



**CULTIVATING**  
OUR MISSION



# Leadership Farm Bureau

# 2022



From left: Abigail Fair, Kathleen Merrill, Stephen Waldron, Donald Wirz, Amanda Berry, Daniel Jones and Madeline Schenken.



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## LFB: Cultivating our mission

By Stephanie Younger, LFB Program Director

To cultivate means to prepare, use and improve or develop through careful attention. As the 2022 Leadership Farm Bureau class prepared to embark on a year of experiences after two years of dealing with many unknowns, they embraced the opportunity to cultivate the mission of the Farm Bureau.

During the first sessions, class members took the time to understand their reason for participating in the program and developed a personal and a group mission they would focus on throughout the program. As much of society was ready to begin 2022 full steam ahead, the class saw the need to be intentional about their interactions by including their mission. The goal was to cultivate their mission through advocacy and communications, while learning about agriculture and issues throughout the nation.

The seven Farm Bureau leaders from throughout the state, representing different sectors of the agriculture community, dedicated 10 months to serving the Farm Bureau and representing California farmers and ranchers throughout the state and nation. With their mission at the forefront of every session, they developed skills in media training, team building, public speaking and business etiquette while gaining a better understanding of the many facets of the organization. They bonded as a group as they shared a common mission.

They gained experience by lobbying for agriculture at the state and national levels and touring parts of California and North Carolina to learn about agricultural issues and practices. They stepped out of their comfort zones, supported one another during the year and developed a strong connection as a class.

These individuals will join the more than 250 Farm Bureau members who have graduated from the program. LFB began in 2000 to develop leaders to share the Farm Bureau vision to protect California’s diverse farming and ranching legacy and enable the whole agriculture community to thrive.



Stephanie Younger

**Congratulations**  
to the class of 2022



# Class of 2022



**ABIGAIL FAIR**  
**STANISLAUS COUNTY**  
Abi is the membership coordinator for Stanislaus County Farm Bureau. She also owns Blumen Flower Farm, a direct-to-consumer flower operation, and owns cattle with her husband. Abi is a graduate of California State University, Fresno and has a degree in agricultural communications.



**DANIEL JONES**  
**SOLANO COUNTY**  
Daniel is the farm manager for Monk and Son Farming in Dixon. He also manages his family's orchard and cattle operation and is establishing his own almond operation. Daniel serves on the California Young Farmers & Ranchers State Committee. He attended Oregon State University, where he played basketball and earned a degree in agricultural business.



**MADELINE SCHENKEN**  
**SACRAMENTO COUNTY**  
Madeline is the membership and events program director for Sacramento County Farm Bureau and an involved Young Farmers & Ranchers member. She earned a degree in communications from California State University, Sacramento. Madeline was previously the communications coordinator for CalAgJobs.



**STEPHEN WALDRON**  
**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**  
Stephen is a field automation supervisor for Plantel Nurseries, overseeing the use of new technologies in agriculture production. He serves on the Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Stephen graduated from California State University, Fresno with a degree in agriculture business.



**AMANDA BERRY**  
**CALAVERAS COUNTY**  
Amanda is a territory manager for Elanco in its poultry business unit. She is president of Calaveras County Farm Bureau and cofounded the Gold Country Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee. Amanda attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and has a degree in animal science.



**KATHLEEN MERRILL**  
**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**  
Kathleen is an eighth-generation Californian and member of a longtime farming and ranching family on the Central Coast. She works part time as the special programs coordinator for Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau. She has a degree in agricultural business from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

