AG LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Recognizing Outstanding Leaders

We grow leaders who make a difference.
I was recently asked to talk to a group of high school teachers in Bakersfield. The teachers were participating in a three-day event to learn about agriculture. The Kern Ag Foundation has held these events for 26 years and has educated more than 1,000 teachers. I commend them for their service to California agriculture.

The topic of my talk was a simple and important one. California agriculture is doing a poor job of attracting the best and the brightest of our high school students to consider a career in agriculture. If we allow the stereotype of farming as one of driving around a plot of dirt watching your crop grow, to continue, we won’t attract the best talent.

My own story is relevant because I had no reason to have a career in agriculture. My father’s career was in aerospace and I grew up moving back and forth between Southern California and Florida. I graduated from Redlands High School in Southern California and attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo to be a CPA and tax attorney. Only when I ran out of money and a place to live did I end up as a laborer in a cotton gin in Buttonwillow and thus began my career in ag.

What would I tell a teenager about ag?

Ag has no glass ceiling. Again, I went from a seasonal laborer to eventually having a management position in one of the largest farms in the country. Many of my Ag Leadership classmates’ fathers or grandfathers were immigrant laborers. They now own their own farms and are doing very well. All that is required is honest hard work.

Ag is dynamic, it’s now. Market prices change by the minute. Weather changes by the hour. No two seasons are ever the same. Ag is less about waiting and more about continuously adjusting your thinking to keep up with current conditions, technology, regulations, trade wars, etc.

Successful farmers have to understand not only farming, but also regulations, budgeting, markets, managing people and resources and managing risk, to name a few. And ag allows you to give back to your industry, as in CALF.

The job of Ag Leadership to grow leaders who make a difference starts at the high school and college level. Whether a student is interested in engineering, science, information technology, robotics, logistics, commodity trading, international trade, or agronomics, they have a career in agriculture.

Let us all who have made a career of agriculture, change the level of dialogue to the brightest of our high school students to paint a more attractive and accurate picture of the potential of a career in ag and the exciting opportunities it presents.
The vision for the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation is to produce alumni “To serve as a catalyst for a vibrant agricultural community.” As is the case with our mission statement, “We grow leaders who make a difference,” where we purposely do not define what that difference needs to be, we also do not set forth requirements or direction on how to be that catalyst for the benefit of California agriculture. While the most often reported, as well as correct, response is related to “time, talent or treasure” in support of Ag Leadership, there is, in addition, the important correlated concept of connectivity between alumni.

We consistently make it clear that the Ag Leadership Foundation is not an advocacy organization. One of our primary goals is to produce better leaders and influencers to advocate on behalf of California agriculture. And in order for those leaders to be most effective and impactful, there needs to be a continued and productive interaction between graduates. That collaboration and communication can also take many forms, from continuing education to deep discussion of current issues. But there must be a strategy on how to provide a platform for alumni so that they may accomplish that needed and desired connectivity.

During the history of Ag Leadership, there have been a number of fruitful ideas to bring alumni together. Originally there were annual conferences that were followed by all-class and individual class reunions. Additionally, the Life-Long Leadership Learning (L4) series was initiated to further focus on leadership development. The consistent thread has been the recognition of the value of alumni working together for the advantage of California agriculture.

We are now approaching an extremely opportune time for that connectivity when we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Ag Leadership in October 2020. A distinguished committee has been formed, co-chaired by Loren Booth (27) and Jeff Elder (35), and plans are well underway for a three-day event to be held in Monterey. There will be a combination of continuing education, world-class speakers and social and networking opportunities that will be unprecedented in the history of our organization. The chance presented by this occasion will certainly serve as an easily identifiable platform but there will be a continuing challenge on how to keep that interaction between alumni in place for the years and decades to come.

However, our first opportunity for alumni to connect and learn from others on how best to be that catalyst comes when the All-Class Reunion will be held at beautiful Booth Ranches in Minkler, May 3-5, 2019. This casual and enjoyable event will serve not only as a fantastic springboard for the 50th celebration the following year, but will also feature valuable education, family fun and fellowship.

In the final analysis, there are innumerable ways to give back to Ag Leadership and California agriculture in the form of time, talent and treasure and all are equally important. Nevertheless, we should not forget what our vision is as Ag Leadership alumni and the importance of being a "catalyst" and how that can be accomplished by remaining connected. All of us here at the foundation truly appreciate the efforts of the alumni in that regard. Thank you!
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Chairman of the board Jeff Elder (35), presided over a meeting of CALF’s board of directors on August 16 at the home of Loren Booth (27). The board heard positive reports related to the financial position of the foundation for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018. They also reviewed the action items connected to the strategic planning session held in November 2017.

EDUCATION TEAM RETREAT

Core faculty, along with CALF President Barry Bedwell (13) and interim Director of Education Dr. Charlie Crabb, met in Fresno on August 9 and 10 to conduct their annual review and update curriculum prior to the inauguration of Class 49. Dr. Peggy Perry (9), Dr. Bob Flores and Dr. Louise Ferguson (30) also welcomed the new campus coordinator at Fresno State, Dr. Alex Alexandrou, who participated in the meeting.

