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Idaho

New economic development chief resigns

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Jeff Hough

The executive director of the Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization has resigned after just six months in that position.

Jeff Hough, who signed on as SIEDO chief in March, is leaving due to personal reasons and without any job prospects, he said.

“My family has some issues going on, and I’m

going home to take care of my family,” he told Capital Press just after the organization announced his resignation on Monday.

Home is Pocatello, where his wife and one son remained until his son, who is a senior this year, finished high school. The Houghs also have three grown children.

Hough was hired after an extensive search for a new director to replace long-time director Jan Rogers, who took a similar position in Eastern Idaho last fall.

At the time of his hiring, then SIEDO Chairman Mike Schutz said Hough had the combination of skills and experience SIEDO was looking for to “keep the foot on the gas of economic development.”

Prior to SIEDO, Hough

was the director of workforce training at Idaho State University in Pocatello and had also served as a business consultant at the university in workforce training.

“I am grateful to the organization (SIEDO) for giving me a chance and sad it didn’t work out. But family comes first,” Hough said.

SIEDO will name an interim executive director shortly to support the region in attracting business

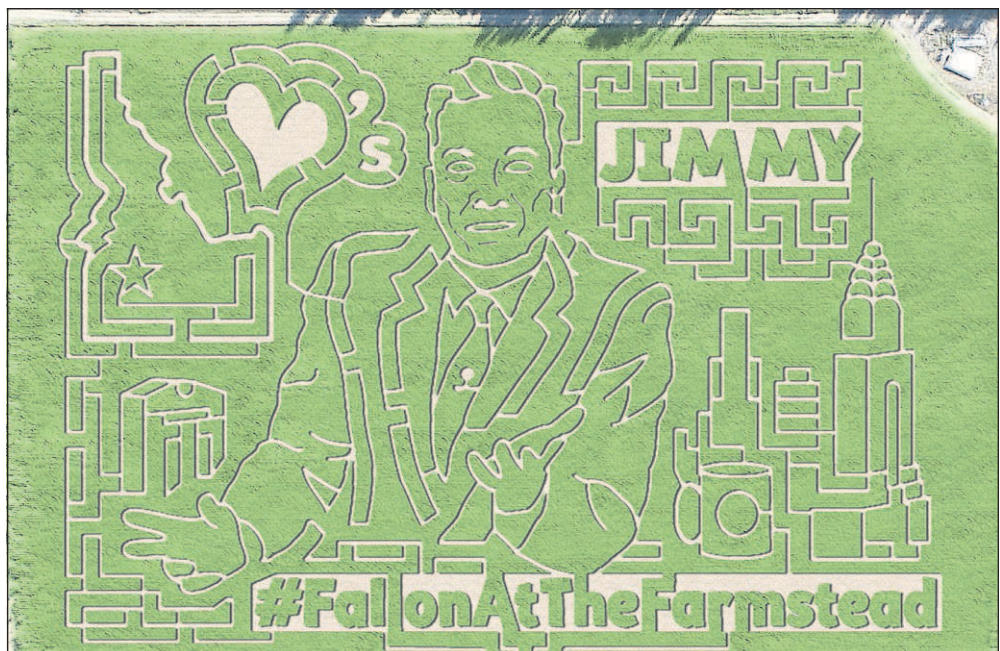
and talent, the organization stated.

“We’ve just come off a very successful annual summit addressing talent attraction, and several very promising new projects are being considered for the region,” said Dan Olmstead, SIEDO chairman.

“We will be naming an interim director soon to assure that our economic development level of activity does not slow down,” he said.

During the last 15 years, SIEDO’s efforts have generated \$1.8 billion in capital investments, attracted 37 new companies and 21 company expansions and brought 5,000 jobs to the region, gaining national and international attention.

SIEDO will be working with its member cities, counties and utilities to develop a strategy for hiring a new executive director.



Courtesy photo

This corn maze in Meridian, Idaho, will allow people to get inside comedian Jimmy Fallon’s head. Popular corn maze designs around the nation this year include “Star Trek” and “Back the Blue” themes in support of police officers.

Corn maze allows people inside Jimmy Fallon’s head

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

MERIDIAN, Idaho — An Idaho corn maze that has attracted national attention several times in past years has chosen a light-hearted approach this year. The image of comedian Jimmy Fallon.

“It’s something a little different than what we’ve done before,” said Meridian farmer Jim Lowe, owner of the The Farmstead Corn Maze & Pumpkin Festival. “We wanted something that would be light-hearted and playful.”

Around the nation, “Star Trek” and “Back the Blue” themes in support of police officers are popular designs this year.

But Lowe said that with all the serious issues facing the world, he wanted a design that would allow people to escape the seriousness for awhile and remember to laugh.

“We just wanted to focus on relaxing, having fun and re-

membering the value of being light-hearted in spite of whatever is going on around us in the world,” he said. “Sometimes you need that breath of fresh air.”

Fallon is a former “Saturday Night Live” star and the current host of the “Tonight Show.”

