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**Connecting with
Your Community**

Creating Community with Places and People

by Gaea Hock

This issue of the magazine focuses on the importance of community – the one where we live and the one we create. Sometimes community means a particular place defined with the geographic boundaries. Other times, community means a group of like-minded people who support each other. As an agricultural educator, I had had the honor to be engaged with both types of community.

When I started my teaching career, I was fortunate to remain at the same small, rural school where I had student taught. The Centre school community was comprised of six towns scattered across a large geographic area. As I reflect on how I connected with this community, I vividly recall the pancake breakfasts, community

lunches, highway cleanups, and flower planting events. One other unique experience stands out.

Lincolnvilleville, KS, population 189, was one of the communities in my school district. In 2004, it received a KAN STEP grant to construct a community building. Cary Granzow, my teaching partner, incorporated the project into his agriculture structures class, and our FFA members volunteered their time to assist with the construction project. Andy Carlson, one of our students, went above and beyond by donating over 450 hours on the weekends and after school pouring concrete, framing walls, laying tile, and helping install ductwork. He was recognized for his efforts with the Kansas FFA Proficiency Award in Home and/ or Community Development in

2007 and was a National Finalist for the award the same year.

The community building was finished in the summer of 2006 and continues to be used to host a variety of events for area residents. While I only played a small role in the building construction, I love seeing pictures on social media of class reunions, birthday parties, wedding showers, and baby showers held in the building. It helps keep me connected to the community and reminds me of my time teaching at Centre.

In regard to how community can be created, I reflect on the positive experiences I had with agriculture, agricultural education, and FFA. The main reason I have remained in the profession for nearly 20 years is due to the community of agricultural ed-



(LEFT) Cary Granzow, agriculture teacher at Centre High School (now retired), incorporated the community building construction project into his Ag Structures class.

(RIGHT) Andy Carlson spent most weekends working on the Lincolnvilleville Community Building.



*(LEFT) Andy Carlson, and his parents, received recognition for his efforts with a state proficiency award.
(RIGHT) Andy was recognized as a National Finalist in Home and/or Community Development in 2007.*

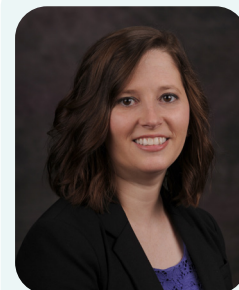


ucators and professionals I am honored to work with each day. The agricultural education community starts at the local level and grows from there. In Kansas, we have FFA districts, each with their own way of conducting events and meetings. We then have the state level and the community connections across the state to help beginning (and experienced) agriculture teachers succeed in their local programs. Finally, we have the national network of agriculture teachers who connect at regional and national conferences each year. These communities allow people to find connections and support to help us lead fulfilling lives.

The articles in this issue look at a variety of communities and how we as agricultural educators can help our students better connect with and serve those communities. Each article provides advice and strategies to help you connect with your communities. As you read, you can reflect on what you want your legacy in the community to be.

What community projects does your chapter host? How are your students learning to be valuable community members? Where can you connect with others to build a community?

I hope you will continue to reflect on how you are engaging with your community and identify additional opportunities to connect with new groups and offer additional service experiences for your students. Connecting with your community benefits the places we live, the people we meet, and the students in our programs.



Dr. Gaea Hock is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Education at Kansas State University and Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine.



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Distribution

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Article Submission

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Rethinking Our Three-Component Model: The Role of Communities

by Amber Rice

Communities are the backbone of any effective agricultural education program. As you will read in this issue, community means different things to different people. It can include cultural communities like the Tohono O'odham Nation and other indigenous communities. It can include the agriculture teacher community itself, spread across school districts, states, and even nationwide. It can include all levels of agricultural education involving community colleges, universities, and local agricultural programs from elementary to secondary education. It can include communities right in our own backyards such as agriculture industries, Farm Bureau, and other partnerships. It can include communities that form specifically to support our efforts such as local alumni chapters, advisory councils, and booster organizations. It can also include virtual communities spurred by the onset of COVID-19 or even global communities many miles away from our local spaces.

