

'Future of Soil' learning series offered

BY MAUD POWELL AND JENNIFER ZEITLER

Farmers, ranchers, and gardeners in the Applegate, and everywhere for that matter, rely on soil to grow crops and provide the forage and pasture to raise animals. The health of our soil, therefore, is paramount to food and fiber production. Between February and June this year, Our Family Farms, a local nonprofit, is bringing together national



Attendees at a February session of "The Future of Soil: Ensuring Resilient Food and Agricultural Systems," sponsored by Our Family Farms, a local nonprofit organization. Photo provided by Chris Hardy.

experts, local farmers, and scientists for a six-part series on the future of soil. Our Family Farms is a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit that protects our farms, families, and future by educating, advocating, and inspiring farmers, policy makers, and the community at large to support regenerative agricultural practices. We envision a thriving food and agricultural system with seed diversity and farmable land for generations to come.

"The Future of Soil: Ensuring Resilient Food and Agricultural Systems" will explore the impacts that our everyday decisions have on soil health, from what seeds we buy to how we grow plants to what foods we choose to put on our table. The workshops will address both the producer and the greater community. The final session will be a celebration of our local food system featuring food and drink produced in southern Oregon.

Sessions three, four, and five feature two tracks: one for people working in agriculture and the other for interested community members. Participants can register for single sessions. Join us for one or more of the workshop sessions and learn more about soil health and how to preserve it for future generations.

Thanks to generous sponsors, we can offer this educational series at a discounted rate. Community members and agriculture industry professionals can attend individual sessions for \$15 each with preregistration

or \$20 at the door (based on availability). Scholarships are available.

Workshop series schedule

Two sessions were held in February: (1) History of seed, food, and farming practices in southern Oregon, our state, and nation, with presentations by Red Earth Descendants, Larry Mullaly (Southern Oregon Historical Society), Don Tipping (Siskiyou Seeds), and Our Family Farms, and (2) Soil is Alive to Nurture the Next Crop Without Added Toxic Chemicals, with Dr. Elaine Ingham (Soil Foodweb).

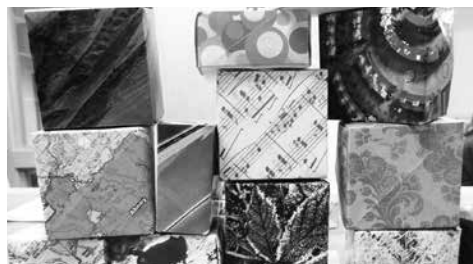
Session three, March 20, Medford Library. Pest Management beyond Neonicotinoids: Predatory Insects and Regenerative Agriculture with Dr. Jonathan Lundgren (Blue Dasher Farm). Agricultural industry from 1 - 5 pm; community from 6 - 8 pm.

Session four, April 17, Medford Library. Pesticide Impacts on Farm Workers, Consumers, and the Environment, featuring Lisa Arkin (Beyond Toxics), Dr. Ray Seidler (retired EPA scientist), Dr. Richard Fenske (Acting Chair, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, University of Washington), and a local resident and farm worker. Agricultural industry from 3 - 5 pm; community from 6 - 8 pm.

Session five, May 15, Medford Library. Oregon Businesses and Regenerative Organic Agriculture. Local farmers,

Soul Boxes: Art revealing the gun violence epidemic

The purpose of the Soul Box Project is to visually reveal the growing number of gun-related deaths and injuries in the US. That number is now so large it is incomprehensible—



nearly 170,000 since 2014, not including 22,000 yearly gun-related suicides.

Dennis Meiners and Leslie Lee, former Applegaters now living in Portland, are making and collecting simple origami boxes measuring 3"x 3" x 1.5" to use in a variety of public art displays. Each box represents one victim. Their goal is to accumulate over 200,000 boxes, but as the number of boxes grows, they will represent different sets of statistics along the way.

How can a bunch of paper boxes change gun violence? Maybe in the same way that past projects have raised worldwide awareness by counting victims. One example, the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, originally created in 1988 to commemorate AIDS victims, grew to hundreds of panels covering the National Mall in Washington, DC, in 1996, bringing awareness of the AIDS

epidemic to the entire world.

A similar project was started by middle-school children in Tennessee studying the Holocaust who wanted to know what the number "six million" looked like. They asked survivors to send their stories and a paper clip for each victim lost. Several years later they had 30 million paper clips and had built a museum out of a German World War II railcar. This project is the subject of the video, *One Clip at a Time*.

Make a box. It counts.

Ruch Library has shipped over 500 Soul Boxes, created by staff, patrons, friends, and Ruch middle-school students, to Dennis and Leslie. The project needs tens of thousands more boxes. If you want to help create this visual comment on a national tragedy, we have instructions and some paper, which we have cut to size from old calendars, maps, and magazines for making boxes. Stop by Ruch Library and let us get you started!

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Ruch Library Branch Manager

Our community website is live!

The Applegate Valley Connect website (applegateconnect.org) is live and expanding every day with more registrants, viewers, and directory and calendar posts! Let's keep this site growing to become the number one website for residents and visitors to find information about the Applegate Valley.



Here's how to use this invaluable website:

- **Events and directory.** Find events on the calendar and local organizations in the directory or register (free) to post your own community event or to add your organization to the directory.
- **Community projects.** Learn about projects of interest to the public and submit your own community projects.
- **News and stories.** Read about local organizations and submit your organization's news and stories.

The intent of this new community website is to become the primary connection and source of information about what's going on, where you can find services, and who's doing what throughout the Applegate Valley.

Thank you to The Ford Family Foundation and Community Systems, LLC, for their ongoing support of this community project. For more information, email applegateconnect@gmail.com.

vintners, orchardists, restaurateurs, and consumers will discuss why they have chosen an organic-based business model. Agricultural industry from 1 - 5 pm; community from 6 - 8 pm.

Session six, June. The date and location will be announced later for Celebrate Our Local Bounty! At this final event, the agricultural industry and the community will come together to celebrate the bounty of our local food system. Tantalize your taste buds with the foods and libations of southern Oregon.

Sponsors of the series include Our Family Farms, Lush Cosmetics, Mountain Rose Herbs, Ashland Food Co-op, Dr. Bronner, Pacific Botanicals, Beyond Toxics, Wild Wines, and Willow Witt Ranch.

For more details about "The Future of Soil," call 541-690-8053 or email contact@ourfamilyfarms.org.

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