

People & Places

Getting small farmers together

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Aba Kiser knows food comes from farmers. But she wants to go the next step and organize events to help them form communities and support one another.

Kiser is project manager of Washington State University's food systems program and coordinator of the Cascadia Grains conference, which supports small-scale grain farmers.

In her job organizing ag-related events, she helps farmers get together to share their experiences and expertise and, in the process, form communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a "wild time" to think about defining or expanding agricultural communities, she said.

"We've realized, with this constraint we all have, it's really a huge opportunity to be able to define your community however you want to," she said.

Kiser sees her role as giving people the space to share their expertise.

"I'm really interested in structures that are equitable, revelatory and the idea that the best idea can come from anywhere in the room, and it likely will,"

Kiser said.

"Aba is fearless in advocating for social equity and inclusiveness in agriculture, and tireless in her efforts to reach out to under-represented communities in the U.S. and across South America," said Kevin Murphy, WSU specialty crop breeder. "Aba has had, and will continue to have, a positive impact on marginalized farmers and communities who are not otherwise represented by established industries."

Equity, social justice and inclusion are Kiser's priorities when planning a conference or event, said Lane Selman, director of the Culinary Breeding Network in Oregon, which connects breeders, seed dealers, farmers and chefs.

"It's also really fun to work with her," Selman added. "She brings a lot of joy and honest interest in what she's doing. She believes in it, and it comes through."

Kiser grew up in Virginia, and when she was young she sang with a jazz group at her father's restaurant during brunch.

She uses her background as a musician, farmer, farmers market manager and food enthusi-



Courtesy of Aba Kiser

Aba Kiser is project manager of Washington State University's food systems program. Part of her job is organizing events to get small farmers together.

ast to help people connect and tell their stories.

"In some ways, my journey has always been connected to food," she said.

Kiser still performs as a musician. She appears under the name Abakis. She made an album, "I'm One, Too," and plays in a band — "me and whoever I can convince to play at the time."

She describes her music as "roots-y orchestral folk

pop, with a heartache for country swing and jazz."

But putting together meaningful events, both in-person and online, remains her priority.

"It's always been a focus of mine to create these events that bring together culture and food, that creates revelatory experiences for people, and allows them to connect and enjoy beautiful food, but with a

Western Innovator

ABA KISER
Age: 31
Title: Statewide Project Manager, Washington State University Food Systems Program; coordinator, Cascadia Grains Conference
Hometown: Fairfax, Va.
Current location: Chimaquam, Wash.
Family: Single
Education: Bachelor's degree in integrated media; attended Evergreen State College and University of Washington
Websites: <https://foodsystems.wsu.edu/>
<https://www.cascadia-grains.com/>
<http://www.abakismusic.com/>

context and understanding of where it comes from," she said.

Wilco awards grants to two Oregon FFA chapters

Crook County, Astoria FFA each receive \$4,000

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press



Sam Bugarsky

MT. ANGEL, Ore. — Wilco, a farmers' cooperative based in Mt. Angel, Ore., has awarded two, \$4,000 grants to a pair of Oregon FFA chapters to install new equipment and expand agricultural education programs.

The donations are part of Wilco's FFA Forever pro-

gram, which has surpassed more than \$1 million since it started.

Astoria FFA will use its \$4,000 grant to help purchase drip irrigation, benches and other supplies for a larger greenhouse.

Crook County FFA received \$4,000 to help install pod irrigation and cross fencing, adding two additional pastures for its land lab.

Sam Bugarsky, president and CEO of Wilco, said the co-op is committed to helping youth in agriculture thrive.

"We look forward to continued support of these youth programs as we partner with our vendors, customers, employees and farmer-owners to assure our future is bright," Bugarsky said in a statement.

As part of the FFA Forever program, Wilco earmarks more than \$125,000 annually to support the Oregon FFA Foundation. Of that total, \$25,000 goes

directly to benefit local FFA chapters.

