Return of the fairs

It's no small help for bees
PHOTOESSAY
This year Washington’s state fairs were back in the swing.

FEATURE
The value and virtues of fungi are deceptively simple.

UPFRONT
Being at the epicenter of renewable power to the people of Washington state.

For hyporesponsive eaters, it may be about finding foods with the right texture.

It’s a rendezvous in a trusting environment for military kids—whose families sacrificed for their country.

It’s a win-win-win for hometown health.


LEFT: The duck pond game at the Washington State Fair in Puyallup (from video by Robert Hubner).
A return to normalcy?  LAST WORDS

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 OUR STORY
 Studying anywhere can make a world of difference

 Our institution’s surplus may be somebody’s small (or large) treasure

 SHORT SUBJECT
 From a simple plant comes big science

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 PROUD TO SUPPORT COUGAR COUNTRY

 We’re excited to grow our partnership with Washington State University.

 Through the changing of the seasons, we remain steadfast in our shared purpose to support the financial well-being of our communities.
In praise of simple things. In a world that’s beset with huge changes, it is sometimes hard to appreciate small things. Consider the mouse-ear cress, Arabidopsis thaliana, which grows by roads and sidewalks. Not much to see, the little weed has a very small genome and in 2000 was the first plant to be completely sequenced. Its very simplicity has made Arabidopsis a powerful research tool for plant scientists at Washington State University and around the world. WSU scientists have used it to identify a gene that allows the elimination of trans fats from many cooking oils and fats, find ways to help plants adapt to climate change, and investigate many other areas of plant research that make a big difference in Pacific Northwest agriculture.

Another often overlooked group of organisms, fungi, also seems deceptively simple. Yet different types of fungus could help save honeybees from parasites, assist crops in taking up nutrients from soil, and can provide a model to break down plant waste for biofuels. Plus, the thread-like structures of fungi, mycelium, can grow robustly into almost any shape and be hardened for a biodegradable material. One WSU student even made a canoe of the stuff.

Sometimes, though, the smallest things feel so hard. Feeding your child, particularly if the child has Down syndrome, can turn into a difficult activity. WSU food scientist Carolyn Ross faced that situation, and it led her to research food textures. Her findings might give relief to many parents who struggle with feeding their children.

Simple pleasures also enhance our lives. For some, that means shopping and the dopamine rush of a serendipitous find at places like WSU’s surplus store. Check out that wonderland of oddities and treasures in this issue.

As the pandemic gradually decreases, we begin to enjoy events again, such as the thrills of a fair. WSU and its connections to agriculture have long been entwined with fairs, and all their nostalgic, fun, and even futuristic features.

We can receive such wonderful, uncomplicated joy from fair food, rides, entertainment, or the smile on a 4-H kid who just showed a prize goat. As Bilbo Baggins says in J. R. R. Tolkien’s famous novel, “It is no bad thing to celebrate a simple life.”
TALKback

Happy times

The Fall 2022 issue shared happy memories of WSU from alumni, faculty, and staff. We asked for readers to send in their own recollections, and here are a few that we received:

Saturdays in the fall leaving my room at the Kappa Sigma house that 30 years earlier was shared by my father and his roommate, Edward R. Murrow, and walking to Rogers Stadium where I did the football PA announcing, while in the next booth sat Keith Jackson doing the play-by-play broadcast on KWSC.

MACK PARKHILL (’56 BUSI.)
OHIO

Pretty much everything at WSU made me happy! My view of the mountains from my dorm room, communication classes with Glenn Johnson, buying supplies at The Bookie, and heated sidewalks! Then weekends in Martin Stadium and dinners at Seda’s. I didn’t even mind my harder classes too much; I was so content to be on campus. I am so glad that I was a student there, and so happy to be a Coug!

ANDREINA (RINEY) THOMAS (’92 COMM.)
KENT

Some of my best years and memories of my life were at WSU from 1979 to 1983. I absolutely loved it there. I was at Regents Hall 313, and that was my little sanctuary. I made friends there that have lasted a lifetime! My favorite place to study was at the CUB.

I was at WSU when Mount Saint Helens blew. I remember that May Sunday very well on campus. It was raining ash and we all wore masks. I loved walking around campus every season. The stillness, the scenery, such a magical place that I did not want to leave because I loved it so much there. Go Cougs!

SALLY SUE BATE (’83 SOCIO.)
KIRKLAND

Absolutely everything: It was my first time away from home and my first time in the beautiful state of Washington. So many new experiences, my senses were on overload. The football games, watching the snow fall, hearing the bell toll, my friends and colleagues, my dorm (Stevens Hall), my classes and teachers, and eating with friends at the dining hall. It all suited me perfectly. I am now 70 years old, and I still remember my time there as the best six years of my life. I am forever grateful that I chose WSU, and WSU chose me back.

JAE LUCIDO-MARTIN (’76 PSYCH.)
IOWA

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Original Photos Available Via WSU Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections

The Subzero Temperatures and Snow at an Infamous Football Game in November 1955 Didn’t Make Anyone Happy. The Cougs played San Jose State to a 13-13 tie, but only after plows removed snow from the field. “The band left prior to halftime as the lips of the horn players were freezing to their mouthpieces,” says Mack Parkhill ’56, who was the game’s announcer. Many of the San Jose State players had never seen snow, and “their coach bought every pair of cotton gloves in Pullman,” Parkhill recalls. “The players on the field were trying to avoid frostbite on each down. They absolutely earned their scholarships that day.”
Advancing the student experience in WSU’s Voiland College of Engineering and Architecture for generations to come.

Fundraising continues for the state-of-the-art Schweitzer Engineering Hall on WSU’s Pullman campus. When complete, the facility will be a central hub for WSU engineering and design students to innovate, collaborate with faculty and each other, and access advising, technology, and other activities that are foundational to their success in college and beyond.

This is the first phase of an ambitious, multiyear vision to modernize the college’s teaching and laboratory spaces for the 21st century.

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This project will really help grow Voiland College. It will give students a whole new way to learn and collaborate.”

— Sara Minogue | Mechanical Engineering

Power to the people—and to the planet

BY TINA HILDING

A small town in Alaska hooks up solar power and a backup generator to keep the lights on.

Two villages in India use cow manure and solar energy to get electricity in their homes for the first time.

In Spokane, researchers study how to share solar energy back and forth across power lines throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Meanwhile, a clock is ticking. The threat of climate change hangs in the air like smoke from increasingly common wildfires or like the hot summer days that now linger too long into the fall.

“The million-dollar question is not how to add more wind and solar to the power grid,” says Anjan Bose, Regents Professor in Washington State University’s School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. “It’s how to make it run reliably and at the same time, try to bring up the resiliency, given the kinds of issues we’re facing with extreme weather and cybersecurity threats.”

It’s a daunting challenge for the world to move quickly to renewables and prevent the worst impacts of climate change. The way we get energy is changing rapidly and dramatically, and the road to decarbonization runs straight through eastern Washington.

“Eastern Washington is really a ‘power’ power,” says Noel Schulz, Edmund O. Schweitzer III Chair in Power Apparatus and Systems and codirector of the WSU and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) Advanced Grid Institute. “As you look at PNNL, WSU, Avista, Schweitzer Engineering Labs, and Itron, we really have a lot of innovation coming out and working on solutions on the next grid.”

Sectors such as transportation and power generation will need to decarbonize, which means moving to sustainable energy such as hydropower, wind, solar, and perhaps tidal energy later. Nuclear energy also doesn’t emit greenhouse gases.

“The common thread between all of these energy sources is the power grid,” says Mani Venkatasubramanian, Boeing Distinguished Professor in the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and director of WSU’s Energy Systems Innovation Center (ESIC). He also holds a joint PNNL appointment. “The key is how can we support the entirety of energy consumption by harnessing it to the power grid.

The biggest engineering challenge is to do this without sacrificing the reliability and affordability that the customers are used to.”

Unlike a coal-fired power plant, sustainable energy is largely distributed—such as solar panels on rooftop after rooftop. Solar and wind power also famously work when the sun is shining and the...
wind is blowing. They can’t be easily stored. Meanwhile, as power grid operators have to change the way they’ve always done business, climate change and serious events like extreme heat, flooding, and wildfires are creating more demand and causing more interruptions for the grid. Utilities now have engineers on staff to specifically plan for extreme events.

“As we are going through the transition, we have to, in fact, improve our system,” says Venkatasubramanian.

Looking at the power grid’s “edge,” like small solar panels on a home, may provide new opportunities for energy storage, says Anamika Dubey, Huie-Rogers Endowed Chair in the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. Dubey, who holds a joint appointment with PNNL, and her colleagues have been looking into how to leverage assets at the distribution level, such as rooftop solar panels or electric car batteries, as storage to improve flexibility.

“One of the main challenges is that when we get to the grid edge, the scale of the problem is too large—we’re actually looking into tens of millions of devices,” she says. “If you’re trying to aggregate them and provide their flexibility or support for the bulk grid, how do we develop models that are helpful enough for us to inform the decision-making process?” Microgrids are also an increasingly popular possible solution for energy challenges. Microgrids are self-contained grids with a local energy source that can be connected to the larger grid but can also function independently. Through a partnership with India, WSU researchers are working with two villages there to develop and test microgrids.

