AG LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Leaders Awarded for Outstanding Contributions

We grow leaders who make a difference.
BOARD MESSAGE

CORE VALUES ARE OUR PRIORITY

BY CAMERON BOSWELL (42), CALF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Trends may come and go, but multi-generational businesses — like many California farming operations — measure themselves against enduring principles that stand the test of time. California’s agriculturalists have long been leveraging innovation, technology, and scientific methodology to produce the best-quality crops possible while maximizing productivity. Those of us who work in agriculture are at the forefront of the collective effort to produce enough food and fiber to meet the demands of a growing population while being stewards of the resources that enable us to sustain these efforts. Every day, our job is to contribute to the sustainability of human life by providing the most basic necessities for survival. Sustainability is the result of our commitment to integrity and respect for people and natural resources while concurrently trying to maximize productivity and profit. In essence, sustainability is a byproduct of a commitment to our core values.

It’s not that we don’t have a compelling story to tell that could be molded to fit the appetites of consumer-facing media producers. Our story is fine, but our focus should not be on capturing the “buzz” or attention that drives digital media. We tend to focus on more traditional metrics and values that have served us for generations, if not centuries, as farmers. Though there may be transitions of generations and culture shifts within our industry that embrace adaptability and openness to change, there remains a strong tendency to preserve our core values as the foundation for success. Experience has taught us to be vigilant in guarding against attitudes of entitlement, and to make sacrosanct the values of hard work, sacrifice, patience, respect and integrity. These basic principles create multi-generational sustainability.

At the same time, special interests want consumers to have a connection with the source of their food and fiber in an emotional way. They push for more market initiatives and government regulations that handcuff growers from running efficient businesses so that consumers can “feel better” instead of viewing food as what it is: a basic source of nutrition.

Maybe the time and energy of our farmers is not best utilized in trying to make consumers feel good about their relationship with their food. Perhaps it’s time to push back by calling out the attitude of entitlement that has swept over so many consumers in wealthier nations. Food and shelter may be basic physical needs, but it is misguided to expect that life should be easy and everything provided, instead of having to work for it. President John F. Kennedy challenged Americans in his 1961 inauguration speech to “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

It takes hard work, risk and sacrifice to produce the things we depend on for our survival as well as our leisure. Our continued success as an industry and as a civilized people depends on our ability to continue our commitment to integrity and respect for people and natural resources as the foundation for success.

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CALENDAR

December
6 First Fridays: Crucial Conversations, Live Online
10-13 Class 50 Seminar, Davis

January
3 First Fridays: Examining Roots of Culture, Live Online
20-22 Class 49 Seminar, Pomona
22-24 Class 50 Seminar, Pomona

February
5 Colusa Farm Show Breakfast, Colusa
6-8 Class 50 Seminar, Fresno
7-8 Class 49 Seminar, Fresno
12 Alumni Reception, Visalia
13 Ag Leadership Alumni World Ag Expo Breakfast, Tulare

For staff email addresses, visit www.agleaders.org/about/foundation_staff
It is certainly that time again, approaching year-end, when we all begin receiving an ever-increasing volume of solicitations and requests for support from a seemingly endless list of worthwhile causes and organizations. With so many alternatives vying for clearly limited resources, most individuals must make difficult decisions as to where to direct their dollars as well as their time and talent. So, the natural and obvious question at this time for Ag Leadership alumni is “Why should I support Ag Leadership?”

The reality, as well as challenge, is connected to our vision for CALF, which 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. However, the bottom line for leadership development, and for our program in particular, is how to continue to find the resources necessary to fund an education and experience that now requires approximately $55,000 per individual for the 17-month period of instruction.

While it is very much true that there are no preconceived notions as to how an Ag Leadership fellow can, or should, demonstrate payback for the leadership development education they received, the hope is that everyone completing the program comes out the other end with at least some sense of responsibility to assist where they might in helping promote and support the program.

“Giving back” can definitely be linked to time, talent or treasure in support of Ag Leadership. And while we enthusiastically value participation in each of those valuable categories, we should also think at the same time of the worth and importance of “paying it forward.” When I hear that term, I think it means that instead of simply paying someone back for a good deed, in this case our own Ag Leadership experience, you do a good deed for someone else. In that regard, I think that good deed is making available our outstanding program for all those individuals who will participate in the future, thus helping ensure that vibrant agricultural community we all aspire to.

So, whether you view support for Ag Leadership as “giving back” or “paying it forward” or maybe even both, we sincerely hope that you will consider the value of our priceless program and take that affirmative action to remain engaged and to make sure the next generation of agricultural leaders has the same opportunity to be someone making a difference for California agriculture.

As we have stated previously, there are innumerable ways to give back to the Ag Leadership Program in the form of recruiting new qualified candidates, participating on selection committees, organizing alumni social events, working on fundraisers or yes, even writing that check. All are extremely valuable and appreciated. No matter if you view such actions as making a payback or investing in the future, such actions greatly assist in helping us accomplish our mission and vision. For that we are extremely grateful. Thank you.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thanks to the generosity of CALF board member Mike Young (35) and Greg Wegis (39), the foundation’s board of directors was able to meet on Aug. 16 at the conference room of Wegis & Young for the board’s first meeting in Bakersfield.

