THE OTHER OREGON

A VOICE FOR RURAL OREGON

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COASTAL OREGON JOINS FISH UTILIZATION PROJECT

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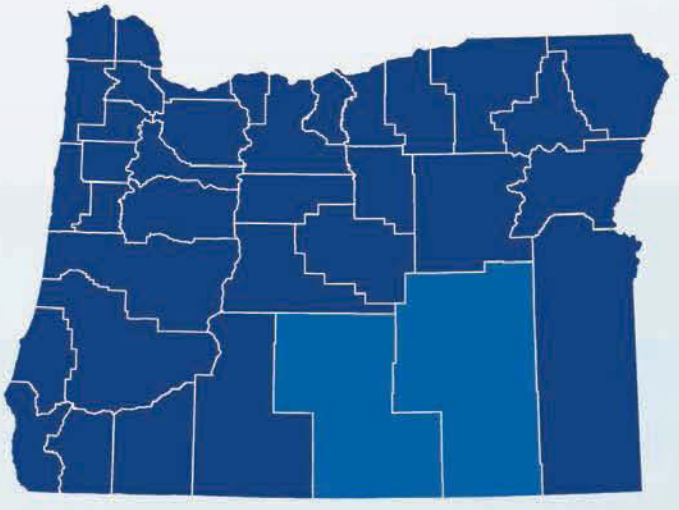

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Making a living from the land or sea has always been hard. The hours are long, the work is hard, and profits can be elusive.

In this edition of The Other Oregon we have a pair of stories that look at the challenges and opportunities.

Kyle Odegard writes about the trials of ranching families in Lake County who this winter faced all of the issues common to the ranching life, then had to endure the predations of a killer wolf for three weeks.

Not only did the wolf kill cattle, it threatened humans — including children in the school yard. Unfortunately, the wolf's protected status and the Endangered Species Act made state wildlife officials reluctant to take lethal action against the apex predator.

It's a compelling story because it's easy to imagine the terror local residents felt as the wolf lurked somewhere in the area.

Not all tales of people making a living from the natural world are depressing.

Carolyn Campbell brings us a story about people looking for ways to increase the value of the fish caught by Oregon's commercial fishing industry. By leveraging innovative and collaborative business models, Oregon hopes to increase the economic value of each fish, while creating a more sustainable and ocean economy.

A group of stakeholders is promoting Iceland's 100% fish utilization project, a model reshaping the seafood industry by creating leather, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and other high-value products made from fish waste.

It's a promising concept that could help keep the fishing industry economically sustainable for Oregonians who depend upon it for their livelihoods.

Of course, these aren't the only compelling stories in this edition. But, I'll let you experience the joy of serendipitous discovery as you explore the pages that follow.

— Joe Beach

SPRING 2025

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On the cover: Kiara Caruso, the Blue Foods coordinator at Yaquina lab, displays lingcod leather potential for fashion accessories.

PHOTO BY CAROLYN CAMPBELL

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COVER STORY

COASTAL OREGON JOINS GLOBALLY ACCLAIMED 100% FISH UTILIZATION PROJECT

By leveraging innovative and collaborative business models, Oregon hopes to increase the economic value of each fish, while creating a more sustainable and ocean economy.

STORY & PHOTOS BY CAROLYN CAMPBELL

Can an $18 fish be worth $7,400? The answer, according Marcus Hinz, Oregon Coast Visitors Association's (OCVA) executive director, lies in Iceland's 100% fish utilization project, a model reshaping the seafood industry by creating leather, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and other high-value products made from fish waste.

On a rainy day in February, nearly 100 people representing diverse industries including fishers, processors, business incubators, entrepreneurs, artists and makers, educators, and resource providers gathered at Ecotrust's Redd Building in Portland for the Oregon's first Blue Foods Symposium.

Welcoming attendees, Hinz shared the origins of the 100% utilization initiative.

"During the pandemic, when OCVA learned local restaurants couldn't get seafood, we commissioned a study to understand why. Through the study we learned that 90% of the seafood consumed on the Oregon Coast is not sourced locally. Planes are flying out with the high-quality seafood landed off our shores. Planes are flying in with imported, often lower quality seafood. The ocean is dying because of the carbon footprint due to fish waste. This is nothing short of madness. As a tourism industry that's not a product we want to sell, or the story we want to tell."

Alarmed by the study's finding, OCVA created the Oregon Ocean Cluster (OOC) to enhance the use of local sustainable seafood in small businesses through infrastructure investments, workforce training, and partnership development. In 2021, Yaquina Lab in Newport became the first shared-use facility of its kind in Lincoln County to provide space and equipment for seafood and farm businesses to process, package, and store their products. Central Coast Food Web was founded in 2023 to help local producers expand their markets.

In 2024, learning of the accomplishments of the Iceland Ocean Cluster (IOC), OVCA partnered with the internationally acclaimed industrial hub and networking organization to introduce 100% fish utilization concepts to OOC members and industry leaders.

▲ Kiara Caruso demonstrates how she removed fish scales using a kitchen spoon.

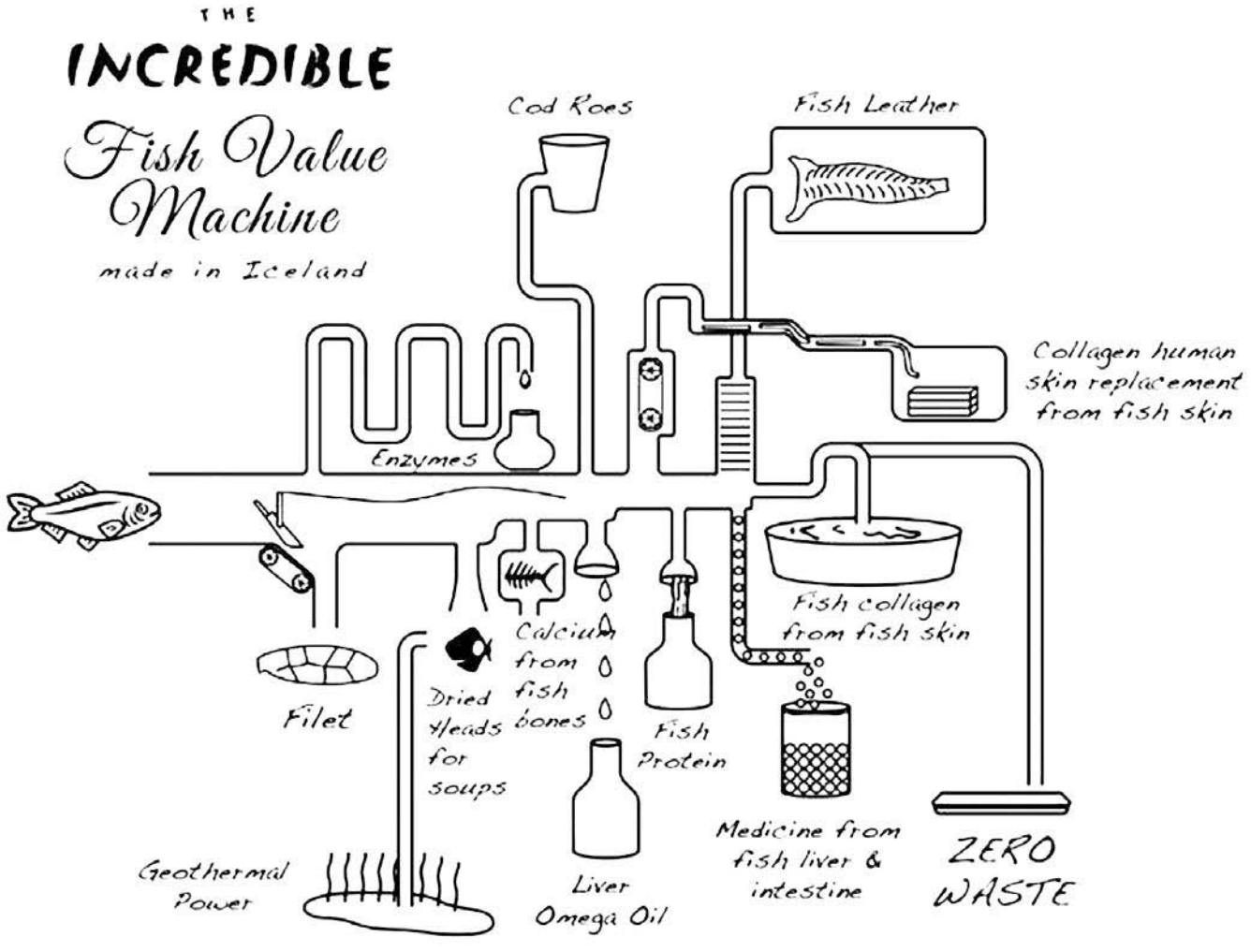
Alarmed by the study's finding, OCVA created the Oregon Ocean Cluster (OOC) to enhance the use of local sustainable seafood in small businesses through infrastructure investments, workforce training, and partnership development.

