

Oregon State University Extension Service

METRO CONNECTION

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Introducing our RECAN member José Jaime *by Stephanie Haugen*



José Jaime realized the importance of education at a young age. That's why he's dedicated his life to learning, and helping others advance and grow.

As a child, Jaime dreamed of being a doctor, but his family had no means to support such extensive schooling for their youngest of 10 children. As farmworkers in Mexico, his parents worked long, hard hours, yet still barely made ends meet. Jaime knew he did not want that for himself and told his father he didn't want to be a farmworker. "My dad said, 'well, there is nothing else,' " Jaime recalled.

Lost and unsure how to move forward, Jaime was playing around in the back of his classroom when a visitor at the front posed the question, "Who wants to go to seminary and get a good education?" This caught Jaime's attention and he listened intently as the man discussed the priesthood.

At 12 years old, Jaime made the decision to leave his family for the monastery. "It was very difficult," he said. "I was still a child." Differing greatly from his life at home, life in the seminary was very regimented. "Every day was scheduled down to the minute," Jaime said. But that good education the classroom visitor had promised was delivered. Through the priesthood, Jaime earned a bachelor's degree and then went on to earn his Master's in Divinity. "I learned the value of sticking with something with passion," Jaime said. "And I stuck it out."

Among many other pursuits, Jaime went on to be an active priest at St. Alexander Catholic Church and the Latino non-profit Centro Cultural, both in Cornelius. As part of his priestly duties he also worked at the non-profit Community Action with the Valley Migrant League, which aimed to help migrant farm workers improve their lives with education and social services in the 1960s and 70s. "It's funny I worked so hard to get away from that life, but I ended up working with farmworkers anyway," said Jaime. "And I love the Hispanic community."

It was also during this time Jaime received his introduction to working with Oregon State University, serving on a committee dedicated to offering college scholarships to Hispanic women. That was important work, he said, because at that time very few Hispanic women considered going to college.

When Jaime was nearly 30 years old, he found himself at a cross roads. While he loved his work as a priest, he thought of having a family and a career outside the priesthood. "I had to choose a path," he said. "I could continue in the priesthood, but I was also still young enough to change careers." Jaime took a full year to meditate and pray for guidance. When he emerged from contemplation, Jaime felt confident in his decision to leave the priesthood despite his love for it.

He met his wife in Cornelius and went on to earn another masters degree in social work. That led him to deeply fulfilling jobs with Oregon Health Sciences University and Washington County, among others.

Now 77, Jaime runs a translation company with his wife. He also jogs 8 miles a day in attempt to stay active and healthy in his golden years. He also marches at the Washington County Courthouse every Monday to protest immigration crimes and helps edit a Spanish language newspaper based in Portland.

And of course, Jaime stays busy serving on the OSU Extension Service RECAN committee, where he absorbs information about OSU Extension programs and shares it with the groups in which he still maintains an active presence, including Centro Cultural and Community Action. "It's a wonderful group of people," Jaime said. "And a good program."