LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

From the moment you picked up this publication to the time you sat down to read it you have passed someone who has lost a loved one, has achieved a fitness goal, who balances a mental disorder, has aced a final and who is advocating for a cause.

It’s easy to become engrossed in your own story and not realize the thousands of stories similar to your own. We all each achieve, suffer, balance. Whether for humanity, animals, the Earth or ourselves, everyone is forging a path that has and will encounter barriers.

One of my most memorable barriers was when I was 13 and my GPA was dwindling at 1.4. My teachers rallied together to put me into drug and alcohol counseling. My parents reminded me of college. At the time, I was not on track to reach any of my academic goals. This left me with two options: accept my situation and continue with it, or accept my situation and surpass it.

Within one quarter my GPA shot up to 3.4 and I was enrolling in honors classes.

This isn’t to say every limit should be surpassed. To see a limit as a barricade or safety is entirely in the eye of the beholder. A limit is an acknowledgment of a line that you cannot pass or you must break; a step in a certain direction to achieve the ending you’re searching for.

CARINA LINDER JIMENEZ
Editor-in-Chief, Klipsun Magazine
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A FEUD IN THE FIELD

Sakuma Bros. Farms and the future of migrant workers

MORE THAN 2,500 MILES FROM WHERE

he was born, Ramon Torres sits alongside his co-workers in Skagit Superior Court. The workers wait to testify against their employer, Sakuma Bros. Farms. They sit silently waiting for their turn to speak, some holding children in their arms. A toddler’s small plaid shoes dangle off the end of a bench; his sleeping body is sprawled on the wood surface. These are the families of Familias Unidas por la Justicia.

Torres is the president of Familias, a labor committee made up of 468 migrant farmworkers. During summer months, the workers harvest berries at Sakuma Bros. Farms in Burlington. Familias was created when more than 200 workers went on strike in July 2013.

Torres stands taller than most and is broad-shouldered. Beneath his T-shirt sleeves black-ink tattoos emerge. A soft-spoken 29-year-old, he was elected by his co-workers to be the group’s spokesperson. He is now the face of an $850,000 labor settlement between Sakuma Bros. Farms and Familias.

Although the story of Familias and Sakuma has made big headlines this past year, it represents just one instance of farmworkers feeling pushed to their limits.

In April 2014, the Pacific region of Washington and Oregon employed 54,000 agricultural service workers and the average wage for field workers was $11.45 per hour, according to a report on farm labor by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Washington State’s food and agriculture industry has a total output of $49 billion, says Mike Louisell, public information officer for the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

“Farmworkers in Washington State are the poorest [workers] in the state. That imbalance
has got to change. We have got to, as farmworkers, be sharing in the profit we are helping to create,” says Rosalinda Guillen, executive director for Community to Community, a social justice group partnered with Familias.

Guillen has been with Familias since its creation. She was asked by the workers to be a witness. The daughter of a professional farmworker, Guillen worked on the fields from ages 10 to 24.

Over the past year, Familias and Community to Community have worked together to enact change at Sakuma Bros. Farms. The group went on strike for the first time on July 12, 2013, calling for better working conditions, an increase in wages and the reinstatement of fired worker Federico Lopez, according to a plaintiff’s complaint filed in Skagit County Superior Court.

If the farmworkers continue the boycott however, the question may be how much longer Sakuma can stay in business?

“The reality is, we’ve got to harvest our crops and they’ve got to make a living,” says Steve Sakuma, co-owner of Sakuma Bros. Farms. “Somewhere in between there is the answer. Without each other, neither of us are satisfied.”

While Torres and the workers risked their employment by striking, Guillen says they had reached a breaking point.

“They said, ‘We don’t care if we get fired, we know we need our jobs but there’s just so much indignity that we can take,” Guillen says. Torres saw workers humiliated by supervisors during the 2012 season, he says.

“The supervisors would give them nicknames. They’d call them donkeys, monkeys, dogs and [say] that they’re the only ones that should be doing this kind of work because they are so short they are stuck to the earth anyway,” Torres says.

That is not the way they treat people at the farm, Sakuma says.

“Our supervisors now and in the past are not perfect,” Sakuma says. “I don’t think they’re perfect anywhere. Could they have said something like that? Potentially. Do I know if they did or not? No.”

Guillen believes the situation with Sakuma Bros. Farms is just one instance of farmworker injustice. She sees the same issue reoccurring throughout history.

“The agricultural industry, consciously or unconsciously really wants slaves, and we are the closest or the latest group being exploited in this country,” Guillen says.

Sakuma’s family has owned and worked on their farm for four generations. He’s observed something else.
Native Americans have fished salmon in the Pacific Northwest for hundreds of years. Centuries ago, a delicate and balanced ecosystem was established where native tribes could harvest as much salmon as they needed. Salmon fishing continues to be critical for the economy and influential in cultural and spiritual aspects of some tribes in the Northwest. The annual return of salmon represents renewal and the continuation of human life. However, since modern industrialization and larger communities came to the area, the salmon populations have dwindled. The tribal salmon harvests have decreased as the salmon populations have decreased.

Native American salmon fishing in Western Washington is constrained by salmon endangerment because of habitat quality, which can be caused by pollution in the water. The endangered salmon in Washington are Chinook, Chum, Coho and Sockeye, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.

Affects of the Boldt Decision

In 1974, Federal District Judge George Boldt ruled that natives have the right to 50 percent of the available salmon harvest. That 50 percent is subject to the fluctuating salmon population, and as the total population decreases, so does the volume of the native harvest. Forty years after the decision, fierce debates and political unrest continue.

Salmon fishing is a significant part of native culture, says Scott Schuyler, the fisheries manager for the Upper Skagit Tribe. Schuyler, 50, has been a tribal fisherman since he was a teenager, and has witnessed the effects of dwindling salmon populations.

