

# **NEWS**

## **Washington State Grange**

P.O. Box 1186 • Olympia, WA 98507 • (360) 943-9911

FAX (360) 357-3548 • [grangenews@wa-grange.org](mailto:grangenews@wa-grange.org) • [www.wa-grange.org](http://www.wa-grange.org)



### **FACTSHEET**

#### ***What is the Grange?***

- A grass-roots organization.
- A fraternal organization formed in Washington, D.C., in 1867.
- Organized in Washington state in 1889.
- Community-based with 284 local community Granges located throughout the state and 40 county/district Granges ("Pomona Granges").
- The Grange is the world's only fraternal farm-based organization; it is the nation's oldest farm organization, serving both producers and consumers.

#### ***Who are Grange members?***

- Junior Grange members, ages 5 through 16. Youth group, 14-35 years old. Adult members, both men and women, age 14 and up – all with equal voice.
- Rural citizens, farm families, suburban and urban residents. Active Granges in Washington are located in rural communities and in the heart of cities like Seattle, Spokane and Tacoma.
- Nearly half of Washington's farm families belong to the Grange.
- Grangers are more than 50,000 strong in Washington, the largest membership of any state.
- Serving all Grange members in the state is the Washington State Grange with its three-story headquarters building located four blocks from the state Capitol in Olympia.

#### ***What the Grange does:***

- Conducts a summer camping program for children ages 9 through 14.
- Offers activities for people of all ages – social, cultural, educational.
- Performs community service projects in communities throughout the state.
- Provides a unified voice for agricultural and consumer issues in the Legislature.
- Provides leadership and educational opportunities including awards of scholarships for higher education through the Washington State Grange Foundation.
- Provides complete insurance coverage for its members (Grange Insurance Association and Marketing General Agents) and access to credit unions (TwinStar Credit Union).
- Conducts a variety of contests (needlework, essay, baking, talent, art, photography, crafts) for all ages.
- Produces weekly radio broadcasts that are heard across the state and on the Internet.
- Publishes the *Washington State Grange News*, an agricultural/organizational newspaper read by more than 40,000 people monthly.
- Maintains an Internet Website at [www.wa-grange.org](http://www.wa-grange.org) (the National Grange Website is located at [www.nationalgrange.org](http://www.nationalgrange.org))

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### **BIRTH OF AN AMERICAN TREASURE**

The Grange came into being in 1867 because of the vision of Oliver Hudson Kelley, a Minnesota farmer and activist. He had long held that farmers, because of their independent and scattered nature, needed a national organization which would represent them much as unions were beginning to do for industrial workers. Farmers were at the mercy of merchants for both needed farm supplies and for marketing their crops. Railroads and warehouse companies were taking advantage of farmers as well.

Kelley and some of his friends organized the National Grange (officially known as the Order of Patrons of Husbandry) as a fraternal group similar to the Masonic lodge. The early leaders were responsible for promoting cooperatives which had the potential of helping farmers economically. Effective lobbying efforts were undertaken early and this activity remains a bulwark of Grange service to rural America. Education of rural residents was championed by the early Grange and, due to Grange agitation, dramatic improvements were made in rural schools. The birth of the Extension Service, Rural Free Delivery, and the Farm Credit System were largely due to Grange lobbying.

The Grange movement in Washington dates from organization of Waitsburg Grange No. 1 near Walla Walla in 1873, before Washington gained statehood. Existing local community Granges in the territory banded together to form the Washington State Grange just prior to statehood in 1889. The organization has continued the national tradition of championing the needs and rights of farmers and other rural citizens. Among Grange accomplishments in Washington are sponsorship of Initiative No. 1 in 1930 resulting in Washington's public utility districts; sponsorship in 1976 of Initiative 59 limiting growth of "corporate farming" in the state; sponsorship of Initiative 872 in 2004 that restored voter choice for primary elections; and support of countless other legislative efforts to enhance agriculture.

Early in its history Grange leaders realized that social interaction was especially important to rural residents. For more than 140 years Grange halls have existed as community centers where residents gather for educational events, dances, potlucks, town meetings, political rallies and other meetings. Junior Grange, 4-H, FFA, scouting and Camp Fire groups have thrived because of Grange involvement and each year tens of thousands of Grange members participate in numerous community service projects.

