

INTRODUCING TILTH ALLIANCE: WHERE GOOD FOOD GROWS

Andrea Platt Dwyer, Executive Director

As part of a recent panel hosted by the Museum of History and Industry about the food culture of the Pacific Northwest, Tilth movement co-founder Mark Musick spoke on behalf of the producers who are at the heart of our food system. One could not help but be struck with the thought that Tilth's early vision to alter the future of agricultural production is attainable. To paraphrase the 1982 Tilth publication, *The Future is Abundant*, we're moving ever closer to an agricultural paradigm that unites farming and forestry, producers and consumers, rich and poor, rural and urban.



Since those early days, our movement's message has resonated far and wide, as demand for sustainably grown and harvested products has grown, driven largely by the changing needs and desires of both producers and eaters. Concurrently, as an organization supporting this movement, we have also had to evolve to stay relevant and effective.

For example, in the 1980s, Tilth's annual Harvest Fair provided farmers with a unique way to sell directly to Seattle's large consumer base in a festive atmosphere where the hard work of farming was recognized and celebrated. Over the years, as farmers markets became common in communities across the state, fewer farmers had to rely on this annual event to reach consumers. In effect, the Harvest Fair worked itself out of a job. Today, in addition to farmers markets, Washington's producers and eaters are able to connect in a variety of ways, including CSAs, food and wine festivals, farm to table dinners, local grocery stores, and school cafeterias.

The leadership of the three pre-merger organizations observed the changing demographics and economics of our producer communities and believed we would be stronger and more effective if we joined forces. Following this successful merger, we have spent the last twelve months strengthening our internal infrastructure by improving our technology, financial systems, human resource practices and addressing a host of other business needs. We also tackled the critical task of choosing a new name for the organization. Welcome to *Tilth Alliance*!

During 2016, the board and staff of Tilth Alliance also learned more about your needs as producers. We remain

tilth producers quarterly



Our mission is to build an ecologically sound, economically viable and socially equitable food system.

Tilth Alliance
4649 Sunnyside Ave N, Suite 100
Seattle WA 98103
(206) 633-0451 ext.128
info@tilthalliance.org

Board of Directors

Email *firstname.lastname@tilthallianceboard.org*

Cornelius Adewale, Treasurer	Warren Neth
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Senior Staff

Email *firstnamelastname@tilthalliance.org*

Andrea Platt Dwyer
Executive Director

JeeSook Kutz
Sr. Director, Finance and Administration

Leesa Schandel
Sr. Director, Advancement

Tilth Producers Quarterly

Liza Burke
Journal Co-Editor &
Communications Director
(206) 633-0451 ext. 103

Sarah Stoner
Journal Designer
(206) 949-9215
TPQeditor@tilthalliance.org

Sarah Collier
Journal Co-Editor & Farm
Program Education Manager
(206) 633-0451 ext. 126

Sheryl Wiser
Journal Ad Sales & Inquiries
Manager of Business Partnerships
(206) 633-0451 ext. 134

Tilth Producers Quarterly is a publication of Tilth Alliance, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Submission deadlines: March 1, June 1, September 1, December 1.

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committed to developing programs that build upon past successes while exploring new ways to serve you better. We've held four listening sessions attended by nearly 200 people, put in place a new farm services team (see page 3) begun the process of assembling a farm program advisory group, continued publishing *Tilth Producers Quarterly*, and begun planning for the 2017 Tilth Conference in Vancouver, WA.

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Additionally, we are recruiting a new team of regional representatives who will help us understand the needs of different regions across the state. The purpose of this network is to ensure that our programs are responsive to the unique needs of each region. Equally important is securing your trust and confidence in Tilth Alliance, so we will periodically request input on your most pressing issues, and will check in regularly through a producer e-newsletter and other Tilth

Alliance communications.

To continue the growth and expansion of a sustainable food culture, we must build a stronger movement. Realizing the full potential of Tilth Alliance will take both time and financial resources from all of us who share these goals and values. With your input and support I foresee a day, decades from now, when one of today's farm interns will sit on a stage with her food community peers to talk about early 21st century activities that helped advance a thriving, sustainable and equitable food system.
