



Exploring Cottage Grove area farms

To market, to market, or, taking the crops to town

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Each Thursday afternoon since the weather has warmed, a group of area farmers cleans the life-giving Oregon soil from their boots and their ripe produce, wipes the sweat from several brows and converges upon a small stretch of pavement in downtown Cottage Grove.

The South Valley Farmers Market happens from 4-6 p.m. each Thursday at the corner of Seventh and Main Streets, and while it's certainly not the first such market to operate in this community — there's been a farmers market here for several years, and the current version happens in the same spot as a predecessor that occurred about a decade ago — a larger lineup and more produce means that more farmers than ever see the market as a vi-

able way to offer their wares directly to the public.

It's a young group, by and large, the next generation that's dedicated to working the soil, to managing and supporting the operations of small farms tucked into the picturesque hillsides of the southern Willamette Valley. Some of these farms have operated for years, while some are quite new, but the market represents for each the desire for a more local focus in their business and a concentrated effort to interact with the public that their produce helps to nourish and support.

And so, the Sentinel offers a new feature series dedicated to exploring and cataloging the life and times of many of the area's farms and farmers, to showcasing the products and ideas that find their way "From the Fields" to Cottage Grove.



photos by Jon Stinnett

At left: Karen Martens and son Eddie dig potatoes at Ruby and Amber's Organic Oasis. Above right: Martens shows off the 'fruits' of her labor.

Passing it on — Ruby and Amber's helps teach the next generation

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On a sun-baked late spring day at Ruby and Amber's Organic Oasis outside Dorena, it's even hotter under the long hoop houses than it is in the open air.

Yet it's under the hoops that Karen Martens toils with her nearly three-year old son, Eddie, always nearby. Martens turns a trowel full of aromatic black dirt to find the prize — potatoes with skins that gleam golden or showcase a deep brownish red when rinsed clean of soil. Eddie helps out when he can, though he's more interested in peeling the new spuds than mom might appreciate. The soaring temperatures mean that summer is coming on fast, and these potatoes must be harvested to make way for hot-weather crops like corn and peppers.

This year marks the ninth growing season for Martens, who hired on as a laborer but has expanded her influence at Ruby and Amber's to include the management of some projects there. Along the way, she's learned many of the methods, techniques and secrets that have been the mainstay of the certified organic and biodynamic operation since owner Walt Bernard began working the ground there with the two draft horses that gave the farm its name.

Like many local farms, teaching the methods of sustainable farming to the next generation is a big part of the operations at Ruby and Amber's. Bernard champions biodynamic farming and the use of horses to work his land while keeping outside inputs to a minimum, and he offers workshops that draw those who seek to learn the craft from far and wide.

"It's definitely a trend in farming that everybody seems to be including that education piece," said Martens, who pointed out that Ruby and Amber's is currently in a "phase of growth" that includes the total redesign and upgrade of many of its systems. She said the outside influence of those who journey there to learn those systems helps keep the farm humming.

"Things have really grown now that we have new people," Martens says, brushing aside the obvious pun.

Two of those "new people," Justin and Teagan Moran, call the farm their home in addition to their workplace, and they say they're quite happy there. The couple came to the area through an internship placement with the Rogue Farm Corps, which of-



fers hands-on experience at many commercial farms throughout Oregon.

"There are plenty of farms here that need good help, and you can be a part of a business that helps sustain the needs of local people," said Justin Moran, who came to Oregon from Devon, England, which boasts its own ancient farms. Like many who seek out the skills of farming these days, he said he found himself dissatisfied with the routines of living in another setting.

"Sustainable agriculture is attracting young people because there are plenty of us who had a career, who went to college but became disillusioned or weren't happy with that," he said. "Here, we're doing something positive; we're growing food that becomes a part of a bigger picture, part of a solution to ecological and social challenges."

Though he came from an area of farms, Moran said that the practice of farming doesn't have the same cachet in England that it does here.

"There's tons of farmer worship," he said. "It's cool to be a farmer here. There's a strong image of the family farm in America, and people want to see and support them."

And in an age where families passing down the operations of their farms through generations is no longer a given, the energy and enthusiasm of those who seek the farm life later in their own journeys could be the key to sustaining local farms into the future.

"Kids don't necessarily want to stay on the farms they grew up on anymore," Martens said. "It's provided a place for a lot of young people to come and make a real difference."

LCC

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support resource for parents. With regard to the college's hope for the Cottage Grove facility, Kuhar, LCC's Interim Dean, said that the college is committed to making the CG campus sustainable and active and is interested in fostering community partnerships to make it happen.

Herburger shared a number of short-term goals that LCC has identified for Cottage Grove: To explore the viability of a recording studio; the college has circulated a survey on whether

such a facility would be beneficial. The college hopes to offer non-credit training certificates to offer more short-term technical training programs including Heritage, GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment) and other professional development opportunities. It also seeks to establish a weather center on campus and increase the presence of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and customized training here.

Herburger stated that the main challenges at the local

center were assessing the needs of the local population, finding qualified non-credit instructors, marketing and improving the college's local image and fundraising.

During the election of a committee chair, KNND owner Cameron Reiten stepped forward, and Alan Baas volunteered to serve as vice-convener.

The committee plans to meet again in mid-July, at which time a subcommittee will present by-laws and a mission statement for the larger group's approval.

GARDENER

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"an opportunity for us to become involved in a high-profile, civic project."

Mull now leads the club's involvement with the park, organizing volunteers to plant, prune, maintain and mulch its beds. Her work has led to other accolades for the park: In 2011, the club received a May-

oral Certificate of Appreciation for its work there, and in 2014 the park was honored with the American Institute of Architects People's Choice Award. Also in 2014, Andrea was interviewed about the park by the Portland gardening show "Garden Time TV."

