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## **FROM A YAKIMA SEED GROWS A FESTIVAL IN SOUTH KOREA**

It all started innocent enough. Mayor San-Ki Youn of Hadong, South Korea visited the Central Washington State Fair in September of 2014. When Mayor Youn stepped outside of the Agricultural Building, he saw the display of the giant pumpkins from the largest pumpkin contest. Right then, he knew he had to grow some in his country.

Fair officials helped secure some seeds from one of the pumpkin growers for the Mayor and he took them home and planted them in the spring.

Jump ahead a year and the Mayor ended up growing some very large pumpkins. Now, thinking it might be something others in Hadong County might want to do, he started the wheels in motion for the first annual Pumpkin Festival to be held there this fall.

To help make the new festival a success, 15,000 pumpkin seeds have been delivered to the Hadong County officials. When the small contingent from the Central Washington State Fair traveled to South Korea to participate in the annual Green Tea Festival, they visited with the Pumpkin Festival directors to set up a delivery of additional pumpkin seeds for their use. Tim Logan of Logan-Zenner in Sunnyside generously assisted with obtaining specially packaged pumpkin seeds for this collaboration.

According to Greg Lybeck, Assistant General Manager of the Fair and one of those to visit South Korea in May, the Mayor and the residents of Hadong are enthralled with growing pumpkins.

“We are helping them with all kinds of information,” said Lybeck. “Recipes for pumpkin pies and bread, how to carve jack-o-lanterns, and inspiration of festivities around our celebration of Halloween. They are extremely interested in everything pumpkin.”

To help encourage pumpkin growing in South Korea, the Fair looks to hold a new contest in the future that will be having the South Koreans actually enter the pumpkins they grow in the Yakima fair.

“It will all be done on-line,” said Lybeck. “But we think we’ll get some good entries in a category set up just for them.”

Lybeck said festivals are extremely popular in South Korea and they are very well attended, drawing people from all over the country and other countries as well.

The region of South Korea where the Green Tea Festival is, and where the new Pumpkin Festival will be, is very agricultural. They have been growing green tea in that region of the country for over 1000 years. Now, they will be growing Yakima Valley pumpkins too.

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