Willits Economic Localization Newsletter

The WELL Bucket

Volume 22, Issue 6 November, December 2026



Other Upcoming Events

Annual Day of the Divine: November 15 at Little Lake Grange, 12noon - 6pm, $22/adults, children under 12 free. (Tickets available at Flying Dog Pizza).

Pete Sawyer & The Left-Hand Monkey Wrench Band: November 21, at Little Lake Grange, doors open at 7:30, music starts at 8pm.

Willits Wild Bunch / Toy Run. Run: November 29, starts at Grocery Outlet at 11am and ends at Little Lake Grange... bring an unwrapped christmas present and have lunch! Raffles and auctions will help raise money to give children in Willits a great christmas!!! Join Us!

Grange Craft Faire: December 4 & 5 from 11am to 5pm at Little Lake Grange. Pictures with Santa on Saturday from 12noon to 4pm.

39th Annual Crafts Fair: December 12th from 10am to 6pm & December 13th from 10am to 4pm, at the Willits Center For The Arts

Light Up The Park - Free Holiday Festival: Saturday December 12th from 5pm to 8pm, at Bud Snider/Willits City Park, Event Merchants, Food Vendors, Music & Dance (Tree Lighting Ceremony at 7pm), brought to you by Future Farmers of America & Willits Chamber of Commerce

Membership renewal emails and mailings are going out this month! Please go to **well95490.org/join-donate** or send your renewal to WELL, **p.o. box 42, willits ca 95490**! by the way, donations over the minimum are much appreciated and needed!

Weekly Farmer's Market:

Now moved indoors...

Thursdays (except holidays) at Little Lake Grange, through April 3pm - 5pm.

Local Harvest Celebration:

Gratitude, Community & Local Food Security

– by Claudia Wenning

The Local Harvest Celebration, held October 4th at the Little Lake Grange, was a lively, inspiring, and wonderfully well-received event—a true celebration of gratitude for the season's bounty and for the many people working to strengthen our local food system. The day offered something for everyone: music, free hot popcorn, all kinds of prepared foods, donated food to share freely, and literally thousands of seeds available to take home at no cost.

We also enjoyed hands-on activities and demonstrations, including corn husk doll making, pumpkin painting, wool processing, seed saving and processing, and acorn processing. One of the highlights was an impressive setup for pressing apples into fresh apple cider. We are especially grateful to Mike Adams and his crew for taking on this Herculean task! Mike also pressed some surely delicious Chardonnay grape juice, which disappeared so fast — it must have been very good!



Laura Toomey, Madge Strong, and Claudia Wenning leading a gratitude song near the beginning of the event.



Early arrivers gather at the harvest display

A heartfelt thank-you to Nuestra Alianza for being part of this special day and feeding us all with such delicious food. The Community Wellness Collective was also there, generously sharing their wonderful herbal teas with everyone.

We are grateful to the amazing presenters who shared their knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm all day.

The event also provided an opportunity to share updates on developments within the local food security movement. There are six action groups working on improving local access to food in ways that are affordable, sustainable, and community-centered: Networking, Community Gardens, Farm to School Grants, Land Trust Opportunities, Health and Wellness Education, Local Food Distribution and Food Collection, including the Food Banks and Gleaners groups throughout our area. Our presenters included Prana, Brian Weller with the fantastic Mind Map, Mike Adair, Buffey Bourassa, Michael Foley, Eric Hart, Claudia Wenning, Jennifer Ludtge, and Ashley Lueders.

The focus must remain on networking, collaboration, and making the best possible use of the resources we already have available—regardless of what happens at the state or federal level. It is vital that we continue to keep the conversation around local food security alive within our community. We all have a role to play, taking meaningful steps to strengthen and secure local food availability. We invite anyone interested in becoming involved to reach out to WELL and learn how they can participate: **office@well95490.org.**

This event was sponsored by WELL and the Little Lake Grange. Thanks especially to the "dream team" that created and brought this event to life: Madge Strong, Laura Toomey, Annie Waters, Prana Petru, Miriam Raphael, and Lila Ryan [editor: and Claudia herself!] -- all so instrumental, engaged, and dedicated.



Jennifer Lutge, Claudia Wenning and Carmen Day are delighted during the Grange garden tour - Photo by Madge Strong



Peter Smith volunteers at the popular apple press

I also want to give special recognition to my magnificent Grange Garden Project partners: Annie Waters, Leslie King, Donna D'Terra, and the after-event cleanup crew. You stepped in with such joy, energy, and vigor, and your contributions made a tremendous difference.

We are equally grateful to the many other wonderful volunteers, presenters, and community groups who came out to participate and contribute their time, energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm.

