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Community farm organizer, pregnant inmates program honored

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Washington County Health and Human Services issues its annual awards

By **WENDY GORDON**
 READER CONTRIBUTOR

As part of National Public Health Week (April 2-8), the Washington County Department of Health and Human Services is recognizing an individual and an organization that have made significant contributions to the public's health and well-being.

Award recipients will be honored at the 10th annual Public Health Recognition Awards ceremony and reception at 9:30 a.m. Thursday in the Charles D. Cameron Public Services Building auditorium, 155 N. First Ave., Hillsboro. The public is invited.

Paul Hudak is being honored as the developer and director of Terra Nova Community Farm in Beaverton, a project he initiated in 2008.

A teacher at Terra Nova High School, Hudak worked to convert an unused baseball field at the school into a productive student farm. Since that time, the farm has become an official Community Supported Agriculture program, where people invest in the farm at the beginning of the season and



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Paul Hudak, who started the community farm at Terra Nova High School in Cedar Mill, will be honored this week by the Washington County Department of Health and Human Services. The Beaverton School District plans to shut the high school at the end of the school year because of declining enrollment and failure to meet its goals. The farm will continue to provide produce to area schools and others.

receive a share of farm-fresh produce throughout the growing season.

Under Hudak's leadership, the students who operate the farm have learned about healthy sustainable agriculture, made it possible for the community to have better access to fresh fruits and vegetables and have grown to understand the importance of community and knowing where their food comes from.

For the first time in the award's history, the organi-

zation being honored is a collaboration between two groups. Coffee Creek Correctional Facility and Community Action Early Head Start have developed ways to improve the health of pregnant inmates during incarceration. Examples include prenatal and postpartum support groups and classes as well as a breastfeeding program that allows women to pump and store breast milk for their newborns.

Now any inmate who wishes to pump breast milk

for her newborn can do so. The mothers can also enroll in the Early Head Start program at the Wilsonville facility and breastfeed their infants several times a week when they are together in the program. The nutritional and psychological benefits for both mothers and infants are significant.

According to Kathleen O'Leary, Public Health Division manager for Washington County, "Our vision, 'healthy people, thriving communities,' can only be realized through effective partnerships and shared work. These recipients are shining examples of how to focus on prevention and good nutrition to build lifelong good health."

Following the awards ceremony, Washington County will host a Public Health Career Day. Students from area high schools have been invited to attend the half-day event, which offers them the opportunity to participate in a series of short, interactive sessions with various public health professionals.

Information about National Public Health Week can be found at www.nphw.org.

Wendy Gordon is communications coordinator for the Washington County Health & Human Services Department.