

# Skyline Ridge Runner

October 2020

Skyline Ridge Neighbors

Vol. 32, No. 4

A Nonprofit Neighborhood Association Serving Northwestern Multnomah County, Oregon

## Highlighting Local Businesses: Plumper Pumpkin Patch & Tree Farm

By Suzanne Perra

I was fortunate to interview Jim Kessinger (co-owner) and April Latta (manager) on the opening day of the Sunflower Maze. A little store is set up near the Sunflower Maze with tables at which to sit down and enjoy snacks. There are farm animals nearby and a small donkey wandering around. There are 25 lb. Hermiston watermelons for sale, just picked up from Hermiston the same morning. At the back of the farm, there is a magnificent view of the valley.

Plumper Pumpkin is an old school 1950's style farm. It has 65 acres with a big variety of crops while most farms these days just have one or two. There is no irrigation and just a small well. Lots of organic material and special tilling techniques produce robust crops. Farm animals that are bred include pigs, sheep, goats and rabbits. The farm has 3 year-round full-time employees.

Plumper Pumpkin began when Jim and Peggy Kessinger bought the farm in 1993 while both were working in tech jobs at Intel. Jim quit working at Intel in 1997 and started farming in 1998. They made \$3,000 off of 1 acre of pumpkins their first year. The first field trip happened the next fall when a teacher of one of their children asked to bring the whole class to the farm. Peggy quit working at Intel in 1999. At the time they had 2 children. In 2000, they adopted 3 more children who needed a home, for a total of five children between the ages of 3 and 9. Starting from scratch, they lost money for a few years and now they make some money to help with expenses. It is a labor of love. Jim likes growing plants and the animals. Each spring brings a new year and a clean slate.

### Pre Covid-19

In a typical year, schools come to the farm in spring and kids plant pumpkin seeds. The name of each school is put on their row. Each child receives a tomato start to plant at home. In the fall, the students return and find their row, now miraculously full of bright orange pumpkins.

Each child picks a sugar pie pumpkin to bring home. I imagine that some are carved and proudly displayed while others are turned into pumpkin pies. Field trips fill the weekdays and the children come back on weekends with their entire families. With the winter season comes another great adventure of cutting a Christmas Tree. Visitors keep warm at the firepit, feed the animals and visit the store.

Throughout the year, fresh farm meat and eggs, and honey are sold seasonally.



*This fall, Plumper Pumpkin will offer a revised version of their annual Pumpkin Patch event with everyone's safety in mind (Photo: Plumper Pumpkin Patch)*

### Impact of Covid-19

This year is a little different. No field trips in the spring and now no field trips in the fall. A state of emergency declared in March due to Covid-19 is still in force for Multnomah County. That is a loss of 3,000 visitors for spring field trips, 8,000 visitors for fall field trips, 2,000 corporate visitors, and 500 kids at birthday parties. On a Thursday in May, the team at Plumper came up with the idea of the Donut Safari. The farm opened the following Friday for the first

Donut Safari. "People were ready to get out of the house in a safe way. It was so great to give families something to do and see the smiles," said Jim. "It's not often you get to be a part of something like that. It was one great day and people kept coming, asking for more and more days. It was a simple drive thru and look at the animals. Pumpkin donuts were available and the tomato plants meant for the kids that attended the spring field trip were all sold," he said. With creativity and a stroke of luck the Donut Safari brought in as much money as the spring field trips.

At the Sunflower Maze, rows and rows of sunflowers burst into bloom: miniature sunflowers, followed by the wild sunflowers, followed by several other types of sunflowers. Visits are pre-scheduled throughout the day and social distancing is maintained. Visitors used sanitized clippers to cut any sunflowers they chose to create a beautiful bouquet with traditional yellow, cream, and black varieties. This is the second year for the Sunflower Maze at Plumper Pumpkin and is becoming another Plumper

**Plumper Pumpkin Patch, p. 3** ➤

# *Skyline Ridge Runner*

**Editor:** Miles Merwin

**Contributing Editor:** Laura Foster

**Page Composition & Graphics:** Agnes Kwan

**Copy Editor:** Libby Merwin

**Printing & Mailing:** City of Portland, Metro Presort

**Contributors:** Suzanne Perra, April Latta, Michael Baker, Tom Cusick, Amanda Brenner, Hannah Spencer, Brad Graff, Sen Speroff

Send comments, articles, opinions and advertising requests to the Ridge Runner, 14416 NW Skyline Blvd., Portland, OR 97231, [ridgerunner@srnpx.org](mailto:ridgerunner@srnpx.org), or fax to 503.621.3450. Deadlines for all submissions are the 15th day of March, June, September, and December unless otherwise announced. Letters to the Editor are welcome, but must include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length.

