

Innovation, the key to success for young agrarians

Ellen Morris Bishop
Wallowa County Chieftain

The agricultural industry has always realized the benefit of industrious women filling vital roles. Those roles just haven't always been recognized. Now more than ever, advances in academic programs and innovative industrial practices are diversifying and broadening the opportunities for women and other passionate young agrarians in their pursuit of agricultural livelihoods.

Dr. Chad Mueller, Animal Science professor at OSU's Eastern Oregon Agricultural & Natural Resources program, sees an abundance of opportunities ahead for women who now are more likely to choose agricultural careers.

"Women bring a skill set that's important," he said. "Sometimes guys in agriculture think all you need is the brawn. But if you really want to be successful it's not about how many hours you can throw hay. When you really want to be successful, it's the business aspect, thought pro-



Hayley Hall answers a question from the audience while Kaleigh Waggoner, Emily Kreachbaum, and Katie Walker look on. All four women attend OSU's Eastern Oregon Agricultural & Natural Resources program at Eastern Oregon University, and are headed for diverse careers in agriculture.

cesses and details. Women seem to have embraced those more than men. They have an outlook on things that we need."

On Tuesday, April 1, four students from the OSU program at Eastern Oregon Uni-

versity shared their inspiring stories at a Josephy Center for Arts and Culture Brown Bag event.

Each student came from a family that ranched, farmed or worked in land management — though not one of them

initially wanted to follow a career in agriculture.

"I thought I wanted to be a pediatric nurse," said Kaleigh Waggoner. "So I went to George Fox University, the best thing I learned there was that I was on the

wrong career path." Waggoner transferred to EOU, and will soon be teaching agriculture to high school students, explaining: "I want to equip and empower future generations to understand and stand up for agriculture."

In an increasingly urbanized culture, these young women are adamant about supporting and standing up for the farmers and ranchers who produce our foods. "Too many times, people in agriculture don't have a voice," Hayley Hall said. That's what is motivating her toward a career in agricultural law. "I hope to be a voice of reason and try to defend people who work a lot more than 8 hours a day, don't live in fancy houses, and spend their money making sure their cows get fed."

And what advice, if any, does any of the students have for the future generations of young agrarians eager to follow in their footsteps?

"Never take no for an answer when working toward your goals," Waggoner said. "Know who you are, your strengths and weaknesses. Authenticity is important. Be yourself and be a lifelong learner. Choose to make a difference. And remember that when one young girl sees you doing something that she wants to do but thought it impossible, you can empower her to change her life."

Writing 131: Revival of Fishtrap College ignites student creativity

Kana Oliver
For Wallowa County
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Thanks to persistent efforts from Fishtrap and Eastern Oregon University, Fishtrap College returned after a several-year hiatus to offer college credit for Writing 131, a creative writing course for local high school students.

Outside of their regular school hours, nine high school students from Enterprise High School, Joseph Charter School, and Alternative Education devoted their time to exploring literary techniques such as repetition, character development, and elements of poetry.

They participated in 10



Left to right: Anna Moholt, Tori Suto, Aubrina Melville, Amy Zahm, Natalie Gorham, Kana Oliver, Renee Seal, Foster Hobbs.

four-hour classes from January through March.

"The classes never seemed long. We enjoyed it and never felt like it was a

chore," the students agreed during their final session. "It was a great addition to our high school education!"

Amy Zahm taught the

class, and, by all the student accounts, she was warm, brilliant and engaging. She encouraged the class to share their work and to give constructive criticism to each other. Over time, the students bonded through their writing and opened up to one another.

"Amy was an outstanding teacher... The atmosphere of the class was amazing — I think we all felt fairly comfortable with sharing our work and personal expressions with each other," said Anna Moholt.

The other students along with Moholt in the class were Aubrina Melville, Christina Russell, Foster Hobbs, Natalie Gorham, Renee Seal, Tori Suto, Kana

Oliver and Jedidiah Lamb.

