



Snohomish County
Office of the Executive
Aaron Reardon
County Executive

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Contact: Brian Parry, Executive Office

Office: 425.388.3050

Cell: 425.508.4552

Email: Brian.Parry@co.snohomish.wa.us

Reardon to officially open 2007 Evergreen State Fair

Birkestol Family honored for 100 years of farming

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon will officially open the 2007 Evergreen State Fair on Thursday, August 23, at 2:00 p.m. Last year, nearly one million fairgoers passed through the Fair gates for 12 days of rodeos, auto races, carnival rides, concerts, lumberjack contests and more.

A highlight of the opening ceremony will with the presentation of this year's Snohomish County Centennial Farms Award honoring the Birkestol sisters for their family's 100 year commitment to farming their land.

Since 2000, the County and the League of Snohomish County Heritage Organization have formally recognized owners of farms that have been under one family's ownership and operated continuously for 100 years on opening day of the Evergreen State Fair.

“Family farms not only represent our local heritage but remain vital to our economy and our quality of life,” said Executive Reardon. “Just as they have for more than 100 years, our local farms are providing the healthy, local food our community needs.”

Norwegian immigrant Ole Birkestol came to Snohomish County in 1906 with his brother, Iver. Soon after their arrival, they purchased 145 acres on Norman Road, just outside of Stanwood. In 1922, Ole married Ingeborg Thorsen, also a Norwegian immigrant, who lived across the Stilligumish Valley. They had two daughters, Annabelle and Grace.

Ole and Iver dissolved their partnership in 1926 and the property was divided. Ole continued to harvest hay, keep Guernsey cows, and grow peas and oats for silage on his 75 acres. Sisters Annabelle and Grace remember growing up with chickens, pigs, horses and cows. When Ole died in 1936, Mrs. Birkestol ran the dairy. In the early 1940s, she built a modern 30-cow milking shed so she could be competitive and sell milk to the lucrative Seattle market.

The Guernsey cows no longer fill the barn and the peas gave way to corn silage, but the farm is still producing under the stewardship of Annabelle and Grace.

Snohomish County has expanded its agriculture exhibit at the Fair highlighting the importance of agriculture to the local economy and honoring the local farming heritage. In addition, fairgoers can get first-hand experience with local farms and farmers at many animal, crop and craft exhibits throughout the fair.

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