→ *Deadline for the next issue is December 15*

## **Skyline Ridge Neighbors Inc.**

Skyline Ridge Neighbors is a nonprofit organization serving rural northwestern Multnomah County through educational, environmental, and social programs that inform residents on relevant issues and events. SRN endeavors to better our community, encourage volunteer efforts, and openly communicate with residents and outside organizations.

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[president@srnpx.org](mailto:president@srnpx.org), [secretary@srnpx.org](mailto:secretary@srnpx.org)

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**Suzanne Perra** / 503.866.9289

**Grant Rolette** / 503.621.3423, 503.985.2060

**Tracy Waters** / 503.285.3530, 503.358.3130

## **Skyline Rural Watch Newsline**

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## **SRN Website**

Visit [www.srnpx.org](http://www.srnpx.org) for more news, photos and information about our community. If you have questions or comments, contact the Webmaster, Agnes Kwan, at [webmaster@srnpx.org](mailto:webmaster@srnpx.org).

The views and opinions presented herein are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by SRN or Skyline neighborhood residents.

## **Thanks for Your Donations!**

Many thanks to the following neighbors and friends who recently made cash donations to SRN:

- ~ Sean & Ann Murphy
- ~ Jean Nixon
- ~ Derek & Cynthia Thompson
- ~ Rachael Brake & Grant Rolette
- ~ Nancy Orr
- ~ Elizabeth Daily & Wesley Cowan

SRN relies on the financial support of the Skyline community to pursue its nonprofit, educational mission. We operate entirely on the volunteers efforts of neighbors like you. Donations are tax-deductible and always appreciated! Please make checks payable to SRN and send them to Rachael Brake, SRN Treasurer, 14109 NW Rock Creek Rd., Portland, OR 97231. Thank you.



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*Keep up with local news via the Skyline Newsline. Subscribe at [www.srnpx.org](http://www.srnpx.org)*

## Windstorm Squashes Horse Trailer at Phoenix Farm

By April Latta, Phoenix Farm

The predicted wind storm was realized in dramatic fashion on Skyline Ridge in the morning of September 8. Phoenix Farm awoke to a downed tree in the driveway that missed cars and tractors. Although power was out, the generator was humming along.

Much preparation had been put into getting the farm ready for the major wind event which threatened the risk of wildland fire and the need to evacuate. All horses and ponies were relocated into the barns and indoor arena. Horse trailers and vehicles lined the road, and we hunkered down for the night. At daybreak, only a tree had blown down in the Farm's driveway, but there were numerous others down on Skyline.

Just after 8 a.m., there was a loud CRACK. A large maple tree fell directly onto Christina's newly purchased and refurbished 8-horse trailer. The trailer was squashed and power lines were draped across the other trucks and horse trailers lining the road. (NOTE: Though this horse trailer was destroyed,



*A big tree felled by the Sept. windstorm destroyed a new horse trailer at Phoenix Farm on Skyline (Photo: April Latta)*

a day later the horses were evacuated successfully to Columbia County Fairgrounds to wait out the risk of forest fire.)

PGE Crew-22 was on site quickly. These guys are seriously amazing! They helped unhook Christina's truck from the trailer, used the farm tractor and chainsaws to remove debris, cleared the road, assessed the damage to the trailer, and got busy repairing the downed power lines! They were kind, friendly, helpful, and efficient. In talking to them, one mentioned that his parents have a Christmas tree farm near Silver Falls that is engulfed in flames. While his family's farm is burning, he was here helping us. That selflessness is evident in every single interaction we had with them!

