

Alberto Astuhuaman is part of the Small Farmers' Project, a farming collective launched by the non-profit Huerto de la Familia.

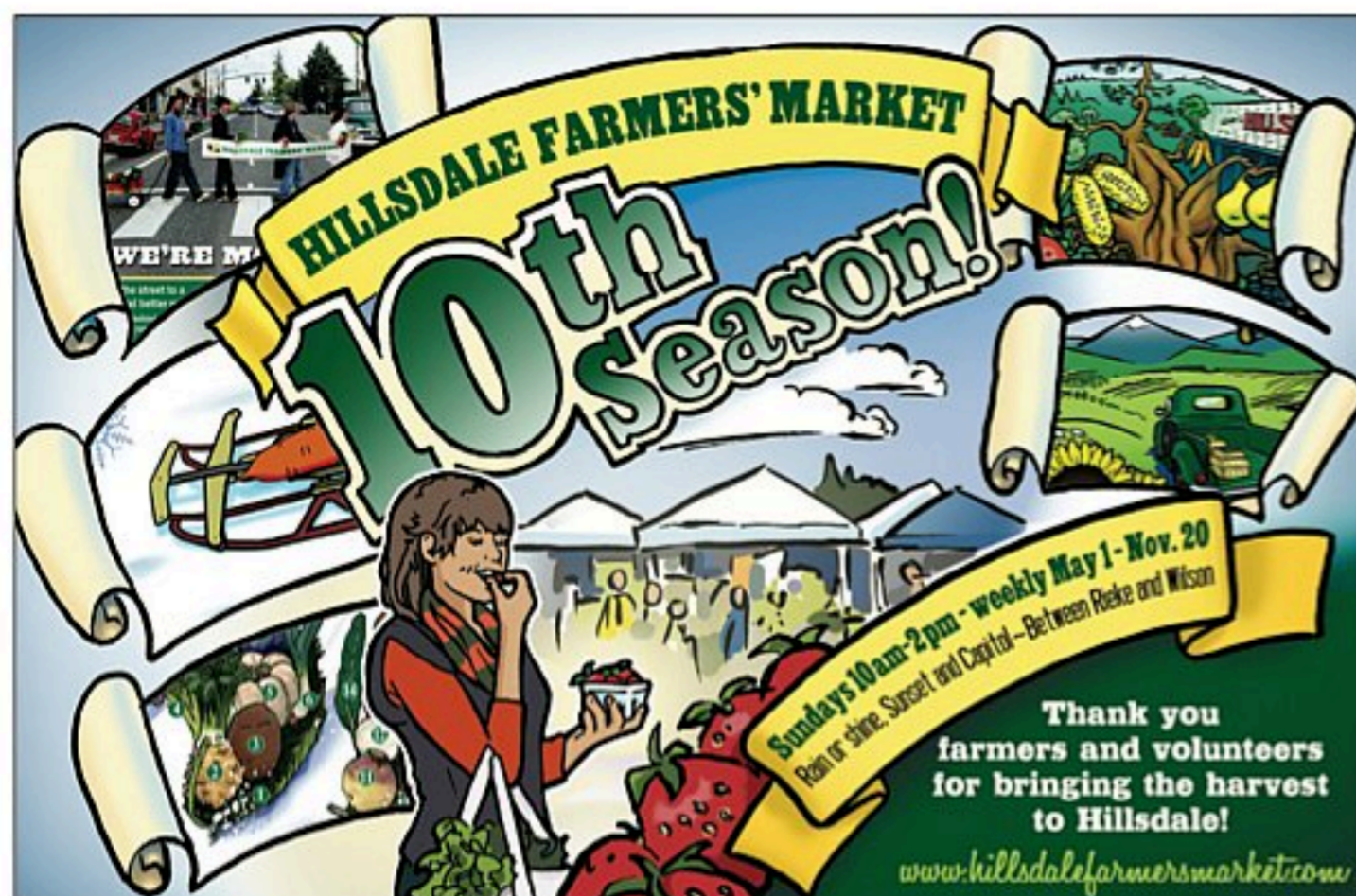
Though the farmers hold the reins, the Eugene community is chipping in to fund a whole host of infrastructure improvements. This season, the farmers are weeding the blackcap rows with their own tractor, thanks to a \$10,000 grant from The Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation and donations from Eugene's First United Methodist Church. And where to store the tractor? University of Oregon architecture students collaborated with the farmers to design and build a multi-purpose building where they'll house the vehicle, pack and cool the berries, and relocate their popular farm stand. And local filmmakers will feature the farmers in a documentary to be released this fall, to inspire other immigrant communities to help rebuild local agriculture.

The farmers also "pass on the gift." They donate produce to the local food bank, and contributed 1,200 strawberry, raspberry and tomato starts for a Food for Lane County plant sale. Palacios also grows vegetables for his Baptist church and encourages more members to garden. He's inspired by his parents, who fed hundreds of passing-by Guatemalan and El Salvadoran migrants, and let them glean watermelons from their Chiapas farm.

This season, the Small Farmers' Project has secured water rights and a lease on part of an eight-acre parcel just across from their current farm. It's still unclear what they'll plant. They hope to sell honey from the hives the Lane County Beekeepers Association donated for berry pollination. They've gained new mentors, such as established organic farmer Roberto Cruz of nearby Cinco Estrellas Farm in Junction City. Cruz himself came to Oregon from Oaxaca as a farmworker in the 1980s.

Even as they now work their own land, the Huerto farmers never forget where they've come from. "We farmworkers happen to be the owners, but it's farmworkers everywhere who are putting food on the table," Palacios says. "It doesn't matter whether it's cold, hot, raining. [Farmers are still] in the field working." *ep*

Laura McCandlish is a food writer and radio producer. She reports on Corvallis and Newport for KLCC, the NPR affiliate in Eugene, and hosts a monthly food show on KBOO 90.7 FM. She blogs at baltimoregon.com.



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