“Renewables are a challenge, but they can also provide an opportunity in rural electrification—places where there are no power lines and transmission, where we can use local resources,” says Schultz.

While the researchers look toward making better use of the renewables, they’re also keeping an eye on better managing the traditional bulk power grid. Venkatasubramanian’s group, for instance, has developed a software tool to monitor oscillations and the health of the power grid in real time that can notify grid operators when instability is occurring. The software tool was recently licensed by France’s grid operator and helped to quickly and seamlessly transition Ukraine from Russia to the European power grid last winter.

“The technology is helping with such uncertainties, and that’s the kind of technology that we need a lot more of in the future,” he says. “As we have these renewables more and more in the system, we need to be able to operate on the go.”

The solutions are available now; perhaps they are not the most elegant, but they can be done, says Bose.

“The question is not really about technology. It’s a question of actual deployment and whether we can deploy within the time frame that has been laid out. That’s the real question, and that’s not dependent on either universities or even the federal government,” he says.

So how confident are the researchers that society can incorporate renewables into the power grid to prevent the worst effects of climate change?

“One hundred percent,” says Venkatasubramanian. “Because that’s what engineers do. When we have challenges, we find solutions.”

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August 23, 2022 – March 11, 2023
In Juventino Aranda: Esperé Mucho Tiempo Pa Ver (I Have Waited a Long Time to See), the artist searches for identity as a “Mexican and second generation American,” among social, political, and economic struggles and notions of the American dream.

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From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation
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On Earth: A Fragile Existence highlights works from the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art’s permanent collection that reflect a multilayered understanding of humanity’s role in our shared ecology with the nonhuman, or more-than-human, world.

THE ART OF FOOD
JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

WINTER 2022
WASHINGTON STATE MAGAZINE

upFront

More than a matter of taste

BY REBECCA PHILLIPS

Watching your baby struggle to eat can be heartbreaking. The daily challenge of offering food only to have it rejected by an unhappy crying child leaves parents frustrated and, all the more so when their child has Down syndrome.

Carolyn Ross, professor in the Washington State University School of Food Science, knows the difficulty firsthand.

“In the beginning, my son Isaac got very annoyed while eating and expressed that with his behavior,” she says. “As the gatekeepers of our child’s eating experience, it can be very stressful trying to figure everything out.”

Ross, who specializes in the chemical and physical analysis of food, had no training in child feeding but could see that her son with Down syndrome was handling food differently than his two older sisters had.

“If a child is unhappy, we immediately tend to think it’s taste or flavor, but there’s also the sensory input feeling of it and how it feels on the lips or in their hands,” she says. “There are a lot of things that go into the eating experience, including a comfortable high chair.”

Wading through online anecdotal information and scientific literature in 2012, Ross learned that children with Down syndrome have a smaller and narrower jaw, smaller mouth cavity, and more dental problems than typically developing children.

“Viewing the online information made very stressful trying to figure everything out.”

The study included a contingent of typically developing children as the control group.

“Participants each received a gigantic box of food,” says Ross. “We included four food products, and each product was fed once a day for six days. We also noted the products by flavor categories, like cheesy, and assigned each child flavors they liked.”

“Caregivers filmed the child’s reactions as they tried the foods,” the says. “Later, my colleagues and I analyzed the videos and coded them for the various behaviors.”

The results revealed that some children, whether typically developing or with Down syndrome, are texture sensitive and others are not. That sensitivity plays a major role in the child’s eating habits.

“Children with Down syndrome and texture sensitivity showed a clear preference for dissolvable snacks like puddles or vegetable trays. They also liked oily and crispy textures but tended to reject snacks that were dense, gummy, or hard. These children ate significantly less than all the other children.”

In addition, youth with Down syndrome often have oral sensory processing difficulties that make them over- or under-sensitive to the textures in their foods. This can lead to over stuffing the mouth and problems with choking. Choking is a frequent cause of death for these children.

“I think the takeaway for parents is to view texture acceptance as a journey,” Ross says. “Start with a preferred texture like pureed applesauce and move into less preferred textures over time such as desserts and garnishes.”

“Ultimately, we want to provide texture information as well as shape, color, and size to create a complete dietary picture.”

“Especially designing food for a child with Down syndrome,” she says. “The idea to get information and food products out there to help move children through the texture journey.”

“Ultimately, we want to provide texture so children can learn how to process it and know what to do with food in their mouth.”

“Ross says. “We want to decrease the risk of choking as they get older. And to give them more nutritious foods as well as quality of life with more variety.”

adhesive, chewy, cold/warm, creamy, crispy/crunchy, dissolvable, doughy, dry, firm, gritty/grainy, gummy/rubbery, hard, [TEXTURES] juicy, lumpy, mealy, mushy, pasty, puree, goopy/ropy, smooth, soft, sponge, stringy/tough, tender, thick, thin.

THE ART OF FOOD
JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON STATE MAGAZINE WINTER 2022

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Waiting to exhale

By Rebecca Phillips

Adolescence can be a rocky road for any child, but for those whose family members have made the ultimate military sacrifice, the challenges are even more complicated.

Whether that’s a Wounded Warrior father struggling with PTSD at a Cold Star Family whose mother was lost in combat, these teens must navigate a world that is foreign to most of their peers.

Hoping to provide the children a bit of respite and support, Gary Varrella, Washington State University Spokane County Extension director and 4-H educator, worked with Karen Hammock, Spokane 4-H military liaison, to establish Camp Rendezvous in 2021.

“We had never done a camp like this in Washington before,” says Varrella. “This was designed specifically for this unique population that likely has high levels of adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs. There may have been some Wounded Warrior and Cold Star kids in other military camps but never a camp just for them.”

Spokane County Extension 4-H has served Washington’s military youth for more than 15 years through a variety of residential camp experiences, says Hammock. Their office has ongoing partnerships with the US Army, Air Force, and National Guard. At one time, they even worked with the Navy.

Through grant funding and donations, Varrella and Hammock were able to hold Military Youth Camp Rendezvous again last August at the Sound View Camp and Retreat Center near Longbranch, Washington. It was open to teens aged 13–17.

“We take 25 campers because these youth come with many more struggles,” Varrella says. “We rent the entire campground for five days so we’re able to provide support on a one-to-one basis.”

To that end, Hammock says the military provides two full-time military and family life counselors free of charge. Camp staff also includes an art therapist and theater therapist, as well as retired military members, and two medics, both ex-military. All have been background checked and trained.

WSU Extension 4-H faculty members Ashley Hernandez-Hall from Snohomish County, Brian Brandt from Pierce County, and Alison White from Kittitas/Yakima Counties also offer special sessions meant to help the teens develop resiliency and establish a sense of belonging and rapport with other campers. Michelle Green of King County Extension 4-H adds some fun through STEM workshops.

Their combined efforts have been truly inspiring according to participants.

“My daughter chose this camp specifically because it would allow her to be around other military kids who have experiences similar to her own—kids whose parent had suffered injuries in combat. She found a kind of peers that she hasn’t found elsewhere. It allowed her to open up a lot more and share things that she hasn’t shared with other friends back at school,” says one parent.

“My son... is a child of a disabled veteran. He didn’t get the opportunity to know his dad prior to his traumatic brain injury. He was able to come home from camp and share his experiences with us, and it gave him a platform to ask questions to his dad with a little more understanding and grace after hearing from other campers about their shared experiences.

“These military youth face so much in their lives; many struggling with a loss of a family member or long-term hardships from their family’s military service. This camp gave these campers more than any other I’ve ever seen, providing resources, teaching tactics to help with stress, and opening a safe place to share their burdens.”

Camp Rendezvous continues to be that place you belong!

Varrella has worked with youth for 50 years but says Camp Rendezvous was the most “profound, meaningful, impactful camp for teens” that he’s ever been involved with during his career.

“It blew me away,” he says. “Not just the challenges these teens faced and managed but the candor and sincerity that came out of us building a trusting safe environment for them to be able to have a vacation from that difficult life, and to be able to share things that they hadn’t been able to share before to parents, siblings, therapists, or even out loud to themselves.

“I think Karen and I are probably more proud of the work we’ve done with these camps than any of the others in the last 15 years.”

Making a world of difference

By Alysen Boston

Whether Cougs are serving aboard an aircraft carrier, exploring the jungles of Sumatra, or living a couple thousand miles away in Toledo, Ohio, the Global Campus offers the same facility and high-quality learning available at Washington State University’s brick-and-mortar campuses, built on three decades of experience.

Our campus is our community. We are all here to work towards a common goal. It’s a place where people come together to learn, grow, and achieve their dreams.

Our faculty and staff are dedicated to providing an excellent educational experience for all students, regardless of where they are located or what their background is.

Whether it’s through online classes, in-person instruction, or a combination of both, WSU Global Campus is committed to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Andrea Mona-Tice lives in three countries while finishing her WSU degree. Courtesy WSU Global Campus

Andrea Mona-Tice (’21 Anthropology) visited nearly 30 countries and lived on two different continents during her studies at Global.

