

INVESTING IN LINN COUNTY

2025

IMPACT REPORT



Photo credit – Crystal Kelso

OSU Extension serving Linn County and here for you

Rooted in the communities we serve, tailored to local needs, connected to Oregon's statewide university and building a more resilient future for all.

Our research, programs, partnerships and volunteer opportunities are focused on:

- Healthy communities and economies
- Resilient and productive forests and natural ecosystems
- Sustainable agriculture, food systems, and gardening
- Thriving youth, individuals, and families



Oregon State
University

4-H Youth Development



4-H Participation

- **165** volunteer leaders
- **656** youth members

Linn County Fair

- **570** 4-H youth exhibitors
- Total auction **\$1,625,222**



National 4-H Congress

Caden Foley was selected to represent Oregon 4-H as one of five youth from our state. This is a great learning opportunity held over Thanksgiving weekend in Atlanta, GA



High Dessert Leadership Retreat

100 total youth, 20 from Linn County attended the annual retreat in Redmond. Youth gain life skills along with new leadership skills and friendships.



Natalie Sanderson
2025 t-shirt winner

3rd Annual Linn County Fair T-shirt Design Contest
*Thank you No Dinx and our community sponsors!
Knife River, AB Construction, Pacific Excavation,
Laurie's Pilot Service, Bish's RV, @ AC New Trucking*

4-H Youth Development



Lafayette Elementary School Field Day

280 students and teachers participated. **23** Extension staff, 4-H volunteers, and member helped facilitate. We provided pigs, goats, sheep, chickens, rabbits for the students to learn about and pet. The Extension Field Crop drone was especially popular as were the dirt babies the students got to make and take home.

4-H Embryology Project

300 students reached in **12** Linn County classrooms 4-H staff educated teachers from Albany, Lebanon, and Scio bringing Ag into the classroom. Kits/eggs were provided with support from set-up thru incubation.

4-H Ambassadors

13 teen Ambassadors 7th-12th grade represent Linn County 4-H. They plan events throughout the year and focus on community engagement. One of the favorite events is Barnyard Olympics at fair.

Four Rivers 4-H Camp

21 Linn County youth in 4th-8th grade and 10 cabin leaders experienced outdoor recreation, team building, life skills, crafts/projects and meeting new friends.



Cloverbud Explorers Club

A county educator led program held once per month (two sessions) at the Linn County office.

- **39** youth (5-8yrs) participate monthly

Youth Tractor Safety

- **144** youth certified

Master Gardener

Highlights

41 Certified Master Gardeners

13 Interns

6078 Volunteer Hours

33,883 Linn County Gardeners Reached

\$211,482 value of volunteer hours

1718 lbs of garden produce donated to food pantries

11th annual BEEvent Pollinator Conference

98 attendees

Cocoon Harvesting Classes

7 classes

82 attendees

Mobile Clinics - Expanding Garden Knowledge within Local Communities

74 clinics

2998 contacts



Program Activities

- Farmers Markets
 - New – Lyons market (1st in 30 years) staffed by two volunteers. Reached 100 community members.
- Mobile Plant Clinics
- Demonstration Garden
- Pruning workshops
- Community Seed Swaps
- Extension Office, Phone, Email, Social Media
- County Fair



Seed to Supper Classes

- Six free classes taught by five volunteers in Scio. The series engaged 24 community members ranging from apartment gardeners to individuals managing garden beds. Attendees reported increased confidence in growing food, access to low-cost gardening resources, and great motivation to eat fruits and vegetables.

Small Farms



Program Reach

Willamette Women's Farm Network – 296 members

Regional Farmer Network – 489 members

Military Veterans listserv – 167 members

Monthly Small Farms Newsletter – 871 recipients

Individual Contact Teaching– 500+ residents

Small Ruminant–225 members

Willamette Valley Agritourism - 153 members

Dry Farming – 453 members

Making Connections: Tours & Events

- 8 Farm Tours with farmers as co-educators
- 10 workshops
- Lacombe Living on the Land Series – 5 classes and 1 field day
- Livestock Webinar Series
- 6 Veteran Farmer Focused Events
- 2 Dry Farming Project Field Days
- 1 Dry Farm Winter Convening
- Regional Farmer Network Gathering
- Small Farms Conference – 900+ attendees, 30+ sessions and related events

