

Generations *of* GROWTH

By Ben Davis

AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AT OREGON

STATE UNIVERSITY is more than a college. It's a community. A community made up of generations upon generations of students, graduates, faculty and staff, industry and stakeholders of all backgrounds—all bound by the common goal to make tomorrow better.

Together we are more than the sum of our parts. Yet our community is still comprised of individuals. Movers and shakers who create new businesses, innovate new products, and create systems that better utilize and safeguard our natural resources. These individuals are the driving force behind the products we consume and the sustainable innovations that help preserve our soils and ecosystems for future generations.

Agriculture is the largest industry and economic driver in the state. It is the foundation of modern society and our closest relationship with the environment. With a growing population and a changing climate, striking a balance between conservation and food and fiber production is perhaps the most critical challenge we face as a society.

Every year at our annual Dean's Dinner in October, our College honors members of the agricultural sciences community at various stages of their careers with awards for their lasting contributions in their fields. The following profiles provide a glimpse of the people that make up our vibrant and thriving community.

1 THE PLANT DETECTIVE

Sierra Hartney, 2021 Alumni Luminary Award

While the work of human disease pathologists has been portrayed in movies like *Contagion* and *Outbreak*—and recently spotlighted by media throughout the COVID-19 pandemic—the work of plant pathologists has gone largely unseen in the public eye. Their work, however, is similar in many ways, and is equally important because it protects our food supply.

“When a grower finds a disease, it’s our job to figure out where it came from, how it got here, and where it’s going. It’s detective work, which I love,” said Sierra Hartney, a plant pathologist with Sakata Seed Company, a global flower and vegetable seed powerhouse.

“One of my greatest joys is to walk a field and not find disease,” said Hartney, who was hired by Sakata after completing her PhD in Plant Pathology from OSU in 2012. Since then she has developed their breeding program and

seized the opportunity to grow into a leader in her field, receiving the “Future Giant of the Seed Industry” award from the American Seed Trade Association in 2017.

One of Hartney’s biggest impacts was taking on downy mildew in spinach and beets, which resulted in commercial varieties that have resistance to the devastating disease.

“My role and the role of my team is to make sure that growers end up with the best possible seed they can get—good yield, good color, good flavor. That’s our food chain,” she said. “It all starts with seeds.”

Remembering her time at OSU as a grad student, she noted, “I think sometimes education can be too narrow. We are specialists, which is important, but what I loved about OSU and the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology was that it also helped me see the bigger picture,” Hartney said. “And that lasts forever.”



Stephen Ward photo



Ben Davis photo

2 | THE BREWMEISTER

Larry Sidor, 2021 Alumni Leader Award

Larry Sidor has always held deep ties to OSU and agriculture. He was born and raised in Corvallis, and his father was an OSU Extension agent who would take him along to experiment stations, where Larry became involved with research projects at the age of ten. This early introduction to science and agriculture would set the stage for a 46-year career in the brewing industry, where Larry has made advancements in both brewing and hop processing that have secured his legacy as an industry innovator.

After graduating from OSU with a degree in Food Science in 1972, Sidor went to work at Olympia Brewing, where his innovations began. “I would make little teeny-weeny changes to a beer and the brewers would say ‘I don’t know Larry, that seems pretty crazy,’” he said, laughing at the memory. This was well before the explosion of craft brewing in America, when brewers were still reluctant to experiment with bold flavors. “It was before OSU invented the Cascade hop”, which Sidor argues, “changed the brewing industry and created the craft movement.”

After Olympia, Sidor worked for a hop processor in Yakima where he revolutionized hop pelletization and inspired large-scale breweries like Budweiser to begin using pellets. He then returned to brewing at Deschutes Brewery, leading their rapid expansion and innovating their product line with new beer styles, helping them grow into the craft brewing giant they are today. While at Deschutes, Sidor created a job pipeline for OSU fermentation grads before starting his own brewery—Crux Fermentation Project—which has developed a loyal following of beer connoisseurs. In less than 10 years, Crux Fermentation Project has become a staple of the Bend craft scene and is renowned for its award-winning innovations that push the boundaries of brewing.

Throughout his career, Sidor has stayed connected to his alma mater by hiring graduates and creating opportunities for students. His contributions are one of the many reasons the OSU fermentation program maintains a 100% job placement rate for graduates year after year. He now serves on the Food Science & Technology Advisory Board where he helps strategize the growth of the department, which is worth raising a glass.