“My husband just got a job in Indonesia and we had an 18-month-old daughter when I enrolled. The fact that WSU let me study online and live outside the country was amazing,” Mona-Tice says. “I never thought I would be a college graduate, but I could do my work when my daughter was asleep at night.”

Chancellor Dave Cillay says Global has come a long way since it began as a distance degree program 30 years ago, but its mission remains the same.

“Our DNA hasn’t changed. It’s all about connecting students to faculty to curriculum to one another,” Cillay says. “We’re a land-grand institution, and this program is all about providing access to higher education to the citizens of Washington and beyond.”

And in that endeavor, Global is succeeding. In the spring of 2022, Global Cougs came from 49 states and 48 different countries.

Cillay, who joined Global’s staff in 2003 and later was selected as the campus’s first chancellor in 2005, says the shift to online learning during the pandemic brought Global’s existing strength to the forefront.

“All the tools have been here for a while,” Cillay says. “We’ve been doing online learning for decades. The change is in the perception. And as the maturity of online learning be...
A surplus of surprises

BY ADRIANA JANOVICH

Coffee tables and couches from executive offices. Filing cabinets. Lockers. Desks. Refrigerators—some working, some not. Assorted tables. And, Oh. So. Many. Chairs. Most of them office variety, some of them swivel, for as little as a dollar. Plates and wineglasses from catering services or special events.

“We’ve had folks who are starting restaurants come in and load up,” says Keith Davison (’04). “You could stock your apartment. There’s a lot of stuff—a little bit of everything.”

Davison guesses there are from physical education classes in the 1970s, for $5 per pair down from $15. Chinook yearbooks from 1957, 1958, 1959, 1994, and more.

Some of the more fun items include a popcorn machine, former football coach Mike Leach talking heads, custom display cases in the shapes of “1” and “2” and “7” from the university’s 125th anniversary (sold), and a big cardboard box full of rubber boots likely left over from the WSU Creamery—a steal at $10 per pair.

Items highlighted on Instagram and Facebook tend to sell fast. In fact, there’s no online store because, Davison says, “inventory changes so quickly.”

There are, however, online as well as in-person auctions, where patrons can often find larger and more unusual WSU-used items such as a 1960s metal milling machine, bundles from WSU track and field, rolls of artificial turf, and relics from soon-to-be-demolished Johnson Hall.

“Some of our best sales are via Instagram and Facebook tend to sell fast. We see a lot of the same faces every week,” says Davison.

It’s true that serious shoppers—Washington State University college students, perhaps—could practically furnish entire apartments from the wares at the wonderland that is WSU Surplus Stores. At the very least, alumni could own a piece—or many pieces, new and used—of WSU history.

Upright pianos. Exercise equipment, from elliptical machines to punching bags. New coffee mugs promoting Cougar basketball. Also new: crimson T-shirts from the 2017 Holiday Bowl and football cleats, and metal filing cabinets are just a few of the items found at the wonderland that is WSU Surplus Stores. Photos Robert Hubner

WSU Surplus Stores is charged with proper handling and disposal of university property. State law governs the proper handling and disposal of university-owned items. At $137 per ton, it would cost about $13,000 to dispose of those things at the local landfill.

Monday through Thursday is for pick-up, sorting, and pricing. Those days are also reserved for shopping by WSU departments and state agencies as well as municipalities, school districts, and nonprofits. On Friday, the warehouse at 250 Dairy Road in Pullman opens to the public. “We see a lot of the same faces every week,” says Davison, noting WSU Surplus Stores sold 18,575 items during the last fiscal year. “There are quite a few regulars who get here right when we open at 10 a.m.”

John and Cathy Burris of Troy, Idaho, are frequent shoppers. Among the items they’ve purchased are filing cabinets to store his tools and her sewing patterns. “I can’t remember what we paid for them, but it was a good deal,” she says. “You just never know what you’re going to find.”

One of the strangest things former material resources manager Wayne Gash ever sold at a WSU Surplus Stores auction was a three-legged calf, he told WSU Week in 1999. Another unusual sell: a bottomless wooden boat. (The buyer turned it into a sandbox.)

Rushing and recycling are the heart of the operation, which traces its roots to 1946. That’s when Charles Byron “CB” Jones came to Pullman to manage Central Stores and Surplus Property. He spent most of his time acquiring US Army surplus, repurposing equipment, and becoming known as Mr. Fix-It. Jones managed the department until 1974. Sales were open to the public in the mid-1980s.

“People who have been coming here since before I was working here,” Davison says. “That’s a fun part of the job, meeting not only people we work with on campus but customers who come to the store.”

WSU Surplus Stores collected nearly 95 tons of university-owned items. At $337 per ton, it would cost about $31,000 to dispose of those things at the local landfill.

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WSU Surplus Stores collected nearly 95 tons of university-owned items. At $337 per ton, it would cost about $31,000 to dispose of those things at the local landfill.

It’s true that serious shoppers—Washington State University college students, perhaps—could practically furnish entire apartments from the wares at the wonderland that is WSU Surplus Stores. At the very least, alumni could own a piece—or many pieces, new and used—of WSU history.

Upright pianos. Exercise equipment, from elliptical machines to punching bags. New coffee mugs promoting Cougar basketball. Also new: crimson T-shirts from the 2017 Holiday Bowl and football cleats, and metal filing cabinets are just a few of the items found at the wonderland that is WSU Surplus Stores.

WSU Surplus Stores is charged with proper handling and disposal of university property. State law governs the proper handling and disposal of university-owned items. At $137 per ton, it would cost about $13,000 to dispose of those things at the local landfill.

Monday through Thursday is for pick-up, sorting, and pricing. Those days are also reserved for shopping by WSU departments and state agencies as well as municipalities, school districts, and nonprofits. On Friday, the warehouse at 250 Dairy Road in Pullman opens to the public. “We see a lot of the same faces every week,” says Davison, noting WSU Surplus Stores sold 18,575 items during the last fiscal year. “There are quite a few regulars who get here right when we open at 10 a.m.”

John and Cathy Burris of Troy, Idaho, are frequent shoppers. Among the items they’ve purchased are filing cabinets to store his tools and her sewing patterns. “I can’t remember what we paid for them, but it was a good deal,” she says. “You just never know what you’re going to find.”

One of the strangest things former material resources manager Wayne Gash ever sold at a WSU Surplus Stores auction was a three-legged calf, he told WSU Week in 1999. Another unusual sell: a bottomless wooden boat. (The buyer turned it into a sandbox.)

Rushing and recycling are the heart of the operation, which traces its roots to 1946. That’s when Charles Byron “CB” Jones came to Pullman to manage Central Stores and Surplus Property. He spent most of his time acquiring US Army surplus, repurposing equipment, and becoming known as Mr. Fix-It. Jones managed the department until 1974. Sales were open to the public in the mid-1980s.

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WSU Surplus Stores collected nearly 95 tons of university-owned items. At $337 per ton, it would cost about $31,000 to dispose of those things at the local landfill.
In 1810, the first Christmas trees in America entered the market. The work has taken him to all 50 states and far beyond. Chastagner, who is finishing a 10-year study to determine regional adaptability of these species for use as Christmas trees, comments, “Within a couple of years, we had demonstrated that over 90 percent of the Douglas fir trees in Washington and Oregon were infected and that losses exceeded $7 million per year even though the premature loss of needles caused by this disease at the time of harvest only affected the marketability of a relatively small number of the infected trees.” Chastagner says, “His lab showed the presence of infection on trees whose marketability was not affected by a hidden impact; they dried faster and shed more needles when they were displayed post-harvest. His lab also showed that a single annual application of fungicide to new growth could mitigate the disease. ‘The treatment program we developed is still widely used today; not just here in the Pacific Northwest but elsewhere. Growers have basically been able to eliminate losses caused by this disease for almost 40 years now.’”

That research led to his next project: studying how much moisture trees could hold before harvest and found that cutting five or six trees per acre, controlled Swiss needle cast. His lab showed the presence of infection on trees whose marketability was not affected by a hidden impact; they dried faster and shed more needles when they were displayed post-harvest. His lab also showed that a single annual application of fungicide to new growth could mitigate the disease. ‘The treatment program we developed is still widely used today; not just here in the Pacific Northwest but elsewhere. Growers have basically been able to eliminate losses caused by this disease for almost 40 years now.’”

Dr. Gary Chastagner, a plant pathologist with the Washington State University Extension Center’s Ornamental Plant Pathology program, throughout his four decades of research, the plant pathologist has studied needle retention, cut-tree care, disease management, variety improvement, and more. The goal: longer-lasting and healthier Christmas trees. His latest work focuses on finding high-quality varieties with excellent needle retention and resistance to Phytophthora root rot, a fungal disease that limits where highly desirable species can grow in the United States.

The Pacific Northwest produces about a third of the country’s Christmas trees, including virtually all the noble fir. It has the potential to hold its needles and last for a long time post-harvest. But there’s limited, if any, Phytophthora root rot resistance within populations of noble and Fraser fir, another long-lasting variety that retains its needles well.