Today we are thankful for trees not hitting the house, no injuries to humans, dogs, horses, or ponies, a power crew that was absolutely TOP NOTCH, and no sparks from downed power lines. If you see a utility worker, thank them! Such important work often goes unrecognized. ☐

### ► **Plumper Pumpkin Patch** (continued from p. 1) tradition.

Jim hoped for a normal October, but unfortunately it's not. They have been thinking about what to do. There will still be pumpkins, the store, animals with babies coming, caramel apples, kettle corn, apple and pumpkin cannons and a 2-acre corn maze. It will be a safe place to come. They will have farm walking loops defined for folks to tour the farm. Online tickets will limit the number of people on the farm. The corn maze will have a one-way trail with social distancing.

So, this fall they will go back to their roots – like it was 10 years ago. Families will come to the farm, pick a pumpkin, have a snack, and enjoy the surroundings. U-pick farms are doing better than ever because they provide a safe outdoor venue for people. In one week, they heard that OregonLive, Country Growers and Skyline Ridge Neighbors wanted to write articles about the farm. October revenue will be way off with the loss of field trips, but hopefully they will sell more pumpkins than ever before.

### **Fun Farm Tour**

During my visit to the farm, I saw many sites and heard many stories. When you visit, see if you can spot the following landmarks and animals:

**Railroad Sign:** Find the railroad sign at the edge of the pumpkin field. In 1910, Ferdinand Kruger (father of 11 children and founder of the farm) was approached to put an underground train tunnel 200 feet under the property. He requested free electricity for life, transportation, shipping to and from Portland, and a spring for the farm's water. A deal was struck. In 1949, he was given \$350 to end the free electricity agreement. The spring was used until 1997, when a new well was drilled. The tunnel is still operated by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad.

**View of Intel Building and Cranes:** On the top of the property, you can view Intel and the cranes off to the right and a beautiful view of the valley and coast range.

**Solar Panels:** A year ago, a tornado hit the farm. TV channels came for a week to cover the story. The tornado tore up solar panels and shredded a large outdoor

**Plumper Pumpkin Patch, p. 6►**

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## HARLEQUINS CORAL AND FIRE

*By Tom Cusick, Skyline Blvd.*

Huge dragon like curls of smoke engorge the valley  
And the sun, a sorry has-been fallen from Broadway  
To Vaudeville, reduces its light to a dull orange  
Bored, serving shadowy daubs of light to blackened natives.

Charred spears and naked firs from Silver Creek,  
Kalmiopsis and elsewhere cackle while  
Performing grim battle with their smoking branches  
Raised like the wooden swords of a million harlequins.

Septembers fiery walls trigger natures slumbering spores  
We know in our minds May will bring  
Jillions of rhizomes contacting one anothers tentacles  
To conspire beneath a silent floor of ash.

Not an offer of verse but obverse  
'The fire is terrible  
No, the fire is not not terrible  
There are morels, say again  
No, there are not no morels  
Come May please come May.'

Springs' sloping warmth qualify hopes  
We pass by admonitions near barbershop poles  
That morels are the pretty well picked over  
Josef and I wink, then we'll search for chestnuts!

Bound mostly by our love of morels  
We negotiate the tortured hillsides  
Sooty feet finding tenancy  
In the tracks of the terrible infidels who came before.

Two men find delight in sunny places  
Snatching joy from the sprigs of green  
Perennials of hope that follow every war  
New to us but old way of seeing.

Apocalyptic gleaners search  
Josef scans the ash, bends to inspect, and I watch, learning  
Our sharp jackknives cut the corals of the forest  
From time to time we lean against giant skeletons. □

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## The Trees Are Talking

*By Michael Baker, McNamee Road*

Fifteen years ago, I moved here  
to live among the trees.  
Through seasonal snow and storm,  
they have nourished me under  
their verdant, enveloping sway.  
Every summer since, this ridge  
registers another thermal record.

My dog and I walk the ridge road daily  
counting dying western red cedars  
in the dry, clay-bound soil  
as an incremental brown annihilation  
spreads up neighboring hills.  
After two years of meager rainfall,  
I check the carnage daily  
of cedar crowns desiccating to brown.  
Monthly, death descends to lower branches.

Immense doug firs, spindly hemlocks  
counter late summer's lack of water  
by throwing a heavy harvest of cones,  
weighing branches with lighter green,  
as they prepare for their coming death  
in a last gasp of reproduction.  
Out of this parched timber, the only trees  
unaffected endure in second growth:  
the scrub trees, alder and big leaf maple.

