

Reimagining Traditions *in a*

VIRTUAL RE

Transitioning iconic college events to an online setting

There is no denying that 2020 brought about significant change and challenge. It also brought about opportunities to reimagine how we approach traditions. If we were able to come up with solutions for teaching, research, and outreach during a pandemic, certainly we could figure out how to reinvent some of our more recognized College of Agricultural Sciences events. Like every part of doing old things in new ways, it took tremendous collaboration, flexibility, patience—and a fair bit of humility—as we learned along the way. This is the story of three iconic College of Agricultural Sciences events that were reborn, reimagined, and even rewarded.

By Heidi Happonen



ALITY

Pop-up Dinner in a Box

For the past several years, the College of Agricultural Sciences and the OSU Foundation have teamed up to sponsor a pop-up dinner for friends and alumni of the college. The dinner is typically held at two outdoor locations—downtown Portland and Corvallis. The dinner is an opportunity to celebrate the bounty of Oregon’s diverse agricultural harvest along with the innovation of our food science experts.

While COVID-19 made the in-person events impossible, the college determined to maintain the tradition.

Organizers pivoted the in-person pop-up dinner to a three-course meal that participants could prepare in their own homes and share together over a virtual table. Food science faculty crafted the unique recipes and filmed cooking demonstrations. All the ingredients were boxed with recipe cards and other information about the college and shipped to more than 100 households across the state.

Never before have such a diverse mix of people come together at the same time across such great distances for a college event. Enabling people from distant parts of the state and beyond to participate together meant a great deal to everyone involved.

The Pop-Up Dinner in a Box was born out of necessity, but even when we are able to return to in-person events the college will likely continue this new tradition as it allowed more people who care about the college to participate.

And event organizers and participants weren’t the only ones who thought it was a success. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) recognized it with a Gold award for outstanding events in 2020.



Left: Recipes developed by OSU’s Food Innovation Center were made by people across the state and as far away as Pennsylvania.

Above: Locally sourced ingredients and foods created by Oregon entrepreneurs were included in the ingredient boxes shipped across the state and enjoyed at a virtual table. Heidi Happonen photos

Art About Ag: Tension/Harmony

The 37th Annual Art About Agriculture Competition and Exhibition returned to the much-loved open call, juried format. While it had been more than a decade since the college had endeavored to put on a juried art show, when COVID-19 made it clear that a traditional show wouldn't be possible, that didn't stop the organizers.

The return of the juried art show this year came with a significant theme: Tension/Harmony. The idea of that theme is core to the balance many seek to define in agriculture and natural resources as we strive to meet the needs of both food production and environmental stewardship. There is a tension innate in that effort, but also an ideal of harmony that we strive for every day.

This year's theme invited artists to consider our agricultural future, exploring the relationship between the conservation of natural resources and agricultural production. What will tomorrow's food and fiber look like when we place equal weight on conservation and use? How might farming, fishing, fibers, fashion, and food culture change in the Pacific Northwest? How might communities and connectedness change as we better understand food insecurity and market access? What would cutting-edge research, technology, and innovation look like in the march toward finding a balanced future? Artists were provided research papers and news articles pertaining to Oregon State University's College of Agricultural Sciences' efforts to tackle these important questions.

The open call received 208 outstanding art submissions by 65 artists. Of the 208 submissions, the jury chose 45 artworks from 34 artists. Artists responded in a multitude of mediums, including painting, drawing, photography, printmaking, sculpture, fiber art, and ceramics.

People ask sometimes, why a College of Agricultural Sciences would invest so significantly in art. Some argue that art, like science, is about discovery. It's about connecting people to new ideas and challenging our understanding of the world around us. In a constant effort to make tomorrow better, both art and science align to create new opportunities and deeper experiences.

While this year's event was partially in person and partially online, it still fostered connections that will have impact for years to come.

NWREC Harvest Dinner

This year's Harvest Dinner went virtual, too, like a lot of events in 2020. Although a very different kind of activity, and nothing like being out on the lawn with hundreds of supporters, this year's Harvest Dinner was deemed a success. Nearly 110 homes, businesses or computers linked to the event—live. It was estimated that the total attendance was about 150.

The iconic event taking place at the College of Agricultural Sciences' most diverse agricultural experiment station, North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC), began in 2012 and typically the attendance is capped at 300. Because this year's effort was online, it was a more intimate event.

That said, some of the traditions from the in-person Harvest Dinner carried through, including the well-loved assortment of charcuterie.

This year, attendees were mailed a box that included Beaver Classic cheeses and meats, and thanks to a donation from the hazelnut industry, also had a sampling of hazelnuts and hazelnut oil.

One new feature this year—in addition to the virtual setting—was the ability to feature a local nonprofit and premiere a new video detailing the history and current research and extension services at the station. Farmers Feeding the Hungry shared some of their story as a local nonprofit that coordinates food donations to the Oregon Food Back from farmers that are then distributed across the state.

And while this year's Harvest Dinner was unique because of the pandemic, it also held a special significance because it was the last that Mike Bondi would organize as he retires in 2021. The creator of the Harvest Dinner and a 42-year veteran of Oregon State University, Mike Bondi has made an indelible impact on the College of Agricultural Sciences and the future of Oregon agriculture and vibrant natural resources across the state.



2020
Art about Agriculture Competition and Exhibition:
Tension/Harmony

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September 3 - October 30, 2020
Reception: October 1, 2020

Giustina Gallery
The LaSells Stewart Center
Oregon State University

Visit the show online for a virtual tour or to schedule a reserved spot for in-person visits.
lasells.oregonstate.edu/giustina-gallery-0



Michael Bondi: An Oregon State legend since 1978

There are not many people who can match a career as impactful as Mike Bondi's. Serving Oregon State University for 42 years, the director of the North Willamette Research and Extension Station will be officially stepping into retirement in 2021.

Mike served most of his career at OSU as an Extension field faculty member, starting in 1978 when he became one of the first Extension forestry agents for the university. Located in Clatsop and Tillamook counties, he worked with private, non-industrial family forest owners in an educational capacity, helping them achieve their goals and apply science to the management of forests.

After seven years on the Oregon Coast, he pivoted to Clackamas county—a major shift in audience as he was then also responsible for everything east of the Portland metro area and the Eastern and Northern part of Marion County.

At the time, his position included Christmas trees as Clackamas County has historically been the largest Christmas tree county in the state.

The breadth of programming Bondi was able to deliver grew to become one of the largest Extension programs in terms of the number of people served with a great deal of industry and private sector support.

He leaned into that role for 30 years and admits that he never really saw himself as an administrator.

"I kind of resisted going into administration for most of my career," Bondi



Mike Bondi, director of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center, is retiring in 2021 after being a part of Oregon State University for 42 years.

said. "But in 2010 I was the only person in the county Extension office who wasn't retiring, so got tapped to become the regional director for Extension."

A year later, he added the role of station director for NWREC and since then has served both his administrative and field extension duties with great success.

Asked what stands out in the course of his career, Bondi says that two things come to mind. The first is the Tree School which he started in 1991. Today it is the largest one-day educational program for woodland owners in the United States.

Another highlight is the nonprofit he helped create called Forests Forever, Inc in response to an estate gift of land that a member of the community wanted to

donate for educational purposes. It has since grown from 120 acres to 500 acres of forest land that nearly 15,000 people access every year for forest education, including many students in middle and high school.

With retirement around the corner, Bondi still isn't quite certain what he will do. One thing is for certain—he will stay connected to OSU and the nonprofit work he's helped establish as a volunteer. And even more certain than that, he will enjoy spending more time with his grandkids. 