For Mull, who works at Territorial Seed, her efforts in Cot-

tage Grove are part of a love of gardening that has only grown since her early years, through 25 years of work in Oregon and California, trainings in the practice of bio-dynamics and studies in environmental science and biology.

"It's pretty much been present in every facet of my life," she said.

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Worship Directory

WORSHIP WITH US

DRAIN:
Gateway Family Fellowship
Church of the Nazarene
337 "C" St. Drain, OR
Sunday School 9:30am
Worship 10:45am
Living Hope Free Lunch
Wed. at 12:30pm
541-836-7051 www.drainnaz.org

HOPE U.M.C.
131 W "A" St. Drain, OR
541-315-1617
Pastor: Lura Kidner-Miesen
Bible Study: 10:45am
Potluck Lunch: Noon
Worship: 12:45pm

COTTAGE GROVE:
6th & Gibbs Church of Christ
195 N. 6th St. • 541-942-3822
Pastor: Aaron Earlywine
Youth & Families Pastor: Seth Bailey
Services: 9am and 10:30am
Christian Education
Nursery for pre-k - 3rd Grade
www.6thandgibbs.com

Calvary Baptist Church
77873 S 6th St • 541-942-4290
Pastor: Riley Hendricks
Sunday School: 9:45am
Worship: 11:00am
The Journey: Sunday 5:00pm
Praying Thru Life: Wednesday 6:00pm

Calvary Chapel Cottage Grove
1447 Hwy 99 (Village Plaza)
541-942-6842
Pastor: Jeff Smith
Two Services on Sun: 9am & 10:45am
Youth Group Bible Study
Child Care 10:45am Service Only
www.cgcalvary.org

Church of Christ
420 Monroe St • 541-942-8565
Sunday Service: 10:30am

Cottage Grove Bible Church
1200 East Quincy Avenue
541-942-4771
Pastor: Bob Singer
Worship 11am
Sunday School: 9:45am
AWANA age 3-8th Grade,
Wednesdays Sept-May, 6:30pm
www.cgbible.org

Cottage Grove Faith Center
33761 Row River Rd. • 541-942-4851
Lead Pastor: Isaac Hovet
www.cg4.tv
2 Sunday Services: 9am & 11am
Full Children's Ministry available

Covered Bridge Nazarene Church
152 S. M St.
541-942-4422
Pastor: Cindy Slaymaker
Sunday School: 9:30am
Worship 10:30am

Delight Valley
Church of Christ
33087 Saginaw Rd. East
541-942-7711
Pastor: Bob Friend
Two Services:
9am - Classic in the Chapel
10:30am - Contemporary in the Auditorium

First Presbyterian Church
3rd and Adams St • 541-942-4479
Pastor: Karen Hill
Worship: 10:00am
Sunday School: 10:00am
www.cgpresbynews.com

Grove Community Church
77820 Mosby Creek Rd.
Cottage Grove, OR 97424
541-942-0123
Pastor: Bryan Parsons
Worship: 10:30 a.m.
Nursery: Infant - Pre-K
Kid's Church: K to 5th grade

Hope Fellowship
United Pentecostal Church
100 S. Gateway Blvd. • 541-942-2061
Pastor: Dave Bragg
Worship: 11:00am Sunday
Bible Study: 7:00pm Wednesday
www.hopefellowshipupc.com
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Living Faith Assembly
467 S. 10th St. • 541-942-2612
Pastor Rulon Combs
Sunday School All Ages 9am
Worship & Children's
Church 10:00 am
Sat Evening Service 6:00pm
Youth 180 Mondays 5:30-8pm

Non-Denominational Church of Christ
1041 Pennoyer Ave * 541-767-0447
Preachers: Tony Martin & Robert Evans
Sunday Bible Study: 10:00am
Sunday Worship: 10:50am & 5:30pm
www.pennoyeravecoc.com

Old Time Gospel Fellowship
103 S. 5th St. • 541-942-4999
Pastor: Jim Edwards
Sunday Service: 10:00am
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Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. Philip Benizi
Catholic Churches
1025 N. 19th St.
541-942-3420 / 541-942-4712
Pastor: Roy L. Antunez, S.J.
Euch. Liturgies; Sat. 5:30pm
Sun. 10:30am
St. Philip Benizi, Creswell:
552 Holbrook Lane • 541-895-8686
Sunday: 8:30am

St. Andrews Episcopal Church
1301 W. Main • 541-767-9050
Rev. Lawrence Crumb
"Church with the flags."
Worship: Sunday 10:30am
All Welcome

Seventh-day Adventist Church
820 South 10th Street
541-942-5213
Pastor: Kevin Miller
Bible Study: Saturday, 9:15 am
Worship Service: Saturday, 10:40 am
Mid-week Service: Wednesday, 1:00 pm

Trinity Lutheran Church
6th & Quincy • 541-942-2373
Pastor: James L. Markus
Sunday School & Adult Education 9:15am
Sunday Worship 10:30 am
Comm. Kitchen Free Meal Tue & Thur 5:00pm TLC Groups
llccg.com

United Methodist Church
334 Washington • 541-942-3033
Pastor: Lura Kidner-Miesen
Worship: 10:30am
Comm. Dinner (Adults \$5, Kids Free)
2nd & 3rd Monday 5-6:00pm
cottagegroveumc.org

"VICTORY" Country Church
913 S. 6th Street • 541-942-5913
Pastor: Barbara Dockery
Worship Service: 10:00am
Message: 11:00am
"WE BELIEVE IN MIRACLES"

Our Worship Directory is a weekly feature in the newspaper. If your congregation would like to be a part of this directory, please contact the Cottage Grove Sentinel at 541-942-3325.