



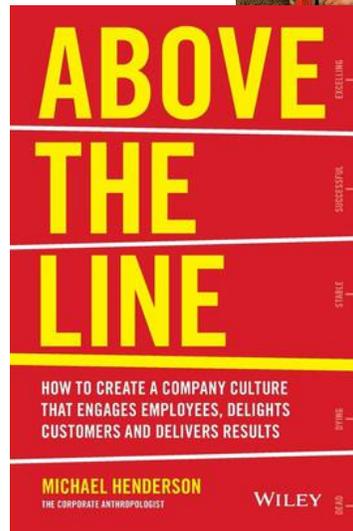
AgForestry

LEADERSHIP

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... and more!



THE DIRT

JANUARY 2024

FUNDRAISING BLOWS BY FIRST TARGET

The Board of Directors kicked off a fundraising drive early November to raise \$600,000 of new funding by June 30, 2024 with Phase One to raise \$350,000 by the end of 2023, and Phase Two was to raise \$250,000 by June 30. THANK YOU for raising \$475,439 to date! That leaves \$125,000 to raise—plus regular donor and supporter income. The fundraising ensures Class 44 graduates and completes the second year of Class 45 starting in the fall of 2024 with graduation in April 2025.

WITHERBEE APPOINTED FUND DEVELOPMENT CHAIR

Jennifer Witherbee, Community and Business Growth Director for Larson Gross, was appointed to chair the Fund Development Committee by the Board of Directors. The committee, created in the wake of the newly-adopted strategic plan, is responsible to create and execute long-term and short-term development plans for AgForestry and has been the primary driver of the current fundraising efforts.

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE KICKING OFF

A Curriculum Advisory Committee is being established to provide insights and recommendations on best practices in adult education and leadership development as well as guidance on goals and objectives. The Committee will work with program staff and make recommendations to the Board of Directors.

The committee will review evaluation data to assess effectiveness of the curriculum and provide advice and recommendations on potential improvements, adjustments, or enhancements to the curriculum. The Committee will also be asked to offer insights into emerging trends, innovative practices, and advancements in leadership development and gather diverse perspectives and ensure comprehensive insights into curriculum impact.

CLASS 45 WRAPS UP MODULE ONE

In Ellensburg, Class 45 wrapped up Module One: Personal Leadership marking a milestone in their AgForestry journey with inspiring energy and engagement.

“AgForestry has proven the value of intensive seminars, of simultaneously being challenged and supported, and that the work we put into the program pays dividends. Only being a few seminars in, I am already doing a better job of actualizing my intentions and finding my voice in contentious conversations. With 15 months of the program and a lifetime of developing connections with other alumni ahead, I am certain this experience will provide foundational skills and growth opportunities to help me support the working lands of Washington for years to come.”

~~ Paul D’Agnolo, Office of Farmland Preservation, Washington Conservation Commission



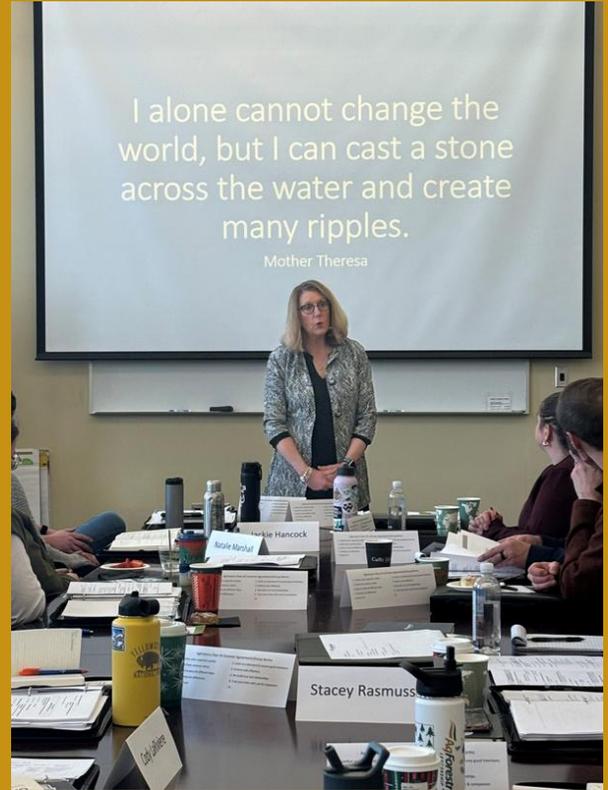
The Marshmallow Challenge is won by constructing the highest free-standing structure made of tape, spaghetti sticks, and string, with a marshmallow on the top! After the competition, participants learned they will work in the same group for the public policy projects. Pictured are: Stacey Rasmussen, Cody LaRiviere, Natalie Marshall, and Paul D’Agnolo.

