

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Corban University announces new director of agriculture science

Susie Nelson is now the director of Agriculture Science for Corban University in Salem, overseeing the launch and creation of the school's new agriculture science major.

Nelson holds a Ph.D. from Oregon State University in agriculture education and has worked as an instructor at the high school and college level, a researcher and lecturer at Oregon State's College of Agriculture Science, and as a farmer, raising crops and cattle on her 40-acre family farm, according to a news release.

Corban is a private, Christian institution in south Salem. Its agriculture science program is set to launch in the fall of 2022. Nelson will now begin the process of building the program's structure and recruiting students for their inaugural class of agriculture sci-

ence majors, according to the release.

Nelson said she sees the university's location in the Mid-Willamette Valley as a major draw for prospective students. She said she envisions building the program around the region's distinctiveness and connecting her students with local growers who can offer expertise and hands-on experience.

"Getting a more comprehensive group of new generation students that understand ag and can educate others is vital," she said. "We want to get the program on the map."

Learn more at corban.edu.

-Natalie Pate

MidValley wineries recognized

Eight MidValley wineries were recognized in Wine & Spirits' list of Top 100 Wineries of 2021:

- Bergström Wines in Dundee.
- Johan Vineyards in Rickreall.

- King Estate Winery in Eugene.
- Lingua Franca Winery in Salem.
- Ovum Wines in Newberg.
- The Eyrie Vineyards in McMinnville.
- Walter Scott in Salem.

Sokol Blosser Winery buys Kalita Vineyard property

Sokol Blosser Winery has signed an agreement to acquire the 65-acre Kalita Vineyard property from Arthur and Sherry Kalita, which includes 22 acres of planted Pinot Noir in the Yamhill-Carlton American Viticultural Area (AVA).

The Kalita Vineyard will be the first Yamhill-Carlton AVA vineyard in Sokol Blosser's portfolio of vineyards, which include more than 100 vineyard acres in the Dundee Hills and Eola-Amity Hills AVAs. "We have been looking for a long time to expand our vineyard hold-

ings in Oregon," Sokol Blosser CEO Alison Sokol Blosser said. "This was the first property that we really fell in love with. We were looking for a vineyard that has been farmed in a thoughtful, sustainable way from the start and was the right size for us."

Kalita Vineyard is 10 minutes north of Yamhill. It has supplied fruit for Willamette Valley producers including Et Fille Wines, Big Table Farm, Panther Creek Cellars, Ponzi Vineyards, and Domaine Divio.

"We are pleased to turn over the vineyard to the Sokol Blossers, a family with 50 years of experience in the Oregon wine business and unparalleled commitment to sustainability in all phases of the farming and winemaking process," Arthur Kalita said.

Sokol Blosser will keep the name of the vineyard and apply for organic certification for Kalita Vineyard.

Workers

Continued from Page 1A

nous and women workers.

"Nothing is surprising. If you talk to any of the interviewers, they already knew these issues we're capturing are long-existing," Martinez-Medina said. "What this study makes us do is see farmworkers in their full selves — inside and outside of the workplace."

Gaining workers' trust

It is often a challenge for researchers to access farmworkers for studies as extensive as this. Many workers are migratory, speak dozens of different languages and are often unwilling to share criticism of employers out of fear of losing their jobs.

To overcome some of these challenges, researchers teamed up with community organizations that already work directly with laborers. Martinez-Medina said that was crucial in earning farmworkers' trust and allowing them to speak candidly.

"We knew farmworkers are already disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and they don't necessarily want to be captured in terms of stories — many are undocumented. They wouldn't talk to us unless there was trust," she said.

But it also potentially skewed results to appear more positive than they likely are because surveys were less likely to reach workers not linked to farmworker-serving organizations, Martinez-Medina said.

"This study is what's happening at its best... this picture is going to be different for people who aren't connected (to these organizations)," she said.

The timeline of the surveys also meant interviewers could not ask questions about working through the winter ice storm and recent heat waves, Martinez-Medina said.