All over the northwest,  
in Cascade foothills, along tidewater flats,  
the trees are talking.  
Haze, heat and smoke envelop us.  
The forests are burning;  
individual trees explode like candles  
and creatures of the understory  
scurry to find their safety islands.

"Plant cypress," an arborist suggested  
after assessing our woods  
of blistered hemlocks, stressed  
doug firs and dying cedars.  
"The climate's changing.  
We won't have red cedars  
at this latitude much longer."

I crush a sprig of braided cedar,  
inhale its heady incense,  
look up at the bright, cloudless sky  
and hope for rain.  
Our redemption remains far off.  
Can we atone for not listening  
to what the trees have been saying?

©Michael Baker, September 1, 2020 □

## “Tree School Online” Offers Free Webinars for Woodland Owners

By Amanda Brenner, OSU Extension

Tree School is a comprehensive forestry education program for woodland owners and anyone interested in learning about the environment in Oregon. Tree Schools are big one-day events that take place throughout the state. Tree School Clackamas in Oregon City began in 1991, and is the oldest and largest event held annually. This year would have marked the 30<sup>th</sup> Tree School Clackamas.

Including Tree School Clackamas, there are seven Tree Schools spread throughout Oregon. These include Tree Schools Lane, Douglas, Jackson-Josephine, Baker, Union-Wallowa, and Klamath-Lake. Statewide, Tree School is a collaborative effort led by OSU Extension Forestry and Natural Resources faculty and staff, with help and participation from many other partners that make up the Partnership for Forestry Education (<https://knowyourforest.org/about>). These include Oregon Forest Resources Institute, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Small Woodlands Association, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Ecotrust, US Forest Service, and others.

Tree School Online began this year on April 21 as a 15-week webinar series that included many of the classes that were set for Tree School Clackamas 2020, which was cancelled after the declaration of the pandemic. Since all other Tree Schools have also had to be cancelled, and because of the success of the first series of webinars, the

Partnership for Forestry Education will continue to deliver Tree School Online classes on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month through June, 2021 from 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm.

The new schedule will begin on September 15 with “Biology & Management of Western Redcedar” followed by “Thinking About the Future of Your Forest: Passing It Onto the Next Owner” on October 6. Recordings of past Tree School webinars that were presented earlier this year are also available for viewing. To register at no cost for Tree School Online webinars, visit [knowyourforest.org/TreeSchoolOnline](https://knowyourforest.org/TreeSchoolOnline).



### Upcoming classes

October 6, 3:00 p.m.:

“Thinking about the Future of Your Forest: Passing it on to the Next Owner,” Tamara Cushing, Starker Chair of Private and Family Forestry, OSU

October 20, 3:00 p.m.: “Making Maps for Management Planning,” David Diaz, Director of Forestry Technology & Analytics; Sara Loreno, Natural Resources Data Scientist, Ecotrust, Portland, OR

November 3, 3:00 p.m.: “Fish Habitat and Riparian Management,” Guillermo Giannico, Associate Professor and Extension Fisheries Specialist, OSU

November 17, 3:00 p.m.: “Diamonds Under the Douglas-fir,” Charles Lefevre, Ph.D., New World Truffieres

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**Visit Skyline Ridge Neighbors' page to see the most current happenings in our neighborhood and add your news and comments.**

## Local Artisans to Hold an Online Sale for Holiday Shopping

By Miles Merwin

Members of the Skyline Grange Artisans plan to offer their wares to the neighborhood in an online sales event later this fall. Due to the pandemic, there will not be an in-person sale at the Grange this year.

Using web and social media, the artisans will present a variety of handmade items for sale. Starting next month, a page on the SRN website will feature photos and descriptions of works on offer, along with artists' statements and contact information. Each artisan will provide an easy process for ordering, payment and pickup. The sale period will last several weeks during November and December. Watch for an announcement in the Skyline Newslines.

Skyline Grange Artisans who have committed to participate so far are Rachael Brake, Claudia Mederos, Miles Merwin, Ken Pincus, Nova Platt, Grant

Rolette, Sue Selbie, Audrey Vasconcellos and Tim West. More vendors are always welcome. They will offer their latest creations in ceramics, wood, paper, jewelry and more. More info and social media links for participating artisans will be posted on the Newslines in October.