Board chairman Jeff Elder (35) led the directors through numerous discussions, including details related to the 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2020, conversations on how to further stimulate contributions at the Fellowship Sponsor level, and review of the financial and investment results for the fiscal year ended June 30. They also heard a report from CALF Director of Education Shelli Hendricks about the Class 50 selection process as well as continuing education efforts with Ag Leadership alumni and the results of the recent core faculty retreat which was held at the home of Loren Booth (27). The recommended slate of 24 individuals for the class, as picked by the final selection committee, comprised of alumni and foundation staff, was then unanimously approved by the board.

DR. DENNIS NEF TO LEAD JORDAN COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Dr. Dennis Nef assumed the role of dean of the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology after serving in several key university leadership positions in his previous 35 years on campus as an administrator and faculty member.

“I am excited to be back in the Jordan College,” said Nef. “As you may know, I came to Fresno State as an agricultural economist in 1983. I left the college 16 years ago to serve in various positions at the university, eventually serving as vice provost and on the president’s cabinet. I was surprised when the opportunity was extended to return to Jordan College, but it has been enjoyable rekindling old working relationships and making new friends.”

Dr. Nef served as vice provost from July 2014 to June 2019 after being appointed as an associate vice president in 2011. He also served as dean of undergraduate studies from 2003 to 2014 and as the interim provost for five months in 2009. He also served as the Jordan College’s acting dean in the fall of 1997, and eight years as its associate dean from 1995 to 2003. He spent five years as the agricultural economics department chair. His areas of teaching and research as a professor and lecturer included agricultural policy, natural resources, trade and land/water economics.

He was a member of the President’s Commission on the Future of Agriculture that released a report in 2014 outlining new academic and outreach opportunities to better connect the college and university with the nation’s leading agricultural area. He later co-chaired the President’s Water Task Force. He serves on the Fresno County Agricultural Land Conservation Committee and previously was a member of the National Association of Agricultural Economics Administrators board of directors.

Dr. Nef holds a Bachelor of Science in business administration from Brigham Young University, a Master of Science from Utah State and a Ph.D. from Iowa State in agricultural economics. He and his wife have five children and 13 grandchildren.

“I believe that the college is on an upward trajectory in many ways and I hope to continue and even accelerate the rate of incline,” said Nef. “My goals, and to a great extent my charge from the president, are in three broad areas: student success, efficient operations and broadening/deepening relationships.”

AG LEADERSHIP’S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The upcoming 50th Anniversary Celebration in October 2020 will bring alumni together with classmates, friends and family in Monterey to reconnect, learn and discuss what it means to be a leader for the benefit of California agriculture. The opportunity to interact and connect with Ag Leadership alumni is a vitally important part of Ag Leadership’s efforts to fulfill its vision “to be a catalyst for a vibrant agricultural community.”

Preparation is already well under way, with a number of sub-committees in formation as well as the retention of event professionals, to ensure that this event will reach its full potential. Room blocks have been secured at both the Marriott and Portola Hotels as well as the necessary event space at the new Monterey Conference Center.

The basic program has been planned as follows:
Friday, Oct. 23: General session with world class speakers, luncheon with nationally-known keynote speaker, breakout learning sessions, exclusive reception and dinner at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.
Saturday, Oct. 24: Group activities, 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner and Ball.

As we draw closer to the event, we will reach out to alumni with more details about the celebration. We look forward to seeing you for the 50th!
I hope this message finds you all well and celebrating the end of a successful harvest! Your Alumni Council and educational liaisons have been hard at work and that work is finally starting to come to fruition. Before I get into all the new and exciting things going on, I want to thank all of the Ag Leadership alumni for their hard work in recruitment this year.

Our foundation set many records for recruiting in terms of total applicants and applicants who were moved on to the final stages of selection. Class 50 is going to be an outstanding class and that is because of all of you! Whether you helped recruit individual applicants, hosted a recruitment event, wrote a recommendation or participated in interviews and/or selection, thank you for your contributions!

Speaking of Class 50, that means our 50th Anniversary Celebration is coming up soon! The event will be taking place in October 2020 and will be an event that should not be missed! Committees are being formed now to help in the planning of the celebration. If you are interested in participating, contact the Salinas office or your regional director. There will also be amazing sponsorship opportunities available that may interest you or your companies. If you are interested in becoming an event sponsor, please reach out to Barry at the Ag Leadership office at 831-585-1030 or bbedwell@agleaders.org.

Finally after much talk, planning and work, our e-learning events with CALF Director of Education Shelli Hendricks, have arrived. They are called First Fridays and are taking place the first Friday of each month from 10-11 a.m. These modules will allow alumni to engage with one another and Shelli about each month's topic. In a cool twist, each month’s topic will attempt to cross-over with what the current class is studying. An example of this is in September we reviewed “Leadership and Self-Deception”, the first book fellows read. I encourage all of you to check out the topics for the upcoming events listed below and make the effort to attend one online. Registration is fast, simple and FREE! Best of all, alumni will have an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion with current curriculum materials. These courses are what we have heard alumni asking for and we are happy to provide them, so get registered and let the lifelong learning continue!

