

# The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



For the good of your food.



**Official Publication of Stanislaus  
County Farm Bureau  
Vol.76 No.3 February 21, 2025**

Judge Nick Dokoozlian provides some tips for first-time contestant and freshman Katherine Serna. Photos by Vicky Boyd

See full story on page 10



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WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT

## SPRING 2025 SUPERVISORY DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

This 5 session program addresses leadership, communication, conflict resolution, planning, and team building. Each in-person session lasts 4 hours with 1-2 hours of activities to practice new skills on the job along with small homework assignments. **attendance is required to graduate.**



## WHEN & WHERE

Stanislaus County Farm  
Bureau Boardroom,  
1201 L Street, Modesto

English 7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Spanish 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

- March 25, 2025
- April 8, 2025
- April 22, 2025
- May 6, 2025
- May 20, 2025
- **Must attend all 5 sessions**



To Register:  
Use the QR Code,  
Call our office @  
(209) 522-7278,  
or email  
Anna Genasci  
[annag@stanfarmbureau.org](mailto:annag@stanfarmbureau.org)

Full Enrollment is required,  
see below for details.



The Supervisory Development Academy is **FREE** this year because Stanislaus County Workforce Development (SCWD) secured grant funding.

**The funding requires full enrollment, that requires the following:**

1. Register in CalJobs
2. Watch Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Orientation Video on SCWD website
3. Review/complete the SCWD Eligibility Packet
4. Gather income verification and required data from last 6 months.

### Questions?

Call Anna @ Farm Bureau - 209-522-7278

### What Happens During a WIOA Eligibility Appointment?

1. Workforce Specialist and client meet in-person or by telephone.
2. Workforce Specialist completes the step-by-step WIOA Title I Application wizard with the client to establish Adult or Dislocated Worker eligibility.
3. Client signs Application and signs and completes forms included in the Eligibility Packet (if not done previously)

### What Happens AFTER Eligibility has been completed?

1. Meet with a Career Services Specialist
2. Provide Identity & Employment Authorization
3. Verification, if you are a veteran
4. Selective Service Status (males ages 18 up to 26)
5. Family income for the last 6 months example: paycheck stubs

## SCFB MISSION STATEMENT

To serve as the voice of Stanislaus County agriculture at all levels of government, while providing programs to assist its farms and family members and educate the general public of needs and importance to agriculture.



### *Podcast discusses building relationships with new lawmakers*

On the Voice of California Agriculture podcast, California Farm Bureau Director of Policy Advocacy Matthew Viohl spoke with host Gary Sack about developing relationships with new federal lawmakers. For example, Viohl said, Sen. Adam Schiff, D-CA, shares an interest in immigration and insurance issues with California farmers. "Those are good areas to open a conversation, sharing that these are important issues to us as well," Viohl said. The podcast episode also discusses new Workplace Violence Prevention standards on California farms and the inspiring work of state FFA leaders.

### *Broadcast journalist talks about covering Central Valley agriculture*

Revered TV reporter Dale Yurong has worked for ABC30 in Fresno, where he is now an anchor, since his college graduation in 1983. Yurong covers Central Valley agriculture in regular segments called "Ag Watch." He also hosts "Valley Grown," a

30-minute agriculture-focused special that runs quarterly, and a weekly "Dine and Dish" segment about local restaurants. Yurong spoke with California Bountiful Magazine, which is published by California Farm Bureau, about covering food and farming in the Central Valley.

### *ICYMI: State to revisit ban on driverless tractors*

During the past half-century, the emergence of new agricultural technology such as aerial drones, autonomous tractors and other equipment has changed the way crops around the world are planted, cared for and harvested. But in California, a regulation from the state's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, or Cal/OSHA, dating to 1977, has prohibited the use of autonomous agricultural equipment without a driver at the helm. After years of advocacy from farm groups, the agency's standards board has empaneled an advisory committee to examine the regulation, signaling it may consider revising it.

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advocacy from farm groups, the agency's standards board has empaneled an advisory committee to examine the regulation, signaling it may consider revising it.

### *'Frustrated' and 'confused': Army Corps dam releases sent farmers scrambling*

An unscheduled order by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to release water at maximum capacity from dams at Lake Kaweah and Lake Success in Tulare County late last month prompted fears of flooding from local farmers and water managers. Alexandra Biering, a water policy expert and director of policy advocacy for the California Farm Bureau, said she had never seen anything like it. "There is a huge danger to the downstream public," Biering said of making unscheduled releases of that magnitude. Local water managers succeeded in getting the releases dialed back to less than a third of full capacity.

### *Delegates adopt labor, trade, crop insurance policies*

At the American Farm Bureau Federation's 106th convention, held last month in San Antonio, voting delegates representing every state and nearly every agricultural commodity deliberated on policies affecting agricultural productivity and profitability. The policies approved at the meeting will guide the nation's largest general farm organization in its legislative and regulatory efforts throughout 2025. California Farm Bureau successfully authored changes that were approved by the delegate body. This included added language to support broadening federal crop insurance for tree and vine losses and discouraging regional limitations.