“In just over two months, the AgForestry Leadership Program has changed my view on leadership and provided me with skills that I am already applying in the workplace. Our focus for the first three seminars has been on personal leadership, and we have been pushed to understand ourselves at a deeper level. This self-reflection provided our class with an awareness of what strengths we bring to our teams, and how important it is to have diverse working groups that bring in complimentary backgrounds and skills. I’m challenging myself to bring back what I’ve learned to my team at work so we can all benefit from my participation. Last week I led a shared values group activity at our annual all-staff meeting; something I never would have considered before joining AgForestry Leadership.”

~~ Jackie Hancock, Hydrogeologist, Washington State Department of Agriculture

AGFORESTRY PARTNERS WITH CWU

AgForestry and Central Washington University renewed their collaboration and beginning this year, CWU will host annual seminars and provide a team of faculty and conducive facilities. At this year's seminar, CWU faculty delivered a blend of theory and practical application. The Ellensburg seminar provided Class 45 the opportunity to learn from the contributors of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP). YBIP serves as an ideal case study in collaborative leadership and the panel discussion was focused on the leadership challenges and competencies required for ongoing success. Thanks to Darcy Batura (43) for assisting in the development and facilitation of the dynamic conversation.



In addition to CWU faculty, Class 45 hear from Vicki Christiansen (12), retired Chief of the US Forest Service.



Craig Gunsel, who founded the Walla Walla seminar, and Patrick Frierson, his successor. They have worked with 22 AgForestry classes.

CLASS 44 DELVES INTO CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND IMPACTS

Class 44 embarked on a thought-provoking journey to Walla Walla, delving deep into the criminal justice system. The experience led to valuable reflections, leaving participants with more questions than answers. As leaders, navigating through challenges often requires embracing complexity and allowing a bit of messiness. It's this willingness to explore the nuances that fosters meaningful change. Thanks to Whitman College for hosting the seminar and providing opportunities for the class to learn from both faculty and students.

CLASS 44 DELVES INTO CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND IMPACTS **(cont.)**

“The Walla Walla seminar has been the most overwhelming and emotional experience throughout my AgForestry journey. We were discussing and learning about the criminal system, punishment, immigration law - issues seemingly detached from our everyday lives, but these are human issues and affect all of us, individually and the whole society. I had to reevaluate how I look at punishment, crime, people involved, ethics of the corrections system, and how the system affects local and state economies. Listening to personal stories and experiences of our speakers had a huge impact on me, it made me very vulnerable and more appreciative of my life. I left the seminar with new perspective and lots of questions/thoughts.”

~~ *Wioletta Skotnicka-Kowalec, Director of Grower Relations, Ste. Michelle Wine Estates*

CLASS 44 DEPARTS ON INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

The goals of the international seminar are to gain perspective on the economic, environmental, social, and cultural importance of agriculture, forestry, and natural resources in another country; complexities of transporting Washington products; understand social issues and how they intersect with natural resources; and, compare/contrast US culture, history, political system, and natural resource management with other countries.

Class 44 left for Panama and Costa Rica on January 18 and returns February 1. The class will be immersed in foreign culture, experience natural resources, interact directly with industry and community, understand future trends and emerging issues, explore natural resource policy issues and, equally important, step out of their comfort zone and learn how you respond to prolonged stress while experiencing a new culture, long travel days, potential physical discomfort, tight quarters, and emotional topics.

In Panama, the Panama Canal will be the focal point as the class explores the economic, environmental, and social impacts of the canal locally and globally, especially as it impacts Washington state. Guided tours, the visitor center, and sharing lunch with water resource managers from the Panama Canal Authority will provide firsthand insights.

CLASS 44 DEPARTS ON INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR (cont.)

Costa Rica, known for its commitment to environmentalism, offers a unique opportunity for comparative analysis of natural resource policies and social issues. The seminar has been designed with intention to provide an immersive experience, from hotels and restaurants, technical and cultural visits, as well as seminar guides. Visits include the US Embassy in both Panama and Costa Rica, Poas Volcano National Park, Manuel Antonio National Park, Monteverde Cloud Forest Bio Reserve, CATIE University and EARTH University. Activities include a traditional pig harvest, chocolate-making, winetasting at Costa Rica's first commercial winery, and harvest of tropical fruits. The class will have the opportunity to engage with leaders and community members in both countries. This cross-cultural immersion will deepen understanding of global natural resource challenges that contribute to shaping balanced policies in Washington state and beyond.

