## **People & Places**

# In support of women in agriculture

## She Grows Idaho strives to educate, empower and enrich members' lives **By CAROL RYAN DUMAS**

### Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho -Laughter and lively banter dominate at a recent gathering of women passionate about agriculture.

They are members of She Grows Idaho, a fledging organization focused on supporting women in agriculture and educating consumers.

The group is the brainchild of Alison Hurwitch, a veterinarian with Elanco, and Karma Metzler Fitzgerald, a writer and agricultural advocate. Its inspiration was twofold — to provide a social and supportive network for young women in agriculture and to educate consumers about food and agriculture.

The approach is threepronged: to educate, empower and enrich, Fitzgerald said.

There's been an influx of young women in agriculture to the Magic Valley over recent years and there was no organization to help them find out about available resources or how to connect to other women in agriculture, she said

"There is a void; there's no way for them to network," she said.

Agriculture can be a really lonely place for women, whether they're on the farm or working in traditionally male roles, she said.

#### Women's struggles

Hurwitch said she knows the struggles young professional women face. She came to the Magic Valley as a single mother in 2008, juggling career, family and a little gender bias. The first time she went to a dairy to pull a calf, she was met with "Where's the vet?"

Women farm owners face the same frustration when people ask, "Where's the owner?" she said.

"We wanted get the group



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

From left, Jaclyn Bruhn and Alison Hurwitch, co-founder of She Grows Idaho, listen to a discussion during the organization's monthly meeting at a Twin Falls restaurant.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press Karma Metzler Fitzgerald, co-founder of She Grows Idaho, conducts business with flair.

together so women feel supported," she said.

Women are taking up non-traditional roles in agriculture — a great opportunity that comes with growing pains.

'We want them to be excited and happy about choosing a path in ag," she said.

For those college-bound women, the group wants to encourage them to pursue the degree they want — even if it has been traditionally male-dominated, she said.

"It's a mentoring thing," Fitzgerald said.

Her daughter is majoring in agricultural technology and production management at Washington State University and belongs to the university's dairy club, whose quarters were designed for young men.

#### Strong role in ag

The vast majority of club members today are female, all working on dairies, yet the club's quarters didn't even have a women's bathroom until recently, Fitzgerald said.

While women have always had a strong role in agriculture, they haven't been recognized or appreciated. With today's young women now working more, "We want them to know they have a support system," she said.

They're bound to have frustrations, and She Grows Idaho offers a safe place to air those issues and find solutions. It's a forum for empowerment and education where they can find support, she said.

It's also a means to connect women in the industry and help them be a voice in agriculture and for agriculture, Hurwitch said.

"There's a lot of misinfor-

mation out there about food, labels and what's going on in agriculture. We wanted to have an opportunity to educate anyone and everyone we can on what things mean, such as GMO or hormones," she said.

The group is also meant to further the education of women in agriculture, from production and marketing to how to give farm tours and handle public-relations issues, she said.

#### Varied backgrounds

The group spans the spectrum of backgrounds — from Ph.D.-level researchers to traditional farm wives, from young women just entering agriculture to those closer to retirement and from staunch conservatives to determined liberals.

The constant is their female perspective and their passion for agriculture.

"Being able to hang out with women who have the same agricultural passion" is what drew Shayna Wilks to the group.

She's part of a multi-generational dairy in Gooding County and said there are a lot of men in dairy. She Grows Idaho gives her the opportunity to be with like-minded



## Western Innovator

She Grows Idaho

Founded: October 2016 Co-founders: Alison

Hurwitch and Karma Metzler Fitzgerald

Membership: 105 and growing

Mission: Empowering women involved in all aspects of food production, from field to fork.

Email: info@shegrowsidaho.com

Website: http://www. shegrowsidaho.com/

Motto: "Lead by serving, learn by giving and nurture by feeding our families, our communities and our world."

women and provides resources as well.

"It's reassuring to hang out with people (women) from the same walk of life," said Kristina Reitsma, the only female on her multi-generational family dairy.

Katy Jo Fitzgerald, in her first year of ag studies at Washington State University, joins the group when she's in town

People think she can't handle ag work because she's female, and she enjoys being with women who do "handle it," she said.

Other members of the group said the group gets them out in the community, both through meetings and educational activities, and provides networking.

Karen Fields, who farms and keeps records on breeding and genomics at a nearby dairy, said women play an important role in agriculture yet don't seem to have much of a voice.