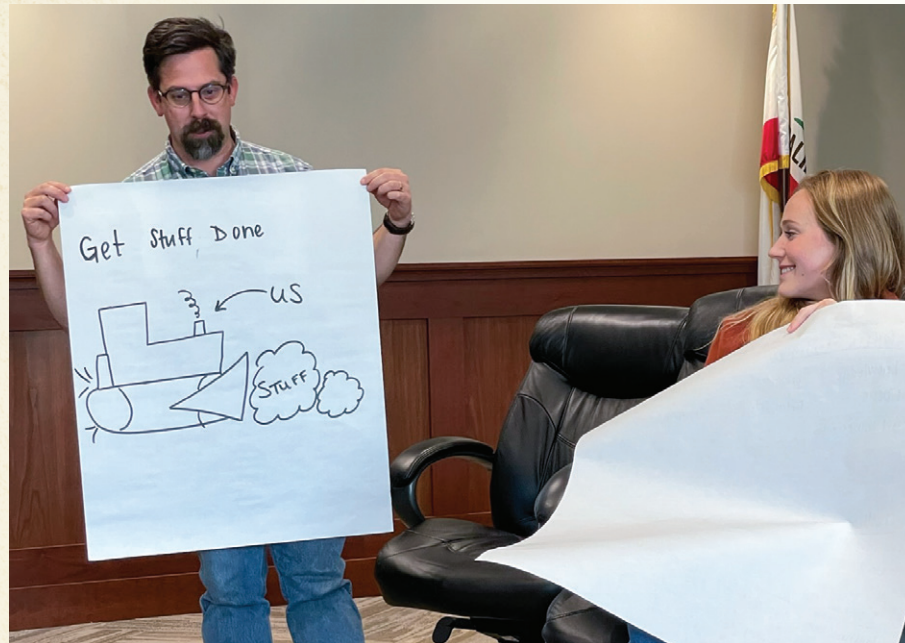


**DONALD WIRZ**  
**SAN BENITO COUNTY**  
Donald is a winemaker for Delicato Family Wines and president of San Benito County Farm Bureau. He works on his family's ranch, growing winegrapes and raising beef cattle. Donald has a master's degree in viticulture and enology from the University of California, Davis and an animal science degree from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. He lives outside of Hollister with his wife and four children.



## February

# Cultivating our mission by growing as a team



### By Abigail Fair and Daniel Jones

At the beginning of February, seven individuals came together from different areas within the Central Valley and Central Coast to explore their personal and professional development as leaders. Through the rest of the calendar year, all of these individuals will build upon their character while refining their skills to become part of the next generation of leaders in California Farm Bureau and other organizations.

The class members began as strangers, but that detail was quickly made irrelevant through team building, thanks to Leo Van Warmerdam. Throughout the day, Leo led the group through different activities to help identify leadership skills and styles that each possessed. The day started with simply getting to know one another and then became more advanced. As the day progressed, the team delved deeper into each other's leadership styles—defining everyone's strengths and weaknesses and

how each can work effectively as a group with varying leadership styles.

The day ended with a visit by California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson, who gave an overview of the Farm Bureau and current policy topics. Then the class participated in a blindfolded activity that included movement as a group both downstairs and outdoors. This highlighted the fact that above all, trust in one another allows us to have the greatest influence of leadership going forward. Even though we started the day as strangers, the activities we participated in made us a team by the end of the day.

The second day of the session was all about business etiquette. Gina Loza from Northwestern Mutual came to talk to the class about what is appropriate in the office and how to maintain professionalism. The presentation ranged from how to properly address concerns in the workplace to the correct way to behave at a business meal.

Following Gina, Amy Wister from RevShopp talked about dressing professionally for different occasions. She reviewed appropriate clothing for various venues, including business professional dress in Washington, D.C., to more casual clothes to wear out in the field.

After learning more about proper business etiquette and attire, the class went to Macy's in Roseville to meet with personal stylists. The stylists took us through the store and helped each of us select business wear for the various trips we will be going on. Almost everyone in the class walked out with a few items to add to our professional wardrobes.

On the last day of our February session, we took a class photo and individual headshots. Taylor Roschen from the Governmental Affairs division sat in and offered insight about current and upcoming issues in California agriculture. She also provided

information about Farm Bureau's role in future events, such as the Issue Advisory Committee meetings in March.

The day ended with presentations by each class member about their personal lives. The slideshows were of each class member, and all had a commonality: Each of us was hand-selected to be part of the Leadership Farm Bureau Class of 2022 based on our character. Furthermore, we are defined by our choices to step up and make a difference for our families and livelihoods. To be directly involved in advocating for the future of California agriculture shows a direct correlation to all of our core values. All of us have leadership styles that will become small windows into the voices and stories of all of the different areas we represent. By the end of the three-day session, we all had a better understanding of our leadership styles and what each of us expects to gain from the program.