First Fridays
A webinar series held every month for Ag Leadership alumni. The series is designed in partnership with the Alumni Council as part of the newly created Alumni Learning Community. Alumni are invited to join a live online discussion each month about topics related to leadership, book discussions, service projects and common business challenges.

When:
Every Month
10-11 a.m.
(Unless otherwise noted)

Where:
Live Online

Mark your calendar:

December 6
Crucial Conversations
Read or listen to the book in advance for a more meaningful dialogue.

January 3
Examining Roots of Culture

January 31
Understanding Emotional Intelligence

March 6
Understanding Political Systems

April 3
Exploring Personal Power & Change

May 1
Persuasive Communications

To register for an event, or for more information about the Alumni Learning Community, contact: Shelli Hendricks at shendricks@agleaders.org.
The California Agricultural Leadership Foundation and the Ag Leadership Alumni Council presented the 2019 Ag Leadership Awards to three outstanding leaders—Rob Geis (35), Greg Wegis (39) and Dr. Sandra Witte. The award ceremony was held in Clovis on Oct. 10 in conjunction with Class 50’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 Geis and Wegis.

“Rob and Greg are outstanding choices for the Profiles in Leadership Awards,” said Jeff Elder (35), chairman of CALF’s board of directors. “Their selection is totally consistent and appropriate given the impact they have had on California agriculture. They have both demonstrated servant leadership and truly are catalysts for a vibrant agricultural community. We thank them for their efforts.”

Dr. Witte received the Honorary Fellow (HF) Award for her consistent commitment and uncommon excellence in the furtherance of education and leadership in California agriculture.

“The selection of Dean Witte, who is truly a leader who has done so much for Ag Leadership and all of California agriculture, is simply a small token of the board’s immense gratitude for what she has meant to this program,” said CALF President Barry Bedwell (13).
Rob Geis
Class 35
Profiles in Leadership Award Recipient

Rob Geis was selected as a 2019 recipient of the Profiles in Leadership Award for his unwavering support of Ag Leadership and the agricultural community.

“This recognition is so important because Rob is truly a servant leader in everything he does for his family and agriculture,” said Darlene Din (35), who nominated Geis. “What made his nomination really crucial is that Rob recognizes and observes people and sees the skills that they bring to supplement his own skills to build a strong team.”

Geis is an agribusiness graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. He is the senior vice president and chief operating officer for Pacific Ag Management in Wasco. He has been with the company since its inception in 2010. In his role, Geis oversees business operations for the vertically integrated farm management company. He manages budgeting for many of the 18,000 acres of crops under the company’s umbrella. He is also responsible for legal contracts and deals directly with other companies that support the work of Pacific Ag Management, such as almond hullers, shellers and handlers.

“What I like about Rob is that he is diligent in everything that he does,” said Din. “He has taken the lessons learned from his Ag Leadership experience and applied them in a way that truly benefits all those who interact with him. He is a doer who gives back and his commitment to Ag Leadership and the agriculture industry is steadfast and amazing.”

Geis was active in CALF’s Alumni Council as chairman and a regional director. His Ag Leadership involvement includes serving as chairman for both the Washington, D.C. and California Exchange Programs. He also volunteers to help with events within his region and beyond.

“Under his leadership, Rob developed the baseline template for the D.C. and California exchange programs,” said Din. “With the prior blueprint developed by Ag Leadership’s Alumni Council, he and his team developed guidelines that are used for the current exchange programs.”

Outside of Ag Leadership, Geis is an active member of the agricultural community. He has served on the board of directors for Fruit Growers Laboratory, a California based company that performs analytical chemistry for farmers. He has more than 20 years of experience working as an agricultural lender, cotton gin manager and manager of an almond huller/sheller cooperative in Kern County.

Geis was blown away by the news that he had been selected as a Profiles in Leadership recipient.

“I was absolutely shocked—honestly,” said Geis. “When I realized what was happening I thought, ’wow…me?!’”

Geis stresses the importance of maintaining a relationship with the large network of alumni he has come to know.

“I realized there was a whole other experience that came with being part of the program—alumni,” said Geis. “Class 35 was great—amazing, but when I met the rest of the alumni, it was like being part of a whole other class. I made new friendships, met new people and learned even more from those people. Every day, every week, every month, I use the connections I made through Ag Leadership.”

“IT’S IMPORTANT TO GO BEYOND THE PROGRAM AFTER COMMENCEMENT AND GET INVOLVED IN SOMETHING THAT YOU WOULDN’T HAVE DONE WITHOUT AG LEADERSHIP.”
-ROB GEIS
Greg Wegis
Class 39
Profiles in Leadership Award Recipient

Greg Wegis was selected as a 2019 recipient of the Profiles in Leadership Award for employing the lessons he learned through Ag Leadership for the betterment of the agriculture industry and for his involvement in a variety of leadership activities.

