

Media Advisory – Oct. 20, 2009

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Focus on Farming Conference returns Nov. 5

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon will host the sixth annual Focus on Farming Conference on Thursday, Nov. 5, at the Tulalip Resort & Conference Center in Marysville, along with the first-ever Land Use and Policy Summit preceding it on Nov. 4.

Since 2004, Reardon has brought together regional farmers, growers and retailers for a day of learning, networking and enjoying farm-fresh local products prepared by gourmet chefs. This year, attendees will be enlightened by speakers including Cowboy Poet Baxter Black, author David Mas Masumoto and former Secretary of Agriculture for New Jersey Charles Kuperus.

Participants will gather insightful information on new techniques and innovations during a day full of workshop sessions designed to help every farm business succeed. There will also be a tradeshow with exhibitors, and on Wednesday, Nov. 4, participants can attend the first annual Land Use and Policy Summit, part of an ongoing series of summits designed to increase regional competitiveness.

“We’ve spent the past five years helping local farmers diversify their products so their business can remain economically viable,” Reardon said. “Farming is an industry with a bottom line, and we’re seeing increases in both acreage under production and products sold.”

This year’s conference, with the theme “Growing Together,” balances business-style sessions on marketing, environmental stewardship and future markets with new-product classes including wine-making, nursery development and bioproducts. Participants can choose from seven different tracks offering 28 workshop sessions.

Kuperus will offer the morning keynote address, discussing the ever-shrinking U.S. agricultural land base despite a continued growth in population, focusing on public policy geared toward farming.

Masumoto, a third-generation farmer and author of “Wisdom of the Last Farmer,” offers the lunch-time crowd his musings on family, farming, life and death and age-old wisdom that only a farmer can know.

Evening entertainment includes Black, a self-described poet who can shoe a horse, string a bob-wire fence and bang out a Bob Wills classic on his flat-top guitar. Since 1982, Black has been rhyming his way into the national spotlight, and now stands as the best selling cowboy poet in the world.

As always, the day is filled with a gourmet lunch prepared by local chefs with locally grown and raised food. The evening will be topped off with wine-and-cheese tasting featuring wineries and artisan cheese makers from Western Washington.

Go to www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/County_Services/Focus_on_Farming for more information.

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