



2015 AG LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Recognizing Outstanding Leadership

The California Agricultural Leadership Foundation and the Ag Leadership Alumni Council presented the 2015 Ag Leadership Awards to four outstanding leaders— Mike Young (35), Roxanna Smith (19), Frank Hilliker (32) and Dr. Charles Boyer. The award ceremony was held on Oct. 15 in conjunction with Class 46's inauguration.

The Profiles in Leadership (PIL) Award, which recognizes Ag Leadership Program alumni for their leadership actions resulting in the betterment of industry, community, business, government, education and/or the environment, was awarded to Young, Smith and Hilliker. Dr. Boyer received the Honorary Fellow (HF) Award for his consistent commitment and uncommon excellence in the furtherance of education and leadership in California agriculture.



Photos by Vanessa Wright

“It gives us great pleasure to shine the spotlight on these four remarkable individuals for our 2015 Ag Leadership Awards,” said Bob Gray, CALF president and CEO. “They have demonstrated effective and strong leadership and have made positive contributions to agriculture and beyond. It is inspiring to see what they have done for the betterment of industry, community and agriculture.”



Profiles in Leadership
Awardee

Mike Young Class 35

Mike Young is principal of Wegis & Young and a fourth generation agricultural entrepreneur who grew up in Bakersfield working on the family farm every summer. He studied business and finance at the University of the Pacific.

Young currently manages his family's operations with his father, uncle, brother and cousin. Wegis & Young has several ag-related businesses under its umbrella. The diversified farming operation grows a variety of tree and row crops and manages agricultural property for individual and institutional investors.

Along with the agricultural interests and family business, Young is a partner in Water Associates, the only Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) dealer of Cummins industrial engines in Kern County. In addition, he successfully launched REDtrac—a personalized asset management and GPS tracking solution that aims to increase revenue to each client's operation. The business delivers both an innovative and progressive management tool for business entities of all types.

Young has been very involved in his community and industry as a servant leader who makes a difference. Some of the organizations to which he dedicates his time include: Kern County Farm Bureau; California Farm Bureau Federation; Kern Citizens for Sustainable Government; San Joaquin Valley Young Presidents Organization; Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce; Youth Leadership Bakersfield; California Cotton Growers Association and the Kern County Fair Board—to which he was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2011.

In addition, Young volunteers for many non-agricultural organizations in his community. He serves as a leader in his local church; volunteers for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society; Bakersfield California Editorial Board and the Quest Club.

Young's PIL nominators say, "Mike has tirelessly given his time, treasure and talent to many organizations and nonprofits. Mike is a prime example of what Ag Leadership is all about."

Since 2005, Young has given much of his time to the Ag Leadership Program's alumni council and served in various roles from 2006-2014. His leadership of the alumni council played a key role in developing new tools to create committees, encourage volunteerism, organize annual events and recruit new directors. Young currently serves on California Ag Leadership's board of directors, a position he began in 2014.

"I thank the foundation and the program for challenging me and giving me the tools and confidence to step outside of myself—knowing that I have the ability and the duty to lead wherever I am called," said Young. "I am very honored and humbled to have been nominated."



Profiles in Leadership
Awardee

Roxanna Smith Class 19

Roxanna Smith is senior vice president and senior relationship manager for the Mid-Valley Commercial Banking Office of Wells Fargo Bank. In her position, she focuses on middle market commercial banking relationships and is responsible for representing Wells Fargo in developing and maintaining relationships with key clients. Smith began her banking career in 1980 as a college intern for a production credit association. She received her degree from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo where she studied agribusiness management.

Smith is described by her peers as a true servant leader who has maintained a high level of community involvement. Her volunteer resume is extensive and includes a wide array of community and agricultural organizations.

Her PIL nominators note that, "Roxanna lives the mission of the California Agricultural Leadership organization and she is a leader that makes a difference through her example."

She has served for many years on the board of directors for Sierra Vista Child and Family Services. The organization helps more than 22,000 children and families each year by offering quality programs to serve people of all ages who are overwhelmed by mental illness, child abuse and substance abuse. In her role with Sierra Vista, Smith has helped with the annual gala and gives in any way she can.

"When I was growing up, my mother was always involved in community groups and outreach in lower served communities and that gave me the opportunity to see things that made me grateful for where I was," said Smith. "The same thing happened to me while I was in Ag Leadership—I saw things with a different set of eyes—it made me consider what we, as an ag community, can bring to the table."

In addition, she served for 16 years on the committee for the Stanislaus County Ag Hall of Fame event which raises money for the National Ag Science Center. Smith was also one of the primary organizers for 20 years for an event to benefit the Muir Trail Girl Scouts.