### *Rancher paved the way for female FFA membership*

More than 1 million youths nationwide learn about agriculture and develop leadership skills through FFA. In California, the organization is thriving, with 104,469 members in 360 chapters. Almost half of those members are girls. This wasn't always the case. FFA was an all-male organization for more than 40 years. Thanks in part to the efforts of female pioneers such as Mary Rickett of Shasta County, membership opened up to girls in 1969.



STANISLAUS COUNTY FARM BUREAU

*Eastside Regional Meeting*

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6:00 PM

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## Advocacy in Action

### *Deportation Efforts Generate Concern in Rural California*

Border Patrol apprehension activities in January aimed at individuals with pending deportation orders have generated significant social and traditional media attention and concerns in rural California about whether immigration authorities may be focused on agricultural employees. Initial reports in some social media channels alleged that agricultural employees were being targeted for deportation, and several reports included claims of large numbers of farm employees allegedly detained by authorities. Some social media channels claimed that nearly half of all farm employees were refusing to work.

Farm Bureau received scattered reports of employees declining to work, keeping their children home from school, or avoiding leaving their homes, but no specific verification of farms or ranches where work was significantly hampered has been found.

The California Farm Bureau issued a statement on January 30 expressing support for agricultural employee communities. Additionally, Farm Bureau's affiliated company, Farm Employers Labor Service, has published resources for agricultural employers to assist them in dealing with potential immigration worksite enforcement and to educate their employees (FELS Newsletter subscriber-exclusive content). Staff Contact: Bryan Little; [blittle@cfbf.com](mailto:blittle@cfbf.com)

### *Climate Resilience Strategy for California Agriculture*

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is currently developing a Climate Resilience Strategy for California Agriculture. The strategy will consolidate the state's various agri-

cultural climate actions into a single framework, providing both the status of current efforts and a roadmap for future initiatives. The strategy is currently in the drafting phase with public input ongoing and is anticipated to be released for public comment in Summer 2025.

The Farm Bureau has submitted preliminary written comments, highlighting, among other things, its support for state-funded climate-smart agricultural programs and the need for continued investment in these initiatives. Farm Bureau staff will remain engaged in the development of this strategy and will provide additional input and recommendations to CDFA.

If you wish to submit input on what should be included in the strategy, comments can be submitted to [climate@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:climate@cdfa.ca.gov) through February 27, 2025. Staff Contact: Richard Filgas; [rfilegas@cfbf.com](mailto:rfilegas@cfbf.com)

### *Fire Hazard Severity Zone Recommendations Begin for Local Responsibility Areas*

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) will begin issuing recommendations for the classification of Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZs) in Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs).

Background Government Code (GC) 51178 mandates that the State Fire Marshal identify moderate, high, and very high FHSZs based on consistent statewide criteria and the expected severity of fire hazards. GC 51179 requires the State Fire Marshal to make recommendations to local agencies for their designation and adoption by ordinance.

Due to resource limitations within OSFM and the impact of recent wildfires in Los Angeles, the agency will distribute these recommendations in four phases over the next six weeks to local jurisdictions in the

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following areas:

1. Northern California jurisdictions (inland)
2. Northern California jurisdictions (coastal)
3. Central Valley jurisdictions
4. Southern California jurisdictions

Starting this week, OSFM will notify local jurisdictions in Northern California (inland) that may contain moderate, high, very high, or a combination of Fire Hazard Severity Zones within their boundaries. These jurisdictions will receive maps and corresponding data from OSFM's recommendations on Monday, February 10.

Per GC 51179, local agencies have 120 days

to designate FHSZs by ordinance. A local agency may, at its discretion, increase the level of FHSZ identified by OSFM or include additional areas within its jurisdiction in its FHSZ ordinance. However, a local agency may not decrease the level of FHSZ identified by OSFM.

Upon adopting an ordinance designating FHSZs, a local agency must provide a copy of the ordinance to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection within 30 days, per GC 51179(c).

Implications It is unclear whether these designations will impact California's already fragile insurance market. However,

parcels in newly designated risk areas may face non-renewals if they are not already affected. In most instances, insurers are already aware of these risks. The new designations will also expedite enforcement of the "Zone 0" strategy, which requires homeowners in high fire severity areas to maintain an ember-

resistant zone within five feet of their homes to reduce wildfire spread. This effort aligns with the Governor's recent Executive Order, which accelerates the implementation of Zone 0 regulations for structures in high-risk fire zones and the State Responsibility Area.

Additionally, the Governor has directed OSFM to release updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps, adding 1.4 million new acres of land to the highest fire severity tiers. This update will affect building codes and local planning requirements statewide. Staff Contact: Peter Ansel, pansel@cfbf.com

### Federal Affairs

Trade Negotiations Continue Between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico

Trade negotiations between the United States, Canada, and Mexico remain in flux as the new administration moves forward with its campaign commitments regarding tariffs. While initial expectations suggested that tariffs and retaliatory measures would take effect last Tuesday, a tentative agreement has delayed their implementation for at least the next month.