I encourage you to expand your working definition of what community means for your agricultural program, regardless of the grade level you teach or your current location. Community simply means a social unit that shares norms, values, or identity. Anyone who is pulling on our side of the rope, with an invested interest in the future of agricultural education, is a part of our community.

With these communities behind us, we are stronger. We are able to provide more opportunities to students, secure the financial backing needed to run effec-

tive programs, introduce students to careers and areas of interest they may have never thought possible, and call on experts to influence the next generation of leaders and change agents.

The three-component model is the foundation of agricultural education. It guides our philosophy as agricultural educators, shapes the types of activities we include within our programs, and serves to set agricultural education apart as a unique approach to quality education. As an avid reader of the Agricultural Education Magazine, you are likely familiar with the

three-component model of agricultural education including FFA/leadership, SAE/work-based learning, and classroom/laboratory instruction. However, if I may be so bold, I would like to revise the three-component model as we consider the topics in this issue centered around connecting with your community, establishing and maintaining successful partnerships.

I propose a new three-component model that acknowledges the unique role that community, however it may be defined, contributes to our programming. Because community truly envelopes

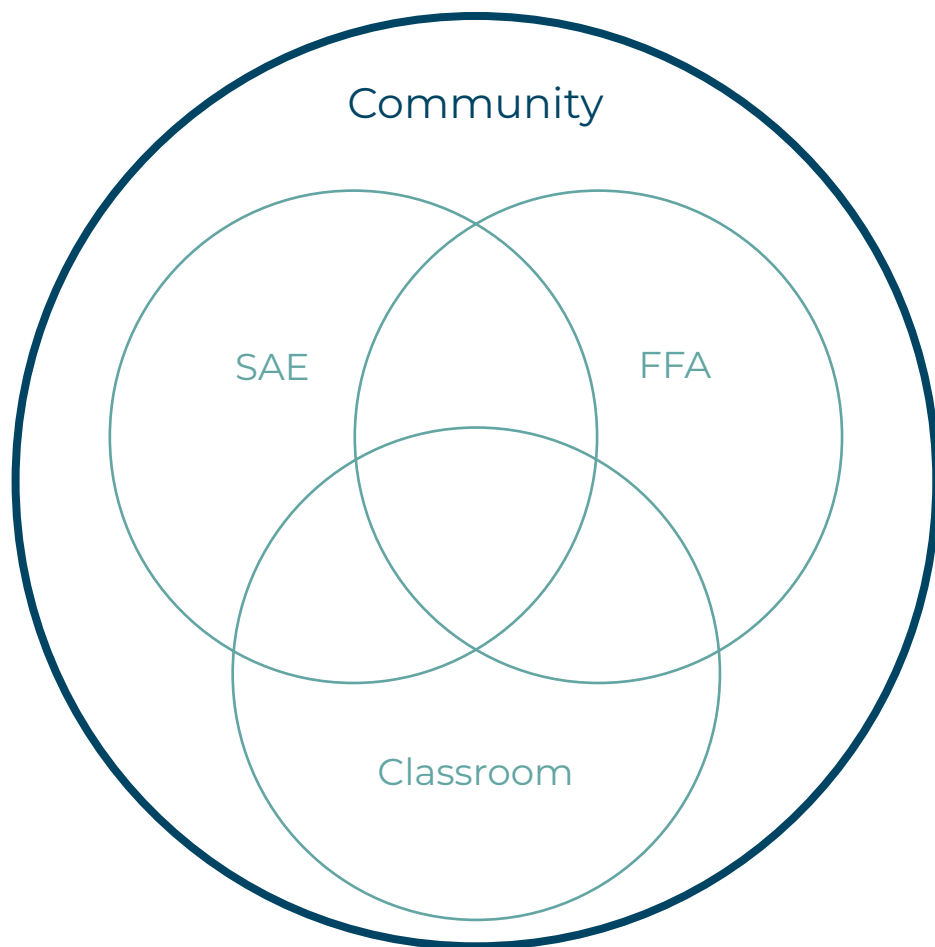


Figure 1. Three-Component Model of Agricultural Education Revised

and impacts everything we do within agricultural education.

