

Vitality



Prospering through a greater role in food

Increase in number of food products offers opportunities to rural areas

Oregon rancher Connie Hatfield often visits urban grocery stores in her role as co-founder of the Country Natural Beef cooperative. When she tells customers that she is from a ranch family, they inevitably thank her for producing the naturally grown product. "And then, they tell me about their grandpa who used to have a ranch," she says. "But there aren't as many of those stories as there used to be."

In the last half century, as food production has become mechanized and centralized, the quantity of food produced by each farmer and rancher has increased dramatically, and the number of farmers and ranchers has declined precipitously. For almost all Americans, food is something you buy, not grow.

The success of our agricultural system has led to a dramatic decrease in the cost

of food. Today, an average American spends about 10 percent of income on food, compared to 40 percent in the 1930s. The relatively low cost of food permits Americans to be more selective, and many choose to spend more than 10 percent.

This willingness to spend has encouraged new food products. Supermarkets just three decades ago carried 15,000 products; today, they carry more than 50,000. Many of these new products cost more because they are local, gourmet, ethnic, organic or sustainably farmed. Most come from rural areas.

This issue of *Community Vitality* is dedicated to sharing some success stories about how rural communities can prosper through a greater role in food systems.

Everyone has to eat. As we build and strengthen our rural communities, let's make sure food is, both figuratively and literally, on the table. ■



Buying local food brings economic benefits. See page 4.

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Lakeview shares success tips

In early January, I visited Lakeview to see the changes related to the community's new vision. Not only was there a \$90 million, 26-megawatt biomass plant under construction, which will produce more than 80 permanent living-wage jobs, there were scores of other projects — from residential solar hot-water to massive geothermal projects. I was traveling to Fossil the next day so I asked the Lakeview group what I should share about their success. Their answer was quite specific. First, don't try to duplicate what we've done; understand your own situation and develop your own vision and goal. Second, engage the entire community in achieving the goal; success is never about one large project. And, when using natural resources, such as for the biomass project, the environment is always first; what is good for the forest sets the limits of resource use.

— Tom Gallagher



Ground has been broken on the \$90 million, 26-megawatt biomass plant in Lakeview.

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Please help us make this publication a valuable resource by sharing your comments or ideas. If you'd like to be added to (or removed from) our mailing list or have a suggestion, contact us at communityvitality@tfff.org or drop us a line at

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Director's Notes

Perspecti

My work with the Ford Institute has helped me rediscover optimism and hope

By Tom Gallagher
Director, Ford Institute
for Community Building

"Hope is preparation for the future, whose positive energy nourishes our actions."

—Kenneth Helphand
Defiant Gardens



I've often mentioned to family and friends, and sometimes to our leadership classes, that being the director of the Ford Institute has changed my life. Quite literally it has changed my perception of the world, a world with so many faults that pessimism would seem the most rational response. But, now I know better. The 3,500-plus graduates of our classes have helped me rediscover optimism and hope.

My career has been primarily in academics, having been a professor for more than 20 years. Universities are heady places, and it is the norm to focus on research about society's problems, the bigger the problem the better. Optimism in the university often felt inappropriate if not naïve. The glass was nearly empty; there were many leaks, no recharge, and essentially no hope.

When I took this job in the spring of 2003 I expected to be immersed in rural community problems, but instead I found myself surrounded by positive people. The partici-



ve changes to hope

pants in our leadership classes opened the window on a new reality. I discovered there are many, many civil, optimistic people working very hard for the benefit of their community. I greatly enjoyed, and still do, visiting new classes and experiencing that optimism and commitment. And I know I'm not alone. From our evaluation program we have learned that class participants rate "positive acquaintance" as the number-one benefit of the leadership class.

Doing the impossible

And the optimism is not misplaced. I've seen too many examples of communities doing the impossible. In 2007, Lake County set a vision to

“Virtually every community we have engaged in the Ford Institute Leadership Program has a positive story to tell.”

be "Oregon's most renewable energy county" with the goal to be a net energy exporter by 2012, and they will achieve that goal (see sidebar). Vernonia, which lost all three of its schools in a December 2007 flood, came together as a community, planned and gathered resources, and started construction of its new

school complex in December 2010. There are many other examples. Virtually every community we have engaged in the Ford Institute Leadership Program has a positive story to tell.

Thank you

Thank you for helping me see the glass as not just half full but, despite leaks, as constantly being replenished. I could not ask for more as I move toward retirement at the end of this year.

Although I'll technically be retired, you'll find me traveling the back roads of the state, visiting small towns and looking for opportunities at the intersection of leadership and hope. ■



▼ In 2009, Vernonia residents celebrated the passage of a \$13 million bond measure to help fund new schools after the flood of 2007 devastated the community.



RYAN KNUTSON, COURTESY OF OPS

Communities generate a FEAST of ideas, connections

Community FEAST events, while not a traditional form of research, are rapidly gaining momentum as a fast, effective way to bring communities together to discuss local food-related issues and develop practical solutions.

FEAST stands for Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together, and a typical one-day FEAST workshop in Lebanon in early 2010—in which 50 community members engaged in an informed, facilitated discussion about local food, education and agriculture—shows why.

