

Passion for the Land



A Collaborative Project to help rural residents share stories about preserving community heritage while protecting agricultural lands & natural resources for future generations

Future Farmers of America by Bill Loveridge



As a high school teacher for more than 30 years, I have taught the Future Farmers of America creed to countless numbers of students. The creed begins, “I believe in the future of agriculture with a faith born not of words, but of deeds....”

Our valley has a long tradition of agricultural youth involvement. They exhibit livestock, grow gardens, work on farms and ranches and do greenhouse work. Whether we’re talking about a young man who grew up on a ranch and is the fourth or fifth generation on that ranch, or the young lady from Sierra Brooks who took that first lamb to the fair in high school – these are the folks who are gaining an understanding of agriculture and will carry on the “best traditions of our national life”.

I have been blessed to have the opportunity to see “the light go on” with kids. When they see a lamb being born or that seed that they planted breaks through the potting soils as it germinates and they say, “Wow, this is cool!” that appreciation will carry agriculture forward. Even if that young man or woman doesn’t go into the field of agriculture as a career, they still will be spokesmen in the community for our industry.

Our kids are workers and businessmen. They can figure budgets and keep other financial records as they develop their projects. They can market the “product of their toil”. And they help others. I am always amazed at the caring attitude of our kids, given everything we read in the media, especially. Kids really do care. Our youth are involved in food drives for the Sierra Valley Food Bank, coat drives for the needy and seed drives for the Philippines. They help with roadside cleanup, are involved in community work days and assist a host of other agencies and organizations accomplish their goals. Good citizenry is being developed with agrarian roots.

Our agriculture youth, are learners, workers and good citizens already. It gives one hope for the republic as we watch these young leaders develop. They will, if allowed, carry agriculture, our valley and our nation forward.

The “if allowed” part is a concern. Programs in agricultural education for youth, whether in the public schools with FFA as a vital component or via UC Extension and 4-H, are critical for this country to maintain a food supply. With shifts in population to more urban areas, we are getting further and further away from the land. These programs need to be maintained everywhere in rural America – even more especially in the Sierra Valley.



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Project
Co-Directors

Holly George, 530/283-6270, hageorge@ucdavis.edu
UC Cooperative Extension, Plumas-Sierra Counties, 208 Fairgrounds Road, Quincy, CA 95971

Jesikah Maria Ross, 530/320-1819, jmross@ucdavis.edu
UC Davis Art of Regional Change, Davis Humanities Institute, One Shield Ave, Davis, CA 95616

artofregionalchange.ucdavis.edu

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