

Women in Ag

Key part of the team

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

SILVER LAKE, Ore. — Cassie Pierson grew up helping on her family's Christmas tree farm and admits the work wasn't always easy.

That led to her not having the fondest memories about that activity and agriculture in general.

"I swore I would never marry a farmer, and then I did," she said.

Since marrying Scott Pierson in 1996 after the two met while students at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, Cassie has been a full-time farm and ranch wife and mother. She has moved handline irrigation pipes and driven a swather and a tractor pulling a baler in hay fields.

When the couple's two children, Jubal and Ella, were old enough, she helped them with their 4-H lambs.

Cassie Pierson, now 46, has no regrets about the lifestyle she married into. She



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Cassie Pierson says she has no regrets about the farm lifestyle she married into. She and her husband, Scott, own Pierson Agricultural Enterprises, a hay business based in the Silver Lake, Ore., area.

and Scott own Pierson Agricultural Enterprises, a hay business based in the Silver Lake area.

"I loved him," Cassie said of Scott. "I believed we could make it work, even though I didn't particularly like farming. I've grown into it (agricultural lifestyle), definitely. It's been a wonderful way to raise our children.

"One of the funniest

things for me is that I have ended up learning far more about how agriculture works through conversation and hands-on work than anything I learned in college," she added. "We go to conferences and ag programs and I can hold conversations with people. They ask me where I got my ag degree and I say, 'I didn't. I married a grass nerd.'"

Family is all about pickles

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

NOTI, Ore. — Holly and Matt Kurzhall have turned their desire to live and to raise their children in a rural setting into a business.

The family grows cucumbers and turns them into pickles. The entrepreneurial venture that became Kurzhall Family Kickin' Pickles is now in its 11th year on the family's property in the Noti area northwest of Eugene, Ore.

"We always wanted to live out in the country, to have chickens and a garden, but this has grown into a lot more responsibility," Holly Kurzhall said.

If only Grandma Jean Kurzhall was around to see the success that started with her garlic dill pickle recipe.

In the beginning, Jean's son Mark took over the pickle canning.

Then Matt and Holly continued the tradition. They used a combination of Jean's and Mark's recipes and stuffed 60 quart jars with "kickin' pickles,"



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Holly Kurzhall says that the growth of the Kurzhall Family Kickin' Pickle business has helped her become more outgoing. The business, now in its 11th year, specializes in making pickles, but has also expanded into other products such as the Bloody Mary mix that Kurzhall is holding.

so named because jalapeno and red chili flakes are ingredients.

Friends loved the flavor and texture and encouraged the couple to go into business and sell the pickles.

In 2011, 250 quart jars of pickles were canned, and all of them sold at

the Veneta Farmers Market before Christmas. The couple decided it was time to turn their passion into a business. They attended the acidified foods class at Oregon State University and began filling out the USDA and Oregon Department of Agriculture paperwork to establish the business.

Celebrating hop history

By GAIL OBERST
For the Capital Press

INDEPENDENCE, Ore. — It's fitting that Natascha Adams, a former hop farm worker, has been enlisted to manage Independence's revised Heritage Museum.

The new museum building at the corner of Second and C streets opened in April, replacing the old museum established in 1976 a few blocks away.

Both featured the city's hop and agriculture history, which is what brought Adams to Independence, the self-proclaimed Hop Capital of the World.

In 2011, Adams went to work for a hop farm, immersing herself in hops and living on the farm.

"That was where my love for hop history was born, and grew," she said. "I loved working on a hop farm. Drinking beer with the farmers, you learn a lot, fast."



Gail Oberst/For the Capital Press

Natascha Adams talks about the diversity of hop workers featured in displays at the new Heritage Museum, which she manages.

In the 11 years since, she's remained in Independence. When the job came up to set up and manage the new city museum, Adams jumped at it.