The gathering resulted in immediate benefits. For instance, a school superintendent who was buying food from one local farmer decided within days to begin buying from four additional farms. In addition, area schools began donating leftovers to a local soup kitchen, which was then able to serve an additional meal each week.

“It is amazing what has happened because of these community organizing discussions,” said Sharon Thornberry, community resource developer for the Oregon Food Bank. “In a single day, we’re able to start conversations and build relationships that lead to really exciting solutions.”

To learn more or schedule a FEAST workshop in your area, contact Thornberry at the Oregon Food Bank, (503) 282-0555. ■



Fifty community members met in 2010 in Lebanon to discuss local food, education and agriculture. Connections made at the event resulted in more local food buying for a school district and the sharing of school leftovers with a soup kitchen.

► It makes economic sense to keep food dollars local, such as buying these Oregon-grown berries. Research in Lane County shows that 90 percent of food dollars currently leave the area, but every percentage point recaptured means an economic gain of nearly \$12 million for the county.



Research of

Study quantifies economic benefits of local food; identifies barriers

The “buy local” food movement is gaining popularity nationwide, and new research is giving people new reasons to buy into it. A recent report on food systems in Lane County, for example, puts an impressive dollar figure on keeping food local. Ninety percent of food dollars currently leave the area, the report says, but every percentage point recaptured means an economic gain of nearly \$12 million for the county.

The Lane County Local Food Market Analysis is one of several research projects taking place across Oregon that endeavor to answer fundamental questions about local food



DAVE TUTTLE

fers insights

systems and how they affect hunger, health and economic vitality. The Lane County research was conducted by the University of Oregon's Community Planning Workshop and its city, county and business partners. In addition to quantifying the economic benefits of local food, the study identified barriers to localizing food processing, storage, distribution and regulation.

The study identified a number of gaps in the local food supply chain. There is a disconnect between growers and local markets, for example, with buyers often unaware of the local food available and how to access it. Limited processing and storage capacity

adds to the problem, as do institutional and grocery store requirements, which can pose an economic burden for small producers.

The study identified a number of gaps in the local food supply chain...a disconnect between growers and local markets, for example, with buyers often unaware of the local food available and how to access it.

Authors of the study, while acknowledging these barriers, also recognize that significant opportunities for economic development exist when the food system is "re-localized."

In order to lessen the production risk faced by small farmers, researchers suggest fostering a system "in which farmers, processors, distributors and others share the risks and returns associated with food production."

Specifically, researchers suggest a strategy of small investments achieved through public-private partnerships. These investments could fund projects such as a manual for growers on doing business with local stores; development of a storage facility to store local fruits and vegetables year round; and creation of a local food coordinator position.

To read the report, visit <http://www.eugene-or.gov> and search for "Food Market Analysis."

Several other research projects in Oregon are providing valuable information and resources for rural communities in Oregon.

Oregon State University – Rural Studies Program

As Oregon's land grant university, Oregon State University has focused on rural communities since its establishment in 1868. Since 2001, the Rural Studies Program and its Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative has studied many facets of rural life, many of them related to food systems.

The department's website, <http://ruralstudies.oregonstate.edu/>, offers a host of resources for researchers. Click on the Or-

egon County Monitor button for up-to-date, county-level information on recent trends in unemployment, food stamp use and related topics. The Oregon Rural Communities Explorer link provides additional details at the county and community level.

Meyer Memorial Trust – Community Food Systems in Oregon study

A recent study by the Meyer Memorial Trust provides a broad assessment of food systems in Oregon, and specifically issues related to food security, health and economic vitality. To view the study, visit <http://www.mmt.org/node/16976>.

University of Oregon, Oregon Food Bank – Resource Assistance to Rural Environments (RARE)

Through the RARE Program, administered by the UO's Community Service Center, graduate students live in rural communities for 11 months to conduct research and help improve economic, social and environmental conditions.

Since 2008, Oregon Food Bank has partnered with RARE to place students in seven rural communities. The students have completed five community food assessments covering 14 counties, published six local food resource guides, helped to develop farm-to-school collaborations and facilitated community-wide discussions. For more information on RARE, visit: <http://rare.uoregon.edu> ■

A challenging enter

Rural grocery stores provide towns with much more than food, but face economic difficulties

When Angela Jones and her parents, Don and Sharon Jones, bought the Dayville Mercantile in 2006, they were pleased to continue a rural tradition. The store has served as the community center for the 130-some citizens of Dayville for more than a century.

Located 125 miles east of Bend, the store provides a couple of comfortable couches next to the woodstove in the back room, ready for the townspeople who start their day by grabbing their personal coffee cups off the wall and visiting with neighbors.

"The Dayville Merc has been here 115 years and has been the focal point of the town since the beginning," says Angela Jones.

The family, who came from Prineville and are known locally as the "Jones Gang," immediately began to renovate the elderly building and improve the inventory. Their hard work paid off right away, with a 28 percent increase in growth for

each of the first two years.

Then the gas crunch hit, and the store, a popular stop for tourists visiting the John Day Fossil Beds and popular Picture Gorge, began to see a decline in travelers. The slump in business has driven home the economic difficulties of operating a rural grocery store, a critical piece of rural infrastructure that is disappearing across the country.