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For a complete history of the National Grange, see *People, Pride and Progress: 125 Years of the Grange in America* by David H. Howard (Washington, D.C.: The National Grange, 1992; 336 pages, bibliography and index, Foreword by former U.S. Rep. Thomas Foley).

For a complete history of the Grange in Washington state see *Washington Grangers Celebrate a Century* by Gus Norwood (Seattle, Wash.: Washington State Grange, 1989, 192 pages, bibliography and index, Foreword by former U.S. Rep. Thomas Foley).

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### **SERVICE TO OTHERS REMAINS A PRINCIPAL GRANGE GOAL**

Volunteer service has always been an integral part of the total Grange program. Many service opportunities existing in each Grange have a positive impact upon the lives of others.

The state and national community service contests exist as a structured way of recognizing outstanding Grange service activities. Local Granges are urged to select a project each year – some community need that can be met by members of the group working together. Reports of the endeavor are submitted for judging at the state level. Awards are granted at the state and national level. A separate competition is held for junior Granges with smaller awards being offered.

The Grange women's activities department sponsors several service-oriented programs. These varied efforts involve thousands of individuals each year and the people affected by the projects number many thousands more.

One of the most popular women's service projects is the stuffed toy contest. Each year several thousand toys are made by Grangers and others. Every possible color, size and shape is entered. The toys are displayed and judged at the State Grange convention after which they are distributed throughout the state where area women's activities chairmen donate them to hospital children's wards. The cuddly toys, given free to the children, help make a frightening hospital stay a little happier.

Another unique women's project helps bring sight to the visually impaired in other nations. Good used eyeglasses are collected from around the state by the women, assembled at the State Grange convention and later donated to a volunteer organization of vision care professionals for later redistribution to needy individuals in Third World countries. Prescriptions of the used glasses are determined and matched to the needs of persons requiring eyewear.

Nationally, the Grange has become a leader in promoting awareness of the special needs of the hearing impaired. In Washington, the Family Health, Hearing and Safety department of the State Grange is responsible for fund-raising which assists educational efforts and purchase of materials helpful to the hearing impaired. Scholarships are offered to help hearing people learn sign language.

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### **JUNIOR GRANGE PROGRAM PROVIDES FUN AND VALUABLE TRAINING**

For several generations, children between the ages of five and 14 have learned valuable skills while they enjoyed themselves in junior Grange activities.

Many subordinate Granges in the state sponsor a junior Grange. The youngsters involved in the groups participate in their organization by electing officers, conducting their own meetings and organizing other activities. They are assisted by one or more volunteer adult leaders.

In addition to earning merit badges for achievement in 25 different participation areas, junior Grangers join in the fun of creative crafts at their meetings. Some of these creations go on to the State Grange convention where they are judged.

The children also present special programs for their local Grange. Part of this activity includes perfecting of performances by talented junior Grangers. These children are urged to participate in junior talent playoffs held in their junior or adult community Grange. The best contestants go on to district playoffs and, eventually, district winners travel to the State Grange session in June to entertain a crowd of nearly 1,000 people.

During the state convention selection of a state Junior Granger of the Year is announced. This child, between the ages of 10 and 14, represents the junior Grange at special events throughout the year. Other convention activities highlighting the juniors include displays of arts and crafts made by the children, announcement of winners in several categories of junior Grange competition and a host of special events for juniors attending the session with their parents.

Each year the children look forward to a week at one of the five junior Grange camps held at different locations in the state. The camping experience is a time for recreation and learning. The camps are conducted by the state junior directors and a staff of volunteers with several hundred children – junior Grangers and nonmembers – being served by the camps each season. Scholarship help is offered to many children who would not be able to attend without financial aid.

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### **THE GRANGE VOICES THE RURAL VIEWPOINT**

Involvement in the legislative process has been an important aspect of Grange activity since the organization's inception in 1867.

As a community-based organization, the Grange is a natural arena for discussion of local and national issues. Grangers gathered for their local community and Pomona (county-wide) meetings debate matters of common concern. Topics range from the need for a local traffic signal to school levies; from health care reform to hunger relief in Third World nations; from public power to state and national taxation.