“We reserve the right to fish for salmon to practice our culture and our way of life,” Schuyler says.

Tribes and the Washington Department of
Fish and Wildlife work cooperatively to set fishing guidelines annually. They put guidelines on how many salmon can be fished each season by tribal fishers as well as non-natives.

Tony Meyer is the division manager for Information and Education Services at the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, a support service organization for federally recognized tribes in Western Washington. The decreasing salmon population directly affects the extent to which the tribes can exercise their rights, and the population is directly affected by the lack of salmon habitat, Meyer says. Since the entire salmon harvest is a smaller volume, the tribe’s 50 percent is smaller as well.

“We’re losing salmon habitat faster than we can fix it or protect it,” Meyer says. “We have to stop the bleeding in the watersheds.”

The habitat matters so much because it determines the quality of life the fish have, Meyer says. Without good water quality and a clean habitat, they can’t thrive.

“People point to a lot of things to place the blame,” Meyer says. “It’s time to repair the habitat so we can move forward.”

INCREASING THE SALMON POPULATION

The Skookum Creek Hatchery in Acme reeks overwhelmingly of fish. Sounds of birds chirping are often drowned out by the constant flow of water through ponds filled with millions of salmon. Bill Finkbonner, 64, and his crew work year-round to harvest salmon for the Lummi Nation. Finkbonner has worked there since 1977 and knows every detail about the processes of the hatchery. They raise Coho and South Fork Spring Chinook, which

come through Skookum Creek from the Nooksack River. The hatchery produces about 2 million Coho a year, Finkbonner says.

Skookum Creek Hatchery runs a recovery program for the South Fork Spring Chinook, which are threatened, Finkbonner says.

Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, a species is considered endangered when it risks extinction throughout all or a significant portion of the species’ range, which is the habitat they live in. A species is considered threatened when it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

HOW TO HELP THE FISH

In order to increase salmon population, Skookum Creek Hatchery takes eggs from the female Chinook and fertilizes them with sperm from the male Chinook. They incubate them, and then raise the fish in ponds for 90 to 100 days, Finkbonner says. When the fish are mature, they are
released back into the South Fork Nooksack River.

In the first year of the recovery program, four years ago, the hatchery released roughly 1,900 spring Chinook. This year, hatchery workers released roughly 670,000, Finkbonner says. The goal is to release one million in a year, which could happen within the next few years if hatchery conditions continue like they have in past years. Once the hatchery reaches one million Chinook, they will scale back and let the population grow in nature. Though the Chinook are on their way to a healthier population, other species of salmon are still in decline.

Salmon released from the hatchery are free to be fished. All hatchery fish are marked by having their adipose fin removed, which is a few inches in front of the tail fin. If a fisher catches a marked fish, they are free to take it. If they catch a fish with the adipose fin, it is wild and is supposed to be put back in the water.

About 50 percent of the salmon in the Nooksack River were raised in a hatchery, Finkbonner says. The intention is that the salmon population will recover one day and hatcheries will no longer be needed.

“Our eventual goal is to turn it back over to Mother Nature, but I don’t know if that will ever be possible,” Finkbonner says.

HABITAT RESTORATION

One key problem is that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration needs to exercise its authority to address the lack of healthy salmon habitat, Schuyler says. NOAA could do more to protect the habitat by enforcing existing habitat protection laws, he says.

“They are eager to curb the harvest, which is more political,” Schuyler says.

Even if all fishing stopped, some fish would go extinct, Meyer says.

“You can’t gain any more fish by cutting the harvest; you need to repair the habitat,” he says.

The administration does what it can for habitat restoration under the Endangered Species Act, but it doesn’t have direct authority, says Elizabeth Babcock, the Puget Sound salmon recovery coordinator at NOAA. The Endangered Species Act gives NOAA limited authority over habitat protection, she says. State and local governments have their own land use management regulations.

The Endangered Species Act directs NOAA to protect and recover endangered species and it implements those protections under what Babcock calls the three H’s: harvest, hatcheries and habitat.

NOAA and the tribes work together to make sure salmon recovery gets on track. The 20 treaty tribes in Western Washington started the Treaty Rights at Risk initiative in July 2011, which contributed to the start of a more coordinated salmon recovery effort.

Federal government, state government, local land use authorities and tribes are all working to repair habitat so salmon population will increase, Babcock says.

Salmon are an integral part of native culture and are a critical economic asset, according to the histories of local tribes. Western Washington tribes depend on a healthy salmon harvest each year. Long ago they developed rituals to celebrate the return of a plentiful salmon harvest. Today, they continue to celebrate the harvest, but it is not as plentiful as it once was. One day they hope to celebrate the true abundance of salmon again.
HEIDI RUTH IS IN THE BUSINESS OF death, and her house is evidence of that. Photographs and ashes of departed loved ones form an altar for her ancestors. Her book collection includes "A Year to Live," "A Celtic Book of Dying," and "The Big Book of Near-Death Experiences." Having witnessed dozens of deaths, she’s constantly reminded that everyone’s life has an expiration date, and her job is to prepare people for that transition.

Ruth, in her early 60s, describes herself as a “closet anthropologist turned death midwife.” For her first career, she taught applied linguistics at the University of Washington, and often traveled and wrote about language and culture.

These days, Ruth is a "death midwife" (a term used by various alternative death-care providers) who helps people deal with aging and death. She is involved in every aspect of a person’s passing.

“We’re like normal midwives who see people into the world, but we’re just at the other end of it — we see people out,” she explains.

Much of what she does as a death midwife revolves around the “nuts and bolts” of dying — how to put a body on ice and make it look beautiful by combing hair, bathing, brushing teeth and rearranging gestures.