Skill Building Workshops

First Aid and CPR for Farmers, Stop the Bleed Training for Farmers, Small Farm Safety, Soil Moisture Sensor and Readers, Beekeeping, Fruit Tree Pruning, Living on the Land (land stewardship, pasture management, wells and septic), Small Ruminant Fecal Egg Counts

New Programming & Resources

- QPR Suicide Prevention Training for the community
- Farmer support programming centering on mental health
- For the Love of Farming Podcast episodes featuring local farmers
- Online Course: Growing Farms - Building Climate Resilience for Farmers and Ranchers

County Working Groups

- Member of the Linn/Benton Food Systems Working Group
- Facilitator of the Linn/Benton Value Chain Coordination Working Group
- Member of the Linn County Noxious Weeds Working Group



Family & Community Health

Connection to local food

Family and Community Health with Small Farms worked to increase local food access for 40 low-income families. \$10,000 was utilized to purchase from Linn County farmers fruits and vegetables and organic meat.

Post program: over half of the families are more than likely to participate in a community supported agricultural box membership.



Food Hero Your go-to resource for healthy recipes, gardening tips, and food management resources.

Federal funding for SNAP-Ed (National Education and Obesity Prevention Grant) ended on Sept. 30, 2025. As a result, OSU is working with partners to sunset this impactful program.

1,604 adults and youth were reached through public events, such as the Albany, Lebanon, and Sweet Home Farmers Markets.

91 adults participated in our nutrition education and physical activity classes, which supported workforce development, older adults, and rural families.

Walk with Ease Walk With Ease (WWE) is an exercise program that can reduce pain and improve overall health.

This program developed by the Arthritis Foundation is proven to:

- Reduce pain
- Build confidence in being physically active
- Improve overall health

Forty-three family and older adults participated and increased their current fitness level and mobility.



New curriculum launch

The Flavor of Latin American Heritage. This culturally relevant nutrition education highlights ancestral food traditions as a foundation for building healthier eating habits.

This program highlights the value of offering nutrition education in participants' preferred language, honoring and valuing their traditions, connecting culture and health, and building confidence to make informed choices for their health.

Forestry & Natural Resources



Photo credit – Crystal Kelso

Safety Preparations at Fall Woodland Weed Workshop

Outreach

- **67 member** - Forestry & Natural Resources Linn Benton Polk Listserv:
- **901 members** - The Needle
- **68 residents**- Individual Contact Teaching
- **2** Articles Written

Making Connections: Tours & Events

- **4** Tree Farm Tours and Gatherings with woodland owners; as co-educators
- **3** workshops
- **4** classes presented at conferences

Skill Building Workshops

- Fall Woodland Weed Workshop
- Stop the Bleed Training for Farmers & Rural Landowners
- Basic Forestry Shortcourse

New Programming & Resources

- The Wildlife Corner Blog
- Emerald Ash Borer Monitoring
- Mediterranean Oak Borer Monitoring

Members in County Working Groups

- Emerald Ash Borer Survey & Monitoring
- Emerald Ash Borer Task Force
- Linn County Noxious Weeds Group
- Linn County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Advisory Committee



Photo credit – Crystal Kelso

Lorelle Sherman at the Linn OSWA Wildflower Tour at Gordon Meadows

Wildfire Preparedness



Wildfire Ready Linn County

Regional Fire Specialist Dr. Kayla Bordelon co-authored a successful \$8.9 million federal grant to strengthen wildfire resilience in eastern Linn County along the Highway 20 and South Santiam River corridor. The award supports the Sweet Home Fire & Ambulance District and five partner organizations in planning and implementing fuels treatments that reduce wildfire risk to communities. The project also delivers wildfire education and support services to local residents and students. Bordelon plays an active role in project implementation, education, and community engagement efforts.



Oak Creek Tour



Pile Burning Workshop

Mid-Willamette Valley Prescribed Burn Association

Bordelon co-founded and continues to support the development of the Mid-Willamette Valley Prescribed Burn Association (PBA), serving Linn, Benton, Polk, and Marion counties. The PBA increases the safe use of prescribed fire for fuel reduction and ecological restoration. In 2025, the association hosted one field tour, one community gathering, and two safe pile-burning workshops. To date, 146 landowners, land managers, and volunteers have joined the PBA, expanding local capacity to implement prescribed fire safely and effectively.