As a new teacher, or even as a veteran teacher, you may be asking yourself, where do I start when forming these communities? How do I create, and more importantly maintain, these partnerships that are crucial to the success of my program?

– Consider a community needs assessment

- What does your community need? How can you collaborate to create win-wins that benefit your program and the communities you serve?

– Introduce yourself and ask questions

- The first step is a simple introduction and human connection. Prepare an elevator pitch when meeting new community members to tell them about your program. Remember those names and faces.

– Listen first, speak second

- Be willing to let go of your own biases and pre-formed opinions about the community. Listen to what others have to say as a newcomer to the space, even if you are back at your home program.

– Expand your definition of community

- Are you only calling on traditional agriculture partners or are you willing to include others who have not traditionally had a seat at the table?

– Create an alumni chapter and advisory council

- These organized groups can provide idea generation, people power, financial support, content expertise, curriculum development, and more!

If the past two years have taught us anything, it's that we need each other now more than ever. Harness the power of your communities!

“Anyone who is pulling on our side of the rope, with an invested interest in the future of agricultural education, is a part of our community.”



Dr. Amber Rice is an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Education, Technology and Innovation at The University of Arizona.

What is Your Community Telling You? Are You Listening?

by Walter Wesch

Success as an Agriscience teacher is a result of meeting local needs. As educators, we must satisfy the needs of our students, administration, parents, school community, and our local community. To accomplish this, we must first understand what the community expects and desires. In many situations, it is simply a matter of listening to what they are telling us. The school administration focuses on quality teaching and learning, as reflected in test scores. Parents often concern themselves with issues affecting the happiness of their child. Governing boards look for evidence of student success, as measured by parental satisfaction. Industry stakeholders want students who exit with strong technical and employability skills. The messages will not necessarily be unified and various constituencies will have differing expectations. With some effort and guidance, however, we can eventually sort through and begin to prioritize our efforts.

In most cases, a new teacher can sort out these varying and often conflicting messages. By trial and error, the teacher learns to develop and operate a program which satisfies the local needs and prepares students to be successful adults. This process takes place as the teacher becomes familiar with the school and community. If the teacher takes a position in a community similar to their own background and experiences, the process of listening, learning, and adapting may be easier. However, if the teacher enters a community with stakeholders of different or varying ethnicities, the challenge of “hearing” some stakeholder groups can be much more dif-

ficult. There are indirect, often quite subtle messages, being transmitted by stakeholders. Our challenge is to make sure to heed these “unstated” messages to ensure *all* voices are heard.

Many educators are unaware of the effect of cultural differences on communication. “Each minority community understands that great differences separate them from the European American mainstream cultures. In contrast, European American communities do not have much awareness of the magnitude of differences. Occasional events open a small portal to this awareness, but European Americans do not experience cultural differences as a central concern in their lives. For minority communities, the differences are not only central, but vast and inescapable” (Elliott et al., 2016, p. 1). For educators to effectively communicate with parents and other stakeholders, they must be aware of the differences as perceived and experienced by these individuals.

I have just retired from teaching Agriscience for forty years at Baboquivari High School, on the Tohono O’odham Nation in Southern Arizona. When I arrived as a 22 year old “white guy” clutching my new teaching certificate, I thought I knew and understood my mission- to serve the students and community by teaching agriculture to the students. The community I was serving was exclusively Native American. The Baboquivari Unified School District was a public school district, with a locally elected governing board. Administrators and teachers were almost exclusively non-native, with a support staff of indigenous community members.

There were many barriers to effective parent and community communication. Unemployment on the Tohono O’odham Nation was 30-40%, due largely to a lack of employment opportunities. The Tohono O’odham Nation faced all of the negative social, behavioral and health problems associated with low socio-economic status communities, exacerbated by time and distance. The average student historically missed 20 days of school per year. This resulted in incoming high school students having missed the equivalent of an entire year of school. Parents and elders had historically been educated away from their local communities, often being forcibly removed and placed in boarding schools hundreds of miles from their homeland. There was little trust in non-native educators. The administrative and instructional staff turnover rate was very high. The community was strongly supportive of the education of their children, but felt they lacked a voice in the true governance of the school system, and had little to no experience working effectively with teachers and administrators.

