



ROGUE FARMS/for the Itemizer-Observer

Tractors often are covered in the hop bines during the harvest each year.

## HOPPIN' GOOD HARVEST

Season produces record yields after hotter than average summer

By Lukas Eggen

The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — If there's one thing farm expert Cheryl Gilson has learned during her more than a decade with Rogue Farms it's this — be prepared for anything.

From protecting crops from cold temperatures in the winter to dealing with unforeseen issues — like last November when slugs ate 10 acres of rye seeds in 24 hours — Rogue Farms sees its share of new issues every day.

"You have to stay on your toes when you're working with Mother Nature," Gilson said. "You have to be ready for anything and you just have to roll with the punches."

Facing an unseasonably warm spring and summer, Rogue began its hop harvest on Aug. 17, roughly a week to a week-and-a-half earlier than normal.

Rogue Farm expects this year's harvest to run at least another week to finish reaping the last of seven varieties of hops.

An early harvest won't mean a weak



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

**Hop cones are dried before they are baled and shipped to the brewery.**

hop yield. In fact, this is shaping up to be one of the farm's biggest harvest seasons yet, Gilson said.

"We're guessing about 80,000 pounds of hops from our 42 acres," Gilson said. "You really don't know until it all happens, but we're expecting a really good yield this year."

With the first hops ripening ahead of schedule, it meant being ready to start harvesting on short notice no matter what had to be done to get ready.

"Our crops haven't suffered," Gilson said. "Like so many crops, they were

ready early. We decided the Friday before our harvest began to start the following Monday. We had to make some last-second repairs on vehicles, but we just had to get going."

The process from bine to bale is a lengthy one. When hops begin to sprout, this year in mid-March, workers string the bines and teach the hops how to "climb" while they are growing.

Once hops are ripe, the harvest begins.

The journey starts as bines are cut and brought to the picker warehouse where they are stripped through a series of conveyor belts and screens.

From there, the cones are transported to the kiln where they are dried for six to eight hours until moisture falls below 10 percent.

Getting the moisture levels correct is important. A mistake puts the cones at risk for catching fire.

After drying, the hops are cooled when hydraulic balers compress the hops into 200-pound bales to be transported to Rogue Brewery in Newport.

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## A celebration of heritage, hops

Independence celebrates its roots during weekend festival at Riverview Park

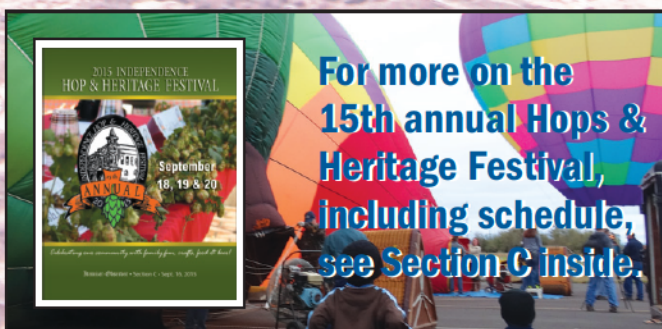
By Emily Mentzer

The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — It's a small-town festival, created by the community for the community, said Jason Kistler, member of the Hops & Heritage Festival commission.

The festival is early this year. Usually falling toward the end of September, it was moved up to avoid competing with other events — and to give festival-goers a better shot at good weather.

"Two years ago we almost canceled the festival because there was a big monsoon moving in," Kistler recalled. "So we



moved it up a week."

Hops & Heritage puts a nice little exclamation mark on summer and kicks off fall all at once, said Marie Trucco, member of the commission.

"I think it's just a sweet celebration of the community," she said. "Last year, people came and stayed and played. It's small; it's

not the Fourth of July, but people found things that (piqued) their interest."

It's no surprise, given all the different things to do, from trying your hand at painting, to entering old-time contests such as building a scarecrow or eating pie. There's even a parade — of critters, that is.

Some of the most interesting animals join the parade, from chickens to parrots, reptiles to more traditional pets such as dogs.

This year, instead of a cookie-baking contest — which seems to have run its course due to the low number of entries last year — the festival will host a culinary challenge to cook with beer.

"We're looking for anything that you can incorporate beer or hops into," Kistler said. "We're hoping to cast a wider net that way, hoping for more entries."

The scarecrow contest always brings a big crowd of creations, from professional-grade to more original models.