Open Campus



Open Campus helps with College Access, Career Readiness, and Community Engagement. Collaborations with Linn County high schools, students receive guidance through a four-week after-school workshop series

Annual LBCC Leadership Conference Strengthened Collaborations

Linn Benton Community College April Conference included workshops on writing personal narratives for scholarships and college admissions. It supported planning, logistics, and leadership development initiatives.

145 students from Linn & Benton counties. Linn High Schools included Lebanon, South Albany, and West Albany

West Albany High School – pilot workshop focused on financial aid, college admissions, scholarships, Career & Technical Education & Community College. Skill building: job search, resumes, interviews

8 families, **17** participants

Community College Transfer & Degree Partnership Support

15 students – individual mentoring to explore Degree Partnership Program with OSU and LBCC

College Visits & STEM Engagement at OSU South & West Albany students experiences campus life and STEM learning



OSU High School Microbiology STEM Camp Students explored microbiology, food systems, human health & aquatic science.



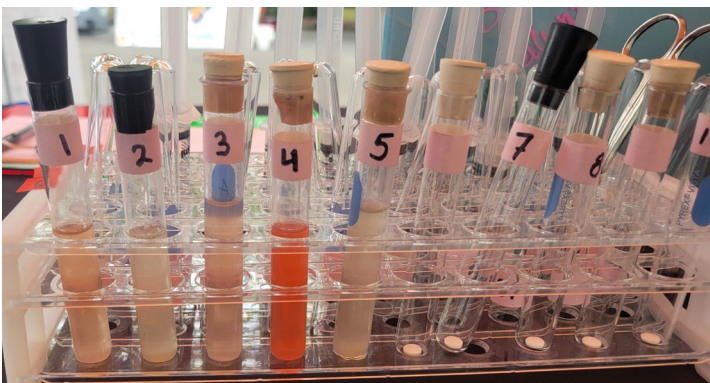
Greater Albany Public Schools collaboration Welcome Center designed to expand access.

Groundwater Health



Linn Health Equity Testing Program

Private wells are excluded from the Safe Drinking Water Act and endanger public health. A grant of \$49,999 in partnership with Crossroad Communities provided **103** households within Linn County with coliform bacteria, arsenic, and nitrate well water tests. Each household was provided one-on-one in-person sampling, domestic well and septic system maintenance information, and a well head inspection. Each household was required to attend a 2.5 to 3 hour educational session to reinforce their understanding. 20 session options were available.



Community-based Free Nitrate Screening Events/Water Days

Sweet Home Farmers Market	14 screening and 30 contacts
Brownsville Farmers Market	15 screenings and 26 contacts
Tangent Farmers Market	20 screenings and 44 contacts
Lebanon Health Fair	6 screenings and 14 contacts
Tri-County Business Expo and Summer Sounds	69 screenings and 247 contacts
Lebanon Farmers Market	31 screenings and 92 contacts
Stayton Farmers Market	40 screenings and 65 contacts
Millersburg Farmers Market	32 screening and 124 contacts
Lacomb Grange Market	43 screenings and 74 contacts
Tangent Harvest Festival	2 screenings and 52 contacts
Albany Farmers Market	35 screenings and 106 contacts
Scio Farmers Market	43 screenings and 112 contacts

- **12** Community Screening Events
- **350** Screenings
- **986** Contacts

Regional webinars/classes:

Living with your well and septic system. Classes offered for FREE to rural residents.

- **22** webinar/in-person classes
- **295** households reached

Livestock and Forage



Monthly Livestock Webinar Series

- **213** attendees
- Buying & Selecting Livestock
- Managing Mud & Manure on your Farm
- Understanding Meat Processing for the Small-Scale Farmer
- Have Sugar-Sensitive Horses? What you should know about Pasture Associated Laminitis & Founder
- So, You Want to Have a Milk Cow?
- Camelids 101
- Scrapie 101
- Pasture Nutrition

Other Regional Events

Strong partnerships with Linn County Livestock Association and Weed Board

- Sheep & Goat Internal Parasite Workshop + Fecal Egg Count Lab
- Lambing School
- Don't Fall for Bad Hay! How to Assess
- Hay Quality and Match it to Your Livestock's Needs
- Handling & Moving Livestock

Resilient Pasture & Forage Symposium

OSU Extension partnered with the Oregon Forage & Grassland Council to host a first-of-its-kind two-day Symposium. Speakers were invited from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and New Zealand

135 participants from Oregon & five other states

95% follow-up survey responded with excellent/very good.