Adams' broad look at Independence's history reflects her education and her personal background. Unlike the old museum the new one displays the import-

ant part immigrants played in building the hop industry. An immigrant herself, born in Germany to British parents, Adams became a U.S. citizen five years ago. Adams finally tired of renewing her green card since she had moved to the U.S. with her family at nine years old. "I wanted to be able to vote," she said.

Working to breed a better blueberry

By BRENNA WIEGAND
For the Capital Press

SILVERTON, Ore. — Growing up in Southern Oregon, Brooke Getty wasn't involved in agriculture but developed a strong appreciation for the impressive fruits, vegetables and livestock grown in the region.

In March Getty accepted a position as assistant plant breeder at Oregon Blueberry Farms & Nursery near Silverton, Ore., which produces nursery stock, farms blueberries and conducts its own breeding program.

Getty assists head breeder Adam Wagner in all aspects of field, lab and greenhouse experimentation in support of the blueberry breeding program.

"...And yes, I eat a lot of blueberries," she said.

"I've always had a strong affinity toward plants vs. animals so when I started my associate degree at Lane



Brenna Wiegand/For the Capital Press

Brooke Getty serves as the assistant plant breeder for Oregon Blueberry Farms & Nursery. Its genetics program focuses on developing new blueberry cultivars for fruit quality, flavor and aroma.

Community College, I was excited to take my first botany class," Getty said. "I started volunteering at community gardens, completed the master gardener program and got a job at Gray's Garden Center in Eugene. These experiences were early resume builders and helped me figure out the area of agriculture that would

be the best fit for me." From Lane Community College, Getty transferred directly into the horticulture program at Oregon State University and earned a bachelor's degree in horticulture. Early on, she got a job with Oregon State's aroma hops breeding program working for Shaun Townsend.

An advocate for agriculture

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

ROSEBURG, Ore. — Elin Miller is an advocate for agriculture.

She likes working in the hazelnut orchard, the wine-grape vineyard and her large garden, but she spends just as many hours, if not more, speaking up in support of the agricultural community and industry.

"We need to educate people about what agriculture needs in order to produce food for the world," Miller said. "We need to spend time with people who have different opinions than we do. We need to provide them with some context on why we are approaching things the way we are in agriculture. It needs to come from us."

She and her husband, Bill Miller, are owners of Umpqua Nut Farm, a 38-acre



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Elin Miller is a partner in Umpqua Vineyards, a 60-acre vineyard in the Umpqua, Ore., area and is the chairperson for the Oregon Wine Council. She's been an advocate for agriculture since her high school days in Arizona as a FFA student.

hazelnut orchard, and are partners in Umpqua Vineyards, a 60-acre vineyard of mostly Pinot noir grapes.

While the couple spend time together on those properties, Bill Miller is supportive of the time his wife spends on commissions,

boards and committees representing agriculture.

"I am so glad and proud that she is doing what she is doing for the ag industry," he said. "It's something I wouldn't have the capacity to do so I'm so proud she can do it and will do it."

Mobile butchering business a family affair

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS
For the Capital Press

HOMEDALE, Idaho — Kortney Bahem and her husband, Daniel Lousignont, own and operate L&L Meats LLC, a mobile butchering business in Homedale, Idaho.

Kortney grew up on a farm near Homedale and attended community college in Casper, Wyo., on a livestock judging scholarship.

"I transferred to Colorado State University to finish my bachelor's degree, and was on their judging teams for livestock and horses. I grew up with livestock and horses; they paid for my schooling," Kortney said.

She has two degrees, in animal science and equine science.

"I also have a meat science minor and worked in the meat science lab at



Courtesy of Kortney Bahem

Kortney Bahem at work.

CSU," she said.

Immediately after graduation, she worked for a meat company in Colorado.

"It was an office job, however, in the big city of Denver. So I moved home. I wanted to do more hands-on, on the processing," Kortney said. "My dad had Daniel process a beef for them

prior to my moving home, and told me I should talk to the new butcher because he might need some help!

"When I moved back home, I met Daniel when he hired me to help in the butcher shop. The shop was started by Daniel's father, and Daniel reopened it here in 2014," said Kortney.

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