

Save money by not wasting food

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As the cost of groceries rises, a Corvallis nonprofit is raising awareness about food waste.

Part of a consumer awareness campaign, a video series from the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition's No Food Left Behind program says families could save up to \$1,600 a year by not wasting food.

The videos star Kjersten Hal-

lin, a local teacher and singer-songwriter who calls herself an "eco-edutainer." She follows food from farm to fork, helped along the way by students, illustrating the connection between food supplies, economics and the environment.

"The food chain itself represents the third largest contributor to global warming," said Jeanette Hardison, founder and director of No Food Left Behind

— Corvallis.

Summer is a great time for people to learn more about their relationships with food, Hardison said, pointing out the videos don't just highlight problems but also offer solutions that emphasize the value of food as well as the efforts and costs involved in producing and transporting it.

"Preventing wasted food gives us another opportunity for climate course correction. In this

case, the videos also help people realize they can save a bunch of money," she said. "We wanted to make it a local focus, and yet, this is an internationally urgent issue. We're just showing how you can do it right here, one meal at a time."

Hallin moved to Corvallis from the Midwest in 2014, finding the Willamette Valley to be a match

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for her values and passion for growing food in abundance. Prior to the pandemic she had a career touring with her music, playing libraries and festivals, which made Corvallis' centralized location another attraction to her.

With a degree in art education and fine arts, Hallin said she uses the subjects of art and music to teach a "deep connection to the earth." When substitute teaching in schools she kept a central focus on interacting with the natural world — the school of life, as she said.

The food waste prevention videos were initially going to be rhythmic, fun learning tool for school kids, but complications related to the pandemic prompted a change. Hallin said the videos' message was recrafted for wider accessibility and

to appeal to audiences of all ages.

"It's not just a classroom activity now," she said. "This is for anyone and everyone who eats."

Working at Gathering Together Farm for the past six years, she is directly involved in the food chain supply. Hallin grows her own food as well, and said the relationship with where food comes from and who produces it is essential, even if those people and places go unseen by most.

That message was driven home for her as wildfires turned Oregon skies orange the week production was originally slated to begin. It's not just about wasted food or greenhouse emissions, it's also about honoring and respecting each other and the planet. Wasting food disrespects the work and resources of everyone involved.

"One of the messages in these videos is when there's wildfires and pandemics,

food doesn't stop growing," Hallin said, adding that she herself kept working as ashes fell from above. "The people involved in food production are still going to work; people still need to eat."

The videos can be found on the website for No Food Left Behind — Corvallis at <https://nofoodleftbehindcorvallis.org/videos/>.

Featuring original music and lyrics by Hallin, the videos highlight Gathering Together Farm and food chain worker interviews, with Claymation and graphics (by Hallin's kids, Sage and Indigo deGaia) to flesh out the story. The three videos range from 12 to 17 minutes long. They're narrated, subtitled and close-captioned in both English and Spanish.

The videos add to the No Food Left Behind program's work, including the Smart Strategies resources such as the Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide. Ashley Terry Films produced the series with

funding from the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and donors, costing around \$29,000 overall, Hardison said.

It was no small task, drawing on an estimated 1,800 people-hours from start to finish and involving independent contractors, services providers, Sustainability Coalition staff and many volunteers.

"Preventing any waste in the first place — whether it's food, water, or energy — ensures there's more to go around while also slowing our individual and collective contributions to the climate crisis," said Annette Mills with the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition.

Cody Mann covers Benton County and the cities of Corvallis and Philomath. He can be contacted at 541-812-6113 or Cody.Mann@lee.net. Follow him on Twitter via @News_Mann.



A photo of production from the No Food Left Behind video series. Kjersten Hallin holds an umbrella while Ashley Terry works the camera. From left to right are 509J school district students Dulce Martinez, Mariana Gonzalez and Heidi Vega. Photo courtesy Jeanette Hardison



A screenshot from the No Food Left Behind video series featuring Kjersten Hallin. Image courtesy of Corvallis Sustainability Coalition



Kjersten Hallin is the star and creative force behind the No Food Left Behind video series. Photo courtesy of Kjersten Hallin

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