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Mission Non-Profit Spotlight: Olympia Beekeepers Association

By
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September just might be the sweetest time of the year because it's National Honey Month! In celebration of all things bee-related, Thurston County Media Mission Non-Profit's Andrea Capere interviews Laurie Pyne and Frank Scolaro from the Olympia Beekeepers Association to share the importance of the honey bee and how we can protect them.

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"The Olympia Beekeepers Association's mission is education, outreach and camaraderie amongst the members," says Frank, the OBA president, "so we try to education as much as we can. For outreach we have a lot of activities out in the community and then obviously with the membership we get together and talk a lot about bees."

Laurie adds that you don't have to be a beekeeper to belong the association. "Anyone with an interest or love of bees is also an ideal candidate to be a member," she says.

For Laurie, getting to educate the public about all the things bees do for us, including provide food through pollination, is one of the best parts of belonging to the OBA, other than talking about bees of course! Frank is fascinated by how organized a hive is and the way the bees work together.

The OBA has many projects that it does as part of their education and outreach. This includes classes in beginning beekeeping (those that complete the class receive an apprenticeship certificate), and hive projects. In 2016, they installed two honey bee hives at the Governor's mansion.

"We have also collaborated with the airport and used their green space for five hives out there," shares Frank. "Every year we harvest some of that honey and donate it to the airport for their staff auction, the proceeds of which they then donate to SafeSpace in Olympia for the domestic violence shelter."

Five years ago, they partnered with The Evergreen State College for their sustainability in prisons project. "It's an extraordinary program because they take different sustainability issues, whether it's growing plants for prairie restoration or developing cocoons for endangered butterflies, but it's hands-on experiences that contribute to the sustainability of the environment," explains Laurie. Evergreen first contacted OBA to do a beekeeping talk at Stafford Creek Prison. "We had 70 inmates attend a talk and they asked the most intelligent questions, really caring questions," she adds. The prison already had hives, and so OBA started teaching their Washington State Beekeepers Association apprentice certificate class.

Now they teach classes at three prisons. "When you nurture and care for something it changes you as a person," Laurie says, "and so the inmates that take the class get the privilege of helping with the hives on those corrections campuses and it's been remarkable to watch the changes."

The OBA is currently working on creating a pollinator's garden in the Port of Olympia. They are hoping to start planting early to mid-October. The plants will be locally sourced native species to best fit what the bees need.

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Part of the OBA education also includes sharing how we are damaging the honey bee population and why it's so important for our food production to help protect them. "Bees are mostly threatened by lack of habitat, lack of food and the treat of pesticides," explains Colleen Lynch, a member of OBA. "We plant all the same things on the farms and then we spray them and we are surprised when the bees are declining. We forget to leave flowers and wildflowers out for bees. We want everything perfectly mowed and all the same and it doesn't leave much for the wildlife."

To make your own backyard more hospitable, look for pollinator plants at your local garden centers. They are usually labeled, or you can ask the workers to help you out. These plants help not just honey bees, but all pollinator plants. Also make sure the plants have not been treated with pesticides that can harm pollinators.

Learn more about bees and the Olympia Beekeepers Association by watching the [full video](#), as well as this fun bee-hind the scenes video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnFF8pX7RQ4&feature=youtu.be>.



Bee-hind the Scenes with Olympia Beekeepers Association

Olympia Beekeepers planning a pollinator garden at the Port of Olympia.

To learn more about Mission Non-Profit, who connects monthly with local organizations and agencies that are making positive impacts in our communities, visit the Thurston Community Media YouTube channel, visit the TC Media website and follow them on Facebook and Twitter.

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