

A Welcome Dose of Holiday Cheer

Beginning in 1845, the United State Congress officially made “the Tuesday next after the first Monday in the month of November” the day that Americans across the country would cast their ballots for federal-elected offices.



ANTHONY K. SMITH

OREGON STATE DIRECTOR NFIB

As a matter of convenience and frugality, most state and local elections are also held on this day. Practical reasons notwithstanding, the decision to decide our most contentious political battles right before the annual holiday season was a stroke of pure genius.

What better way to heal the divides of a heated political campaign season than a little holiday cheer?

Thanksgiving offers us an opportunity to reflect upon all that we have to be grateful for. We gather together with family and friends to make merriment, and following our over-

indulgences in delicious food and drink, we brave the crowds and begin the holiday shopping season, most notably, the massive sales promotions of Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday.

Last year, an estimated 95 million Americans went out dining and shopping on Small Business Saturday. Consumers spent \$16.2 billion at independent retailers and restaurants, up 14 percent from \$14.3 billion in 2014. If recent trends held last week, this number will likely be even greater once we see the final statistics.

Not to detract from the important economic impact of the sales, but these commercial “holidays” are much more than a boon to our economy. They provide us with an opportunity to refocus our priorities on what really matters in our communities; family, fellowship, and a spirit of giving – the perfect panacea for our Election Day pains.

Still, politics are by definition about wins and losses, so it’s okay to celebrate the victories and commiserate in the defeats, but at least here in Oregon, everyone should have

something to be excited about.

Democrats elected Gov. Kate Brown to serve another two years as the state’s top executive, just the second woman to be elected to the office in Oregon history. They also maintained their majorities in the Oregon House and Senate, and in a first for the state, the House Democratic caucus now is made up of a majority of women.

Republicans elected Dennis Richardson as Oregon’s next secretary of state, the first Republican to win a statewide race in 14 years. They also won a key state Senate seat in southern Oregon, not to mention the Republican victories at the national level – when President-elect Trump takes office on January 20, 2017, he will have a Republican House and Senate to work with.

It’s very easy to think of Election Day as the end – the end of the campaign season, the end of a presidency, and nearly the end of another year. However, our system of government, a democratic republic, in which the people are empowered to democratically elect their own representatives in government, works

best when citizens stay active and engaged in making sure those representatives are held accountable. Elections are only the beginning of the process. The real work is still ahead of us – and there is much to do.

But before we embark on that daunting journey forward, be sure to take a moment and enjoy this brief window of time that we call the holiday season, a season characterized by a spirit of giving in nearly every cultural tradition. Undoubtedly, we have earned a respite from all the political rhetoric and posturing and there will be plenty of time for that in the coming months and years.

Hopefully, those who we have elected to public service will do the same, and by the time the new congress is sworn in, the new president takes office, and the Oregon Legislative Assembly reconvenes, they will all be ready to get to work with a renewed optimism for the future of Oregon and for these United States of America.

Anthony K. Smith is Oregon state director for the National Federation of Independent Business.

Making Every Bite Count

By Beth Casper

Special to the Salem Business Journal

A restaurant is often very fast paced while cooks prepare dozens of meals, servers bring food and take it away, and patrons come

through the doors every few minutes to eat lunch or dinner.

In a busy environment of this kind of operation, a restaurant can overlook practices to save energy, reduce waste and buy local.

Not Bentley’s Grill.

This downtown Salem restaurant is committed to composting their leftovers; recycling even the hard items, such as Styrofoam and bottle caps; changing lighting to save energy;

and constantly evaluating their food sources to ensure the most local options are used.

It’s no wonder that Bentley’s Grill has been EarthWISE certified since 2008. EarthWISE staff helps businesses recycle, save energy, reduce waste and much more. To earn certification, a business meets criteria in six areas. Bentley’s Grill is one of more than 160 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.

Consider this partial list of items that are recycled or composted: straws, bottle caps, wine bottle corks, bread bag closures, meat and vegetable trimmings, wooden toothpicks, cocktail napkins and milk jugs.