She also assists in other areas, such as taking care of the deceased’s family and helping people overcome the American culture’s fear of death that’s spread during the last 200 years, she says.

“I believe you can’t have a really great aging if you’re in huge fear of death or in denial,” Ruth says.

One way that people are attempting to live life more fully is by openly talking about dying.

Sandy Stork, 71, founded Death Café in Whatcom County — an event where Ruth also volunteers. At this monthly event, people have conversations about death over coffee and cake. Jon Underwood started the original Death Café in London in 2011, and more than 300 of these groups now meet in the United States.

"The fundamental, driving mission is to create a safe place where people come together who are interested in talking about all aspects of end of life, death and dying and the afterlife," Stork says.

It is open, non judgmental and accepting of all spiritual belief systems, but is not a support group.

With “this one wild and precious life” to live, Ruth says everyone should address certain topics now: seeking forgiveness, dealing with unfinished business, mending estranged relationships, finding meaning in life and having hope. She hopes people see death in a new light and embrace it as a natural part of life.
WILL THERE BE BLOOD?
Washington residents face a declining blood supply

CRITICAL CARE NURSE SALLY MCPHERSON has seen the necessity of a blood transfusion first hand.

“The patient said, ‘Something’s wrong, something’s wrong,’ then he stopped talking, and stopped breathing. As we were putting the breathing tube in, that’s when blood started coming out of his mouth,” McPherson says.

An ulcer had eroded the wall of his stomach and ruptured a major artery, McPherson says. He required an emergency transfusion.

Unlike a normal transfusion, where a simple IV will suffice, doctors plunged a large tube called a central line into a vein in his neck. They hooked the line to a machine called a rapid infuser. In an hour, the machine pumped nearly two gallons of blood into the patient. Afterwards they rushed him to surgery to fix the ruptured artery, McPherson says.

This patient is not alone. Every two seconds someone in the United States requires a blood transfusion, according to the American Red Cross.

The average amount of blood used in a transfusion is three units. A unit of whole blood is defined as 450 milliliters, about one pint. A major emergency such as a car accident can require over 100 units of blood, enough to fill the car’s gas tank, according to the American Red Cross.

In 2011, hospitals transfused 13.8 million units of blood according to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which surveys blood centers every three years. That year 14.6 million units were available for transfusion, a 9.1 percent decrease from 2008, according to HHS.

The narrowing gap between numbers of donors and number of patients can be a problem says David Leitch, director of Volunteer and Donor Resources at Puget Sound Blood Center.
Every day, Puget Sound Blood Center collects blood and sends it by the truckload to hospitals throughout Western Washington and Oregon, Leitch says.

“We can only build up our supply so much in any given time period because blood only lasts so long. We can’t stockpile it,” Leitch says.

Maintaining the supply requires 900 to 1,000 donations every day, Leitch says. Certain times of the year impede this goal, he adds.

Brief shortages can cause serious consequences. In 2011, 10.3 percent of surveyed hospitals couldn’t meet non-surgical blood demands, according to HHS.

“If we don’t have enough blood we start asking hospitals to hold off on surgeries,” Leitch adds. “We also may limit the amount of blood we are able to ship them in order to conserve the supply.”

The blood center ensures hospitals have sufficient blood for critical patients, such as McPherson’s, but shortages may delay elective surgeries such as joint replacements.

In 2011, 3.3 percent of hospitals surveyed delayed surgeries. Delays lasted anywhere from one to 14 days, according to HHS.

KEEPING UP WITH THE KIDS

Puget Sound Blood Center offers incentives to keep donations flowing in, Leitch says.

“We manage it very closely, and try to focus our donors on the summer time. That time of the year is the biggest challenge is just making sure we can get people to participate,” Leitch says.

Sometimes, the blood center issues an emergency appeal, which typically prompts the community to rally and fulfill the request, Leitch says. “We still need 900 to 1,000 donors,” Leitch says. “The demand stays the same.”

PAY BY THE PINT

For Western economics Professor Hart Hodges, the problem of incentives is simple. Money talks.

“I don’t think there’s any doubt that if you pay for it you’d get more of it,” Hodges says. “One thing an economist would ask is why you see clinics paying for plasma but requesting blood on donation.”

The difference all lies in whose blood the centers want, he says.

“If I, and I’m going to be very politically incorrect here, see homeless people or drug addicts, they’re the ones who need money and they find selling plasma to be a worthwhile thing,” Hodges says. “But what about blood? I need a system where I’m not being attractive to people who are HIV positive or have hepatitis. One way to do this is by asking for volunteers to appeal to a different audience.”

This policy assumes we need an extra level of screening, Hodges says.

“The system of pre-screening by donation is decades and decades old, the situation’s probably changed,” Hodges says.

In 2011, 102,000 units of blood were discarded because of disease, according to the report from the Department of Health and Human Services.

All donated units were tested for HIV and hepatitis.

“If the cost of testing outweighs the amount of extra blood you’d get from buying it, we’d want to stick with the current system,” Hodges says. “If it’s cheaper and easier to screen blood now, it might make sense to start buying it.”

MAKING THEIR OWN

Ice-cold mist rolls out of a beaker of liquid nitrogen as Western senior Johann Sigurjonson drops a small plastic test tube in. The mist parts briefly, revealing the dark red liquid inside the tube.

Today this tube will travel, on dry ice, to be tested in a lab across the country. If the tests determine if the red compound is similar enough to...
hemoglobin — the oxygen-carrying molecule in red blood cells — years from now hospitals may transfuse it in place of whole blood.

Sigurjonson works in a Western biochemistry laboratory under Dr. Spencer Anthony-Cahill. The goal of the research is to create an artificial blood substitute.

