

BUSINESS

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From hobby farm to Grade A dairy



Billie Johnson, owner of the Windy Acres Farm, started a "herd share" program for local consumers.

Johnson has rolled with punches enroute to starting herd share program on her ranch

Bill Mintiens
Special to the Central Oregonian

Billie Johnson grew up on a cattle ranch near Monument. Soft spoken and inviting, she likes to say, "You can take the farm

girl away from the farm but you can't take the farm out of her."

Walking around Windy Acres Farm, originally purchased in 1994 as a "hobby farm," it's clear how much Billie loves her animals. Dairy cows, piglets, chickens, turkeys, her beloved dog, and an assortment of cats roam easily on the lush grass and in the many paddocks.

Operating the dairy farm hasn't always been easy for Johnson, but it has taught her a lot about the business of farming, dealing with

bureaucracy, and people.

"It's humbled me. I felt like, in the beginning, I didn't know how to ask for help. I've learned there are people all around you, you don't even know who they are, and they'll come and they'll help, and they'll do for you when they see that you're trying," recalled Johnson.

By 2003, Johnson and her husband had turned the hobby farm into a Grade A dairy, expanding their herd to 44 cows. They supplied

See DAIRY, page B7

Fourth of July family events on schedule

Kerry Morf has opened a new garden patio and home furnishings consignment shop

The skies of Prineville will be lit up with a colorful fireworks display this Friday night, July 4, 2014. But, before that happens, there is plenty of fun activities to keep you busy throughout the day.

At 7 a.m. the Crook County High School Annual Splash n' Dash will begin at Ochoco Creek Park. This event benefits the CCHS Track and Field athletes.

Also starting at 7 a.m. and ending at 10 a.m., the Kiwanis will host the Third Annual Fourth of July Pancake Breakfast, in the City Plaza by the City Hall.

From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the City of Prineville, Oregon Historical Society and Prineville Crook County Chamber of Commerce invite you to catch a free ride on the Mt. Emily Shay. Boarding will be at the COP Team Track at 1521 N.W. Lamonta Road with the new 1551 Locomotive on display for public viewing.

The Band of Brothers

will have the Fourth of July Parade at 11 a.m. starting at the corner of Fourth and Deer streets, traveling down Fourth Street to Ochoco Creek Park.

The Crook County Juvenile Department and LCS Resource Center, 430 N.W. Fourth St., will be hosting a yoga class from noon to 1 p.m. The display of fireworks will again be lit off of the viewpoint, west of town. Meadow Lakes Golf Course invites you to a family Fourth of July

Fireworks viewing. They ask that you bring your lawn chairs and blankets, but no personal fireworks will be allowed. You can head down at 4 p.m. to secure your favorite spot in which to watch the fireworks. At 7 p.m. they will begin the family activities that include a barbecue, drawings, putting course contest, prizes, and much more. For more information you can contact them at 541-447-7113.

The Prineville Crook County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center will hold their 2014 July Jubilee starting at 4 p.m. at the Crooked River Park on South Main Street.

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It's Your Business



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CONGRATULATIONS!!

to Ron Hemphill and the congregation of New Life Bible Chapel

"The security of owning our own church property will be a very positive move into the future."



Left to Right:
Mike Warren Sr., Crook County Properties, LLC
Mellisa Case, Columbia State Bank
Ron Hemphill, Pastor, New Life Bible Chapel

Enjoying a day of service



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Prineville Windermere Real Estate brokers and owners held a service day earlier this month at High Desert Haven Foster Care. They edged the lawn, pulled weeds, spread bark dust and planted flowers at the facility. Every year, Windermere staff across the U.S. gather together for the service day projects.

Tooley:

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They will have entertainment, food vendors, beer garden, watermelon eating and whipped cream pie eating contest, and much more. Vendors will close at 10 p.m. and the annual fireworks display will begin. For more information, you can contact the Chamber at 541-447-6304.

So, get out and enjoy the weather, the festivities, and have a happy and safe Fourth of July.

Prineville Perk will not be held this Friday, July 4, due to the Fourth of July holiday. For more information on Prineville Perk, contact the Chamber of Commerce at 541-447-6304. The Chamber is looking for businesses to hold the weekly gathering at. If you would like to have active chamber members visit your business, have coffee, and learn what your business has to offer the community, give Kandice a call and get assigned a Friday that is convenient for you. For more information on Prineville Perk, contact the Chamber of Commerce at 541-447-6304.

The Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors center has announced the new board members who will start their term in July: Duane Garner,

Business brief submissions

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Crook County Parks and Recreation Department, and Michelle Vail, Temptations.

