

# Lewis County Farm Forestry Association honors service to land and community at 64th annual awards banquet



*Judy Guenther and Dennis Larson pose for a photo with their awards during the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association awards banquet in Chehalis on Tuesday, Nov. 14.*

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Denny Larson, a woodworker from Winlock, doesn't need Dr. Seuss's Lorax as an interpreter.

"I believe the tree talks to me. I believe wood talks to me," Larson said.

In countless hours of volunteer labor over the last three years, Larson has cut slices from a 300-year-old Douglas fir in order to provide a new educational tool to every high school in Lewis County. The project was brought to Larson by Bob Guenther, founding member of the Pinchot Partners, a collaborative of Gifford Pinchot National Forest stakeholders.

For the project, on Tuesday night in the Veterans Memorial Museum the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association honored Guenther and Larson with the “Community Service Award.”

Judy Guenther accepted the award on her husband’s behalf, recalling her upbringing with her father, a logger, who encouraged her to count the rings in trees more than 100 years old, saying, “That was a learning experience for me.”

Larson and Bob Guenther’s “Tree Ring Timeline Project” is a visual aid for tree biology and history. In each slice of the tree, its rings behold the years 1720 to 2020. Larson also has an accompanying sheet that lists the years of significant events, such as the Declaration of Independence and the birth of Abraham Lincoln.

Larson said his favorite lesson from the tree was what happened in 1775: The flush toilet was patented.

Chuck Higgins, an association board member, presented the duo with their award. Higgins, who referred to the Douglas fir discs as “tree cookies,” noted each was mounted on a “beautiful” stand with wheels to allow easy transport between high school classrooms.

Tuesday was the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association’s 64th annual awards banquet.

For their work to educate landowners and tree farmers, along with good land stewardship, the association then granted the “Distinguished Service” award to Donna and Bryon Loucks, of Chehalis.

The duo owned a tree farm on Brockway Road for decades, where they engaged in wildlife and habitat restoration, sustainable harvest practices and education for other tree farmers on both topics, Higgins said.

The couple was also thanked for their go-getter attitude toward efforts and events on the state and county levels of the Farm Forestry Association.

“If we were a legislative body, (Donna Loucks) would probably have some title like, ‘Majority Whip,’” Higgins said. “She’s the make-it-happen, get-it-done kingpin here.”

The awards banquet also honored Merc and Nina Boyer, who were granted the 2023 Lewis County Tree Farm of the Year award on their Randle-area property in February.

The 2023 Forest Management award was given top Russ Armitage, a board member on the county association.

Elaine Oneil, executive director of the Washington Farm Forestry Association, presented on hope for the future as Tuesday night’s keynote speaker.

Debate over forestry practices and other environmental policies over the last decades has led to division and over-simplification of issues, Oneil said. She encouraged the tree farmers in the

room to share their positive stories and “put a face on what it is that you do” to educate members of the public who are unfamiliar with forest management.

“Young people are so tired of hearing ‘The world is going to heck,’” Oneil said. “They want to know that there are some positive things out there.”

Read past reporting on the Tree Ring Timeline Project at <https://bit.ly/300YearDougFir> or learn more about the 2023 Lewis County Tree Farm of the Year award at <https://bit.ly/KionaFarmAward>.



*A photo of Bob Guenther alongside Congresswoman Marie Gluesenkamp Perez is displayed during the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association awards banquet in Chehalis on Tuesday, Nov. 14.*





*Russ Armitage poses for a photo with a plaque made from Cedar for the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association awards banquet in Chehalis on Tuesday, Nov. 14.*



*Bryon, center, and Donna Loucks, far right, are presented the Distinguished Service Award by Ann Stinson, President of Washington Farm Forestry Association, during the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association awards banquet in Chehalis on Tuesday, Nov. 14.*



President Rick Kuykendall smiles during the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association awards banquet in Chehalis on Tuesday, Nov. 14.



Raffle items sit on display during the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association awards banquet in Chehalis on Tuesday, Nov. 14.