

People & Places

App helps farmers manage workers

By KATY NESBITT
For the Capital Press

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — Harvust, smart phone and computer software designed to help farms with their human resource needs, allows users to effectively manage field workers in light of state and federal COVID-19 distancing requirements.

Co-owner James Hall said that with Harvust workers can remotely attend a safety meeting by using an app on their phone in the field as opposed to meeting in a group with dozens of others.

“Farms using Harvust were already doing safety meetings remotely when essential workers were told it wasn’t good to gather in a group, ironically, for a safety meeting,” Hall said.

Within 48 hours of Washington Gov. Jay Inslee’s March 13 executive orders that expanded statewide closures of schools and limited large gatherings, Hall and business partner Riley Clubb uploaded COVID-19 safety information from OSHA and CDC to the Harvust platform.

Not only did Harvust have the information to their customers over the course of a weekend, it was in their hands before Inslee requested a federal major disaster declaration on March 20 and more than a month before the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries came out with its COVID-19 safety guidelines on April 16.

“We like to think we are doing our part in keeping people healthy,” Hall said. “So much relies on education and altering behavior as a society. The employer can demonstrate he is taking it seriously while looking into the future and the safety of future workers. We want to help employers, in the long run, maintain a good



Katy Nesbitt/For the Capital Press

A worker uses the Harvust app on his smart phone to check in for new information from his supervisor.

workforce.”

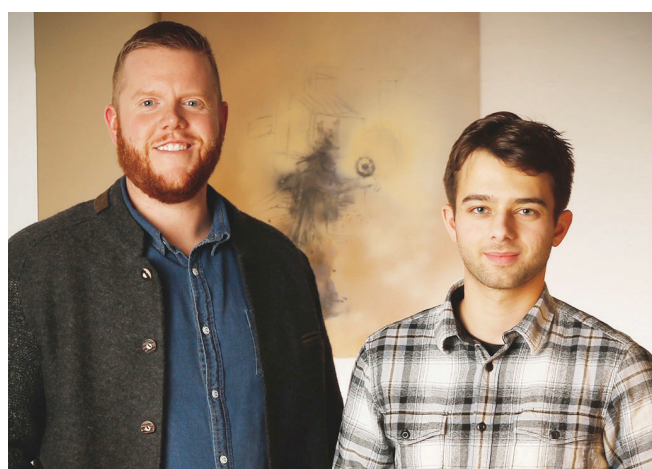
Hall said the app is a human resource tool like Quickbooks is for accountants — an easy-to-use program that allows farmworkers to fill out their hiring paperwork, read and sign-off on policies and procedures and attend training, all from their phones.

“It’s a big help when a farm is onboarding new hires, like 200 cherry pickers all at once,” Hall said.

Harvust distributes training information in several ways — via verbiage in the worker’s preferred language or as an audio translation so those who struggle with literacy are not left behind.

Hall said, “Imagine trying to get 20 to 30 people to stop what they are doing, come into the shop, wait for the late stragglers to come in, and then conduct a safety meeting in English and Spanish. Instead, we give them the information in a way that’s accessible and the workers will actually do it.”

As a college student who had become enamored with capital markets Hall said he started writing computer code to trade stocks that ingested market data and strategies. When he discovered what he built didn’t work as he wanted, he



Riley Clubb, left, and Chris Hall, developers of the Harvust app that helps farmers and farmworkers.

looked around for someone who had done it better. He found Quantopian in Boston, a quantitative finance firm, and emailed, requesting an internship.

Hall said he spent two summers with the firm, laying groundwork to start his own company. With what he called his rigorous background in technology and markets and having grown up in Walla Walla, Wash., and Wallowa County, Ore., he said he wanted to apply these skills to farms to help them be as productive as possible.

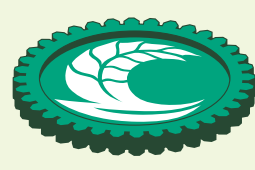
“I talked to growers I knew to tease out the main labor management issues they were struggling with,”

Hall said.

While mulling over his business idea he met up with Clubb, a recent graduate with a master’s degree in business administration graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology whose family owns a vineyard.

“He recognized what I was talking about immediately — it was a great match,” Hall said.

They struck out on Harvust together and quickly delved into deeper research to determine how to help farms manage itinerant employees, improve and sustain productivity while providing a good workplace. Farmworkers are a noto-



Western Innovator

HARVUST RILEY CLUBB

Age: 33
Home: Walla Walla, Wash.
Occupation: Entrepreneur
Education: B.A. Whitman College 2009, MBA MIT Sloan School of Management 2017
Family: Wife Melissa, son Malakai

JAMES CHRISTOPHER HALL

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Education: Enterprise High School 2013, University of Washington 2017
Family: Single



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EMPOWERING PRODUCERS OF FOOD & FIBER
Established 1928

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EO Media Group
dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is published weekly by EO Media Group, 2870 Broadway NE, Salem OR 97303.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR 97308-2048.

