

SKAGITONIAN



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A Message from Bob Hart, President, SPF Board of Directors

SPRING 2011

Future Chefs Learn from the Ground Up

As spring pushes out the winter cold, I'm pleased to announce once again that Skagit Valley farms will be part of an integrated learning experience for culinary students from Seattle. This will mark the sixth year that Seattle Culinary Academy (SCA) students will be participating in a six week course in the Skagit Valley as part of the SCA's program *Sustainable Food Systems Practices*.

Beginning in June, students will arrive at our farm where we have set aside land for them

to learn best practices for sowing, cultivating and harvesting vegetables and fruit which they take back to their kitchens in Seattle to create local, seasonal meals.

The students work under the direction of retired scientists, agricultural industry leaders, farmers and teachers (affectionately known as the Geezers), who volunteer to teach the students about different plant varieties as well as agricultural and cultural practices utilized for growing vegetables in the Puget Sound's maritime climate.

After spending time at our farm the students will visit other farms in the area, including a local shellfish farm and an organic ranch. By visiting a broad spectrum of farms throughout the Skagit Valley during their six week course, the students are exposed to a diversity of agricultural practices and learn about the daily issues local farmers face on a day to day basis.

As a farmer and President of SPF, I have seen first hand how effective this program. Students receive valuable experience as they prepare for their careers, gaining a better understanding of what it takes to grow food in the Pacific Northwest and get local produce, dairy and meat to grocery stores, restaurants, hospitals or schools.

Developing connections between farmer and chef are growing, you might say, thanks to the commitment of the Seattle Culinary Academy to support local farming!



Seattle Culinary Academy students prepare to plant at La Conner Flats.

Meet Our Members



SPF Members Ann Bergeron, Judy Christianson and friends.

Names: Judy Christianson and Ann Bergeron

We Live: Just outside of Mount Vernon in Skagit Valley

What We Do: Judy is a sales representative for nutritional supplements and uses her background as a naturopathic physician to work with health food stores and co-ops in the Pacific Northwest. Ann is an acupuncturist and works in the corporate office of Super Supplements as their inventory control person. We enjoy gardening and playing with our pet goats, chickens, ducks, cats, and bunnies.

How Long We Have Been Members of SPF: 3 years

Why We Support SPF: We both have farming in our blood. Ann's grandparents were sugar cane farmers in Southwest Louisiana and Judy's great-grandfather started the first commercial apple orchard in Wenatchee. The green thumb in Judy's family has also touched her brother John who, with his wife Toni, owns and operates Christianson's Nursery. We have passion for delicious food that is grown with care. We look at the bigger picture of what it takes to sustain this incredibly rich farming community, and it is very important to us that we eat as local and seasonally as we can. We love our local farmers and are grateful for all their hard work. We equally appreciate SPF's dedication to preserving this historically rich valley so that generations to come will benefit from her rich bounty. Thank you, SPF!!!

We've attended the last three Harvest Dinners and have met so many wonderful individuals who support this great cause (not to mention the incredible items we've acquired). We hope to see all of you at the next auction for some serious fun and competitive bidding.



Skagitians to Preserve Farmland
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SPF Receives Bequest to Support Farmland Preservation

SPF recently received a generous gift from the estate of Winifred (Bobbie) Rieck. Bobbie first contacted SPF in 2007 to learn more about our mission. Her decision to support SPF's work to protect Skagit agriculture stemmed from a strong desire to preserve the fertile lands of this Valley as an important source of food. Bobbie said she did not want to see farmland disappear in the Skagit Valley the way she had seen the Kent and Puyallup Valleys paved over.



Winifred (Bobbie) Rieck

Born on a Nebraska farm, Bobbie began teaching in a one-room school house at the age of 19, after completing teacher's college. She eventually began a career in banking. In 1950 she moved to Washington to be with her mother after her father died. It was in Tacoma where she met a widower, Bill Rieck, who had four young children. When they married, she adopted the children. She was a longtime volunteer for 60 years in Tacoma at St. Patrick's Church and in the community. She also enjoyed gardening, and had a great love of learning her entire life. She recalled many trips to the Skagit Valley, where the family would gather at her daughter and son-in-law's farm in Mount Vernon.

We are grateful to Bobbie's commitment to farmland preservation and honored to continue the critical work to protect Skagit agriculture in her memory.

If you would like to consider including SPF in your estate planning, please contact Susan Macek, Development Director, at (360) 336-3974.