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## IN YOUR TOWN

### DALLAS NEWS

CASA of Polk County has a new home and is ready to show it off during an open house on Wednesday.

CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) pairs trained volunteers with abused and neglected children who have been removed from their homes. The volunteers advocate on behalf of children as they move through the court system.

CASA's new office is at 580 Main St. in Dallas. Until a few months ago, the organization was housed in the Polk County District Attorney's Office.

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### FALLS CITY NEWS

A sewer rate increase may be coming for Falls City residents, but that won't be enough to resolve all the issues with the city's aging system.

In the 2014-15 fiscal year, wastewater revenue was \$100,819, while expenses amounted to \$98,635, according to a report Falls City Mayor Terry Ungricht presented to the Falls City City Council at its meeting Thursday.

Falls City's wastewater system is an enterprise fund, meaning it is supposed to be self-sustaining on user fees. Last year's expenses didn't include replacement of a circulation pump at \$8,489.

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### INDEPENDENCE NEWS

Firefighting is the only career the new Polk County Fire District No. 1's chief Al Alcalde has ever known, or wanted.

"A lot of our neighbors were firefighters for the city of Torrance (Calif.)," Alcalde, 54, said. "I was in track, and I saw a lot of the firefighters on the track working out."

When he graduated from high school, he joined the Air Force and took a job fighting fires.

"It was a different kind of firefighting because we were on a base," Alcalde said. "Our primary responsibility was for aircraft."

Later, he became a paramedic.

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### MONMOUTH NEWS

The Monmouth Public Library will host a conversation about death and dying at 6 p.m. on Sept. 24 at the library, 168 Ecols St. S.

"I think this will be a great opportunity for our community to be able to come together and talk about a subject that is not often discussed publicly," said Krist Obrist, Monmouth library director. "We all experience death on different levels throughout our life, yet it can be such a difficult and personal experience to open up about."

The conversation is part of a statewide initiative by Oregon Humanities.

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### POLK COUNTY NEWS

Glen Miller, the new director of Chemeketa Community College's Dallas Center, wants the community to know the campus doesn't just offer classes for students in high school fifth-year programs.

"Yes, we do offer general education classes," he said.

"A student could get a significant portion of their associate of arts Oregon transfer degree here in Dallas. We are a legitimate college-course offering campus that I personally think is being underused by the community because they don't know we are a resource that's available."

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| <b>THE NEXT<br/>7<br/>DAYS<br/>PLANNING<br/>FOR YOUR<br/>WEEK</b><br> | <b>wed</b><br>Helping Hands<br>Emergency Food<br>Bank is there for<br>those who need a<br>little extra help each<br>Wednesday.<br>10 a.m.-noon. Free.<br><br>Rain<br>Hi: 63<br>Lo: 52 | <b>thu</b><br>Lift up your voice<br>and sing with others<br>at the hymn sing-<br>along at Monmouth<br>Senior Center each<br>Thursday.<br>6:30 p.m. Free.<br><br>Showers<br>Hi: 69<br>Lo: 49 | <b>fri</b><br>Support Buell<br>Grange at its fall<br>market where a raf-<br>fle, local produce<br>and a garage sale<br>will be happening.<br>9 a.m.-6 p.m. Free.<br><br>Mostly sunny<br>Hi: 75<br>Lo: 52 | <b>sat</b><br>Head to Dallas Al-<br>liance Church for<br>dinner and a blue-<br>grass concert in the<br>field and help raise<br>money for youths.<br>5 p.m. \$10.<br><br>Cloudy<br>Hi: 77<br>Lo: 52 | <b>sun</b><br>Those interested in<br>learning more about<br>flying remote con-<br>trol aircraft may<br>meet at Whitworth<br>Elementary School.<br>1-3 p.m. Free.<br><br>Mostly sunny<br>Hi: 70<br>Lo: 52 | <b>mon</b><br>Network with other<br>business people<br>while enjoying lunch<br>at the Dallas Area<br>Chamber of Com-<br>merce luncheon.<br>11:30 a.m. \$12.<br><br>Partly cloudy<br>Hi: 70<br>Lo: 46 | <b>tue</b><br>It's National Voter<br>Registration Day! If<br>you haven't regis-<br>tered to vote, today<br>is the perfect day to<br>update your records<br>or get registered.<br><br>Sunny<br>Hi: 71<br>Lo: 47 |
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