Smith works to support the California State Fair as a member of the advisory board and has dedicated her leadership over the years to California Women for Agriculture. Currently, she serves as a 4-H youth program advisor for the Stanislaus County 4-H All Star program.

"I feel very honored because there are so many people within Ag Leadership who are very deserving of this award, so to be recognized is pretty humbling," said Smith.



Profiles in Leadership
Awardee

Frank Hilliker Class 32

Frank Hilliker is president of Hilliker's Ranch Fresh Eggs, a family business he has been actively involved in for the majority of his life. The business, which was started in 1942 by his grandparents, Frank and Josephine Hilliker, is the oldest egg laying operation in San Diego and one of the longest established in all of California.

When his father, Harold Hilliker (12), suddenly passed away in 2009, Frank Hilliker stepped up in a big way at the ranch. With the support of his family, Hilliker led the business through the unexpected loss of their patriarch, and the changes that came with Proposition 2, while continuing to support the community through his many volunteer activities.

Hilliker serves as a director of the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) representing Lakeside Water District. Through this expertise, he has reviewed state water infrastructure projects and created opportunities to coordinate with state officials for improvement projects. He works to represent and share the viewpoints of Lakeside while maintaining the goal of a better water system for San Diego and California.

As a volunteer, Hilliker is actively involved in the Lakeside Chamber of Commerce; International 4-H Youth Exchange; Lakeside Union School District Bond Oversight Committee; San Diego County German American Society; East County Boys & Girls Club and a supporter of local FFA chapters.

Hilliker is a passionate agriculturalist and community leader who is known for giving his time and knowledge to improve his community and industry.

His PIL nominators say, "Frank has not only put sweat equity into all of these organizations, but he has also taken on a leadership role by helping to guide these organizations and to improve their fundraisers, gain community support and increase membership."

Under Hilliker's direction, a fundraising event for the local Boys and Girls Club raised \$140,000. The fundraiser helped to keep membership fees lower than those of other clubs and allowed for field trips, supplies and improvements to four locations.

With the passing of Proposition 2, Hilliker took every opportunity to educate the public about issues affecting his industry. He was interviewed by the Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, NPR, various radio stations and every television station in San Diego.

"Ag Leadership really helped give me the tools and confidence I needed to handle all the media requests that were coming my way," said Hilliker. "I've been the go-to person for a lot of media in San Diego and southern California when there's a story about eggs or chickens."

Hilliker doesn't shy away from sharing the process of aligning his company with the requirements of Proposition 2 and how it effects his business. He knows that his open, candid manner of sharing makes it easy for the public to understand what producers like himself are facing when new regulations are enacted.

"I'm very humbled—I'm ultra humbled that I was nominated for this award, I feel very blessed," said Hilliker.



Honorary Fellow

Dr. Charles Boyer

Dr. Charles Boyer has been named this year's Honorary Fellow in recognition for his outstanding service to the California Ag Leadership Foundation. He is currently the vice president of agriculture, dean and director of the College of Agriculture and the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Montana State University (MSU). Before taking on his new position in December 2014, Boyer was dean at Fresno State University's (FSU) Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, and had been the longest-serving dean amongst the four legacy partner universities. His institutional memory, time spent traveling with the class—including a trip to India and Nepal with Class 42—all contributed to the revival of the California Ag Leadership Foundation.

"I was fortunate to be part of the leadership team and work with the educational team during an important period in the history of the program," said Dr. Boyer. "During the transition, the program made critical changes in the organization and increased focus on core values and educational objectives. Indeed, I benefited in personal growth as part of my inner journey of leadership development."

Boyer earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Eastern Oregon State College and a master's degree and doctorate in genetics, both from The Pennsylvania State University. In 2006, he was named dean of the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology at California State University, Fresno. Prior to the appointment, he served as associate dean and associate director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, College of Agricultural Sciences, at Oregon State University; professor and head of the Department of Horticulture at Oregon State University; chairman of the Intercollege Graduate Program in Genetics at Pennsylvania State University; professor and associate professor of plant breeding and genetics at Pennsylvania State University and assistant professor of horticulture at Rutgers University.

In 2009, during his time as dean at FSU, the College of Agriculture received an unprecedented gift from the Hanabul, Dee and Lowell Jordan family. At the time, the gift of \$29,442,516 was the largest donation ever received by Fresno State and the largest single cash gift to any entity in the entire California State University system. In recognition of the family's generosity, the college changed its name to the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology.

Boyer is currently vice president of agriculture at Montana State University. As such, he holds the dual positions of dean of the College of Agriculture and director of the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, in addition to serving in a vice presidential role for the university.

"It is an honor to be recognized as an Honorary Fellow by the California Agricultural Leadership Program," said Boyer.