“He has shown leadership on a number of different levels within his company, in the agricultural community and on a national level,” said Rob Goff (45), who nominated Wegis. “He has really stepped up to an incredible level of involvement in Farm Bureau, in the ag community, through outreach and by his engagement with local, state and national politicians.”

Wegis is a partner in charge of operations for Wegis & Young Property Management, a Kern County farm management and agricultural development firm with a 12,000-acre portfolio.

“Greg has utilized his leadership learnings with great influence on the agriculture industry,” said Goff. “While working in his family’s ag management company, Greg has found the time to stay involved with leadership activities on multiple fronts.”

Wegis’ Ag Leadership involvement includes serving on planning committees for the D.C. and California exchange programs, assisting with recruitment events, fundraising and volunteering where needed.

“His level of engagement and forward thinking are illustrative of his leadership style and effectiveness as a leader,” said Goff. “As a result, he has been an incredibly successful leader and advocate for the ag industry.”

Wegis is the past president of the Kern County Farm Bureau (KCFB) and the legacy of his efforts are still visible. Notably, he improved and increased the KCFB’s outreach to the community by messaging through radio and television interviews. He also established a political strategy committee which updated the KCFB’s policy of avoiding endorsements of political candidates. As a result, the committee changed their policy and KCFB is actively engaged with political candidates, their campaigns and offers endorsements to individuals who demonstrate a desire to positively support Kern County agriculture. Under Wegis’ leadership, the KCFB founded the annual Bounty of Kern Dinner—a celebration and showcase of Kern County’s agricultural bounty. The event is the organization’s largest fundraiser.

Beyond Farm Bureau, Wegis serves as president of the Semitropic Farmers for Sustainable Groundwater Political Action Committee. He was appointed in 2018 to serve on the Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Committee for California and now serves as chairman of the group. He also served on the board of the California Tomato Growers Association from 2013 to 2016.

In 2012 Wegis was named a winner of the National Outstanding Young Farmers Award.

“Given his past successes at the local level, Greg has now taken his skill sets to the national level,” said Goff. “He was recently appointed to lead a group responsible for allocating emergency relief services to the national agriculture industry.”

Wegis was moved by the thought of joining the ranks of accomplished alumni who have also been selected to receive one of Ag Leadership’s highest honors.

“I am just very honored to receive this award,” said Wegis. “Especially knowing who’s won the award in the past. Being amongst company that I respect greatly is a tremendous honor.”

Wegis believes that a strong Ag Leadership Program is important to the future of agriculture in California.

“Ag Leadership is important because we don’t have many avenues of developing leaders in agriculture,” said Wegis. “Many of us work on our day-to-day operations and don’t have the time to devote into leadership training. But when there’s a program like the California Ag Leadership Program, with such a good reputation, it attracts talent and leaders who develop their skills even further to better the industry as a whole.”
Dr. Sandra Witte
Honorary Fellow Award Recipient

Dr. Sandra Witte was selected as the 2019 recipient of Ag Leadership’s Honorary Fellow Award for her unwavering commitment to California agriculture and her devotion to leadership development.

“Dr. Witte has been a strong supporter of Ag Leadership and is always willing to assist the program’s core faculty whenever and wherever necessary,” said Bedwell. “She has demonstrated a servant leadership style that served as a wonderful example for all participants.”

Since assuming her role as dean, Witte served as the welcoming voice for incoming fellows at the inaugural seminar on behalf of the Dean’s Council.

“We are extremely grateful for her service and consistent dedication to the Ag Leadership Program as well as for her exemplary efforts on behalf of the entire agricultural community,” said Bedwell.

Witte completed her Bachelor of Science in foods and nutrition at Cal Poly Pomona in 1973; her dietetic internship at the University of California Hospitals and Clinics, San Francisco, in 1974; her Master of Science in home economics, nutrition and dietetics at California State University, Fresno in 1981; and her Ph.D. in food systems management with minors in nutrition and education at Oregon State University, Corvallis in 1992.

She has been a registered dietitian since 1975 and had more than 15 years of dietetics practice experience, primarily in medical nutrition therapy, before her time at Fresno State. Her areas of expertise include applied nutrition and medical nutrition therapy. She holds certificates in adult, child and adolescent weight management from the American Dietetic Association.

Named dean in March 2016, Witte had previously served as interim dean for the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology and associate dean of academic affairs. Prior to that time, she was a professor of nutrition and chair of the Fresno State Department of Food Science and Nutrition. She also served as program coordinator for the didactic program in dietetics, a program accredited by the American Dietetic Association for preparation of registered dietitians.

“The California Agricultural Leadership Foundation has been honored and privileged to mutually work with Dean Witte in helping grow leaders who make a difference,” said Bedwell. “All of us associated with the foundation wish her the very best in her well-deserved retirement. Thank you Sandy!”
GET TO KNOW

Photos by Vanessa Wright
Celeste is a third-generation grower and general manager of Junior Enterprises, LLC, her family’s 800-acre bell pepper, corn, green bean, eggplant and potato farm. She oversees the office, serves as the company’s controller and often makes her rounds through the fields to check in with employees and to see the growing process.