This will be the tenth year that this group of local artisans has presented their wares to the Skyline community. Their annual holiday sale has always been held at the Skyline Grange. Since becoming an official activity of the Grange, that relationship has strengthened. The group is coordinated by a committee of Artisans who are also Grange members. All the Artisans look forward to returning next year with a wonderful in-person event at the Grange focused on bringing the community together.

In the meantime, you can get in contact with the Grange Artisans committee by writing to

skylinegrange894@msn.com. □

### ► **Plumper Pumpkin Patch** (continued from p. 3)

tent. Pumpkins picked up by the tornado were thrown everywhere. The corn plants formed a laid out circular pattern where the tornado touched down. Eventually everything was cleaned up and the corn maze took place as usual. The solar panels were rebuilt last year in a new location about 100 feet away.

*Windmill:* The 40-foot windmill is hard to miss. Each year Jim adds something new and unexpected; last year was the hobbit house and this year it is the windmill. Jim grew up in Kansas. "A windmill looks nice on a farm," he said.

*Houdini:* Houdini is a llama who is an escape artist. Jim and Peggy found Houdini running loose with the elk for a year. Jim said that it took more than half a dozen people to catch him. "Once we got him home, he jumped over the top of the pen. He was then placed in a larger area in the upper yard and he jumped the fence again," he said. Jim

finally gave up on him. A few days later, Houdini jumped back in and has been there ever since. "He had become lonely and realized that he was fed here," said Jim. He never ran away again.

*Sam:* Sam is a Pot Belly pig. Have you heard the expression "When pigs fly"? Some friends found Sam in Texas and then flew him back to Portland. After their family grew, they donated Sam to the farm as a pet. The owner still visits Sam every year.

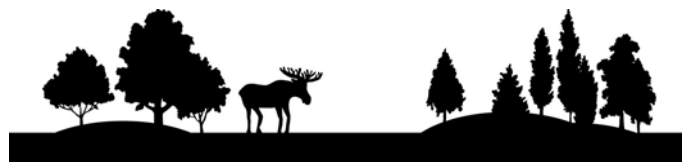
### Upcoming events

Pumpkin Patch: Open Daily Sept 25 to Oct 30

Christmas Trees: Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays starting the day after Thanksgiving to Dec 22

Go to plumperpumpkins.com or Like on Facebook to sign up and get the latest information. □

There's more online at  
[www.srnpx.org](http://www.srnpx.org)



## Skyline Ridge Neighborhood Emergency Team News

By Sen Speroff



The pandemic and fires have affected the Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) organization along with the rest of our state. In person meetings and trainings are still not

being held, but Zoom meetings for all NET members are ongoing. NET members have been volunteering in the community as well. In addition to staffing the Emergency Coordination Center (Portland ECC), NETs have organized the "Portland Mask Project" to make and distribute so far about 1,000 cloth masks. NETs were deployed to assist with downed lines due to the recent high winds. Then the wildfires! The NET organization has been charged with managing volunteers and donations and has assisted evacuees at Clackamas Town Center which was designated as the evacuation center for Clackamas County. NETs are also assisting Multnomah County at their indoor shelters. There may be other locations as well. These are strange days!

We are committed to keeping our Skyline neighbors informed. Here are some good sources:

•Pandemic: <https://multco.us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19> and <https://govstatus.egov.com?OR-OHA-COVID-19>

•Wildfire in Multnomah: <https://multco.us>

•Air Quality: <https://airnow.gov>, <https://oregonsmoke.blogspot.com/>, & <http://www.aqicn.info/map/world>.

NETS are still out there supporting the community. Questions? Email Skyline Ridge NET at [SkylineRidgeNET@gmail.com](mailto:SkylineRidgeNET@gmail.com) or contact Rachael Brake, Team Leader, at 503.621.3423.

### Think Emergency Toilet!

Now that you have stored 14-days of water for your household as part of your disaster preparedness, next it is time to think toilet. If disaster strikes and plumbing no longer works, you will need a toilet system that is usable, but doesn't pollute the area and contaminate water sources.

There are a number of systems. We like the Twin-Bucket Emergency Toilet system, a system that was used by many New Zealand apartment dwellers for months after the huge earthquake in 2011.

