

Column: You can market your business during COVID-19 closures

There is not a single person who has not been affected in some way by the fact many businesses have been forced to temporarily close. However, don't assume you should not continue to market your business, especially as the economy begins to open. Here are some tips to consider:

- Stay connected with your customers. If you do not have a website or social media presence, create one now. Offer a sign-up portal and send emails about products available, changes you anticipate making to your business once the economy opens, and let them know you care about them and their families.
- Offer ways people can continue to purchase your products or services online, including gift certificates. Social media ads to boost awareness are effective and affordable.
- Fortunately, not all customers have lost their jobs and want to support their favorite hometown businesses. Consider having some T-shirts or hats designed and offer them online. You may be



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- surprised how quickly they sell and are a great way to advertise.
- Come up with a fun contest or way to interact with your customers. This might include a photo contest in which people upload candid shots to your Facebook page of their pets or children. One business encouraged clients to share their favorite recipes online. Perhaps a prize might include a gift card or discount to be used when your business reopens.
- This is a great opportunity to find ways to help support your community. There are many avenues available to assist others and if you are not in a financial position to do so, initiate a food drive or encourage people to donate blood. There are many needs.
- Spiff up your store. Take this opportunity to consider painting, rearranging and updating displays, and planting flowers. Wash windows and even the outside of your building. This will provide an inviting, fresh look for your customers when they return.
- Consider joining other businesses in sharing the cost of buying radio or newspaper ads. Marketing really is about developing long term relationships. Offering products and services customers want to buy, providing outstanding service, and being personable are all part of an effective marketing plan. Top

of the mind awareness has never been more important, so being resourceful and creative will help you be resilient and among those standing after this crisis is over.

Finally, it is imperative to learn from this instantaneous and dramatic economic downturn. Be determined to get a handle on your finances, better manage your cash flow, update or create your business plan, and most important, create a rainy-day fund as anything can happen at any time.

About the Author
Greg Smith is the director of the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center.

New officers chosen for Oregon FFA

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

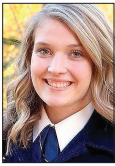
CORVALLIS — It was a longer road than usual, but Oregon FFA has chosen six new state officers for 2020-21.

Officers are normally elected by member delegates on the final morning of the Oregon FFA State Convention in March, though this year the event was abruptly canceled, like so many other school and social gatherings, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Instead, Oregon FFA went “virtual” with selecting officers. A nominating committee made up of 12 FFA members — one from each district — interviewed and scored 24 candidates over four days via Zoom meetings, whittling the list down to 10 finalists.

On Tuesday, the committee recommended appointing Grace Adams, of Dayton, as president; Jenna Wallace, of Hermiston, as vice president; Raimsey Brown, of Baker, as secretary; Celilo Brun, of Hood River Valley, as treasurer; Alivia Robbins, of Burns, as reporter; and Colby Fairbairn, of Roseburg, as sentinel.

Nominations were approved by the Oregon FFA State Executive Committee, and the new officer



Grace Adams



Raimsey Brown



Celilo Brun



Colby Fairbairn



Alivia Robbins

team will begin serving May 1.

“Oregon FFA is thrilled to install these new officers who will represent approximately 11,200 members of Oregon FFA for the coming year,” said Lee Letsch, Oregon FFA executive secretary.

Getting to this point took flexibility and creativity on the part of the state association. After the convention was canceled, in-person elections were moved to early May during spring career development events scheduled to take place at Oregon State University.

That, too, was nixed by COVID-19.

Shawn Dooley, Oregon FFA CEO, said virtual interviews were the best option going forward to comply with social distancing requirements. He praised both the nominating committee and state executive committee for their work to make it happen.

Parts of the state convention, including retiring addresses from the 2019-20 state officer team, were

also recorded and streamed online last month on Facebook Live for members to watch, which Dooley said went off without a hitch.

The only snag in appointing the new state officer team came when one of the candidates was found to have previously made “concerning” posts on social media, Dooley said. He did not go into detail about the posts, but said they “did not uphold the values that FFA strives to instill in its members.”

The nominating committee met again Tuesday to revise its slate of officers, and recommended one change. The state executive committee is made up of 12 Oregon FFA district presidents, the 12 Oregon FFA district advisors, the current Oregon FFA state officers and other representatives from the Oregon FFA Foundation, Oregon FFA Alumni and Oregon State University.



Jenna Wallace

Tyson still awaiting tests following Trump order

By Jedidiah Maynes
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLULA, Wash. — An executive order from President Donald Trump that classifies meat processing plants as critical infrastructure brought more questions than answers for Tyson Fresh Meats in Wallula.

Tuesday’s order, according to The Associated Press, uses the Defense Production Act to mark the facilities as critical in order to prevent a shortage of chicken, pork and other meat on supermarket shelves.

Local officials were caught off guard by the order.

“The county has no comment at this time,” Walla Walla County Emergency Management Director Liz Jessee said. Jessee is also serving as a public information official for the county’s Department of Community Health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Tyson spokeswoman said Wednesday that the company will work with the USDA on next steps.

“We appreciate the administration’s efforts

to help the food supply chain, and we remain committed to protecting the safety of our team members as we continue our efforts to keep feeding American families,” said Hli Yang, senior communications specialist for Arkansas-based Tyson, via email.

However, it was unclear if Tyson plans on sending workers back soon or not.

The return of workers at the facility depends on “a variety of factors,” including how long it takes coronavirus test results to return, Yang said.

She said the company will work with local health officials to conduct education for workers regarding CDC guidelines and preventing the spread of the virus.

The plant was partially shut down last week as remaining meat was processed and workers were sent home following testing.

The test results were expected Wednesday, Jessee said.

“We were hoping to

have some information (Tuesday), but that didn’t happen,” Jessee said.

About 1,400 people are employed at the Wallula facility. Between Walla Walla, Benton and Franklin counties, 125 workers have tested positive for coronavirus and one employee has reportedly died, as of Tuesday afternoon.

State Rep. Skyler Rude said food production is essential, but the safety of health and workers must be made a priority.

“At this time, I would not support forced reopen coming down from the federal level via the Defense Production Act,” Rude said. “Walla Walla County health officials are better suited to take the lead on this situation.”

More than 20 meat-packing plants have been temporarily closed, according to the AP, including Walla Walla County’s second largest employer.

The president’s order came a day after Tyson Foods Inc. placed a full-page ad in The New York Times, claiming the “food supply chain is breaking.”

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