Last year alone, nearly \$60 billion in agricultural exports went to Canada and Mexico, and broad tariff measures would have almost certainly led to price increases across multiple commodities and sectors. The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) issued multiple statements last week warning against such measures while also welcoming the temporary pause. In a statement, AFBF President Zippy Duvall emphasized the negative impact

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As another membership service, Farm Bureau members are offered FREE classified advertising in the Stanislaus Farm News. Ads must be 18 words or less and only one ad per month per membership (membership number required.) Ads may be MAILED to the Stanislaus Farm News, or BROUGHT to the SCFB office, 1201 L Street, Downtown Modesto. NO PHONE-IN OR FAX free ads will be accepted. Free ads are restricted to farm machinery or equipment or unprocessed farm products. Farm jobs wanted or offered will also be accepted. No real estate ads and no commercial items or services will be accepted. 209-522-7278

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From FB on page 5

of tariffs on farmers and ranchers, stating: "Tariffs and tariff retaliation often hit farmers and ranchers hard, making it more difficult for them to pay their bills and grow the food America's families rely on." During President Trump's first administration, a market support program had to be created to assist producers who lost millions due to similar trade policies. Given California's heavy reliance on international markets to move its agricultural commodities, the California Farm Bureau (CAFB) has also urged caution on tariff policies that could further strain an already struggling industry. We will continue to keep members informed as developments unfold. Contact: Matthew Viohl: mviohl@cxfb.com

BLM, USDA Forest Service Announce 2025 Grazing Fees

Federal land management agencies have announced that the federal grazing fee for 2025 will remain at \$1.35 per animal unit month (AUM) for public lands administered by both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. The newly calculated grazing fee will take effect on March 1, 2025, and will apply to nearly 18,000 grazing permits and leases administered by BLM and nearly 6,250 permits administered by the Forest Service. The formula used to calculate the grazing fee was established by Congress in the 1978 Public Rangelands Improvement Act and has remained in use under a 1986 presidential executive order.

For additional information, permit holders and lessees are advised to contact their local BLM or Forest Service office. Staff Contact: Erin Huston; ehuston@cxfb.com

Fix Our Forests Act Passes in the House  
The U.S. House of Representatives passed the CAFB-supported legislation, the Fix Our Forests Act (H.R. 471).

The bill, which passed in a bipartisan 279-141 vote, aims to:

- Streamline and expedite the environmental review process for forest management projects
- Promote improved wildfire mitigation practices
- Limit frivolous lawsuits designed to delay critical forest projects
- Implement additional policies and programs to support rural communities

The legislation now heads to the Senate for consideration.

CAFB submitted a support letter as well. Staff Contact: Erin Huston; ehuston@cxfb.com

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## Strong Leadership, Stronger Future

By: Zippy Duvall, AFBF President

America's farmers and ranchers are no strangers to uncertainty, but the challenges they face today call for immediate attention and decisive leadership. With the confirmation of Brooke Rollins as Secretary of Agriculture, USDA has the opportunity to continue its long history of working with farmers and ranchers to prioritize stability, security and sustainability, and we look forward to coming to the table to continue this work in the days ahead.

Secretary Rollins steps into this role at a pivotal time as farm country is facing economic pressure, unpredictable markets and policy decisions that could have long-lasting consequences. While we have confidence in her ability to navigate these challenges, the urgency of the situation requires strong leadership.

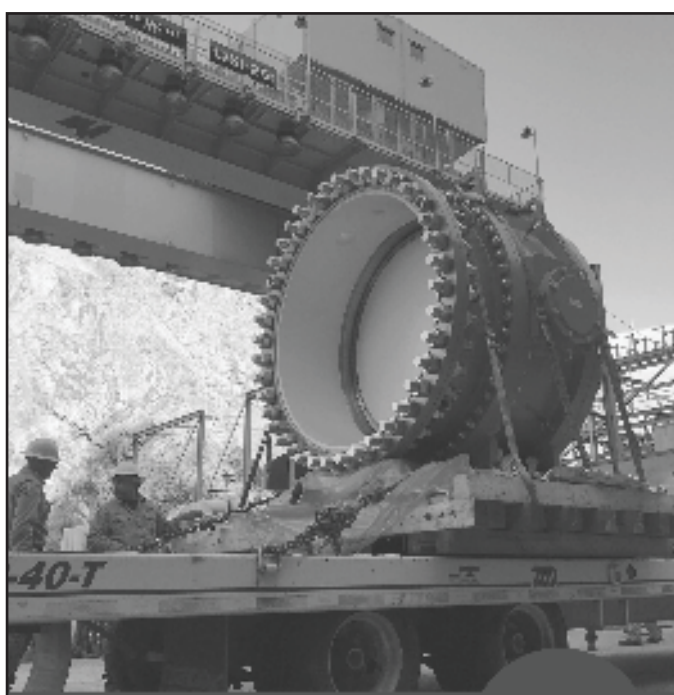
One of the most pressing concerns is the impact of tariffs on agricultural trade. Farmers rely on global markets to sell their products, and uncertainty in trade relationships with key partners could lead to significant financial strain across the agriculture economy and the 42.6 million U.S. jobs it supports. If trade conflicts escalate, farm families will be left with low prices or a surplus of crops with no viable markets – something we simply cannot afford right

now. Secretary Rollins will have a critical role in working across the administration to ensure that agricultural trade remains a priority and that American farmers are not caught in the crossfire of broader geopolitical disputes.