Wilco also helped 11 Oregon county fairs pivot to virtual livestock auctions for FFA and 4-H members amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to providing \$2,000 for fees and expenses associated with hosting a virtual auction, Wilco members were active bidders, contributing to the purchases of more than 100 animals and helping to bump up prices.

"Many of our team members were in FFA and 4-H as kids, so we immediately recognized how disheartening

the situation was with fairs canceled," Bugarsky said. "We were happy to add the additional donations and be active in virtual auctions to add good things in tough times."

Finally, to help jumpstart youth projects in 2021, Wilco has also mailed out over \$150,000 in rebates for those with youth accounts in Oregon and Washington.

Established in 1967, Wilco today serves more than 500,000 customers and has more than 3,000 farmer members across the Pacific Northwest.



Courtesy of Valley Wide Cooperat

Carly Weaver of Valley Wide Cooperative, left, presents a \$10,000 check to Idaho FFA Foundation Executive Director Marcia Jedry and Programs Director Liz Wilder.

Co-ops donate \$10,000 to Idaho FFA Foundation

Valley Wide Cooperative, with grant partner Land O' Lakes, has donated \$10,000 to the Idaho FFA Foundation.

Funds will be used for items such as educational resources, digital platforms and programming, and scholarships. The two cooperatives contribute more than \$100,000 annually to local communities and organizations.

"We know and work in ag, equipment, energy and mechanics industries every day and see new generations coming to work and making a real difference," Valley Wide Cooperative CEO Dave Holtom said in a news release. "It's critical to support the education of up-and-coming farmers and industry leaders in any way we can; investing in their future is investing in the future of our co-op and ag industry."

Idaho FFA Foundation Executive Director Marcia Jedry thanked Nampa-based Valley Wide for its donation and detailed activities

the cooperative supports. "Great businesses always think about the future of the industry they work in," she said in the release.

"Valley Wide's donation, which will support Idaho FFA members' learning and growth, is an investment in future industry leaders. The foundation is grateful for the support of Valley Wide Cooperative, Valley Agromics and their family of companies for activities like (FFA) State Leadership Conference, agronomy career-development events at state and national levels, career-success tours, in-classroom participation, FFA adviser training, and so much more."

Valley Wide said agricultural education "prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural-resources systems" by providing opportunities ranging from education and career preparation to leadership development and personal growth.

Do you have the best farm dog? Tell us

By **SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN**
Capital Press



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press **A Maremma livestock guardian dog in a snow-covered sheep pasture.**

The Capital Press is looking for stories about farm dogs. If you think you've got the world's best farm dog, tell us why.

Maybe your dog protected your livestock from a coyote attack. Perhaps your dog does a great job herding sheep. It may have saved your life. Or maybe it's just a faithful friend that follows you around on the ranch every day.

If you've got a special farm dog, the Capital Press wants to know about it. You, and your dog, just might be featured in an

upcoming story.

What to do:

Write one short paragraph about your dog. Include the dog's name and breed and tell us why it's such a great

farm dog.

Send your paragraph to our reporter, Sierra Dawn McClain, at: smcclain@capitalpress.com. In the email subject line, write "Best Farm Dog."

Please include your full name, age, city and state in the email.

Deadline: Jan. 4, 2021, at 5 p.m. Pacific Standard Time

Who may enter: Anyone in California, Oregon, Washington or Idaho may participate. Individuals affiliated with Capital Press, including employees, interns and their household family members may not participate.

Tell us about your farm dog today.

Washington native crowned ag advocate

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

40 miles southeast of Seattle. Her parents, Michael and Sondjia Edwards, own Midnight Mountain Farm. Lundquist and her husband, Michael, currently live in Florida, where he's a technical adviser for a heavy equipment dealer.

Washington native Sondra Lundquist was crowned America's Miss Agribusiness at a pageant last month in Florida.

Lundquist, 33, won the Elegant Miss title, one of 11 age categories. She also won the title National AgVocate, a separate competition held the same day.