Leeann is a senior sales account manager for Bonipak Produce, a vertically integrated growing and shipping operation that supplies more than 22 million cases of fresh produce annually. Her responsibilities include supply forecasts, negotiation and customer analysis. Her long-term focus involves the development of internal infrastructure to meet and prepare the business for upcoming industry and customer standards.

Tyler is the director of legislative and regulatory affairs at the Wine Institute, a public policy trade association representing approximately 1,000 California wineries and affiliated organizations. His primary responsibility is to develop lobbying strategies to fight for sound public policy to benefit California’s wine industry and wine grape producers.

Adrian is the director of irrigation maintenance and lean initiatives for Wonderful Orchards and Wonderful Nurseries. He is responsible for maintaining 8,000 pieces of irrigation equipment for more than 100,000 acres of orchards and 800,000 square feet of greenhouse space and equipment for nursery operations.

Yezmin is the manager of business process improvement for Reiter Affiliated Companies, the world’s largest fresh multi-berry producer and the leading supplier of fresh strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries in North America. She manages projects that are strategic for the organization and supports field operations by providing technology and solutions that facilitate daily field data collection processes.

Mitch is president of Marv Coit Inc., a custom farming operation, and managing partner of Marv Coit Farms L.P. He is a third-generation farmer who is responsible for managing his family’s 2,800-acre almond, pistachio, garlic, onion, tomato and cotton operation.

Kris is the director of producer relations for the California Milk Advisory Board, the state’s dairy marketing order which works to promote California dairy products across the U.S. and internationally. Her responsibilities include working collaboratively with the marketing team to understand the organization’s ongoing activities and finding the best way to communicate the information to dairy farmers.

Natasha is a third-generation farmer who owns and operates Chris and Natasha Crivelli Farms, a cotton, corn, alfalfa, wheat and almond operation. She and her husband grow, pack and ship melons across the U.S. and Canada through their produce company, Golden C Natural Foods. The operation also provides custom farming services for more than 20 neighboring farms.
Rocco is a managing partner at R.O. Shelling and Barlas Feeds. He works alongside his father and uncle to provide quality feed, hay, pet supplies and erosion control materials for a variety of ag businesses in Sonoma County. His customers include dairy farms, horse ranches, sheep ranches, poultry farms, vineyards, nurseries, construction companies and pet owners.

Brian is a sixth-generation California cattle rancher and partner at Gill Cattle Co., which still operates in the same location where the family originally settled in 1874. He also works as a sales agent for Nielsen & Associates, an insurance agency which has served the agricultural community for more than 40 years.

Erin is a lecturer in the Cal Poly Agricultural Education and Communication Department. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses focused on teacher preparation. She supports credential candidates while they complete their student teaching experiences in agricultural education.

Megan is a fourth-generation farmer who helps manage the family-owned businesses, Stephens Ranch and Stephens Farmhouse. Her family grows peaches, prunes, walnuts and watermelons. Megan oversees all farm business activities, handles sales and international shipments, works alongside growers and employees and manages accounting, human resources and safety operations.

Ted is the director of plant operations at Vann Brothers, a multi-generational, vertically integrated farming enterprise which farms almonds and walnuts in the northern Sacramento Valley. He directs the daily activities of Yolo Hulling and Shelling and Vann Family Orchards and oversees yearly operating budgets and capital expenditures.

Lindsey is the executive director of the Sacramento County Farm Bureau. She manages the county-level nonprofit which represents farmers, ranchers, agricultural professionals, rural residential community members and urban supporters.

Holly is the director of global commercial science at Acadian Plant Health, a global biostimulant and bionutritional crop care company. She provides scientific and technical support to the sales team and growers, directs the conversion of science to field relevant information and manages a global team that conducts field trials and provides technical support locally.

Julian is the supervisor of the Pesticide Use Enforcement Division of the Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner. He helps ensure that crop protection materials are used appropriately and in a way that respects workers and the broader environment. He also analyzes legislation and communicates impacts on the industry and the public via correspondence and presentations.
Megan Marques
San Luis Obispo

Megan is the member advocacy specialist for the California Farm Bureau Federation, an organization that works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 36,000 members statewide. She is responsible for member acquisition, experience and engagement, and attends county board meetings as a liaison between the state and local levels.

Jonathan Merrill
Salinas

Jonathan is a fourth-generation grower and ranch manager for Merrill Farms LLC, a family farm which grows lettuce, romaine, broccoli, cauliflower and many other specialty crops on 7,000 acres in the Salinas Valley. He actively manages 1,400 acres of vegetable production and coordinates irrigation, fertilizer application and equipment schedules.

Michael Newton
Stratford

Michael is a fourth-generation grower who is the farm manager of Newton Farms and managing partner of MPN Farms. The family businesses grow cotton, tomatoes, wheat, pistachios, dehydrated onions, almonds and various row crops. His responsibilities include coordinating most aspects of field operation, from ground preparation to harvest.

Erin O’Donnell
Arbuckle

Erin is the assistant vice president of global rice trading at Sun Valley Rice, which provides superior and innovative rice and food products, services and solutions worldwide. She is responsible for developing emerging market opportunities and overcoming barriers to entry. Her current focus is in China, a market that has recently opened to importing U.S. rice for the first time.