After moving to an apartment on the high school campus in July 1981, I began interacting with the local community. Two decisions, made rather accidentally, helped put me on the path to becoming a more effective communicator with parents and community members. First, I was advised by a school staff member to interact with the local community away from school as much as possible. Our school was an hour away from a major metropolitan area, so it was possible to not utilize the local trading post,

café, and gas station. However, by patronizing these local businesses, I was able to encounter students and parents away from school. Yes, I paid more than I would if I did everything on my weekly trip to Tucson, but people saw me as being willing to engage with the community. It was also extremely beneficial when I attended school sporting events, and began to participate in other community activities.

My second decision, of which I was unaware of at the time, was to slowly forge a close relationship with the Maintenance Director for the school. He was a local resident my fathers' age. Bruce took an interest in me, served as my mentor for many years, and remains my friend to this day.

Over several years, he gradually taught me how to build relationships within the local community. His lessons were very similar to my fathers' advice, heard many times during my adolescence, "keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut."

As time passed, an important realization emerged. I was a resident in the community, not a part of the culture. I was not O'odham, could not be, and was not expected to be. I heard stories from community members regarding teachers who tried to insert themselves into all aspects of community life, included sacred cultural ceremonies. These unwanted attempts to "become one of us" were resented by many community members. I realized I needed to acknowledge and respect the differences between my own cultural background and that of the people I served.

Listen To Build Trust

On the Tohono O'odham Nation, parents were frustrated because teachers did not reach

out to parents, and by the time they got to know a teacher, that teacher left and was replaced by another new face. Teachers felt that because most parents didn't attend open house and parent conference events, education was not important to them. Parents didn't attend for a number of reasons, including lack of transportation, but high on that list was they didn't feel comfortable talking to teachers, and did not believe the teachers would listen to them. My mentor Bruce explained to me I needed to talk less, and just listen to parents. By showing respect to the parents by listening, even though that led to some very long, one-way conversations, I was earning credibility as someone who "respected the people."

“...we must first understand what the community expects and desires. In many situations, it is simply a matter of listening to what they are telling us.”

A Clash Of Communication Styles

As a member of the dominant (Anglo) culture, I was used to a more direct communication style, where oral interactions were assertive, direct, and of low context. "Get to the point" was a common theme. The indigenous parents and community members communicated in much the same manner as Hispanics; passive, indirect, and contextually rich (Catalaa, 2019). The resulting communication gap was what Bruce was warning me about when he gently urged me to "listen listen, listen." What I learned was that often *what* the parent was talking about was not necessarily of importance. Instead, the purpose of the conversation was to build a relationship. Parents early on would ask me if I knew previous agriculture teachers at our school.

Since I did know several former teachers, this gave us common ground to explore. Wait time is also crucial to communicating with parents. It was hard for me to overcome my fear of silence, and to jump in anytime there was a pause in conversation. I came to learn that silent periods were part of conversation.

What Our Stakeholders Are Not Saying

When listening to parents, I would often feel somewhat frustrated that I was not receiving concrete information about their student, a specific situation, or a concern the parent may have. I was assuming the purpose of the conversation was to exchange information, whereas Bruce taught

me to realize, for the parent, the purpose of the conversation was to develop a relationship. I also learned parents would not praise or complain directly. A parent might say "when I was in school the teachers never tried to talk

to my parents." Her meaning in this statement is she desired that outreach by her child's teachers and my coming to speak with her in her home was appreciated. My stakeholders were invariably polite, to the point that I was never contradicted or told no. This caused no small amount of frustration until I learned "I'll see what I can do" was a polite, culturally appropriate way to say "no."

Parents Look Up To Teachers

The parents of my students always treated me with the utmost respect. While it is nice to be treated in such a manner, this was always a potential source of concern, as parents would almost never tell me anything negative concerning me or the program. I learned a great many parents considered teachers to be at a higher status level, and it would

be rude to say anything that might displease a teacher. Many parents had not completed high school and only a handful were college graduates. This notion of status disparity is not unique to indigenous cultures.

