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The VSP Voice



Free Webinars Available for 2021 National Farm Safety & Health Week

Air temperatures are beginning to drop, and as the leaves on the trees start to change colors, annual harvest activities begin to kick into high gear on farms across the nation.

It has been estimated that about 3 Million farmworkers (family farm workers and hired workers combined) will be working hard to harvest America's agricultural commodities to feed local communities and the world.

Unfortunately, with annual fall harvests in full swing, the odds of farm-related injuries and fatalities will also be on the rise, as well.

"The 2019 data for the 2019 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the agricultural sector is still the most dangerous in America with 573 fatalities, or an equivalent of 23.1 deaths per 100,000 workers." (*National Education Center for Agricultural Safety 2021*).

Most accidents on the farm can be avoided, but unforeseen occurrences can and do occur – often with disastrous results. Unexpected accidents and fatalities can occur when farmworkers are doing the same chores or harvesting activities they have previously done for decades, without injury.

Experienced farmers and farm workers can just as easily lose their lives as those workers who are new to the job. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should always be worn when using caustic agricultural chemicals to prevent severe burns to the skin, blindness or death from asphyxiation, if inhaled.

One family in Ohio experienced the unimaginable firsthand last month and are still dealing with the grief from their loss, when three brothers were overcome with invisible fumes while they attempted to fix a manure pump.

Cowlitz County VSP strongly encourages all local farms to develop a farm plan, and review it annually for any revisions that might be needed. In addition, regular monthly safety reviews with family and farm hands will keep safety in the spot light on your farm and can help to reduce the odds of accidents or fatalities on your farm.

AgriSafe Network is offering free Webinars Monday, September 20, 2021 through Friday, September 24, 2021.

To register for the Webinars, visit:

necasag.org/nationalfarmsafetyandhealthweek



DAILY THEMES

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 | Tractor Safety & Rural Roadway Safety |
| TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 | Overall Farmer Health |
| WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 | Safety & Health for Youth in Agriculture |
| THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 | Agricultural Fertilizer & Chemical Safety |
| FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 | Safety & Health for Women in Agriculture |

Are you interested in Conservation Farming?
Sign up for the VSP today!
 Contact: Mark Taylor
taylor@co.cowlitz.wa.us
 or call: (360) 577-3042, Ext. 1-6660

Preserving the Harvest: It's a Matter of Quality vs. Quantity

Scott and Summer Steenbarger end each day counting their blessings that come from the rural lifestyle of living on a family farm. Their 30+ acre farm, *Preserving the Harvest*, is situated in the Lewis River Valley of Woodland, Washington.

The Steenbargers are a hard-working couple, with Scott holding down a full-time job, and Summer managing their busy farming operation, and a houseful of children. Scott and Summer have five sons (ranging from a toddler to a 19-year old who has already earned his Private Pilot's license and plans to pursue a career in aviation) and one daughter, who has recently married on the family farm.

The family grows and raises many things, which include: pasture-raised eggs, meats, cheeses and other dairy products. Their farm fresh eggs come from chicken, geese, and quail. Pasture-raised meat includes: chicken, turkeys, quail, lamb, pork, rabbit, and grass-fed

beef. In addition to farm-fresh eggs and meats, you'll find cheeses & other dairy products, raw local honey, herbs & spices, locally-roasted coffee, granola, nutritive & tasty teas, wild foraged (and farm-grown) mushrooms, nuts, berries, and greens. And if that isn't enough, you can even purchase handmade soaps with essential oils, and other gentle skin and body care products.

The Steenbargers also found a way to strengthen the economic viability of their **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** farm by developing a partnering web of select farms with healthy farm products to sell, and forming a cooperative marketing system. And while all of the farms benefit from selling their collective products from one website, CSA customers also benefit from having

more farm products from which to choose.

All products are delivered weekly to one convenient pick-up site – saving CSA customers the time and gas it would have taken to visit multiple farms to shop for the same products separately.

The cooperatively *Preserving the Harvest* list of products is impressive, to say the least, and even includes apple juice that has been sweetened with cranberries from the nearby coastal area of Washington State. The cooperative farm web also extends to a fourth-generation farmer friend from Maine, who provides their CSA customers with

that we currently provide to our customers.”

Preserving the Harvest believes in using a homestead, permaculture approach – they've learned that diversity is key to preserving their land, with each aspect of the farm operation working to compliment another to create a well-rounded and healthy farm.

“We use regenerative farming practices to create a thriving, biodiverse farmstead, honoring the Creator's artwork, the land's heritage, and our roots in agriculture.”

The farm also hosts various classes & food-sharing events throughout the year, including: How to use herbs, rain barrel building, cheese

making, soap making, farm dinners, and more!

Scott and Summer like to “think outside of the box”, often creating innovative ways to practice old-time ways of community.

