

Oregon State University Extension Service

METRO CONNECTION

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Introducing our RECAN member Norie Dimeo-Ediger

by *Stephanie Haugen*



Norie Dimeo-Ediger doesn't want today's students to be intimidated by science like she once was. She wants them to grasp basic biology and understand the fascinating intricacies of the natural world.

That's why Dimeo-Ediger has dedicated her career to demystifying science. Initially earning master's degrees in education and teaching biology, she worked with students in public schools and then taught biology at Portland Community College. For the last 18 years, Dimeo-Ediger has worked for the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), a state agency dedicated to bringing forest education to all Oregonians.

"I love science," Dimeo-Ediger said. "It's not good for our world for people to fear or be intimidated by science to the point that they avoid thinking critically about and dealing with environmental issues. Understanding how nature works gives you an appreciation for it," Dimeo-Ediger said. "I think when we truly understand it, we begin to value it."

Even growing up in a rural area, it wasn't until Dimeo-Ediger attended Aloha High School that she really grew to love science after a teacher took her class outdoors for exploring and hands-on learning.

After nearly 20 years, she still loves her job as OFRI's director of K-12 education programs. The organization, funded by taxes gathered from private company timber sales, collaborates with community partners and distributes money for education related to Oregon's forests and environment. This educational programming provides full-time staff members serving as resources for forest education; lesson plans for teachers; and reimbursements to school districts for taking students on field trips into the forest, to various forest centers and museums, or to Oregon State University's College of Forestry, for example.

Dimeo-Ediger believes these K-12 programs can reach students early in their school career, creating a context for understanding the natural world. "Students today are the decision makers for our future and they need to be able to understand material, think critically and question information when it's given to them," she said. "Students will be voters and making decisions, hopefully based on knowledge and information and not ignorance."

Dimeo-Ediger devotes her work and even free time to organizations dedicated to future thinking and creating awareness. That's why RECAN suits her so well. The meetings help her stay informed about what's happening in her home county and what is needed next, she said. Dimeo-Ediger takes this information back to her coworkers and partners at OFRI where they can collaborate to meet emerging needs centered on natural resources. That is also why she serves on the Banks School Board.

When she is not working or volunteering, Dimeo-Ediger tends to the dozen chickens on her Banks farm along with her dogs and cats. She enjoys reading and traveling, and walking every day, currently training for a half marathon she'll walk at Joshua Tree National Park.

She enjoys spending as much time as possible with friends and family, and her four grown children, including a daughter who now lives in Nashville, Tenn.