Don't Ask Too Many Questions

About twenty years ago, a good friend from the community said to me, "Wesch, do you know why the people here like you so much?" I had no idea. I thought I was well-liked, but I thought it was because I kept teaching there when so many other teachers had left. What Jerry told me next really opened my eyes. He said, "we like you because you don't ask questions about everything. You just listen to us." Many teachers who come to reservation communities to teach are quite interested in learning about the local culture. They hammer community members with questions probing into language, culture, beliefs, and legends. These are matters of utmost respect and reverence to the local indigenous community. Such direct questioning is considered rude and intrusive. My reluctance to ask questions was because I was introverted, not because I possessed great insight. However, this reticence did help me to fit in and become accepted.

What Is Praised Is What Is Desired

I saw Mrs. Jones about three weeks after the State FFA Leadership Conference, our annual state convention in Arizona. "I am so happy you pushed Phyllis to attend. It was a very good experience for her," she told me. Phyllis didn't compete or receive an award, but she attended conference award sessions and participated in many activities during the three day event, staying away from home for the first time without her family. This exposure was what her mother valued. Mrs. Jones would not have told me before this event that she wanted

her daughter to have these types of opportunities. The parents of my students were not necessarily interested in their students winning awards, degrees, or offices. These achievements were not disliked. Rather, they were de-emphasized in favor of recognizing their children for being willing to engage in new experiences. This also was in line with a culture which emphasized the group, rather than the individual.

The Message May Change Over Time: Will You Notice The Shift?

When I began teaching at Baboquivari High School, the O'odham language and culture were not part of the school curriculum, and largely absent from the daily school climate. O'odham language and culture were part of the students' home life. It was not considered acceptable for students to speak the O'odham language at school. Over time, the emphasis on incorporating language and culture into the classroom shifted and was now desired. This change came from the students.

Our agriculture program raised cattle, forage crops and vegetables early on. We began growing traditional O'odham crops many years later. The students and community responded in a very positive manner to this change, displaying a renewed interest in our school-based enterprise. No one, however, spoke up and requested this change. I slowly responded to a changing environment when students began to openly embrace their culture at school. I observed the students slowly beginning to display an active interest in their language and culture, and eventually I understood this evolution. I was able to act upon it by revising what crops we grew and marketed. Today our largest revenue producer is Devils Claw, grown for basket making.

If You Think You Understand It All, You Won't

It is not necessary to be knowledgeable about all aspects of a different culture to be able to communicate effectively with members of that group. Respect, patience, and a willingness to learn and to develop relationships will allow you to hear, and to be heard. It is important to remember there will always be cultural and linguistic barriers affecting your interactions with others. People from other cultures and backgrounds face this realization every day. How well you can demonstrate your understanding of this reality will help you hear what they are saying, and more importantly, what they are *not* saying.

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Walter Wesch is a retired Agriculture Teacher after 40 years of service at Baboquivari High School in Sells, Arizona on the Tohono O'odham Nation. Walt currently serves as the chair of the Arizona Team Agricultural Education Organization.

Sharpening the Saw: Learning through Connection with the Ag Teacher Community

by Kellie Claflin

One of my favorite parts of being an agriculture teacher was going to Ag Ed and FFA meetings and events. Sure, I loved seeing my students step out of their comfort zone through contests and leadership conferences or gaining new skills and knowledge to take back to my classroom. But truth be told, I really looked forward to connecting with other agriculture teachers.

As an ag teacher, meeting up with other ag teachers was invaluable, whether it was a short conversation catching up as we sat next to each other at a professional development workshop or huddling around cups of coffee at an early morning FFA leadership conference. Seeing other ag teachers gave me a chance to say hi to old friends and get new ideas for my classroom or advice on everything from fundraisers to the forestry CDE. It was a chance to laugh over the funny things that only happen in the ag room and strategize how to keep agriculture relevant in our schools.