ALL CLASS REUNION

The 2019 All Class Reunion will be held May 3-5 at Booth Ranches in Minkler. The family friendly event will serve as a springboard to Ag Leadership’s 50th anniversary celebration and will be a great opportunity to catch up with friends and fellow alumni. Very special thanks to Loren Booth (27) and Booth Ranches for allowing us use of their beautiful property!

More information at: agleaders.org/2019-all-class-reunion

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION ACCEPTS NEW CHALLENGE

Dr. Michael Thomas has been named interim associate dean for academic affairs for the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (JCAST) at Fresno State.

“Dr. Thomas’ tenure coincided with a time experienced by Ag Leadership that can best be described as a reawakening of the leadership principles and training that truly produces ‘leaders who make a difference,’” said CALF President Barry Bedwell (13). “Dr. Thomas has been a vital cog in the strategic realignment of the curriculum and how it was delivered. His ability to connect with each class of fellows is renowned and his teaching style, comfortable and thoughtful, has proven to be tremendously effective and well-received. The foundation and all of those touched by Dr. Thomas during his association with Ag Leadership will always be grateful for his efforts and leadership in support of California agriculture.”

A search for the new director of education has started. Dr. Charlie Crabb, currently serving as program advisor for CALF, has agreed to assume the position of interim director of education. Dr. Crabb’s long association with Ag Leadership has previously included stints both as director of education and CEO. His experience and knowledge related to the program and its goals will help ensure a smooth transition as the search process unfolds.

“On behalf of the foundation, the board of directors, alumni and staff, thank you so much, Dr. Thomas, and please accept our sincere appreciation for all you have done,” said Bedwell. “We wish you the very best as your own leadership journey continues.”

For any questions related to this change, or for further information about the search process for the director of education, please contact Barry Bedwell at (831) 585-1030 or bbedwell@agleaders.org.
One of the most prominent names connected to the history of the California Agricultural Leadership Program is Dr. Gene Rapp. Gene was serving as the executive director of the Council of California Growers (CCG) at a period (1972-1974) when the Ag Leadership Program was still in its infancy. It was during the late 1960s when the actual structure for the Ag Leadership Program was created with the assistance of key individuals associated with CCG.

As a bit of further background prior to Gene’s arrival at Ag Leadership, Bob White, a professor from Cal Poly Pomona was appointed as the first director of education in 1970 and held that position until the following year. Then Gaylord Siner, who was associated with CCG and an alumnus of Fresno State, took over the position until 1974. At that time, at the direction and urging of Dean Brown, Gene became the third director of education for the program when Class 4 began.

For approximately the next 11 years, Gene was, in many positive ways, the face of the program and its foremost representative. Recently, I had the good fortune to visit with Gene in Roseville to talk about his Ag Leadership experience. I also received some great contextual information from his wonderful wife, April, about this remarkable individual.

Gene was born in San Francisco on August 6, 1930 as the youngest son of Gene H. and Helen W. Rapp. Along with his older brother Norman, who is three years his senior, they lived in Daly City to attend elementary and middle school. Gene later went on to Balboa High School in San Francisco and excelled academically. From there it was a short jaunt across the bay to attend UC Berkeley where he received a B.S. in agricultural education in 1952.

Not long thereafter, Gene became a vocational agricultural instructor for seven years at Escalon Union High School where he was chairman of the department for three years before moving on to UC Davis. He earned his M.S. there, also in agricultural education, in 1959. While being a student advisor, lecturer in agricultural practices and statewide foreign visitor officer at Davis during the period 1960 to 1972, he was also able to complete his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in 1971.

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One of the basic principles of Ag Leadership is the propensity to serve. No one exhibited a commitment to service more than Gene. He first belonged to the Lions Club while living in Escalon but it was his dedication to the Kiwanis Club and their community service work that is truly impressive. Gene took a very active role in a number of clubs around Northern California where he held various leadership positions, including club president and lieutenant governor of the California-Nevada-Hawaii district. He helped lead clubs in Davis, Sacramento, Roseville and Lincoln and he was particularly proud of his 55 years of perfect attendance during his 60 years of membership in Kiwanis. Of course, given the demands of his travel schedule with Ag Leadership, he had to attend Kiwanis meetings all over the world, which was truly a pleasure for him.

During our conversation, it became clear that Gene had a real passion for leadership development and I began to understand more fully why he meant so much to the California Ag Leadership Program. However, his influence did not stop within the boundaries of our state. With his international reputation, he was asked to help start Ag Leadership programs elsewhere, including the state of Washington as well as Australia. His impact was significant and long-lasting.

