

COVID Chronicles**Life goes on at Whistling Duck Farm**

BY MARY ALIONIS

After 29 years of farming, we've fallen into a kind of auto-pilot mode, moving along, making plans, adding on, planting somewhat by rote, meeting with reasonable success. While we know to prepare, to pay attention, dodge the potholes, and seize the opportunities, always, 2020 has, very obviously, presented us with a new reality.

I told our workers back in April that we are on a boat casting off into the ocean. We're all on the boat together, and when we leave the shore, we will ride on together. If you get off, you cannot get back on, so make the choice. And off we go, into our current reality, on a stout boat, well-built, well-provisioned, heading into uncharted waters. Ride those waves!

Our farm store has been the culmination of our farming experience, and we are so grateful to have been open for business throughout this ride, providing financial stability and useful work for all of us and food and provisions for our community.

When we opened in 2014, we never could have anticipated how much our relationship with our community would mean, how important it would be to provide a venue to our fellow farmers and local food to our neighbors, and how critical support from our community would be for our farm's survival. Everything we've believed to be important for decades has become reality, good reality, in the most profound way.

We've settled into a routine in our store since March, one which places the most importance not on being right or being perfect but rather on being kind to each other and respecting everyone, no matter their views. Tolerance is more important than ever right now. Our staff works hard to create a warm, calm, friendly place where everyone feels safe.

There have been some changes, of course, with a new checkout system, online gift cards available to purchase ahead, gloves and hand sanitizer at the entry, air filters running quietly, extra cleaning throughout the day, as well as folks giving each other extra space, fewer conversations, and more focused shopping.



Whistling Duck Farm and Store stayed open during the coronavirus shelter-at-home period, but began offering gloves and hand sanitizer at its entry. Photo: Mary Alionis.

In the end, we're the same store we've been all along: a neighborhood store with lots of farm-based produce, our delicious fermented foods, house-made soups, pestos, dressings and spice blends, locally produced cheeses, drinks, meats, seafood, bread, teas, plus CBD hemp products grown and produced on-farm, cool local and farm-created T-shirts and art. And the best organic ice cream for hot days!

You will see us continuing to develop our new courtyard and landscaping alongside the store because we all need places to enjoy each other's company—after all, we are social creatures! We never stop planning and building because as we move forward to normal, we will all need to gather, to share, and to celebrate each other.

We need—all of us need—to create the world we want to see, not the world that was. This beautiful place we call home, the Applegate Valley, is a great place to start, and now is definitely the time!

Mary Alionis

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Have a story about living in a time of coronavirus pandemic you'd like to share with Applegater readers? Email no more than 700 words to bert@applegater.org.



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••• BIZBITS •••**Businesses adjust to COVID-19 impacts**

BY JEANETTE LETOURNEUX

The coronavirus crisis inspired **A Greater Applegate** to start a gathering of Applegate Valley healers to consider the formation of a Health & Wellness Working Group. Considerations include the potential for a virtual or physical wellness site, collaborative opportunities, marketing, needed resources, and other priorities associated with health.

AGA has also been busy supporting local businesses' donation programs, allowing the businesses to continue and to expand outreach to those in need. AGA Chair Cathy Rodgers has been racing around the valley giving out generous Momentum Grants to support good works by **Applegate Country Club**, **Applegate River Lodge**, and **Ruch Garden Nursery**.

AGA is also buying food from local farms and ranches and donating it to the Ruch and Williams food pantries.

For more information, email AGA at info@agreaterapplegate.org or call 541-702-2108. Contact Executive Director Seth Kaplan at seth@agreaterapplegate.org

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Williams Store (541-846-1311) is giving away locally made hand sanitizer and allows pre-orders for hot meals Wednesday through Sunday to help the many caretakers in the area. They also make sure first responders at the fire district have meals after hours. Seniors can order groceries by phone and pick up curbside.

CasaBlanca Grill organized a FoodShare that provided 1,530 pounds of food to our community! Thank you to Brian from **Sun Spirit Farms** in Murphy, Neil from **Cherry Street Meats** in Medford, and **Chad Guthrie Realtor** in Grants Pass for their donations and help. You can now order and pay online at all three CasaBlanca locations (mycasablancagrill.com, 541-846-3131).

Thanks to an anonymous local donor, **White Oak Farm** (lovingloveforeva@yahoo.com) provided two families \$25 worth of free organic produce and meat each week for four weeks. They were able to support eight families in all.

Two customers at **Hidden Valley Market** (541-862-7001) made masks for employees at no charge. The store continues its donations to the **Gospel Mission** and provides local schools with paper bags for picking up belongings and lunches. They advise seniors and immune-compromised individuals to shop from 7 – 9 am.

The folks at the **Provoit Store** (541-846-6286) are making and giving away many masks. They also offer family-style dinners for pre-order and ten percent off deli items. No-contact pick-up is available.

In Ruch, **Code 3** (541-899-7867), **Indigo Grill** (541-702-2320), and **Ruch Country Store** (541-899-8559) provide free lunches to students. They thank everyone who has supported this program that gives a free meal to families even on the weekends.

By George Farm (541-899-5650) is donating eggs to **Ruch Food Pantry** and offers artisan cheeses and duck eggs with direct delivery or to drop sites.

Because of the delay in starting the **Williams Farmers Market**, three Williams farms (**Banyan**, **White Oak**, and **L&R Farms**) opened for on-farm pre-order. For a list of available produce and dried herbs, email tommy@banyanbotanicals.com.

Ruch Hardware and **Garden Nursery**, **McKee Bridge Historical Society**, **AGA**, and **Roots for Hope** partnered to get 111 vegetable starts to Ruch Outdoor Community School students. Ken Snoke, of **Ruch Gardens Nursery**, at 181 Upper Applegate Road (541-899-1113) provided the beautiful plants and large growing pots.

Applegate Store and Café (541-846-6659) is giving discounted prices for their new "grab and go" home-cooked meals from their hotbox, including barbecue chicken and ribs, rice and veggies, and mac and cheese.

Whistling Duck Farm Store (541-761-6772) accepts phone and email call-in orders for health care workers and high-risk citizens. Prepay on the website (whistlingduckfarm.com) by purchasing gift cards.

Pennington Farms (541-846-0550) is grateful to the Applegate for "letting us be part of your acts of kindness." They will happily set aside and deliver any special requests and offer curbside pick up.

(Note: Programs were current as of mid-May but may have been modified or discontinued by press time.)

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Our great wineries also really need our support. Most are offering free shipping for three bottles and curbside pick up. Here are just a few that are offering help:

- **Valley View** (www.valleyviewwinery.com, 541-899-8468) has doubled the size of the rows in their hemp field that are planted with vegetables, thanks to Kelly at Ashland Greenhouses. All the food goes to their employees' families and local food banks.

- **Red Lily** (www.redlilyvineyards.com, 541-846-6800) started a Gratitude Campaign each week on their Facebook page. You can nominate someone amazing who is making a difference during this pandemic! Nominations so far have included healthcare workers and first responders.

- **Cowhorn** (cowhornwine.com, 541-899-6876) was able to donate about 70 extra pounds of asparagus to the local food bank. If you are able to donate any extra food surplus to your local food bank, they encourage you to do so!

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BizBits highlights businesses new to the area, holding special events, or offering new products. If you are a business owner, let us know when you move into the area or to a different location, hold a special event, expand your business, or mark a milestone.

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