▲ Dr. Alexandra Leeper, Tasha Nathanson - 7 leagues fish tannery, and Ellen Bascom - Sofiskur jewelry discuss 100% fish utilization.

▲ Dr. Alexandra Leeper introducing 100% fish utilization to Oregon Ocean Cluster at Blue Foods Symposium.

Alexandra Leeper, the Iceland Ocean Cluster's CEO, led a series of workshops inviting participants to reimagine fish waste by strengthening cross sector partnerships to create robust new markets using discarded or underutilized by-products.

During presentations Leeper's Incredible Fish Value Machine diagram demonstrated how the value of a single cod in Iceland rose from $12 to $4,700, by producing high-value goods from what has previously been considered waste. Products included production-grade commercial leather as well as skin grafts for wound healing made from fish skin, anti-aging creams from collagen, along with health supplements from bones, proteins, and organs. The goal of 100% fish, according to Leeper, is to increase the economic value of each fish while also creating a more sustainable and circular economy. In a matter of months, over 90 organizations and industries participated in the presentations featuring the work of the Iceland Ocean Cluster. »



▲ **Fish Value chart from Iceland.**
ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF ICELAND OCEAN CLUSTER

Alexandra Leeper, the featured speaker at the Blue Foods Forum, shared that since its inception in 2011, the Iceland Ocean Cluster's philosophy of full utilization and sustainability has gained global recognition with sister clusters emerging in Canada, Denmark, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and the U.S.. Central to IOC's success is the Iceland Ocean Cluster House, a business incubation hub fostering collaboration between fishers, entrepreneurs, businesses, and researchers with the goal of creating high value products from marine resources ensuring sustainable and profitable growth.

"A number of the great innovative products have emerged from rural communities," Leeper stated. The challenge for many rural regions, though, is that industries located in marginalized places often lack access to R&D, investors, and accelerators. Building partnerships that foster cross-sector innovation, key to ensuring the long-term socio-economic viability in these communities.

Explaining the process of building clusters, Leeper explained, "When we work with new clusters, we often recommend they start with what we term, the 'low hanging fruit,' the ideas that don´t take huge investment or scale but can create generate interest and demonstrate value while more capital- and labor-intensive businesses are developed."

In Oregon, like other clusters, the "low-hanging fruit" product is fish leather. Most often harvested from commercial fisheries then processed and dyed to create a durable leather, fish leather is increasingly used in high-fashion clothing, artisan handbags, designer baskets, sleek wallets, journal covers, and other products.

While many processors in Oregon recycle their carcasses and skins into compost and pet food, 100% fish advocates promote fish leather as an important value-added product, both economically and culturally. In Oregon, Lisa Norton, Mark Hazelton, and Kiara Caruso have been learning fish skin tanning and sharing the knowledge within their respective communities.

For Norton, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz, the process has provided a crucial connection to a past destroyed by colonization. Pulling a rockfish skin from an egg-based tanning solution, Norton reflected on traditional uses of fish skin.

While many processors in Oregon recycle their carcasses and skins into compost and pet food, 100% fish advocates promote fish leather as an important value-added product, both economically and culturally.

"I haven't yet found examples of fish leather used traditionally in Oregon, but Tribes in northern, colder climates used fish leather for shoes and clothing. Later, stretching a dried hide to make it supple, she added, "The pattern of the rockfish would be a beautiful inlay in powwow regalia."

Mark Hazleton, a small-scale farmer and school administrator in Kings Valley, has been tanning yak hides for years. When Yaquina Labs offered skins for free, Hazelton took the opportunity to teach high school students leather making using tannins from bark extract.

At a worktable in the corner of his shop, a dozen fish skins lay out to dry. Pointing to a hide a bit too red, he said, "There's a bit of a learning curve, for sure." When asked why it was important to maximize the 'waste' of fish, Hazelton reflected, "If we are going to honor the animals that give us food, we need to use every part of them."

Kiara Caruso, the Blue Foods coordinator at Yaquina lab is excited by the opportunities leather production could provide local crafters and artisans. Having recently completed an online Fishskin Tanning Class through The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) she held a freshly tanned Lingcod to her waist, "It would make a beautiful belt."

While fish leather workshops get underway, OCVA and OOC partners are meeting with cross-sector networks including fisheries, academic research institutions, workforce development organizations, policymakers, product innovators, designers and architects to discuss ways to discuss 'investment heavy' infrastructure necessary for processing, product design and development, marketing and sales.

Ben Gates, principal architect for Urban Patterns, is currently pursuing a multi-tenant project in Astoria. Reflecting on the importance of venture capital investment for 100% fish Gates asserted, "Coastal properties are rapidly being consumed by shops and vacation homes pricing out fishermen and others who've lived off the ocean for generations. When the fishing industry competes against tourism, they consistently lose. But if we can build affordable multi-use spaces, designed similarly to the Iceland Ocean Cluster's House, both tourism and rural economies can thrive, together. Now that's a win-win!" »

▲ **Art Design Xchange founder Kelley Roy (right) and local artisan showcase commercially tanned fish leather at Blue Foods Symposium.**

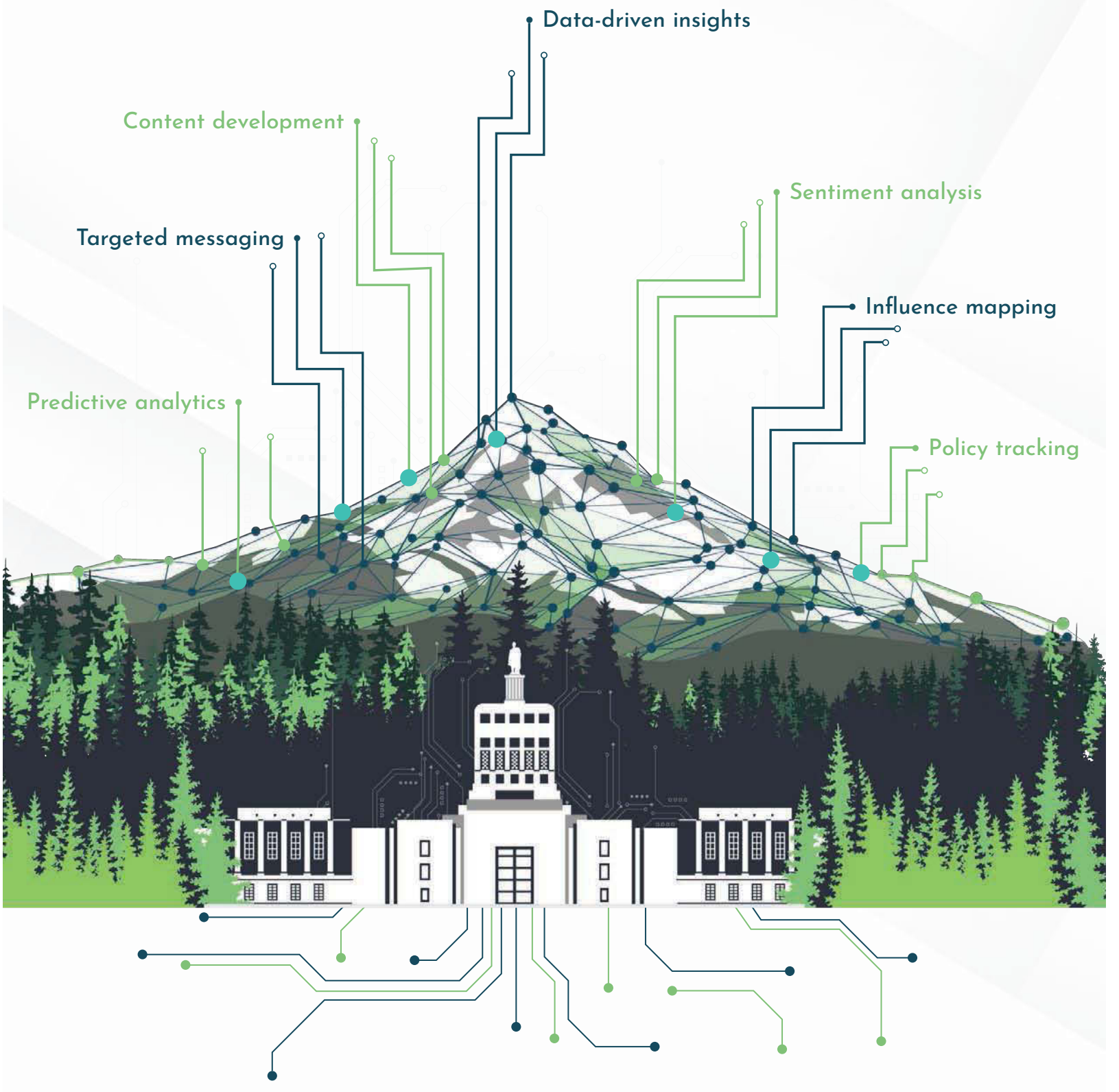
The challenge, according to Gates, is cost and time. Investing public and private capital today is crucial."