After debate, the Grange members draft and vote on a resolution concerning the issue. If the problem is a local one, the Grange officers and legislative committee members often pursue solution options such as visiting local government officials, writing letters or testifying at hearings.

Resolutions covering issues of statewide or national concern are forwarded from the community Grange to the State Grange. Eventually, the resolution is brought to the delegates assembled for the State Grange convention held in June. Committees discuss it and delegates debate it. When adopted, it becomes State Grange policy.

The resolutions passed by the State Grange convention delegates covering national matters are referred to the National Grange convention for consideration. Resolutions adopted there become National Grange policy.

The Grange at each level actively works toward adoption of its policy. In Washington state, representatives of the Grange are present in Olympia during legislative sessions to explain the policy as it relates to bills under consideration. Similar efforts occur in Washington, D.C.

The primary legislative objective of the Grange is to represent the views of rural residents and the agriculture community. These views become Grange policy from the grass roots through a democratic process. Each year the policies are summarized and published in booklet form and on the Grange's web site ([www.wa-grange.org](http://www.wa-grange.org)).

In 2004 the Washington State Grange successfully sponsored Initiative 872 that restored voter choice to the state's primary election ballots. It was overwhelmingly supported by voters but later overturned by the courts.

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For more information about the legislative activity of the State Grange, contact the State Grange's Legislative Director, Laura Tracy Butler, P.O. Box 1186, Olympia, Wash. 98507; (360) 943-9911 ([ltracy@wa-grange.org](mailto:ltracy@wa-grange.org))

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### **GRANGE OFFERS YOUTH MANY GROWTH-ORIENTED ACTIVITIES**

Young people find many activities within the Grange have been designed specifically for them. Individuals are eligible for community Grange membership upon reaching the age of 14. From that point the young member has equal membership rights and can participate in any adult Grange activity. But experience has shown that interests of young people are often much different from those of older members. The Grange youth program attempts to provide a broad range of activities to meet the special needs of young Grangers.

Skill building while having fun is incorporated into several Grange youth programs. Annual competition for the title of Young Couple of the Year and Outstanding Young Granger captures the attention of many throughout the year. The young couple honor goes to Grangers who have evidenced significant involvement in their Grange, family and community. The final judging is conducted at the State Grange convention held annually during the month of June. Couples present a report including a resume highlighting their activities. The couple chosen for the state title spends the following year representing the Grange at many meetings and functions around the state.

Two outstanding young Grangers are selected each year at the State Grange convention – a male and a female – both under the age of 23. Judging practices are similar to those in the young couple contest and the young people also participate in many Grange-related activities. These competitions provide opportunity for young people to develop public speaking and leadership skills. Many previous winners have gained practical experience which has enabled them to become effective community leaders.

Structured public speaking and essay writing contests also stimulate younger members to sharpen skills which will aid them in their careers and public service activities. Three age divisions in each contest allow for fair competition. Cash awards are granted in each contest and the state first place winner in the public speaking contest is eligible for district and national competition.

All levels of the Grange have chosen education about the needs of the hearing impaired as a project. The youth sponsor an annual "sign-a-song" contest which requires the contestant to learn sign language for a song and perform it for judging. Any Granger is eligible to compete.

Concurrent with the State Grange convention, the youth department conducts a full week of activities for youth members.

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### **GRANGE FOUNDATION PROVIDES NUMEROUS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS**

Many scholarships for college students are awarded each year by the Washington State Grange Foundation, the State Grange women's activities department and the Grange Insurance Association (GIA, headquartered in Seattle). Each scholarship is for \$750 or more.

The grants for higher education are made from several funds. Some endowments support awards for students engaged in college studies relating to some area of agriculture. Others assist students in any field of college study.

Much of the money raised each year by the Grange family living department is used for scholarships. One category grants awards to students preparing for a career in some area of home economics. The other category is open to any individual engaged in a vocational course of study.

The Grange Insurance Association awards several Washington state students scholarships of \$750-\$1,000 each. Information on GIA grants is available from Grange Insurance Association, 200 Cedar St., Seattle, Wash. 98121; (206) 448-4911.

In 2009, the State Grange Foundation granted 31 scholarships and GIA awarded 11 scholarships in Washington state.