We are also grateful for generous donations made available for this event by local businesses, including: Frey Vineyards, Reza's Breadery, Mendo Mill, Grocery Outlet, and Safeway. Thank you for supporting this celebration and for supporting our community. It matters. Food matters. Community matters.





Tours At Mitigation Lands

– by Amy Wolitzer, Project Interpreter, MCRCD

The Willits Bypass Mitigation Lands, located in Little Lake Valley, is the largest public wetlands restoration and mitigation project in the State of California. As mitigation for habitat impacted during the building of the Willits Bypass, Caltrans created a non-wasting endowment through the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation as a permanent source of funding for management and monitoring of 2,087 acres of wet meadow, stream corridors, and oak woodlands. The Mendocino County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) provides on-the-ground land management, monitoring, and monthly public tours.

Fall Walk

November 21, 2026, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Let's take a walk to enjoy what fall has to offer - fresh air, changing colors, better glimpses of birds on bare branches, perhaps animal tracks along trails or even sightings of our wild neighbors. This will be a relaxed wander along old ranch roads along Davis Creek with plenty of pauses to learn and chat about what we see. We will probably walk a total of about three miles. Plan to carry drinking water and snacks for yourself. Group size is limited -- you must reserve a spot to come on this free program. If you would like to come text "Ranger Amy" at (369) 216 9990 or email amyw@mcrcd.org. Significant rain at the time of the field trip may result in cancellation of the tour.

Bird Watching Adventure

December 12, 2026 - 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

The Willits Mitigation Lands and the nearby Willits Water Treatment Plant are great places to catch glimpses of really cool birds in winter. In addition to all manner of waterfowl hanging out at the ponds, hawks and eagles are frequently seen hunting in the fields nearby. After passing through the water treatment area we will follow Outlet Creek where we may see river otters or other wildlife! Plan to carry drinking water and snacks for yourself. Group size is limited -- you must reserve a spot to come on this free program. If you would like to come text "Ranger Amy" at **(369) 216 9990** or email **amyw@mcrcd.org**. Significant rain at the time of the field trip may result in cancellation of the tour.



Mendocino County Resource Conservation District
Conserving Wild and Working Landscapes Since 1945

Group size limited - RSVP required - Email amyw@mcrcd.org or text (369) 216 9990

Acorn Day at Grace Hudson Museum in Ukiah



Saturday, November 7, 1PM - 4PM

431 South Main Street, Ukiah

Acorn Day returns with three distinct but related programs:

1:00PM The Beautiful Tree

Eric Wilder (Kashia Band of Pomo Indians) will introduce a rare 20-minute film, The Beautiful Tree, from 1964, featuring his grandmother Essie Parrish demonstrating how to harvest acorn as well as make acorn mush and bread.

2:00PM Sudden Oak Death

Dakota Perez Gonzalez (Yurok Tribal Member and also of Pomo descent) will discuss what sudden oak death is and how it can be stopped.

2:30PM Acorn Bread

Patty Franklin (Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians) will demonstrate how to make acorn bread and also share about acorn processing. Visitors will be able try samples!

Tao Of Seeds – by Ellen Bartholemew and Miriam Raphael

This is a new on-going column for the WELL newsletter and it will focus on growing for seed. You might wonder at a gardening column starting in November. Well, if you are growing for seed, you aren't finished yet.



You may also wonder at the photo of a crowded bed of celery and some very skinny celery. Many of you probably know that celery is a biennial. The celery is planted to get the highest number of plants and not to care about size. It is very delicious anyway, and it makes a great snack in the garden. Ellen has been breeding this celery for years now and it is adapting to our conditions here at Ridgewood Ranch. Its name is Cold Comfort Celery.

Very soon now these plants will be brutally dug up and transplanted into new beds where they will recover and flourish in the spring to produce tall stalks with beautiful umbels covered with flowers. Once the seed matures the stalks will be cut down, dried and separated.

Our human ancestors started selecting superior plants for seed a long, long time ago. We have accumulated seed wisdom. We are fortunate here in Mendocino County to have many seed savers. We can do some profiles of them as time goes on. Stay tuned. Seeds take us full circle. There is no life without seeds...

Favas for the Future - by Julia Dakin

I was lucky enough to host a fava bean table at the Local Harvest Celebration at the Grange last month. People who had grown favas their whole lives stopped at my table, surprised by the diversity: black, purple, yellow, green, large, and small, with varying flavors developed by many cultures around the world over thousands of years.



Variety of fava beans, photo by Julia Dakin

Many people don't particularly like eating large-seeded Windsor favas as dry beans, because extra peeling can be time consuming and they have that strong fava flavor. But after some grant research and cooking trials with my fava collaborator and local food busybody Caroline Radice, we started eating bell beans. Bell beans are in the same fava species, but have more of a history elsewhere being eaten as dry beans (and ignored locally as a food crop). After making chili and flour for bread and biscuits, I got more enthusiastic about the potential for the species as a staple food crop for Mendocino County.