On March 6, just weeks after the Blue Foods symposium, OCVA announced that the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade would soon hold public hearing for HB2969. The bill appropriated $840,000 to the Oregon Coast Visitors Association to replicate the success of the 100% Fish Project, utilizing fish for non-food product manufacturing.

Rosey Thomas Executive Director of Bay Area Chamber of Commerce in Coos Bay believes 100% Fish utilization initiatives legislation could revolutionize Oregon's Fishing Industry. Her letter to the committed stated, HB2969 represents a visionary step toward a more sustainable and prosperous future for Oregon's fishing industry. By embracing principals of 100% fish utilization, we can unlock new economic potentials, support our coastal communities, and position Oregon as a leader in innovative and sustainable practices."

As the bill makes its way through the Committee, Hinz commended efforts of legislators across the coastal region to strategically invest in long-term growth, job creation, innovation, and community vitality. "We couldn't have gotten this far without the funding streams supported by our coastal and regional legislators. If we are to offer authentic experiences to travelers, we must create opportunities that strengthen local economies while protecting our ocean."

Carolyn Campbell is a freelance writer.



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HIGH TECH WORK, RUNDOWN SPACE

Oregon's top vet lab looks to protect against new threats

STORY & PHOTOS BY KYLE ODEGARD

For decades, the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory has served veterinarians, livestock producers and pet owners across the state, quickly processing samples and identifying diseases.

Lately, the Oregon State University facility also has been on the frontlines protecting human health against emerging zoonotic infectious threats — diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

First it was COVID, then highly pathogenic avian influenza.

During the pandemic, the lab processed 300,000 human coronavirus tests.

The OVDL, part of OSU's Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine, also saw an increased workload with bird flu.

The OVDL did roughly 12,200 molecular tests to diagnose all diseases in fiscal 2021. In the past six months, there have been about 20,000 tests from across the West.

Samples can't wait with so much on the line for farmers and the public, said Kurt Williams, OVDL director.

So OVDL employees are working late hours on tight timelines to help halt the spread of diseases, and doing so in cramped and rundown buildings.

Williams said the situation risks burnout.

"It's this unrelenting problem. But we understand that's why we're here," Williams said.

Seeking new lab buildings

Williams said despite funding increases from the Oregon Legislature, more resources are needed.

He wants to launch a campaign to hire additional workers, purchase upgraded equipment and build new laboratories, both in Corvallis and at OSU's Cascades Campus in Bend.

Donations and public funding would help pay for facilities, which could cost upwards of $100 million, Williams said. »

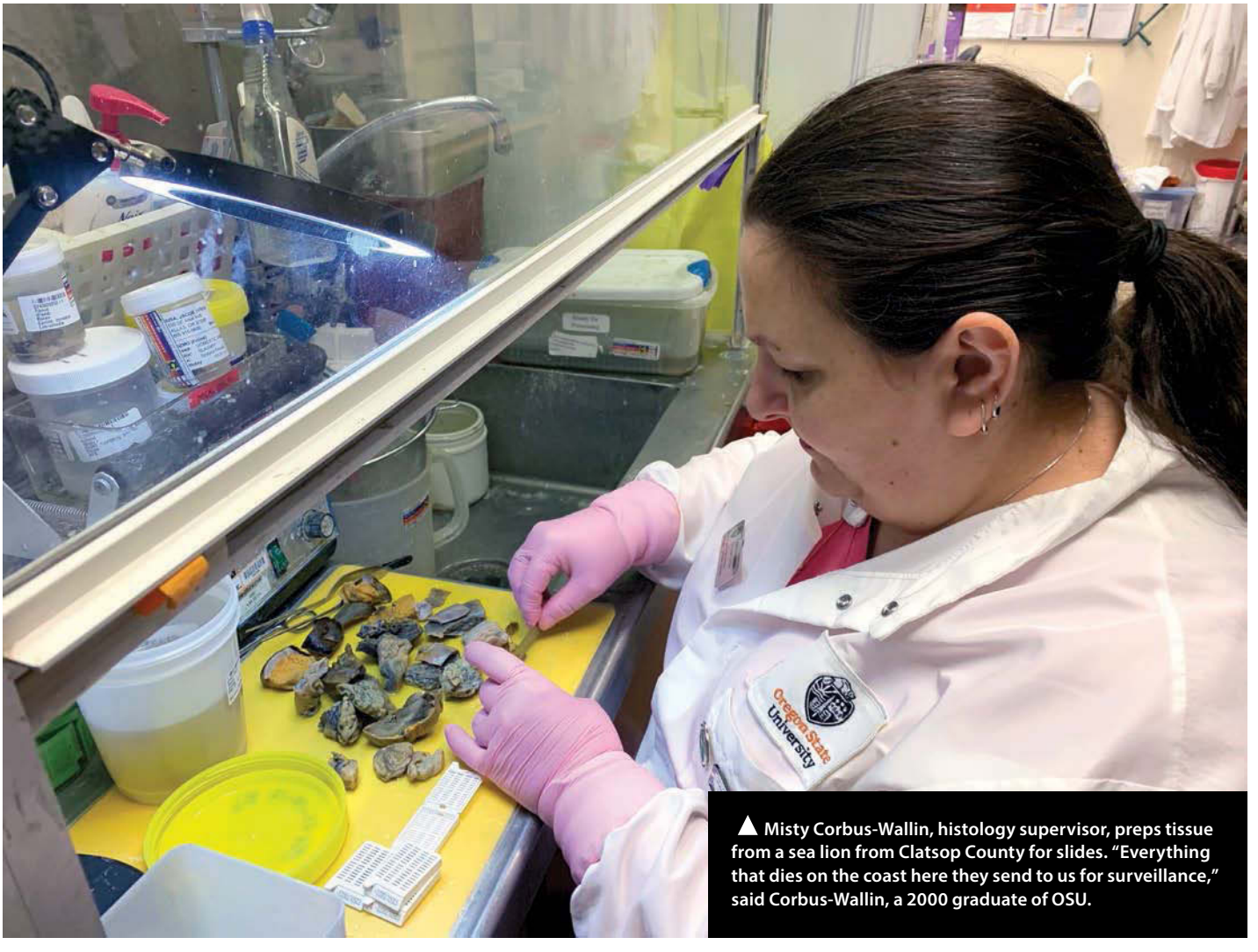
▲ Kay Fischer, a semi-retired histologist, slices tumor samples for diagnosis.

"The overall protective services that the diagnostic lab can provide benefits every single animal across the state with discoveries of what are the new threats."

— Rep. Ken Helm

▲ Dawn Dirks, Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory supervisor for molecular diagnostics, virology and serology,

▲ Tessa Walker, an Oregon State University student worker at the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, holds up a bird sample that will be tested for highly pathogenic avian influenza.



▲ Misty Corbus-Wallin, histology supervisor, preps tissue from a sea lion from Clatsop County for slides. "Everything that dies on the coast here they send to us for surveillance," said Corbus-Wallin, a 2000 graduate of OSU.

"The benefits long term, it would pay for itself. We'd be prepared for things we're not anticipating," Williams said.

And new diseases surely are coming.