'Maybe this group can help; I felt it was important to support this group," she said.

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#### Friday-Saturday March 31-April 1

High Desert Stampede. 6-10 p.m. Bank of the Cascades Center, 3800 SW Airport Way, Redmond, Ore. High Desert Stampede, in concert with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, will be presenting a full rodeo performance lineup complete with bull bareback and saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, team roping, calf roping and barrel racing. www. highdesertstampede.com

#### Saturday-Sunday April 1-2

Spring Farming Days. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Eastern Washington Agricultural Museum, 99 Fairground Road, Pomeroy, Wash. Old-time horse and mule farming on 13 acres, plus static and active equipment and vehicle displays and artisan displays. RV and camping available and hot lunch available both days. Cost: Free. www.co.garfield.wa.us/museum

#### Tuesday, April 4

Understanding and Applying Farm Market Reports. 6-8 p.m. OSU Extension Auditorium, SOREC, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. Have you ever wondered what that Market Report at the back of the Capital Press really means? Perhaps you just ignore those pages, hoping it won't hurt your business too much. This class will teach you about market reports. You need to understand the terminology, where to find reputable market reports, get a market report update and learn how to apply the information gleaned in market reports to your operation. Cost: \$20 one/ \$30 two from same farm. http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarms

#### Wednesday, April 5

Exploring the Small Farm Dream. 5-8 p.m. OSU SOREC Research Building Library, 569 Haley Road, Central Point, Ore. This three-session course provides an excellent framework to help new farmers assess their skills and interests, learn the realities of farm business ownership, and become connected to local resources. The aim is to help those thinking about small-scale commercial farming learn what it will take to start and manage a farm business, and decide whether that is something they really want to pursue. \$50 per person, \$75 for two from the same farm. Website: http://bit.ly/JacksonSmallFarmDream

#### Wednesday-Saturday April 5-8

86th Idaho FFA State Leadership Conference. College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls. www.idahoffa.org/ conferences-conventions/

#### Thursday, April 6

Second Annual Friends of Idaho FFA Banquet. 4:30-7 p.m. Canyon Crest Event Center, 330 Canyon Crest Drive, Twin Falls, Idaho. The silent auction and social hour start at 4:30 p.m., followed by dinner, a program and live auction. Cost: \$25 per person, or \$300 for a table of eight. Website: http://bit.ly/2nGk2zQ

#### Saturday, April 8

Community Food System Gathering. 9 a.m.-noon. Broadway Commons, 1300 Broadway St., Salem, Ore. A healthy community begins with a healthy food system. Everyone involved in creating the Mid-Valley Food System, including farmers, gardeners, food processors and eaters are invited. The purpose is to give all of stakeholders in the Mid-Valley food system a chance to network and discuss pressing issues with their peers. The event will also feature a keynote address about "The Future of Oregon's Agricultural Land" from Nellie McAdams with Rogue Farm Corps. It will conclude with an optional tour of the Salem Saturday Market. Cost: Free. Website: http://bit.ly/2mZy2oy

Goat Seminar. 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. 7211 40th Ct. NE, Olympia, Wash. Learn about goat healthcare and nutrition, along with a short session about packgoats. Cost: \$25 public; \$7.50 4H/FFA. Website: http://edelweissacresobers.com/

#### Tuesday, April 11

Do Your Kids Want the Business? Planning for Yes or No. 7:30 to 9 a.m. Hayden's Lakefront Grill, 8187 SW Tualatin-Sherwood Road, Tualatin, Ore. Presented by Steve Bennett, Farleigh Wada Witt and the Austin Family Business Program, Oregon State University. 800-859-7609, http://bit.ly/2h3k8Ck

www.oxarc.com

Wednesday, April 12 Exploring the Small Farm Dream. 5-8 p.m. OSU SOREC Research Building Library, 569 Haley Road, Central Point, Ore. This three-session course provides an excellent framework to help new farmers assess their skills and interests, learn the realities of farm business ownership, and become connected to local resources. The aim is to help those thinking about small-scale commercial farming learn what it will take to start and manage a farm business, and decide whether that is something they really want to pursue. \$50 per person, \$75 for two from the same farm. Website: http://bit.ly/Jackson-SmallFarmDream

Local Meat Marketing and USDA Processing Workshops. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Expo Center, 45224 284th Ave. SE, Enumclaw, Wash. Workshops will focus on market demand for local meats, economics and processing options to help determine what is best for vour livestock enterprise. Contact: Patrice Barrentine at King County Agriculture Program at Patrice. Barrentine@kingcounty.gov or (206) 477-1556. Cost: Free. Website: https://goo.gl/forms/JENmH-1PAWkQfZDaH2

#### Thursday, April 13

Oregon Mint Commission budget hearing. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. White Buffalo Bistro, 4040 Westcliff Drive (Exit 62 I-84), Hood River, Ore. Any producer of Oregon mint oil has the right to be heard on the commission's budget for next year.