The Twin-Bucket Toilet requires a bucket for urine and another for poop/toilet paper, plus handwashing capability. Each bucket needs to be sealed tightly. A standard toilet set does not fit tightly, allowing odors to escape and flies to enter. There are toilet seats for buckets available on the internet or you can do the squat act. A day's worth of urine is ten times the volume of poop. Urine causes most of the odor, not poop. Urine is generally sterile while poop contains pathogens and requires special disposal care. Separating urine and poop reduces the disease risks, reduces odor, and makes the contents easier to handle. After using the poo bucket, user should sprinkle a handful or two of carbon material, such as sawdust, dried leaves, shredded paper, forest litter, or wood shavings, into the bucket. Of course, you will need to finish by washing hands.

For more information about The Twin-Bucket Emergency Toilet, log onto [https://www.honolulu.gov/rep/site/dem/dem\\_imgs/Twin\\_Bucket\\_Emergency\\_Toilet\\_Portland\\_Bureau\\_of\\_Emergency\\_Management.pdf](https://www.honolulu.gov/rep/site/dem/dem_imgs/Twin_Bucket_Emergency_Toilet_Portland_Bureau_of_Emergency_Management.pdf) and to learn more about emergency sanitation log onto [https://www.sweethomeor.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community\\_and\\_economic\\_development/page/4031/a\\_sewer\\_catastrophe\\_companion.pdf](https://www.sweethomeor.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_and_economic_development/page/4031/a_sewer_catastrophe_companion.pdf).

### Haven't Stored 14 Days of Water Yet?

Now is the time. It is recommended each household have at least 14 days of emergency water stored for each family member, pet and livestock. Log onto <https://www.regionalh2o.org/emergency-preparedness> for excellent directions. When you have done this, report your success to [skylineridgeNET@gmail.com](mailto:skylineridgeNET@gmail.com). We are hoping at least 300 local households will meet this 14-day challenge. (So far, only 17 households have reported doing so. Ugh!)

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## WMSWCD Tests Native Seed Mixes for the Forest Understory

By Hannah Spencer, WMSWCD Field Conservationist Intern

One of the first projects I worked on as a new intern with West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) was the Understory Seeding Project headed by staff conservationists Laura Taylor and Michael Ahr, and I was absolutely ecstatic at the opportunity to be involved. Officially part of the District's Forest Understory Vegetation Enhancement Project, this project was funded through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Conservation Innovation Grant, and was undertaken to figure out how to increase native groundcover using native seed mixes, especially on sites that had once been overrun by invasive species. Several properties had been selected as study sites in 2018, and during spring 2020 I went with Laura to check on their progress.

The first site we visited was a narrow forested patch between two homes. The understory was fairly clear and open, with some large shrubs and a thick layer of leaves on the ground. The site had recently been cleared of ivy and vinca, leaving a blank slate on the forest floor for the native seeding study. When we arrived, I saw that this site was already showing signs of success. In the first plot was a circle of bright, new green with a neon pink flag in the center to mark it as one of our study plots. In all, there were six plots at this site: two were seeded with a native seed mix; two were raked first, then seeded with natives; and two were raked but not seeded, as control plots. Not all of the plots at this site were covered in bright green baby plants, like the first one. For example, it looked to me like the plots that had been raked first, then seeded with natives, were more densely peppered with seedlings than plots that had not been raked first. However, we were here to do more than just visually evaluate the greenness of the various plots. This was science! We had data sheets that needed filling.

Before I could really be useful collecting data, I needed to learn to identify the plants we were observing. I was already comfortable identifying a lot of the native plants found in the Pacific Northwest, but I discovered that seedlings can look vastly different than adult plants; some of the seedlings were so tiny, they could have fit on the head of a nail! It's difficult to tell them apart when they are

that small. Luckily for me, Laura is an incredible botanist and a wonderful teacher, and I soon learned to pick up on details like the hairs on a tiny stem, or a notch in the tip of a leaf. As we started to count the plants in each plot and record them on our data sheets, I began to feel more confident. There is something so joyful to me about identifying plants, like the feeling of meeting a new person you can just tell you're going to like.