Oregon Rep. Ken Helm, the main contact for the lab in the Legislature, said he was happy Williams was looking forward.

"This really needs to be a joint effort. The reality is that state dollars won't be adequate to do this alone," the Beaverton Democrat added.

He hoped veterinarians and veterinary clinics would donate for improvements.

"The overall protective services that the diagnostic lab can provide benefits every single animal across the state with discoveries of what are the new threats," Helm said.

"There's no doubt we're not as prepared as we should be. No doubt," he added.

Dawn Dirks, OVDL supervisor for molecular diagnostics, virology and serology, said working conditions hurt morale.

"It's really challenging. It takes a significant amount of time to get things funded to get repairs to happen," Dirks said.

As rows of lab machinery hummed and computers connected to them analyzed genetic material, Dirks talked about leaky toilets and sinks. Overhead, brown circular water stains, like giant coffee mug marks, adorned white ceiling tiles.

Duct tape and cardboard supported an air conditioning unit in a nearby room.

Williams said OVDL workers believe in their mission.

Lab technician Caitlin Van Meter, who graduated from OSU last year, said she enjoys helping solve major problems.

"They'll put up with grossly inadequate facilities to keep pursuing the larger objective," Williams said.

Outdated facilities, new threats

State Veterinarian Ryan Scholz of the Oregon Department of Agriculture said OVDL facilities are designed for gentler risks.

Labs are held in the Veterinary Research Laboratory, built in 1952, as well as nearby Magruder Hall, which opened in 1981.

"Most of the diseases that were a regulatory concern back then don't exist anymore. … Now we're dealing with these fast moving diseases that have significant zoonotic exposure risks and we're doing it in the same facility," Scholz said.

For example, Magruder Hall's necropsy suite didn't have safety measures so workers could examine a Crook County pig with HPAI.

Instead, Williams and three workers did their necropsy examination and harvested tissue samples at a nearby campus.

Officials left Eastern Oregon at 5 p.m. on a Friday. They had test results at 8 a.m. the next morning.

Scholz said that with existing OVDL buildings, Oregon can't expect protection against new and more dangerous zoonotic diseases.

"Our job is to make sure we're prepared for what's coming down the road. I don't think we can do that," he said.

▲ Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory director Kurt Williams

Fast results

The OVDL, which has 50 workers, is Oregon's only member of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, allowing it to test for certain diseases, including several zoonotic diseases per USDA regulations.

The network is designed to protect U.S. agriculture from high threat animal diseases, including those of foreign origin.

Federal and state agencies rely on the lab for testing.

Officials can act on OVDL results without confirmation from a national laboratory, where samples can wait for weeks.

Scholz said agencies can respond rapidly, often the same day farmers notice diseases, thanks to the OVDL.

With COVID, which also impacted animal populations, scientists became more sensitive to emerging threats.

Williams acknowledged some people think HPAI and a potential pandemic are a hoax.

"COVID should have been a wake up call to all of us about where we sit in the world," Williams said.

Throughout history, infectious diseases have periodically brought civilizations to their knees.

Helm, the Oregon representative, said a trailing pattern exists. Throughout history, people quickly forget how horrible pandemics were.

"In our rush to get back to normal, we don't think about the next time," Helm said.

HPAI's impact isn't clear but leaders shouldn't take it lightly, Williams said.

Since HPAI was first detected in the U.S. in February 2022, it's resulted in the death of 30 million birds in commercial and backyard flocks, according to the USDA.

▲ Oregon Department of Agriculture State Veterinarian Ryan Scholz

The virus, which is spread by migrating wild birds, has resulted in farm losses and supply shortages, pushing up the cost of poultry and eggs.

While authorities believe the risk to humans is low, scientists have become more concerned with HPAI moving through mammals, Williams said.

HPAI has been found in 959 dairy herds in 16 states, though Oregon didn't have a confirmed case as of Feb. 6.

A second strain of HPAI — the same type that resulted in the nation's only human death from the virus in Louisiana — has been detected in dairy herds in Nevada.

So far, the nation has had 67 human cases, with 38 from California, 11 from Washington and one from Oregon. Almost all stem from dairy or poultry operations.

Several other mammal species also have been infected.

Williams said four pigs that tested positive in Oregon are particularly concerning. Pigs are susceptible to viruses from both birds and humans, which could cause intermingling and mutations.

Williams said a necropsy he performed on a domestic cat with HPAI was alarming, showing devastating injury to the lungs and inflammation in the brain and other organ systems.

"This virus, unfortunately, isn't going anywhere," Williams said.

Williams said the state is taking the right steps to protect the public, including testing of farmworkers and residents exposed to outbreaks, birds in suspected commercial and backyard cases, wild animals and milk from dairy herds.

Since December, the OVDL has received 60 to 120 milk batches per week.

California declared an emergency with HPAI spreading through its dairies, and laboratories there have been inundated with milk testing.

The OVDL now gets numerous wild bird samples from California and other states.

New and emerging threats

Scientists believe zoonotic diseases are increasing due to factors such as climate change, habitat loss and globalization.

"We've had disease after disease that are new," Scholz said.

People — and animals — can travel more easily than ever before, bringing new viruses with them.

As the human population increases and spreads out, changing land uses, species that haven't been in close proximity to people may transmit new diseases.

Increased temperatures and humidity raise the likelihood of spillover diseases, in part because creatures' ranges and migratory patterns change.

That's happening now with a mosquito that carries dengue, which was inadvertently introduced to the country.

In July, one of those insects was found for the first time in Oregon in Jackson County.

Another mosquito borne disease, West Nile virus, has been in Oregon for decades but will likely spread. »

▲ Caitlin Van Meter, lab technician, and Tessa Walker, an Oregon State University student worker, open boxes and process samples from wild birds for testing for highly pathogenic avian influenza.

In 2024, the OVDL tested about 1,200 pools of mosquitos, with up to 50 insects per pool.

Other diseases also are on scientists' radar.Julia Burco, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife veterinarian, said she was worried about leptospirosis, a disease found in seals and sea lions.

Then there's chronic wasting disease.

CWD impacts deer and elk, and it hasn't been detected in Oregon yet.

"We know it's in so many states now. We're surrounded by it on all sides," said Ashley Reeder, ODFW CWD coordinator.

The OVDL is preparing a new space for testing for CWD and it should be ready for hunting season.

Oregon and other states currently send samples to Colorado and testing usually takes weeks.

Evidence doesn't show the disease is transmissible to humans, but hunters shouldn't eat tainted meat.

While the ODFW has increased its testing, with 4,000 samples in 2024, Williams said there probably isn't enough being done given the state's large populations of deer and elk.

Funding increase, budget deficit

The CWD testing space is thanks to extra funding from the Oregon Legislature.

From fiscal 2020 to 2023, the OVDL budget was in the range of $2.2 million to $2.4 million. It increased to $3.1 million in 2024 and then to more than $5 million for increased testing of CWD and other illnesses.

Renewed funding, with a slight increase, is before the Legislature.

But Williams said that doesn't solve the OVDL's budget problem given current demands.

"When you look at the cost of people, supplies, equipment building maintenance, we have a budget deficit," Williams said.

Williams administers the ODVL, but he's also on the facility's rotating week-long necropsy duty. It's important to show folks he can get his hands dirty, but he also enjoys the work and doesn't just want to be an office manager.

He can examine anything from a mouse to a horse or a sea lion.

Every week he sees something new and he's on the lookout for troubling signs.

"Infectious disease is always out there lurking and changing," Williams said.

Kyle Odegard is a reporter for the Capital Press.

When Eastern Oregon University student Addison Bonzani stepped into the fast-paced heart of downtown Portland for the first time, it wasn't just a class trip—it was a turning point. As a Pendleton native, Addison had never experienced city life up close. Now, thanks to EOU's Urban-Rural Ambassador Program, she helps bridge the divide between Oregon's communities—one conversation at a time.

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SURVIVING IN CENTRAL OREGON

For campers living east of Redmond, 'Every day is a struggle'

STORY BY DAVID DUDLEY FOR JOURNALISM LAB
PHOTOS BY JOE KLINE

Kim "Tattoo Kimmy" Moss visited a cross that stands in the middle of a large encampment to the east of Redmond on a recent afternoon in February.