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STEWARDS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Bill & Karla Chambers, 2021 Alumni Legacy Award

Bill and Karla Chambers met in statistics class at OSU. Looking back, they like to joke “What are the odds?” They both graduated with bachelor’s degrees in agricultural economics and then completed master’s degrees before founding Stahlbush Island Farms—the first farm in the United States to become 100% certified sustainable.

“In the 90s, sustainability wasn’t a word anybody was using. We put the first certified sustainable food into the market, but nobody knew what it meant,” Karla said. The certification process includes a comprehensive farm audit that looks at farming practices, wildlife management, soil and water conservation, and energy consumption among other things. The entire farm is powered by an on-site biogas facility that uses fruit and vegetable by-product to produce a surplus of electricity—more than their entire processing operation can utilize—and the excess power is sold back into the grid. It also generates steam used in their boilers and organic fertilizer that is spread back into the soil. “There is no such thing as waste,” Bill said. “Only underutilized resources.”

Although the Chambers’ passion for sustainability nurtures the environment, their motivation is driven by a deeper purpose. “As founders and owners of a farm, one of your goals is to always improve your asset base, your soil base, hoping your children and grandchildren will ultimately farm that ground. You would never want to leave that asset in worse condition for your grandchildren, ever. So your whole mindset is continuous improvement and building soil health,” Karla said.

Stahlbush began as a 300-acre farm growing two crops and is now a 5,000 acre operation growing over 20 crops and processing them on-site into value-added products sold around the globe. Throughout that rapid growth, the Chambers have stayed connected to OSU by providing student internship opportunities and jobs for graduates, giving guest lectures and hosting class visits to the farm, and sponsoring a special seminar course in Sustainable Agriculture. Their collaboration with OSU can be seen as an extension of their work in sustainability, as they continue to create innovative systems to help improve the foundation of tomorrow.



Stahlbush Island Farms photo

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ONE SCIENCE FITS ALL

Julianne Wood-Rethwill, 2021 Alumni Legacy Award



Julianne Wood-Rethwill received her bachelor's in Food Science & Technology from OSU in 1975 and embarked on a career journey that would take her around the globe. She credits the strong foundation of science she gained at OSU for her storied career that spans a diverse array of industries. Working for several companies under the umbrella of Johnson & Johnson, Julianne developed a wide range of products across industries, including food, pharmaceuticals, pet food, skin care, and bar soaps. She helped develop well-known consumer products like Splenda and Aveeno Active Naturals, and shifted into an international marketing role to expand product lines globally.

While building her career, Julianne also built a family. She and her husband raised two children, which she said was her biggest accomplishment of all. She also looked for ways to give back to society through volunteering and community service. In Kalamazoo, Michigan, Julianne served as a board member for two years for Open Doors Kalamazoo, a non-profit that aims to alleviate homelessness, and served as President of the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra.

Recently, Julianne has been back on campus serving as the Chair for the Food Science & Technology Advisory Board, utilizing her background in global marketing to strengthen departmental branding and raise funds to create new opportunities for students. She is engaging the department in a benchmarking exercise to measure against peer institutions, and helping advance initiatives that explore hemp-based products—both of which aim to heighten the national ranking of Food Science & Technology at OSU.

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DECADES OF DAIRY DEVELOPMENT

Tillamook County Creamery Association, 2021 Hall of Fame Award




Oregon is renowned for the quality of its dairy, and few dairy brands are more widely recognizable than Tillamook. The Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA) is a dairy cooperative founded in 1909, now comprised of nearly 90 farmer-owners in Tillamook County. Their creamery is the largest attraction on the Oregon Coast, drawing over a million visitors each year.

The partnership between TCCA and OSU goes back decades. OSU's Department of Dairy began in 1899, when scientists began to help dairy farmers make cheeses that could be shipped to distant markets. Later TCCA established scholarships for students to attend OSU and eventually set up an endowed professorship to ensure a future of expertise in dairy science.

"OSU has been a key partner in the development of dairy in Oregon," said Patrick Criteser, President and CEO of TCCA.

"One of the many reasons our longstanding partnership has thrived is our shared values, especially regarding the balance of conservation and food production. Today consumers expect brands to not only provide great-tasting, nutritious food, but to also benefit the community and the environment."

Recently TCCA has been instrumental in helping OSU move forward with plans for a new dairy pilot plant, which will feature state-of-the-art equipment for the production and packaging of student-made Beaver Classic™ cheeses, ice cream, cultured products, and dairy-based powders. This new facility will offer students unparalleled experiential learning opportunities and help advance the dairy industry in Oregon for years to come. 

 Watch the Video Online: beav.es/wMd