“Plastic items of all kinds are collected and recycled correctly,” said Patrick Bertsch, General Manager. “Bottle caps and wine corks are collected and donated for art projects to various different organizations.”

By training staff to recognize compostable and recyclable items, Bentley’s Grill was able to reduce garbage significantly. The kitchen area has also reduced garbage by focusing on compost and recycling. Garbage bags are filled mainly with dirty plastic items, half-and-half containers that have a plastic coating on paper and all other non-sustainable products.

“Our staff are trained to compost everything possible, and are proud to be as waste-free as we are,” Bertsch said. “If it’s compostable, we do it. Food, napkins, paper towels, etcetera.”

Staff sets aside other plastics, such as straws, bread bag ties, and rolls from receipt paper, to deliver to Agri-Plas, Inc. or to the Marion

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Marion County's Master Recycler Course



Class Photo of the Fall 2016 Master Recycler Class

By Jolene Kelley

Everyone in my family has a reusable water bottle. My laptop bag is made from recycled seatbelts. I take reusable cups to my favorite coffee shops and reusable bags when grocery shopping. I love technology and use event tickets that can be scanned from my phone and I can't think of any bills I don't receive and pay electronically.

So you see, I thought I was doing pretty well when I signed up for Marion County's Master Recycler course. I realized how little I knew by the first class and knew I was in over my head when people were excited about visiting a worm farm. I didn't get it. What the heck does a worm farm have to do with recycling? I soon found out, but more about that later.

For anyone not familiar with Marion County's Master Recycler course, it is 30 hours of class time and field trips covering the importance of waste reduction and recycling. However, it's so much more! I've met people, instructors and students alike, who are passionate about protecting our environment and using green thinking to make a difference in our community.

Marina showed us how to turn trash into treasure with her creative reuse of soda cans to make fashionable clothing. From Chris I learned more about Habitat for Humanity's ReStore – a place to donate and purchase used goods for household projects. And from Keith I was inspired to start a Green Team at my workplace and work towards EarthWISE certification for not only the building I work in, but other county facilities.

Nancy showed us how she helped get her workplace EarthWISE certified. They even compost food items from the employee breakroom for a co-worker's worm farm. Remember, I said we'd get back to the worms.

It turns out that worm composting, or vermicomposting, creates a nutrient rich soil while helping to divert certain food waste from the waste stream. Worm composting can range from small home garden use to large industrial operations like the one our class visited. While I'm not sure I'm ready to start a worm farm, I am very willing to try a home composter as well as make better use of my yard debris bin.

My point is that I probably never would have known about worm composting – or that I can reduce household hazardous waste by using baking soda, vinegar, Castile soap, and hydrogen peroxide to clean my house, or that 20 percent of the county's garbage is made up of food waste, or that "biodegradable" and "compostable" are not interchangeable terms – had I not participated in the Master Recycler course.

I am also more cognizant of what I buy, its packaging, and how I can creatively reuse the things I already have. And while my family already recycles many items, we have yet to compost food. As the holidays approach, I'll be thinking of creative ways to wrap gifts using paper and items that can be reused or recycled and make gift choices for items that are really wanted and needed. Because most importantly, I've learned that being a Master Recycler is only a little bit about recycling – it's about reducing and reusing first.

I'm looking forward to seeing my classmates at Master Recycler events and other trainings to spread the news about waste reduction and recycling. If you're interested at all, I encourage you to find out more about the Master Recycler course. It is time well spent. For more information, contact Marion County Environmental Services at (503) 365-3191 or environmentalservices@co.marion.or.us. Tell them Jolene sent you.

Celebrate With Us At The 2017 SAIF Agribusiness Banquet

The rich and proud history is honored through special entertainment with a message. The banquet features the humor of Cara Ayers, inspiration, and business insight along with an appreciation for agricultural values. We will also recognize an outstanding Future Farmers of America student for leadership in shaping the future of the industry. This fun night honors a special part of Oregon's history and culture, while looking forward to its future.

Marion County Commissioner Kevin Cameron will keep the party going as Master of Ceremonies.



Cara Ayers



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