

Oregon State University Extension Service

METRO CONNECTION

A Message From Our Regional Director Angela Sandino



Serving as the Metro Regional Extension Director for these nine months has been a great privilege. Before joining this wonderful organization last year, I knew relatively little about OSU Extension other than the beloved Master Gardener and 4-H programs. There is a renewed effort in place to better impart Extension's story and share our impressive accomplishments with larger audiences in our community so that more people can learn about –and from - us.

Being part of Extension's unique educational system, where community members partake in classes and opportunities to learn research-based skills and knowledge in a wide variety of settings, continues to be an eye opener. To most of our community, the complexities of our operations are behind the scenes. Some aspects are intended to be that way, while others could be better exposed. The time and dedication put forth by our dedicated volunteers helps create the strength and balance that keeps

our programs running smoothly, while our talented faculty and staff give back to our communities sharing their skills and knowledge in many ways that benefit our local cities and surrounding rural areas.

This summer, our 4-H program will provide leadership-building opportunities with an emphasis on positive youth development to hundreds of young people in our area. The amount of passion, planning, time and effort that goes in to creating a successful Washington County Fair is impressive. Our many volunteers and hard-working 4-H team also organizes clubs, classes and workshops all summer so that youth can reach their full potential by learning and working together through a common goal. Thank you to all of our talented staff, dedicated volunteers and generous donors for your valuable participation in this very worthwhile program.

Our Food Hero program is also very busy with summer farmers' markets teaching folks how to cook and enjoy delicious and nutritious food options available. These programs present a great opportunity for families to learn new recipes and taste scrumptious food in a wide variety of creative ways. Dedicated nutrition staff demonstrate cooking skills while also encouraging participants to meet and socialize with others. If you are not familiar with Food Hero, I encourage you to drop by your local farmers' market and see what a positive experience these demonstrations are. Also, remember these colorful markets support local farmers and small business owners. More foot traffic hopefully translates in to more profits so these individuals can continue providing our community with farm fresh produce and products.

Last month, I was invited to attend a local farm tour and BBQ celebration organized by our amazing grass seed specialists. The casual event took place on a lovely evening on two beautiful farms in Washington County. Learning opportunities were conducted in the fields providing hands-on experiences for the many farmers who attended. Participants were encouraged to bring family members along to enjoy the spring evening.

Thank you to our hosts who provided a perfect venue for socializing over delicious burgers while enjoying a great view of the surrounding picturesque fields of brightly colored red clover. This was a powerful reminder to me, a city dweller, that Extension serves a crucial role keeping industrious farmers up-to-date with research and practical information with the ultimate goal of helping farmers increase their yields. I heard numerous impressive stories from farmers who reminded me that Extension must not forget its agricultural roots as our area develops and farmland decreases.

One important goal for Extension is to encourage these motivated and responsible citizens to advocate for Extension and to act as ambassadors for our organization. We are fortunate to have great citizen representatives on our Regional Extension Advisory Committee who advise us on creative ways for us to innovate and improve. This is just one aspect of our community engagement and outreach focus. We continually seek new opportunities to partner with the diverse communities around us.

The 4th of July is a highlight of the summer season for me as I pause to reflect on how blessed I am to live in our free country. I would ask each and every one of you to please remember to appreciate and thank our local military personnel who dedicate their lives to ensure we continue celebrating our freedom and independence for generations to come.

Have fun, plug in to a new activity, meet some new neighbors, and I look forward to seeing you out and about in our beautiful slice of Oregon this summer.