CURRICULUM REVAMP AND CLASS 46 TIMELINE

AgForestry successfully secured a three-year, \$250,000 grant from the Washington State Department of Agriculture to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program. Over the past year, staff collaborated with Dr. Laura Greenhaw of the University of Florida to undertake an in-depth assessment: engaging industry stakeholders from across Washington and educational leadership specialists nationwide.

While this evaluation process unfolded, current classes continued – Class 44 (second year) and Class 45 (first year). Class 44 is on track to graduate in April with Class 45 set to follow suit in April 2025.

The Board of Directors will review Dr. Greenhaw's recommendations this spring. Subsequently, the Board will collaborate with staff over the summer to develop changes to the program curriculum for future classes. These adjustments are intended to address the current requirements of today's leaders and professionals. Additionally, the Board and staff are exploring the possibility of shortening the program's duration to ensure ongoing relevance in our rapidly changing environment, all while consistently producing new leaders in natural resources each year.

Given the comprehensive curriculum review and the potential change to the program's cadence, the application timeline for Class 46 is shifting. This decision is based on the Board's deep commitment to uphold our standard of quality programming, ensuring ample time for staff to dedicate to implement program changes in addition to aligning program costs with the budget. The application window for Class 46 will open in early 2025.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR 2024 AND 2025:

- **January/February 2024:** Class 44 travels to Costa Rica and Panama for their international seminar.
- **April 2024:** Class 44 graduates on April 12, 2024, in Everett.
- **May 2024:** Class 45 completes the first year.
- **September 2024:** Class 45 begins the second year.
- **January/February 2025:** Class 45 international seminar.
- **Early 2025:** Class 46 applications open.
- **April 2025:** Class 45 graduates.
- **Early Fall 2025:** Class 46 begins.

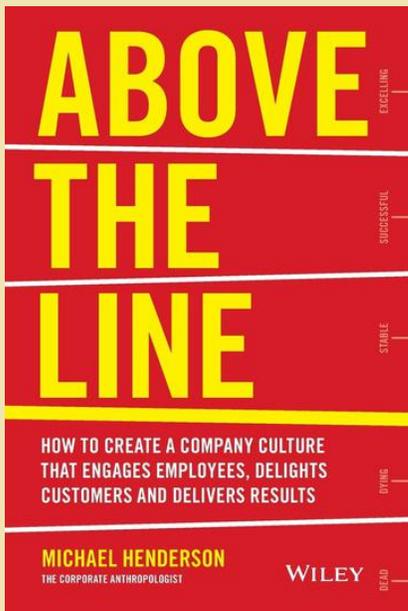


*Recommended by:
Tammy Edmonds, Class 44*

BOOK REVIEW

Above the Line by Michael Henderson

Culture underscores every human endeavor in the workplace. If culture is ignored, it will happen to an organization regardless but if deliberate; a purposeful culture can be created. Above The Line is written to bring understanding to all the concentric circles that culture is. Culture, simply put, is dynamic--not static--and belongs to the people. Leaders in organizations that seek to control people put a strangle on employees, stifle creativity and contribution. This book brings to light the high value of culture in every organization and how living above or below the line can be the difference between success and failure. I felt the book was useful because it helped me recognize behaviors in myself and others that could be improved and also helped gauge where our organization currently is and how we can get better.



Upcoming Events

Networking Reception

When: *Thursday, February 8, 2024: 6 – 7:30 pm*

Where: **Abigail Stuart House**, 1002 Washington St SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Who: *Class 45, alumni, friends and prospects*

How: *Thank you Washington Forest Protection Association for sponsoring!*

Register here.

Save the Date

When: *Friday, April 12, 2024*

What: *Class 44 Graduation*

Where: *Everett, WA*

Who: *All alumni and stakeholders!*

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

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Mission

We cultivate leaders in agriculture, forestry, and natural resources who communicate, collaborate, inspire, and serve.

Vision

To positively impact and enrich lives and communities in Washington State to meet challenges faced by agriculture, forestry, and natural resources.

Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation

2702 W Sunset Blvd., Suite B

Spokane, WA 99224

www.agforestry.org

(509) 926-9113