

Fondren: Ultimate goal is to support himself and son while self-employed

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a teenager. He worked as a shop hand around Clatskanie and started learning construction, welding and mechanical work. He farmed potatoes and helped other people start their crops.

"Farming is what drove me to be a blacksmith, because I was a pretty proficient welder," he said. "My tractor bucket became more welds than bucket, and I realized I needed to learn how to make tools."

Fondren met the late Dave Curl, a locally famous blacksmith, at Fort George Brewery and mentioned his do-it-yourself lessons beating up railroad spikes. Curl eventually took Fondren on as an apprentice.

"He was the first guy to put a hammer in my hand and show me what to do with it," Fondren said.

Fondren recently held a fundraiser for DeWitt Brazelton, another local blacksmith and mentor who is recovering from partial paralysis. Fondren credits Brazelton with helping him during hard times

and providing much of the equipment he's used to start Lonely Crow Forge.

Fondren is busy building Lonely Crow's visibility and his inventory of fire pokers, bottle openers, pendants, knives, hatchets, custom orders and other products. He sells his work online, at markets and at Terra Stones in downtown Astoria. He will be a featured pop-up artist at Vintage Hardware in January.

To support his blacksmithing, Fondren recently started Dave's Dump Service, using his truck to haul away or move people's stuff. He is also setting up Pacific Northwest Pressure Washing. His ultimate goal, he said, is to be able to support himself and his son while remaining self-employed.

"I'm trying to start up some businesses I think the area needs, unfilled markets, niches I guess," he said. "The whole town could use a good pressure washing. Driving around day to day, I see people with stuff that they could probably use hauled off. Anything to help the community."

Caring: Personal care aide industry expected to grow

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lower-income residents such as Boothe.

Tillamook County only has state-provided caregivers. The advantage of an agency like Caring for the Coast is the company vets and monitors caregivers, whereas people using a state list must do it themselves, Siegmann said.

"If you're a family member wanting to make sure your loved one is taken care of, you're pretty much out of the loop, unless that state caregiver is willing to be on the phone with you and spend their time bringing you up to speed," he said.

Caring for the Coast's caregivers are managed by a small administrative staff out of the Allen Building, in charge of hiring caregivers while matching their availability and personalities with people's needs.

"Once you have a surplus of clients, you need more caregivers, so it's perpetual," said Britaney Brim, an assistant administrator with the company.

In-home caregivers are among the lower-paid professions in the labor market, with fewer education requirements and an average wage of \$12.95 in northwest Oregon, accord-



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Caring for the Coast, based in the Allen Building in downtown Astoria, is run by Assistant Administrator Britaney Brim, owner Adrian 'AJ' Siegmann, Scheduling Manager Cindy Rummell and Office Coordinator Melanie Schneider. Not pictured is Vice President Sarah Rice.

ing to the state Employment Department. Siegmann said he tries to keep wages higher and provide more hours to attract and keep good caregivers, often paying between \$14.50 and \$15 an hour.

Caring for Oregon

Siegmann and his wife moved to Portland in 2014 to be closer to rehabilitation resources for their seven adopted foster children.

The business in Astoria kept running smoothly, and two years later, he opened Caring for Portland, the second iteration of his in-home care agency. By 2020, Siegmann hopes to open Caring for the Cascades, based in Bend and serving central Oregon.

The personal care aide industry is expected to grow by 25 percent statewide over the next decade to more than 26,800 workers, according to the Employment Depart-

ment. That includes a 16 percent increase in north-west Oregon, a 25 percent increase in the Portland metro area and a 30 percent increase in central Oregon.

"I've always taken the approach that we're not going to grow faster than we can find good people to grow the business," Siegmann said. "We're not just going to send anybody to your mom or dad's house to take care of them."

DNA: Innocence Project has helped exonerate 362 people through DNA testing since 1989

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Richardson and the Innocence Project, an organization that seeks to overturn convictions based on DNA evidence, took to the Capitol to argue that the state law makes it impossible to get DNA testing that could exonerate the wrongfully convicted.

"You have to show you are actually innocent before you can get testing, which is a Catch-22, because the entire point of getting testing is to use that to prove you're innocent," Feldman said.