March

Cultivating our mission for the future of agriculture



By Madeline Schenken and Donald Wirz

Our second Leadership Farm Bureau session was held in March at the same time as the Capitol Ag Conference in Sacramento. For those of us who had attended the event pre-COVID, it was great to be back in Sacramento. For all of us, it was a chance to drink deeply from the firehose of activity that the California Farm Bureau does to advocate for our members.

Our first day began with a discussion of our reading assignment from February, “Start with Why” by Simon Sinek. In that book, the author fleshes out what motivates the most successful people and organizations. Through a discussion of behavior and understanding that is rooted in biology, he shows that for those who can articulate their why, their deep motivation for doing what they do is more compelling than just talking about what or how. Later, we enjoyed a thorough presentation from Steven Fenaroli, who showed how California Farm Bureau helps ag-friendly candidates suc-

ceed in state politics. He also showed off Farm PAC, which raises money to advocate for pro-ag candidates and issues. (Remember to donate to Farm PAC!) We got a taste of grassroots policy-making by observing the Issue Advisory Committee meetings. Half of our class was in the Ag Labor IAC and the other half was in the Energy, Air and Climate IAC. The group that went into the Ag Labor committee heard updates from Bryan Little of the Farm Employers Labor Service and Patti Huber of the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement. The class agreed that we learned more about the issues at hand in the few hours of the meeting than we had in all we had learned before the meeting.

Tuesday was the main event of the Capitol Ag Conference: the Leaders Conference. The morning was filled with addresses and speeches, and the afternoon with the annual visit to lawmakers. The morning program illustrated the fact that while agriculture is a

huge industry in California—the biggest in many of our counties—and a way of life for Farm Bureau members, it is outnumbered. Darryl Sragow, publisher of the “California Target Book,” showed in a clear fashion the demographic reality facing rural California. Simply by the numbers, the votes are not on our side. The Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego metro areas comprise over three-quarters of the state’s population. The rest is in the Central Valley and other rural areas. California Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross outlined other challenges, while Assemblymember Carlos Villapudua from Stockton talked about how he engages members of the transportation/shipping and ag communities to do good for his district. He has a clear understanding of the importance of California agriculture.

Because the Capitol building is in the middle of a renovation, we did not get to walk the halls as counties to talk with our representatives. Rather, we invited them to come to

a restaurant across the street. It was a good opportunity to discuss issues and pending bills, and share our stories with them.

Wednesday was another chance at learning how grassroots organizations work. Jessica Cabrera from American Farm Bureau led us through a relevant discussion. How do we get people engaged in grassroots organizations and how do you channel that energy into action? We tried recruitment strategies with the help of our California Farm Bureau field reps, using what we had learned from the previous two days. Our last task of the week was to come up with our theme for the rest of the course. We came up with “Cultivating our Mission.” It matches up with our understanding that we want to grow our county Farm Bureaus and that we are committed to speaking up for our members. Agriculture may be outnumbered in California, but California Farm Bureau punches above its weight thanks to the commitment of its members.





# April

## Cultivating our mission by sharing our stories



### By Stephen Waldron and Amanda Berry

The theme of April's LFB class session was communication, and we dove in headfirst. The session began Wednesday morning with Jordan Henry, American Farm Bureau's director of leadership and organizational training. Jordan is truly passionate about helping others improve their public speaking abilities. While public speaking is often a pain point for many, Jordan's expertise and positive energy helped set the tone for the week and got the class excited to prepare and present our benchmark speeches, and practice speaking to the media.

Jordan led us through public speaking do's and don'ts, and provided insight into tackling tough conversations. Then, to varying levels of comfort and excitement, we each presented the first draft of our speeches. After each presentation, class

members offered constructive feedback and Jordan gave expert advice on ways to better connect with our audience. We ended the day celebrating our victories in improving our comfort level with public speaking, and being in front of an audience and the lens.

