

FRESH: Restores connection with food

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"It's so important to participate in your food," she said. "Our food should be alive. Food is a living, organic thing."

The Pendleton River Walk Garden has been in the community since 2005, Sanders said. It used to be managed by Phil Emert, a master gardener from Hermiston, before he died in 2010. Since then, responsibility for the garden changed hands several times and production has lagged behind.

Recognizing its value and potential, Sanders agreed to take on the garden and began weeding the ground as early as January. Smith, who was recently hired as the Healthy Communities Coordinator for the Umatilla County Health Department, also answered the call after receiving an email asking for help.

"To learn there was a community garden here and that it might be going away is something I wasn't OK with," Smith said. "This is a really important piece to a vibrant community."

Together, the duo organized volunteer days throughout the spring where they planted seeds, organized crop rotations and rebuilt the entire irrigation system. Elmer's Irrigation & Supplies donated roughly 1,000 feet of irrigation drip tape, Sanders said, which is indicative of the support they've received from the very beginning.

"I'm ecstatic," Sanders said. "This has performed beyond my wildest dreams."

According to the most recent community health assessment, 71 percent of Umatilla County



Sherry Lentz fertilizes squash plants during Sunday's Seed to Supper class at the Pendleton River Walk Garden.

Staff photo by George Plaven

is overweight or obese. Not only can the garden encourage people to eat healthier, but Sanders and Smith both said gardening restores an intimate connection between people and their food that's largely gone missing.

"We've become such a passive society, where we go to the grocery store and buy produce that's really far removed from the way it's been grown," Sanders said. "We lose sight of the effort and work that goes in to what's on our dinner plate."

To help reestablish that relationship between people and their food, Sanders and Smith are hosting a six-week series of free classes known as Seed to Supper. The curriculum, developed by OSU Extension and the Oregon Food Bank, covers

all the basics of gardening from planting to harvest. On Sunday, the class focused on mixing and spreading fertilizer while also planting bean sprouts at the garden. Jessica Sou and Erin Zander said they've already learned about different tools and planting techniques to start their own gardens at home.

"We're learning how to feed our families without having to go to the grocery store all the time," Sou said.

Keeping up with the garden is, admittedly, a huge task, Sanders said. But it's been worth the long hours, and she's already looking forward to expanding.

"This is like my child," she said. "It's growing up and doing great things, and creating happiness in the world."

NELSON: Defendants banned from information about witnesses, victims

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The document, though, does not identify the shooters, or any other victims.

Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus charged McIver, of Umatilla, with murder with a firearm in Nelson's death before he dismissed the case in early February when federal prosecutors indicted the trio of defendants. Martin's motion states the district attorney's office continues to investigate the homicide and witness statements in state search warrant affidavits and supporting documents remain under a court seal.

"Most, if not all, of the discovery contained in the federal investigation is relevant to the state investigation," the motion states, and while defense

attorneys would "use such materials responsibly," they "have no control over what their incarcerated defendants would do with such materials, and the risk that the defendants would use it to affect the statements of other witnesses, thus impairing both the homicide investigation and this federal prosecution pose genuine concerns."

The U.S. Attorney's Office re-indicted the defendants on June 8, five days after Martin filed the restrictive motion.

While they all still face charges of felons in possession of guns, prosecutors also charged Ayala, of Hermiston, with assault with a dangerous weapon and use of a firearm in connection with a crime of violence for assaulting an Indian

male with a shotgun and rifle. The assault of an American Indian on Indian land gives federal prosecutors jurisdiction in that case.

Primus said in February that Ayala and Vargas had substantial criminal histories in Fresno, California, including for domestic violence and weapons crimes.

District Judge Anna J. Brown on June 17 signed an order to prevent defense attorneys from providing McIver, Ayala and Vargas with information about witnesses or victims. She also set July 8 for the defense to respond.

Primus did not immediately respond Tuesday for a request to comment.

Contact Phil Wright at pwright@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0833.

MARIJUANA: If voters don't end ban in November, next chance will be 2018

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"You've got to be all in, medical and (recreational)," he said.

If the electorate doesn't pass the local tax in November, the city's next chance at passing it would be the next general election in November 2018, in accordance with state law.

Even though Election Day isn't until Nov. 8 and the first day marijuana businesses can apply for licenses is Jan. 2, the council will start the process immediately to meet the deadlines.

The council held a first reading

Tuesday night for an ordinance repealing the marijuana sales ban conditional on voters' decisions in November.

They will vote on the ordinance June 5, where they also will consider passing the resolutions putting the questions on the ballot.

Having already instituted land use laws for medical marijuana dispensaries, Kerns said the council also will have to pass similar laws for recreational retailers.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

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