



The Furrow

Newsletter of Oregon Rural Action

Sowing Seeds of Change

July 2005

Volume 4 Number 2

Local Project Aims to Boost Economic Opportunity for Farmers in Northeast Oregon

----**Julie Keniry, Northeast Oregon Regional Farmers Market Coordinator**

Oregon Rural Action was the recipient of a \$20,000 grant from The Oregon Community Foundation to administer a Community Food Connections Project. This project provides research and support to farmers and farmers' markets in Northeast Oregon and will run through the end of this year. The overall goal of the work is to increase opportunities for regional farmers to sell their products locally as well as provide opportunities for people to purchase local farm products.

Calendar

Baker County Grassroots Alliance meets the first Tuesday of the month at Mad Matildas at 7 PM. The present focus is on renewable energy. Call Randy Joseph, 541-894-2347.

The **Blue Mountain Chapter** meets the second Monday in September; your participation in the Green Power Team is welcome -- call Jane @ 975-2411

The **Snake River Chapter** is planning to hold their Annual Meeting in September -- watch for details.

Wallowa County residents: there is a small but steady group of Oregon Rural Action members living in Wallowa County meeting on a regular basis; they are taking on weed control this year. For information, call Dave Bishop 426-3033.

"Many of the region's farmers' markets face similar issues" according to Michael Bettis, a La Grande farmer and Oregon Rural Action member. "A regional coordinator can address these challenges for the benefit of all and work toward the ultimate goal of strengthening the local food economy." The project will also provide training for farmers and market managers through the 2nd Annual Farm Direct Marketing Conference scheduled for November 5th.

Julie Keniry, the market manager for the La Grande Farmers Market, was hired to continue working her magic regionally! In February she was contacted by the Baker City Farmers Market organizers who were thinking of canceling their market for 2005. Julie interviewed about 20 vendors and customers, providing the market coordinators with some clear indicators that resulted in their decision to seek local support to continue the market this year. She was also trained to conduct market surveys; Julie and the market managers from the other three markets will work together to conduct Rapid Market Assessments (local market managers and/or Board members team together to view other markets and provide new insights), Dot Surveys (where customers are surveyed

to help market organizers understand and improve their market), and Crowd Count Surveys (which provide estimates of the number of people attending the market). She created a regional website: www.neofm.org, providing advertising for all of the markets in Northeast Oregon. Also look for Julie's monthly article for local newspapers, "At the Farmers Market", that will be published from May - September.

This fall Julie will distribute educational materials to the markets, including information on a farm to school program. The information gathered as a result of her work will be collated and made available to Northeast Oregon markets; this information will also be available to other markets, such as the potentially new Ontario market, as needed.

The Oregon Community Foundation, established in 1973 and now for 30 years, has managed charitable funds donated by individuals, families, and businesses to enhance and support the quality of life in their communities. Today, the Foundation's endowment consists of over 1000 funds with combined assets of over \$500 million. The funding for this grant was provided by the Gray Family Fund, the J.G. Edwards Fund, and the Robert W. and Nancy R. Chandler Discretionary Subfund of The Oregon Community Foundation.

Blue Mountain & Baker County Grassroots Alliance Chapter News

During the remainder of 2005, the Blue Mountain Chapter's Energy Team and Baker County Grassroots Alliance will be working on renewable energy issues. Members from both communities met in North Powder to line out their goals on renewable energy. Their defining statement and talking points are:

We support community generated renewable energy to benefit citizens and local economies

- Attract and keep local businesses
- Keep our energy dollars at home
- Support fuels for schools programs
- Provide local economic development opportunities
- Encourage OTEC to support local renewable energy in lieu of BPA green power from Wyoming
- Increase the awareness of the benefits of renewable energy
- Increase the number of local producers
- Recruit community partners in support of community generated renewable energy
- Promote regional energy independence
- Provide jobs for local citizens
- Educate the public
- Support OTEC's current public purpose program and encourage them to meet Senate Bill 149's goal of a 3% public purchase charge
- Promote OTEC's current programs

CONSIDER PURCHASING GREEN POWER FROM OTEC!!

The more customers who are willing to pay an extra \$3.00/kwh for your energy needs demonstrates to OTEC that the citizens of Northeast Oregon are serious about using renewable energy. Please, convert your current BPA "dam power" into "green power" from a wind-farm in Wyoming and hopefully soon from **local** renewable energy projects.

La Grande Farmers Market

Saturdays 9-12; Tuesdays July 19th to September 20th 4:30 - 6:30

August 13th - Tomato Tasting!

Not only do fresh, local, vine-ripened tomatoes taste best, but there are infinite varieties. Come taste the difference! You can also try your hand at the Tomato Toss.

September 10th - Harvest Festival

Join us for our annual Harvest Festival where we will celebrate the bounty of the harvest.

Harvest Dinner Fundraiser

This is a special night you won't want to miss! We will be serving a gourmet, four course meal made from our local harvest. Come enjoy the luxury of what we can grow in our own backyard.

