

What Do You See in Growth?

---Zachary Lauritzen, Organizer Blue Mountain Chapter

As we venture into the 21st century, many people in Eastern Oregon see a future of population growth, commercial development, and industrial expansion in our communities. As we all know, growth comes in a variety of forms: the good, the bad, and the ugly. As members of the Blue Mountain Chapter peer into the future, they want to see growth that enhances our community rather than the dreadful sprawl that leaves rural valleys nothing more than buildings and pavement.

Calendar

Baker County Grassroots Alliance meets every 2nd Monday at Mad Matilda's. Next meeting is August 14th at 7pm.

The **Blue Mountain Chapter** issue teams are meeting regularly. Call office for details. Next quarterly meeting is in September (date and time to be announced).

The **Snake River Chapter** meets every 3rd Thursday at the Malheur County library in Ontario. Next meeting is August 24th at noon. Lunch is provided.

Ask yourself: What does growth look like? Is it four-lane highways leading to a sea of housing developments, forever covering what was once lush fields of grain and mint? Is it mall complexes erected on the edge of town, directing consumers to where there are no locally-owned businesses? Is it the sale of vast tracts of land into out-of-town hands, leaving you locked outside the fence where you once walked your dog, went hunting, or had picnics?

Maybe you see something different in growth. Could it be a revitalized downtown with local businesses offering a wide range of goods and services? Perhaps, after refurbishing the upper floor apartments, downtown is bustling with residents and new life? Maybe your future means a truly forward thinking look at transportation with bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and a community bus moving people around town?

(Continued on page 4)

Local Food & Farm Directory

Buying fresh local farm products just became easier! Oregon Rural Action members in Union and Baker Counties have produced a directory of Northeast Oregon farms that sell their products locally. The directory contains contact information and growing practices for farms in Union, Baker, Wallowa, and Umatilla counties with a whole range of products including fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat, honey, and plants.



In addition to local farm contacts, you will find schedules and locations for farmers' markets in the region and other related businesses. If you happen to be an avid gardener with a bumper crop, you can use this directory to find a place to donate your surplus to those who need it.

These handy brochure-sized directories are free and have been distributed throughout Union and Baker counties at many local businesses. You can also contact the Oregon Rural Action office at 975-2411 to pick up a copy or get a stack to give away to friends or other community organizations you are involved with. Information is also listed on the regional farmers' market website www.neofm.org.

Times are “a changing”

Thank you Jane!

for your support and dedication to
Oregon Rural Action

Indeed, here at Oregon Rural Action things are happening on many fronts – we are engaging many more community members in all of our Chapters to move toward our mission of supporting and encouraging community organizing on locally identified issues. We are collaborating with civic leaders and moving toward united efforts to make inroads into more locally produced energy and foods. And we are taking a look at such issues as poverty, hunger, and in Malheur County issues that unite all community members.

I have been at Oregon Rural Action as the Director since the summer of 2003. It is with some reluctance that I am choosing to give my “one year notice” to the Board of Directors and over the last few months we have been actively involved in seeking a new Director. This person will fill the shoes of both Zachary Lauritzen, our half-time organizer, and myself, who has been working half-time as the Director. We are performing a national and local search, hoping to recruit someone with the appropriate skills.

My transition out of Oregon Rural Action is not a transition out of Union County. I will remain involved with the non-profit community as a member of the Board of Directors of the Blue Mountain Humane Association. I hope to pursue some of my less work-oriented aspirations, such as getting my hands dirtier in my garden, pursuing service work with the village of Nangi, Nepal on sustainable papermaking products, and perhaps even learning how to sit still and read a novel. And yes, the rumor is true, I will be working at Starbucks as a barista, a great corporation that not only statistically increases coffee consumption in communities (thus not taking business from the small, local businesses) but also gives health insurance to employees who work only 20 hours/week.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved with Oregon Rural Action and has helped us move this organization forward. THANK YOU ALL for your support and friendship.

—Jane Sabin-Davis, Director

New Organizer!

Zachary Lauritzen

My story starts just seven short blocks from my office at Oregon Rural Action’s La Grande Headquarters. At the age of four, my family came to La Grande from Kansas City, Missouri and we have called this community home ever since.

After graduating from La Grande High School in 2001, I moved to North Carolina to attend Elon University where I studied International Politics and History. During my junior year at Elon I lived and studied in Santiago, Chile. Within an hour’s drive of my host family’s home were all the aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents from both sides of their family. Spending afternoons and evening together reminded me of the intense joy of family. During this time I realized my interest in returning to La Grande to be with the family and community that gave so much to me.

After graduation I had a stint working in Washington, DC where I witnessed firsthand the gridlock that often hampers our government and massive national organizations. It was then I saw the power of local individuals working in groups on issues close to home. For these reasons, it is a pleasure and wonderful opportunity to join the staff at Oregon Rural Action where, together, we can improve the lives of friends, family, and neighbors throughout our communities.