It was clear to me that the agriculture teacher community was something special. Through connecting with other agriculture teachers, I really learned what it meant to be an ag teacher.

As I left the high school classroom and transitioned to the university setting as a graduate student and now teacher educator, the importance of the agriculture teacher community never faded from my mind. In fact, I saw the significance of the community in a new light as I tried to help

It was clear to me that the agriculture teacher community was something special. Through connecting with other agriculture teachers, I really learned what it meant to be an ag teacher.

identify how to better support alternatively certified and non-traditional ag teachers.

One of the research projects I'm working on sought to figure out how alternatively certified ag teachers, those folks who didn't become licensed through an agriculture teacher preparation program and/or hold an alternative or provisional teaching license, learn to be ag teachers. I focused on how they learned within the agriculture teacher community due to my own experiences and knowing that learning was occurring outside of induction programs and professional development sessions.

The advice I share below from my research relates not only to alternatively certified agriculture teachers, but any new teachers, whether they came from a school-based agricultural education program, non-formal agriculture, industry, or another content area, and those who seek to support new teachers.

Find Your Guide to the Community

The ag teachers in the study all noted the importance of in-

dividuals who introduced them to the ag teacher community. These guides ranged from the ag teacher down the road, retired ag teachers, state staff, and FFA alumni members. These folks weren't necessarily formal mentors, nor were they the only resource utilized. Still, they played an important part in sharing the expectations of what ag teachers did, how they worked together, and how they interacted, as well as answering questions. For many, the guide to the community played a vital role in networking and getting connected to the norms of the profession and other ag teachers.

We're All in this Together

While a guide and mentor are super helpful, we also learn as we participate. As ag teachers meet up at FFA events and ag teacher meetings or connect over social media or on the phone, we benefit from being able to bounce ideas off each other, ask questions, and listen.

It can be challenging for new teachers, especially non-traditional ag teachers or individuals from a different state or region, to know the norms for participating.



Early career teacher workshops are a great place to start building a community with other agriculture teacher in your state or region. Having a community of fellow teachers plays a vital role in networking and getting connected to the norms of the profession and other teachers.

This is why it is vital for current ag teachers to reach out and seek to include new teachers and help them understand how to best connect with other ag teachers.

Many of the participants in the study shared that they not only learned from the connection with other ag teachers but also felt a familial sense of belonging. However, that feeling didn't happen overnight. It takes time to learn the norms, meet folks, and build connections. One teacher noted that the first year they went to a professional development event, they looked across the room and didn't know anyone. The following year at the same event, they had a seat saved for them by another teacher. Participants also shared how they felt supported beyond just the ag classroom as they got to know other ag teachers. Teachers mentioned the outpouring of support they received during tough times or simply how they checked in with one another about themselves and their families.

A few last notes

We are pretty lucky in agricultural education to be part of a community of individuals who

are so supportive. However, as we seek to be welcoming, there are a few things that we need to keep in mind.

- New teachers may feel a bit unsure as they seek to connect with other ag teachers. This is not because they aren't competent, but simply because they are new and trying to figure out the group's norms and who to connect with. We need to be welcoming and help explain what goes on during different events, especially the expectations of fellow ag teachers.
- Ag teachers who did not go through an agricultural education program in high school or a university teacher preparation program may be unfamiliar with the ag teacher community. How are you helping connect those folks with the ag teacher community in your region or state?
- Ag teachers bring a wealth of experience and backgrounds, especially those who are alternatively certified. Make sure you reach out - no matter

someone's background - and see how they can contribute to the community.

We're all in this together, but by reaching out and being more intentional our ag teacher community will be even stronger.



Dr. Kellie Clafin is an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership at The Ohio State University.

Perseverance Through Partnerships

by Randi & Joshua Krieg

Introduction

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is how important it is to persevere and continue to build relationships. Although the world was shut down, we still had our students, programs, and communities to serve. Our work still required us to carry out the three-component model of school-based agricultural education. The survival of our programs hinged on our ability as agriculture educators to maintain and create opportunities for students to gain knowledge, explore careers, and develop leadership skills. The best way to continue that work was to actively utilize our communities in any way we could.