The local grocery store provides much more than food – it acts as an economic driver, a central meeting place, and an employer. Recent studies have shown, however, that the rural grocery store is an endangered species in rural America, as the challenge of operating these enterprises grows.

The Jones Gang knows just what those challenges are. The first obstacle, and in many ways the most frustrating, is the local flight to big box stores in Redmond or Bend, more than 100 miles away. "It's a whole new lifestyle," says Angela Jones. "People go to town, they do lunch, they spend their money somewhere else. They don't understand what it is do-

ing to their community."

Another challenge is dealing with suppliers, according to research by the Center for Rural Affairs (see story, right). "If you don't have the volume, they don't want to deliver," Jones says. "And if they do deliver, they will deliver in case lots and charge you shipping. They really don't want you as a customer."

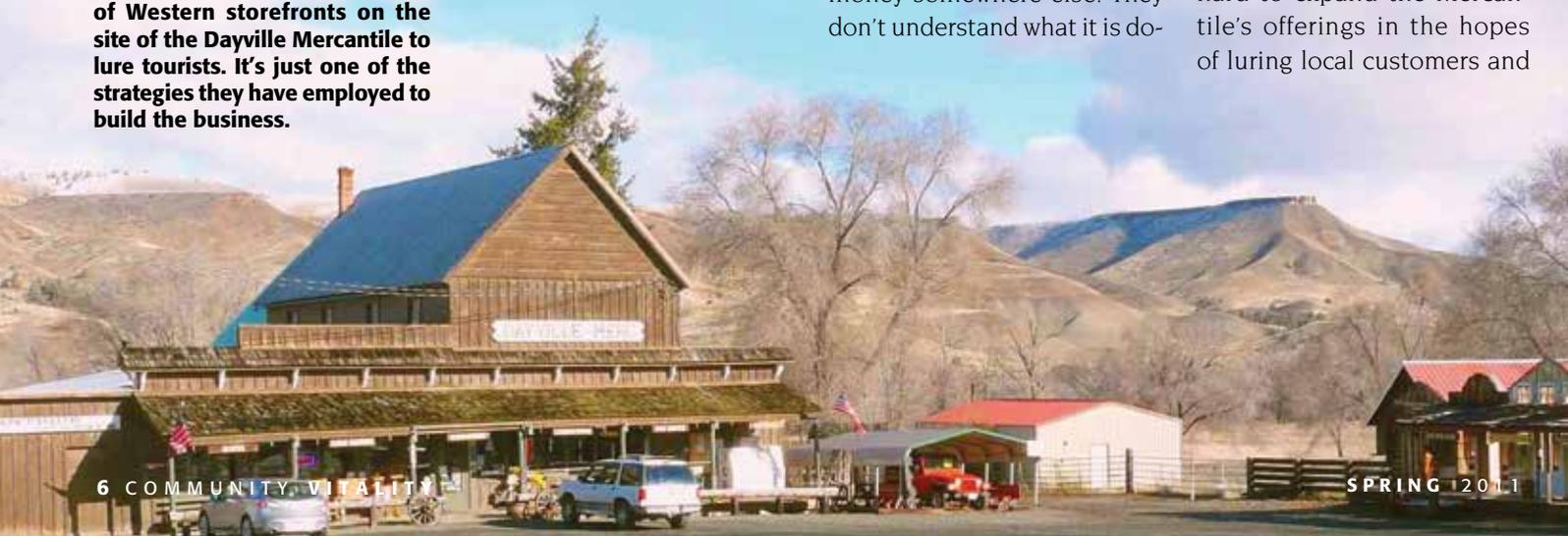
Cargo trailer

Jones' solution was to buy a cargo trailer, outfit it with a generator and a freezer, and drive to Boise or Portland to buy food. "It's the only solution we could find," she says. "It took three years to pay for itself, but now I can offer several different varieties of Jell-O, in 10 different flavors with three or four boxes of each, and I don't have to buy case lots."

Small grocers also deal with high-energy costs (mostly due to use of small coolers instead of more efficient walk-ins), a host of labor woes and a small profit margin.

The Joneses have worked hard to expand the Mercantile's offerings in the hopes of luring local customers and

The Jones family added a row of Western storefronts on the site of the Dayville Mercantile to lure tourists. It's just one of the strategies they have employed to build the business.



prise

drawing more outside business. They added a row of Western storefronts that offer photo opps for tourists, and wrote and staged a Western melodrama there. They invited gun buyers and other traders to do business from the store. They feature jewelry, crafts and art from local artisans, and they just launched an Internet site to broaden sales (www.dayvillemerc.com).

When her parents suffered a bout of ill health, Jones took over nearly all the work in an enterprise open every day of the year except Christmas and New Year's (and Easter, this year.) Because of that, the Joneses have put the store up for sale. A big selling point is the Mercantile's importance to the community it serves.

"Without a grocery store, there's no town," Jones says. "There's no place for people to meet, no social connection. There's always a store first, then maybe a post office and a school to back it up. But if they can't get food, they won't stay." ■



JUDITH TUTTLE

In Gove, Kan., (population 105), citizens banded together to open a community-owned grocery store and cafe. The building was made possible by donations and volunteer labor.