Thursday started off with an FFA Ag Issues presentation from Turlock Christian FFA. The students presented to California Farm Bureau staff and the LFB class in preparation for their upcoming State FFA competition. The issue they chose was agroterrorism. They spoke on the challenges agriculture is seeing with agroterrorism and some solutions they learned from experts in the field. The audience was asked to provide feedback and we were happy to share pointers we had gathered the day before.

After watching the FFA students give

their presentation, it was our turn to jump back in front of the camera—more confident from our training the day before—and give our speeches for the final time. It was a true joy to see how each classmate grew from the day before, having incorporated the feedback they'd received. Thanks to our peers and trainers, we walked away better able to serve our Farm Bureaus and present in front of a group.

The day ended with Danielle Leal from AgNet Media, who presented on how to build our leadership brand. Based off her experience growing her own podcast and as an agriculture journalist, she taught us how to address the media and deliver our messages with intention. Then she jumped into journalist mode, helping us practice being interviewed by the media.

Danielle interviewed us on our speech

topics. Most questions were straightforward, but she threw in a few curveballs to give us an opportunity to apply our recently acquired skills on tackling tough conversations. Each classmate walked away more prepared to deliver messages to the media as advocates for agriculture.

After two days of speaking, the class met with CAFB staff and affiliates on Friday morning. First we heard from Judy Culbertson, executive director of the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, about their work to educate students on agriculture in California. She provided fun activities to use the next time we speak with a group of people about Farm Bureau and agriculture. Kate Fuso with Nationwide Insurance gave us an overview of the relationship between Nationwide and Farm Bureau and resources for members.

We also got tips on social media strategies and tactics from the CAFB marketing staff.

In the afternoon, CAFB Senior Counsel Carl Borden told us about the roles and responsibilities for board members and Farm Bureau staff. We also met with Senior Counsel Chris Scheuring about California's current water situation. He gave an overview of the aqueducts and basins that we rely on to get our water supply in preparation for our upcoming field tour, which will provide a firsthand look at California's current water situation.

Finally, we prepared to head back to our respective counties, excited for the next session. We knew we were all better prepared to represent Farm Bureau and agriculture when it comes to public speaking and meeting with the media.



May

# Cultivating our mission for community



**By Stephen Waldron, Madeline Schenken and Daniel Jones**

In May, the Leadership Farm Bureau class visited the Central Valley to learn about the many angles to the multifaceted topic of California agricultural water. Ryan Jacobsen, CEO of the Fresno County Farm Bureau, graciously planned an immersive schedule for the class that offered foundational knowledge and personal experiences of California farmers and businesses. This allowed the class to obtain a complete picture of how the viability of Central Valley water is ever-changing and always important to advocate for as members of the California Farm Bureau.

The first day began by convening at Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, where Tom Orvis explained how the water systems and districts worked within the county. A story of the “haves and have nots” unfolded, in which the east side of the valley floor receives some water to use in irrigation, while the west side in a year like this goes without.

An overview perspective was given of how intricate the systems are, with many different groups trying to have access to the same water for both agricultural and urban uses.

Next, the class moved down the road to Fresno County Farm Bureau, where they met up with Ryan. He highlighted the diversity and magnitude of Fresno County agriculture and showed how water curtailments have negatively impacted the area. The further south you go, the more restrictions are in place. The day’s third speaker was Kassy Chauhan with North Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency. She spoke on the impacts of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and how much of the landscape has changed and will continue to do so. She led the class on a quick tour of a man-made groundwater recharge basin that also serves as storage during the irrigation seasons. The district where she works has a few of these basins

aimed at recharge and storage for future use. The final speaker of the day was Jeff Roberts with the Assemi Group. Speaking at an almond orchard just on the outskirts of the Fresno city limits, he told the class about some of the alternative land uses his company has employed. Land that would have been left fallow until it was approved to be developed was now being farmed. He pointed out that there are many benefits to farming the land, including that it prevents the land from becoming a place for people to dump trash. Farming within the city limits can pose challenges to producers of all commodities; however, this perspective showed that an urban farm setting had been allowed to exist when proposals were brought to the City of Fresno.