Shortly after I started my tenure as president of the foundation, Gene, who helped guide my own Ag Leadership experience when I was in Class 13, sent me an impressive collection of documents related to the history of the foundation. Included in that information was a transcript of a speech from one of our founders, Dean Brown, that was made more than 30 years ago. In reading it, I was struck with the realization of not only the vision and foresight of those who came together to start this impactful program, but also the understanding of the challenges that would face California agriculture and why such leaders as Gene would be required. Key excerpts from that speech follow:

Presentation by Dean Brown to the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership, November 21, 1987:

I would like to begin this evening by giving you some historical background about the California Agricultural Leadership Program.

A group of California growers in the late 1960s hosted 30 young farmers from Michigan who were involved in an ag leadership program sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan. After showing them around the state, we decided that a program of this nature should be instigated in California.

James Boswell of the Boswell Foundation offered to put up, on a matching basis, $75,000 to help start such a program in California. John Newman of the Irvine Foundation agreed to match the $75,000. We took this seed money and traveled to Battle Creek where we were fortunate enough to receive a grant from the Kellogg Foundation of $350,000 giving us $500,000 to start and carry on the program.

A curriculum was developed by Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with the help of Michigan State University.

Due to the range and diversity of crops in California, it was decided to involve four universities in the program. The University of California at Davis was scheduled to handle economics, Fresno State University handled politics and government, Cal Poly State University at San Luis Obispo was to cover communications and Cal Poly University at Pomona was to handle sociology, arts, religions and rural urban relationships. Emphasis of the program is on disciplines other than agriculture.

The primary responsibility of the four cooperating universities is the planning, organizing and implementing of the educational program aspects of the grants, including the seminars, trips and program evaluation.
So now you can see that this program has three parts:
1. The involvement of four universities to provide the academic part of the program.
2. The involvement of industry, agriculture and government to provide insights, understanding and knowledge for the development of future leaders of California agriculture.
3. Travel. National and global, to broaden the scope of their education and experiences.

What does the future hold for us? By the middle of the next century, the percentage of the U.S. population that has any working knowledge of production agriculture will be very small. Today, less than three percent of the population is on the farm, most urban Americans—and that means most Americans—do not personally know a farmer. In the next century all but a handful of Americans will be two or three generations removed from the farm. What can they be expected to know about the realities of farming?

Farming by its nature rearranges nature: substituting controlled environments for wild, pristine environments. Urban people are sometimes quite genuinely shocked when they see what farmers do to the rural landscape. That makes them susceptible to anyone who raises public outcry, legitimate or not, regarding farming practices that make use of unfamiliar chemicals or produce non-aesthetic changes in the natural environment. Farmers, as a political minority whose national electoral strength is hardly worth cursory attention, will be living with public policies that are fashioned not in response to their practical needs, but the perceptions and needs of urban voters.

There is every indication that a productive agriculture will continue to be important to the nation’s balance of trade and to certain strategic defense and foreign policy objectives. The political problem will be to make urban voters understand that a resource and environmental policy that cripples agricultural productivity will have detrimental effects on the economic well-being of everyone regardless of how he or she earns a living. Solving that problem will require more subtle and sophisticated political skills than farmers and farm organizations have yet demonstrated.

The conclusion, therefore, is that farmers of the twenty-first century will have a very difficult time controlling the natural resources that are required for farming. Private property rights to use those resources are likely to be curtailed substantially by public policy. Environmental restrictions and regulations are likely to increase and become more burdensome and complex. The political climate, while not hostile to agriculture, is apt to be insensitive of the needs of production using advanced technology and requiring substantial departures from the old romantic images of farming. Lacking electoral strength to exert policies influence through the control of blocs of votes. American farmers will need to become well organized and politically sophisticated if they are to influence natural resources and environmental policies in significant ways.

What Dean Brown articulated in that speech was in reality a summary of the need for Ag Leadership as well as the necessity for individuals such as Gene Rapp to step forward to lead those who would participate in the program. Gene, who is described by his wife, April, as “a most loving, thoughtful husband, my soul-mate, who shared memories and especially his love of the Ag Leadership Program and all the people connected with it,” is that exceptional person who came forward to make a difference.

As an alumnus, staff member and continuing supporter of California Ag Leadership, I will be forever grateful to Gene Rapp for his wisdom and work on behalf of this extraordinary program. I suspect there are hundreds of other Ag Leadership alumni who feel the same way.

Thank you Dr. Rapp!

The Gene Rapp Fellowship Fund was established in 2013 by alumni to honor him for his important contributions to Ag Leadership and positive influence on fellows.

To contribute, visit www.agleaders.org/donate/
Paul Wenger (17), Bill Adams (32) and Dr. Michael Thomas were recognized on Oct. 11 during the Class 49 Inauguration and Ag Leadership Award Reception and Dinner at the Clovis Veterans Memorial District.

Wenger and Adams were each presented with the acclaimed Profiles in Leadership Award, which recognizes alumni of the California Agricultural Leadership Program for their leadership actions resulting in the betterment of industry, community, business, government and/or the environment.

