

Small Investment, Big Return!



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In the midst of the Great Depression, fuel was hard to afford. So, in 1934, ninety-nine farmers in Southern Oregon came up with ten dollars each—ten dollars which was invested into a cooperative that is still growing, eighty-seven years later.

Today the Grange Co-op is no longer known for fuel. Over nearly nine decades, community needs and wants have changed and now, in addition to having the only organic feed mill between Sacramento and Eugene, Grange Co-op sells feed, fertilizers, clothing, snacks, pet supplies, and outdoor home décor in its seven stores and online.

The company is also committed to supporting its local communities. By providing discounts, awards, and scholarships for local youth programs, offering educational assistance to their employees, and contributing to fire relief funds for Southern Oregon and Northern California—the Grange Co-op can fulfill its purpose of helping its employees, customers, and communities achieve more together.

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“The company’s biggest success has been the ability to change, to listen to customers, and stay connected to the community. Because it all comes back to the people.”

-Neil Itzen
CEO

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In the midst of the Great Depression, fuel was hard to afford. So, in 1934, ninety-nine farmers in Southern Oregon came up with ten dollars each—ten dollars which was invested into a cooperative that is still growing today, eighty-seven years later. The Grange Co-op is no longer known for fuel, but anyone in Southern Oregon or Northern California who does farming, gardening, or likes bootcut jeans has probably visited at least one of the Grange's seven stores. The company's largest location is as far south as Yuba City, with six other stores around the Rogue Valley and Klamath Falls. And more expansion is on the horizon—not every company that's been around for nearly nine decades can claim that.

In 1947, the Grange Co-op grain elevator became a landmark in Central Point. Even after it caught fire in 1961, it was rebuilt in less than a year and is still functioning today. And according to Grange Co-op's CEO, Neil Itzen, and its Marketing Director, Jason Wall, the company has the only organic feed mill between Sacramento and Eugene. "The company's biggest success has been the ability to change, to listen to customers, and stay connected to the community," Itzen agreed. "Because it all comes back to the people."

Of course, in eighty-seven years, community needs and wants have changed. Farming in the Rogue Valley is a different process than it was during the Depression era, and now Grange Co-op stores sell far more than just feed and fertilizers. Today customers can also find clothing, snacks, pet supplies, and outdoor home décor on Grange shelves—or on the online store, which is yet another example of adapting to the customer.

And for anyone involved in the community's agricultural programs, the generosity of Grange Co-op is remarkable. Each year, youth in Southern Oregon and Northern California receive support in 4-H and FFA, through discounts, awards, and scholarships. Even gardening clubs, civic organizations, and community projects receive donations through the company. In the past few years, Grange Co-op has contributed to fire relief funds for Southern Oregon and Northern California. "These things matter to our people—so they matter to our company," said Itzen. In addition to all this, the co-op offers an educational assistance program, allowing employees who have worked for the company for at least six months, a \$2,500 yearly reimbursement on applicable school expenses, such as college classes or preparation courses (SAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.).

"We look for people who care about people," Itzen replied, when asked about the recruiting process. "We want them to believe in what they're doing—providing friendliness and quality products to their local community." Currently, Grange Co-op employs about 150 individuals in the Rogue Valley and around 270 overall. Training is done completely in-house, so there are very few requirements for prospective job seekers, other than a good attitude and a willingness to help people. "Grange Co-op offers internships and internal growth... you can do a lot of cool things here," finished Wall. "It's a fun place to be."

While the future may not be set in stone for anyone, the Grange Co-op has constantly-evolving visions for expansion. It's safe to say that as Grange Co-op grows, they will do so in a way that fulfills their purpose of helping their employees, customers, and communities achieve more together.



For nearly nine decades, Grange Co-op has attended to the community's needs

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