Currently, they are hosting Friday Movie Nights on the Farm, with a community potluck that starts at 6:30 p.m., to



Preserving the Harvest farm in Woodland, Washington

maple syrup from the east coast.

Scott and Summer have a diverse farming business, collecting revenues from raw farm commodities and value-added products in their farm store, but also from a variety of services they provide prospective customers, and by renting out farming buildings for social gatherings.

Throughout the year, they host day workshops, tea parties, and tours in order to equip and teach others, and collaborate knowledge about “all things homestead”.

When asked if they wanted to increase their profitability by increasing production on their farm, Summer replied, “Quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality... we don't want to produce more, if we lose out on the quality

be followed promptly by family-friendly movies for all to enjoy!

The Steenbargers have invited all who would like to participate, in a way that truly reconnects local families to local farms.

To check out their extensive list of farm-related products, and learn more about the services they provide, visit their web site at: www.preservingtheharvest.net/products.html



Reconnecting with Local Farms Can Provide a Relaxing New Family Tradition

The hustle and bustle of the “modern” life-style can create lots of stress for adults and children, alike. Hard-working, urban families spend countless hours with their faces focused on the tiny, bright screens of their digital devices. Their brains are bombarded by streaming current trends, sporting events, or the latest political squabble creating civil unrest somewhere across our nation.

The sad fact is, they’ve lost touch with the relaxing lifestyle that country living provides.

Visiting a nearby in your down time offers family members the opportunity to recharge their mental & physical batteries before the upcoming work or school week. Simply driving out in the countryside, as the sun is setting, is a great way to relax, teaches your children where their food comes from, and can create memories that kids will cherish for decades



Sunset on the farm at The Patch in Woodland, Washington

to come. It’s a great way to spend some end-of-summer time with the family. Just make sure to bring your camera along so you can capture your own beautiful farm-scape photos, like the one proudly provided by the Donald Family (center page) of their Woodland Bottoms farm, *The Patch*.

If you’re looking to roast some sweet ears of corn on the grill for one last summer BBQ, be sure to visit a farm stand near you, or one

of three farmers markets in the county. *Thoeny Farms* harvests sweet corn daily, along with a variety of freshly picked tomatoes and other vegetables to sell at their farm stand. Unfortunately, their corn is so popular that this year’s harvest has already sold out.

However, if you’d like to pick your own ears of corn straight from the stock, you can visit *R and B Pleasant Hill Farm and Pumpkin Patch* in Kelso, Washington. The farm is currently selling fresh,

sweet corn (U-Pick), and also has tomatoes and assorted squashes for sale.

Other farms that sell local fruits & vegetables include: *Willow Grove Gardens*, and *Swofford Family Farm* – both farms sell at the Cowlitz Community Farmers Market in Longview on Saturdays.

Thorton’s Family Farms sells at Mama Mindi’s Market in Castle Rock on Sunday afternoons and also sells

directly from their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm.

Additional CSA farms in Cowlitz County include: *Watershed Garden Works* in Longview, *Preserving the Harvest* in Woodland, and *Hubbard Gardens* in Castle Rock, Washington.

So the next time you need a relaxing break from your daily grind, visit a local farm and get to know the people who grow your food.

And don’t forget...

Buy local – Buy Cowlitz Country Fresh!

Community Events

VSP Ag. Viability Sub-committee Meeting

3rd Thursday of each month 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Please join from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/636446813>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (872) 240-3311 Access Code: 636-446-813

Cowlitz County VSP Work Group Meeting

3rd Thursday of each month 2021 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Please join from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/636446813>

You can also dial in using your phone.

VSP Conservation Farming Educational Booth

Cowlitz Community Farmers Market: 9:00 am to 2:00 pm

2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month through October 23, 2021

Silver Lake Watershed Advisory Council Mtg.

Tuesday, October, 12 2021 – 1:30 pm

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, or Android:

<https://wsu.zoom.us/j/7756056320?pwd=RzVxbTl0dXpyUjIjSDdsWnJhTXdydz09>

Meeting ID: 775 605 6320 Password: 12345

Phone Call: +1 253 215 8782 +12532158782,,7756056320#



Complimentary VSP Refrigerator Magnets for our loyal monthly Readers are still available at the VSP conservation farming educational booth at the Cowlitz Farmers Market in Longview on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month through October 23, 2021. Stop by and get yours soon!

Cowlitz County Voluntary Stewardship Program
 Building and Planning
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 Kelso, WA 98626-4124
www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/vsp



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Cowlitz County VSP

Dedicated to strengthening agriculture viability through conservation farming practices that protect water quality and enhance environmentally critical areas, and to the promotion of productive farmland(s) so that future generations can choose to farm.

Conservation Partners... and participating local landowners!



Freshwater fishing in Toutle, Washington

Photo Credit: Jesse Swofford