Snake River Chapter

There are many words we can use to describe the goals of our work in Malheur County - all citizens having equal rights, participatory democracy, social justice – but no matter how you say it, the Snake River Chapter has increased the ability for mono-lingual Spanish speakers to be on equal ground by translating the key documents for Probation and Parole into Spanish. Stephanie Williams, a Malheur County Attorney, and five key members from the Ontario area collaborated to make a path for success for people in trouble with the law.

Snake River Chapter member Alberto Quintero spent numerous hours on his computer taking the documents that were originally created in English and translating them into Spanish. They were then rechecked for accuracy by Rosa Vargas. Meanwhile, the Probation and Parole Department recently hired a bi-lingual staff person! We hope that our work helped to influence this decision.

On July 20th, 22 members and non-members met to talk about next steps. Jack DeWard facilitated a focus group to discuss what could be done in the community for children: issues with lack of child care for working parents and assuring certification of bi-lingual child care providers, lack of adequate food and a need for an additional food pantry, and lack of services for homeless persons. There was also interest in a farmers' market in Ontario, including thoughts on backyard gardeners being a part of an ethnic farmers' market or the development of a community garden to help feed community members.

The next meeting of the Snake River Chapter will be held on August 24th at noon at the Malheur County Library. We anticipate being able to focus in on a specific issue to work on over the next six months. I will be giving folks reminder phone calls so I hope to see you there.

— *Diane, Snake River Chapter Organizer*

Energy Team Update

We want to thank Randy Joseph and Colin Mathewson for their hard work and dedication to last spring's OTEC board election. Although Randy lost to the incumbent, we can rejoice in several successes related to this campaign. This was the largest anti-incumbent vote on record and voter turnout was higher than in any other OTEC election in the past six years. Our campaign's extensive public education effort on renewable energy led to more than a dozen letters to the editor published in four regional newspapers along with display ads, several articles and editorials, and 17 minutes of radio ads broadcast over four days. Two candidate forums each drew 30 attendees, including all but two of the current OTEC directors and top co-op management. As a direct result of discussions emerging at one of these forums, OTEC directors decided to set aside 30 minutes at the beginning of every board meeting for public comment.

Currently...

We continue to encourage OTEC to invest renewable energy money into local energy producers. We also encourage you to call OTEC and sign-up for the Green Power program.

Many members are attending Solwest, one of Oregon's largest renewable energy fairs, to gather new ideas and network with like-minded individuals.

Fuels for Schools, a program designed to use biomass waste as a source of energy in schools, is having a tour of their Council, Idaho facilities on August 8th. If you are interested in going on the tour, call Robin Nudd at 541-523-8200.

Planning for the Future — We appreciate your input

You may remember that we recently sent out a questionnaire to help our Board make decisions about the future of Oregon Rural Action. We got a great response – thanks to all that returned those questionnaires; as of July 15th, 20% of the questionnaires were returned with a majority of Oregon Rural Action members targeting policy change and projects as their key areas of interest.

Our Board will use this information at a two-day retreat at the Cove Ascension School where we will expand our current Strategic Plan to cover our goals and objectives for the next two years. In addition, we will be discussing the leadership transition and reviewing potential applicants for the Director/Organizer position.

If you have any additional thoughts about our future, we welcome your views – please call Jane, Zachary, Julie in the La Grande office at (541) 975-2411 or Diane at (208) 713-5876.

What Do You See in Growth? (Continued from page 1)

Does your vision of growth mean the development of family wage jobs, the growth and integration of the university into the community, or more public park and open space? Whatever your view of growth, preserving and improving the quality of life in our communities is paramount.

Starting in July, our newly-formed growth team began meeting regularly and discussing the positives and pitfalls of growth. We believe planning for growth now, before it happens, is the best way for a community to embrace and benefit from change.

So stop and take a moment to look into the future of your community. What do you want to see? Together, as a group of vocal citizens, we can make that vision a reality. Call the office at 975-2411 if you would like to join the growth team and lend your voice toward a positive future.



Page 4

**With your help, we are making a difference in the work we do.
We appreciate the many ways you support these important efforts!**

You may have received this newsletter even though your membership is recently lapsed. We hope you'll consider renewing at this time. Your continued support is important to our efforts.

\$40—Family Membership \$60—Business Membership

\$30—Individual Membership \$15—Student or Living Lightly

Other

Names of Oregon Rural Action members
(anyone in the household over 18 years)

Name: _____

Email: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone (H) _____ Phone (W): _____

Please make checks payable to Oregon Rural Action
Send to: PO Box 1231·La Grande, Oregon 97850
General donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by US tax law



Oregon Rural Action
PO Box 1231
La Grande, Oregon 97850

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

Return Service Requested



30% Post Consumer