Day two included stops at the Friant Dam, P-R Farms, Jordan Agricultural Research Center, Fresno State Farm, Westlands Water District headquarters and Baker

Manock & Jensen. At Friant Dam, the class met with officials from the Bureau of Reclamation and Friant Water Authority, who gave an overview of how the dam operates. They spoke about how much water goes through the dam gates and Millerton Lake in an average year, as well as where that water comes from before entering the lake. From the lake, the water is sent to the San Joaquin River, Friant-Kern Canal or Madera Canal. During the tour, the class saw the hydroelectric plant, spillways and canal. We also learned about many of the issues the operators are facing, such as reservoir capacity and subsidence on the canals.

The final day served as a capstone to the session, offering information to bridge the gaps and round out the trip. The class heard personal accounts of drought and water policy effects on their operations from Brian Pacheco at Pacheco Dairy, Mark McKean at McKean Farms and Daniel

Hartwig at Woolf Farms. The three-day journey ended with a visit to Madera County Farm Bureau. We learned about the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley, a coalition made up of community leaders, businesses, water agencies, local governments and agricultural representatives. We met with two members of the coalition, Jason Phillips from Friant Water Authority and Christina Beckstead from Madera County Farm Bureau. They shared with us what the coalition is doing to address upcoming policies that will impact communities in the San Joaquin Valley.

During the three-day session, we learned a lot about water issues in the Central Valley. We also learned that there are groups working together to find solutions to address the demand for water for the environment, urban users and agriculture. The situation is dire, but the ag industry is working on developing and implementing solutions.





# August

## Cultivating our mission in the 'California of the South'



### By Amanda Berry and Donald Wirz

In August, we sojourned to North Carolina with field representative Ned Coe to cultivate our mission to learn about agriculture in the state. Upon arrival, we met our host Mac Hodges, director of the North Carolina LEAD (Leadership, Education, Activity and Development) program.

Day one started at the Farm Bureau headquarters. We met with state staff to learn about their programs and issues and got a building tour. Anne Coan, from the environmental policy division, explained that due to generations of environmental legislation aimed at controlling ag in the state, North Carolina is called the "California of the South." The pork and tobacco industries in North Carolina have been the targets of environmental regulation for nearly 40 years. Understanding the regulatory environment that farmers there work in was a theme that kept repeating itself.

The afternoon was all about tobacco. We visited Jeff and Sharon Tyson, tobacco and sweet potato farmers in Nash County. We saw tobacco being packed for curing in steel bins. After about two weeks in a hot shed, the cured tobacco is baled and sent off for processing. Part of the LEAD program, Jeff and Sharon told us that we were learning about ag and also forming friendships that can last a lifetime. We toured Universal Leaf's tobacco processing plant.

On day two, we visited the State Farmers Market, a market spanning 77 acres, open 364 days of the year, and boasting sales of produce and products grown across the state. We learned that North Carolina grows 80 crops, making it the third most diverse agriculture state in the U.S. The apple cider found at the market was a class favorite. After the market, we toured the brand-new Plant Sciences

Building at North Carolina State University. We saw their state-of-the-art equipment, a 10,000-square-foot rooftop greenhouse and multiple project-specific labs.

Then we headed to Carolina Mushroom Farm and met with the Carrolls, who opened our eyes to the art of growing mushrooms. Like many farmers, their family had to pivot when they were forced to close their swine farm. They decided to grow mushrooms. The retrofitted hog barns provided the right environment to grow many mushrooms, including grey oyster mushrooms. They have an agritourism business that includes an event venue. We ate lunch there with Wake County Farm Bureau President John Burt and more staff.

Our last stop was the Caterpillar plant in Clayton. This 57,000-square-foot building boasts the production of approximately 30 small wheel loaders daily and is a distributor

of backhoe loaders. The plant is streamlined, automated, quiet and efficient. Customers can schedule time to test drive equipment on their test playground and watch a technician drive equipment remotely from inside the building. Overall, it's an impressive facility with many tools to help farmers and ranchers in the field.

Our last day started with breakfast at Bojangles, a North Carolina favorite. Then we headed to the Marine Sciences Center and Jay Styron's oyster farm. We learned about the life cycle of oysters and scallops and how challenging it is to raise and keep diversity at an oyster farm. We heard about the challenges of finding land and water to farm this commodity, competing with homeowners, hotels and restaurants also wanting to take advantage of the waterfront properties.