"Taking an extra class on your own time, especially a college credit class, was a bit daunting to me when first proposed. But what started as a chance to get some more college credit, became a chance to engage in something new and special," said Suto.

Zahm was pleasantly surprised with the outcome of the class. Wrapping up the course, she gave her students the opportunity to share their pieces and show off their new skills at a public reading sponsored by Fishtrap.

Parents and friends all appeared very impressed by the students' work as well as Zahm's instruction — some parents were even moved to

tears. Every student agreed that they would recommend this class to others.

"I'm really pleased to see Fishtrap College revived. It's a great opportunity for local students to not only develop their writing skills, but to also get a jump on college credits," Zahm said. "I feel honored to be part of the program, and I got the chance to work with some exceptional students and to read and listen to some excellent stories. Teaching creative writing to these students was the best part of my winter."

Kana Oliver is a senior at Joseph Charter School and contributing writer for the Wallowa County Chieftain. She lives in Enterprise with her family.

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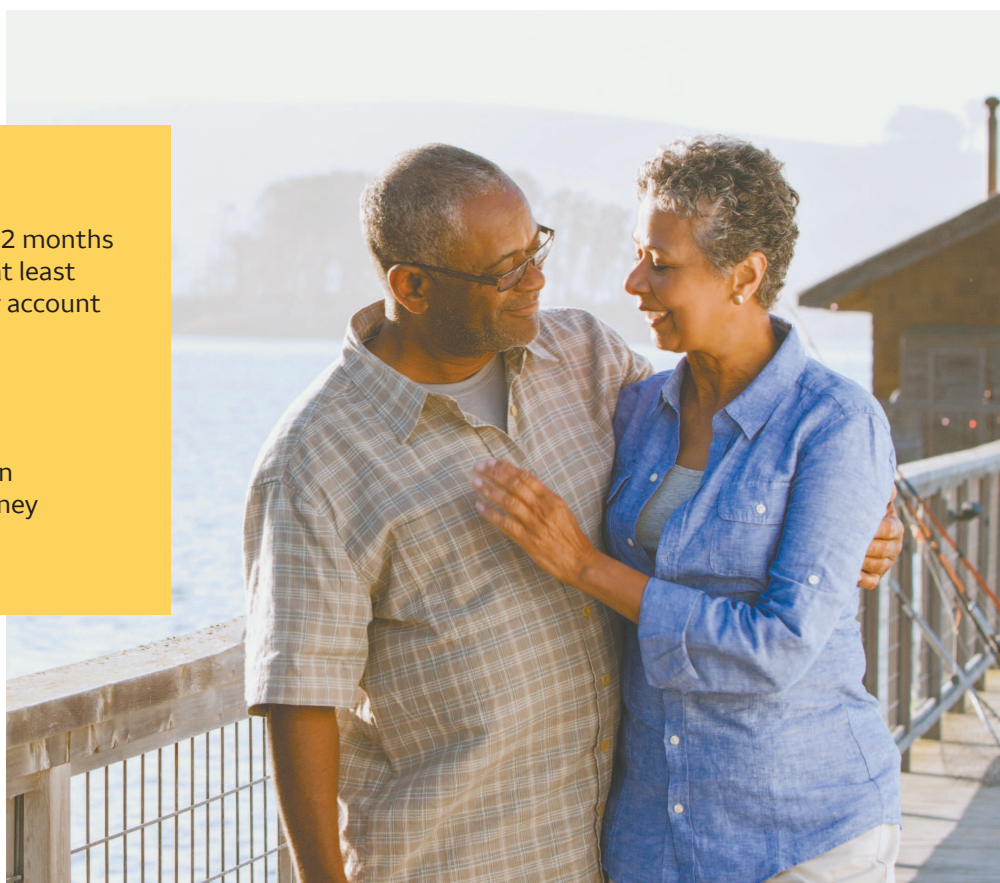
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