

Portland's Zenger farm bridges urban, rural divide

By ERIC MORTENSON
EO Media Group

PORTLAND — Zenger Farm, which operates at the edge of one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, opened the doors June 22 on a facility intended to train the next generation of farmers, consumers and food entrepreneurs.

The Urban Grange, built with \$2.3 million in donations, has 6,600 square feet of classroom, office and meeting space. A commercial kitchen is available for start-up food businesses and community events.

The Grange — the name was used with permission from the national Grange — is part community center, part conduit to proper nutrition and a vibrant local food system.

Through camps for children, school visits, adult classes and presentations, families learn where food comes from, how to grow it and how to prepare it, Executive Director Mike Wenrick said.

Rural residents who grow up in agricultural settings already understand farming, Wenrick said. But he asked a group of children recently where eggs come from and one boy answered, "A carton."

"It might be a novelty to see the reaction children have to pulling a carrot out of the ground," Wenrick said.

"In an urban environment, a lot of the (food system) education rural children get is not happening," said Laleña Dolby, Zenger's communications director.

Zenger's programs help them value the farming lifestyle and farmers as well, Dolby said. That can pay off when they're adults and decide issues that affect agriculture.

"That urban piece is what makes us unique," she said.

About 10,000 people visit the farm annually, and Wenrick expects that to double now that the Grange is up and operating.

Zenger Farm has emerged over the years as a bridge between urban and rural. The 16-acre property is owned by the city of Portland and operated by the non-profit Friends of Zenger Farm.

The farm founded and supports the Lents International Farmers Market, which serves low-income neighborhoods in outer Southeast Portland. Crops grown on the property go to the market, to a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, and to restaurants.

The farm trains a handful of interns each year, people who want to be farmers but don't know how to go about it. Chil-



A boy attending camp at Zenger Farm in Southeast Portland holds a chicken for the first time. The farm, owned by the city, offers classes, camps and tours, and trains new farmers.



Photos by ERIC MORTENSON — EO Media Group
ABOVE: With the opening of the Urban Grange, Portland's Zenger Farm added 6,600 square feet of classroom, kitchen, community meeting and office space. The farm trains new farmers and teaches people how to raise and prepare food. LEFT: Executive Director Mike Wenrick and Communications Director Laleña Dolby cut up veggies for lunch in the new commercial kitchen at Zenger Farm in Southeast Portland. The kitchen is part of a 6,600 square foot addition at the farm, which trains new farmers and offers camps, classes and tours.

dren attending camps get to pet chickens, plant, care, harvest and prepare vegetables and enjoy fruit trees and berry bushes.

The farm has a relationship with the David Douglas School District, and fifth graders visit several times a year as part of their science curriculum. A wetlands on the property provides additional learning experiences.

Donations for the Urban

Grange construction came from some of the Portland area's best known organizations.

Portland Development Commission gave \$300,000. Providing \$100,000 to \$299,000 were Bob's Red Mill, M.J. Murdock Memorial Trust, Meyer Memorial Trust, New Seasons Market, the city of Portland, the Collins Foundation, East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation

District and an anonymous donor.

Ilwaco: Fireworks show still on

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was passed, approved and published. Under city guidelines, for the ordinance to be considered published, a notice had to go into the Chinook Observer, which publishes Wednesdays. In that scenario, the ordinance would not have been official until after the holiday.

At today's "special emergency" meeting, the city passed the ordinance. Under the ordinance, Williams is able to declare when the ban is in place and when it is lifted, this year and in the future.

Ilwaco will still hold its annual fireworks display at the Port of Ilwaco at dusk Friday.

South Bend acts

South Bend also declared a fireworks ban. It has had an ordinance in place since December 2005, allowing the fire and police chiefs to declare a fireworks ban at their discretion. Unlike the city of Ilwaco, officials in South Bend simply had to announce that a ban was now in effect for this year's Fourth of July holiday.

In a June 23 letter, South Bend Fire Chief Alan Ashley and Police Chief David Eastham wrote the upcoming Fourth of July weekend "is expected to be one of the driest in recent history" and asked city residents to use extreme caution.

Burn ban in place

A countywide limited burn ban is already in place, and, as of Friday, campfires are prohibited until further notice in all state parks and ocean beaches in the Seashore Conservation Area, which extends along most of Washington's outer coastline and includes the areas between Cape

Disappointment and Leadbetter Point. Under this ban, no charcoal or wood fires are allowed, even in state parks-designated fire rings. Gas and propane may be used, but only for cookstoves.

Fireworks of any kind are never allowed on state parks property.

On average, Ilwaco sees roughly two inches of rain in June, said Ilwaco City Councilor Gary Forner, who has been tracking rainfall and weather in the city for more than a decade. This June, Ilwaco had only a quarter of an inch of rain, he said.

"So you can see we're pretty dry," he said at the special meeting Friday.

Adding penalties

Citizens in attendance worried about the city's ability to enforce the ordinance when a ban is in effect. Ilwaco does not have its own police department and relies on the city of Long Beach's police department.

"Who is going to enforce it and how are they going to enforce it? Or is this just another law that no one enforces?" Ann Saari asked.

After some discussion and additional feedback from the six attendees, the council decided to add enforcement provisions from the existing city code to the ordinance. City code chapter 8.18, sections 60, 70, 80 and 90 outline what sort of actions police can take to deal with people who break the ordinance, how much those people can be fined and what the civil penalties and process look like.

Under the ordinance, anyone caught discharging, firing or throwing an exploding or burning device, including legal aerial and projectile fireworks, could face a fine of up to \$250. Fireworks that

don't travel or explode can still be used, including fireworks like sparklers and smoke bombs.

In South Bend, people caught using aerial devices such as paper lanterns and parachutes, or projectile fireworks, such as rockets and mortars, are subject to a \$1,000 fine.

Under state law, fireworks can only be shot off between June 28 to July 5 and from 6 p.m. New Year's Eve, Dec. 31 to 1 a.m. Jan. 1.

Saari commented that she would like to see Ilwaco pass a permanent ban on private fireworks. The loud noises caused by private fireworks exploding intermittently at all hours of the day can be troubling to people dealing with trauma, as well as being particularly distressing to pets, she said, adding the city's official fireworks "should be our celebration."

There are numerous safety concerns, too, she said. After one Fourth of July holiday, she said she found an exploded bottle rocket on her wooden deck; a friend found one on her roof. It was a wetter year that year, so nothing burned, she said. "This year it very well could."

"It's a small step, but it's headed in the right direction," said Forner about the ordinance and the ban. Ilwaco is a unique among the Long Beach Peninsula cities, in that it has many steep hills covered in trees and brush, he explained. If a spark escaped or a lit firework landed in the hills, it could easily trigger a large fire.

Those in attendance pointed out that fireworks are being sold right up the road in Long Beach where no fireworks ban has yet been contemplated.

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