



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact: Lisa Hill
503.730-8055, lisa@lisahillpr.com

OREGON ORGANIC COALITION BESTOWS AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE ON SIX LOCAL INDIVIDUALS AND COMPANIES

Environmental Activist Jim Weaver Gives Keynote at Luncheon Celebrating Local, Organic Food Trade

SALEM, Ore. – *September 13, 2011* – The recipients of the 2011 Oregon Organic Coalition (OOC) Awards were announced today at a celebratory luncheon at the Ecotrust Building in Portland. Nearly 65 representatives from Oregon’s farming, retail, academic, and food production community gathered to honor these organic innovators. The event, a highlight of the annual [Organically Grown in Oregon Week](#), featured a keynote address by Jim Weaver, local politician, author and environmental activist.

Awards were given to individuals and organizations that demonstrated innovation in organic practices, service to the industry, expansion of organic business opportunities, and overall achievement in the state’s organic industry. This year, OOC recognized accomplishments in furthering the quality and growth of organic food in six areas: processing, retail, wholesale distribution, organic advocacy, organic policy and farm crops. The following individuals and organizations were honored with OOC Awards of Excellence:

Processor: Bliss Unlimited, Eugene

Bliss Unlimited, LLC was founded in January, 2005, by Luna Marcus and Larry Kaplowitz, when they began making and selling [Luna & Larry's Coconut Bliss](#) out of their home in the Whiteaker neighborhood in Eugene, Oregon. Their intention was to make a satisfying and delicious ice cream that didn't have the negative health and ecological effects of dairy and sugar, and that tasted better than the soy and rice-based options that were on the market. Using a base of organic coconut milk and organic agave syrup, they succeeded, and, pulled by consumer demand, quickly grew the company, going into nationwide distribution in early 2009. Their products are now sold in more than 2500 natural food stores, co-ops, and supermarkets throughout the US and Canada. Another innovation was their use of agave syrup, a natural low-glycemic sweetener. From the beginning, all of their products were certified organic, and many of their flavors contain certified fair trade ingredients as well. Coconut Bliss quickly became the best selling nondairy frozen dessert in the northwest (and in some markets, sold even better than the leading dairy-based frozen desserts). Their Cherry Amaretto flavor recently received the *Vegetarian Times* "Foodie Award" for Best Frozen Dessert for 2010. Bliss provides leadership to the Willamette Valley Sustainable Foods Alliance and they sponsor and participate in community events and regularly donate to area nonprofits.

Retailer: Sundance Natural Foods, Eugene

[Sundance Natural Foods](#), is a privately owned, natural foods store that first opened its doors in 1971 and has provided Eugene with high quality, organic food at very competitive prices ever

since. Sundance's mission, "Individuals nourishing community nourishing individuals," implies that Sundance can practice right livelihood by being nurturing in how they relate to others as well as in the foods they sell. Management at Sundance was one of the first to consider a variable margin, one that gave organic food, especially produce, a more competitive price. Sundance is a pioneer in the natural food community in the Willamette Valley--staying strong and true to their ethics and mission of providing local, organic products. They have continued to be an integral part of the community, staying active in local sustainability groups and offering guidance for young entrepreneurial businesses.

Wholesaler: Mountain Rose Herbs, Eugene

Since 1987, [Mountain Rose Herbs](#) has been known for its commitment to organic agriculture. Mountain Rose Herbs is a wholesaler and producer of high quality, organic herbal products—from herbs and spices, to teas and oils and edible, medicinal and cosmetic products. Co-owners Julie Bailey and Shawn Donnille worked as engaged, grassroots activists for many decades giving them a unique opportunity to witness and address critical environmental issues in agriculture firsthand. They gained an especially deep appreciation for farmers, their struggles, and their rights. As a result of their combined experience, when purchasing from farmers Mountain Rose Herbs extends forward contracts that pay organic farmers 50% in advance and the rest upon delivery of the harvest. This has encouraged organic practices and has stimulated growth of organic herb farming in the Pacific Northwest. Mountain Rose Herbs received Green America's People's Choice Award for Green Business of the Year in 2008 and the Oregon Ethics in Business Award in 2010. They have also been honored with the City of Eugene's prestigious Bold Steps Towards Sustainability Award, Mt. Pisgah Arboretum Business of the Year in 2008, Evolution in Motion Award 2008 by Provender Alliance, and the 2010 Lane County Trashbuster Award.