Brian O’Neill
Fresno

Brian owns Huron Orchard Services, a full-service farm management company that farms more than 8,000 acres of pistachios and almonds in Kings, Fresno and Madera counties. The company’s consulting and management services range from pistachio and almond investment modeling to harvest.

Matt Peyret
Woodland

Matt is a vice president at First Northern Bank, an independent community bank with 11 branches. He works alongside agricultural companies to provide customized financial solutions, manages agricultural relationships, studies market conditions and ensures his customers receive superior service throughout the entire banking process.

Priscilla Rodriguez
Fresno

Priscilla is the director of food safety at Western Agricultural Processors Association, which represents processors and hullers of almonds, walnuts, pistachios and pecans throughout California. She provides food safety and safety services to members and clients, works on legislative and regulatory issues related to tree nuts and organizes membership meetings.

Trevor Tagg
El Centro

Trevor is the vice president of West-Gro Farms, his family’s third-generation farming operation. He is involved in marketing, strategic planning, sales and the pesticide program for the operation that produces a variety of forage commodities, sunflowers and hemp. He is also a broker and owner of the Bear Surf Property Co., a residential and ag property sales and management firm.
LEADERSHIP FOCUS

Communicating in Times of Change

BY SHELLI HENDRICKS, CALF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

We live and lead in a time of incredible change, especially in agriculture. Whether a result of shifting demands due to foreign trade or international competitors or increasing regulatory requirements or evolving consumer preferences, strategic vision requires leaders to interpret the market conditions, make adjustments to business strategy and effectively communicate those adjustments across our organizations. It is often said that the only constant in life is change.

Change is messy, uncomfortable and typically avoided by many people. In my experience working in the technology industry, I have found seasons with high volume of change to be filled with innovation, opportunity and possibility. For leaders to effectively guide their organizations through such seasons of change, I’ve found the following model to be useful as a means of 1) recognizing behavioral responses they are seeing inside the organizations they lead in response to change, 2) understanding what people need in response to that stage of transition and 3) providing the appropriate leadership support to facilitate organizational change in the most empathetic and understanding ways possible.

In her book, “On Death and Dying,” Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) describes five stages of grief, as a way to understand the normal range of emotions people experience when dealing with change in their lives—or in their workplaces. Her research observes and details these five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. In more recent years, organizational development professionals, including myself, have adapted and applied this model to understand how people experience organizational change.

Normally in organizations, a decision is made by senior leadership, which may include but is not limited to the executive team and/or board of directors. A period of due diligence and viability testing may follow, and then a plan is developed to communicate and execute the decision. Press releases are crafted, announcements are made and town halls may be held to convey the message. And then the organization reacts. At this point, leaders may forget that they have had the time and opportunity to process, think and reflect about the impending change before making such announcements, whereas their teams are just now learning about the change for the first time.

Change doesn’t happen at the flip of a switch or the drop of a press release. Change efforts often fail when leaders underestimate the very real emotional response that takes place for the human beings inside their organizations. The simplified four-stage model that follows is an adaptation of Kubler-Ross’ model, and has been utilized in multiple organizations across industries to help leaders recognize, understand and respond to the needs of their people in times of transition. This four-stage model includes: denial, resistance (which combines anger and bargaining), exploration and commitment.

At the time of announcing any size or complexity organizational change, leaders can anticipate that people will first respond with what is called denial. This stage includes such emotions as fear, shock and denial itself. Associated behaviors may be comments or why questions like, “Why is this happening? Why would they do this to me?” When observing such behaviors, leaders can suppose the person is experiencing denial. This is a normal and natural first reaction to change of any magnitude or complexity. Typically, people in the denial stage are searching for information. They are looking to understand what the change is about, why it is necessary, what is driving the change, who made the decisions, based on what information, and most importantly—how will I be impacted?

In response to this type of reaction, leaders can effectively support their people and address the need for information through communication. It is recommended that leaders provide as much information as is appropriate and possible to truthfully, transparently and legally provide, depending on the nature of the change. Transparency is key here, as it reinforces trust in the leadership team and belief that good and right decisions are being made on behalf of the people, the organization and the community.

In the absence of information, human beings have a tendency to fill in the gaps through our imaginations, often creating worst-case scenarios. By providing real-time access to accurate information, leaders who effectively communicate can better equip their teams and stakeholders to deal with the changes being introduced.
Five C’s of Change

- **Clarity**—in all areas, especially of the business need for change, of the specifics of the change, the benefits of the change and most importantly the impacts of the change.

- **Communication**—constant two-way communication that explains clearly what is happening or not happening and why; that listens actively and demonstrates to people that you have thought through the impacts of the change on them and that you are prepared to work with them to achieve what you want (i.e.: their commitment to the change) by addressing what they want and making it work for them.

- **Consistency**—in all aspects of the way in which you lead the change, manage the implementation, handle the communication and ensure the realization of the benefits of the change. There should especially be consistency between what you say and what you do.

- **Commitment**—to inspiring and leading the workforce, ideally with transformational leadership and total ownership of the program and visibility in that role.