Researchers around the world are working on blood substitutes. Most are oxygen-carrying molecules based on hemoglobin, Sigurjonson says.

Substitutes could last longer than whole blood, which can only be stored for 42 days. It could also be transfused to anyone, regardless of blood type.

However, researchers must design them carefully.

“Outside of the cell, hemoglobin is actually quite toxic to your body. It gets filtered out by your kidneys really fast, which can cause deposits that lead to kidney damage,” Sigurjonson says.

Scientists have discovered that larger forms of hemoglobin don’t cause toxic effects. Therefore, research has focused on building larger molecules, Sigurjonson says.

The most developed blood substitute is chemically cross-linked hemoglobin. Researchers create it by purifying hemoglobin and adding chemicals that bind it together into long strands. In 2001 the government of South Africa approved its use, but Sigurjonson hopes his group can do better.

“When researchers add these chemicals to hemoglobin, they make a solution with a wide range of sizes. There’s no way to control that. Some of those hemoglobins can be below the threshold for toxic effects,” Sigurjonson says. “Our method creates proteins from the ground up, so we get only one size of hemoglobin.”

Sigurjonson’s group harnesses the natural machinery of cells to create single-chain hemoglobin. Cells create proteins based on genes, or sequences of DNA. To make their protein, the group creates a gene made up of many sequences for hemoglobin. When they add this gene to bacterial cells, the cells grow a single protein made up of many units of hemoglobin, Sigurjonson says.

In the summer of 2013, the group successfully created the protein.

“We worked 70- to 80-hour weeks several weeks in a row. Finally we got enough to send out for testing, and we got really good data,” Sigurjonson says.

The next step is off-campus animal testing, but they have hit a snag.

“Research is all centered around funding; it’s all about the money. Our grant recently ran out, so we need to put out more papers to try to get a new one,” Sigurjonson says.

In his time at Western, Sigurjonson has stepped into the nationwide struggle to stretch our limited blood supply. Every day he and others work to give people like McPherson’s patient a fighting chance.
A birth-control program aimed at zero population growth must be inaugurated as soon as possible if we are to avert progressively more frequent and ever-widening famines, as well as avoid still further disruption — not to mention destruction — of the ecosystems of every major region of the world.

This quote comes from a letter to the editor of The Western Front on November 12, 1969. This was not an uncommon view at the time, says Jay Teachman, a sociology professor at Western.

Population growth is measured by Total Fertility Rate (TFR): how many children each woman will have during her lifetime. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the sustainability rate: essentially, the number of babies needed to replace the parents. Any less would cause the population to shrink and any more would cause it to grow.

Zero Population Growth, now called Population Connection, advocated for population growth to be limited to the sustainability rate. While people in the '60s and '70s were very worried about overpopulation, we don’t have to worry about that in today’s world, Western economist Dennis Murphy says.

“The concern is not too many babies,” Murphy says. “The concern is too few babies.”

As societies become richer, they have fewer children, because children become less of an economic asset and more of a luxury good, Murphy says. Their economic cost outweighs their benefit.

Having fewer children changes a society’s age structure, Teachman says. In many countries experiencing population decline, the number of workers per retiree is small and shrinking. It’s important that the younger generation produce what the older population needs. If the younger generation is not willing to transfer (sell or trade) their assets to the older generation, they will not have what they need to live and survive, Murphy says.

Giving dependents more money would not solve the problem, Murphy says. Money is only a means to a resource.

“You could have a million dollars, but if you can’t find potatoes, you are going to go hungry,” Murphy says.

Both Teachman and Murphy agree that while those in the ‘60s may have worried about overpopulation, today’s problems are the opposite, when most of the industrialized world has shrinking populations. If this trend continues, economic growth may be hurt and cultures may shrink or even die out, changing the map as we know it, Murphy says.
The risks and benefits of eating past the expiration date
THE DUMPSTER CREAKS OPEN AND PUNGENT AROMA
pours out over the cracked green plastic of the bin. It’s an almost sweet rotting stink that blankets a few dried-up tomatoes and a carton of smashed eggs. A puddle of an unknown liquid is slowly forming beneath the bin and a few maggots fall from the lid. This isn’t the most appetizing place to get groceries.

The United States Department of Agriculture estimates 133 billion pounds of food was thrown away in 2010 alone. That includes food tossed from restaurants, uneaten food discarded at home and expired food chucked by grocery stores and homeowners.

Bags of bread snowy with white mold and slightly slimy peppers may not be salvageable, but expired food is nothing for Western senior Emily Carlson, who licked the inside of a trash can on a dare. Carlson says she’s not squeamish — and it’s easy to see why.

“People can’t get over the heebie-jeebies, and I just don’t have them,” Carlson says.

Most expiration dates are conservative and some food can be eaten safely months after its “best by” date, yet every year about 40 percent of food ends up in landfills rather than stomachs.

While many people strictly adhere to expiration dates, throwing away their food in disgust when it reaches the shelf life, Carlson has no problem pushing the limit a little and eating expired goods — as long as they’re not too gross: no maggots, no mold.

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT

Carlson spends her days working for an analytical firm that tests everything from drinking water to cow feces for pathogens such as salmonella, E. coli and listeria. These days she is testing the shelf life of mini cheesecakes, monitoring bacterial growth each day after their “best by” date.

So far, the little pink cakes are clean. Even days after their date they are safe — and Carlson is looking forward to eating them with her lunch tomorrow. While the desserts are cleared by the lab tests, Carlson says every company has different standards of freshness.

It is up to the consumer to eat safely. Expiration dates on most products are advisory only, meaning manufacturers guarantee the freshness and wholesomeness of their product up to the printed date provided that it has been properly handled,
says Tom Kunesh of the Whatcom County Health Department.