“We have identified several species of conifers, such as Nordmann and Turkish fir from areas around the Black Sea, which appear to be resistant to the Phytophthora in the Pacific Northwest,” says Chastagner, “who—along with researchers nationwide—is finishing a 10-year study to determine regional adaptability of these species for use as Christmas trees in America. The work has taken him to Turkey and the Republic of Georgia for seed collection.”

Chastagner, who recently won a lifetime Achievement Award from the National Christmas Tree Association, has been looking for alternative species since the late 1980s when he began working on Christmas trees the following year, examining Swiss needle cast on Douglas fir—which then made up some 90 percent of Christmas trees grown in the Pacific Northwest. Growers needed help managing the fungal disease, and the state legislature directed WSU to work on the problem.

“You can find recipes for these dishes and more at magazine.wsu.edu/extra/eat-it-too. If you want your tree to last 7 to 10 days, very much any evergreen will do. But if you want to put your tree up at Thanksgiving and have it last into the new year, you’re going to want a noble or Fraser fir, or Nordmann or Turkish fir. ‘In some of our trials, we’ve been able to maintain some of these high-quality trees for two to three months,’” Chastagner says. “But it depends on how both the retailer and the consumer take care of the tree.”

Wholesale growers tend to sell “very uniform” trees to retail lots. Choose-and-cut farms “cater to quirkiness or diversity or whatever it is a person is looking for.” Some trees, says Chastagner, “the perfect trees are Charlie Brown trees.”

Dr. Christmas Tree

BY ADRIANA JANOVICH

Oh, Christmas trees!

BY NORA TAYLOR

Spruce Tip Ice Cream

Douglas Fir Shortbread Cookies

DIY Douglas Fir Fettuccine Alfredo

Forest Friend Tea Recipe

Douglas Fir Tip Sorbet

Spice Tip Ice Cream

You can find recipes for these dishes and more at magazine.wsu.edu/extra/eat-it-too.
Strength in numbers

BY JASON KRUMP

How can we be connected?” Dickert asks. “When things go bad, they don’t point fingers. They stay together. It’s building a mindset for the hereafter. One of my biggest jobs is to make sure when things are hard, we keep pushing.”

Dickert knows there will be challenges ahead. Time is a precious commodity for him, especially early in the season. “Sometimes it’s hard that I spend more time with my players than I do with my kids in a season.” Dickert admits, “and that’s hard for me to say out loud.”

Dickert and his family take one stick out of the collection. “You pull a single one out, you can easily snap it,” Dickert says, as he breaks a stick.

“I don’t think anyone realizes what coaches’ families go through,” Dickert says, as he breaks a single stick. “When things get hard, you always got to give back to why you’re doing it.” Dickert says. He points to his desk. “When I’m sitting over there and maybe things aren’t going right, this is why I do it.”

Dickert says, as he points back to the picture. “Because I got a bunch of people at home who love me and support me.”

Hometown health

BY THE TIME Washington State University
Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine welcomed its inaugural class in 2017, Pullman Regional Hospital had been exploring a medical residency program for nearly two years. The motivation was both practical and sentimental.

“We’re located in WSU’s hometown,” says longtime hospital CEO Scott Adams. “That was a very compelling part of why we wanted to be affiliated.”

WSU and Pullman Regional Hospital are long and intricately linked. For nearly six decades, the community hospital was located on campus and housed student health services. Today, the two institutions partner on activities ranging from COVID-19 testing, research and innovation projects, to town-gown initiatives and more.

“It can’t be a better example of collaboration than the residency program. It really demonstrates not only the alignment of the two institutions’ missions and values; it also—most importantly—I think—demonstrates the alignment within the community for the community,” says James M. Record, interim dean of the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine.

The new program aims to be a win-win for the community, university, and hospital. A 2013 study published in American Family Physician found 56 percent of family medicine residents stay within 100 miles of where they graduated from residency. Soon, Adams says, “Eastern Washington and northern Idaho will have more potential for new physicians.”

“That’s a key mission of the medical school: training doctors to serve rural and vulnerable populations in Washington.”

“It’s a real opportunity to work on health issues and advanced care through community and alumni engagement, and innovative health solutions.”

The university has had impact at a real fundamental level in improving the quality of health care in the community because of its relationships,” Adams says. “When the university is involved, everyday levels of knowledge in the community go up. Quality of care in the community goes up. There’s a broader benefit.”

“Everybody heard it was going to be a challenge, and everybody thought it was going to be a challenge. But when we started this in 2014, we had it on track.”

The new program aimed to be a win-win for the community, university, and hospital.

In the mid-1940s, a group of concerned residents formed the Pullman Community Hospital Association, which incorporated and advocated for a hospital that would serve not only students but community members. Back then, the nearest community hospital was 15 miles away in Colfax.

The group leased the hospital building from the college and, within three years, built a new wing. The expanded Pullman Memorial Hospital was dedicated in 1951.

Twenty-five years later, the hospital district formed and soon took over hospital management. Around the same time, voters approved a $3.7 million bond to again expand the hospital, re-dedicated in 1982.

When Adams arrived in 1992, on-campus parking for the hospital remained a challenge. So was keeping up with technology. After two attempts, voters in 2001 approved an $8.2 million bond to build a 55,000-square-foot, 25-bed, off-campus hospital. The $28.5 million Pullman Regional Hospital opened in late 2004, just 1.3 miles from its campus location.

In 2018, WSU and the hospital formalized their partnership signing a memorandum of understanding in recognition of continuing their long-standing collaboration. The two institutions work on health and wellness support and education, clinical affiliation agreements and workforce training, human resources and employee recruitment and retention, advancement through community and alumni engagement, and innovative health solutions.

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Recruitment for the residency program takes place each fall. MatchWeek was announced mid-March. The first three residents arrive next summer, with more coming in the summers of both 2024 and 2025. Together, Adams says, “We’re training people to be the next generation of physicians, and we want them to be trained well and stay to serve our communities.”
Washington state has nearly 70 ag fairs*...

Washington state has nearly 70 ag fairs*... as listed by the Washington State Fairs Association

Syracuse, New York, hosted the country’s first state fair in 1841, featuring attractions that still draw crowds. Produce displays, livestock exhibitions, blue-ribbon pies, pumpkins, and ponies are exhibited alongside advancements in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math—from 3-D printing to robots and drones. Washington State University is connected to all fairs across the state that host these timeless experiences.

The delights of the fair bring together folks to celebrate community—and have some fun. At state, county, and local fairs, you could pilot a virtual airplane or ride a camel, marvel at a homemade quilt or giant squash, get lost in a hay-bale maze or admire piglets.

There’s nothing like the thrill of the midway—amusement rides, panoramic views from the Ferris wheel, carnival games and their vendors calling to potential players. Win an oversized stuffed animal for your sweetheart. Watch a child score a goldfish, swimming in a clear plastic bag.

Fairs in Washington state in 2019 attracted 3.3 million people, featured 68,000 exhibitors, garnered 136,000 hours from 5,600 volunteers, and offered an economic boost of $397 million in business revenue and $10 million in taxes.

Fair season runs March to October. From their agricultural roots and old-fashioned fun to showcases of modern creativity and innovation, Washington’s fairs serve up a slice of Americana and tradition. Here, we celebrate their timeless aesthetic.
Fisher scones debuted at the 1915 Western Washington Fair in Puyallup and remain a favorite at what’s now the Washington State Fair. Patrons still enjoy classics—hand-dipped ice cream, elephant ears, deep-fried candy bars, funnel cakes, curly fries, corn dogs, other foods served on a stick—along with Hawaiian-style poke and new-in-2022 Glow Tea served in a lightbulb-shaped to-go cup. Some years, fairgoers have even gotten to taste alligator burgers, lăng xáu sausages, and Manchurian scorpions.

TIME GOES FAST AT THE FAIR. But, oh, what a ride—not just the Classic Coaster, Extreme Scream, Giant Slide, or all the amusements in Thrillville and Sillyville—but all of it. The entertainment. The activities. The oh-so-many things to see and do since Washington’s fairs first started.

People have been “doing the Puyallup” since 1900. Yakima’s Central Washington State Fair originated in 1892, and the roots of the Spokane County Interstate Fair reach to 1886. In Walla Walla, the fair dates to 1888. The King County Fair in Enumclaw goes back even further—to 1867.

Early days featured vaudeville and high wire acts, fiddler contests, a three-ring circus, log rolling, water skiing, and something known as auto polo in which Ford Model T’s pushed a ball between them toward a goal. There were dances too. In the 1930s, Puyallup’s dance hall was a main attraction. Each dance cost five cents.

These days, entertainment includes concert-going with musicians and bands from a wide array of genres—country, rock, R&B. Washington fairs have brought in Bob Hope, Clint Black, Michael Bolton, Boyz II Men, Faith Hill, Wayne Newton, John Denver, Weird Al Yankovic, Wynonna Judd, Dolly Parton, the Doobie Brothers, Los Lobos, the Goo-Goo Dolls, the Beach Boys, Blake Shelton—too many to name.
Millions annually attend the fairs*

*3.3 million did so in 2019 (source: WSFA)

Fairs are—and historically have been—centers of commerce, entertainment, and education. Alongside artfully arranged Grange mosaics of apple, onions, potatoes, and other crops, Washington fairgoers have been able to see polar bears, tigers, and an exhibit on "bug-ology." There are awards for photography and scrapbooking as well as traditional home arts such as canning, quilting, and pie-making. Buy a prized pig, goat, or daisy or beef cow from a 4-H or FFA kid. Or, at least, watch the animals shown in the arena after months of caring and feeding. Check out the other deals too—on hot tubs, mattresses, cookware, even cars and RVs.

