



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

143rd YEAR, No. 56

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

ONE DOLLAR

DIRT TO DELICIOUS



Teresa Retzlaff, of 46 North Farm, speaks during the Columbia Forum Tuesday. Retzlaff addressed the changes that have taken place to help small farming operations, as well ways to encourage local farming.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Olney farmer Teresa Retzlaff describes her work in the industry

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

Teresa Retzlaff, the self-taught farmer who co-owns 46 North Farm in Olney with her husband, Packy Coleman, is glad she didn't read the Clatsop County comprehensive plan's section on agricultural lands before deciding to found a farm in the area.

If she had, she may never have started.

The opening sentence of Goal No. 3, written in 1980, sounds all but designed to discourage their line of work: "Farming in Clatsop

County has declined in the last 15-30 years and the future does not look particularly bright."

But this isn't 1980 anymore, and the future of small-scale farming on the North Coast and southern coast of Washington can be what community members make of it.

That was the message of Retzlaff's talk, "From Dirt to Dinner: A Future for Local Food in the Lower Columbia-Pacific Region," held Tuesday evening at Columbia Memorial Hospital's Community Center.

The event, which drew about 50 attendees, kicked off the 26th Columbia Forum season and began, fittingly, with a shared meal that

included lingcod, grilled chicken, pickled beet and kale salad, and shortcake — all prepared with locally grown ingredients by Chef Chris Holen, owner of Baked Alaska.

'We need more farms'

Though the number of farms in Clatsop County is steadily dropping — from 229 in 2007 to 199 in 2012, according to census data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture — the number of regional farmers markets is rising, as are the resources to establish new farms and help existing ones be more successful, said Retzlaff, coordinator of the North Coast Food Web.

"Local food is not something that's crazy. It's not a bunch of

crazy hippies doing whatever," she said. "(These are) viable practical businesses feeding people in their communities, and it's pretty exciting."

The barriers to agriculture on the Oregon Coast are not technical but attitudinal, often based on defeatist assumptions like those expressed in the county comprehensive plan, she said.

Many of the regional farmers markets — the River People Farmers Market in Astoria, the Columbia-Pacific Farmers Market in Long Beach, and markets in Seaside, Cannon Beach, Manzanita and elsewhere — are often scrambling for vendors.

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Picking up the Posse pieces

Kerfuffle with sheriff over Posse funds, property draws to close

By KYLE SPURR
The Daily Astorian

A dustup involving a prison costume with plastic ball and chain, mylar balloons and a Rubbermaid dump cart is resolved between the Clatsop County sheriff and the former Sheriff's Office Posse, a group of horseback riders who assisted in search and rescue and crowd control.

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners and Oregon Department of Justice recently helped settle the strange dispute.

The conflict stems from Sheriff Tom Bergin's decision to disband the posse in 2012. He said dissolving the group was necessary due to infighting between the dozen members, who were poorly representing the sheriff's office.

"I'm not going to put up with a small fraction of individuals that were causing other individuals to not want to be a part of the posse," Bergin said. "It was best it was dismantled under the wing of the sheriff's office and

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Munched mammals signal sharks on the prowl

Human attacks are rare, but swimming not recommended

By KATIE WILSON
EO Media Group

In at least one telling of the story, a local surfer is out looking for waves in the ocean off Fort Stevens State Park around this same time several years ago.

He's resting on his board when he feels a massive jolt. He looks back. A chunk of his board, a bit of tail and fin, is missing. He glances to the side just in time to see a large great white shark roll by him. It seems to look at him — he can see one dark eye. And then it's gone.

Stories about large sharks like great whites travel faster than the sharks themselves. Though NOAA identifies great whites as "the top shark species implicated in unprovoked fatal attacks throughout the world," encounters with them by humans are rare. Especially out here.

In recent weeks, however, four sea animals have been found dead from large shark bites on Clatsop County beaches.

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Fighting hunger: Waste not, want not

Farmers, nonprofits redirect leftover food to help needy

By ZANE SPARLING
Capital Press

BROOKS — Elise Bauman wants to work herself out of a job.

The executive director of Salem Harvest, a gleaners organization that picks surplus crops following harvest, believes hunger can be defeated across America if only food didn't go to waste.

"I'm a firm believer that, if we ate everything that was grown or already in the food system, we would have no hunger in the U.S.," she said.

When that happens, she won't need to get up early, as she did on a

recent Saturday in Brooks, to coordinate a corps of volunteers picking blueberries.

Entire families of gleaners were working. Bauman schooled the younger members on what she called the "tickle method" of blueberry harvesting: hands cupped, thumbs out, gently rolling the blueberries off the stem.

The gleaners could keep up to 50 percent of what they collected; the nonprofit donated the other half to the area food bank, Marion-Polk Food Share, something Bauman stresses with the children.

"It's amazing to see the difference in kids' eyes," she said. "Suddenly they're like, 'Let's go pick more. I want to donate all my blueberries.'"

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Courtesy of Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Food Bank employee Mark Bigley spends five days a week collecting food donations from Portland area retailers.