If you already cook with favas, share a favorite recipe! I believe bell beans grown in vineyards and backyards, harvested with combines and by hand, and incorporated into value added foods (like tempeh and bread), could become an important part of food security in Mendocino County.

Stay in touch: **FavasForTheFuture.org**



Notes From Willits Indivisible

– by Mary Burns

We are a peaceful, non-partisan, non-violent group that loves democracy. There is power and camaraderie in acting locally together!

Our last big action for 2026 was our part in the "No Kings: Vote Early" event on Saturday, October 17th, which turned out to be the largest early vote activation in U.S. history! Early voting had already started across much of the country, and there were more than 3,000 of these events in all 50 states. Unlike the previous three No Kings events, which drew millions of Americans into the streets nationwide, the focus was on early voting and turnout rather than protesting. The events ranged from small backyard barbecues to huge rallies, all with the goal of making sure everyone would be able to vote in a free, fair, and safe election. We want everyone's voice to be heard, no matter the political affiliation. We stand up to preserve our democracy, to make sure that our kids and our grandkids have a decent country in which to survive.

It was a successful day of massive voter participation, one where we helped folks lean into voter power as a statement on what democracy is and should be. We met at Babcock Park on a crisp fall morning, in high spirits, believing in our cause and each other – 250 of us, from tiny tots to seasoned members with dozens of elections under their belts. And as always, we were encouraged by the hundreds of honks and thumbs up we received from people driving by. [Editor's note on Nov. 4th – From the election results, it seems to have worked- locally and nationwide!]

Willits Indivisible will keep up the good work. After a year's worth of Democracy Vigils every Friday evening at Babcock Park, however, we're going to take a break for the winter. Unless, of course, we are needed!

To find out more and sign up for our emailings, go to our website: **willitsindivisible.org**.

Data Center Moratorium Extended

– Excerpt thanks to MendoVoice

In mid-October, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 to extend the moratorium on new data centers until Aug. 21, 2028. Facilities drawing under 3 megawatts of power are exempt from the moratorium, which roughly reflects the maximum capacity PG&E provides through standard service without the need for custom transformers or a new substation, according to Supervisor Ted Williams, who proposed the exemption. Supervisor Maureen Mulheren voted against the extension, calling the 3-megawatt threshold "not fully developed."

Fire Preparedness Grants!

Hello Neighbors! Don't miss the December 15th application deadline to be eligible for home hardening and defensible space funding from the $50 million Mendocino County FEMA BRIC grant. Available to all Brooktrails, Spring Creek, Sylvandale and Gates property owners at no cost. Eligible projects may include roofs, tree clearing, siding, and anything else that is recommended.

Phase I stage of the FEMA BRIC grant is funded. There is a December 15th deadline for property owners to register. Phase II funding is contingent on FEMA approval and completion of Phase I. If you don't sign up you won't get anything. Please share with your neighbors and let's get all 750 residences signed up!

For more information call us at **707-360-0056** or contact Owl Check at **https://owlcheck.net/**.

Mendocino County: **https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/All-Departments/Executive-Office/Prevention-Recovery-Resiliency-Mitigation-Emergency-Preparedness** (Once there, scroll dwown to the box titled "Wildfire Community Resilience Project" and click +)

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The Good Farm Fund's annual Winter Feast

Dec 1, 2026, 6PM

Rod Shippey Hall, 4070 University Rd, Hopland

Join us in a celebration of local food resiliency now and into the future. This community dinner connects attendees with our region's farms and food producers through a sumptuous menu prepared by beloved local chefs, which showcases the world-class foods and produce our project partners bring to our region.

Get tickets at **goodfarmfund.org/events**

Stay Warm, Save Energy – Nov. 18

– by Aldo Hernandez, NREN

As temperatures drop, join NREN (Northern Rural Energy Network) Mendocino and REDI (Renewable Energy Development Institute) on Wednesday, November 18, from 5 to 7 pm at 121 W Commercial St in Willits for a free Community Event on How to Stay Warm while Saving Energy this Winter.

Learn practical ways to prepare your home for the colder months, from simple weatherization tips to free programs and services available to help, including no-cost home energy consultations, free energy efficiency and weatherization kits and rebates on appliances and more! Activities will include demonstrations on how to use the kit items, an overview on heat pumps, backup battery demonstration, and a challenge to guess which household items are the biggest energy users. Complimentary snacks and drinks will be provided. This is the first in a series of community events, so tell your friends and neighbors, bring your questions, and get ready for winter!