Over the course of a few weeks, we monitored all eight sites. Some were mostly bare, with islands of seedlings, like the first site. Other plots were covered in grasses, and we had to hunt for our neon pink markers. In some cases, our markers had been eaten by elk, and we had to find the plots using photos from previous years! Once we found the plots, we surveyed them for plant diversity and density, paying closest attention to species that were present in the seed mix we had used. We also noted if other plants, such as ivy or vinca, or natives not present

in the seed mix, were present in the plots. Once we had collected data from all eight sites, we were able to look at trends across the whole project.

The data showed that my impression at the first site was correct: raked plots typically had more plants on them than plots that hadn't been raked. This is probably because raking away debris before planting helps seeds get better access to soil, making it easier to establish than if they had to contend with dead leaves and branches. This means that if a landowner wants to maximize coverage in their seeded areas, giving the ground a thorough rake before seeding might be worth their while.

### Raking Helps Seed Establishment

The downside to this is that raking an entire forest would be extremely labor intensive, not to mention extremely disruptive to plants, animals, and soil. The best way to use raking is to choose small patches scattered throughout the understory, and rake and seed those. But what about those unraked parts of the forest (which will be the majority of the forest)? Can property owners do anything to improve the understory that has to be left unraked? Well, another trend we found was that plots which were not raked but were seeded still had a higher density of native plants

**Forest Understory p. 10** ➤



WMSWCD intern Hannah Spencer inspects one of her plots to evaluate different seed mixes of native understory plants (Photo: WMSWCD)



## Team See Possibilities Helps Visually Impaired Youth to Excel

By Brad Graff, Skyline Blvd.

Six years ago, my best friend Charles called to ask if I could help him out with something. Dan Berlin, who is blind, had decided to run from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon to the North Rim, and BACK in 1 day. Charles wanted my help guiding Dan because he was concerned that it was unsafe to attempt with only 1 guide. This is a 46 mile trail, with over 20,000 feet of elevation change, half of which would be at night in pitch darkness. I said “sure” and with that answer, started a series of events that eventually led to the formation of a 501(c)(3) non-profit to raise money for scholarships to help blind students attend college. Additionally, I helped guide Dan on endurance challenges across 5 continents, while raising international awareness of, and inspiration for, visually impaired people of all ages.

Team See Possibilities ([www.teamseepossibilities.com](http://www.teamseepossibilities.com)) is the charity that I co-founded, and *inspires and empowers young people with vision loss to thrive and excel*. What began as a test of Dan’s ability to achieve some endurance feats has birthed a non-profit that has raised over \$150,000 in 5 years and has awarded scholarships to 23 students. The students are mostly from the US, but we have our first international student this year who is attending Stanford University. In addition to granting the scholarships, the Team See Possibilities (TSP) board (which has several blind members) meets monthly with the students (on Zoom calls, of course), and gives encouragement, tips, and advice to these young students, as well as providing a community so that our TSP “scholars” have a way to connect and share experiences and advice with each other. Our hope is that over the next decade we will be able to help hundreds of visually impaired stu-



Brad Graff, with Charles Scott and Dan Berlin in the Grand Canyon, 2014 (Photo: Brad Graff)

dents attend college and provide them a lifelong network of friends. And hopefully, as this current cohort graduates, they will continue to be involved with TSP and become mentors to the new class – and the cycle continues. It is really a privilege for me to be involved with this amazing organization. I love reading the applications every spring – although it is HARD to draw the line when there are so many amazing and deserving applicants.

The other “side” of TSP are the endurance challenges. We have a goal for Dan to be the first blind athlete to do (something) on all 7 continents. Yes, we did in fact finish the Grand Canyon back in 2014. It took us 28 hours, but Dan was the first blind athlete to do a “Rim to Rim to Rim” run of the Grand Canyon and appeared on several national TV news programs and was featured in many articles (you can see them on our website). In subsequent years, I helped Dan achieve the fastest summit up Mount Kilimanjaro, run the entire 26 miles of the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in 14 hours, traverse 100 miles across the Great Wall of China, and do two of the “Great Walks” in New Zealand, back to back, non-stop. We intended to do an ultra-marathon distance in Scotland along Loch Ness this spring but

Covid-19 pushed this out until 2021. We hope to be able to do Antarctica next, but an expedition of this type would require a sponsor to help with the costs.