#### Saturday, April 15

Oregon Women for Agriculture 30th annual auction and dinner. 5-9 p.m. Linn County Fair & Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road E, Albany, Ore. Website: owaonline.org

#### Wednesday-Friday April 19-21

National Organic Standards Board meeting. 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel, 1550 Court Place, Denver, Colo.

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> During meetings, the board listens to public comments, discusses agenda items and then votes in a public forum. Website: http://bit.ly/2gKsKgb

#### Friday-Saturday April 21-22

Second Annual Horsedrawn Vehicle and Equipment Auction, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Yamhill County Fairgrounds, 2070 NE Lafayette Ave., McMinnville, Ore. Preview starts at 8 a.m. both days. Auction benefits the Youth Educational Scholarship Foundation. www.pacificoverlandexpo.com

#### Saturday, April 22

Local Meat Marketing and USDA Processing Workshops. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Carnation Farms, Carnation, Wash. Workshops will focus on market demand for local meats, economics and processing options to help determine what is best for your livestock enterprise. Contact: Patrice Barrentine at King County Agriculture Program at Patrice.Barrentine@ kingcounty.gov or (206) 477-1556. Cost: Free. Website: https://goo.gl/ forms/JENmH1PAWkQfZDaHŽ

Map & Compass Workshop. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. University of Idaho Extension Office in Kootenai County, 1808 North Third St., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The program features 2-3 hours indoors interpreting various natural resource maps, followed by field activities using magnetic compasses. Those wishing to participate should pre-register by Friday, April 14, at the University of Idaho Extension office in Kootenai County. Cost: \$10. Website: www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry/calendar

#### Saturday-Tuesday April 22-25

California FFA State Convention. Fresno Convention & Entertainment

#### Website: www.calaged.org Thursday, April 27

Growing Forest Mushrooms workshop. 6:15-8:45 p.m. The workshop will cover techniques for growing a variety of edible forest mushrooms, including oyster and shitake mushrooms. Kootenai County Fairgrounds, Building 2, 4056 N. Government Way, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Cost: \$15 by April

Center, 700 M St., Fresno, Calif.

21. Website: http://www.uidaho. edu/extension/forestry.

1-800-765-9055

#### Friday, April 28

Forest Edibles workshop. 1-5 p.m. This workshop will cover the range of edible non-timber products that can be harvested from forests. Kootenai County Fairgrounds, Building 2, 4056 N. Government Way, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Cost: \$15 by April 21. Website: http:// www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry.

#### Saturday-Sunday April 29-30

Oregon Ag Fest. 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. Ag Country activities, a petting zoo, pony rides, toy tractor races, a craft and garden show and family entertainment make for a fun and informative day. A ranch breakfast is served on Saturday from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Cost is \$6. Sunday Ag Fest hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Ag Fest cost: Free for 12 and under. \$9 for 13 and older. Free parking. http://oragfest.com/

#### Wednesday-Thursday May 10-11

Managing for Resilience: Northwest Grazing Conference 2017. 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate, Pendleton, Ore. Featured speakers are Kit Pharo and Fred Provenza. Pharo, cattle breeder and owner of Pharo Cattle Co., says, "The most profitable cow-calf producers that I know of have a low-input, grassbased program with very efficient, low-maintenance cows. These are also the happiest producers I know of." Provenza, professor emeritus at Utah State University, is part of the BEHAVE team. BEHAVE principles, based on 30 years of research: If we understand how animals learn, we can train the animals to fit the landscapes instead of changing the landscape to fit the animals. Cost: \$227 by April 14, \$267 after. Website: http://bit.ly/2kpT9yb

#### Thursday-Saturday May 11-13

87th Washington FFA State Convention. Washington State University, www.washingtonffa.org/ Pullman. calendar/

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