Richardson and Feldman were joined by state Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, and state Rep. Carla Piluso, D-Gresham. Thatcher left her committee seat to join Piluso, a former police chief, as witnesses to testify about the importance of amending the law.

"I wouldn't be surprised if this bill got a supermajority on both sides of the isle and in both chambers," Thatcher said.

Exonerated

Since 1989, the Innocence Project has worked to exonerate 362 people nationwide through DNA testing. Those innocent people spent an average of 14 years and a combined 5,013 years in prison. Feldman said people have been exonerated in 37 states. Oregon has had 13 people exonerated, mostly on the basis of false accusations, but never due to new DNA testing.

Since 2001, 31 convicts have requested new DNA testing. Feldman testified that only three people have won a court order granting such testing, twice with the agreement of prosecutors.

Richardson was convicted in part because an expert said his teeth matched a bite mark on the victim. A swab of DNA tested during the trial phase did not show Richardson's DNA, but was ruled tainted and inadmissible. After being convicted, Richardson fought for years and eventually was able to have another swab tested,

which showed samples of two other men. It led to Richardson being freed.

Feldman said evidence such as bite marks and hair can be unreliable, but are still being used to convict people. She said it's critical for legislators to realize there is bad science, eyewitnesses can be wrong and confessions aren't always telling the truth.

That's why she wanted legislators to hear Richardson's story.

"If someone like him couldn't have gotten DNA testing here, that means that the law is not working the way it's supposed to," she said.

It's not clear how significant an issue this is locally. Brittney Plesser, an attorney with the Oregon Innocence Project, said the state doesn't track how often defendants file motions for DNA testing.

Gail Meyer, a lobbyist working with Feldman, said the legislation her clients want would include a man-

date to track requests for DNA testing.

After the testimony, Rep. Rich Vial asked why the testing issue existed. He asked whether it was a money matter.

Feldman said "no" because defendants pay for the later DNA testing.

"I think sometimes it's just hard in an adversarial system for prosecutors to acknowledge a mistake could have been made," she said, adding district attorneys in Oregon regularly

fight this kind of testing.

Feldman said the Innocence Project is in discussions about the matter with Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum's office and two district attorneys representing the Oregon District Attorneys Association.

Public safety

In addition to making testing more available, the advocacy group also wants DNA used to clear a convicted defendant to be automatically entered into law

enforcement databases to seek the true killer.

It's not just a justice issue, it's a public safety issue, she said.

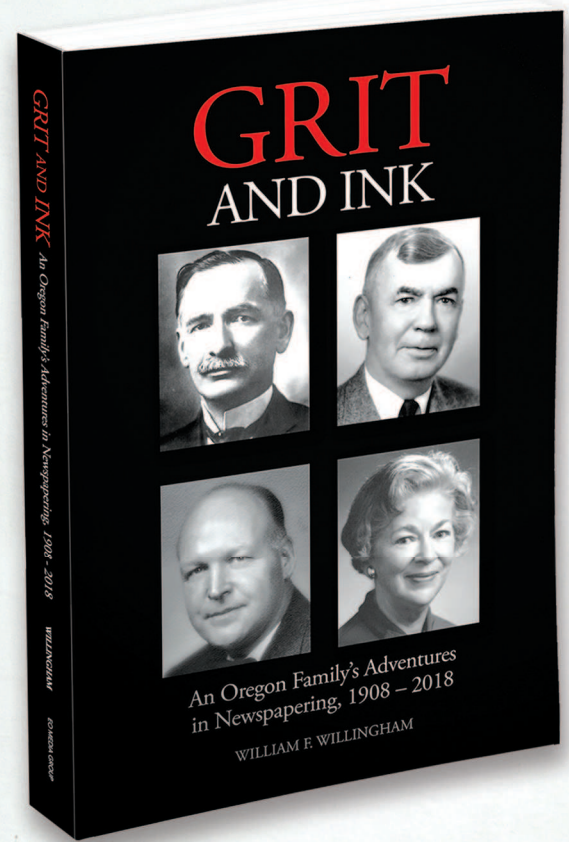
Richardson said the DNA that cleared him still hasn't been used to pursue another match.

"Someone out there could still be walking around killing people," he said.

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