Union County Land Use

Committee for Positive Community Growth members Mark Tipperman and David Whitson have weighed in on the City of La Grande's re-writing of Goal 9 of the City's Comprehensive Plan which directs the community's economic development program during the next five to ten years. The whole plan can be reviewed at <http://www.ci.la-grande.or.us/uploads/Ordinance-Goal9.pdf>. The key goals include:

Goal 1 – Create High Quality Family Wage Jobs

Promote industrial and commercial development that generates high quality family wage jobs and income for the community and creates sustainable and environmentally sound economic vitality.

Goal 2 – Foster the growth and expansion of Eastern Oregon University

Support the university in its efforts to grow and target educational programs to the region and the state. Provide sites and other infrastructure to businesses seeking to partner with the university.

Goal 3 – Promote Retail Development

Promote the development of the City as a Regional Shopping Center by providing a greater range of retail services for residents and visitors. Allow residents to satisfy their shopping needs within the Community and provide a greater range of services for travelers on I-84.

Goal 4 – Revitalize the Downtown

Revitalize the Central Business District by building on its historic character, expanding the mix of goods and services offered and creating public spaces and amenities.

Goal 5 – Attract new Residents seeking a Quality Residential Environment

Attract new residents with entrepreneurial skills to La Grande that operate in-home businesses or are semi-retired and desire a mid-sized community with sites for larger quality residences.

Because of this Committee's past involvement with opposing the expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary to include a Wal-Mart Supercenter, this move towards working with the City to create a document that lays the ground work for positive growth is a great step for all concerned. These proactive approaches have been talked about extensively in the Blue Mountain Chapter and we are hoping to be able to continue to find ways to work in conjunction with decision makers to assure a livable community for all.

Blue Mountain Chapter members are also interested in creating a **vision** for the future of this community and other communities in Northeast Oregon. There is increasing interest in the idea that instead of just **reacting** to problems as they arise that we set our sights on **creating** the communities we would like to see twenty years from now. We will be talking about this concept both at the Oregon Rural Action Board meeting on July 24th and at the Blue Mountain Chapter meeting on September 12th. We invite you to become more involved with this visioning process by attending one or both meetings.

Oregon Rural Action
PO Box 1231
La Grande, Oregon 97850

NonProfit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 24
La Grande, Oregon 97850

Return Service Requested

Snake River Chapter News

We have decided to initiate the **Latino Organizing Project** to build a Latino, low-income component of our current Snake River Chapter (SNRC). Because Malheur County is 20% Latino and the City of Ontario is 32% Latino, there is a critical need to include both Anglos and Latinos to work together to assure a united voice to support the needs of disenfranchised citizens. Christina Dunker, a long-time County resident and Latino farmer workers' daughter who thrives in both the Anglo and Latino cultures, provided an in-depth analysis of Malheur County with the following results:

- My research indicates that there is the potential for organizing on on-going issues that need to be addressed in the Latino community at the policy level. Latinos have had disproportionate representation from Latino leaders as well as the general Latino population regarding participation in any decision-making entity/body. It is the general feeling of Latinos in Malheur County that policies are being made all around us without Latinos having a voice in the decision making process. The interpretation is that the Latino opinion is not valued or does not count.
- There is no other group working directly with the Latino community. Many organizations have come and gone in the past and there is a need for a conscientious effort to mobilize Latinos. We can help overcome some of these barriers by joining Oregon Rural Action and over time show folks that we can make a difference on policy levels and that Latinos will be represented and respected.

The Organizing Committee, which is comprised of current Snake River Chapter members and many new, Latino members, is considering working on: Spanish language access issues, or the late fee for water bills.

This shift in emphasis towards social justice organizing is a new focus for Oregon Rural Action. The Board and staff are very excited about the potential for this Chapter to not only take a lead within Eastern Oregon but also to chart new territory for other member states of the Western Organization of Resource Councils.

There is interest in continuing this work in Umatilla County. However we are committed to finding a locally-based Latino community member to organize their friends and families. Help us in our search for an organizer for Umatilla County -- if you have any prospects, let us know.

Supporting a Local Veterans Out-patient Clinic

At it's June meeting, the **Blue Mountain Chapter** decided to spearhead a drive to petition the CARES Committee (federal-level veterans care committee which is considering closing the Walla Walla Veterans Administration Hospital) to encourage local Union County policy makers and the Grande Ronde Hospital (GRH) to actively recruit an outpatient clinic attached the GRH to provide inpatient/outpatient physical and mental health services, including alcohol and drug treatment and pharmacy. David Whitson, Oregon Rural Action Board member and Vietnam Vet, knows that not only would Veterans step forward to support these efforts but that there would be public support as well. According to David, "La Grande is an ideal location because of the proximity of the hospital and the OHSU nursing program at EOU. The only Veterans facility in Eastern Oregon is an outpatient clinic in Bend or Veterans can travel to Portland or Boise. This clinic would result in an improvement of health care for Veterans, increase the number of professional level jobs in the community (thus supporting local businesses), and be a boost in the health care sector in Union County."