Heavy snowfall from the previous night blanketed the area with about 4 inches of snow. The bright afternoon sun reflected off the snow, making the light exceptionally bright. The network of roads, if they can be called that, lead to various camps composed of parked RVs, cars and trucks, and campers placed upon cinder blocks.

While some advocates call the encampment The Junipers, Moss and her friends call it "the dirt."

One of those friends, Patricia Griffith, built the cross when she'd kicked her meth habit. As Moss and Griffith stood before the cross, Moss pointed to some black scrawl.

"This is my friend 'Guy,"' she said. "He died of pneumonia, which is easy to get out here. When I heard the news, my first thought was: 'I didn't visit him often enough.' Now, he's gone."

Like Guy, Moss is among more than 770,000 homeless people nationwide who were counted in the 2024 annual Point in Time count, which is conducted by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). That number represents an 18% increase from the previous year, and is a record high. The previous record was 653,104 set the year before. HUD said soaring rents and the end of pandemic protections are to blame for the jump in those numbers.

In Central Oregon, 1,799 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2024, according to a statewide PIT count. Moss belongs to a subgroup who are considered "chronically homeless." That means she's experienced homelessness for at least a year, and she's also battling a terminal illness and substance use disorder. Those factors often compound one another, which makes it harder to get back into housing once they become homeless.

While Moss has learned to live in "the dirt" during the past decade, she knows that life there is precarious. She feels an urgency to get out, but she must break through a number of barriers to escape.

"I want to find a home," she said. "But I don't know how. I don't want my name on this cross."

▲ Kimmy Moss looks at a memorial her friend, Patricia Griffith, built to remember friends who have died or left in an encampment where she lives east of Redmond. The memorial is at Griffith's former campsite, and Moss lives nearby.

In Central Oregon, 1,799 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2024, according to a statewide PIT count. Moss belongs to a subgroup who are considered "chronically homeless." That means she's experienced homelessness for at least a year.

'I did whatever I could to survive'

Born and raised in Redmond, Moss said she was just 15 years old when she hit the road to follow the Grateful Dead. She criss-crossed the country in pursuit of the Dead's next gig, until frontman Jerry Garcia died in 1995.

"That was the end of an era for me," said the 49-year-old, who now lives among hundreds of people in The Junipers. "I was 21 then, hitchhiking. I had no idea where I'd go next, or what I would do."

Though she returned to Redmond a couple of months later, it wouldn't be the last time she hit the road in pursuit of happiness.

She eventually moved to Kingston, N.Y., where she worked for a company that made tie-died Grateful Dead T-shirts. She also worked as an industrial seamstress, and she held jobs at fast food restaurants like Burger King.

"I did whatever I could to survive," she said.

While she was on the road, Moss was more or less homeless. She didn't know what a stable home was until 1998, she said, when she was married.

"I had my first of four daughters around that time," Moss said. Then, she trailed off into silence.

"The hardest day of my life was when I chose to adopt my four daughters out to my brother," Moss added after a pause.

That choice, as many others, was dictated by her addiction to meth. Moss said that addiction is one of the key factors that pushed her to join hundreds of others who live in "the dirt."

"I'd come out here to hang out with my friends," said Moss. "I've lived out here for 10 years, on and off."

Moss said the last time she had a home of her own was between 2019-21, when she shared a Redmond apartment with her best friend JoAnne.

"But then, she died," Moss said. "I tried to keep the apartment but had to let it go. I couldn't afford it on my own."

That's when she returned to The Junipers, broken.

What does it mean to live in 'the dirt?'

In the beginning, Moss lived in a tent. But it was unsustainable due to extreme cold and heavy snow, among other factors. Then, she was the recipient of a random act of kindness.

"Some friends gave me a camp trailer," Moss said. "It was nice. But about seven months later, it burned to the ground and I had to start all over again."

Whether the fires are caused by operator error, malfunctioning propane accessories, or arson, burning is a common fate for many things in "the dirt."

"It's bad," Moss said, "but it's also an occasion for people to come together, to help each other out, as neighbors are supposed to do."

Though she appreciates those moments when the community comes together to help each other, she prefers solitude. That's why she chooses to live in a remote corner of the encampment.

"It's away from others, but still close to town," she said. "You've got to have a way to get to town, otherwise everything's so much harder." »

▶ **Kimmy Moss stands near a large encampment where she has lived for approximately 10 years east of Redmond. Moss said that despite the barriers, she hopes to find housing away from "the dirt".**

Moss said she's grateful for the service providers and advocates — which include Jericho Road, Mosaic Health, Shepherd's House, and a slew of others — who visit a site off of Antler Road each Friday. They bring food, clothing, supplies, medical care and propane.

"I'm grateful for the propane, of course," she said. "Whether it's for cooking or heating, it's so helpful."

But that doesn't solve all of her worries.

"Every year, as winter sets in, people become more shady," she said. "They start to wonder how they're going to survive. You can hear them walking through the trees at night. It's scary."

She's seen her share of people come and go. Some of them find a home and move away.

"Some of them die," she said. "That's why I hug all of my friends every time I see them. I don't know if I'll ever see them again."

A foot in the door

Moss hasn't given up hope that she will one day have her own home again, but she knows it will be an uphill battle. The housing supply is still significantly less than demand. The city of Redmond will need to add 1,500 affordable housing units in the next 20 years to meet demand.

But Moss can't wait 10 years, and she'll have to wait and see whether rent will ever be affordable with her income.

"I'm on disability," said Moss. "I get a little less than $1,000 a month. It's nowhere near enough to get my own place."

That income has been a boon, she said, but it unexpectedly impacted her overall finances.

"I used to get $200 a month in SNAP benefits," she said. "Since I was approved for disability, they cut the SNAP benefits to $90."

In which case, Moss said she needs to find two or three reliable roommates.

"Even then, we need to find a private owner," Moss said. "They're usually a little more lax in their requirements than big apartment complexes."

Moss is referring there to criminal background, credit and reference checks, which are ubiquitous when applying for rentals. While Moss may not have a criminal record, many people who have experienced homelessness do, which adds another challenge to being approved for a rental.

When asked how advocates can help her, and those in similar situations, her reply was deceptively simple.

"Just help me get my foot in the door," she said. "I know it's not that easy, but we need help."

In the meantime, she feels time slipping away. Moss said that, since Guy's death, she's been in a slump.

"He took care of me when I needed help," she said. "Five of my friends have died out here. It's hard to live without running water, plumbing, heat. Every day is a struggle."

David Dudley is a writer for Journalism Lab in Bend.

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CENTRAL OREGON EGG FARMING

Producers works to keep up with demand

STORY BY SUZANNE ROIG
PHOTOS BY DEAN GUERNSEY

▲ Janelle Maricle, co-owner of Well Rooted Farms with freshly collected eggs.

At Well Rooted Farms in Tumalo, the phone rings off the hook with customers seeking to buy eggs.

Frank Maricle, who owns the farm with his wife Janelle Maricle, supply eggs mainly to restaurants and, if there's enough, to local grocery stores.

"We have 2,200 hens and that's not nearly enough," Maricle said. "There's no large egg production in Central Oregon to speak of. We're trying to change that. We're considered a small producer."

Egg prices at grocery stores have more than doubled since last year. Grocery stores are rationing the amount consumers can buy and often shelves are empty. The supply shortage is due in part to the avian influenza.

The soaring price of eggs has prompted some residents to consider raising their own egg-laying chickens. At Wilco, a feed supply chain with stores in Oregon, Washington and California, weekly delivery of chicks are snapped up. At Coastal Farm & Ranch in Redmond, Bella Dannis, says that the 1,000 chicks delivered last week are all gone.

It's typical for this time of year, Dannis said. But this year seems busier as people not only come in for chicks to replenish their flock, but backyard farmers are also seeking to raise their own chickens.

It takes chicks 16 to 20 weeks before they can start laying eggs. One chicken can.

Avian flu

The egg crisis goes back to 2022 when the outbreak of the highly pathogenic avian influenza struck commercial poultry flocks. More than 100 million chickens have been killed nationwide in an attempt to stop the spread of the disease, also known as H5N1. The virus can also spread to cows, pigs and people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is no known person-to-person spread of the disease.

In Central Oregon, the most recent case found in Deschutes County was in backyard poultry in December, according to Oregon Department of Agriculture data. There was one case in October in backyard pigs in Crook County and no recent cases in Jefferson County, according to Oregon Department of Agriculture data. No other details about the cases are available from the department.

