# It's All About The Ice

*A discussion with OCF's new general manager Tom Gannon*

TOM GANNON

Looking back over his first year as general manager (GM) for the Oregon Country Fair, Tom Gannon says the thing that's surprised him the most is "how incredibly important ice is."

It might sound strange, but realize that the frosty lemonade you're enjoying, or that tasty burrito with extra sour cream, or your gluten-free hemp seed salad with extra hemp seeds, were all made off the grid. No one operating a food booth has a fridge to plug in — there are no plugs.

In a sense, OCF operates like a mammoth-sized campground, yet routinely dazzles all manner of health inspectors who patrol the loops the entire Fair weekend.

So, from food booths to medical tents, ice is king. The OCF lays in its supply in January and distribution is critical.

"No ice, no fair," Gannon says with a chuckle.

I'm speaking with Gannon in the upstairs offices at the Oregon Country Fair's Lawrence Street headquarters.

We're surrounded by 40 years of history: photos, posters, knickknacks, mementos, a small sampling from the cultural institution that has put a sleepy oak grove west of Eugene on the worldwide map.

This year, Gannon took the helm from Charlie Ruff, who had held his spot as Fair GM for years.

A friendly, burly guy, Gannon has colorful full-sleeve tattoos, bright eyes and speaks with the warm, competent cadence of someone who's seen it all before.

"This is my first main camp as the solo GM," Gannon says.

"We're in good shape financially," Gannon says. "But we have virtually a whole new staff — a new GM, a new assistant GM, new site manager, new caretaker."

(This was the last day in early June, before the crew — admin included — moved on site full time, to clean, mow, water and rebuild the Fair in anticipation of its July 8 opening.)

"There's been a lot of turnover and that has certainly been a challenge, but all these fresh eyes present opportunities to increase our institutional knowledge, too," Gannon says.

"My job is to create the framework so the people who can actually run the Fair — like that all-important ice crew — can do it," he says.

Remember, few get paid to do this work. Besides a skeleton crew of full-time staff, the OCF relies almost entirely on its army of volunteers to pull off its massive party in the woods.

"I've always been interested in city management," Gannon says. "And this is like an ephemeral city, with crew leaders, like the water crew, recycling, childcare, kind of acting as a zoning board. And then there are social groups, like the Community Village, that kind of serve as the nonprofits within the city."

Gannon hails from Seattle, where he managed commercial recycling and composting, including outreach and volunteer programs. He and his wife have two children, ages 4 and 8.

Looking back on the work he's accomplished this year, besides gearing up for thousands of visitors, Gannon says he's been glad to collaborate with local officials from Elmira and Veneta, OCF neighbors, to help facilitate positive change. "We were able to get state funding for a path along Territorial Highway to be built that connects Veneta and Elmira with a non-motorized path," he says.

Gannon says he meets regularly with the mayors and city managers of Veneta and Elmira to discuss mutual issues.

And he reports to the OCF board of directors, who not only wield an approximately $2 million annual budget, gifting a portion of that out each year to the local community, but are also stewards the vision for the future of the OCF. With Gannon's support, the board is entrusted with making decisions to stay the course in perpetuity.

Gannon may be a relative newcomer, but he's clearly proud of what the Fair represents. "If you think you know what the Oregon Country Fair is all about, prepare to be surprised," Gannon says. "We're open to however it is you want to present yourself." — *Rachael Carnes*

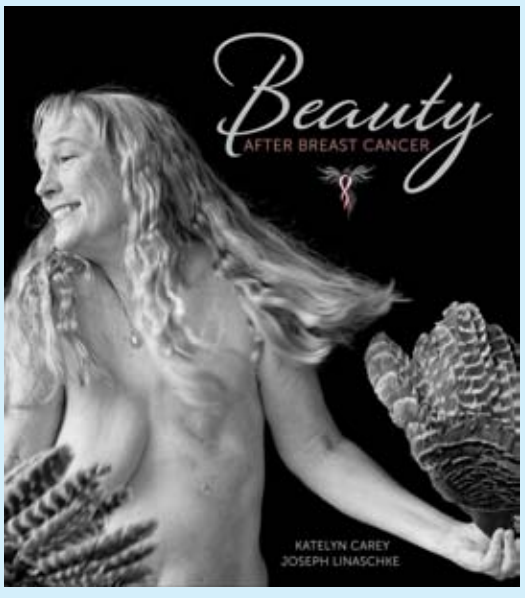
# Beauty and the Breasts

The forecast for Oregon Country Fair includes a definite chance of breasts — different shapes, sizes and protruding from bodies of all kinds.

This year, however, we're getting down to business about boobs. Katelyn Carey, author of the recently published *Beauty After Breast Cancer*, is giving a talk about this increasingly common milestone for women.

Carey has been working on changing the dialogue about breast cancer for the past three years by creating a "coffee-table" book that isn't overloaded with daunting medical terms and horrifying photos. Au contraire, the 38 folks in her 178-page book show off their newly sculpted bods and share their stories in ways that makes the experience more palpable — enjoyable, even.

Carey is no comedian, but she clearly has a sense of humor when it comes to breast cancer. And why not? Since one in eight women are reported to get breast cancer in their lifetime, Carey says everyone knows someone who goes through the journey. What isn't as common, though, is greeting the news with optimism. "This isn't going to be a scary talk," she says. "This is going to be a fun talk."




Usually breast cancer is met with fear, but Carey is actively trying to change the tools and resources for folks who receive the big news. "A new resource needed to exist for women," she says.

That resource is hope. By discussing and humanizing breast cancer, Carey aims to give people an easier go of things when facing a big life change like a mastectomy, or even just trying to stay calm during a routine mammogram.

Catch Carey's talk, "Change the World (A Story About Boobs)," 3 pm Saturday, July 9, at Rabbit Hole stage and 12:30 pm Sunday, July 10, at Front Porch stage. For more details about her work, visit beautyafterbreastcancer.com. — *Kelsey Anne Rankin*