Expiration dates are not legally required on food products with the exception of infant formula, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Food manufacturers must ensure their products are safe to eat, even if it is consumed past the “best before” date. However, manufacturers are not legally responsible for illness caused by eating spoiled foods.

Illnesses associated with food are spread mostly through handling rather than expiration dates. Of course, eating foods past their prime can be unpleasant. No one likes to bite into moldy bread or a mushy strawberry, but some expired foods don’t make people sick — they just taste bad.

“Some of the organisms that cause food spoilage will make foods smell bad, look bad, taste bad. You get slime, you get mold, they give off odors,” Kunesh says.

For example, a fresh head of lettuce could be washed on a farm with E. coli in the water. If it makes it past the farm without contamination, it still has to pass the distribution facility, which may house disease-carrying mice. At the store, it could be poorly refrigerated. At home, raw chicken in the fridge could drip on the lettuce, infecting it with salmonella. Even crisp, green lettuce fresh from the store can be a hazard if handled improperly, and the contamination is invisible.

“Foods that are contaminated with pathogens are not going to be easy to detect,” Kunesh says.

KEEPING FOOD ON THE TABLE

Most stores take the guesswork out of expired goods, rotating products and tossing food or donating it to a food bank as it reaches the “sell by” date. Organizations such as food banks also help limit the amount of food that enters the landfill — and help feed the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s estimated 49 million Americans without access to food.

The first food banks in the early 1970s were essentially groups of Dumpster divers rescuing discarded food from grocery stores and giving it to people in need, says Mike Cohen, executive director of Bellingham Food Bank. Food banks have evolved since then and Bellingham Food Bank serves more than 10,000 people each month.

The local food bank also started a gleaning program to collect excess food crops from farms. Last year they saved 200 pounds of produce from being tilled under the soil. Home garden produce also accounts for 50,000 pounds of food donations.

“We want it all — and that helps educate the community that we are about more than packaged food,” Cohen says.

The bank focuses on fresh foods, such as dairy, bread from local bakeries and produce from the farmer’s market. It also accepts canned goods, and expiration dates are not a concern. Cohen says that every once in a while a moldy product or spoiled food is distributed, but for the most part the food bank is pretty careful — and patrons select food for themselves.

And the food that isn’t in such good shape? The bank donates limp and wilting produce to farmers to use as livestock feed and compost.

Rescuing every last scrap of food from a lonely landfill future has a much higher purpose than some may realize. Discarded food breaks down and releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas. The EPA estimates landfills release 20 percent of all methane in the atmosphere, so keeping leftovers out of the trash has global consequences.
HOW TO NOT THROW UP

Some stores, such as Grocery Outlet and Deals Only sell expired food at a discount, saving people money and saving food from the trash. Grocery Outlet pulls all fresh dairy and meat from shelves at the products’ expiration dates. Products like processed cheeses, juice and smoked salmon are thrown away seven days after the printed date and dry grocery goods are given 30 days past expiration to sell.

Discount stores also often sell damaged products such as crackers in crunched boxes and products with misprinted labels. Just like expired goods, damaged goods are not harmful, Kunesh says. Except for damaged cans.

“Don’t buy cans that are severely dented. Don’t buy cans without labels. Don’t buy cans that are bulging,” Kunesh says.

When cans bulge, bacteria is growing inside the can, Kunesh says.

Denting and squishing cans can cause the seals to break, welcoming in dust spores that may contain pathogens such as botulism. Botulism is a foodborne bacteria that attacks the nervous system and can be fatal. According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 145 cases of botulism are reported each year in the United States, mostly from home-canned and pickled goods and expired canned food.

Eating expired goods presents risks, but the key to staying safe is mostly in safe preparation. Kunesh’s top rules: wash hands, cook meat all the way through and don’t let sick people prepare food for others. Don’t leave cooked foods out overnight; that includes soup abandoned on the stove or the bit of mac and cheese left in the bottom of the pot.

And skip the Dumpster diving.

“You don’t know why that food was thrown away,” Kunesh says. He says a diver may think cottage cheese or deli pasta salad that is still cold is gold, but what if a clerk found a refrigerator that wasn’t working and the product is spoiled?

Kunesh points out that foods may mingle with less appetizing trash, such as restroom waste and chemical residues from cleaning products — even bleach. In case of an outbreak of infectious disease, the health department orders the contaminated food to be doused with bleach and then dumped. In Kunesh’s opinion, a Dumpster steal is not worth the risk.

But for Carlson, it’s all about the limit — finding that tipping point when food is no longer appealing. People come into contact with the germs crawling on Dumpsters every day, she says. Exposure to a little dirt and a little mold only helps build immunity in Carlson’s experience; Carlson hasn’t been sick in a year and has never had food poisoning. A green pepper plucked from the trash — in Carlson’s book that’s a healthy pepper and one more pepper that won’t end up in the landfill.

FACTS ABOUT FOOD WASTE

1.3 billion tons of all edible food produced worldwide is wasted or lost every year

...that’s 1/3 of food produced annually.

1 billion people on Earth are malnourished, even though the world produces enough food to feed 2x its population.

1 billion people is about 3.2x of the U.S. population.

Food is the largest category of waste in U.S. landfills.

In 2010, 33 million tons of food waste ended up in landfills and incinerators.

...that’s about 254 pounds per person, per year.

Source: Forbes/ Door to Door Organics
**BARRIERS BEYOND BARS**

The issues of reintegration after prison

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**GETTING OUT OF PRISON WAS LIKE** reading a five-chapter book that was missing chapters three and four. After the first two chapters you take a break, and when you return to chapter five, nothing makes sense. You remember chapters one and two, and you know chapter five is important, but you can't put the pieces back together. That's how it was for 53-year-old Tony Fleck of Bellingham.

