

People & Places

Digging for data helps farmers

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

MOSCOW, Idaho — Brenda Schroeder's work ranges from investigating a foreign grass pathogen that can kill livestock to determining the best soil for growing potatoes and how to most effectively cure onions.

"A theme to my work is trying to get knowledge into the hands of stakeholders about the biology of their systems," said the University of Idaho associate research professor of entomology, plant pathology and nematology. "And the biology of their system includes the pathogens, but also aspects of beneficials. If we can get that information into the hands of stakeholders, they can make educated and sound decisions based on data as opposed to supposition."



Brenda Schroeder



Kurtis Schroeder

Brenda Schroeder, in an on-farm laboratory, inoculates onion cultivars to determine different resistance responses to pathogens when onions are in storage.

genetic profiles to determine if they have the potential to produce the toxin.

The bacteria require a nematode to vector the pathogen from soil to plant. The team is working to determine if nematodes here could vector the Australian pathogen should it enter the U.S.

Schroeder said that knowledge could affect how a U.S.-bound shipment of grass seed or hay is handled if it is found to have the Australian pathogen.

"We are now focusing on nematode-bacterial association to try to quantify the native strains in association with their nematode vectors," she said. The nematode vectors will be studied in a

high-biosecurity lab in Maryland, which has a sample of the Australia strain.

Best potato soil

Schroeder is also working with a national group to investigate the micro-biome of potato soils. The four-year project is in its second year.

"The goal is to identify the biochemical and biological parameters of what healthy potato soil is for Idaho," she said. "We are just at the beginning of looking at what microbes are present in a healthy soil compared to a soil that is not as beneficial for potato production."

Data likely will show which organisms are present and at what densities in healthy potato soil.

The work could ultimately show soil productivity potential, pathogen risk "and beneficial organisms that we may not have known were present in the soil prior to this analysis," Schroeder said.

It also has the potential to show a producer which microbes could be added to help soil rebound after fumigation.

Curing onions

Another project focuses on onions.

Schroeder for years has been researching how to best protect onions from post-harvest bacterial diseases.

Growers' tools for riding onions of excess moisture include field curing, and adding air flow and heat after



**Western
Innovator**

**BRENDA
SCHROEDER**

Age: 53

Occupation: University of Idaho associate research professor, entomology, plant pathology and nematology. Member American Phytopathological Society.

Education: Ph.D., Washington State University; M.S., North Carolina State University; B.S., University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Home: Pullman, Wash.

Family: Husband Kurtis Schroeder, UI cropping systems agronomist and associate professor. Two children.

Hobbies: Family activities, skiing, camping, crocheting.

they're stored.

Ironically, some curing temperatures can alleviate problems with one pathogen and elevate the risk of damage from others, Schroeder said.

If the crop is at risk for bacterial problems, "then it is much better to cure onions at a lower temperature for a longer period of time than at a higher temperature for a short period of time" before they are stored, she said.

Oregon FFA elects new state officers for 2021-22

Team was installed virtually at state convention

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

Oregon FFA has elected a new slate of officers to lead the organization in 2021-22.

The six-member team was installed Thursday during the final session of the 93rd annual state convention, which was held virtually and livestreamed over Facebook.

Isabel D'Acquisto, of Central Point, was tabbed as Oregon FFA state president. She previously served as president and reporter for the Crater High School FFA chapter and is a member of the National Honor Society.

In her candidate application, D'Acquisto told the story of her horse, Sugar, and how the animal began going blind when she was 8. The solution: her family tied a bell around Sugar's pasture mate. Whenever the bell rang, it would help to guide

Katie Price,
sentinelKylie Baldwin,
reporterJ.W. Dippold,
treasurerJonwyn Ayres,
secretaryJustin Sharp,
vice presidentIsabel D'Acquisto,
president

her wherever she needed to go.

"(At) Oregon FFA, we are fortunate because, just like Sugar trusted her friend enough to follow the sound of the bell, we have friends holding bells all around us," D'Acquisto said. "These friends guide us when we can't see the next step, making us feel valuable even when we feel unworthy."

The rest of the 2021-22 Oregon FFA state officer team includes:

- Justin Sharp, of Fort Rock, vice president.
- Jonwyn Ayres, of Rogue River, secretary.
- J.W. Dippold, of Imbler, treasurer.
- Kylie Baldwin, of Redmond, reporter.
- Katie Price, of Sutherlin, sentinel.

Sharp has served as chapter president and vice president of North Lake FFA. He hosted his own podcast, "The Sharp Side of the World," interviewing policymakers such as Oregon U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz — marking his transformation from "being an awkward middle schooler who could barely carry a conversation with my teacher."

"Oregon FFA, together we will achieve that feeling of accomplishment, success and growth that I have had the privilege of experiencing," Sharp wrote in his candidate application. Together we will bounce back from 2020 in spectacular fashion."

Ayres, most recently the chapter president for Rogue River FFA, said agriculture has been a constant in her life for as long as she can remem-

ber. She now works at her family's livestock business, Ayres Pascalar Angus.