“Paul and Bill are remarkable examples of the types of leaders the Ag Leadership Program strives to produce,” said Jeff Elder (35), chairman of CALF’s board of directors. “Their dedication to the ag industry and to their communities make them ideal candidates for this prestigious award. We are proud to present these exceptional servant leaders with Ag Leadership’s 2018 Profiles in Leadership Award.”

Thomas was presented with the Honorary Fellow Award, which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated consistent commitment and uncommon excellence in the furtherance of education and leadership in California agriculture. Recipients are also dedicated and longtime supporters of the California Agricultural Leadership Program.

“Dr. Thomas’ work with CALF has been exemplary, particularly his teaching style and the way he developed special and long-lasting ties with each of the fellows he touched,” said Elder. “The foundation and all those connected with Ag Leadership are sincerely grateful for his efforts.”
Paul Wenger of Modesto is a third-generation almond and walnut grower whose farming operation includes custom farm work, sharecropping and walnut hulling. He has expanded his operation to include processing and marketing of almonds and walnuts through Wood Colony Nut Company.

“Paul Wenger has for decades been a leader who makes a true difference for California agriculture,” said CALF President Barry Bedwell (13). “His service and efforts have benefited every sector and area of this state and we are very grateful for his support for, as well as his strong connection with Ag Leadership.”

Wenger attended Modesto Junior College before transferring to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo where he earned a degree in animal science. At Cal Poly he was elected to the student senate and was president of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources Council.

Wenger has been active in the agriculture community for many years. He joined the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau in 1980 and became a member of the Young Farmers & Ranchers committee in 1985 before serving as the county’s Farm Bureau president from 1990 to 1994.

Shannon Douglass (46), who nominated Wenger for the Profiles in Leadership Award, describes him as a prime example of a servant leader. “He has been a tireless advocate for California for decades,” said Douglass. “He has never been afraid to stand up and speak out for California farmers. He has encouraged others to step up to the plate as well, inspiring agriculturalists to engage in issues. While juggling this critical work and his farm, he never failed in making time for people, especially in encouraging and supporting developing ag leaders.”

Wenger became a California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) state officer in 1997 when he was elected as second vice president. He then went on to become first vice president of the federation in 2005. His service to the organization continued and he served four terms as president of CFBF from 2009 to 2017. In addition to serving as a state officer, Wenger’s Farm Bureau involvement includes serving as a state board member and chair of the federation’s water advisory committee and the board’s water development task force. He also served on the American Farm Bureau Federation’s board of directors from 2011 to 2017.

Wenger has been active in his community and is a supporter of Modesto Junior College and the local 4-H and FFA chapters. He served on the Salida Volunteer Fire Department, the Hart-Ransom School Board of Trustees and the Stanislaus Land Trust and Agricultural Pavilion boards. He and his wife, Deborah, have three sons.

“I was surprised, humbled and very honored when Barry called to tell me I was to be recognized with the Profiles in Leadership Award,” said Wenger. “I’ve always been amazed by the contributions of prior award winners and enjoyed reading about their contributions to our agricultural industry in California. I’m honored to join the ranks of these individuals that I have worked with over the years in advocating for California’s farmers and ranchers and who I respect for their unique leadership contributions. The California Agricultural Leadership Program was instrumental in helping me develop the individual skills and tools, as well as a network of alumni and agricultural advocates that I rely upon daily.”
Bill Adams
Class 32
Profiles in Leadership Award Recipient

Bill Adams of Visalia is vice president of Imperial Western Products (IWP). He has worked for the company since 1991 and is an avid supporter of his community and the Ag Leadership Foundation.

“Bill Adams’ leadership skills have been on display for many years, but most significantly in his role in directing the World Ag Expo breakfast,” said Bedwell. “His guidance has proven instrumental, even in the face of extraordinary challenges, in the success of this and other vital events for Ag Leadership.”

Originally from Vermont, Adams’ family moved to California in 1975. He later attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo where he earned a degree in dairy science. After graduating, he began his career with Security Pacific Bank working with the dairy industry. He has worked for IWP for 27 years. The company supplies feed for dairy, poultry, beef and pork operations. IWP has also expanded into the fuel and food service arena and is a leader in biodiesel production.

Adams is passionate about serving his community, the ag industry and Ag Leadership. He currently serves as president of the Boys and Girls Club of the Sequoias, and has served in many positions within the organization, including chair of the golf fundraiser and as a board member. During his time serving the Boys and Girls Club, fundraising has doubled and the organization has diversified its revenue streams to better serve young people in the community. He is also a past president of the California Grain and Feed Association and remains involved as the legislative chair.

Dennis Albiani (32) nominated Adams for the Profiles in Leadership award and says he epitomizes service leadership.

“Bill uses his training and skill in leadership positions within his community, industry and the Ag Leadership Program,” said Albiani. “He is a generous leader whose gregarious personality is contagious and makes people follow his lead and support mutual causes and encourages them to make the difficult decisions necessary for the organizations he supports to prosper.”