At Well Rooted Farms, Maricle had a scare last month when a bird showed signs of an illness that turned out not to be related to the avian flu, he said.

"I had some sick chickens and alerted the department of ag," Maricle said. "The department put me in quarantine even before the test results were back. They locked me down. But it turned out to be a sick bird," not H5N1.

Meeting the demand

At Root Down Acres, a 20-acre family farm in Bend that sells eggs, honey and lamb, owner Ariel Siebe is always thinking ahead of how to mitigate risks to the crops and the environment. When a nearby flock was affected by the avian flu, she decided to separate her flock into two groups that lived on different areas of the farm as a way to mitigate any losses, Siebe said.

"Since January, we've seen a dramatic increase in folks looking for a reliable supply of eggs," Siebe said. "We sell our eggs to our weekly egg subscribers and have a growing standby list that we rotate through whenever we have a surplus."

It's not easy raising chickens in Central Oregon. The harsh temperature swings and long winters stress the chickens. At Well Rooted, the chickens are kept in greenhouse structures at night and allowed to roam in pasture land.

"The temperature swings stress out the birds," Maricle said. "That's why there's not a lot of major egg producers here. The capital needed to build a barn is expensive. It's a rough area to raise chickens. Our production is up and down all the time."

Backyard producers

On a small 2.5 acre farm, Maegan Hindson and her husband, James Radnich, raise chickens and vegetables at Cultivate Farms in northeast Bend. Their 50 chickens produce about four dozen eggs a day that Hindson sells subscriptions for in community supported agriculture boxes.

"Raising chickens is a ton of work," Hindson said. "We produce a high quality product. Our hens are raised on pasture land and we supplement with feed that is soy and corn free.

"When you know your farmer, you know what you're eating. The chickens get fresh air and sunlight. When you buy eggs in the grocery store, you don't really know what organic or free range really means. "

At Locavore, a farmers market on Third Street in Bend, keeping the egg fridge stocked has been a challenge, said Lexie Houchins-Park, Locavore outreach coordinator. Like other stores, Locavore has limited sales per customer to two dozen eggs, Houchins-Park said.

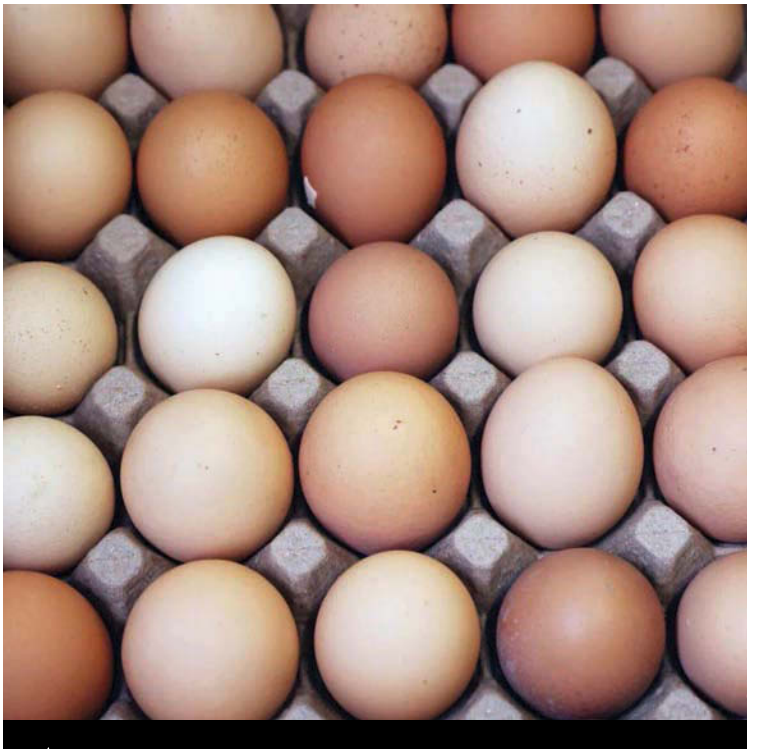
"We too have had issues keeping local eggs stocked during the winter, which is normal given they don't lay when it's too cold, "Houchins-Park said. "Our small local farmers prioritize the well-being and natural behaviors of the chickens, so we acknowledge that we'll see less in the winter."

At Locavore, the prices have been kept fairly stable, despite the soaring prices at the grocery stores.

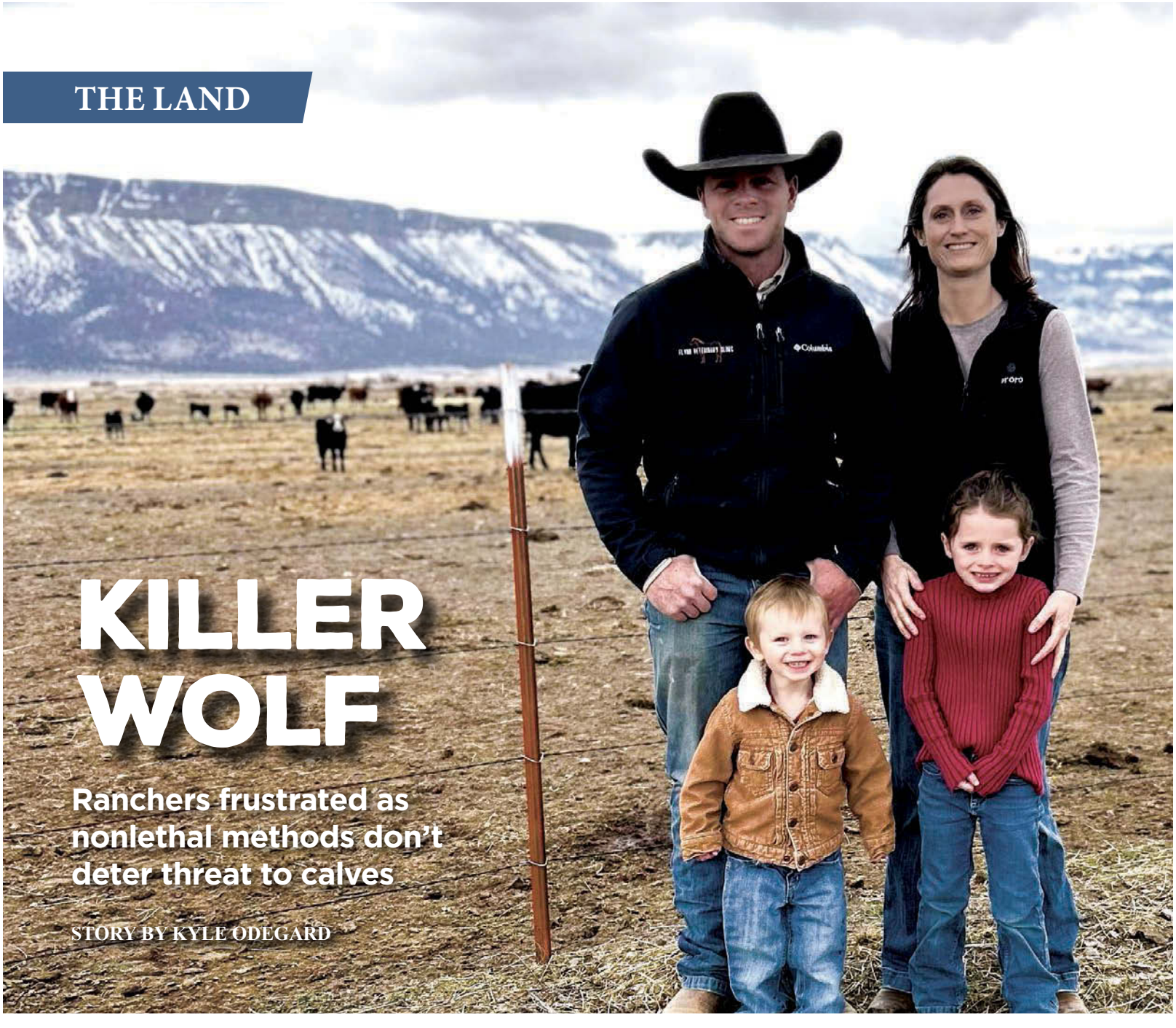
"We're literally turning down customers every day," Maricle said. "We haven't raised our prices as high as the consumer prices are out there. We really are a food desert out here in Central Oregon."

Suzanne Roig is a reporter for The Bulletin in Bend.