Kerry Morf has opened Random, a garden, patio, and home furnishings consignment shop. They are located at 235 N.W. Third St. and specialize in unique items for the home and garden. They are open Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5:30 pm. You can reach Kerry at 541-233-9283.

This column was written by the Central Oregonian's general manager Teresa Tooley. If you have something that you would like to have included in the Central Oregonian's business briefs, e-mail it to: business@centraloregonian.com

Dairy:

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bulk milk to the Farmers Cooperative Creamery in McMinnville, who in turn had a contract with Eberhard's Dairy in Redmond to process the milk.

Their herd grew to 60 cows by 2005. The work got harder and the profits slimmer for their bulk milk business. It was costing the farm more to ship the milk than the resulting profit.

Then Johnson got the news that would change her business — and her life.

"One day my husband just simply said to me, 'I've decided to sell the herd, I can't do this anymore,'" she said.

The next day the majority of the herd was sold to a cattle buyer. Except for seven cows that the buyer rejected. But the bad news wasn't over yet for Johnson — her husband decided to leave.

She had a crisis on her hands, actually several. Operating a bulk dairy farm with only seven cows was not possible, her partner was gone, and she had no source of income.

This would overwhelm most people — but not her.

"I needed to figure out income and so I started the herd share (program) with the cows that were rejected by the cattle buyer. I contacted the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund and they helped us put a contract together that was legal and would move the farm forward to make ends meet."

Johnson made two important decisions. One about her farming business, another about producing a product that would enhance peoples' health.

Starting a "herd share" program at Windy Acres Farm meant instituting an entirely different business model, one that no longer relied on a second and third party before her milk reached consumers.

"The herd share is that you're paying me to take care of your animal and I'm being compensated for producing your products. So everything belongs to the members; there's very little that belongs to me personally," explained Johnson.

A herd share program is similar to a Consumer Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. In a CSA members pay at the beginning of the growing season for a share of the anticipated harvest. Once harvesting begins they receive weekly shares of vegetables and fruit. With a herd share, members own part of a milk cow.

Johnson's second decision was more personal. She would produce and supply raw milk, as well as organic dairy products, directly to her members. Products that she believed enhanced health.

"We've produced other products from the dairy milk as raw product such as butter, kefir, yogurt, cream cheese; we have some cheeses made here at the farm," said Johnson.

This decision also allowed Windy Acres Farm to produce raw milk for its members. According to the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, raw milk laws are different from state to state mainly due to the federal ban on raw milk for human consumption in interstate commerce.

Oregon allows retail store sales of goat and sheep raw milk — but not raw cow's milk. On-farm sales of raw cow's milk, however, are legal. Windy Acres Farm is sticking with the herd share model because it is both legal and has been working well for members.

Johnson's belief and passion about raw milk come from personal experience.

"I grew up on raw milk so I knew what the product was. I've learned even more through my herd share members and the Weston A. Price Foundation (a nonprofit, tax-exempt nutrition education foundation) that it's something that's going to enhance life instead of taking away from life."

Raw milk has both advocates and adversaries on several levels — consumers to state and government agencies. But Johnson is adamant that raw milk products, and farms' ability to provide these products, are vital to a healthier society.

"Health-wise a lot of people are seeing that, when they go to the doctor and they are diagnosed as lactose-intolerant, they really are not; they're pasteurized, homogenized-intolerant. So it's rewarding to see someone be able to drink the product and know that you produced it," said Johnson.

Johnson believes that consumers have begun to distrust the government "messages" about raw milk being dangerous.

"I think that there is so much propaganda out there causing people to have fear; they've been brain washed to believe it's dangerous. We've been drinking milk for centuries. No one has ever died from raw milk — but they have died from pasteurization and homogenization."

Windy Acres Farm has had no problems attracting herd share members. The growing demand for raw milk and associated organic products has reinforced Johnson's decision to change her business model.

"As we started the herd share word spread and it (growth) went pretty fast. We supplied private people in the Bend area and then I extended it to Medford and Ashland. And we've now extended it to the Portland and Hood River area and, of course, here at the farm," she said.

Eventually, Johnson would like to evolve her herd share program into a "farm share" program, enabling members to actually own shares of the total farm.

"We would like to get it even more so (member-owned) so that investors come in and own a part of the farm. That eliminates the banks and anybody else that's involved. It would make the farm totally sustainable forever."

Johnson is a farmer who faced adversity head-on, adapted both her products and business model to fit the needs of a changing marketplace, and in the process realized that farming was meant to be her journey in life.

