



Melody Cowan helps calves reach the feeder in the weaning barn.

JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Dairy: ‘Baby calves are my thing’

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ee April Zorich stirred total mixed ration, a mixture of essential nutrients, to help feed the approximately 500 calves, which Melody said can take about 5,000 pounds of milk and rations a day to feed.

“Baby calves are my thing,” said Melody, who comes from a dairy farming family in Ridgefield, Wash., while her husband’s family farmed near Cathlamet.

The Cowans’ dairy cows, predisposed to grazing, are sought after across Canada and the U.S., especially in Missouri, where Brad said many New Zealanders have set up seasonal pasture dairy farms. This spring, they started raising Wagys, prized for their use in Kobe beef.

Brad said the family can sell about 200 calves and cows a year. This year they held on to many, populating Green-Gold Dairy, a 250-acre confinement dairy that went under financially and stood vacant for a year before the Cowans purchased it in October and started setting up operations there.

The family is constantly improving the genetics of their herd, a specialty of son Julian. All of the best cows get inseminated, he said, and the best of the best get their embryos taken out and put into other cows.

Growing in Astoria

The beginning of their major expansion, Brad said, came with the installation of their rotating milking parlor, shipped from New Zealand and commissioned in 2004. Cows, bribed in with some feed, walk into one of 50 slots, are hooked up for milking and take a spin while eating.

By the time the parlor came in, the dairy had increased to about 700 cows. Under their most recently Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) permit, meant to ensure manure does not pollute surface and groundwater, the Cowans are allowed up to 1,400 mature animals.

The permit is a technicali-



Running Cowan Dairy are, from left, Nathaniel, Marika, Brad, Melody and Julian Cowan.

EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian



Desi Velasco holds up a calf he found during a search of the covered area used for calving at the Cowan Dairy.

JOSHUA BESSEX
The Daily Astorian

ty, Brad said. The family has no plans of going to 1,400 mature cows, instead looking to create a more sustainable grazing operation between Astoria and Nehalem with longer lifespans and fewer young cows.

Brad and Melody still technically own Cowan Dairy in Astoria. GreenGold is jointly owned by them and their children.

“We’ll always be involved,” said Brad, 56, about their succession planning. “The kids will be taking it over as they get older.”

The Cowans’ oldest child, Aleia, 32, is a nurse in Portland, but the other three appear interested in being career dairy farmers.

Brad has been busy setting up the operation in Green-

Gold. His oldest son Nathaniel, 31, has been largely managing the Astoria farm in his absence, along with Marika, 26, who helps Melody with payroll, milks and can speak Spanish.

Melody said she didn’t fully realize how much of a help her kids are until recently, when she thought she would lose Julian, 29, to late-stage lung cancer.

He’s returning to work after having a successful surgery. By Jan. 30, Melody said, she had finished her own chemotherapy treatments and rid herself of breast cancer just in time to start calving.

“The work we do, and the hours we put in,” she said, struggling to hold back tears, “I’m really happy I can do it with my kids.”



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

From left, Chris Holen, a culinary teacher at Seaside High School, Marvin Avilaz, an adviser with HICcup, and Esther Dyson, founder of HICcup, visited The Daily Astorian newsroom Monday.

Wellville: The challenge is to find healthy food students will actually eat

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lunches, are something the Way to Wellville could help accelerate through connections with interested investors around the world.

“What we are trying to do is support local players in doing things like this,” Dyson said.

Any idea to improve health in Clatsop County will first need to be vetted by local groups, including a recently formed Way to Wellville Strategic Advisory Council, which includes stakeholders in business, social services and education.

The Strategic Advisory Council will take local ideas and match them with interested investors through the help of Way to Wellville.

All ideas that work or fail will be shared among the other four Wellville communities.

Improving school lunches is definitely on the list of possible projects Way to Wellville could assist, according to organizers.

No plans have been set yet and possible ideas are still forming for the five-year challenge, Way to Wellville spokeswoman Patti Atkins said. Atkins understands the Wellville communities are getting anxious, but plans are in the early stages.

“Right now it’s so uncomfortable because we are still figuring out what we want to do,” Atkins said.

At Seaside High School Monday, Dyson sat with students, met with the school’s head cook, its food supplier Chartwells and culinary teacher

Chris Holen, who owns Baked Alaska in Astoria.

Dyson discovered only 98 students out of about 475 stayed on campus for the school lunch, which was pizza or nachos. Many students crossed the street to fast food restaurants and convenience stores.

The challenge, which has been attempted with other initiatives, is to find healthy food students will actually eat, Dyson said. Logistics and cost are larger hurdles to improving the lunches.

“It’s complicated. If it were easy, people would have done it,” Dyson said.

Dyson spent Monday in Clatsop County prior to speaking in Portland Tuesday night at the Linus Pauling Memorial Lecture, which covers topics in science, technology and society.

Along with visiting Seaside High School, Dyson also toured Tongue Point Job Corps Monday.

Dyson, who visited Clatsop County in January for a kickoff event, said she is encouraged with the foundation of programs and groups in the community that revolve around health.

She describes Way to Wellville’s role with an analogy of a group helping a business, not acting as the owner of the business.

Way to Wellville will assist where it can, but it will be up to the locals to achieve a healthier community.

“If it happens without us, that would be great, too,” Dyson said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Baxter Family Medicine joins CMH Primary Clinic April 20, 2015

Kevin Baxter, DO, and Jan Monroe, FNP, are pleased to be joining the CMH Primary Care Clinic team. They will begin seeing patients at the clinic in Warrenton at 1639 SE Ensign Lane, Suite B103, on April 20.

This change allows Kevin Baxter, DO, and Jan Monroe, FNP, to focus on caring for their patients instead of running a business. Their patients will enjoy the same care and services that they have previously. For more information or to make an appointment, call 503-338-4500.



Columbia Memorial Hospital would like to welcome Dr. PJ Hayner back to Astoria! Dr. Hayner, who specializes in internal medicine, has opened a new primary care clinic, Renaissance Health, at 1406 Marine Drive, Astoria.

Dr. Hayner previously practiced in Astoria from 2003-2010. Then he and his wife have worked and lived in California for five years, but the Columbia-Pacific region stayed in their hearts. We are happy he chose to return to Astoria.

At Renaissance Health, Dr. Hayner cares for adult patients with a focus on preventative care. To contact Renaissance Health, call 503-325-0505.



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