▲ Hyline brown chickens roam a pasture at Well Rooted Farms.



▲ A crate of eggs ready for market at Well Rooted Farms.



KILLER WOLF

Ranchers frustrated as nonlethal methods don't deter threat to calves

STORY BY KYLE ODEGARD

This calving season was the worst many ranchers had ever experienced, with blizzard conditions in the open landscape of Lake County, Ore.

Then the wolf arrived.

Tom Flynn of T7 Cattle saw the wolf's tracks the morning of Jan. 30 as he drove a tractor to a feed ground on his family's 5,000 acres.

"I found him on a fresh kill," he said.

Flynn parked the tractor and feed trailer near the dead calf but the commotion never spooked the wolf away and it stayed within 50 yards, watching and waiting.

"That was the big concern — he just had no fear," Flynn said.

Killing spree

Within three weeks, the radio-collared gray wolf known as OR 158 killed five calves in Lake County and another in neighboring Klamath County.

OR 158 also was the prime suspect in three additional calf deaths during that span in Lake County, according to an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife spokeswoman.

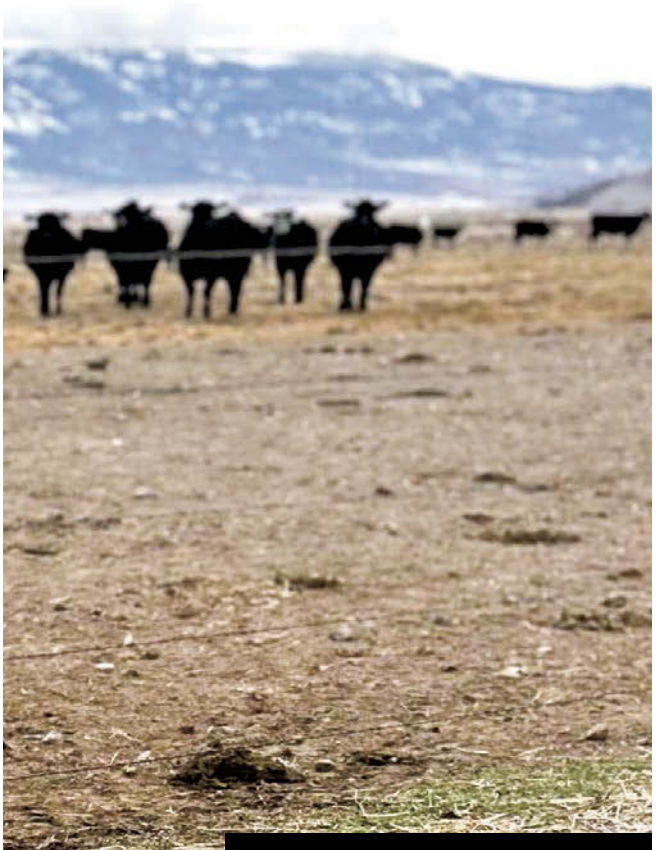
(Since June in Oregon, OR 158 was responsible for six calf deaths, two injured calves and is the suspected cause of four more livestock depredations.)

Ranchers expect to find more carcasses once the snow melts from the brush and sand dunes.

OR 158 was killed by authorities Feb. 26 because it posed a threat to human safety, according to ODFW.

Locals said the apex predator prowled close to houses with children and an elementary school bus stop.

"We went through three weeks of hell with him here," Flynn said.



◀ Tom and Elise Flynn pose with their son Buster Jack and daughter Layne at their ranch in Lake County, Oregon. A gray wolf killed three calves on their acreage and came within 100 yards of their home. For weeks, the family kept the youngsters locked up in the house unless they were closely supervised.

Frustrations mount

Frustrated ranchers said the animal's endangered species designation in western Oregon led authorities to extensively prioritize non-lethal deterrents.

That resulted in increased costs to ag operations, the death of more calves and stress to families, ranchers said.

"I'm not saying there needs to be a hunting season on wolves, but when you have a habitual offender, there needs to be tools in the toolbox besides less than lethal," said Justin Ferrell, who owns T Bar Livestock.

Two of his calves were killed by OR 158 and three more were probably killed by the wolf, he said.

Wolves are protected as a special status game mammal statewide, but west of highways 395/78/95, they are listed under the Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, not ODFW, regulates any lethal taking of wolves in Western Oregon.

▲ A wolf is shown in this file photo from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Ranchers in Lake County, Ore., said they were frustrated by a problem wolf's endangered species designation in western Oregon, which led authorities to prioritize non-lethal methods.

Ranchers said they could have defended their livestock with lethal force in Eastern Oregon.

They added OR 158 was a problem wolf that brazenly showed itself at least four times in daylight and would have been an easy shot for most country residents — if that was allowed.

Emergency declared

Ferrell and Flynn said they applied for permits to kill the wolf under the ESA. They believe by the time their paperwork was received, authorities had already killed the wolf.

On Feb. 18, the Lake County Board of Commissioners declared a public safety and livestock emergency, and asked for Gov. Tina Kotek to intervene in removing OR 158 from the area.

Non-lethal efforts

Ferrell said USDA Wildlife Services workers had a heavy presence, patrolling herds at night or trying to find the wolf to haze it with a drone.

Ranchers also hired extra staff to work 24 hours a day and purchased new equipment, including night vision goggles, to keep the wolf away.

The extra cost from non-lethal deterrents was around $20,000 for each ag operation, ranchers said. That doesn't include the loss of livestock and stress to animals.

Flynn said his wife also shuttered her veterinary clinic on their property due to safety concerns and to deal with the wolf.

Ferrell and Flynn said this was their first experience with wolves, which have gradually dispersed into western Oregon.

"We never wanted the wolves, but we're going to be the ones living with them," Flynn said.

ROASTING INTO RETIREMENT

Baker City man turns hobby into Stray Cat Coffee

STORY & PHOTOS BY LISA BRITTON

▲ Kent Virtue, owner of Stray Cat Coffee in Baker City, checks the inventory of his Stray Cat Coffee at Sunn Juice + Decor.

Kent Virtue just wanted a great cup of coffee.

"I was searching for a better cup," he said.

At the time, 15 years ago, he was living in northern California and managing a Raley's grocery store. One day, a friend told him about roasting his own coffee beans.

Virtue decided to try it.

"It started with a popcorn popper," he said. "The West Bend 1440 was the holy grail of popcorn poppers able to handle coffee beans."

He scoured garage and estate sales to find that particular popper.

"If you could find it, you bought it," he said.

That popper could only roast one to two ounces of beans at a time. The experience of roasting his own coffee was enjoyable, he said, so he upgraded to a roaster with more capacity and started sharing with friends and family.

He was searching, he said, for a more ceremonial way to enjoy a cup of coffee.

"We need to slow down and enjoy it," Virtue said. "Sit down with a cup of coffee, read a book, or have a conversation."

The move to Oregon

In 2022, Kent and his wife, Tammy, bought a house in Baker City. He has family here, and they visited often.

Before they bought a house, though, the couple hadn't intended to live here.

"We were voted, in the family, least likely to move to Baker," he said with a laugh.

He retired after 32 years in the grocery business and moved to Baker City in October 2022. Tammy, who is a registered nurse, came a few months later.

In the meantime, his coffee hobby kept growing. He orders green coffee beans from Sweet Maria's in Oakland, California, and he upgraded to a fluid bed roaster from Coffee Crafters, made in Post Falls, Idaho, that can roast up to seven pounds of beans at a time.

"I've tried other suppliers, but was never satisfied," he said.

Friends and neighbors kept telling him he should sell his coffee at the local farmers market, and then he had a conversation with Bryan Tweit, the executive director of Launch Pad Baker, and the county's economic developer, who offers business mentorship.

Tweit asked Kent and Tammy, "Is this something you really want to do? And what if? What if this thing goes crazy?"

The answer, it turned out, was yes.

"I ran out of excuses," Virtue said. "First I was too busy with work, and I wondered if I was in the right area or right market in California."

He launched Stray Cat Coffee LLC in 2024, and started selling bags of beans — and offering coffee samples — at farmers markets in Baker City and La Grande.

"There was a really good response from Baker City and La Grande," he said.

The business name is inspired by cats the Virtues, and their family and friends, have rescued or cared for over the years.

"It resonated with us," he said.

In Baker City, Best Friends of Baker Inc. is the nonprofit that rescues animals, and Kent decided Stray Cat Coffee could help their mission, too.

