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### **Potato Farmers Giving Back**

Spring is always a busy time for our region's potato farmers. However; in addition to all of the work they are planning to accomplish in their fields to prepare for this year's growing season, they have also been active in giving back to their communities. So far in 2016, potato farmers and their families have teamed up to benefit everything from cancer research to helping fight hunger.

During the annual Washington and Oregon Potato Conference attendees can sign up and attend a special luncheon to celebrate women involved in the industry. This year, along with the traditional luncheon, the group made a donation to the Ovarian Cancer Foundation. The Stahl Hutterian Colony of Stanfield, OR hosted nearly 50 attendees at the luncheon. In lieu of any payment for hosting the lunch the Stahl family asked that all proceeds from the program be donated to the Ovarian Cancer Foundation. A total of \$3,740 was donated to the organization on behalf of the family.

"It turned out to not only be a fun event for all those who attended but it also supported a very worthwhile cause," said Karen Walchli whose family farms near Hermiston, OR and is chair of the committee that oversees the luncheon for the [Washington Oregon Potato Conference](#). "I know that all who attended felt great knowing they were able to help contribute to the Ovarian Cancer Foundation. Those who attended also look forward to providing a charitable contribution for next year's event."

The giving didn't stop there and continued at the annual All Ag Day held in Olympia. Thanks to Washington's potato farmers, the event proved to once again be a great win for one local food bank. The [Washington State Potato Commission \(WSPC\)](#) invited all state legislators to visit their booth during the State's second annual Ag Day. Those State Senators and Representatives that did visit the WSPC booth were entered into a drawing to win 2,500 pounds of fresh potatoes for a food bank or charity of their choice.

Representative Steve Thranger from the 24th legislative district won the drawing. Representative Thranger elected to donate the potatoes to Coastal Harvest located in Hoquiam, WA. Coastal Harvest is a nonprofit organization that distributes food to some 50 agencies serving those in need across Southwestern Washington.

"Everything we do is free of charge to our partner agencies. We provide trucking, warehousing, cold storage and repack of bulk foods," said Tony Airhart Executive Director of Coast Harvest. "Potatoes are such a staple for the food banks. I don't have to tell you how versatile they are. People can use them with a variety of other foods. For us an added bonus to this donation is that we get to use it to fill in where it is needed, as opposed to much of our food that is allocated to specific food banks."

Lastly, in honor of Potato Lover's month the WSPC looked to partner with schools throughout the Puget Sound to give one classroom of a students a chance to win a cooking school experience using potatoes while also being able to give back to local shelters and children in need. In conjunction with Blue Ribbon Cooking in Seattle, classes entered a drawing that would allow one class to spend an afternoon hosted by Blue Ribbon, learning cooking skills and having fun in the kitchen. The students in the winning class will use potatoes during their class and have a friendly potato cook-off. All of the food the students

prepare will be donated to community organizations that help those in need. The winning class was Ms. Ventura's fifth grade class from Seattle, WA. They will be having their special day working with potatoes and providing meals to local charities on June 10, 2016.

Washington state is home to nearly 250 family potato farms that grow nearly 10 billion pounds of potatoes each year. Their fields and farms can be found throughout nearly every region of the state. Not only through these examples, but in many other everyday ways Washington's potato farmers and their families are giving back and serving the communities they call home.

*Established in 1956, the mission of the WSPC is to support an economically and environmentally sustainable Washington State potato industry by providing strong leadership and innovation and building partnerships to meet the demands of global consumers. For more information about the WSPC, Washington potatoes or other general inquiries please visit [www.potatoes.com](http://www.potatoes.com) or call 509.765.8845.*

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