Fleck has been in and out of prison for the last 25 years. Arrested at age 16 for armed robbery, Fleck was tried as an adult and sent to a federal penitentiary in Shelton. Since then, Fleck has served time for two accounts of armed robbery, two accounts of second-degree burglary, two accounts of attempting to elude police and unlawful possession of a firearm. Fleck was released Jan. 24, 2014 after serving his 18-month sentence for unlawful possession of a firearm.

Heroin addiction, prescription pills and other drugs took over Fleck's life at an early age. Fleck recalls being beaten by his father so badly as a kid that he couldn't go to school. He was an avid fighter in the neighborhood, and it wasn't uncommon for his father to be cheering him on as he beat up other kids, he says.

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**TOTAL POPULATION OF U.S. JAILS AND PRISONS FROM 1978-2012**

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics Corrections Statistical

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Only 30% of incarcerated people find work in the two months after their release.
At age 12, Fleck was sent to a juvenile correction facility for grand theft auto and possession of an illegal substance. His parents wanted him to go through the system to learn his lesson. He remembers calling them in tears, trying to get them to help him out, but they wouldn’t, he says.

“I knew my parents didn’t care, so soon I didn’t care,” Fleck says.

When Fleck returned to school, the other students wouldn’t look at him the same, he says. He began to attract a crowd of troublemakers because they were the only ones who would befriend him.

“It’s almost like you have a sign on you that says, ‘You’re one of them,’” Fleck says. “It becomes a part of your identity; you have [new] friends as a result of a bad choice and the notions of right and wrong go out the window.”

As a released felon, Fleck now faces a daunting world of barriers. With $18,000 worth of fines, Fleck is unable to get a driver’s license. He struggles to get a job. Drug tests are administered weekly, and if failed, Fleck must return to prison for a weekend. On top of that, most rental housing applications ask about any prior felony convictions.

“It’s like I can’t go anywhere without someone knowing my history,” Fleck says.

Irene Morgan is the founder of Whatcom County Restorative Community Coalition, which helps integrate previously convicted individuals back into society. The debt and restrictions that are placed on these people limit their chances of finding a job and staying out of prison, Morgan says.

The United States has the highest documented incarceration rate in the world. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), 2,908,571 adults were incarcerated in federal and state prisons and county jails at year-end 2012.

Another 6,259,750 adults were on community probation or parole. In total, 9,168,321 adults were under correctional supervision in 2012 — about 2.9 percent of the U.S. population.

“Penitiunary” began as a system of punishment to denote prisoners as religious “penitents,” serving time for their sins, according to Architects, Designers and Planners for Social Responsibility. Despite their high moral aims, prisons soon became overcrowded, dirty and dangerous.

Prisons are cleaner now but still hold serious problems. More drugs are inside prisons than are on the streets, Fleck says. Visitors sneak them in either by swallowing them or hiding them inside their reproductive organs, Fleck says. It is pretty commonly known that there are drugs in prisons, Morgan agrees.

Reform swept through the prison system in the 19th century, attempting to redefine prison’s role as reforming inmates into model citizens by providing education, work and counseling.

The prison population began to explode in 1971 when President Richard Nixon declared America’s “War on Drugs.” Rehabilitation efforts fell and the “post modern” revolution set its primary goal for prisons with super-maximum security, intended for holding large numbers of prisoners for long terms. Consideration for prisoner’s behavior and well-being, inside of prison and out, began to fall away.

The Restorative Community Coalition teaches students about alternative methods of punishment to help alleviate the “school to prison pipeline,” Morgan says.

“Prison isn’t punishment,” Fleck says. “It’s coming out of prison that is punishment.”

Due to the current system, many previously convicted individuals are released from prison and face a wall of barriers that usually push them back behind bars, Morgan says. The challenges are insurmountable; they mostly can’t get a job, they can’t get a house and the stigma follows them wherever they go.

“I never thought I was going to be a criminal; I never dreamed of being in this situation,” Fleck says. “I didn’t want my life to be like this, but things happen and now I have to deal with it.”

(above) Tony Fleck has been in and out of prison for the last 25 years. Currently, he is attending Whatcom Community College with aspirations of becoming a counselor for at-risk youth.
REDEFINING RELATIONSHIPS

Polyamory: the state or practice of having more than one open romantic relationship at a time

FOR MOST COUPLES, LOVING AND BEING intimate with someone outside of the relationship would be an automatic deal breaker. For others, such as those who define themselves as polyamorous, this deviation is mutually agreed upon and fulfilling.

As foreign and confusing as it may seem to some, for people like Gray Newlin, it just makes sense.

"Love isn’t finite," Newlin says. "You can’t really stop yourself from loving other people while you’re in a relationship."

Newlin’s hair is messily piled atop her head, with only her short choppy bangs, which frame her wide navy blue eyes and flushed cheeks, escaping the elastic band that secures the rest of her mane.

Newlin has been in open relationships since she was 14 years old, even before she knew what polyamory meant.

Like those who engage in a non-monogamous lifestyle, the term polyamory is widely misunderstood. Contrary to the popular assumption that its defining characteristic is the unlimited number of partners, those who understand it will say polyamory is as much about setting limits as it is about removing them.

POLYAMORY 101

Robin Trask, executive director of Loving More, a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness and providing support for polyamorous relationships, says these relationships are defined as being “ethical, non-monogamous relationships done with consent.”

While the number of relationships a polyamorous person can have at once is not limited, balancing
too many partners can be difficult, Trask says from the Loving More headquarters in Colorado.

"There’s a joke in the poly community that says while love may be unlimited, time isn’t," she says.