Studies focus on solutions

From school-owned to community-owned, towns get creative in bringing grocery stores to their rural communities

The townspeople of Leeton, Mo., had been without a grocery store for almost 10 years when a new one finally opened in the largely abandoned downtown district. It wasn't operated by a grocery chain or a private investor. With only 619 residents, the town simply wasn't a good investment option.

Instead, the grocery store, called the Bulldog Express, was opened by the high school, and operated by its students. The new store teaches students practical skills while providing a critical piece of infrastructure for the rural community.

In Gove, Kan., (population 105), local citizens operate a community-owned grocery store and cafe in a building made possible by donations and volunteer labor. Today, the organization also operates a grocery distribution business that delivers groceries to its own store and to other small stores. This arrangement allows the stores to meet minimum purchasing requirements, a major challenge to rural grocery stores.

These stories are two of a host of unconventional solutions being implemented across the country, as communities struggle to hang on to their town grocery stores. The issue is gaining attention nationwide, with several rural research groups studying the issue, and a national Rural Grocery Store Summit held last year in Kansas. For more information, visit these sites:

The Center for Rural Affairs
www.cfra.org

The center recently released two reports. The first examines the critical role grocery stores play in rural communities and challenges faced by those stores. A follow-up report examines models

of rural grocery store ownership and how they deal with challenges. <http://files.cfra.org/pdf/rural-grocery-stores.pdf>, and <http://files.cfra.org/pdf/rural-grocery-ownership-models.pdf> or call (402) 687-2100.

The Rural Grocery Initiative
www.ruralgrocery.org

The initiative sponsored the 2010 Rural Grocery Store Summit in Kansas. The site contains resources for grocers on suppliers, networks, surveys and funding opportunities as well as inspirational videos. In Kansas alone, 82 grocery stores in communities of fewer than 2,500 people have closed since 2007. The Rural Grocery Initiative is a Kansas-based effort, but its findings apply to rural areas across the country. ■



TERESA SHANE

Bulldog Express employee Bailey Moulder finishes a sale for a customer. The grocery store was opened by the high school in Leeton, Mo., and is operated by its students. It's the only grocery store in the town of 600 residents.

FoodHub helps buyers, sellers find each other

The online match-making service offers a free basic membership

It's all about making connections, and FoodHub, Oregon's online match-making service between food buyers and food sellers, has been making tasty ones for more than a year. The electronic directory and marketplace (<http://food-hub.org/>) connects food buyers of all types and sizes with farmers, fishers, ranchers, growers and food manufacturers throughout the greater Northwest.

The idea for the site was sparked by the popular Chef's Collaborative events, where restaurant professionals and food suppliers mingled to share each other's wares, but where everyone went home at the end of the day.

"We wanted to create a tool that could be used 24/7 and



managed in real time," says Deborah Kane, vice president of Food & Farms for the non-profit organization Ecotrust. "It was a combination of really understanding the limitations of the print directories, and the opportunity lost in not providing a chance for people to connect throughout the year."

Corporate cafeterias

Food-buying members include corporate cafeterias, dining halls, restaurants, school districts, hospitals and market co-ops. Food suppliers are big and small, ranging from makers of organic nut butter to herb farms to cattle ranches.

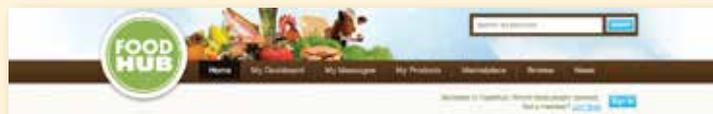
The stories of connections

made are inspiring. When the Gervais School District needed lettuce in a hurry, the food services director sent a message out through FoodHub and, by the end of the day, found a new supplier just six miles away. Salvador Molly's found a rural Washington County farm to grow 80 bushels of peppers for the Portland restaurant's spicy menu. Besides buyers and sellers of food, the

“Given the great interest and complexity of navigating regional food system landscapes, FoodHub is the right tool at the right time.”

—Deborah Kane
Ecotrust

The electronic directory and marketplace can be found at <http://food-hub.org>.





JOHN WALIS

◀ **Grand Central Baking found a new rhubarb supplier using the FoodHub Marketplace section. "It was like magic," says cuisine manager Laura Ohm.**

to rural communities," Kane says. "Right now we have a large membership group along the I-5 corridor, but the tool is for everyone."

In December, the first anniversary of FoodHub, organizers made a major change: The membership fee of \$100 was dropped. "The fee has been a barrier to entry and now that we are introducing free basic membership, we expect membership on the buyer-seller side to grow exponentially," Kane says.

FoodHub also began accepting memberships in a third category — associate members, which could range from nonprofit organizations working on food issues to managers of farmers markets or commodity commissions.

After FoodHub's first year of operation, what's the verdict from buyers and sellers? "The reaction has surpassed our expectation, honestly," Kane says. "It is entirely clear that there is a tremendous interest in sourcing local products. Without a tool like FoodHub, it is a daunting process to find the right match.

"Given the great interest and complexity of navigating regional food system landscapes, FoodHub is the right tool at the right time." ■

site also caters to those who teach — the EVOO Cannon Beach Cooking School uses its FoodHub connections to fill guests' plates with Oregon's finest ingredients.