"We immediately worked on a relationship with Best Friends of Baker," he said.

The coffee website, straycatcoffeellc.com, has a link to donate to Best Friends. He's also held a raffle at his booth to raise money for the rescue organization.

The coffee

In addition to farmers markets and craft fairs, Sunn Juice + Decor, 1917 Main St. in Baker City serves Stray Cat Coffee and stocks bags of coffee, and Soda Blitz, 1609 Adams Ave. in La Grande, is also a retail location.

Coffee can also be ordered from his website, and local customers can make an appointment to pick it up from Kent at Launch Pad.

"Launch Pad was with me through launching the website and establishing a social media presence," he said.

His focus is on small batch coffee, and his offerings have toured the coffee-growing regions of the world — South America (Brazil and Peru), Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama), Africa (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda), Indonesia and Southeast Asia (Flores Java, Sumatra, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea), and India.

"These are varieties you aren't going to find on your grocery store shelves. We wanted people to have the opportunity to experience coffees they've never had before," he said. "We're offering a coffee passport."

He also offers several varieties of Swiss water process decaffeinated coffee.

Although the coffee list is long, he doesn't roast every variety all the time due to the seasonality of coffee.

"So if you find one that you like, it may not always be there. But a coffee similar to your liking will be coming soon," he said.

▲ Kent Virtue releases coffee beans from the roaster.

Starting a business

There has been a learning curve to starting his own business — how to procure beans and entering the world of e-commerce, for instance.

"You're going to make mistakes, trust me," he said. "You're going to have to pivot, recalibrate. But I wouldn't change it for the world. It's been a great experience."

But he doesn't regret it.

"If you have a passion, don't be afraid. It's never too late," he said. "It shines brightly in the eyes of my grown children, and that's important."

And, even though the Virtues never saw themselves living in Baker City, he said he's glad he didn't listen to those family votes.

"It's probably the best thing that ever happened," he said. "Nothing beats the environment Baker offers — the people, the beautiful country, the sense of community."

Stray Cat Coffee, and joining the Baker City Rotary Club, has helped him meet locals and people just passing through — he now has customers in New York after a couple stopped by his booth at the farmers market.

Lisa Baker is a reporter at the Baker City Herald.

Senior Centers Partner to Increase Fresh Produce Availability

Frances Rempel and Carol Spears from the Vale Senior Center.

Senior centers in rural and remote areas play a crucial role as social hubs for older adults and, in many cases, for the entire community. Not every community has one, but senior centers are special places—often run entirely by volunteers. Many offer weekly congregate meals, fitness classes, social clubs, and even Meals On Wheels for homebound seniors.

In the summer of 2024, the Roundhouse Foundation reached out to 15 senior centers across Oregon and provided a small grant to enhance their senior meal programs. The goal was to support purchasing fresh produce from local farmers or distributors, which would promote local economies while providing healthier meals to seniors. And if needed, they were provided resources to help establish new partnerships with local growers.

Many of the senior centers had existing relationships with local producers and were thrilled to expand the availability of fresh, local produce. "I had the enjoyment of visiting the senior centers in Nyssa and Vale," says Grant Program Director, Rebeckah Berry. "One gentleman sat with me, savoring a pear for dessert. When he and his wife left, he casually pocketed an apple and held another pear in his hand. He said he couldn't wait to finish his second pear that afternoon and wanted to save the apple for the next day at home."

At Roundhouse Foundation, we are grateful for the dedicated individuals who volunteer at these rural and remote senior centers. They keep these centers running, providing invaluable opportunities for older adults to connect and engage with others in their communities.

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NURTURING THE VINES

AHIVOY, ¡Salud! empower vineyard stewards

STORY BY ALIYA HALL

The son of a vineyard manager, Miguel Lopez grew up in the vineyards of the Oregon wine industry. Now the owner of Red Dirt Vineyard Management & Winemaking and co-founder of AHIVOY, Lopez has witnessed the industry evolve and the disconnect between winemakers and vineyard stewards widen.

"As the industry grew, it started to become more and more evident that not enough people that look like me were in the same rooms with our white counterparts," he said, adding there was a sense of surprise when he was as knowledgeable about wine as the winemaker. "That was a friendly reminder, while kind of cold, that we needed to do more."

Since 2000, the Oregon wine industry has grown from 500 wineries to 1,143, according to the Oregon Wine Board. This increase has heightened winery demand for skilled vineyard workers, and created the need for organizations like AHIVOY and ¡Salud! to support stewards' livelihoods.

AHIVOY was co-founded in 2018 by Lopez, Sofía Torres-McKay of Cramoisi Vineyard and Winery; Yuliana Cisneros-Guillén and her late-husband, Jesús Guillén, of Guillen Family Wines, to empower vineyard stewards through education.

Torres-McKay said she was inspired from interacting with her own stewards and realizing how little they understood their influence on the health of the grape and quality of the wine.

"We [the co-founders] started talking about how can we elevate the voices of the vineyard stewards, how can we elevate the work that they do — they work so much," she said.

These questions evolved into a 17-week long program of weekly classes at Chemeketa Community College and Linfield University that range in topics from vineyard management and wine making to brand development, tasting etiquette and administration components. The classes are taught in English and Spanish and stewards are paid a stipend for attending the program.

"The whole goal is that by the end of it, they're able to say, 'my part in the vineyard has a ripple effect all the way down to the consumer,'" Lopez said.

This April, AHIVOY will have 15 stewards graduating in their sixth cohort, and 80 total graduates of the program.

"It's not just empowering them through education, but also in their lives," Torres-McKay said. "First day of class, they're kind of timid, and the second or third class they're getting more confident and at graduation it's like completely different people."

▲ **¡Salud! Mobile clinic at Momtazi Vineyard.**
PHOTO COURTESY KATHRYN ELSESSER

Empowerment is also at the heart of ¡Salud!, a clinical department of Hillsboro Medical Center that has offered accessible healthcare services for stewards and their families since 1992.

Due to the complexities around seasonal agricultural employment, it is a challenge for most stewards to receive employment-based health care, said Stephanie Buchanan, manager of development and communications at Hillsboro Medical Center Foundation.

"The focus has really been, 'traditional method of healthcare doesn't really work, let's do it differently,'" she said. "How can we do that and make it culturally responsive, compassionate and deliver high quality care?"

¡Salud! breaks barriers to entry by bringing bilingual and bicultural providers to work sites through their free mobile health outreach program, as well as partnering with other healthcare organizations to bring services to the whole family.

Both ¡Salud! and AHIVOY are funded by philanthropy within the wine industry.

▲ **Sofia Torres-McKay and Miguel Lopez at the AHIVOY 2022 graduation.**

"We just happen to be fortunate that wine is a luxury product that people will pay a premium for, and we can use the proceeds from that to take care of the people that help build that luxury product," Buchanan said.

These organizations also acknowledge the skillset required for working in the agricultural sector, Lopez said, adding he hopes that this full-rounded education will allow for steward families "to own their own part of the Oregon wine industry."

"It takes skill to prune a vine, to harvest a grape," he said, "and people forget that."

Although ¡Salud! has been part of the wine industry for decades, Torres-McKay said she's been asked why it took so long for a program like AHIVOY to be established.

"It was because nobody thought about [stewards] — not to be mean or to be diabolical, it's just not on their mind," she said. "We're focused on the wine and we tend to separate the people that work in the vineyard and the wine makers."

While she said that ideology is now starting to change within the industry, Lopez added that it's also important for consumers to be curious about more than what is in the wine.

"If you find yourself visiting the wine regions of Oregon," he said, "just pose the question of, 'How are the vineyard stewards engaging in those companies and in those sectors?'"

Aliya Hall is a freelance writer in Portland.

Leading the Charge for Sustainability in the Mid-Columbia Region

The Northeast Oregon Water Association (NOWA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to solving one of the Western United States' biggest challenges: rapidly dwindling groundwater supplies. In the Mid-Columbia region of Oregon, we face some of the most significant groundwater declines in the developed world. These declines stem from development practices dating back to the 1950s through the 1970s, a time when the notion of groundwater as an infinite resource prevailed. Today, both urban centers and irrigated agriculture rely on these aquifers. Continued declines threaten the sustainability of our communities and the livelihoods of future generations.

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Multi-Generational Impact
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Our Work In Action

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