The survey participants were evenly split between men and women, and half of the farmworkers surveyed were from the Willamette Valley, which accounts for 40% of agricultural production in the state.

Over 80% of farmworkers surveyed said they were from Mexico, with 11% from Guatemala, 6% from the U.S. and 1% from Peru and Honduras.

The initial survey was the first phase of the study. Phase two will be a qualitative report centering on 50 in-depth interviews, Martinez-Medina said.

Work conditions, lost wages, retaliation

The majority of farmworkers interviewed reported their employers took some steps to limit the spread of COVID-19, but one-fifth reported no changes to bathrooms and handwashing areas, and 19% said their employers didn't provide them with face masks.

Indigenous workers more often than non-Indigenous farmworkers reported not receiving an employer-provided mask, with 27% of Indigenous workers saying their employer did not provide them a mask, compared to 17% of non-Indigenous workers.

The study indicated 15% of workers surveyed had tested positive for COVID-19, while 49% of respondents said they were directly exposed or knew someone who had contracted COVID-19.

Sandra Martin is part of the "promotoras" program at her Forest Grove apartment complex run by the Washington County-based nonprofit Bienestar. She surveyed 10 people for phase one of the project, and four in phase two.

Usually, she connects her neighbors, who she said are mostly farmworkers, to resources and has helped coordinate food boxes, mask distribution and vaccine appointments during the pandemic.

Martin, who arrived to the U.S. from Guatemala four years ago, said her husband's experiences as a farmworker and her short stints in agricultural work showed her the importance of a project like the COVID-19 farmworker study.

"I realized the needs they have as workers," Martin said in Spanish. "They go through a lot. Sometimes they're not listened to, or they work and one doesn't realize everything they go through so everyone can have all the products they grow and harvest."

According to the study, 53% of farmworkers reported losing months or weeks of work due to the workplace shutting down,

having to quarantine or caring for a sick family member. Employers typically only pay farmworkers when they work, by the amount they work, and many farmworkers are ineligible for unemployment benefits, stimulus checks and many other government benefits due to their immigration status.

Within that group, women were disproportionately impacted, with 72% of women reporting losing wages, compared to 28% of men. Indigenous women were also more likely than non-Indigenous women to report losing months of work.

As a result, about 60% of all workers surveyed described difficulties paying for rent or food, with about 70% of Indigenous workers saying they struggled.

Martin said many of her neighbors have not financially recovered from income lost during the pandemic. Her husband was unemployed last year after losing the nursery job he'd held for five years, but has found a position at another nursery.

Martin said she also heard from people who described their employers treating them differently or cutting their work when returning to work after a positive COVID-19 test. The report noted farmworkers often fear workplace retaliation and/or deportation, making them less likely to raise concerns with employers or file complaints.

"We need to situate this in the larger conversation about immigration and what it means to have a workforce that's largely undocumented," Martinez-Medina said. "We can't protect them because these systems were built from the beginning to not protect them."

'Worse' for Indigenous workers

Studies estimate that 40% of Oregon's farmworkers are Indigenous, and one-quarter of survey respondents identified as Indigenous. The survey noted the percentage could be higher because people may have been reluctant to self-identify due to racism and discrimination.

Indigenous people are those with ties to pre-settler or pre-colonial societies that may have distinct languages and cultures, according to the United Nations. In the U.S., the term often applies to Native Americans. Mexico has 68 distinct indigenous peoples.

Respondents to the survey spoke more than seven languages. Across the state, farmworkers speak at least 26 languages.

One of the clearest disparities was that 63% of farmworkers who self-identified as Indigenous reported having lost weeks and months of work, compared to 49% of non-Indigenous farmworkers.

"Whatever we found for farmworkers in general, for those that identified as Indigenous, everything was much worse," Martinez-Medina said. "They had more difficulty paying their rent, food, and same thing with loss of wages."