- **Capability**—constant attention to the management of the tasks, activities, projects and initiatives that are delivering the capabilities into your organization that will deliver the benefits that you are seeking, thus ensuring that your people have the full resources and capabilities they need to support them through the change.

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Sources:

RECENT EVENTS

THANK YOU

July 2-3
Class 50 Interviews, Pomona
Kevin Antongiovanni (47)
Jared Britschgi (47)
Bryan Foley (39)
Ted Grether (47)
Juan Guzman (41)
Joyce Jong (39)
Dr. Lisa Kessler
Bryan Nickerson (48)
Bill Van Skike (32)

July 10-11
Class 50 Interviews, Davis
Grant Baglietto (48)
Tom Barrios (47)
Dominic Bruno (46)
Dr. Louise Ferguson (30)
Steve Garland (44)
Mica Heilmann (40)
Sarah Hovinga (46)
Jean Hultquist (38)
Steve Kritscher (27)
Alejandra Navarrete (48)
Nita Vail (21)
Blake Vann (46)
David Warter (40)

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Class 50 Interviews, Chico
Denise Carter (38)
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Sarah DeForest (39)
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Josh Huntsinger (39)
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Jane Roberti (45)
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Paul Squires (37)
Dr. John Unruh
Luke Wilson (44)
Mitchell Yerxa (48)

July 18-19
Class 50 Interviews, Fresno
Dr. Alex Alexandrou
Rachelle Antinetti (42)
Eric Bream (48)
John Chandler (44)
Randi Gwilliam (47)
Gayle Holman (46)
Randy Hopkins (46)
Adam Lovgren (48)
Darrin Monteiro (47)
Sal Parra (46)
Paul Parreira (44)
Yvonne Sams (45)
Roxanna Smith (19)
Deanna van Klaveren (32)

July 30-31
Class 50 Interviews, San Luis Obispo
Erin Amaral (46)
Cameron Boswell (42)
Anthony Bozzano (43)
Paul Crout (48)
Chris Drew (47)
Donna France (38)
Robert Grether (42)
John Hay (47)
Heather Jackson (46)
Erik Jertberg (40)
Jarrett Martin (48)
Jim McGarry (43)
Dr. Andy Thulin

August 14
Class 50 Final Selection, Salinas
Dr. Alex Alexandrou
Kevin Antongiovanni (47)
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Dominic Bruno (46)
Bryan Foley (39)
Donna France (38)
Steve Garland (44)
John Hay (47)
Shelli Hendricks
Heather Jackson (46)
Erik Jertberg (40)
Steve Kritscher (27)
Kandi Manhart (40)
Sal Parra (46)
Paul Parreira (44)
Peggy Perry (9)
Dr. John Unruh
Blake Vann (46)
Luke Wilson (44)

August 17
NorCal Ag Leadership Sporting Clay Shoot, Zamora
Denise Carter (38)
Sandy Fiack (29)
Steve Garland (44)
Matt Neubert (44)
Blake Vann (46)

September 9
29th Annual Region 9 Golf Tournament, Camarillo
Art Bliss (8)
Luis Calderon (49)
Jason Cole (42)
Ted Grether (47)
Cesar Hernandez (41)
Susan Josue (43)
Denise Junqueiro (42)
Scott Klitich (43)
Leslie Leavens (34)
Helen McGrath (43)
Mike Nunez (29)
Tom Pecht (18)
Richard Pidduck (21)
Josh Pinkerton (32)
HORIZONS MAGAZINE  FALL 2019

ALUMNI & FELLOWS NEWS

Classes 1 - 9
Frank Rehermann (8) was honored with the California Rice Industry Award. He was recognized for his significant and long-lasting impact on the rice industry. Frank’s service includes 20 years on boards and committees of the California Rice Commission, including as chairman.

Lawmakers and state officials attended the California Association of Winegrape Growers’ (CAWG) vineyard tour at Steve Heringer’s (9) winery, Heringer Estates Family Vineyards and Winery.

Classes 10 - 19
Randall (14) and Brad (17) Lange were the features of a Family Business Magazine article, “Old vines lead to new fruit” about the winery they built on property where their family has grown grapes for 100 years.

Classes 20 - 29
Nicole Montna Van Vleck (26) was elected in July as chair of the USA Rice Farmers board of directors. The USA Rice Federation is the global advocate for all segments of the U.S. rice industry. Charley Mathews, Jr. (26) is currently serving as the USA Rice Federation’s chairman.

Jeff Colombini (28), a third-generation grower and owner of Lodi Farming Inc. is the new chairman of the U.S. Apple Association. He has been a board member of the association for three years, most recently as the vice chairman. He is also chairman of the California Apple Commission, past chairman of the California Cherry Advisory Board and secretary of the Olive Oil Commission of California.

Classes 30 - 39
Rose Marie Burroughs (30) has been selected as one of three finalists for the 2019 California Leopold Conservation Award, which will be presented in December at the California Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting.

Louise Ferguson (30) has been selected as president-elect of the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS), a professional academic society. Her appointment commenced in July 2019 at the ASHS annual conference in Las Vegas. Following the upcoming year as president-elect, board member and executive committee member, she will then serve for a year as president and a third year as chair of the board of directors.