For lunch, we met with Sampson County Farm Bureau and LEAD graduates, where we

heard about their experiences in California and compared experiences within our programs.

With full bellies, we went to the world's third largest swine production company, Smithfield Foods. It has 40,000 employees across 29 states and 2,000 contract growers. We learned about vertical integration in the swine industry and how growers work with large corporations. We saw a swine farm and learned about sustainability and clean energy on the farm, including methane production. We also visited Smithfield's feed mill, "The Chief," which, until recently, was the world's largest feed mill, producing 20,000 tons of pig feed per week.

Our trip ended at dinner with Mac and team, with whom we traded California wine for North Carolina wine. We accomplished our mission: to learn about North Carolina agriculture, what they experience and how we are similar and different.





# November

## Cultivating our mission at the nation's capital



### By Abigail Fair and Kathleen Merrill

Our 2022 Leadership Farm Bureau class had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., to gain firsthand experience in the advocacy work done on behalf of Farm Bureau members.

The trip started with the class meeting at the American Farm Bureau office to get an overview of the issues the organization is currently working on. Our class heard about climate, transportation, trade and drought—all important issues that AFBF addresses daily. We also got an update on the economy and what farmers can expect moving forward. Following our visit at the American Farm Bureau, we were fortunate enough to go to the Embassy of Japan to learn about U.S. trade with Japan and agriculture in their country.

Day two of our D.C. visit was spent on Capitol Hill. We started the day preparing for our upcoming meetings and awarding

Democratic members of Congress with Friends of Farm Bureau awards, thanking them for the work they do on behalf of agriculture. Our group then broke off into smaller teams and each met with at least two members of Congress to discuss agricultural issues. The meetings were very productive and we were able to voice our concerns and talk about issues impacting farmers and ranchers.

After our day at Capitol Hill, Rep. Doug LaMalfa was kind enough to take us on a tour of the Capitol building. We were able to see all the beautiful things inside the Capitol and it was an amazing experience. After touring the building, President Jamie Johansson took our LFB class on a night tour of the monuments. It was a 3-mile tour during which we walked from the Capitol building to the Washington Monument, World War II

Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the White House. It was a chilly night but definitely something all of us will remember.

The last day of our trip began at the Capitol Hill Club, where we gave Friends of Farm Bureau awards to Republican members of Congress for the work they do on behalf of farmers and ranchers. After breakfast with them, we went to the National Republican Congressional Committee for an update on elections. We were able to gain insight into the current races in California that had not yet been called. It was a really interesting meeting because the speaker talked about the amount of money that goes into federal campaigns and how candidates are selected. After we finished there, we returned to the American Farm

Bureau office to do closing interviews in their studio.

After completing our interviews at AFBF, we had a few more hours to explore before the day was over. The class decided to go to the Smithsonian and we all stopped by the Museum of Natural History. It was very interesting and a great place to explore. After wrapping up our visit, we went out to enjoy our last meal together as a class before we graduate from LFB.

For many of us, this was our first trip to Washington, D.C., and it was an amazing experience, to say the least. While it was a busy trip with a full schedule, we were able to see so many things and learn so much in a short period of time. We are so thankful to the California Farm Bureau for the opportunity to experience our nation's capital!





# Congratulations

to the class of 2022





# CULTIVATING AG-VOCATES one member at a time

Sharing the story of California farmers and ranchers is essential when connecting with the public, and our members have great stories to tell. California Farm Bureau is proud to offer a program that equips our members to share their experiences with people in all aspects of their lives, from the general public to elected officials. The Leadership Farm Bureau program is designed to develop emerging Farm Bureau leaders and provide professional development, advocacy and industry-specific training. Graduates of the program become leaders in Farm Bureau and their communities.

## Learn

valuable communication and professional development skills



## Advocate

on behalf of farmers and ranchers on the local, state and national levels



## Experience

on-farm field study sessions and farm tours





Learn more about the program at:  
[cfbf.com/lfb](http://cfbf.com/lfb)



Leadership Farm Bureau **2022**