Reigning titleholders promote agriculture, make appearances and perform community service, according to the organization.

"I'll be a representative for the farmer," she said. "I will talk to farmers to understand their problems and how to fix them. ... I want to explain to people in (cities) where food comes from."

Lundquist grew up in Enumclaw, about



Sondra Lundquist

Lundquist said they plan to eventually return to Washington. "I love the snow. I'm not made for 100 degrees," she said.

Lundquist has won national horse-showing and pageant titles before. Miss Agribusiness was the first farm-related pageant she has entered.

Lundquist won the Florida Miss Elegant title and competed in a seven-woman field Nov. 22 in Crestview, Fla., for the national crown. About half the contestants were unable to attend because of coronavirus restrictions, she said.

CALENDAR

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

SUNDAY-WEDNESDAY JAN. 10-13

American Farm Bureau Annual Convention (virtual): The convention will focus on top issues including the impact of COVID-19, sustainability and the future of the supply

chain. Website: <https://www.fb.org>

THURSDAY, JAN. 14 Create a Plan for Your Land Workshop (virtual): Learn from experts about soil, water and wildlife conservation. Classes are geared toward small farms and rural properties, but anyone is welcome. We will provide technical assistance to complete conservation plans and potentially find funding for conservation projects on your land. Plan to

attend all four free sessions, which will be from 5 to 8 p.m.:

Jan. 14: Conservation planning — Soil.
Jan. 21: Water and vegetation.
Jan. 28: Streambanks and woodlands.
Feb. 4: Working lands — Putting it all together.
Contact: Marion Soil and Water Conservation District, 503-391-9927. Registration: <http://virtual-pfy.eventbrite.com>



Capital Press
EMPOWERING PRODUCERS OF FOOD & FIBER
Established 1928

Capital Press Managers

Joe Beach Editor & Publisher
Anne Long Advertising Manager
Carl Sampson Managing Editor
Jessica Boone Production Manager
Samantha McLaren Circulation Manager

Entire contents copyright © 2020
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.

To Reach Us

Circulation 800-781-3214
Email Circulation@capitalpress.com
Main line 503-364-4431

News Staff

Idaho

Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise

Brad Carlson 208-914-8264

Western Washington

Don Jenkins 360-722-6975

Eastern Washington

Matthew Weaver 509-688-9923

Oregon

George Plaven 406-560-1655
Mateusz Perkowski 800-882-6789
Sierra Dawn McClain 503-506-8011

Designer

Randy Wrinthouse 800-882-6789

To Place Classified Ads

Telephone (toll free) 800-882-6789
Online CapitalPress.com/classifieds

Subscriptions

Mail rates paid in advance
Easy Pay U.S. \$4 /month
(direct withdrawal from bank
or credit card account)

1 year U.S. \$55
2 years U.S. \$100
1 year Canada \$275
1 year other countries call for quote
1 year Internet only \$49.99
1 year 4-H, FFA students/teachers \$30
9 months 4-H, FFA students/teachers .. \$25

Visa and Mastercard accepted

To get information published

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.
Include a contact telephone number.

Letters to the Editor: Send your
comments on agriculture-related public
issues to opinions@capitalpress.com, or
mail your letter to "Opinion," c/o Capital
Press. Letters should be limited to
300 words. Deadline: Noon Monday.

Capital Press ag media

CapitalPress.com
FarmSeller.com
MarketPlace.capitalpress.com
facebook.com/CapitalPress
facebook.com/FarmSeller
twitter.com/CapitalPress
youtube.com/CapitalPressvideo

Index

Dairy 8
Markets 10
Opinion 6

Correction policy

Accuracy is important to Capital Press
staff and to our readers.

If you see a misstatement, omission or
factual error in a headline, story or photo
caption, please call the Capital Press news
department at 503-364-4431, or send
email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

We want to publish corrections
to set the record straight.