

Volunteers help make Expo a success

By GEOFF PARKS
For the Capital Press

The smooth running of the Willamette Valley Ag Expo each year always comes down to a firm reliance on the dedicated volunteers who set up, keep running and tear down the event each year.

For the individual volunteers, that usually means starting at the bottom rung of jobs and working their way up over the years — always with a smile on their face.

“I started as a ‘gruntling,’” said 8-, 9- or 10-year Expo volunteer Rich Riffle, who says he’s lost count.

He said he started off helping with

general purpose setup and teardown, then worked his way up “to a ‘Gruntling,’ with a capital G — though I’ve been a building superintendent at the Expo for most of my career at the show.”

A former Benton County sheriff’s deputy and Adair Village police chief, Riffle, 58, moved to Scappoose from the Corvallis area after retiring. But continues to dedicate himself to a long stretch of hard work at the Expo each November — starting with the commute to Albany.

“I’m more or less a stage hands coordinator,” he said.

He started his volunteer work at the Expo after he met event producer Scott Ingalls about a decade ago as he was carrying out his duties as

a sheriff’s deputy.

“We met at the Benton County Fair, where he was doing marketing work and we became fast friends,” Riffle said of Ingalls. “He mentioned the Willamette Valley Ag Expo and said, ‘Hey, I need your help,’ and that’s how I started.

“I mostly just do it for Scott and Jill (Ingalls, Scott’s wife and manager of the Expo-sponsoring Willamette Valley Ag Association).”

He said the three-day event is actually a four-day challenge each year for the crowd of volunteers.

“We’ve got to set up before the first day of the show, then keep things going for three days and get out with the rest of the crews on Thursday evening,” Riffle said.



Courtesy photo

Rich Riffle, a longtime volunteer at the Willamette Valley Ag Expo, lives in Scappoose, Ore.

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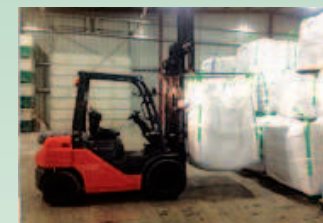
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