Forage and Livestock Consultation

- **18** individual consultations
- Topics included: Noxious & poisonous weed, endophyte testing & resources, sheep & goats, pasture renovation, hay nutrient testing, mineral & feed storage, livestock supplementation



Field Crops

Mint Pest Alert Outreach

- Newsletter distributed for 12 years
- Helping mint producers use integrated pest management practices
- Improved pest control and fewer pesticide sprays
- **\$453,000 savings** in pest control across mint production acres statewide

Seed and Cereal Crop Meetings

- Crop and pest management information
- **384** attendees held in September & January

Pesticide Education

- Improved pest control and fewer pesticide sprays



Ongoing Research Projects

Testing bait boxes and rodenticides for vole control

- Voles can cause substantial yield losses in grass seed crops.
- Bait boxes may give farmers a new tool that they can use to manage this pest.

Managing white clover seed weevil

- Insecticide resistance was detected in this pest.
- Through educational programming, two thirds of growers plan to stop using the ineffective pesticide entirely.
- Field research in 2022 – 2025 helped support two new insecticide registrations.

Resources

Resources accessible by Linn County residents:

OSU Extension youth portal providing educational resources by subject and by grade level
extension.oregonstate.edu/families-health/youth

Food Hero's budget friendly and nutritious recipes
foodhero.org

Ask Extension. We have experts in family and health, community development, food and agriculture, coastal issues, forestry, programs for young people, and gardening
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/ask-extension>

Extension publications and more
catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu

Monthly Linn County E-News
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/newsletter/linn-county-e-news>

Bi-Monthly GROWING newspaper
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/newsletter/growing>

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GROWING

Extending Knowledge and Changing Lives in Linn and Benton Counties

With Help from Extension, Oregon Leads the Nation in Christmas Trees

By Mitch Liles, OSU Extension Service

Recently, Oregon leads the nation in Christmas tree production. Starting on top, though, hasn't been easy.

Oregon growers had to get out there and attack Christmas trees throughout a tree's life cycle, and they couldn't wait until they were ready to sell. The industry had to make upgrades of millions of Christmas trees annually, supplying more than 100 million in gross value.

One key to Oregon's edge at the top has been the assistance of the industry extension team. Oregon State University Extension Service, OSU Extension has had a Christmas tree specialist in place to help growers address their and their plant stresses that can play havoc on tree health the next to ten years it takes to bring a Christmas tree to market.

"It is pretty critical for us," said Corey Taylor, a Christmas tree grower in an interview who is co-chair of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association's Research Committee. "We have issues that we need to

to replace former Extension Christmas tree specialist Greg Landgren, who retired in 2021, and that the industry was critical when Christmas brought on by the fallings in 2024.

Rodriguez comes to OSU from the Pacific Northwest University where she spent much of her time working for the university's Christmas Tree Genetic Program as an entomologist, horticulturist, and environmental biologist.

At OSU, Rodriguez is spending less time in the lab and more time on the ground, helping growers address production issues, as well as overseeing a Christmas tree and ornamental production trial at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWR-EC) in Astoria.

"The growers have been great," she said. "I feel very fortunate that I've been accepted into their community."

Production Issues

Associates suggest production issues that Pacific Northwest Christmas tree growers encounter today in seedling nurseries. "Seedling nurseries have become a huge problem," Rodriguez said. "During the 2010s, when demand for Christmas trees was high, growers were planting a lot of seedlings that were not ready to be planted."

OSU Extension doesn't have as big of an issue with these pests in other areas of the country. Rodriguez said, the pests like aphids, mites, and the Douglas fir scale mite can still grow production problems. And, according to Oregon, at times export partners will buy a Christmas tree because of the presence of a pest.

"We need to bring our nurseries closer to the growers. People don't want, and we need to identify those pests

to help us with them."

Oregon added that the industry "ought to be" to help OSU administrators

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