“Maybe, if we can get inside Jimmy’s head, we can all come out a little more light-hearted,” Lowe stated in a news release.

The Farmstead’s designs in past years include likenesses of Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama during that election year, a bumblebee, Abraham Lincoln, a trout, and the Statue of Liberty.

Some of the designs have been featured in Time magazine, “Good Morning America,” USA Today, New York Magazine and on the “Today Show.”

Two of the nation’s most popular corn maze themes this year are “Star Trek” and “Back the Blue,” according to Mazeplay owner Shawn Stolworthy of Idaho Falls, whose business

cut 110 mazes around the United States this year.

After a picture of one “Back the Blue” maze that Mazeplay created in Georgia was posted on Facebook, it generated more than 1 million views in a few days, Stolworthy said.

The “Star Trek” design is in honor of the 50th anniversary of the first airing of the “Star Trek” TV series. “That one went huge,” Stolworthy said.

Eagle, Idaho, farmer Jeff Smith said he chose the “Back the Blue” theme for his corn maze this year because he wanted to bring attention to the important and sometimes under-appreciated role that police officers play in society.

His maze features a police officer holding a German shepherd next to a squad car, with an “Idaho” silhouette in the background.

Smith said he wanted to show police officers in a positive light to the multitude of kids that go through the maze.

UI’s annual farm estimates close to USDA numbers

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

BOISE — Annual January estimates by University of Idaho agricultural economists on how the state’s farming industry fared have closely matched USDA’s official numbers, which are released 10 months later.

Each January, UI economists provide members of the Idaho Legislature’s Joint Legislative Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee with an estimate of how Idaho agriculture fared the previous year.

Legislators use that estimate to help them forecast how much revenue the state will take in that fiscal year, and that revenue estimate in turn is used during the legislative session to set state budgets.

UI’s 2016 forecast for the 2015 season turned out to be pretty accurate for most commodities, except for cattle and calves.

In the university’s annual “Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture” report this January, UI ag economists Garth Taylor and Ben Eborn estimated that the cattle and calves sector in Idaho brought in \$2.2 billion in cash receipts in 2015.

Data released Aug. 31 by USDA’s Economic Research Service shows that number at \$1.95 billion.

But UI’s forecasts for other commodities were close to the USDA numbers, in some cases extremely close.

UI forecast Idaho potato cash receipts at \$871 million for 2015 while USDA shows that number at \$873 million, and UI forecast dairy receipts at \$2.3 billion while USDA shows them at \$2.35 billion.

Overall, UI estimated total Idaho farm cash receipts for



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Wine grapes are harvested in southwestern Idaho Aug. 19. Annual estimates by University of Idaho ag economists on how the state’s farm industry fared are matching up closely with official USDA numbers that are released 10 months later.

2015 at \$7.87 billion while USDA has them at \$7.46 billion.

In their January 2015 report, UI economists estimated Idaho farm cash receipts for 2014 at \$8.77 billion, while USDA’s data has them at \$8.66 billion.

“It’s not that far off,” Eborn said of UI’s overall forecast for Idaho cash receipts in 2015. “The only one we really missed was cattle and calves.”

Republican Sen. Steve Bair, a retired farmer from Blackfoot and a member of the Legislature’s economic outlook committee, said he puts put a lot of stock in the UI forecasts.

A separate forecast by economists from the state’s three major universities that includes the overall economy “are not nearly as accurate,” he said. “Garth does a great job. He seems to have a good handle on what’s happened

in the agricultural sector and what’s going to happen.”

Other UI farm commodity forecasts for 2015, with USDA numbers in parenthesis: Wheat, \$506 million (\$463 million); hay, \$485 million (\$440 million); sugar beets, \$300 million (\$280 million); barley, \$286 million (\$261 million).

UI forecast \$3 billion in total Idaho crop cash receipts for 2015 while USDA’s total was \$2.9 billion. On the animal production side, UI forecast \$4.8 billion while USDA had that total at \$4.55 billion.

Because UI’s estimates are released 10 months before the USDA numbers and agriculture is so important to the state’s economy, “We just try to give (legislators) a feel for how the year went 10 months before they actually get the numbers from ERS,” Eborn said.

ISDA to collect unwanted pesticides

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Farmers, dealers, professional applicators and homeowners who have unusable pesticides will have a safe, legal and free opportunity to dispose of them when the Idaho State Department of Agriculture conducts its unusable pesticide collections this month.

Pesticides include herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides or anything with

a “cide” at the end. Unusable pesticides should be taken to the closest collection site between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. on the date and location listed below.

No fertilizer, micronutrients, paint, solvents, or motor oil will be accepted at the collections.

Pesticide collections will be held at:

- Twin Falls: Sept. 26, Twin Falls Canal Co., 357 Sixth Ave.
- West Gooding: Sept. 27, Gooding Airport, 1945 Airport Road.

• Nampa: Sept. 28, Pickles Butte Landfill, 15500 Missouri Ave.

For updates and additional information, contact your

nearest ISDA field office or the main office in Boise at (208) 332-8500 or the ISDA website at www.agri.idaho.gov.



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