As a 10 year member of our community up here on “the Hill”, I find myself grateful for so many things. This year, sheltering in place on Skyline Blvd, I have had a lot of time to think about what is important. The time I spend working on Team See Possibilities is certainly the most meaningful. If anyone knows any deserving visually impaired students going to college, please tell them about us and apply for a scholarship in 2021! ☐



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## What Is (and Isn't) Happening at the Skyline Grange

By Sen Speroff

Skyline Grange and its surrounding community came out of the acute September wildfires mostly unscathed. This was not the case for several other Oregon Granges and their communities. We are fortunate, and we miss you.

### What is Happening

Due to the pandemic, Skyline Grange has been pretty quiet, except for landscape work parties and monthly outdoor meetings. Outdoor yoga is still being offered (weather permitting) with hopes to be able to safely hold small classes inside once the rains return. Participants must register for a spot to attend at [www.yogainalignment.com](http://www.yogainalignment.com). Securing a place is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Members of the Skyline Grange Artisans will offer their locally-crafted wares to the neighborhood in an online sales event during November and December. Due to the pandemic, there will not be an in-person sale at the Grange this year. Watch for complete information to be announced in the Newslines next month.

### What is NOT Happening

We are not accepting any rental applications at least through the end of this year. Sadly, our traditional fall

events are cancelled – the savory Community Soup Supper and the popular fall Garage Sale.

### Join Skyline Grange

Grange is a non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-profit, and a totally volunteer-driven organization. We are a diverse group of people with the common belief that we are fortunate to live in the Skyline area and want to support its well-being. We take seriously the fact that our building is a community asset as a gathering place. Our impact, activities, and accomplishments depend upon our members and community volunteers.

Working together binds us together, though the pandemic certainly has curtailed our activities. We still try to meet monthly usually on the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m., now weather permitting since we are outdoors. You can contact the Grange at [SkylineGrange894@msn.com](mailto:SkylineGrange894@msn.com) and for rental inquiries in 2021 at [skylinegrange894@gmail.com](mailto:skylinegrange894@gmail.com). Skyline Grange is located at 11275 NW Skyline Boulevard. Our website is <https://www.srnpx.org/grange.html> and our Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/Skyline-Grange-894-169559023662398/>. □

### ► **Forest Understory** (continued from p. 8)

than the control plots. As a bonus, they also had a lower density of exotic plants than either the control plots or the raked/seeded plots. This means that simply seeding their land without raking can be significantly beneficial to a landowner's understory. This method won't provide the same diversity or density that raking first would, but it will still help promote native plant populations. A landowner could even use a combination of raking small plots and seeding the rest of the understory to maximize native understory plant coverage.

Another interesting result was the discovery of which species performed best in our plots. The seed mix used on the plots contained 17 different species, but some species didn't perform well—or at all. For example, we did not see a single penstemon in any plot. (Such an underachiever.) Native understory seed mix is currently pretty hard to find, and expensive when you do come across it, so it's important to know that your money is being spent on seeds that will perform well. According to our plots, the best investments seem to be: inside-out flower, small-flowered nemophila, miner's lettuce, western fescue, pathfinder, sweet-cicely, Columbia brome, and blue wild-rye. Even though these species may be difficult to find as seed in stores, WMSWCD recommends that landowners who have these plants present on their properties can try collecting their seed and spreading it to bare areas of their properties.

Just be very careful not to collect seeds from a plant you aren't sure about—you don't want to accidentally collect and spread an invasive species!

WMSWCD will be publishing a formal, detailed report on their findings later this year, so the entire community will have access to the information gleaned over the course of this study. And landowners can expect understory seeding to be included in more of the projects they undertake with WMSWCD. As WMSWCD shifts to exploring understory seeding in practice, other partners will continue exploring experimentally, such as Erin McElroy, a graduate student with Portland State University's Department of Environmental Science and Management. Erin has been monitoring plots of her own using a similar protocol to the one WMSWCD used, but she has been including even more variables, such as the presence of worms, the soil profile, and aspect at her sites. Her research will help fine-tune the ways in which land managers can make their understories as successful as possible. She is also contacting local nurseries to talk with them about their interest in producing and selling native understory seeds, so she could have a direct hand in making seed more accessible in the Portland area. I feel so lucky to have been able to contribute to this project, and I'm excited to see how Erin, the WMSWCD staff, and the rest of the Understory Seeding Project partners continue to explore this topic. □

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