Mary Kimball (32) was quoted in a Daily Democrat article, “Equipment donation supports novice farmers” about supporting the needs of the California Farm Academy Training Program.

Michael Frantz (36) was interviewed by the California Ag Network for a video about the Turlock Irrigation District pursuing a settlement agreement with the California State Water Resources Control Board.

Alex Ott (37) was interviewed for a California Ag Today podcast focused on consumer education to increase pecan consumption.

Classes 40 - 49
Karrina (40) Bains was featured in an India West article, “Indian American farmers caught in the crossfire of Indo-U.S. trade war” about the economic impact of a trade policy announced in June by India’s Commerce Ministry, which added tariffs to their products.

Christine Ivory (41) was honored at a Sutter County Board of Supervisors meeting in August for her efforts to improve the community.

Vernon Peterson (41) was interviewed for a Growing Produce article about the elements of providing a consistent, quality supply of organic stone fruit.

Robert Grether (42), an avocado grower and California Avocado Commission board member, met with Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue to discuss water and labor issues with growers and industry members at an avocado grove in Escondido in July.

Ashley Gill Rossi (42) was the feature of a Capital Region Family Business Center member spotlight about her family’s business, Green Acres Nursery. Ashley handles the company’s marketing and business development, construction facilitation of new locations and e-commerce projects.

Anthony Laney (43) was interviewed by Food Bloggers of Canada for a post titled “Q&A with Anthony Laney—California cling peach grower.” He was also spotlighted in an article about Mendocino Farms Sandwich Market’s seasonal Peachy Keen Chicken Club which features hometown peach honey mustard, made with Anthony’s own peaches.

Derek Azevedo (45) was interviewed in a Tomato Wellness video about what he wishes consumers knew about the processed tomato industry.

Yvonne Sams (45) was interviewed for a G3 Enterprises video about preparing for the 2019 wine grape harvest.

Abby Taylor Silva (45) was quoted in a Monterey County Crop Report: $4.3 billion value, down more than 3% about the crop report stressing the importance of gross production value.

Sal Parra, Jr. (46) was featured in a Farm Service Agency (FSA) blog post, “County committees – making a difference” about serving on an FSA county committee.

Casey Creamer (47) was quoted in a The Packer article, “China: no more purchases of U.S. agricultural products” about urging negotiators to redouble their efforts to arrive at an agreement.

Eric Bream (48) was part of an American Grown: My Job Depends on Ag video about the show debuting this fall on Valley PBS.

Ian LeMay (48) was featured in a Western Farm Press article, “CFFA’s Ian LeMay credits leadership training” about how the California Agricultural Leadership Program helped prepare him for his current role as the California Fresh Fruit Association’s president.

Steven Filter (49) was featured in a Sacramento Valley Water video about peach harvest at Filter Farms in Live Oak.

Sara Neagu-Reed (49) and Jake Wenger (49) were interviewed for a Los Angeles Times article, “Trade tensions with India and China put California almond growers at risk” about the future of the almond market.

Multiple Classes
John Duarte (28) and Rose Marie Burroughs (30) were interviewed in a Bay Nature article titled “A time of reckoning in the Central Valley” about how climate change is affecting agriculture and land use.

Cannon Michael (39) and Derek Azevedo (45) were interviewed for a Growing Produce article, “Bowles Farming Company finds leaders from within.” Cannon is president/CEO and Derek is executive vice president of the farming company.

Cannon Michael (39) and Paul Parreira (44) were part of a group who traveled to the state Capitol on behalf of the Merced County Spring Fair Heritage Foundation. The foundation was recognized as the 2019 California Nonprofit of the Year for the 21st Assembly District.

Christine Ivory (41) and Manpreet Bains (43) were featured in the Yuba-Sutter Farm Bureau’s Crop Talk magazine as part of a spotlight on local women in agriculture.

WHAT’S HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE?
PLEASE SEND ANNOUNCEMENTS OR NEWS TO:
liza.teixeira@agleaders.org
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  Emily Rooney
  Taylor Serres*
  Mark Unruh*

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  Darrin Monteiro

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  Nat DiBuduo

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  Dan and Nancy Nelson

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Daryn Miller*

$100
Tony Pires*
  Salinas Pump Company*

$75
Jason and Jacqueline Pucheu

$57.15
Amazon Smile

$50
Jacquelyn Buffham*
  Shane Mackenzie*
  Dan Royer*

$18
Ron Hyman

In Memory of Terry Marie Bengard
Ocean Mist Farms: $1,000

In Memory of Edward Lea and Armando Vornoli
Albert Adreveno and John and Eda Muller: $200

In-Kind
  TMD Creative: $2,000
  Manpreet Bains: $1,996
  Sureena and Ravi Thiru: $1,000
  Far Horizon Crop Insurance (Manpreet Bains): $625.10
  Manseena Orchards (Manpreet Bains): $252

*Class 49 Giving
Congratulations

On 50 years of contributions to farming.

Pistachios  Almonds  Walnuts  Hemp  Grapes