

## UCD, Co-op Extension Team Up to Record Valley History

SIERRA VALLEY—*Passion for the Land* is a digital storytelling project designed to help Sierra Valley residents communicate with policymakers, community leaders, and educators about sustaining working landscapes, wildlife habitat, and the rural way of life.

The storytelling project, locally spearheaded by Plumas-Sierra Counties' Cooperative Extension Advisor Holly George, have recorded 12 storytellers. Lacey Maddalena, at 24, is the youngest and George Goodwin, in his 80s, is the oldest.

Organizers of the project understand that urban America has become alienated from the land, from these rural communities. There is no longer a basic understanding that agriculture is the most viable use of the land. Planned residential development and environmental regulations also threaten rural businesses and way of life. Aside from the historical record, an aim of the project is to let government officials, local and statewide, help understand issues and help shape policies to preserve and protect agricultural production and natural resources for future

generations.

"We've recorded the audio scripts and scanned images from almost all of them and are currently working on editing," says Holly George. "We'll have a rough cut screening with the storytellers in early May and plan to do our first public screening with some of the storytellers on June 6 at the Plumas-Sierra County Picnic at the Old Schoolhouse on the Fairgrounds in Quincy."

Among the issues addressed are water worries, estate planning, ag viability, sustainability, land use, conservation, restoration; an educational tool through the personal stories being shared.

The project brings together Cooperative Extension workers, ranchers, farmers, artists, UC Davis scholars and students.

Developing digital storytelling skills increases the capacity of ranchers, farmers and Cooperative Extension agents to articulate concerns, share best practices, and creatively participate in the development of their community. Involving UC Davis faculty creates a forum for scholars and community members to learn from one another—inform-

ing scholars' research while helping residents see how their efforts connect to the larger discussion about agricultural viability and resource stewardship.

The project's creators will present and discuss these stories at a series of public screenings with elected officials, county staff, and state regulators. UC Davis scholars and students will participate in project development, story production, community research and the public screenings.

University of California Cooperative Extension, headquartered at the Universities of California at Berkeley, Davis and Riverside, is the outreach arm of the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. ANR is a statewide network of University of California researchers and educators dedicated to the creation, development and application of knowledge in agricultural, natural and human resources.

As a land-grant institution, the Cooperative Extension mandate is tied to the welfare, development, and protection of California agriculture, natural resources, and people.