At home, confusion over the status of government programs has left many farmers in limbo. Questions remain about which initiatives are moving forward and whether signed contracts will be upheld. Farm families must not be left holding the bag for investments they made in good faith for conservation practices. Farmers made planting decisions trusting federal agencies would uphold their end of the agreements. We need stability and transparency in these programs, to keep our farms economically sustainable in all seasons.

Another pressing issue we will work with the Secretary to address is the promised disaster and economic aid that was authorized at the end of last year. The delays in getting those funds have caused unnecessary hardships, and with planting season quickly approaching, timely assistance is critical. Farmers need relief so that they can focus on what they do best, producing the food, fiber and renewable fuel we all rely on.

Additionally, we look forward to working with Secretary Rollins and her team as we continue to call on Congress for a new,



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modernized farm bill that provides a necessary safety net for farmers. We need her as a strong advocate to get this across the finish line and ensure new programs reflect the realities of modern farming.

We also need her leadership in addressing reforms to the Farm Labor Survey. Agriculture has reached a crisis point when it comes to accessing – and affording – a stable workforce. Farmers across the country tell me this is one of the greatest challenges they face, and for many, labor costs and shortages threaten to put them out of business.

The list of priorities for farm and ranch families is long, but Secretary Rollins is up to the challenge. Her experience in Washington and her ability to navigate complex policy issues make her well-equipped to tackle the tough issues facing agriculture. We stand ready to work alongside her and the administration to ensure that government serves as a partner in the success of America's farmers and ranchers.

## FFA History 1929 -

National blue and corn gold are adopted as official FFA colors.

Carlton Patton from Arkansas is named the



first Star Farmer of America. This is one of the first awards created by FFA, and it was sponsored until 1949 by the Kansas City Star.

First National Chapter Contest is launched and sponsored by Farm Journal magazine.

At the Second National FFA Convention in November, 33 states are represented by 64 delegates.

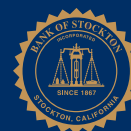
Thirty-five state associations with approximately 1,500 chapters and 30,000 members are affiliated with the national organization.

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## On your marks, get set, prune!

By Vicky Boyd

With that command, FFA teams from nine state high schools were off and lopping grapevines, balancing speed, knowledge and skill.

The inaugural Vine Pruning Spring Training, held recently in a Ceres-area orange muscat vineyard, was designed to expose new FFA students to competitive vine pruning, said Turlock High School agriculture teacher and FFA adviser Travis Cardoso.

“It gives them a chance to get their foot in the door,” he said. “For some of these freshmen, it’s their first competition ever.”

Most of the Turlock High FFA freshmen competing were city dwellers and had no real ag experience, Cardoso said.

The event also served as a refresher to prepare veteran competitors for the statewide FFA pruning contest scheduled for the first weekend in February at California State University, Fresno.

Cardoso said vine dormancy affected when they could compete. The plants are best

if they’re in a deep winter slumber before pruning, and that usually doesn’t occur until early December. Following Ceres, weekend FFA pruning competitions in Lodi and Reedley lead up to the statewide contest at Fresno State.

“There were only two other dormancy weekends,” he said. “There are only so many chances to get students practice, and we wanted them to have a positive experience.”

With talk of another Central Valley pruning contest possibly scheduled for early 2026, Cardoso said he hoped to push back the Ceres competition to December. It would remain the first event of the season and would still serve as a low-pressure introduction to competitive pruning for new FFA students.

Of the nine school FFA programs and 50 students entered at Ceres, only Turlock High was from Stanislaus County. Other entrants came from as far away as Napa, Solano and Fresno counties.

Cardoso said the local event was particularly special for Turlock High FFA freshmen because they received their blue jackets just before Christmas, and it was the first time they were able to wear them in competition.

“I want to see the looks on their faces — win, lose or draw, it doesn’t really matter, as long as they represent Turlock well,” he said.

A community effort

Spurred by substantial community support, Cardoso said he put together the Ceres FFA event with the opening game of baseball spring training in mind. He commended Bill and Triana Berryhill, owners of Berryhill Family Vineyards, for volunteering a block of grapevines for the competition as well as for their overall support of ag education.

Bill Berryhill, who gave up a day of duck hunting to attend the contest, said it was fun to see youth take an interest in wine grape production and pruning.