The Bon Appetit Management Company, which provides café and catering services for businesses and colleges, signed up all of its Northwest regional team for FoodHub memberships. These new food buyers include corporate cafeterias at Adidas, Amazon, Nordstrom, Mentor Graphics and OMSI, along with colleges and universities such as Seattle University, Reed College, Lewis & Clark College, George Fox University, College of Idaho and many more.

Kane encourages the use of FoodHub by buyers and sellers in the rural Northwest. "We believe the tool could be a great benefit and service

Free magazine features local growers, restaurateurs, recipes

You don't have to live in Portland to love this magazine. Edible Portland, published quarterly by the nonprofit organization Ecotrust, celebrates the seasonal bounty of Oregon and Southwest Washington. Each issue contains recipes highlighting local foods, feature stories on local growers, restaurateurs and foods, gardening tips, and listings of farmer's markets and available produce. The free magazine is available online at <http://edibleportland.com>. The site also lists locations where you can pick up a copy. Here's just one of the recipes featured:



Salad with apples, roasted hazelnuts and blue cheese

- 2–3 apples (Braeburn, Fuji or Honeycrisp)
- 5–6 cups mixed salad greens (including hearts of romaine and baby arugula)
- 1 scant cup crumbled Oregon blue cheese
- 1 cup roasted and skinned Oregon hazelnuts, coarsely chopped
- Vinaigrette (recipe follows)

1. Peel and core apples. Cut the apples in half. Lay the flat side on a cutting board, slice into 1/4-inch slivers, and then cut the slivers into thirds. Place the apples in a small bowl and toss with enough vinaigrette to coat the pieces. You can prepare the apple mixture up to 1 hour ahead. If you hold it any longer the apples will absorb enough vinaigrette to overwhelm their flavor.

2. Toss greens with a little dressing in a large platter until lightly coated. Top with the apples, hazelnuts and cheese, and serve.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

Sweet honey mustard and hazelnut oil vinaigrette

This vinaigrette is wonderful to have on hand for any number of winter salads that incorporate fresh greens, fruits and nuts.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1/2 cup red or white wine vinegar | 1/2 tsp kosher salt |
| 2 tsp balsamic vinegar | 1/2 tsp vanilla extract |
| 1 tsp sugar | 1/3 cup hazelnut oil* |
| 1 tsp sweet honey mustard | 1/3 cup canola oil |

Whisk together the vinegars, sugar, mustard, salt and vanilla. Slowly whisk in the oils. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use. Makes about 1 1/4 cups

From Jan Roberts-Dominguez, *Oregon Hazelnut Country—The Food, The Drink, The Spirit*.

*Monmouth-area hazelnut grower Barb Foulke of Freddy Guys Hazelnuts produces toasted hazelnut oil from her own hazelnut orchard. If you can't find it in a store near you, go to www.freddyguys.com. You can also use canola oil in its place.



LEAH HARR



Volunteers repack donated vegetables at the Linn Benton Food Share warehouse.

Gleaners provide a hand

A small army of volunteers gathers food and other staples year-round

Twice a month, the cavernous warehouse at Linn Benton Food Share fills up with the good-natured chatter of 75 or so hard-working volunteers, gathered there to repackage bulk quantities of donated food into household-size portions. The volunteers are from the 14 active gleaning groups in the two-county area.

At one such event in late February, the “repack” consists of eight big totes of frozen vegetables, courtesy of NORPAC. Some of the vegetables will be

added to Food Share’s stores, with the rest going home with the gleaners, who share half the food they collect with their elderly or disabled members.

Gleaning has been around since biblical times, when the Deuteronomic Code required farmers to leave sections of their fields unharvested for the poor.

The gleaners are part of a small army of volunteers in Oregon who gather food and other staples year-round. About 30 independent gleaning groups, most of them operating in conjunction with area food banks, involve more than 8,000 low-income households in collecting food and firewood.

“My first job with gleaning was in 1986 as a VISTA worker organizing firewood gleaning in Linn and Benton counties,” says Sharon Thornberry, community resource developer for the Oregon Food Bank. “Interest

in gleaning groups waned for a few years earlier this decade, but the current recession has triggered a resurgence of participation in the programs. Gleaning is one of the best ways that people can help themselves, and I think that's why it is so popular."

Gleaning also provides people with fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables, the types of foods often lacking in the diet of the low-income population.

Gleaning has been around since biblical times, when the Deuteronomic Code required farmers to leave sections of their fields unharvested for the poor.

Food to firewood

In Oregon, gleaners harvest end-of-season fruit and vegetable crops, pick up do-

At Linn Benton Food Share, gleaners must meet low-income guidelines; able-bodied members work four to eight hours per month.

2.5 million pounds of food to their 4,500 members last year. Linn Benton Food Share is the only regional food bank that funds a full-time gleaning programs coordinator; its gleaning groups are considered member agencies.

Gleaning in Oregon began

in the early 1970s in the Portland area, with the Metro Area Gleaning Cooperative harvesting and distributing more than 300,000 pounds of produce to 1,129 families in food banks. In 1977, the Oregon Legislature approved a tax credit for farmers donating to gleaning programs. Over the next 20 years, gleaning groups grew across the state and began to work in partnership with regional food banks. In 1998, the Oregon Food Bank hired the first statewide gleaning coordinator.