Adams has served on the World Ag Expo Ag Leadership Alumni Breakfast committee for many years, most recently as chair. The annual event, which is hosted by Region 6 alumni, draws several hundred attendees and has raised more than $1.0 million to benefit the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation. The fundraiser continues to be one of the largest annual fundraisers for CALF and also serves as an opportunity for agricultural leaders to network and further their leadership skills through motivational and informative speakers.

Adams and his wife, Chris, have been married for 28 years and have two sons. They enjoy staying involved with many local charities and fundraising causes.

“To receive this award from an organization I admire so much is a great honor,” said Adams. “The coolest thing about this award is being in the ‘Profiles in Leadership club’ with so many of my Class 32 friends that I admire and think so much of. All of them have remained great friends and continue to impact my life in positive ways.”
Dr. Michael Thomas
Honorary Fellow Award Recipient

Dr. Michael Thomas assumed the role of the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation’s director of education in September 2010. In this position, he worked closely with core faculty members from partner universities in curriculum planning and delivery. He also maintained communication between the Education Team and Ag Leadership staff, provided continuity between seminars, conducted feedback sessions at each seminar, planned and scouted international travel seminars, and led the continuous improvement efforts carried out by the Education Team.

During his tenure with CALF, Dr. Thomas served an important role in the process of strategic realignment of the curriculum and its delivery. His ability to connect with each class of fellows was renowned and his teaching style, comfortable and thoughtful, was known to be tremendously effective and well-received.

“The enthusiastic selection of Dr. Thomas as an Honorary Fellow by the board of directors represents the sincere recognition of all that this extraordinary individual has done for Ag Leadership,” said Elder. “As CALF’s director of education, Dr. Thomas was not only the leader and catalyst for the Education Team working together, but he was also the keeper of the curriculum that resonated so well with all the fellows he touched. We are truly indebted for his service in helping ‘grow leaders who make a difference.’”

Thomas received a bachelor’s degree in animal science from Brigham Young University and a DVM from Washington State University. As an educator with the Fresno State Department of Animal Sciences and Agricultural Education, he has received numerous teaching awards, including the National Excellence in University Teaching Award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Prior to beginning his career in education, Thomas worked as a large animal veterinarian in Washington and Oregon. He first joined the faculty at California State University, Fresno in 1985. While at the university he has focused on teaching pre-veterinary courses on animal health and infectious diseases and leading practical research projects. He has also served as an advisor for pre-vet students in the department and faculty advisor for the Pre-Veterinary Association.

In 1999, Dr. Thomas prepared a proposal for a new animal science course which was accepted by the General Education Committee and is now available to students of all majors. The course, Animals and Society, deals with ethics, appropriate care and use of animals in our society, including therapeutic uses.

In August of this year, Dr. Sandra Witte announced that Dr. Thomas had been named interim associate dean for academic affairs for the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology at Fresno State. The foundation and all those connected with Ag Leadership are sincerely grateful for his efforts and wish him the best of luck.

THE ENTHUSIASTIC SELECTION OF DR. THOMAS AS AN HONORARY FELLOW REPRESENTS THE SINCERE RECOGNITION OF ALL THAT THIS EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUAL HAS DONE FOR AG LEADERSHIP. HE WAS NOT ONLY THE LEADER AND CATALYST FOR THE EDUCATION TEAM WORKING TOGETHER, BUT ALSO THE KEEPER OF THE CURRICULUM THAT RESONATED SO WELL WITH ALL THE FELLOWS HE TOUCHED. WE ARE TRULY INDEBTED FOR HIS SERVICE.
GET TO KNOW
Brean is the wholesale accounts manager at Bella Viva Orchards, a processor and marketer of California-grown dried cherries, apples, peaches, blueberries, pears and citrus. She oversees Bella Viva’s wholesale sales program, which serves ingredient, private label and retail customers, including some of the largest food retailers and manufacturers in the country.

Adam is a regulatory advocate for the Association of California Water Agencies, which represents over 440 public water agencies that deliver about 90 percent of the water to farms, cities and businesses. He drafts regulatory language and negotiates policies affecting agricultural water and water quality issues before administrative agencies. Adam was raised on his family’s farm in Yolo County.

Luis is the southern district partnership manager for Reiter Affiliated Companies, the world’s largest fresh, multi-berry producer, and North America’s leading supplier of fresh strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries. He oversees and works closely with all of the company’s partnerships in Oxnard and Santa Maria.

John is a senior business specialist for Index Fresh, one of California’s largest grower-owned avocado companies and a worldwide marketer of avocados. He mainly works with the company’s client base, implementing strong go-to-market business strategies aimed at delivering optimal grower returns. He also works with the executive team, new business development and sales, and the marketing department.

Steven is the co-founder of Acuity Agriculture, an agriculture technology company that installs and maintains farm monitoring systems. Its mission is to empower the agriculture industry with the ability to grow more with fewer resources, especially in the face of increasing climate instability. He runs strategic growth and partnerships for the company.

Miranda is a co-founding partner of ERA Economics, an agriculture and water firm that provides economic analysis to support agriculture and water resource industries.

