

Workplace
WATERCOOLERCol. Falls to host
discussion on
higher-paying
jobs in Montana

The Columbia Falls Area Chamber will host Greg Gianforte of Better Montana Jobs for a community discussion June 1 about higher-paying jobs in Montana.

Gianforte also is the founder of Right Now Technologies.

The roundtable discussion will be a brown bag lunch, with water and coffee available, at the North Valley Hospital Community Room at noon June 1.

For questions or to reserve a space, contact director@columbiafallschamber.org or call 406-892-2072.

Showcase to
help educate
local businesses
on area tourism

The Whitefish Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with the Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau presents the third annual Summer Tourism Showcase.

Recreation and activity-related businesses that wish to participate will answer questions from the front-line staffs of restaurants, hotels, and retail shops.

Members of either the Whitefish Chamber or the Whitefish Convention and Visitor's Bureau can participate in the showcase for free.

The showcase will take place on June 4 from 4 to 6 p.m. at Grouse Mountain Lodge.

To reserve a space, contact Sarah Stewart at the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce at 862-3501 or email businessmanager@whitefishchamber.org.

Chamber hosts
safety workshop
to instruct on
tools, training

The Whitefish Chamber of Commerce will host a "365 Days of Safety" workshop starting June 18 at the Hampton Inn in Kalispell. The training is free and will run from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Topics will include workplace violence prevention and training tips. For more information, call 800-332-6102, extension 5361, or register online at www.safemt.com/montana-state-fund-programs.

'This is the way democracy should work':
Red Ants Pants owner attends small biz summit at White House

By ALEXANDER DEEDY
Independent Record

Sarah Calhoun, owner of White Sulphur Springs-based Red Ants Pants, was the sole representative from Montana at a small business summit at the White House recently.

She spent two days participating in panel discussions and attending forums with top policy advisers to the president.

"This has been an honor and a terrific platform to emphasize Montana's unique opportunities at the national level," Calhoun said in a press release.

The summit was organized by the Small Business Majority, a

Dark fruit trials begin at FVCC

By LYNNETTE HINTZE
The Daily Inter Lake

The quest to develop alternative agricultural crops in Flathead County continued last week with a new dark fruit research plot planted at Flathead Valley Community College.

The study is a collaborative effort between FVCC and Montana State University. It follows on the heels of similar research studies of cherries, grapes and hops, shepherded by the Flathead County Extension Office to help local farmers increase profits.

"There are over 85,000 parcels of land in Flathead County that are between 5 and 10 acres, MSU Flathead County Extension Agent Pat McGlynn pointed out. "These smaller-acreage landowners are looking for innovative ideas to maintain their agricultural landscape. They need something non-traditional with higher value.

"You can't grow a 10-acre wheat field and have all equipment needed for that, so I'm looking for crops that fit with our new landscape," McGlynn said. "I am excited about the potential for growing considerable acreage in small, dark fruits. These plants are cold-tolerant, do not require expensive infrastructure and can produce within the first two to three years."

During a Made in Montana assembly at the state capitol three years ago, McGlynn interviewed a number of business owners about the fruits used in their products. Barbecue sauces, wines, ice cream, granola mixes, cookies, jams, jellies, salsas and candies are being assembled in Montana, but the fruit was purchased out of state.

"The quantity of fruit needed was just not available in state," she said. "Here was an opportunity for Flathead farmers to grow

high-value fruit and sell to Montana businesses eager to buy local ingredients.

Many of the small dark fruits grow in extremely frigid temperatures from North American into Canada, some in Northern Europe.

Small dark fruit in the MSU/FVCC study include Saskatoons, black and red currants, aronias, shrub cherries, haskaps, elderberries and gogi berries. The fruits can be juiced, dehydrated, used fresh, made into jams and jellies and maintain their health benefits, McGlynn said.

"I do not anticipate issues with cold hardiness. It will be most informative to study the economics of these crops," she said. "How many tons per acre can we achieve, what harvesting equipment will be needed, will businesses contract with growers to obtain local ingredients and what type of processing will be needed? The bottom line is, does it make money for the grower?"

Through the cold-hardy wine grape research trials initiated by McGlynn locally in 2012, growers learned where wine grapes can be grown profitably in Montana.

"This allows growers to make a profit and wineries to purchase local fruit," she said. "The new hybrids developed in Minnesota made that a possibility."

Heather Estrada and Julian Cunningham, instructors of the integrated agriculture and food systems curriculum at FVCC, will use the dark fruit study as a learning lab for their students.