"I think of the gleaning programs as one of the best-kept secrets in Oregon," Thornberry says. "Over the past 40 years, thousands of low-income people have worked together in communities across Oregon to harvest and recover millions of

pounds of food and hundreds of cords of firewood.

"All gleaning programs give participants a 'hands-on' way to participate in their individual and community food system. They partner with gardeners and farmers to help make the best use of our rich agricultural bounty."

The gleaning groups in the Linn Benton Food Share area are typical of most in Oregon. Each is an independent organization registered as a 501(c)3. Interested gleaners must apply for membership and meet low-income guidelines. If they are able-bodied, members are required to put in four to eight hours a month of work.

Monthly meetings

Volunteer coordinators meet monthly with each other and Susan James, volunteer coordinator for the Linn Benton Food Share. There, they exchange ideas, and receive training in grant writing, donor relations and in conforming to federal food-gleaning guidelines.

"Gleaning is a very positive activity. It empowers them and gives them control of their own life," says James.

"A lot of elderly people come out to the warehouse twice month for repack, for example, and that's a big social event for them. As a working group, the gleaners' mission is 'A hand up, not a handout.'" ■

up, not a hand out

nated food at local stores, haul firewood, and repackage bulk food. Often, gleaners are able to also supplement local food pantry supplies.

Different groups take advantage of unique opportunities in their area. The Linn Benton organization, for example, has an agreement with Oregon State University and the USDA so area groups can glean research plots growing blueberries, potatoes and sweet corn. The gleaning groups in Linn and Benton counties alone distributed



◀ **Gleaning provides people with fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables, the types of foods often lacking in the diet of the low-income population.**

Supporting sustainable

Founded in Oregon, Country Natural Beef links ranchers with consumers for the benefit of all

When Doc and Connie Hatfield first began researching markets for the hormone and antibiotic-free beef raised on their Brothers ranch, it was the late '80s—a challenging time for ranching. Red meat was out of favor with consumers.

The Hatfields knew there was a market for the natural beef they raised; they just weren't quite sure where it was or how to best sell to it.

Then, on a fact-finding trip to Bend, Connie Hatfield met Ace. "I walked into this fitness place in Bend, and this 25-year-old named 'Ace' came skipping out," she says. Introducing herself as a rancher, she asked him point-blank: "What's your position on red meat? And Ace says, 'I recommend it to all my fitness clients—but we have the hardest time getting Argentinean natural beef into Bend.'"

With anecdotal evidence of a local demand, the Hatfields called a meeting of like-minded ranchers in a 200-mile radius, and the idea for the cooperative was born.

"It was a community of shared values, not a community of place," Doc Hatfield explains. "All those ranch

families came, and Ace talked to us about the demand, and we all figured out that if we marketed our cattle together, it could really take off."

And it has. Today, the Country Natural Beef cooperative is one of the nation's leaders in natural beef production, with beef supplied by 120 family ranches located in 13 Western states.

Rancher-consumer link

"The concept is to link the ranchers with the consumer," says Stacy Davies, marketing director for the cooperative. The organization has no employees; Davies, for example, is ranch manager of co-op member Roaring Springs Ranch, near Steens Mountain. "Each company in the process is an internal partner, from the feedlot to the packing house to the distributor to the retailer. That puts us all working together to meet the needs of the consumer."

It also fills the need that the Hatfields identified back in the '80s: economic stability. "The way to provide stability then was to get as close to

“Country Natural Beef’s model helps take the volatility out of the commodity market. This makes family ranches more stable”

—Dan Probert
Country Natural Beef

the retail consumer as possible,” Doc Hatfield says. “We needed to find out what they wanted, and that turned out to be a smaller cut of leaner beef without antibiotics or hormones, tracing it back to the family ranch that owned it

A cowboy keeps an eye on a herd of cattle on the Billingsley Ranch in Palisades, Wash. The ranch is a member of the Country Natural Beef cooperative.



agriculture

all the way from birth.”

In a traditional agriculture business model, people would produce something and then try to find a buyer. With Country Natural Beef, members find a buyer and then produce to fill the need.

“CNB’s model helps to take the volatility out of the commodity market,” says Dan Probert, the co-op’s executive director. “This makes family ranches more stable, which in turn makes their communities more stable.”

Buyers, described by the co-op as partners, include Burgerville, the Bon Appetit and Café Today institutional catering companies, New Seasons Market and Whole Foods Market.

The intense interest today in naturally raised beef has also changed the way members do business. While environmental sustainability has always been a critical part of the business plan, ranchers are looking at other things, too.

“We are now focusing on things beyond ‘natural,’ like animal welfare and compassion and traceability to the ranch,” Probert says.

Endorsed by Temple Grandin

The cooperative has been collaborating with well-known animal behaviorist Dr. Temple Grandin, who has officially endorsed the cooperative’s “Raise Well” animal welfare standards. (The film “Temple Grandin,” which chronicled Grandin’s life, from her struggles with autism to her work revolutionizing the cattle industry, aired on HBO in February.)

Meanwhile, demand for the co-op’s products are up and business is good.