Lesa is the director of producer resources and sustainability for Superior Farms, a nationwide employee-owned company that is North America’s largest and most sustainable processor and marketer of lamb. She works with producer partners that supply lambs by developing programs that increase production and consistency through financial programs, camera grading, genetic research and producer education.

Kate is the chief financial officer for Vail Ranches, her family’s fourth-generation, 7,000-acre diversified farming operation in the Imperial Valley. The Elmore family has been farming there since 1908. She is also CFO of Sahara Packing, the family’s produce label. She oversees the office management, manages company finances, and performs all technical accounting and financial analyses.
James is the director of winemaking on the Central Coast for Delicato Family Vineyards, a fourth-generation, family owned and operated grape grower and winemaker founded in 1924. Delicato farms over 4,000 acres and is the sixth largest U.S. winemaker. He is responsible for guiding winemaking styles and practices to produce Central Coast wines that over deliver in quality at their respective price points.

Brittany is the raw olive purchasing agent for California Olive Ranch, a 20-year-old extra virgin olive oil company that invented the super high-density olive growing system. She works with grower-partners and vendors, schedules harvest, contracts with growers, scouts new land acquisitions and assists grower-partners with new orchard development. She and her husband own a walnut and rice operation.

Steven is a fourth-generation grower managing Filter Farms, his family’s 900-acre farm near Live Oak that grows walnuts, cling peaches and prunes. It has a large commercial walnut harvest operation and a commercial huller and dryer. He is involved with daily aspects of running the farm: personnel management and coordination, soil fertility, irrigation management and an integrated pest control program.

Cherie is the marketing manager and citrus category manager for Homegrown Organic Farms, which markets a full line of organic citrus, blueberry, tree fruit and grapes, and represents over 4,000 acres and 180 organic growers in California and Oregon. She oversees social media marketing campaigns, content creation and brand health while evaluating the direct and indirect impacts of these efforts.

Daniel is a resource manager for Woolf Enterprises, a diversified farming operation with ranches throughout the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys. He oversees water management, capital projects and regulatory affairs for the farm that grows tomatoes, almonds, cotton, wheat, wine grapes and pistachios. He is also a partner in Hartwig Brothers Farms, which grows almonds and grapes.

Alyssa is the director of government affairs for California Citrus Mutual, a voluntary nonprofit trade association representing about 2,500 California citrus grower members. Her portfolio includes a broad range of legislative issues that impact the state’s $3 billion citrus industry, and she is responsible for managing the association’s state political action committee.

Betty is the water resource supervisor for James J. Stevinson, an eighth-generation dairy farming corporation. She is also the general manager of Stevinson Water District, delivering 36,000 acre-feet of irrigation water annually. She handles field delivery scheduling, employee supervision, GIS data and the coordination and verification of state water rights permitting. Betty was raised on a farm in Los Banos.

Melissa is a senior nursery manager for Driscoll’s, the world’s largest supplier of fresh berries that develops proprietary breeds of berries. She manages a program team that enables new proprietary genetics to be distributed globally, as new cultivars move through the development process to commercialization. She raises and shows purebred Hereford cattle with her family.
Adam is the strawberry business manager at Driscoll’s, the world’s largest supplier of fresh berries that has been family owned and operated for more than 100 years. He is responsible for the annual strawberry P&L; works with growers, the sales team and stakeholders; assesses markets and business strategies; and leads a team comprised of a supply forecaster, demand manager and pack out planner.

Daryn is an irrigation manager and viticulturist for Monterey Pacific, which provides professional applied agricultural expertise for vineyards located on the Central Coast. He focuses on irrigation and nutrient management on 5,000+ acres. He is also a pest control advisor and certified crop advisor. Daryn grew up on a small family farm in Cayucos that grew citrus and avocados.

Sara is the associate director in the Federal Policy Division of the California Farm Bureau Federation, a nonprofit organization with nearly 40,000 members statewide. She represents California farmers and ranchers at the federal level on issues such as immigration reform, trade, transportation, biotechnology, organics, pests and diseases, and urban agriculture.

Laura is the marketing communications content lead for Cargill Animal Nutrition. She leads the content strategy and development for its U.S. commercial dairy business. She also communicates numerous offerings – from animal nutrition expertise to supply chain and risk management solutions – across various segments of the dairy industry. Laura grew up in a dairy family.

Jared is the vice president of farming for Booth Ranches, a family owned and operated, vertically integrated citrus operation in the San Joaquin Valley that was founded in 1957. He is responsible for all day-to-day farming activities, as well as mid- and long-term strategies relative to irrigation, pests, nutrition, land development and acquisition, and safety.

Taylor is the company officer, food safety manager and winery representative of Serres Ranch and Serres Corporation, her family’s diversified fifth-generation farming and general contracting operation. The farm produces wine grapes, blueberries and commercial beef cattle. She helps with the day-to-day aspects of running the operations, including harvest activities and monitoring food safety regulations.