Some fairs, such as the Central Washington State Fair, dedicate entire buildings to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education, offering interactive games, displays, and lessons. The 1927 Pioneer Hall at Yakima’s State Fair Park features a 3-D printer along with straw rockets, a shadow wall, engineering challenges, and more.
From 4-H and Extension to alumni who work for fairs or serve on fair boards, **WSU CONNECTIONS** to fairs across the state reach far and wide. Greg Stewart (’71 Ag.) was hired in 1972 by the Central Washington Fair Association as assistant general manager and retired in 2019 as general manager and fair board president. In 2018, he was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Washington State Fair Association. He was also chairman of and honored by the International Association of Fairs & Expositions, receiving the organization’s Hall of Fame Award in 2010. Erin Gurtel (’97 Comm.) is the director of the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. Her predecessor, Rich Hartzell (’71 Ani. Sci.) retired in 2019 after 13 years on the job. He also sits on the Washington State Fairs Commission along with Stewart and—as of summer 2022—these Cougs: Tim Schneider (’83 Ag. Ed., ’90 MS Voc. Tech. Ed.), Paul Kuber (’01 PhD Ani. Sci.), Lori Williams (’03 Ag. Econ.), and Ron Crawford (’65 Ag. Ed., ’75 Ag. Ed.). In fact, at that time, six of the eight commissioners were Cougs.

Some fairs are recognizing all the sights and sounds can provide a sensory overload for people with autism and sensory-processing differences. The Spokane County Interstate Fair instituted **SENSORY DAY** for folks with sensory sensitivities. The special fair day features a touch-and-feel zone, critter-cuddle area, opportunity to meet a comfort dog, and chance to enjoy carnival rides without lights or sounds.

**“One of the things we strive to do is to stay relevant. To stay relevant, we’ve got to keep up with what’s going on. One of our key functions is to educate. We think fairs provide the largest outdoor classroom.”**

— WASHINGTON STATE FAIRS COMMISSIONER GREG STEWART ’71
Global agriculture is in many ways indebted to scientists who tinker with a nondescript little plant called mouse-ear cress or *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

“The weed,” as it’s affectionately known among researchers, grows along roadways or in the cracks of sidewalks where its small white flowers rise on stalks from a floret of rounded leaves. A part of the brassica family whose cousins include broccoli and cabbage, *Arabidopsis* is edible if you’re so inclined.

But the thing that makes *Arabidopsis* so important to scientists—such that it warranted a 2019 trip to the moon aboard China’s Chang’e-4 lander—is the plant’s extremely small genome of only 125 megabase pairs and five chromosomes. In 2000, that genome became the first in the plant kingdom to be completely sequenced.

Since then, *Arabidopsis* has become the world’s favorite model organism for studying plant biology, genetics, evolution, and much more. Its impact is so ubiquitous, in fact, that some call *Arabidopsis* the fruit fly of the plant world.

At Washington State University, *Arabidopsis* gives faculty and students in the Molecular Plant Sciences Program a vital platform to explore the fundamental life processes of valuable crops such as wheat, barley, potatoes, mint, and cannabis.

Through a wide range of interdisciplinary research efforts, these WSU scientists help sustain high-yield agricultural production while protecting regional crops from disease, insect pests, drought, and other effects of climate change.

John Browse, WSU Regents Professor of biochemistry and molecular plant science, has been an integral part of the program since 1988. He first began working with *Arabidopsis* in 1983 when the tiny plant was just gaining notice as a versatile and easy-to-use experimental organism.

“*Arabidopsis* research started as early as the 1940s but really took off in the scientific community around 1975–1980,” he says. “The plant is extremely small so is easy to grow in controlled environments. It also has a very short life cycle and will produce seeds in only six to eight weeks’ time. So, for impatient scientists, it lets us progress through our experiments much faster than if we were studying another plant like corn, which you’re lucky to get one crop per year from.”

Browse was recently inducted into the National Academy of Sciences for his pioneering work in the field of plant biology. Specifically, he studies plant cell membranes and the lipid molecules they are composed of. His primary focus is on oilseed crops such as soy, canola, and sunflower that are often used for food, biofuels, and other bioproducts.

In 1994, Browse made a historic discovery that transformed the international food industry. Using his favorite “pet” line of *Arabidopsis*, he identified a gene that would make it possible to eliminate heart-damaging trans fats from many cooking oils and fats.

Trans fats, once a mainstay of margarine, baked goods, fried food, and even microwave popcorn, were eventually banned by the US Food and Drug Administration in 2018, though a few processed foods and snacks still contain them.

“The problem with most vegetable oils is they have a lot of polyunsaturated fatty acids that easily oxidize in the air and produce the off-flavors you get when it goes rancid,” says Browse.

“In order to stop that process, the food industry resorted to using partially hydrogenated oils, which produce the trans fats that have been shown to cause heart health problems,” he says. “The gene we identified is the one that encodes the gateway enzyme to the synthesis of polyunsaturated fatty acids,” he says. “So it was possible to downregulate

The gene we identified is the one that encodes the gateway enzyme to the synthesis of polyunsaturated fatty acids,” he says. “So it was possible to downregulate
that gene and prevent the formation of polyunsaturates in the first place. Thus we no longer had to worry about rancidity or resorting to partially hydrogenated oils."

Today, Brouwer and his colleagues are investigating oiled crops as a renewable resource for the production of plastics, polymers, and fuels. "We’ve had long-term success in looking at the chemistry of oils through research in the School of Molecular Biosciences," she says. "That’s why we were so excited when we found an oil that could be converted into more sustainable versions of those things that are toxic to insects, aid in ripening, or make them good for food preservation or proteins that make plants taste good, or be poisonous, repel or attract equipment can analyze secondary organic compounds, those unique properties of unique compounds. Neff shares a story about his own work with Arabidopsis that could help safeguard Pacific Northwest agriculture in the face of advancing climate change.

"We were studying how certain proteins contribute to seedling growth in Arabidopsis and discovered you can express the mutant form of a gene and make seeds twice as big," he says. "So we transferred the same mutant form of the gene into an oiled crop called Canolina and it also resulted in larger seeds.

"This allowed researchers, Mycologist, a common mold-like fungus found in soil around the world, has spores that attack and kill Varroa mites. The spores are safe for bees, but fungal treatment a viable option.

Fungi have emerged as a potential alternative for a vast range of uses. In years past, modulators of pesticidal efficacy and bluestem. Now, mycelium—the mushroom-like tendrils under many fungi—are modern materials. They are degradable packaging, strong and fire-resistant building materials, and even hats and other clothes.

More than just delicious mushrooms, fungi have powerful abilities to break down plant waste, or even polyurethane and polyvinyl compounds. They can grow into strong materials at a tremendous rate, have medicinal properties, and keep ecosystems functioning.

Washington State University researchers have taken full advantage of fungi into applications ranging from medicine to biocontrol to habitat restoration. Stamets has also worked on projects that involve trying to use spores to fight viruses in bees. "They say that usually with our interventions the chance to develop resistance is minimal, but with the fungi, it's not," he says.

However, the fungal approach had not been explored much because M. ambrosiae couldn’t survive the high temperatures inside a beehive, around 95 degrees Fahrenheit.

"We needed to develop a fungus that could tolerate the heat. When he saw bees feeding on mushrooms, and knowing that bee health is critical for pollination, Stamets connected with Steve Sheppard, a professor in WSU’s Department of Entomology. Together, they developed a medicinal extract of mycelium that combats viruses in bees.

"The bees face a major crisis, though. Parasitic Varroa mites suck fluids from bees, weakening bees’ immune systems and making them vulnerable to viruses. "We say that usually with our interventions the bees will kill a colony in about two years," Sheppard says.

"Chemical pesticides have been used for many years to control the mites, but the parasites’ rapid life cycle enables them to develop resistance pretty quickly. Beekeepers in the United States now have very limited chemical treatments to control the mites. "There’s a feeling of being near the end of the road," Sheppard says.

"There’s a feeling of being near the end of the road," Sheppard says. To make matters worse, colony collapse disorder has accelerated around 2008, causing beekeepers to lose up to 50 percent of their hives. Although multiple factors cause bees in a colony to die, scientists found mites were deadlier than they used to be. They had formed a symbiosis with a virus that suppressed bees’ immune system. "Colony health went from bad to really dismal," Sheppard said. "It was difficult to keep bees alive.

"M. ambrosiae spores are already known to destroy mites, almost as well as chemical controls. The spores germinate on the exoskeletons of mites, drill in, and consume the mites. Parasite spores are immune to the spores.
Han and the team also screened for virulence against the mites, going through tens of thousands of *Metarhizium* strains to identify one that was thermal tolerant and deadly to mites. “The mite our experiments really showed was thermal tolerant and deadly and we aimed to use in actual product that can be put in the hands of beekeepers and used,” he says.