“We’re in a phase now in the last few months where we are more short on product than we are on customers,” Doc Hatfield says. ■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF COUNTRY NATURAL BEEF



Kathy Panner, a Country Natural Beef rancher, works behind the counter at a New Seasons grocery store last year. At least once a year, CNB members conduct in-store demonstrations and answer questions from customers.

Ranchers reach out to meet their consumers

Store visits, demonstrations, customer appreciation days bring ranchers to town

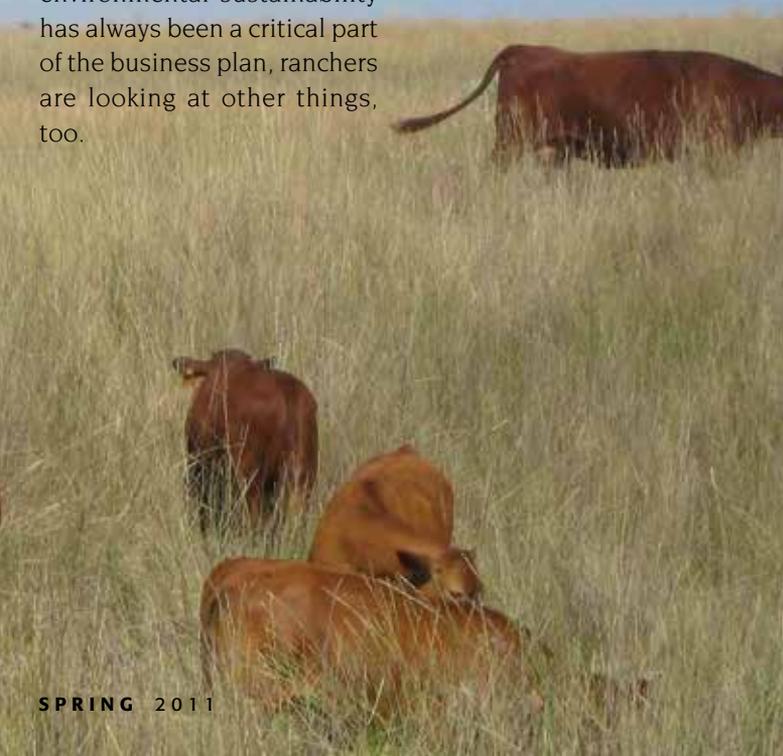
A big challenge in the early days of the Country Natural Beef cooperative was getting the word out to the public about the availability of the co-op’s natural beef products. The best solution at the time was sending ranch families into the city to do in-store demos. Today, the interaction of the ranch families with the public is an integral part of the way the cooperative operates.

“We all see it as one of the responsibilities of membership,” explains Doc Hatfield, co-founder of Country Natural Beef. At least one weekend a year, CNB members can be found doing store visits and in-store meat demonstrations as they answer questions from customers. They also participate in yearly customer appreciation days held on member ranches.

Last June, the co-op sponsored the Country Food Fair in downtown Portland, with all proceeds benefiting the Oregon Food Bank. The fair featured country dancing, readings of ranch stories and poems, and games for the kids, including a chance to ride a stick horse. The top attraction was, of course, the food, with co-op partners Whole Foods, Burgerville, Fulton, New Seasons and Bon Appétit serving up beef and vegetables.

Earlier that week, ranchers could be found behind the meat counter of every New Seasons store in Portland, weighing, wrapping and labeling product. Ranchers were also staffing 38 Burgerville restaurants, where they served customers, grilled burgers, mixed shakes and worked the drive-up window.

“What happens is that those demos prove to our ranchers that there are a whole lot of urban people that don’t ever get off the pavement who are solid, honest, caring people who want to know where their food has been, how it’s grown and what’s in it,” Doc Hatfield says. ■



Reading materials offer insight

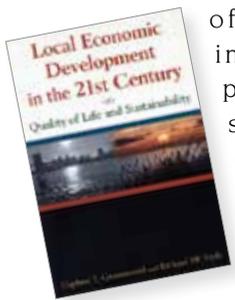
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Here are details on some of the books on the Select List:

Local Economic Development in the 21st Century: Quality of Life and Sustainability

by Daphne T. Greenwood and Richard P.F. Holt. An economics professor from Southern Oregon University teams up with a colleague from the University of Colorado to offer some insights on policy issues surrounding economic development today.

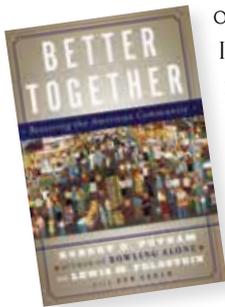


“We wrote this book in answer to rising concerns about the relationships between economic growth, quality of life and sustainable development,” the authors write in the preface. In particular, they say, communities are beginning to question

the popular assumption that more growth automatically brings a higher quality of life that is sustainable. The first half of the book is devoted to a discussion of the research and policy behind the three concepts—economic development, quality of life and sustainability. The second half explores ways of creating economic sustainability on two levels, statewide and in communities. 214 pages. © 2010.

Better Together: Restoring the American Community

by Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein. (See complete review on page 16.)