Mark is the water department manager for J.G. Boswell Company’s Corcoran ranch. Founded in 1925, the company produces Pima cotton, processing tomatoes, pistachios, safflower and alfalfa hay. He and his department are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the ranch irrigation system, wells, lift pumps and several off-ranch water conveyance systems. He grew up working on his family’s farm.

Jake is a fourth-generation grower and vice president at Wenger Ranch, his family’s 700-acre farming operation that grows walnuts, almonds and corn. He is involved in nearly all aspects of the farm: irrigation, fertilization, integrated pest management, pruning, harvesting, walnut hulling/dehydrating, and custom farming services. He also helps with billing, regulatory oversight and compliance.
As my family farming operation ends harvest season, I have begun to reflect on the last year and have come to only one conclusion: 2018 has been one hell of a year for California agriculture. We kicked it off with the most devastating wildfire season in our state’s history with blazes from Sonoma to San Diego counties. Heavy rain followed the fires and flooding was widespread and took a heavy toll on property and life. While we were still reeling from the destruction of fires and floods, a late frost pounced on many of us, destroying crops across the state. As if to prove the full extent of her power, Mother Nature unleashed a series of heat waves that literally burned crops to the ground—especially across Southern California where coastal valleys had near 120 degree days and nights that never dipped below 100.

As an avocado and citrus farmer in Santa Paula, we had the bad luck of experiencing crop loss in all four of these events. As rough as it has been, I’ve become so inspired by the grit and fortitude that many fellow farmers have shown. In the face of tremendous adversity, I have watched friends and neighbors push forward, rebuild, and persevere. Because that is what we do.

As with the struggles we have all faced this year, CALF has a new and unique challenge in front of it. Replacing Dr. Thomas will not be easy, because let’s face it, change is hard. It seems almost impossible when attempting to replace a cornerstone like Dr. Thomas. I believe that with the leadership of Barry Bedwell (13) and our esteemed board of directors, we will find a qualified candidate who will bring their own unique method and experience to the program, enriching us all even more.

Speaking of enrichment, the Alumni Council is very close to announcing a new way for all alumni to connect and continue their lifelong leadership journey. While yet to be finalized, I can tell you that it will have multiple components with the core goal of allowing alumni to connect with one another and work together to continue to grow. Dr. Thomas was very helpful and supportive in helping the Alumni Council with this project. It will be ready soon and all of us on the Alumni Council are very excited.

I’m also happy to announce the addition of Ellen Way (28) to the Alumni Council’s leadership team as Region 11 director. She is the owner of Sanders Family Almond Ranch, a family farming operation in Stanislaus County. She resides in La Quinta with her husband and two daughters. Ellen is a graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a degree in agribusiness. She began her career in the produce industry with Sun World International and went on to work for Assemblyman Jim Battin as an agriculture specialist. She serves on the board of her local CWA chapter and has also served on the board of Western Growers. She is currently president of the Coachella Valley Chapter of National Charity League. Ellen and her husband are involved with Boys & Girls Clubs of Coachella Valley. In 2005 she was appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger to serve on the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin Region.

Ellen is passionate about agriculture and loves to educate people about food and farming and says she is forever grateful for her Ag Leadership experience.

There are a lot of great things happening at CALF right now and I have had a blast working with all the regional directors on the Alumni Council. If you have a chance, go check out the redesigned CALF website. It has all the information regarding events going on throughout the regions and contact information for your regional directors. Be on the lookout for that big announcement. I hope you all had a fruitful end to your season. Be well.
RECENT EVENTS

THANK YOU

CLASS 49 REGIONAL SCREENING, POMONA
JULY 9
Kevin Antongiovanni (47)
Barry Bedwell (13)
Dr. Charlie Crabb
Susan Josue (43)
Dr. Lisa Kesler
Eric Limas (39)
Mike Mendes (39)

CLASS 49 REGIONAL SCREENING, SAN LUIS OBISPO
JULY 16 - 17
Erin Amaral (46)
Barry Bedwell (13)
Danielle Burk (43)
Todd Collins (34)
Dr. Charlie Crabb
Jackie Crabb (36)
Chris Drew (47)
Erik Jertberg (40)
Justin Perino (44)
Stasi Seay (30)
Dr. Andy Thulin
Ivor Van Wingerden (39)

CLASS 49 REGIONAL SCREENING, FRESNO
JULY 19 - 20
Derek Azevedo (45)
Barry Bedwell (13)
Jeff Boldt (40)
Dr. Charlie Crabb
Gayle Holman (46)
Randy Hopkins (46)
Heather Jackson (46)
Darrin Monteiro (47)
Stefanie Mosier
Heather Mulholland (44)
Sal Parra (46)
Paul Parreira (44)
Brad Reinhart (47)
Eric Thor (44)
Dr. Sandra Witte