"I have always loved checking my cows late at night with a spotlight in hand, few hours of sleep, and my favorite muck boots," Ayres said. "As leaders, we are called to put our own needs behind the needs of others. Whether I'm caring for cows, or serving Oregon FFA, I remain committed to and strive for these ideals."

Dippold, chapter president for Imbler FFA and Eastern Oregon district secretary, said he jumped into FFA headfirst after visiting his school's agriculture building for the first time in seventh grade. "The FFA has given me memories that I will hold onto forever and some of the best friendships

I have ever known," he said.

Baldwin, who served as Redmond FFA vice president and Central Oregon district sentinel, reflected on an unusual 2020, stuck in online classes and seeing local fairs canceled.

"This is the low that is going to make the high so sweet," she said.

Price, chapter president for Sutherlin FFA and district president for Umpqua FFA, also served last year as a member of the American Boer Goat Association, Central Oregon Beekeepers Association and Oregon Farm Bureau. "Overcoming our uphill battles can become much easier as we do it together," Price said. "With peer support and influence, the mountains ahead are not as daunting."

Assuming coronavirus restrictions are lifted at Oregon schools, the FFA state officer team can expect to travel around the state next fall, visiting with students and leading workshops.

Oregon FFA has 112 local chapters and more than 11,000 members statewide.

Small farm thrives during pandemic

By ALIYA HALL
For the Capital Press

PORTLAND — Originally, Lil' Starts Urban Farm was strictly a plant nursery. It wasn't until Lily and Luke Klimaszewski got engaged and decided to grow all the food for their wedding that they began growing produce.

"We way over planted and by June we were swimming in produce," Lily Klimaszewski said, adding that they were already selling their plants at farmers markets and were able to sell the excess produce alongside them.

From there, the business blossomed.

Lil' Starts first began in 2013. The farm sells at farmers markets, through their Community Supported Agriculture program and directly to restaurants. They farm half an acre on their property and in 2018 expanded to 4.5 acres they lease at the Head-

waters Incubator Farm.

It wasn't until this year that the income from the farm completely supported them. Despite the challenges with the pandemic, Klimaszewski said that was proof that small scale agriculture is sustainable.

"Last year people needed something to do and wanted to get more connected to anything, but also where there food is coming from," she said. "Part of it is that with everything going on, people want to feel good about what's going on with their money, and supporting a small farm makes them feel good."

When they first started their CSA they had 12 members. Now they have sold out with 160 members.

Sustainability is an important aspect of Lil' Starts farm. They only use non-GMO seeds and both their plants and produce are

free of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. They make their own soil mix, and their compost is locally sourced.

"With all the changes in the world, in order to sleep well at night we need to know we're taking care of the earth in the best way we possibly can," Klimaszewski said.

Along with it being better for the environment, Klimaszewski said that, ironically, it's harder to run a small farm without sustainability being a keystone. She said they couldn't even find GMO seeds and aren't big enough to get an account at a farm supply store. Synthetic fertilizer was also more expensive than organic, she added.

"It's not a decision to make," she said before adding that she doesn't want to demean conventional farmers because everyone has their reasons for the way they farm.

CALENDAR

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 30

Practical Sensory Programs for Factories and Quality Managers (online): 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The Practical Sensory Program course is designed around a learn-and-apply model. Each participant will get a kit to have hands-on activities to reinforce the concepts learned. He or she will walk away with practical skills that can be applied immediately. The course fee is \$285/each individual. Contact: Catherine Cantley, 208-426-2181, catherinecantley@techhelp.org

**MARCH 30-APRIL 1
TUESDAY-THURSDAY**

International Mass Timber Conference (online): Benefit from 30-plus expert presentations in four tracks, with multiple sessions and keynotes that can help bring you more business today. Website: <https://masstimmerconference.com/>

TUESDAY-FRIDAY APRIL 6-9

Idaho FFA State Convention (online): This year's convention will be online. It is a four-day celebration of members' leadership, personal growth and career success. Details will be available online at www.idahoffa.org/

SATURDAY APRIL 10

101st Annual California Ram Sale: 9 a.m., 4500 S. Laspinia St., Tulare, Calif. The California Wool Growers Association will host the 101st Annual California Ram Sale on Saturday, April 10, at the International Agri-Center in Tulare, Calif. Ram sale information, including the sale catalog, schedule, lodging information and directions are available on the CWGA website at www.californiawoolgrowers.org To request a Ram Sale Catalog, contact the CWGA office at 916-444-8122 or info@woolgrowers.org

FRIDAY, APRIL 16

AgForestry Leadership Class 41 Graduation: 5 p.m. Red Lion Hotel, Wenatchee, Wash. Celebrate the graduation of AgForestry Leadership Class 41. This celebration was rescheduled from its origination April 10 date. Table sponsorships are available. Cost: \$60/adults, \$20/child. Website: <http://agforestry.org/graduation-class-41/>



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