

From the Executive Director:

This year has certainly gotten off to a dramatic start, with its record snow storms and constantly churning political news. But it's February in Portland, and that means we can start to think about milder weather as our predictably rainy spring approaches.

Just two weeks ago we completed another successful ChocolateFest. The crowds were a bit smaller this year due to traffic congestion from the post-inauguration protests, but those who made it, loved it. In past years the bundt cake was the winner, but this year the big hit was chocolate-infused alcohol, so keep that in mind when you make your Valentine's Day purchases. Nevertheless, we continue to be impressed by all our chocolate vendors who seem to outdo themselves every year with amazing chocolate creations from ingredients that come from trees. Yes, there is a connection between forests and chocolate!

And we at the World Forestry Center are in the process of completing some long overdue infrastructure repairs at Magness Tree Farm and in Miller and Cheatham Halls. There's always more to accomplish, but it sure is great to be checking some things off our to-do list thanks to some generous donations from the Cheatham Family, Intel Corporation, and a land bequest from Virginia Good! The buildings at Magness get new roofs and the halls get nice new projector systems with bigger screens.

Looking forward to the spring, we fully expect our grand gala on April 8 to be a sellout. Honoring all 210 of our Forestry Leadership Hall inductees, we will be hosting this event at Flo Merlo's Global Aviation Hangar in Hillsboro. Some of you just may even want to take the opportunity to fly there. How cool is that? But wait, there's more. Tesla will be showing off one of their latest, incredibly smart and quick electric vehicles. Those of you who'd like a test drive will need to remember to brace yourself. The acceleration is simply amazing. And then, once you are ready to slow down a bit, Big Bottom Whiskey will be serving up its amber nectar to put you in a mellow mood. Test drive first, whiskey second, please. Finally, Pepe and the Bottle Blondes will be entertaining us with their chic Copacabana style that echoes the delicious indulgence of the '50s nightclub scene. Overall, it's going to be a very stimulating evening.

We are also anticipating the arrival in April of our next cohort of International Fellows. With eight fresh faces from far-flung places, this program just keeps getting better. This year, 64-applicants vied for eight spots, allowing us to select from the world's best in creating yet another new cohort of foresters bent on making our planet's forests healthier. We can hardly wait to welcome them.

Finally, in pursuit of our ambitious mission in 2017, we are developing some remarkable conferences and professional gatherings. More about these in a future newsletter. Stay tuned.

-Eric Vines
Executive Director