“Anything that motivates kids to go into our industry, whether it’s on the growing side or winery side, I’m all in,” he said. “We’ve always been very supportive of our local high school FFA and 4-H.”

Modesto-based Gallo sponsored the awards and lunch, without which Cardoso said he wouldn’t have been able to host a contest of this caliber.

*See Prune on page 12*



*The Turlock High School FFA Vine Pruning Team was one of nine that competed recently in Ceres. Members included (from left) Christina Da Silva, Diego Peguero, Ashley Diaz, Lexiah Lopez, Katherine Serna, Paisley Brahic, Paityn Silva-Sousa, Liliana Cabrales and Olivia Barletta.*



*Turlock High Junior Diego Peguero prunes a vine in the spur-pruning class, cutting out old or unproductive growth. He also is chapter secretary.*



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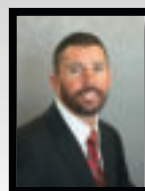
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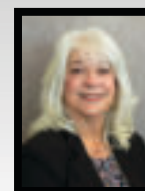


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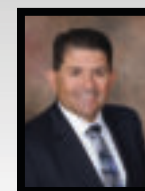
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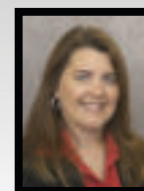
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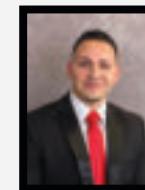
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*From Prune on page 10*

Nick Dokoozlian, an industry veteran with Gallo, served as one of four judges. He said he looked for two main factors — how entrants selected the fruiting wood they kept and how they maintained vine shape for the following year.

“Are they doing the right thing in leaving renewal spurs and shaping the vine for the future?” he said. “How well are they forming the vines for next year’s crop?”

Joining him as a judge was Joe DiGrazia, a retired ag teacher who had coached FFA vine pruning teams in Santa Rosa and

Turlock High School beginning in 1974.

“I’m looking for them to use all of the shears correctly and safely,” he said. During the mini-critique, DiGrazia said, he hoped students were able to identify potential problems with the vines and describe how they addressed them through pruning.

Spring training for pruning

As the first competition of the year, Cardoso said the Ceres event also was an abridged version of upcoming contests and was designed to give new FFA students a taste of what’s in store without intimidating them.

The Ceres competition began with a 100-question written test, just like the state competition. But the number of pruning classes was reduced from the typical three to two.

At Ceres, FFA students competed on sets of three vines. They had to spur-prune two bilaterally trained cordon vines in eight minutes, leaving 10 spurs per cordon if possible. In the cane-pruning class, they had to prune two vines in 10 minutes, leaving eight spurs per cane and two renewal spurs on each side.

Then under the watchful eye of a judge, competitors pruned the final vine of each

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class while describing their mindset as they cut. They also answered questions from the judge, who scored each contestant on skill, knowledge and whether they were able to complete their two-vine pruning in the al-

lotted time.

Because the Ceres event was more of a learning experience, judges took time to point out what the contestants did well and

*Turlock High FFA Chapter President and Junior Liliana Cabrales concentrates on making cuts to a spur-pruned vine.*

provide suggestions for the future. Contestants could receive up to 100 points for each pruning class.

While some freshmen were anxious and even admittedly scared going into the judging critique, most exited the vineyards with smiles on their faces, saying it wasn't as bad as they'd anticipated.

From rookies to veterans

Freshman Katherine Serna, who lives on a ranchette that raises goats and oat hay, was one of the rookies. Encouraged by her father, a state grape pruning champion when he attended Turlock High, Katherine decided to go out for the event.

"I wanted to try something new and try something that's really hands on," said Serna, noting she had only practiced once before the event. "I'm interested in learning about something I didn't know about before, and it's fun."

For junior Diego Peguero, the Ceres contest marked the third year he had competed in grape pruning. A city dweller, he also shows swine.

Peguero said he initially decided to go out for the skill challenge because it's one of the only winter FFA teams.

"It looked really fun," he said. "My older sister was a three-year member as well. She placed second in the state, and I decided to join and go for first and try to beat her."

All joking aside, Peguero said both of his older sisters encouraged him to become involved in FFA. In addition to serving as chapter secretary, he is involved with fruit tree judging and is on the cooperative marketing team. He plans to pursue a career in viticulture.

"So this right here is why I fell in love with it," Peguero said, pointing to the vineyard contest.

Junior Liliana Cabrales is entering her second year of competitive vineyard pruning, spurred by her interests in viticulture and agricultural horticulture.

"I'd really like to pursue this as a career," she said. "I'm falling in love with it more and more."

Cabrales also competes on the vegetable judging team and is FFA chapter president.

"You learn professionalism within the industry," she said. "You learn about the different career opportunities and how to excel in the career."

