9th Focus on Farming draws record attendance

About 600 people participated in Thursday’s 9th annual Focus on Farming Conference, setting a new record for attendance at the event, which drew about 100 local farmers to the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in 2004.

“The conference’s regional appeal with national support is a testament to the relationships that we have built through the years as well as the changes that we have made to keep farming economically viable,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon.

Reardon opened the conference – with the theme “Feeding Our Future” – by giving an update on steps the county has made to improve the balance between farming and environment in addition to new opportunities that now are available to farmers and their families.

Improvements to the Transfer of Development Rights program as well as the Sustainable Lands Strategy offer new ways to protect farmland without trading off the need to reclaim certain lands for environmental benefit, especially for increased salmon production.

Following Reardon were former Marine Sgt. Colin Archipley and his wife, Karen, who together run Archi’s Acres. The operation offers combat veterans agricultural training and employment opportunities in sustainable crop production. The Archipleys highlighted the work they have done to re-employ veterans upon their return from combat and offered the Pacific Northwest a model for future work here.
**Chef Ann Cooper**, a celebrated author and educator, topped off the conference’s gourmet lunch – prepared wholly from local produce by top regional chefs – with her story of advocating for better food for children in local schools. In attendance Thursday were representatives from several school districts hoping to learn how to connect farm-fresh products with their school lunch programs.

Snohomish County has joined with the Snohomish Health District and other local nonprofits to provide better access to food, especially in lower-income areas of the county and within the schools. The county also participates in the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Regional Food Policy Council, which is looking at the same issues on a larger scale.

Joe Rogoff, **Whole Foods Market** Pacific Northwest Regional president, also offered the lunchtime crowd a look at Whole Foods’ long history of working with local farmers to help create markets for locally grown food. Specifically, Rogoff gave agricultural producers insight into the company’s Local Producer Loan Program, which provides low-interest loans to small, local producers to make it easier for them to bring more local products to market. Snohomish County farmers, including Jeff Miller of Willie Green’s Organic Farm near Monroe, have benefited.

“The goal has always been to secure top-notch speakers with innovative ideas that can be translated and developed here in the Puget Sound,” Reardon said. “This year’s speakers have done exactly that, and now it’s our turn to see what we can do with the information we’ve learned.”

The day wouldn’t be complete without the epicurean lunch, which included beer braised pork, whiskey glazed carrots, squash soup with apple salad and roasted Brussels sprouts with bacon. The day ended with a wine-and-cheese tasting featuring local fares, another opportunity to showcase the high quality of the local food being produced here.

This year’s conference at the **Comcast Arena** also included a 17,000-square-foot trade show, offering farmers and those interested in local food production a look at the latest equipment models, samples and demonstrations. For more information on the conference, click [here](#).
On behalf of Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon, Deputy Executive Gary Haakenson earlier this week signed a proclamation in support of the fight against pancreatic cancer. Supporters of the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network joined Haakenson for the signing.

County’s Energy Assistance Program fully funded

The Snohomish County Energy Assistance Program has received full funding for the 2013 heating season and will re-open at 8 a.m. Monday, Nov. 19. This program provides assistance with heating bills for income-eligible households that qualify.

Assistance is provided for all types of heat, including electric, natural gas, oil, propane and wood. For qualifying households, heat assistance grants range from $25 to $1,000, depending on household income, number of persons in the household, size of the heating bill, and type of housing. The grants provide assistance one time per heating season.

“Our energy assistance program is one way that we can assist those in times of need,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “Receiving full funding at the start of the program allows us to better serve those in crisis as well as those who just need a lift during a difficult time.”

To qualify, households must meet the program’s income guidelines. For example, a household of one person must have income below $1,164 per month; two people - $1,576 per month; three people - $1,989; and four people - $2,401 per month.

Applicants are asked to phone ahead for an appointment. However, those who are out of fuel or who are shut off may walk into the county’s Energy Assistance Office at 3000 Rockefeller
(in the lower level of the Robert Drewel Building) and will be seen on a first-come, first-served, space available basis.

Applicants will be asked to provide a number of documents including, but not limited to, a copy of their most recent heating utility bill, proof of income from all household members for the three months prior to application, as well as copies of social security cards for all household members.

The program offices are open 8 a.m.-Noon and 1–5 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding holidays. The telephone lines are staffed from 9 a.m.-Noon and 1-4:30 p.m. Those interested in the program that are not in immediate danger of shut-off are encouraged to wait several days after the opening date due to high call volumes.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 425-388-3880.

24 children find new families on Nat’l Adoption Day

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon recently signed a proclamation supporting National Adoption Day in conjunction with the county’s Superior Court celebration. More than 20 children were adopted Friday as part of the annual celebration. Below is the wording of the proclamation:

WHEREAS, Snohomish County understands the importance of helping children in foster care find permanent, safe and loving “forever” families through adoption; and

WHEREAS, more than 400,000 children across the United States currently live in foster care; and

WHEREAS, more than 100,000 of those foster children are eligible and waiting to be adopted into loving families; and

WHEREAS, in Snohomish County, more than 1,000 children live in foster care with 170 of those children eligible right now for adoption; and

WHEREAS, National Adoption Day was created to celebrate and raise awareness of the need to find permanent homes for all of these children; and

WHEREAS, the Snohomish County Superior Court system has led the charge to make National Adoption Day a meaningful part of the local community; and

WHEREAS, this is an effort to give children a chance to live with the appreciation that they are loved and wanted, and to also raise awareness among the residents of Snohomish County that adoption is a viable and important way to grow a family; and

WHEREAS, today the Snohomish County Superior Court has finalized the adoptions of 24 children and 19 families, forever and positively changing the lives of all involved.
NOW, THEREFORE, I, Aaron G. Reardon, Snohomish County Executive, do hereby proclaim Nov. 16, 2012, as

National Adoption Day in Snohomish County

and urge all citizens to join this effort of helping these children find their new families.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read my electronic newsletter.

If you would like to send me your comments and feedback, or if you would like to unsubscribe, simply reply to this message.

You may also contact me directly by phone at 425.388.3460.