See the Eventbrite here and let us know if you will be attending: **https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-winter-energy-event-tickets-2003417151631?aff=oddtdtcreator&keep_tld=true**

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Emandal Retreats & Nov. 28 Pizza Event

– by Tam Adams

Emandal-A Farm on a River, established in 1908, continues still as a retreat from the everyday world..... summertime cabin camping for generations of families..... a country get-a-way for art folk and friends to learn and share new methods and techniques.

Family Camp is open from June to September. ArtStay Sessions two or three times a year.

A special event on **Saturday, November 28**, the Saturday right after Thanksgiving.... Pizza and Wreaths. Join us for all-you-can-eat pizza, along with materials for making your own evergreen holiday wreath. 16 miles NE of Willits, on the Eel River, at the end of a county road.



Basket making at one of Emandal's Art Stays

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NC Financial Group 2025 awarded Gold in categories Accounting Firm, Financial Advisor (won prior in 2024), and Tax Prep. The Best of Lake and Mendocino presented by Bicoastal Media is a vote-based contest for individuals and businesses that serve Lake County, CA, and Mendocino County, CA. Nominations are provided by the community and after the nomination period is completed, the names of nominated businesses in each of the categories are finalized and make up the official Best of Lake and Mendocino voting ballot. The audience can then vote on one choice in each category. Voters are allowed to nominate without limits and once the voting period has begun, one vote per category per 24-hour period is allowed. Listing in this publication and/or award is not a guarantee of future investment success. This recognition should not be construed as an endorsement of the advisor by any client. No compensation was provided directly or indirectly by the recipient for participation or in connection with obtaining or using the third-party rating or award.
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Coordinating Committee Summaries Oct. 5 and Nov. 2, 2026 (combined)

At its Oct. 5 meeting, the WELL CoCom plus some of our co-sponsors from the Little Lake Grange reviewed the success of the Oct. 4 Local Harvest Celebration. (See article in this newsletter highlighting the many activities.) We expressed interest in making the event annual with improvements to its format.

The group also reviewed finances, noting that while expenses remain low, we are not quite at break-even. Stable income is needed, making membership renewals especially important for 2027. Organizational goals include providing clear value to members, increasing visibility, refreshing our promotional materials, and steadily growing membership. Fundraising and membership renewal strategies include recurring donations, renewal mailings and emails, and newsletters.

Goal setting for 2027 and planning for the December 6 Soup Party were major focuses across both Oct. and Nov. CoCom meetings. Several possible 2027 initiatives were considered, including practical skills workshops, documentary film events, community meals, city beautification projects, creating local emergency food storage, a City Flower campaign, and expanded community engagement efforts. Some other ideas are on the back-burner for now.

All our wish-list of goals and projects rely on volunteer energy. The soup event will serve as a community-building gathering, a membership outreach opportunity (and our annual member meeting), and a way to gather feedback on and participation in our priorities and projects for 2027.

For the Soup Party itself, CoCom discussed menu planning, volunteer assignments, outreach, setup logistics, and community group participation. Note that current and new members attend for free, while the non-member fee is $15.

One other recent accomplishment was noted: a series of information & discussion sessions about the 14 statewide ballot measures, initiated by WELL and WEC. These were held at the library, the Hub, and Ridgewood Ranch, reaching about 75 people in person, with information also distributed to hundreds other local voters.

Next CoCom meetings are set for **Mon. Dec. 5, 6:30** and (tentatively) **Mon. Jan. 4, 6:30 at the Hub, 630 S. Main St. Contact office@well95490.org for more info.**

Opportunity for Shared Office Space at the Hub!

WEC and WELL are exploring a new use for the available space in the Hub building at 630 S. Main Street (just south of Mariposa Market) in Willits.

The goal is to create a shared, community-oriented space for local nonprofit organizations, community groups, small programs, and individuals. By sharing the building and its expenses, participants could pay substantially less than for traditional separate office space. We hope the space will encourage collaboration, networking, and new partnerships.

To learn more or express interest, contact: Ellen Drell at 707-459-2643

WHAT IS WELL?

Willits Economic Localization is a 501(c)3 non-profit, membership organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

Our Vision: An enduring local economy that provides health and security for our community.

Our Mission: To foster the creation of a local, sustainable economy in the Willits area by helping residents to learn valuable skills and take action, and by partnering with other organizations to share knowledge and support projects that build a thriving community

WELL Coordinating Committee

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There are two vacancies on the Committee, if interested call Madge 459-1493

Memberships are $35-85 individual or $50-100 family; Donations are welcome! WELL, PO Box 42, Willits CA 95490

Donate now with.. PayPal

Please join or renew your membership for 2026