Despite the Ceres competition's fun atmosphere, Cardoso said it also meshed nicely with the ag biology courses he teaches. In plant science, for example, he talks about photosynthesis and how it drives most aspects of plant growth. In advanced plant science classes, he goes into more detail. Lessons may include plant growth hormones, such as auxins, and how they affect shoot, cane and root growth.




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# Bountiful insights: The heart of resilience

By Masie Skelton

Resiliency is a trending word in agriculture. Resilience is more than just a trait; it is a way of life. At the heart of this resilient spirit lies Zane Ranch in Paynes Creek.

For my grandparents, Steve and Peggy Zane, the ranch is more than a home—it is a legacy and a livelihood built on decades of hard work. I was fortunate to be raised close to my grandparents and to experience agriculture firsthand, which has wholly defined who I am and the values I hold today.

On July 24, a wildfire ignited in Chico. By 11:48 p.m. the following night, the fire had grown to 145,171 acres. By noon on July 26,

the fire was 178,090 acres and continued to rage northward. At approximately 6:30 p.m., it reached Zane Ranch.

Throughout the night, my grandparents, uncles and mother worked side by side with Cal Fire, employing every tool and ounce of energy they had to fight the encroaching flames. They cut fire breaks, cleared brush, extinguished spot fires and watered the pastures and barns, battling relentlessly to protect our cattle, homes and historical structures. The night was long and sleepless, but their determination was unwavering. The flames, though perilously close, were held at bay, and my family was able to secure the ranch from a threat that could have been much worse.

Amid the chaos of that night, a moment of irony highlighted the resilience of life

on the ranch. While my family fought to protect the homes, barns and livestock, the cows were in the midst of calving season. That very night, as the fire raged, three new calves were born—a poignant reminder that life in agriculture does not pause for disaster. No matter the obstacles, the cycle of life continues even in the face of devastation.

Editor’s note: Masie Skelton is a junior majoring in horticulture at Purdue University College of Agriculture. A longer version of this piece was first published on the Purdue Sigma Alpha sorority’s Beta Chapter Blogs. Meet her grandparents and learn about their agriculture-themed collectibles and how they came close to losing them in the Park Fire.



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<p><b>February 25, 2025</b> <b>Food Safety - FSMA</b> 9:00-10:30am - Spanish 10:30-12:00pm - English <small>What is FSMA? Who does it apply to? How do I comply? What should I expect during an inspection? Pricing: Member \$60/Normember \$60.</small></p>	<p><b>June 5, 2025</b> <b>CPR &amp; First Aid</b> 8:00-12:00pm - Spanish 1:00-5:00pm - English <small>CalOSHA requires that at least 1 employee for every 20 employees be trained. Pricing: Member \$100/Normember \$125</small></p>
<p><b>March 6, 2025</b> <b>Pesticide Handler &amp; Fit Testing</b> 9:00-12:00pm - Spanish 1:00-4:00pm - English <small>This is an annual training required by the Department of Pesticide Regulation. Pricing: Member \$60/Normember \$75.</small></p>	<p><b>July 31, 2025</b> <b>Tractor Safety</b> 9:00-10:00am - Spanish 10:00-11:00am - English <small>CalOSHA requires that employees who operate equipment be trained annually. Pricing: Member \$40/Normember \$50</small></p>
<p><b>May 1, 2025</b> <b>Indoor&amp;Outdoor Heat Illness Prevention</b> 9:00-10:00am - Spanish 10:00-11:00am - English <small>CalOSHA requires this training annually for employees. Pricing: Member \$40/Normember \$60.</small></p>	<p><b>October 23, 2025</b> <b>Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)</b> 9:00-10:30am - Spanish 10:30-12:00pm - English <small>Everyone operating a class C vehicle carrying hazardous material must be trained. Pricing: Member \$40/Normember \$50</small></p>

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## Almond Update: Almond Board Kicks Off 2025-2026 Election Cycle

The Almond Board of California (ABC) has officially begun the election process for the 2025-2026 Board of Directors. The candidate declaration window opened on February 7, allowing interested individuals to declare their intent to run for one of the available board positions.

This year, several seats are up for election, including both grower and handler positions. Specifically, the independent grower number one seat, currently held by Paul Ewing, and the independent grower number two seat, held by Brandon Ribiero, are open. The independent handler number one seat is also available, though it was vacated last year and has one remaining year in its term. Addition-

ally, the independent handler number three seat, presently occupied by Darren Rigg, is up for reelection. The board's co-op handler number one seat is selected internally by Blue Diamond and is not part of this public election process.

The election process follows a structured timeline. Candidates must submit their letters of intent and required grower petitions by April 1. Following this, ballots will be mailed to eligible voters on April 21, with a submission deadline of May 22. Election results will be announced on June 2, and newly elected members will assume their roles on August 1.

Taylor Hillman, Senior Specialist of Industry Communications at ABC, emphasized the importance of participation, stating, "This

is the time where we call for any candidates that want to run for any of the positions. They have roughly two months to put in their information and their intent to run." He also noted the detailed process involved in declaring candidacy, saying, "You do have to go through a little bit of a quote-unquote background check to see if you are in fact a grower or are in fact a handler."