Eventually the team developed a strain of the fungus that could survive the heat and kill off most of the mites. Stamets, who contributed to the 2021 paper, was impressed by the WSU scientists’ success. “Some of her recent work looks at mycorrhizal fungi and their role in plant health, particularly for wine grapes in Washington state,” she says. “Mycorrhizal fungi thrive on plant roots, where they help sustain several different plants. "You could potentially reduce fertilizer use by cultivating certain types of mycorrhizal fungi in the soil," the notes. "If we can identify certain plant-fungi combinations that are beneficial in certain environmental conditions, we can perhaps identify some drought-tolerant fungi or locally adapted fungi that we could add back." Cheeke’s investigation extends to ecosystems beyond agriculture, including Palouse Prairie restoration. Soil fungi are “important in both natural and agro-ecosystems, in terms of helping to improve nutrient and water uptake,” Cheeke says. "They can provide protection against pathogens, drought, stress, all sorts of different things." Extending this concept, Cheeke examines which mycorrhizal fungi will be most beneficial to plants. She works with a group of symbiotic soil fungi called arbuscular mycorrhiza. "They’re thought to be one of the most ancient symbioses with plants on earth," Cheeke says. "There are fossils dating back at least 400 million years.

Not only do plants thrive because of the mycorrhizal relationship, carbon dioxide released by fungi — up to 5 billion tons a year — is sequestered and stored in the soil, along with carbon dioxide, decreasing climate change and reducing greenhouse gases.

Still, more research is needed to understand the full extent of the fungal role in soil and plant health. For example, Cheeke notes that under high-nutrient conditions, such as when fertilizer is added to soil, mycorrhizal fungi can become a carbon cost on the plant and take more than they return in nutrients.

It’s a complex system. Cheeke and her research team, including her collaborator, Extension assistant professor and viticulture expert Michelle Meyer, have even seen significant differences between merlot and Chardonnay grapevines in reactions to mycorrhizal treatments. A long-term goal is to find the right types and amounts of the fungi to support different plants.

Cheeke’s interest in its use for pests was piqued when she and a graduate student, Feather Dowski, were cleaning up waste to building sustainable, so they can be tilled and cultivated. Some of her recent work looks at mycorrhizal fungi and their role in plant health, particularly for wine grapes in Washington state. Mycorrhizal fungi thrive on plant roots, where they help sustain several different plants. "You could potentially reduce fertilizer use by cultivating certain types of mycorrhizal fungi in the soil," she notes. "If we can identify certain plant-fungi combinations that are beneficial in certain environmental conditions, we can perhaps identify some drought-tolerant fungi or locally adapted fungi that we could add back."

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Fungi not only build up plants; they’re extraordinarily effective at breaking down lignin. A rotting tree on a forest floor shows the effectiveness of fungi, such as white rot fungi, in breaking down wood. Even though that process takes quite a while, it offers a model to tap into one of the best ingredients for biofuel. Lignin forms the cell walls in plants and is the second most abundant carbon source on the planet, but it has tough molecular bonds. Chemists have attempted to efficiently make valuable products from lignin for a century without success.

Natural enzymes, like those in fungi, are much more benign than chemical methods that require high heat and consume more energy than they produce. However, fungal and bacterial enzymes degrade over time, and they’re too expensive for industrial use. Chen and Zhang’s team recognized the shortcomings of natural enzymes and used protein-like peptides as a scaffold to surround the enzyme. “The side chain of peptides can carry and enhance the fungal enzyme,” says Zhang. Chen, a senior research scientist at PNNL, and an affiliate professor in chemical engineering and chemistry at the University of Washington, brought his peptide expertise to the project. Peptides mimic the function of proteins and, in this case, self-assemble into nanoscale tubules to provide higher stability and more tunable and active surfaces than natural enzymes.

The novel stable enzyme outperforms natural enzymes. The new stable enzyme surpasses natural enzymes in breaking down lignin and making composites, according to the researchers. "We were able to boost the activity of lignin-degrading enzymes about 200-fold compared to the natural enzyme," says Chen. "We’re now able to degrade much more lignin at a much faster rate."

Chen and Zhang used their new enzyme to produce cellulose, a material that could be used to make paper, clothing, and textiles. Chen says the team is currently working on producing cellulose from lignin.

“Fungi are the forgotten kingdom on the planet,” Sheppard says. “They are a vastly underutilized, untapped resource. There is little reason not to tap this potential and try to make the world better.”
Doneen Arquines’s summer camp contains Quickfries, Wars, and last chances.

It comes with the territory of being executive producer of Top Chef, the Bravo network cooking show that debuted in March 2006 and is set for a twentieth season. Arquines started as a production assistant for the first season in San Francisco and has been on board ever since.

“Tom (Colicchio), our head judge, kind of calls it Top Chef Summer Camp because we come together once a year and do this crazy thing for a few months,” says Arquines (’05 Comm., Anthro.). “Then it’s over and we don’t see each other again until the next year.”

Arquines, who grew up in Marysville, north of Seattle, chose Washington State University to explore dual interests in television and anthropology. “The communication and anthropology programs were both where I wanted to be—they were high-level and respected,” recalls Arquines, who had never visited the Pullman campus before coming for freshman year.

The Murrow College of Communication gave Arquines plenty of opportunities to volunteer at Cable 8 and produce shows. “I was very lucky to have Neal Robison as my advisor before he retired,” Arquines says. “He was very supportive and so was (scholarly associate professor) Marvin Marcelo. Both of them were very much people I could go to and ask questions anytime I had them.”

When Marcelo asked Arquines during her senior year, “What do you want to do?” the answer was go to New York or Los Angeles. “He introduced me to some alumni who were down in LA and had already started to establish themselves,” Arquines says. “That really kind of helped me decide LA was going to be where I wanted to go.”

A couple of weeks after she moved, Arquines interviewed for production assistant job on Top Chef. Even though it was the first season for the program, the production company behind the show Magical Elves had an established record as the producers of Project Runway. The format does not require year-round shoots, so early on Arquines had time to work on other projects as she was establishing herself in the industry. These days, she works on Top Chef year-round. “I have really grown with the show,” she says. “Top Chef has kind of been my life, and I have been able to move up through the ranks on the show.”

Doing many jobs meant Arquines had a hand in setting up challenges for the show, scouting suitable locations for filming, and eventually booking guest judges. That variety gave Arquines insight into how all the pieces fit together. She routinely strikes a balance between introducing new elements without jettisoning the most popular ones. “You definitely want to keep the audience that has been with you all these years happy with things they are familiar with, but you also want to keep them entertained with things they haven’t seen before,” Arquines explains.

The city locations have functioned as characters on the shows. Destination cities such as Boston, Miami, and Chicago have provided backdrops for fan favorites to battle for the title of Top Chef.

“Cities naturally lend themselves to different creators we have never seen before,” Arquines says. “The US is so regionally diverse that we are able to get new dishes, new ideas,
new chefs, and everything into the show in an organic way.” That has been Arquines’s favorite part of the show. Everyone was involved,” Anton says. “And hospitality is what I know,” says Anton, who “grew up in a very, very Greek household.” All four of his grandparents immigrated from Greece. One grandfather was a dishwasher at the famed Historic Davenport Hotel in Spokane. The other opened a café in Otting. Anton’s father owned three restaurants in Payphoon.

“That was our life. That was our family. Everyone was involved,” Anton says. “And that is where my heart is. My heart is in small businesses, it’s a person opening a place and chasing a dream.”

Today, the WHA has about 6,000 members representing restaurants, lodging, events, and the entertainment venues statewide. It’s the bridge between the hospitality industry and government,” Anton says. “We want Washington’s restaurants and hotels to be the best places in the world to run a restaurant or hotel.”

Under his leadership, the association has advocated for and helped distribute more than $500 million in state and local grants for hospitality businesses affected by the pandemic. It has also distributed an additional $500 million in state and local tax relief. And it has delivered more than $10 million in value to members in each of the first two years of the pandemic—through webinars, consulting, legal and regulatory guidance, and more.

While dine-in was no longer an option, some establishments were able to pivot, switching to takeout or delivery business models. Still, Anton says, “We let (much of) our workforce go for the better part of eight months. That’s what makes us uniquely impacted by the pandemic.”

Today, he notes, “We’re still short [on] about 22,000 workers. And our vendors are short truck drivers. We have major challenges to address, but people are starting to feel optimistic.”

Since Anton took the helm in 2006, the WHA has tripled in size, merging trade organizations for state restaurant and lodging industries. It helped reestablish a state tourism department after a decade without one and helped shape more than 125 state laws, mandates, and regulations, including the state’s unemployment insurance system. WHA also worked on the privatization of liquor sales and was instrumental in creating the state’s family leave program.

“My job is never boring,” says Anton, who oversees about 50 people and emphasizes teamwork. “Anthony has an innate ability to find leaders and wonderful leaders,” says Phil Costello (’89, WHA chief operating officer. “He really values opinions that are different from his own and works to make sure diverse voices are included in decisions.”

