

Hummingbird Wholesale Earns Mayor's Bold Steps Sustainability Award



Submitted by KVAL Communities Staff
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From a press release

Hummingbird Wholesale is the recipient of Mayor Kitty Piercy's latest Bold Steps Sustainability Award. Mayor Piercy will present the award at Art and the Vineyard on Saturday, July 3, at approximately 5:45 on the event's Main Stage. Art and the Vineyard has made its own significant steps towards becoming a sustainable event, and is proud to host this award ceremony.

The Bold Steps program honors Eugene businesses that make decisions based on the triple bottom line: taking extra care in how they treat people and the planet, while supporting economic prosperity.

Hummingbird Wholesale is a full service wholesale distributor supplying organic bulk foods to natural food stores. They are located at 254 Lincoln Street in Eugene and the CEO is Julie Tilt.

"Their boldest step, like the previous winner, SeQuential Biofuels, is a willingness to take financial risk to live their commitment and values, and to do their part to transform an unsustainable and environmentally harmful industry into a sustainable, environmentally beneficial one," noted Leslie Scott, chair of the Bold Steps award committee. Hummingbird Wholesale has been working with local farmers in the Willamette Valley to grow organic beans, grains and seeds for over 10 years. The company currently has 8 farmers growing in the valley, four of which are grass seed farmers who have converted conventional land to organic. "We help the farmers if they need it, by buying the seed for them, and giving them money up front. This way we are taking the risk with them..." stated the company's application.

Mayor Piercy praised Hummingbird's commitment to education and collaboration with farmers and community groups as exemplifying the spirit of the Bold Steps award. "Their work with local farmers and the emphasis on growing locally is so important to help address the crucial food security issue in our area," Piercy added.

The company recently took an additional risk, creating a new position of farmer/buyer liaison. They saw a critical need to assist farmers in the Willamette Valley to transition part of their acreage to growing food, rather than grass seed. The price of grass seed has plummeted in the last few years and some farmers need to find other crops. James Henderson, who bring years of farming experience and comes from a family of 7 generations of farmers, has been successfully

arranging contracts with local farmers in the Willamette Valley and Oregon to grow thousands of pounds of grains, beans, and seeds.

The company's other Bold Steps that most impressed the awards committee are the following:

Sustainability is integrated at every level of the organization, from mission statement to company policy, to all packaging, energy use and transportation systems. Some examples include:

- use of 100% green power electricity
- close to customers to allow efficient delivery in town with deliveries by bicycle in Eugene
- bulk liquids delivered in reusable containers with deposit for return, with 83% return rate on plastic and 50% on glass jugs.

Hummingbird Wholesale has a strong social equity commitment to hiring and retaining a diverse staff. They provide staff raises twice a year, pay profit-sharing bonuses when they are profitable enough, and give all employees \$300 per year to be used toward their own health and well-being. They assist employees with school and education related to their job.

The company gives employees paid volunteer time to work for local non-profits, 3 hours/ month. They also donate to over thirty non-profits in our community a year.