To aid potential candidates, ABC has expanded its elections webpage ([almonds.com/elections](http://almonds.com/elections)). The site includes details about key deadlines, board responsibilities, and a list of individuals who have declared their candidacy. A frequently asked questions section provides further guidance on the election process and expectations for board members.

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the Board of Directors but still wish to contribute, ABC offers alternative avenues for involvement. Various committees, subcommittees, and working groups provide opportunities to engage with the industry. More than 150 almond industry members participate in committees such as the Biomass Work Group, Environmental Stewardship Work Group, and Global Market Development Committee. Committee membership applications open in June, with new appointments announced in August.

Interested individuals can learn more about board elections, committees, and meeting schedules by visiting [almonds.com/events](http://almonds.com/events) and [almonds.com/committees](http://almonds.com/committees). These platforms allow industry members to observe committee discussions, participate virtually, and explore ways to become more involved in shaping California's almond industry.



FFA History 1939 -

28.5 acres of land is purchased near Alexandria, Va., for the first FFA-owned national headquarters; the land was once part of George Washington's estate.

Identical twins Albert and Arthur Lacy from Hondo, Texas, become the only members ever to share the title of Star Farmer of America.

The H.O. Sargent Trophy Award is

created to honor H.O. Sargent's commitment to helping NFA members achieve success and leadership in agriculture.

1946 - Attendance at the National FFA "Victory Convention" is 12,500. Those in attendance honor the 260,450 FFA members who served and the 7,188 who paid the supreme sacrifice, losing their lives in the war.

1953 - The U.S. Post Office Department issues a special 3-cent postage stamp—the cost of mailing a first-class letter then—to celebrate the 25th anniversary of FFA.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower speaks at the National FFA Convention — the first U.S. president to do so — and receives an Honorary American Farmer Degree.

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## Our Journey, Agriculture's Story

By Heather Lang

College years are often considered the most memorable and formative time in one's life, providing the freedom to explore and discover one's identity. It marks a significant transition for many as they leave home for the first time and face the realities of the real world.

During my freshman year in college, each student was assigned to give a 20-minute presentation on any single controversial topic, allowing three weeks of preparation. Hearing the teacher say that we were supposed to give a 20-minute presentation made my heart stop, and my body temperature go up. Public speaking is not my forte. I take pride in my work but prefer to work alone; therefore, I prefer to get the tasks done that were asked of me by myself, in a quiet room, and on my time.

The day I was scheduled to give my presentation, I was the second one to present, which meant I just had more time to stew in everything that could go wrong. The first presenter of the day started talking and they spoke on the exact topic I was speaking on. Already terrified, this really made me panic and filled my head with self-doubt. I was sweating profusely, and I felt weak. Ultimately, I failed at my presentation that day. The experience haunted me, affecting future public speaking engagements.

Interestingly, inter-

acting with customers at our family farm is a stark contrast. I don't run and hide from them. I am not looking to detour from them, and the self-doubt seems to be minimal, at the very back of my mind. In fact, I enjoy talking to our customers about our lifestyle, our products and why we do what we do. The fact that we are a 5th-generation family farm that depends on the family's involvement to make it thrive. Or how I get to see their faces light up and the giggles throughout the barn as they touch the animals, come up with names for them and hand feed them. As we walk around the farm, showing them different aspects of our family farm, I get to show them the original farmhouse with pride.

Engaging with customers and sharing our farm's heritage, products, and values brings me joy and purpose. Guests experience the hustle and bustle of farm life and when I get the opportunity to help a young child live out his dream of being in a real tractor, time seems to stand still for just a minute. Witnessing their excitement as they interact with our animals, explore the farm, and learn about our

family's history fills me with pride.

It's in those moments that your heart is full, and your life has purpose. I want people to experience why we love this life and see firsthand how we treat our animals. These interactions allow me to convey our passion and dedication, creating meaningful connections and showcasing our commitment to our farming practices.

Conversations with our customers about our meat products are valued. I want to hear the good and the things that they might change. I encourage them to share any new suggestions for products or flavors. If something wasn't right, we want to hear about it. Their input is vital to our business, driving us to continuously enhance our offerings and customer experience.

Sharing our agricultural journey is not only rewarding but also serves as an opportunity to educate and inspire others about the importance of farming in our daily lives. By narrating our journey from farm to fork,



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FFA History 1959 -

First National FFA Center is dedicated in Alexandria, Va., on land that was once part of George Washington's estate. An FFA camp had been located here earlier.

FFA holds its first National Leadership Training Conference for state officers in Washington, D.C.

1964 - FFA sells its one-millionth FFA jacket.



I can highlight the dedication, innovation, and challenges faced by farmers. Each story is a testament to their resilience and the vital role they play in sustaining our communities.