The association recently invested $250,000 at Washington State University to establish an up-to-date industry financial health dashboard. Anton sits on the WSU Hospitality Business Management Advisory Board, Institute of Hotel Management and was inducted into WSU’s Hospitality Hall of Fame in March. He’s known for hiring WSU hospitality alumni to work for the association—more than 20 in all.

A few of the hospitality industry trends he predicts include the increased use of technology, such as QR codes and robots, for ordering, scheduling, and delivery, as well as continued emphasis on outdoor dining. “Outdoor dining is going to be more permanent,” Anton says. “It brings us out into the community, and it’s going to be a big part of who we are going forward.”

His latest pilot project spotlights Pullman. He’s working to create a city-state WSU partnership to test and study best practices around industry sustainability, then inform industry leaders and others nationwide. Its working title: “Pullman Saves the Planet.”

Anton typically visits Pullman for two weeks each year, often repeating to hospitality students some of the best advice he says he’s ever received in the industry: “Treat everyone like they’re the best guest ever.”

The Wright career

BY WENDA REED

“Failure is the best teacher in the world,” says Mark Wright (’89 Comm.), “if you make the right correction.”

Attacked in Washington State University by its bowling team and taking business classes because he thought it was what he should do to make money, Wright was “waking up.” “My professors advocated I go home and figure it out,” he remembers. “I came back and tried broadcasting. I was in Seattle and grew up on the family grocery store in Ferndale. He’s plans to join a mortgage lending firm in Seattle partly because, like broadcasting, it relies on who you know and who you can trust,” says Wright. “People come up to me all the time and say they’re on the move; I’m looking forward to helping them find a new home.”

The downtown Seattle Rotary Club, where he served as president from 2017 to 2018, is going to be a big part of his life
because of its emphasis on service, as will participate in the Community Development Round Table and local charities.

And the muddy boots? Wright gets those from helping his two older brothers run Wright Brothers Farm near Ferndale. It’s an extension of the organic vegetable farm run by Wright’s uncles in the 1970s on property settled by his great-grandparents in 1903. Neighbors called it the "hippie farm," and Wright and his brothers worked in the fields as kids. His mother still lives on the farm; his oldest brother left work as an attorney and CPA to run it full-time; and the middle brother, an aerospace manufacturer, designed the irrigation system and automated greenhouses.

No matter how many directions his mountains take, the farm is a place where he and his family—including wife Jamie, sons Brandon and Austin, and all their cousins—can stay grounded. ★

Mountain of a legacy

BY DEVIN ROKYTA

Mark Strother (’83 DVM) was a skilled mountaineer who had his sights set on summing the tallest peaks on the globe. He had recently graduated from Washington State University, married, and purchased a small animal practice in western Washington.

But, in 1986, on a fateful climb to Mount Robson, the highest point in the Canadian Rockies, Strother and his climbing partner’s tracks stopped just 100 feet from the summit.

Not long after his death, his family established the Dr. Mark Strother Endowed Scholarship to honor his legacy and to support veterinary students. Thirty-five years later, the fund is still helping Coos achieve their dreams.

From an early age, two things were clear about Strother: he had a deep love for animals, and there was no keeping him away from the mountains.

As a teenager, his friends and family remember, he would hike to a nearby veterinary clinic in his hometown of Yakima to volunteer. When he wasn’t at the clinic or school, his golden retriever, Sampson, was likely in tow. "It was amazing to watch them because Sam hung on every motion: Mark made,“ Strother’s friend Jim Lundblad says. "Mark truly loved that dog.”

Strother was a driven and committed student and had his heart set on becoming a veterinarian, but he also was determined to conquer the outdoors, mountain by mountain.

His passion for the outdoors was shared by his close friends, Steve Soos (’81 Math) and Lundblad. The trio spent nearly every weekend in the summers hiking, rock climbing, and summiting area peaks before Soos and Strother graduated high school in 1976 and headed to WSU.

Shortly after graduation, Strother married his wife, Susan (’79 Anim. Sci., ’92 MS Vet. Sci., ’83 DVM). After completing residencies in California, the couple returned to Washington, where they purchased a small animal clinic in Monroe.

Nancy Strother, Mark’s sister, remembers how dedicated her younger brother was to his clients and patients. "Mark had a real love for animals,” she says.

Early in the summer of 1986, he began making plans to climb the 12,972-foot Mount Robson and approached Soos about joining the expedition.

"It’s an impressive mountain, notorious for its weather,” Soos says. "There really isn’t any easy way up that mountain, and I told him I wasn’t in any shape to do it.”

Strother eventually found a climbing partner, Ken Nelson, an experienced 42-year-old mountaineer.

The day before he was to leave for Canada, Strother sat down for dinner with his wife and Lundblad, who had just flown in from New York City where he was attending medical school.

“My plan had been to surprise him and go on a couple of local climbs because I hadn’t been doing much climbing,” Lundblad says. “He asked me to join him on his climb of Mount Robson, but he was no way I was in any kind of condition to do that.”

The friends made an agreement to get together when Strother returned from his climb, but that gathering never happened, as Strother died on the mountain. The cause of the fall that ended his life was never determined. "It was pure congestion on my part, but as strong of climbers as they both were, it was some objective hazard they had no control over,” Soos says. "On that side of the mountain, if you got pulled down, it is a 60-degree slope. There is no chance for survival.”

Soon after Strother’s death, his family established the scholarship in his name. Reipients must show substantial compassion for people and their animals and have an interest in practicing small animal medicine.

It has been awarded to more than 30 third-year students, including James Schmidt (’21 Vet. Med., ‘24 DVM). Schmidt grew up in West Seattle and knew Strother from elementary school.

Schmidt says the scholarship reminds him of his mentor. "Mark had a real love for animals,” Schmidt says. "It was inspiring to look at.”

"He had such an impact on me and others,” Soos says. "If I could talk to him again, I would wish you were still here to enjoy the love of family, friendships, and the warmth of the autumn sun. We miss you. The memory of the life you lived has given strength and purpose to others.” ★★

Keys to success in roles no matter how brief

BY ADRIANA JANOVIC

Daniel J. Bernardo was an administrator at Washington State University for 14 years, first serving as dean of the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resources Sciences, then provost and executive vice president. Between the summers of 2015 and 2016, immediately following the death of President Ewan S. Floyd, he filled in as WSU’s top executive.

That yearlong stint inspired The Interim: A Guide to Transition Leadership in Higher Education. Drawing on his own experience as well as more than 30 interviews with other former or current interim administrators, Bernardo, (35 PhD, Ag. Econ.) addresses key tasks and moments—from developing a 30-day plan to the eventual handoff.

Interim leaders are thrust into positions for which they likely have little direct experience, often with little preparation, and sometimes at the most inopportune times," Bernardo writes in the introduction to The Interim (2022, WSU Press). In the book, he details five stages of interim leadership: positioning for success, leveraging the front end, executing a 30-day plan, and evolving leadership, practices, and systems. Strother eventually found a climb partner, Ken Nelson, an experienced 42-year-old mountaineer.
didn’t go to college. Some dreamed of being astronauts as young girls. Often, they were the only woman or one of few women in their work group or particular role. They offered insights into NASA’s—from day-to-day operations and workplace dynamics to personal interactions with famous astronauts, including John Glenn and Alan Shepard, and details such as NASA engineers keeping Playboys calendars on their desks and pictures of pin-up models inside large cabins in the 1970s.

Ross-Nazzal’s compilation of their struggles and dreams, careers and legacies is conversational, approachable, inspirational, and powerful—a perfect read for girls and young women interested in science, technology, engineering, and math, or whose career aspirations include working for NASA. Women who work or have worked in STEM career aspirations include working for NASA.

Women who work or have worked in STEM needs perfectly as the association embarks on the next era, calling out for advancement and CEO of the WSU Foundation, knew he had to find a leader who could take the association into its next chapter. Since 2014, Maki has worked for the foundation and alumni development at the University of Arizona in Tucson. With 23 years of higher education administration experience under his belt, he is well-positioned to lead the association into the future. Maki is diving right into the new role by traveling all over to visit campuses and meet with fantastic alumni bases. Volunteers especially drive WSUAA’s success, Maki says. "They give of their time, talent, and treasure, but they’re also helping other Cougs to find an affinity that they may have not had with the university.

No matter where she goes, though, Maki loves what she’s doing. "There’s really nowhere like WSU," she says. "It’s a dream for me to work with alumni at all of our campuses and help grow the Cougar family.”

Pioneering Death: The Violence of Boyhood in Turn-of-the-Century Oregon

Peter Boag

University of Washington Press 2022

His father slapped him, commanding him to tend to his chores. Instead, the 18-year-old marched into the farmhouse where he lived with his father, his siblings, and their mother. When he returned, he was admonished by his father for shirking farmwork and instructed “to go and cut some wood.” Loyd was arrested the next day for murdering his parents, John and Elizabeth, and Daniel McKercher, proprietor of the local gristmill, who “side’d in with father when we were quarrelling,” Loyd said in his deposition on November 26, 1895. Just before the shooting, McKercher and the Montgomery family patriarch, an impoverished farmer, had been engaged in conversation about the persisting economic depression, general scarcity, and mounting debt. Hops prices were down. Unemployment was increasing. Society was rapidly industrializing and urbanizing. The agrarian—and often romanticized—way of life was in crisis.