"I am thrilled to have the research located at FVCC where there will be no accidental herbicide drift," McGlynn said, citing the challenges of conducting on-farm horticulture studies. "Fertilizer recommendations will be followed and fruit will be removed when



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY graduate student Durc Setzer works in the dark fruit research plot at Flathead Valley Community College. He will help with the analysis and data collection. MSU's Flathead County Extension Agent Pat McGlynn is leading an effort to study what kinds of dark fruits can be grown locally to help diversify agriculture in the Flathead Valley.

appropriate." McGlynn had intended to start the dark fruit study in 2013 when the hops project jumped ahead in priority. She said she's now glad she waited because there are similar trials underway in Helena, Bozeman and Corvallis.

"It's a benefit to our

region and to the state to have these trials located across Montana and to be able to pool our expertise," she said.

The small, dark fruits in the trials are considered "super foods." The anti-oxidant and vitamin benefits surpass almost all other fruit, McGlynn pointed out.

Aronia, one of the plants in the study, is a native North American plant in high demand for its health benefits and natural disease-fighting qualities.

Features editor Lynnette Hintze may be reached at 758-4421 or by email at lhintze@dailyinterlake.com.

Series highlights state breweries, recreation

HELENA — A video production crew last week visited Western Montana to film a web series featuring craft breweries and outdoor recreation through a program with Men's Journal and the Montana Office of Tourism.

"Real Brewers" pairs a recreational activity with drinks from a brewery nearby. Three episodes will be produced, one each to highlight Bozeman, Helena and the Flathead area.

TV personality Zane Lamprey, known for food-and-drink programming such as "Three Sheets" and "Drinking Made Easy," accompanied the crew to host.

"Montana is a place where visitors can have exciting outdoor experiences by day and relax with unique brews at night only a short trip down the road," said Montana Department of Commerce Director Meg O'Leary. "This

program is so exciting because it uses the reach and recognition of Men's Journal to promote multiple aspects of Montana's tourism offerings."

Part of the state's tourism marketing campaign, the episodes will premiere at MensJournal.com over the summer, with the first slated to debut early July and the last around mid-August.

Around the Flathead, the crew enjoyed the

trails of Whitefish Mountain Bike Park with a guide from Whitefish Bike Retreat before ending at Flathead Lake Brewing Co. in Bigfork.

Bozeman was the first stop of the five-day shoot. The crew started off the day rock climbing with Montana Alpine Guides, covering the basics in town before departing for the Gallatin National Forest and finally retiring to Bozeman Brewing.

In Helena, fly fishing with CrossCurrents Fly Shop was on the agenda. Lewis and Clark Brewery was the night's setting.

The Montana Office of Tourism's mission is to strengthen Montana's economy through the promotion of the state as a vacation destination and film location. In 2014, Montana hosted 11 million visitors who added nearly \$4 billion to the state's economy.

nonpartisan small business advocacy group run by small business owners.

Calhoun founded Red Ants Pants, a women's work pants company, in 2006. She had attended a small business event in Washington, D.C., several years ago and was one of 100 small business leaders from around the country invited to attend the summit.

Before the event, she invited other business owners from around Montana to send her issues or ideas to raise at the summit.

The three biggest challenges facing Montana small business owners, she said, are workforce development, rural infrastructure and

tax code.

"As small business owners, we truly carry a huge burden of taxes," she said.

Red Ants Pants contracts manufacturing of its pants to companies in Seattle, Denver and White Sulphur Springs, Calhoun said. But those labor prices and taxes are much higher than what companies who outsource their manufacturing pay.

So Calhoun stood up during one of the forums and asked White House advisers if tax incentives or other support is possible to help companies that manufacture in the U.S.

"They didn't have a great answer," she said, adding that changing tax codes is probably a

more complicated process than she envisions.

But the question did create some buzz around the room, and Calhoun said accountants and other business owners were approaching her afterward to discuss similar challenges when trying to keep manufacturing stateside.

"It is very refreshing hearing from other business owners that no one's alone in the business challenges we're all facing," Calhoun said.

Despite not receiving a good answer, Calhoun said it's encouraging to be able to bring real-world issues to policy makers.

"This is the way democracy should

work, in my opinion," she said.

She said other discussions centered on federal support, including expanding federal funding for programs like the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center and any other support services for small businesses. The more support, she said, the more a small business would be encouraged to hire more employees.

According to the Small Business Administration, Montana has 30,641 small businesses and another estimated 120,173 self-employed workers. Those small businesses account for 99 percent of all businesses in the state, which employ 89.65 percent of all employment,

the SBA website states.

Red Ants Pants employs two full-time employees, two part-time employees and several contract workers around the state, Calhoun said. Plus the music festival she runs employs two people year-round, eight people for six months and 70 people the week of the festival.

Calhoun said that once she had a chance to recover from the trip she wanted to jot notes down on paper from what she learned. Then she wanted to start pressing the issue of tax incentives for U.S. manufacturing by writing letters to Montana's congressional delegation and President Obama's office.