Heather Lang is a family farmer in North Dakota with local, state and national Farm Bureau leadership experience. She currently serves as president of her county Farm Bureau (Burleigh). Follow her on Instagram (ndpiggytales) to learn more about her journey. This column was originally published on North Dakota Farm Bureau's "On Your Table" blog.

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### FFA History 1970 -

New York's Anita Decker and New Jersey's Patricia Krowicki become the first two female delegates to the national convention.

1980 - The National FFA Foundation raises \$1 million in one year for the first time.

1988 - The Future Farmers of America changes its name to the National FFA Organization to reflect the growing diversity

in agriculture.

Seventh and eighth grade students are permitted to become FFA members.

The Agriscience Student Recognition Program is introduced.

President Ronald Reagan speaks at the National FFA Convention via a prerecorded message.

Member Chrystal McDaniel poses with the 3 millionth FFA jacket.



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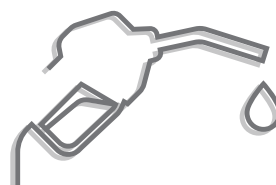
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## Manny Corona: A Journey of Leadership, Growth, and Community at Modesto Battery

By: Anna Genasci, SCFB

For Manny Corona, the path to business ownership was anything but linear. From arriving in Modesto in 2003 to working his way up from warehouse staff to President and owner of Modesto Battery, Manny's journey is a testament to perseverance, mentorship, and a deep commitment to community.

### A Chance Beginning

Manny moved to Modesto from San Jose in search of new opportunities. With a choice between working at Foot Locker—a tempting prospect given his love of shoes—or taking a job at Modesto Battery, he ultimately chose the latter.

"I knew if I worked at Foot Locker, all my money would go right back into shoes," he laughed. So, in 2004, he started working in the warehouse at Modesto Battery as a recycling coordinator. Over the next two decades, he left and returned multiple times, always maintaining a strong relationship with the company's previous owners, David and Rita Haan.

### The Road to Ownership

Through the years, Manny sought out new experiences, including joining a union job that required long commutes and demanding hours. While the pay was good, the lifestyle took a toll on his family life and finances. A pivotal moment came when he discovered Dave Ramsey's financial guidance. Listening to Ramsey's podcast during long drives sparked a transformation in his financial mindset and leadership approach.

"God was just putting something in me, shaping me into a better leader," Manny reflected.

Eventually, in 2017, David Haan approached Manny with an unexpected

proposition: taking over the company. The idea took root quickly. "That seed sprouted within 11 miles," he said, recalling the drive home. "What if I could be home every day? What if I could take my kids to school?" After thoughtful discussions with his wife and the Haans, Manny began the transition to ownership. By 2021, he and his wife officially took over Modesto Battery.

### Growing the Business with Passion and Community Focus

Manny's leadership has expanded the business in unexpected ways, with the unwavering support of his wife. Her dedication has allowed him to focus on Modesto Battery, managing early mornings, late nights, and weekends while she holds down the household. One key move was bringing in Juan Ovalle (Otherwise known as Justlowriders), now Modesto Battery's social media manager. Their partnership began through a shared passion for the lowrider community. Juan initially sought sponsorship for his lowrider, leading to a business relationship that quickly grew into a successful marketing strategy. Today, Modesto Battery ships pallets of batteries across the U.S. and even internationally, including Japan.

Yet, their commitment goes beyond sales. "We're organically grown in the community," Manny emphasized. "When people walk through our doors, they feel it in the air—our values, our mission."

### A Deepening Connection with Agriculture

While Modesto Battery has always served the farming community, Manny and his team have made a conscious effort to strengthen those ties. They now attend industry events such as the Farm Expo and John Deere shows to connect with local farmers.

"Farmers are the backbone of our community, and they've always supported us," Manny said. "We want to show that same support in return."

As a part of that commitment, Modesto Battery recently joined the Stanislaus

County Farm Bureau and offers a 10% discount to Farm Bureau members. Customers who set up accounts also receive an additional farmers' tax exemption.

### Looking to the Future

While Modesto Battery has seen impressive growth, Manny and his team remain focused on their core mission—providing quality products with integrity and reliability. Though plans for an annual car show have been postponed to prioritize business growth, they're actively working to replicate their success in the lowrider market within the agricultural community.

"Farmers don't have time to worry about their equipment starting up in the morning," Manny said. "We provide that peace of mind."

### More Than Just a Business

At its heart, Modesto Battery is more than a place to buy a battery—it's a community-driven business built on trust, relationships, and a dedication to serving its customers. Manny's son, Antonio, has also stepped into the business, taking on various roles as needed. As the next generation, he is poised to keep Modesto Battery thriving for years to come—it's a community-driven business built on trust, relationships, and a dedication to serving its customers. Manny Corona's journey from warehouse worker to owner exemplifies the power of mentorship, resilience, and staying true to one's values.

As the company continues to grow, one thing remains constant: Modesto Battery isn't just selling batteries—it's providing reliability, stability, and a commitment to those who depend on them the most.





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