Indigenous farmworkers were also much more likely to work for a farm labor contractor. Farm labor contractors are the fastest-growing segment of farm employment, and made up one-quarter of federal employment law violations in agriculture, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a think tank that examines the economic conditions of low and middle-income workers.

Valentin Sanchez has been a community outreach worker and paralegal at the Oregon Law Center's farmworker program for nearly 20 years, and he surveyed people for the COVID-19 farmworker study.

The survey's overall findings support his experience, he said.

Sanchez, who identifies as Indigenous and speaks Mixteco, said he hopes the responses will prompt greater outreach toward Indigenous farmworkers.

"If not, every emergency will be a crisis, and far worse when there is a pandemic," Sanchez said in an email. "I hope the pandemic may finally force attention to the importance of not only collecting more specific demographic including language information but also translating that information into action to close the gaps in accessing services that will save lives of all workers and their families and particularly indigenous farmworkers."

The study also indicated Indigenous farmworkers also were less likely to have heard of resources like the Oregon Worker Relief Fund, which provides financial as-

See WORKERS, Page 4A

Diversity

Continued from Page 1A

skewed data.

Ethnicity — whether someone is Hispanic or Latino — is counted separate from race by the U.S. Census Bureau. The 2020 Census still used two separate questions to collect data on race and ethnicity in the country but it built on previous research to change the questionnaire in hopes of a more accurate and nuanced analysis of the U.S. population.

One question focused on Hispanic and Latino origin and the other question focused specifically on race. For the first time, the census included write-in boxes for Black or African American respondents, allowing them to list whether they are Haitian or Jamaican or Somali, for example.

"The improvements we made to the 2020 Census yield a more accurate portrait of how people self-identify in response to two separate questions on Hispanic origin and race, revealing that the U.S. population is much more multiracial and more diverse than we measured in the past," said Nicholas Jones, director and senior advisor for race and ethnicity research and outreach at the Census Bureau.

Changes may have complicated the comparison of 2020's data to previous data but the released numbers do align with experts' predictions that the country is increasingly more diverse and multiracial.

Those changes were also reflected locally.

Data from Marion, Polk and Salem

Marion County's population grew by 9.7% over the past decade, according to the new census data, representing 30,583 new people in the area.

While the white, non-Hispanic population remains the largest racial group in Marion County, 13,337 fewer people identified as white in 2020, a decrease of 5.4%. A total of 67.4% of people identify as white alone in Marion County. In Oregon, that percentage is 74.8%.

Comparatively, people identifying as two or more races changed by 248.7% in Marion County.

The county's Black, American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islander population grew by 23.4%, 37.9%, 25.1% and 64.1%.

Hispanic or Latinos grew by 25.0% to remain the second largest demographic in the county at 27.7%. Marion ranks 5th out of Oregon's 35 counties in Hispanic or Latino population.

It ranks fourth within the state in

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terms of people who identify as Black alone. Census data showed 2.2% of the county identified as Black or African American alone or in combination.

Polk County's population grew by 16% over the past decade, representing 12,055 new people in the area.

The white, non-Hispanic population remains the largest racial group in Polk County, and 3,467 more people identified as white in 2020, an increase of 5.3%. Comparatively, people identifying as two or more races changed by 225.4% in Polk County.

The county's Black, American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islander population grew by 73.3%, 19.6%, 23.6% and 71.9%.

Hispanic or Latinos grew by 40.1% to remain the second largest demographic in the county.

In Salem, 20,898 more people responded to the 2020 census, a 13.5% increase.

Similar to the rest of the country and the state, the city's white population shrunk by 0.8%. It's multiracial population increased by 219.2%.

The Black population in Salem increased by 33.6%, with 3,049 people identifying as Black in 2020.

Salem's American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander and "Other race" population grew by 28.0%, 32.8%, 62.5% and 23.1%.

The Hispanic population grew by 31.7%.

The figures at right summarize the 2020 data in the state and local communities.

Communities in many locations will not reflect total population and should not be added together. In some communities, people don't live inside an incorporated community; in others, multiple levels of communities may overlap.



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OR-0C055203-01