

Extension Twilight Tour to showcase research

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

KIMBERLY, Idaho — Serious research hums along daily at the University of Idaho’s Kimberly Research and Extension Center, but the research farm will take on a festive air July 20 when it hosts its biannual Twilight Tour.

Open to the public, the tour will feature not only current research at the center but all things ag in the region. The tour will be packed with activities and displays, family fun and an opportunity to visit with University of Idaho faculty and staff.

The theme of this year’s event is “Growing Knowledge

for Growing Food.”

“It is an opportunity for us to showcase some of the research and extension projects related to increasing our knowledge about growing food that are taking place across Southern Idaho,” said Don Morishita, superintendent of the research center.

The free event will take place from 5 to 8 p.m., complete with music, games, wagon rides and a beef dinner.

“We try to make it a family event with things kids can do and look at,” he said.

One attraction returning to this year’s tour is the insect “petting zoo,” with live and pinned insects, some involved in current research.

The event will also feature a 6-foot-deep, transparent soil pit, with soil scientists explaining the characteristics of the area’s soil.

In addition, UI entomologist Erik Wenninger will perform with his band, The Barking Owls, and UI mascot Joe Vandal will be on hand for fun and photos.

Interactive displays, exhibits and field tours will include information on potatoes, wheat, barley, sugar beets, dry beans, plant diseases, insects, weeds, nutrient management, water conservation and management, aquaculture, food preservation, nutrition and 4-H.

Wagons will traverse the ex-

periment station, stopping at research plots, where researchers will explain what’s taking place, Morishita said.

“It’s an opportunity to show taxpayers, the public, our research activities,” Morishita said.

“It’s also an opportunity for potential UI students and their families, as well as current UI students and alumni, to learn more about what is going on at their university,” he said.

UI President Chuck Staben, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Dean Michael Parrella, Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station Director Mark McGuire and Extension Director Barbara Petty all plan to attend.



Courtesy of UI Kimberly Research and Extension Center

Sara Zglobicki, a former University of Idaho graduate student, shows attendees how to recreate a soil profile of Idaho’s state soil, the Threebear soil series, on index cards. The photo was taken at a previous Twilight Tour at the UI Kimberly Research and Extension Center.



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FFA allows ag mechanics students to shine



Anderson, Calif., High School FFA adviser George Wold encourages students each year to enter their shop-class creations in a competition at the Shasta District Fair in June.



FFA member Dustin McNeely of Anderson, Calif., stands next to the garden cart he made in shop class and entered in the Shasta District Fair's ag mechanics contest, winning best of show. The annual fair in June displays students' metal and wood shop creations next to the livestock sale arena.

ANDERSON, Calif. — Raising livestock isn't the only way that high school students in FFA prepare for entering their local fairs.

At the Shasta District Fair here in June, dozens of tables, chairs, gardening equipment and other shop-class creations were displayed next to the livestock show arena.

Dustin McNeely, who will enter Shasta College's agricultural mechanics program in the fall, won a Best of Show for the garden cart he spent nearly the full school year working on in his high school wood shop class.

While the 19-year-old McNeely also brought a market hog to the fair, he likes the ag mechanics competition "because it gives you a chance to get in front of the public and show them what you can do and make a little extra money on the side," he said.

While the Shasta District Fair has displayed students' shop-class creations for many years, they started holding a silent auction of the items about 10 years ago, said George Wold, an Anderson High School ag teacher who helps put on the display.

While the animals are still the big sellers, the auction of shop-class creations can bring in between \$10,000 and \$15,000, Wold said.

Further, the mechanics competition gives students who don't have animals or are just more mechanically inclined a chance to shine.

"A lot of times, a shop kid is just a different kind of kid," Wold said, noting that the students are sometimes more quiet and reserved and are looking for a practical trade.

"Sometimes we forget that side of it," he said. "We push college on kids, but college isn't for every student."

The future has never been brighter on the mechanical side of agriculture, he said. He noted that one of his former students is now in his final year at California Polytechnic University-San Luis Obispo and is preparing for a career in irrigation technology.

For some students, the local fair gives them a desire to compete in other FFA-related contests.

"This almost becomes a springboard for kids," he said.

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