Newlin echoes this sentiment when she discusses her previous relationships. Four people is the most she has ever been involved with at one time, but she says that she was only committed to two of them. More than that would be too much to maintain, she says.

The healthiest and most successful polyamorous relationships have written agreements, or what are known as "hard limits," that everyone involved collectively determines, says Chalaina Connors, a poly-friendly licensed professional counselor in Portland.

"Polyamorous couples in a healthy relationship would talk about which behaviors they are and are not comfortable with and determine what their relationships are going to look like," Connors says.

FEAR OF COMMITMENT?

Trask, who has identified as polyamorous for more than 23 years, says a common misconception about the polyamorous lifestyle is that it is only for people who fear commitment.

"If you look up the definition of commitment, it does not say monogamy anywhere," Trask says.

Connors, who began counseling people who identify as polyamorous three years ago, says this fallacy is not limited to the general public.

"There are even professionals who don’t understand it," Connors says. "I’ve heard other therapists say, ‘Oh that person just has a commitment issue and they just need to learn to deal with that.’"

Polyamory can go wrong in a number of ways; one is when people identify themselves as polyamorous, but only as an excuse to sleep around with multiple partners, which does not represent the values of open and honest communication that polyamory emphasizes, Newlin says.

Before she knew what polyamory was, Trask tried swinging, which is based more on sex than committed relationships, and found it was not for her, she says.

For Trask and Newlin, the polyamorous lifestyle works because commitment is involved, sometimes even more so than with monogamous relationships, because more commitments and agreements have to be upheld in order for the relationships to work.

Ultimately, Trask and Newlin and others in the polyamorous community voice no fear of commitment, only fear of missing out on opportunities to connect with other individuals.

"People are great," Newlin says. "Why wouldn’t you want more people in your life?"

JEALOUSY AND CHEATING

The number one issue polyamorous couples seek her counseling for is jealousy, Connors says. While they might want an open polyamorous relationship to work, they struggle to overcome their jealousy and insecurities over knowing their partners are involved with other people.

"I try to help them be able to articulate that so they can really support each other," Connors says.

New Relationship Energy, a polyamorous term used to describe the giddy feeling one gets when falling in love with a new partner, is something Newlin has experienced first hand. It can be a major source of jealousy in polyamorous relationships, she says.

"She was getting treated differently than I was getting treated," Newlin says. "That would make anyone get jealous. Polyamorous people get jealous."

Cheating, another grey area for those unfamiliar with polyamory, also occurs in these relationships the same way it does in monogamous relationships.

"I don’t think it differs at all," Connors says.

"Cheating is when someone goes behind someone else’s back and they are not aware of it.”

While these relationships may look like cheating to someone unaware of their guidelines, the polyamorous community considers a person to be unfaithful only if pursuing someone outside of the relationship goes against an established agreement.

With a practically endless number of relationship combinations and no real societal guideline in place dictating how they should function, polyamorous individuals are forging their own paths and determining their own set of relationship standards that work for them.

"There are limits," Trask says. "But you decide what they are."
LIVING LARGE IN LESS
Tiny houses cram the American Dream into 200 square feet

A BEAUTIFUL SPIRAL STAIRCASE. A COZY FIREPLACE
for the winter. Custom woodworking. All of these luxuries fit inside a new kind of dream home – one that is less than 200 square feet and sometimes sits on wheels.

In America, the national average for the size of a new home is 2,607 square feet with an average price tag of $399,532, according to the National Association of Home Builders. However, more Americans are bucking the big house trend, opting instead to think small and build tiny houses at a tenth of the size and a fraction of the cost.

While these tiny dwellings are limited in square footage, benefits abound. For some, it’s a way to cut down on expenses and clutter. Others build them to be more environmentally friendly. Many small houses are built on trailers, allowing their owners to take their “home sweet home” with them wherever they go.

SKI LODGE ON WHEELS

“I was looking for the next step to perfecting the ski bum’s dream home when I discovered tiny houses,” says Zack Giffin, a 34-year-old professional skier and tiny house builder who co-hosts A&E’s new FYI network show, “Tiny House Nation.”

Giffin built his own 112-square-foot tiny house on wheels three years ago. His mobile living solution allows him, his girlfriend Molly Baker, and their ski buddies to tour the world in search of fresh powder. When they aren’t traveling, Giffin parks his house on his parents’ property on Lummi Island. His handcrafted tiny ski house features a sleeping loft, a two-tone wooden spiral staircase, and a retro fireplace to heat the space on cold winter nights. The whole project cost him around $25,000, he says in an interview with

“My favorite part of living in a tiny home is absolutely the freedom that I get to travel,” Giffin says. “To take my house wherever I want and the comfort that I feel when I’m in my house, because it is a place where I cut every piece of wood that’s in there.”

WHY THINK TINY?

Giffin is especially keen on the environmental angle, because he sees tiny houses as a real solution for people who are looking to consolidate waste and minimize their impact.

“The tiny house movement is about saying, ‘Hey, there is something we can do,’” Giffin says. “We all have the power to reassess what we need to be happy, and simplify our demand on the planet.”

Now, as a “Tiny House Nation” host, Giffin travels the country helping families build their own tiny homes. He loves the creativity that goes into trying to make everything multipurpose and coming up with new solutions for each house, he says.

Giffin encourages people of all ages to not be frightened by the idea of building their own house.

“Even if you’re having help, try to involve yourself as much as you can with your own construction, because it will be so rewarding knowing that you had a hand in creating it,” he advises.