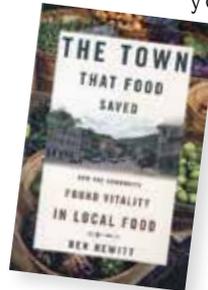
If you like to read colorful and uplifting stories about people and places that are making a difference, then this book is for you. The author of the bestseller *Bowling Alone* has teamed up with a colleague to offer readers these inspirational tales of projects that have at their center the successful building

of social capital. A church in Texas, neighborhood groups in Portland, an online community in San Francisco—all of them show readers the kind of potential inherent in any social situation. 318 pages. © 2003.

The Town That Food Saved: How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food

by Ben Hewitt.

Buying local isn't just a good idea. For a group of young agri-



businessmen in the small northern Vermont town of Hardwick, it could be a ticket to economic stability. The book describes their efforts to nurture a healthy local food system, which has drawn national attention, along with the ire of some of the former mining town's residents. 256 pages. © 2010.

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Glaser. This practical and easy-to-read guide offers help for managing business, family and relationship conflicts. The book teaches concrete, tangible skills for a wide range of communication challenges. 4 CDs. © 2010. ■



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Better together

Continued from page 16

neighborhood coffee klatch to a full-fledged civic organization. They further identify two kinds of social capital. Networks linking people who are similar are called bonding social capital. The second type, much more difficult to create, is called bridging social capital—networks that encompass different types of people. With society's increasing diversity, bridging social capital is essential for healthy public life.

Traveled the country

How can social capital of any sort restore the American community? The authors traveled the country to answer that question, and one of their trips brought them to Oregon.

"Portland: A Positive Epidemic of Civic Engagement," takes a close look at Portland's Office of Neighborhood Associations, established in 1974, in the midst of a swell of neighborhood activism across the country.

The difference was that, as the rest of the country slumped into passivity, Portland experienced what the authors called an "extraordinary civic renaissance." When public meetings in the rest of America saw a 50 percent decrease in involvement, Portland saw an increase of 30 percent to 35 percent.

The authors devote almost 30 pages to Portland's story of civic engagement, from its roots in the neighborhood associations, to its movement against the national trend of

One chapter explores the question of whether the virtual community of Craigslist can be said to build real social capital.

disengagement, to an analysis of why, in a few instances, the approach just does not work.

It's just one of the 11 comprehensive, colorfully written case studies that make up the bulk of the book. It's a great read—stories range from the youth-driven "Do Something" framework, to a new kind of labor union at Harvard University, to the extraordinary diversity practices implemented by UPS in a time of social upheaval.

One chapter explores the question of whether the virtual community of Craigslist can be said to build real social networks.

Better Together offers a rich look at the success enjoyed by a wide variety of groups as they seek to better their communities.

"If *Better Together* provides insight, unlocks new ways of thinking, and sparks enthusiasm that contributes in even the smallest way to ... a revival [of social-capital growth], it will have more than justified our hopes and efforts," the authors write. ■



REDEEMABLE FOR ONE BOOK

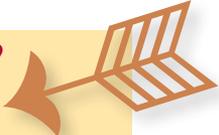
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Which book would you like?

Please check only ONE:

- Better Together* *The Town that Food Saved*
- Local Economic Development in the 21st Century*
- Be Quiet, Be Heard (Audio)*

(Books are described on pages 14 and 16.)



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Review

Restoring community

Best-selling author takes a new look at civic renewal

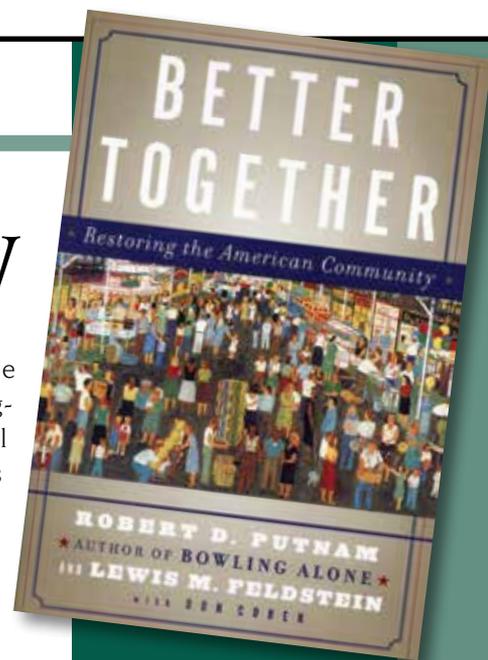
When Robert Putnam wrote his book *Bowling Alone*, the best-seller served to make a nation aware of its declining social capital—the lack of connection between neighbors and within communities. With *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, Putnam and his co-author, Lewis Feldstein, present the flip side of the coin—the civic renewal that can happen when people work together for the greater good.

Where *Bowling Alone* looked at numbers to measure America's disconnectedness, *Better*

Together looks at people and how they are bringing change to their social environments. "We focus on these social-capital success stories, hoping and believing that they may in fact be harbingers of a broader revival of social capital in the country," the authors say in the introduction.

What exactly is social capital? In its simplest form, this form of capital describes social networks. Social capital comes in many forms, the authors say, from a neigh-

Continued on page 15



▼ Social capital comes in many forms—from a neighborhood coffee klatch to a full-fledged civic organization.



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