CLASS 49 REGIONAL SCREENING, DAVIS
JULY 23 - 24
Rachelle Antinetti (42)
Tom Barrios (47)
Barry Bedwell (13)
Bob Cherenson (29)
Dr. Charlie Crabb
Correen Davis (45)
Dr. Helene Dillard
Missy Gable (40)
Missy Geringer (43)
Tom Merwin (44)
Denise Moore (46)
Jill Scofield (47)
Blake Vann (46)

CLASS 49 REGIONAL SCREENING, CHICO
JULY 26 - 27
Karm Bains (40)
Barry Bedwell (13)
Denise Carter (38)
Dr. Charlie Crabb
Robin Flourney (29)
Steve Garland (44)
Hans Herkert (47)
Ty Huesser (45)
Joel Kimmelshue (37)
Matt Neubert (44)
Kiran Toor (47)
Dr. John Unruh

CLASS 49 FINAL SELECTION
AUGUST 15
Barry Bedwell (13)
Dr. Charlie Crabb
Dr. Helene Dillard
Robin Flourney (29)
Missy Gable (40)
Ty Huesser (45)

Heather Jackson (46)
Dr. Lisa Kesler
Mike Mendes (39)
Denise Moore (46)
Paul Parreira (44)
Dr. Andy Thulin
Dr. John Unruh
Ivor Van Wingerden (39)
Dr. Sandra Witte

NORCAL AG LEADERSHIP SPORTING CLAY SHOOT, ZAMORA
AUGUST 25
Denise Carter (38)
Sandy Fiack (29)
Steven Garland (44)
Tom Merwin (44)
Matt Neubert (44)
Blake Vann (46)
Classes 1-9

J. Gordon Kennedy (2) was honored in August by the Madera Chamber of Commerce as a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Since graduating from Ag Leadership, he has served on the Madera County Farm Bureau, Madera County Board of Supervisors, California Air Resources Board, Madera Sunrise Rotary, district governor of rotary district 5220 and master of Madera Masonic Lodge. He is currently retired from farming, but still active in local politics and humanitarian service through Rotary. He writes grants for several countries, including a honey bee project for farmers in Bolivia, a water filter project in Baja Mexico and a project to send an ambulance to the Philippines.

Classes 10-19

Dave Pratt (15) has written a new book, “Healthy Land, Happy Families and Profitable Businesses.” The book is a collection of essays written by Dave about lessons learned during the past 30 years spent working with thousands of ranchers on five continents. The book is available from Amazon and ranchingforprofit.com.

Steve Patricio (19) was presented with the 2018 Award of Honor by Western Growers during its annual meeting in October in Palm Desert. The award is Western Growers’ highest recognition of industry achievement and is given to individuals who have contributed extensively to the agricultural community.

Classes 20-29

Holly King (24) was featured in a July Bakersfield Californian article titled “Record almond crop forecast for 2018” about how California almond growers are on track to outdo themselves again this year. She was also featured in a June KGET news story titled “Kern concerns on Trump trade battle” about Kern farmers who say the impacts of international tariff dialogues are beginning to hit home.

Joe Turkovich (26) was re-elected as chair of the California Dried Plum Board (CDPB) in July. The 22-member board and 15 alternates will serve for the 2018-2020 term.

Nick Pasculli’s (27) company, TMD Creative, has been cited for its achievement in design from the Visual Media Alliance (VMA). The visual media competition hosted by VMA in San Francisco, covers northern California and northern Nevada. The competition promotes excellence in visual communications and the important role print media plays in the business world.

Classes 30-39

Cindy Jewell (30) was featured in a July AndNowUKnow article titled “Tour de Fresh kicks off day three: challenges showcase strength of the event” about the event that raises thousands of dollars to make fresh produce accessible to the next generation of consumers.

Classes 40-49

Julie Rentner (44) was featured in a July New York Times article titled “California is preparing for extreme weather. It’s time to plant some trees” about the state expecting drier dry years and wetter wet ones in the decades ahead and what’s being done to prepare.

Yvonne Sams (45) was featured in a July Wine Business Monthly article titled “Truck driver shortage affects wineries, entire ag industry” about the shortage of drivers which is expected to reach 239,000 by 2022.

Sarah Hovinga (46) was featured in a CropLife International video highlighting biologicals in agriculture. She also wrote a blog post for Bayer Crop Science titled “How is sugar similar to glyphosate?” about the safety of agrochemicals.

John McKeon (47) was featured in a July The Snack article titled “Tanimura & Antle: on the organic frontier” about the company’s ever-expanding organic portfolio. He was also featured in a June Future of Agriculture podcast titled “Organic agriculture at scale with John McKeon of Tanimura & Antle” about how the company is working to fulfill demands for organic produce.

Multiple Classes

Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli (19), Steve Patricio (19) and Bob Gray (Honorary Fellow) were featured in a July Western Farm Press article titled “Western Growers to honor cantaloupe industry leader” about Steve Patricio being presented with the organization’s Award of Honor.

WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE?

PLEASE SEND ANNOUNCEMENTS OR NEWS TO:

liza.teixeira@agleaders.org
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<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
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