Boag’s scholarly exploration connects the Montgomery murders to their place and time—during a changing economy, as rural populations were decreasing and depression was setting in, a generation or two removed from Oregon pioneers’ westward expansion, in the aftermath of the so-called Indian wars and killing of missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman.

The more historian Peter Boag learned about the killing in west Linn County—and its place in the larger social and cultural contexts of nineteenth-century Willamette Valley—the more it disturbed him. The history professor and Columbia Chair in the History of the American West at Washington State University opens his latest book with a scene that the local newspaper described in 1895 as “wholesale butchery.” He uses the triple murder as a gripping entry into the landscape of western Oregon in the mid to late 1800s.

"Rural Oregon was a dangerous place for children," he writes, "outgrowing boyhood in particular was rife in that era with disease and accidental deaths—from drownings to hunting accidents and more. His well-researched work examines the perils, pitfalls, and paradoxes of Pacific Northwest pioneer history: the hidden childhood traumas of the American West, the inherent violence of Manifest Destiny, anxieties surrounding the chores and routines of daily farm life, bruttality of boyhood, and problems of manliness in mid to late nineteenth-century Oregon. This interesting analysis will make readers glad they didn’t grow up in those kind of times.

—Adriana Janovich


Rob Phillips ’78 Comm.

Latah Books: 2020

A father and son snug a black bear near Chinook Pass during their first hunt of the season and cross human remains—an ear among the animal’s stomach contents. Luke McCain, a Yakima-based Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife officer who also just happens to be a WSU alum, is called to the scene along with his trusty sidekick, Jack, a yellow Labrador retriever, leads McCain and a crew of sheriff’s deputies to what’s left of a Native woman’s body. A second body is uncovered a month and a half later. Soon after, another is found. Then, another. McCain is at the scene each time.

While a work of fiction, this timely and gripping narrative set largely in the wilds of Washington’s Cascade Mountains echoes recent real-life headlines publishing the epidemic of missing or murdered Indigenous women. Along with the murder mystery, the fast-paced plot features plenty of action and intrigue—a jailbreak, run-ins with poachers and wild animals, steak dinners with an attractive FBI special agent, and glimpses into the killer’s mind.

The Alumni Association News

COURTESY WSU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
WASHINGTON STATE MAGAZINE WINTER 2022
THE COUGSFIRST!

Podcast

Some of your favorite Cougs tell their stories to host Kelley Knutson (‘12 Bus.) on The CougsFirst! Podcast, launched in July by the CougsFirst! business network. Listen to WSU legends like “Thrown” Samaoy quarterback Jack Thompson (‘78 Bus.), leaders like WSU President Kirk Schulz, and entrepreneurs like Tony Poston (‘08 Poli. Sci., ‘11 Crim. Just.), as they share their insights and Coug tales. You can find the podcast at linktr.ee/cougsfirstpodcast.

Newmedia

Rob Phillips demonstrates his deep, first-hand knowledge of central Washington’s backcountry in this quick and engaging read. And his writing style is wholly approachable. He writes about what he know—from the Lower Naches and White Pass to Rimrock Lake and Cle Elum. In addition to lots of central Washington references, the avid outdoorsman includes plenty of jokes about the Oregon Ducks.

He’s racked up 30 years’ worth of newspaper column focusing on the great outdoors. Phillips has been writing the Northwest Sportman column for the Yakima Valley Bugle since 1991.

Readers who enjoy this page-turner are in luck: Phillips wrote two more Luke McCahn novels in 2021 and another in 2022. — Adriana Janovich

ClassNotes

Johnnette B. Cole, who launched her career as an activist and educator at Washington State University in 1964, received the ATHENA International Global Award.

The award—established in 1994 and presented by chambers of commerce, women’s organizations, and universities, recognizes leaders who have achieved professional excellence—work to improve quality of life for community members, and actively assist others, particularly women, in realizing their leadership potential.

Past recipients include the late US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

ATHENA International, founded in 1982, is a nonprofit dedicated to building a global pipeline of women leaders from the classroom to the boardroom.

In the spirit of an African proverb that says, ‘It does no harm to be grateful,’ I want to express my profound gratitude for receiving this prestigious ATHENA Global Leadership Award,” Cole said in a news release. “The very best way to demonstrate my gratitude is to continue out the kind of work the ATHENA Award stands for: to do work that is marked by excellence and creativity—to be of service to others, and to help women soar to the height of their potential.”

At WSU, Cole taught anthropology, helped found the Black studies program, and served as the program’s first director. She was named “Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year” in 1978.

In 1987 she became the first Black woman president of Spelman College, the country’s oldest college for Black women. She also served as president of Bennett College.

After retiring from academia, Cole directed the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. She was also the first Black chairperson on the board of United Way of America and has held leadership positions in numerous other boards and organizations.

She currently serves as chairperson and president of the National Council of Negro Women, dean of the Herndon Directors Institute, and member of the Dr. Maya Angelou Foundation.

By Adriana Janovich

WashingtOn STaTe MagAZine winter 2022
CLASSNOTES

JESSICA CLUTTER was among the first Peace Corps volunteers to return to overseas service since the agency’s unprecedented global evacuation at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clutter, a Spokane native, recently returned to Costa Rica, where she had been studying as a Washington State University student when the pandemic hit. “I really want to travel and improve my Spanish,” said Clutter, who was slated to work in Peace Corps’ youth-in-development sector, “I’m mostly looking forward to meeting people and learning about their lifestyle, billowing with a host family so I’ll be more involved in the culture and community.”

Clutter (21 Spanish) completed Peace Corps Prep at WSU. The program combines course work, hands-on experience, and leadership and intercultural skills with the aim of earning WSU’s Global Leadership Certificate and creating strong Peace Corps applicants.

After her service ends in fall 2024, she plans to pursue a master’s education and teach high school Spanish.

Peace Corps evacuated nearly 7,000 volunteers from more than 60 countries in March 2020. Current cohorts are made up of both new volunteers, like Clutter, and volunteers who were evacuated in 2020. All are engaging in pandemic response and recovery as well as work in Peace Corps’ six sectors: agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth in development.

By summer 2022, Peace Corps volunteers had returned to 19 countries, and the agency was recruiting volunteers to serve in 42 countries in all. More than 240,000 Americans have served in 142 countries worldwide since President John F. Kennedy established Peace Corps in 1961, including nearly 1,000 from Washington State University.

RURAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

40 million
Americans reside in pharmacy deserts

760,000
People have little access to health care in rural Washington

By ADRIANA JANOVICH

Thank you to an anonymous donor and STCU for funding our Rural Health Initiative, which will increase access to quality health care in rural communities across the state.

Learn how you can support rural health: bit.ly/WSU-RHI

WORLD RURAL HEALTH Day 2022

40 million
Americans reside in pharmacy deserts

760,000
People have little access to health care in rural Washington

2022-2023

40 Million

40 Million
IN memoriam


FACULTY AND STAFF


Spokane community and civil rights activist Sandy Williams died in a Puget Sound seaplane crash on September 5. Williams started The Black Lens in 2015 as editor and publisher. Williams also founded the Carl Maxey Center, which opened this year to promote economic development, education, and cultural enrichment in Spokane’s Black community.


PLEASE GIVE

TO YOU
Simply getting back …

When students and faculty return to Washington State University campuses after the summer, there is a simple joy in embarking on the new year, meeting friends and colleagues, and joining together in events that bring the university alive. This fall, in particular, has a special feeling as the COVID-19 pandemic eases and Cougs return to classrooms, labs, gyms, and dining halls.

“For the first time since 2019, we are starting fall classes without any restrictions on our campuses,” WSU President Kirk Schulz wrote to the university community at the beginning of the academic year. “It’s an exciting return to normalcy, and the beginning of a new chapter for WSU.”

Donor support is a catalyst for much of the success students have here.

— John Bussey
OLYMPIA, WA | 2022 GOLDWATER SCHOLAR

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF A DONATION TO
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY?

John Bussey knows how donor support can amplify the student experience.

Coming from a family of WSU grads, he knows and embraces WSU’s family culture. A high-achieving student, he received a generous scholarship package, a promise of access to undergraduate research opportunities, and opportunities to join student clubs and projects—all supported by WSU’s passionate donor base.

An outdoors enthusiast, John combined his personal passion for conservation with his studies in materials science to pursue solutions to make nuclear waste storage safer and more effective.

John was recently selected as a 2022 Barry M. Goldwater Scholar—a prestigious award given to just 417 students nationwide. His journey is just beginning. We are proud to see what John will achieve, and we are thankful for the 40,000+ donors who played a supporting role for students like him.

You can support more Cougs like John Bussey today: go.wsu.edu/give
WEB EXTRAS
Fair food and fair leaders; map of fairs; Christmas trees; vintage surplus; esports; bad fungus

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