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Mailing address:

Capital Press
P.O. Box 2048
Salem, OR 97308-2048

News: Contact the main office or news staff member closest to you, send the information to newsroom@capitalpress.com or mail it to “Newsroom,” c/o Capital Press. Letters should be limited to 300 words. Deadline: Noon Monday.

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New state officers chosen to lead Oregon FFA

Interviews conducted virtually to keep social distancing

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

It was a longer road than usual, but Oregon FFA has chosen six new state officers to lead the organization 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



President Grace Adams, Dayton



Vice President Jenna Wallace, Hermiston



Secretary Raimey Brown, Baker



Treasurer Celilo Brun, Hood River Valley



Reporter Alivia Robbins, Burns



Sentinel Colby Fairbairn, Roseburg

to 10 finalists.

On Tuesday, the committee recommended appointing Grace Adams, of Dayton, as president; Jenna Wallace, of Hermiston, as vice president; Raimey 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 team began serving May 1.

“Oregon FFA is thrilled to install these new officers who will represent approx-

imately 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.

“It’s a very adaptable, can-do group,” Dooley said.

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 originally selected for treasurer was found to have

CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on www.capitalpress.com or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

FRIDAY, MAY 15
OSU Extension Fire Preparedness Webinar: 1 p.m. Online. This webinar — the second of three — will address fire behavior and home ignition zone. Topics covered include the fire environment, embers, mitigating risk by taking care of hazards in the home ignition zone, and why structures ignite. Website: https://bit.ly/2VNtC7L

SUNDAY-TUESDAY MAY 17-19
The Alltech Ideas Conference: Central Bank Center, 430 W. Vine St., Lexington, Ky. The 36th Alltech Ideas Conference will explore innovative solutions within the global food-supply chain. More than 40

topics are slated for discussion. Website: http://one.alltech.com

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY, MAY 20-21
AgTC Virtual Annual Meeting: 9-11 a.m. Pacific each day. Online. An amazing line up of speakers, fastest paced Annual Meeting ever, tackling the challenges facing shippers, carriers, ports, all others, right now. Website: https://agtrans.org/events/

FRIDAY, MAY 22
OSU Extension Fire Preparedness Webinar: 1 p.m. Online. This webinar — the third of three — will focus on fire adapted communities and the Ready, Set, Go! Program. Attendees will gain an understanding of what it means to be prepared to evacuate, including a demonstration on how to build their personal go-packs. Website:

https://bit.ly/2VNtC7L

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY JUNE 3-4
Stockmanship Clinic: 8 a.m. Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate, Pendleton, Ore. This hands-on clinic will focus on practical applications of various livestock handling techniques, why low stress handling is important and helping to design a livestock handling facility for a local ranch. Sponsored by Roots of Resilience and Oregon State University Extension. Contact: Andrea Mann at 509-670-7743 or mannandrea@aol.com, or Beth Robinette at beth@lazyrbeef.com

SATURDAY, JUNE 20
Goat and Lamb Clinic: 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Red Pavilion, Scio, Ore. Join us for a practice showmanship contest and some hands-on learning on how to get your animal

show ring ready. Contact: Teri McKenzie, 503-302-9901, teri@4Mlive-stock.com

SATURDAY-SUNDAY JUNE 20-21
Glenwood Ketchum Kalf Rodeo: 12:30 p.m. Glenwood, Wash. The 86th Annual Ketchum Kalf Rodeo will be held in Glenwood, Wash. The Glenwood Rodeo Association is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization. Contact: Mary L. Pierce, 509-364-3427

MONDAY-TUESDAY JUNE 22-23
Idaho Cattle Association Summer Roundup: Burley Convention Center, Burley, Idaho. The annual summer conference includes presentations on topics of interest to cattle producers, as well as social events and a golf tournament. Agenda to be announced. Website: http://www.idahocattle.org

FRIDAY, JULY 24
16th Annual AgForestry Golf Tournament: 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Apple Tree Golf Course, 8804 Occidental Ave., Yakima, Wash. Join the AgForestry network of alumni and supporters for an afternoon of golf, camaraderie and supporting future AgForestry Leaders. Contact: Melissa Skomer-Kafton, 509-926-9113, melissa@agforestry.org Website: http://agforestry.org/golf-tournament-2020/

TUESDAY, AUG. 11
7th Annual Ag World Golf Classic: 11 a.m. registration. Canyon Lakes Golf Course, 3700 W. Canyon Lakes Drive, Kennewick, Wash. The Ag World Golf Classic supports the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Inland Northwest. Contact: (509) 765-0698, www.agworldgolf.com/golf