RECLAIMED NOMAD HOUSE

In Tacoma, 28-year-old Sarah “Sars” Joslyn recently decided to build her own tiny house. Joslyn describes herself as a “self-proclaimed writer-photographer-Jesus-lover-adventurer-foodie” and “a nomad.” She ticks off some of her recent adventures — three months spent in Los Angeles, another three in Montana, and a year spent doing construction in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

She expected to rent for the rest of her life until she realized that she could build a tiny house on wheels and not have to stay in one spot like a traditional homeowner.

“I wrote this silly blog post that by the time I’m 30, I have to either build a tiny house or write a memoir,” Joslyn says. “Then I was like, ‘You know what sounds easier than writing a memoir? Building a tiny house!’”

She decided to build her tiny house by salvaging almost all of the materials and sticking to a $7,000 budget.

Joslyn walks out to her garage to show off her growing pile of treasures. Double-pane vinyl windows from a casino hotel sit next to a red front door and a brand new skylight. She proudly shows off studs that she went Dumpster diving for. The materials take up a good third of the garage, and she’s just getting started.

“Because it’s salvaged, it changes the design and look,” Joslyn says. “People often build tiny houses to make their dream house. I had no grand plans of something that was ‘very me.’ I’m not picky.”

Joslyn shows off her rough blueprints. The house will end up being 160 to 170 square feet, with a 112-square-foot “main floor” and a
50-square-foot sleeping loft that hangs over the front of the trailer like a fifth-wheel RV.

To maximize available space, the area under the staircase will double as a multipurpose storage unit. The bathroom will have a composting toilet and a shower that runs off a water heater that can be hooked up to a garden hose. The bathroom’s ceiling will only be 5 feet 10 inches tall, since it is under the loft section, but at 5-foot-1, Joysln isn’t worried; she doesn’t plan on sharing her house.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

“If a tiny house is a permanent structure, it still has to comply with building, energy, plumbing and electrical codes,” says Kirsten Hawney, a permit technician for the City of Bellingham. “You have to treat it like any other house.”

Permits and codes are real issues for people who build tiny houses on the ground, but both Joslyn and Giffin have found a loophole that allows them to circumvent many of these rules.

“The nice thing is, in most states, if your structure is on wheels, it’s not considered a permanent structure,” Joslyn says. “You don’t need building permits, because it can be moved at any point. However, if they don’t like what you built, they tell you to ‘get out of Dodge.'”

Her tiny house will technically be viewed as a recreational vehicle, Joslyn says. She plans to change the title and get RV insurance upon completion.

TINY DREAMS

Joslyn hopes to have the house framed, sided and roofed by October. She thinks she’ll live in her new home for six or seven years, before building another tiny house.

“My sister and I have this crazy idea of opening up a tiny house bed and breakfast in Vermont some day, and this can be one of the structures,” Joslyn says.

They found 10 acres in the woods of Vermont for sale, and are seriously considering pursuing that dream, she says. However, they don’t have any plans to move until 2018 at the earliest.

Both Joslyn and Giffin have discovered that limiting their square footage has opened up new possibilities in life, and they love it.

Joslyn says there is nowhere else that he would rather live than in his tiny wooden house, which he calls “the most relaxing, comfortable place on the planet.”

“I think if you have that feeling about a place, it doesn’t really matter what size it is,” Giffin says.

Despite the unique challenges and compromises tiny home dwellers face, they seem to agree on two key ideas: bigger isn’t always better, and sometimes, less truly is more.
TROUBLED WATERS
Southern Resident Whales face the threat of extinction

SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALE LOLITA has entertained visitors to the Miami Seaquarium since 1970. Her companion, Hugo, rammed the walls of the solitary confinement and died of a brain aneurysm. Her only companions now are a wet suit and an inflatable toy. To this day she calls out to L pod, her group of southern residents relatives. She is one of 47 Southern Residents captured in the 1970s for marine parks.

Today, only 79 Southern Resident Killer Whales are left in the wild. The Center for Whale Research tracks their drastic population decline, which started in the 1960s when killer whales were captured for marine parks. Before then, the lowest recorded population was 140.

In 2003, Congress awarded funding specifically for killer whale research and management to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Between 2003 and 2012, NOAA dedicated $15.7 million to southern residents research. The animals were listed under the United States Endangered Species Act in 2005.

Even after a decade of recovery programs dedicated to the southern residents, which migrate from Central California up to British Columbia, scientists have not seen the population increase. Scientists from NOAA have discovered that southern residents favor a diet of Chinook salmon, burn more calories around boat noise and their bodies contain high levels of pollutants like PCBs, which are man-made chemicals.

“It is likely that all three of those threats work together in concert to create a problem for the whales,” says Lynne Barre, the Seattle branch chief for the Protective Resources Division at NOAA Fisheries.

Founder of the Center for Whale Research Ken Balcomb, who was interviewed in the documentary Blackfish, says the biggest threat to southern residents is the limited amounts of their food, Chinook salmon.

“The wild Chinook salmon situation on the whole West Coast has been a continuing downward trend disaster,” he says. Chinook salmon travel along the West Coast between rivers in Southern California and Alaska.

The primary threats to salmon runs are what Barre calls “the four H’s:” harvesting of fish, hatchery practices, hydropower and habitat alteration. Dam operations and farming practices affect the quality and temperature of water in salmon habitats.

Balcomb includes a fifth “H.”

“The biggest one is hubris,” he says. “We are such an arrogant species, we figure the world is for us.” Creating more salmon hatcheries, which dilutes the wild salmon populations to almost extinction, is not a long-term solution, Balcomb says.

“[Hatcheries] do not provide an ecosystem, they provide a factory,” he says.

Wild salmon will be extinct by the year 2100, so the whales will not exist beyond that, Balcomb says. The whales will be extinct anywhere between 30 and 200 years, he says.
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COLVILLE NATIONAL FOREST, WASH.

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BELLINGHAM CIRCUS GUILD

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