Our students were encouraged to not think of what they couldn't do during these trying times, but instead what they could do. Teachers and students worked together to develop plans for learning activities to ensure students received a holistic education. Students were given opportunities to connect with people and issues in their own communities.

Gaining Knowledge

An example of gaining knowledge tied to our community was in our Killdeer Unit in 7th Grade

Natural Resources. This unit was based on an issue presented to us by a community member - the swimming pool manager. She mentioned having problems with killdeer birds laying their eggs in the gravel parking lot. We saw this as an opportunity to have students work with a community member to solve a local problem, while learning and applying the standards. The unit was driven by a community issue, Natural Resources Agriculture Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and students' questions.

We began our unit with a video of the community member providing a short background on the local problem. Then, students were given a series of activities that built on one another until they gathered enough information to plan a solution to present. In this unit, the students were not just taught information about killdeer. The students were given activities in which they made observations and formulated questions to obtain the knowledge they needed to reach a solution. The activities were based on the students' driving questions and their own misconceptions.

For the learning activities, students analyzed videos, articles, and pictures related to abiotic and biotic components

of the killdeer's ecosystem and their behaviors for reproductive success. During the activities, they recorded their observations and questions on their student learning logs and discussed their findings in pairs and as a class. After the activities, they created and reviewed their driving questions board. They had non-traditional assessments, such as drawing a killdeer bird and watercolor painting biotic and abiotic components in the background of the killdeer. Additionally, they engaged in acting out behaviors of reproductive success and participated in a Shark Tank solution pitch to the community member. The relationship between the agricultural program and the specific community gave way to an amazing opportunity for relevant and purposeful learning.

Exploring Careers

At a time when we were told that we couldn't have guest speakers and our students couldn't attend job shadows, we turned to virtual platforms. Our FFA officers were challenged with developing a virtual career event - Zooming into Careers. Officers, with the assistance of their teacher, conducted a student career interest survey that was linked to in-class activities. Officers reviewed the surveys to determine which career pathways generated a higher interest among students. Then, officers were given contact information for local and regional professionals within the career pathways. Officers secured five professionals from Animal Systems, Natural Resources Systems, Food Products and Processing Systems, and Power,

The survival of our programs hinged on our ability as agriculture educators to maintain and create opportunities for students to gain knowledge, explore careers, and develop leadership skills. The best way to continue that work was to actively utilize our communities in any way we could.



(TOP) Goldendale students engaging in community learning.
 (BOTTOM) Goldendale FFA member proudly displaying the “Love where you live, Shop local” banner for Gunkel Orchards, Inc.

Structural and Technical Systems to join a virtual panel to answer student questions.

Next, students were presented with the five professionals’ career titles and a brief background. The students generated questions to ask the career professionals during the panel discussion. The officers sorted questions by each

career professional and combined similar questions.

The event, Zooming into Careers, took place on an evening with students and parents attending via Zoom. The panel was moderated by an officer during the first part of the Zoom using the questions generated by students. During the last part,

attendees were given the opportunity to ask additional questions. The Zoom was recorded for students to watch after the event.

In class, students watched or re-watched a section of the career panel. Students signed up for a career and took notes while their career professional was speaking. Then, students used their notes

to create an Instagram post for social media and to put up at the school's entrance area. In this activity, students were given some control in the teaching and learning process, were able to make connections with local agriculture professionals, and explored agricultural careers of interest.

Developing Leadership Skills

The Goldendale FFA partnered with the Klickitat PUD and Goldendale Chamber of Commerce to hang banners of 35 local businesses around town to encourage community members to shop locally. In the project, we wanted community members to connect with our local businesses by seeing an actual photo of the people behind the businesses. The FFA Officers came up with the slogan, "Love Where You Live, Shop Local."

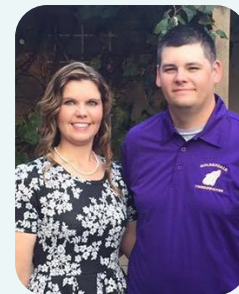
The Goldendale Chamber of Commerce donated money to have the FFA chapter design and print 30 City of Goldendale banners to alleviate the cost to the businesses for their banners. As stated by Dana Peck, Goldendale Chamber Executive Director, "Local business recovery support from the Chamber was made possible through COVID-related funding from Klickitat County."