She remembers fondly her father's words of advice while ranching near Monument: "What you don't get done today — you have tomorrow."

Splash n' Dash: Family-oriented event

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doing pretty good," Brooks said last Friday. "There is still plenty of time to sign up and plenty of shirts left."

Brooks added that people can still enter the day of the race. However, organizers would prefer if as many teams as possible sign up in advance to help make registration smoother and easier.

Individuals or teams can get entry forms either on facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/>

pages/Splash-n-Dash/117605564940282 or at Norm's Xtreme Fitness.

Day of the race registration opens at 7:15 a.m. at the Prineville pool with registration continuing until 9:30 a.m.

Individuals and teams are asked to be at the pool at least 30 minutes prior to the start of their swimming leg. Racers are asked to please obey all traffic laws. In addition, bicycle helmets are required for the biking leg and life jackets for the boating por-

tion of the race.

The race is a fundraiser for the Crook County High School and Middle School track and field teams and runs entirely with volunteer help.

"We have great volunteer help stepping up for our program," Brooks said. "It's a fun family-oriented event. It's pretty cool the morning of the Fourth to be able to get out and get some exercise and enjoy a good time together. It's just a great community event."

Staats: Walton Lake stocked with trout

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Since the water is so clear, it's best to fish in the mornings and evenings. Most lake fishing techniques can be effective. Cast spinners from the shore near the dam at the northeast end of the lake or try using bait in deeper water at the south end.

There are two National Forest campgrounds with picnic areas. Three Creeks Resort has boat rentals and a small store. There is also a swimming area at the south campground.

Getting there: From Sisters, turn south onto USFS Rd 16 (Three Creeks Lake Rd) for 15 miles. The road is paved to within ½ mile of the lake and the last half mile is rough, gravel road.

Walton Lake

Walton Lake is a popular 25-acre reservoir located at 5,150 feet in the Ochoco National Forest. The lake is open year-round and has plenty of shoreline fishing. Boats with electric motors are permitted, but canoes and float tubes are more popular. There is also a wheelchair accessible platform with a paved path.

The lake is frequently stocked with catchable rainbow trout throughout the summer. Most anglers have luck using PowerBait suspended beneath a bobber, while others cast lures such as spinners and spoons. Fly-fishing can also be effective. The lake has a campground and boat ramp.

Getting there: Walton Lake is approximately 35 miles east of Prineville. From Prineville take Hwy 26 East (Ochoco Hwy) for 15 miles, bear right on USFS Rd 12 and travel 13 miles to Ochoco Ranger Station. From here the lake is 7 miles northeast of the Ranger Station on USFS Rd 22.

Prineville Youth Pond

This small one-acre pond was built in 2009 in order to provide a conven-

ient opportunity for local kids to learn how to fish. The pond is open year-round to youths 17 years old and younger, but only youths between ages 14 and 17 need a juvenile fishing license. There is a two fish per day limit and an 8-inch minimum length for trout.

When the water is cooler, anglers should target stocked rainbow trout. As the waters warm up in the summer, largemouth bass will become the primary target. Use baits suspended beneath a bobber, cast lures such as spinners and spoons or try fly-fishing.

Getting there: The Prineville Youth Pond is located in Rimrock Park at 843 SW Main Street. Parking is available on the west side of Main Street after passing Lynn Blvd; or directly next to the Crook County Christian School and across from the Crook County Fairgrounds. To get to the pond, use the iron bridge to cross the Crooked River in Rimrock Park.

Tackle

The booklet also covers a simple list of necessary fishing gear — enough to go fishing just about anywhere you might find fish. Here's what ODFW sug-

gests:

*A lightweight 5- to 6-foot spin-casting or spinning rod with matching reel and 4 to 6-pound monofilament line.

*Package of size 8 bait hooks.

*Couple of small plastic bobbers.

*Jar of PowerBait or PowerEggs.

*A package of #5 non-lead split shot.

*Worms.

*A handful of 1/16 oz. spinners.

To learn more about what techniques to use for lakes, ponds and rivers, stop by ODFW and pick up a booklet. The publication is sponsored by ODFW's Fish Restoration and Enhancement Program with assistance from the Salmon Trout Enhancement Program.

Now that school's out and summer has officially started, why not take the kids out and teach them how to fish. Besides, doesn't trout in the fry pan sound good?

Scott Staats is a freelance outdoor writer. His column can be read every Tuesday in the Central Oregonian. He can be reached at: outdoors@centraloregonian.com

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