

Food and farms in the Applegate: Ideas into action

BY MEGAN FEHRMAN AND SARA MARIE HAMILTON

Hopefully you have already heard of or participated in some of the A Greater Applegate listening sessions. If you haven't, here's the deal: For several years A Greater Applegate has made it their goal to support those living in the Applegate from the roots up, starting with just making the space and time for voices to be heard and shared. All that came from that listening has been recorded, and now goals, strategies and ideas for action have been identified. Concerns and visions around farming and food and related topics were central to many of us. Food and farming touch our day-to-day lives in many ways. It's no surprise they are a high priority.

Last winter, a group of farmers, prepared food producers, caterers, farmers market managers, and those working in food access gathered to dive deeper into the food and farming topics that surfaced during the listening sessions with the goal of maintaining and building our local food and agricultural system. The

strategies that emerged look something like this:

- Increasing educational and technical assistance opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and growers
- Connecting producers and consumers through outreach, education, communication, and relationship building
- Ensuring farm, land, and water viability for new and existing farmers
- Assessing and building necessary infrastructure
- Creating vibrant and efficient distribution and marketing channels.



In addition to these overarching strategies, there are many ideas that folks have come up with to achieve this big goal of a thriving local food system. Raising awareness on the importance of buying locally and supporting local farmers, utilizing shared commercial kitchens for value-added businesses, developing a tool and equipment sharing system, updating irrigation efficiency, and increasing local food access and food security in the Applegate are just a few of the priorities we collectively share in this community.

Now that listening and organizing have been done, to a point, it's time to start turning these ideas into tangible actions that will enhance our community and individual well-being. It will take input and energy from community members. If you are a farmer or involved in a food

business in the Applegate, we would love to hear from you and loop you into this process. We will hold a gathering this fall to share in detail the work that has been done already and to form working groups that will begin moving into next steps and actions.

Another exciting food and farm networking project that will feed into this work resulted from a survey that was given to vendors who attended any of the three Applegate Farmers Markets this season. The feedback is being organized and will help us to support the continued growth and success of our farmers markets next year—and beyond.

We would love to hear from you to learn more about what is important to you regarding food and farms in the Applegate. If you are a farmer or involved in an Applegate food business, email Sara Marie (saramarie@rvfoodsystem.org) and be on the lookout for an invitation to the fall working group gathering. We look forward to building together.

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Free anti-overdose drugs available

Rogue Harm Reduction offers free lifesaving overdose medication and HIV tests from 10:30 am - 1:30 pm the first Sunday of each month at the Sugarloaf Center, 206 Tetherow Road, Williams.

Volunteers offer free doses of naloxone to take home, along with instructions for use (allow 20 minutes), as well as free fentanyl test strips, take-home HIV tests, and condoms and lube. For more information, email rogueharmreduction@gmail.com.