Organic Advocate (Lifetime Achievement): Jim Weaver

Former Congressman Jim Weaver served as a House Representative from Oregon in Congress from 1975 to 1987. Congressman Weaver pioneered efforts for organic agriculture in our country. He saw the dangers in chemically intensive agriculture first, while growing up in South Dakota, and later as a staffer for the Oregon State Legislature's Agriculture Committee. While serving in Congress he introduced the Organic Agriculture Act of 1977 and moved it forward until President Carter approved the Act. This Act was the Nation's first organic agriculture law. He was then the chief sponsor of the Agricultural Productivity Act of 1983, which had 58 Representatives as co-sponsors. This bill proposed to examine 24 farms throughout the United States - 12 that had used chemical intensive agriculture and 12 organic farms that had been financially successful for five years to prove the viability of organic agriculture. President Reagan's administration opposed the bill. Jim was known for his expertise on energy policy and made headlines in his successful battles to stop the proliferation of nuclear power plants in the Northwest, strategically using economic arguments while other activists were touting safety and environmental concerns. Others have followed Weaver's example and today economic issues, such as calculating the true cost of sprawl, are often used to draw broader support for environmental concerns.

Organic Policy Analyst: Laura Barton

Laura Barton is a trade manager in the Agricultural Development and Marketing Division of the Oregon Department of Agriculture and has conducted trade activities in the US and overseas for 23 years with the State. Her responsibilities include overseeing the Organic Costshare Reimbursement program, farm participation in Oregon's Senior and WIC Farm Direct Nutrition Programs, and WIC Fruit & Veggie Vouchers. She assists numerous small direct farm market producers and larger farms and processors with market access issues and is engaged in "Buy Local" programs for Oregon farmers and processors. She has served on the board and continues to assist the Oregon Farmers Markets Association; participates in the Chef's Collaborative (connecting chefs with farmers), and the Portland Culinary Alliance (which she co-founded in 1987). Laura has also facilitated the Oregon Department of Agriculture's participation in *Organically Grown in Oregon Week* for the past three years, as well as promoted the week to the Oregon Farmers Markets Association. She participated in the start up meetings for the

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Organic Programs (NASOP) to share common issues and challenges and work on resolutions.

Farm (Crops): Sauvie Island Organics, Portland

As a vegetable farmer, Shari Raider has spent her entire life in the food industry and become a leading figure in Portland's organic farming industry. [Sauvie Island Organics](#) is more than a farm; it is an educational center. A founding Board member of the [Sauvie Island Center](#), Shari teamed up with Cory Schreiber in 2005 to create the non-profit organization to provide educational experiences for Portland children directly on her Sauvie Island farm. With Shari's help, the small Sauvie Island Center has grown, and in 2010 they provided full-day field trips for approximately 900 elementary school children. It is the Center's mission to reach out to children from Portland's low-income schools, and in 2010, nearly 2/3 of their field trips included Title 1 schools. These trips are offered to the schools at no cost. The Sauvie Island Center offers field trips at no cost to these schools, raising the funds from grants and donors to be able to pay for the trip fees and transportation costs for these students.

About Oregon Organic Coalition

The Oregon Organic Coalition (OOC) was formed in 2005 to advance the development and growth of the state's organic agricultural community and trade. OOC brings together representatives of the organic trade as the stakeholders of the organic food system. Together, they support research on organic systems at Oregon State University, advocacy, alliances with like-minded groups, marketing programs and conferences, and provide direction and endorsements for activities that promote Oregon's organic industry.

#