After designing and making the city banners, the Goldendale FFA members recruited 35 local businesses for the project. The members designed and printed banners for each individual business in which they put a picture of the family, staff, or a logo to represent the business. On October 20th, the Klickitat PUD hung the banners power poles along Columbus Avenue and Simcoe Drive.

Conclusion

The utilization of our community around us is truly the key to our program's success. Each one of our communities is unique in the needs that drive our program. Don't be afraid to ask business owners and industry leaders

to review your curriculum in order to ensure you are teaching the skills your community needs learners to have upon graduation. Reach out to local groups in your community so that students can start learning about those organizations. Introduce students to work and service opportunities to gain hands-on experiences and learn how to serve their own community. Be okay with the fact that you are not the expert of everything, but you are resourceful and can find the person in your community who is the expert you need for your students to learn. Your relationship with your community serves as the conduit for your students to transition into the real world.



Randi and Joshua Krieg are husband and wife as well as teaching partners. Randi instructs students in grades 7-8th at Goldendale Middle School. Joshua instructs students in grades 9-12th at Goldendale High School in Goldendale, Washington.

When Industry Partners with Teachers Everyone Wins

By Katie Aikins

It is important that industry stays connected with our agriculture teachers. After all, you have our future workforce, decision makers, consumers, and advocates in your classroom. The decisions your students make throughout their lives will dictate the future of agriculture from the food they eat, the dollars they spend, and the opinions they form about the regulatory environment. It is important that we provide teachers with resources and opportunities to expose their students to the realities of where their food comes from, who produces it, and how we have created the most abundant, safe and affordable food supply the world has ever known. In addition to helping students understand our industry, we hope we can encourage some of those students to be a part of it. Whether it is from the tractor seat, from behind a microscope, or through generating the next big technological ad-

vancement for food production, there are exciting opportunities in the agriculture industry.

The Arizona Farm Bureau is proud to partner with Arizona agriculture teachers through a variety of programs and opportunities. Below are just some of the ways that the Arizona Farm Bureau regularly connects with school-based agricultural education. I would encourage you to consider forging similar partnerships in your own state or taking advantage of existing opportunities within Farm Bureau or other industry partners.

Arizona Agriculture Skills and Competencies Certification

With the help of current Arizona agriculture teachers, the Arizona Farm Bureau developed the Arizona Agriculture Skills and Competencies Certificate that meets needs for both industry and schools. Industry is looking for individuals who are dependable, responsible,

hardworking, and passionate. FFA Members who qualify for this Industry Certification embody these qualities and are wanted on our members' farms, ranches, and agribusinesses. The advantage to schools is that programs are always looking for certifications that can give their students an advantage when entering the workforce.

Arizona Agricultural Education Program Evaluation Instrument (AAEPEI) Funding

The Arizona Farm Bureau is proud to be the founding sponsor of the AAEPEI Teacher Incentive Program and continues to sponsor the program on a yearly basis, dedicating up to \$15,000 to the efforts of teachers who work to assess and improve their programs each year. The AAEPEI is a valuable tool that provides teachers an opportunity to reflect on accomplishments, assess challenges, and set a path for the upcoming year;



(LEFT) Teachers get their hands dirty while visiting a local grain farm and processing facility.
(RIGHT) Teacher receiving the AAEPEI Incentive check.

all things Farm Bureau believes is important to having a successful agriculture program.

Classroom Presentations

In an effort to connect directly with our youth, the Arizona Farm Bureau visits with over 3,000 high school students each year through classroom programming. Interactive presentations on Arizona Agriculture, Misconceptions of Agriculture, Marketing and Media Mayhem, Animal Welfare and Care in Agriculture, and Biotech, What the Heck provide critical thinking opportunities for students and support for teacher lessons.

Ag Issues Resources

Arizona Farm Bureau knows the issues. Our Advocacy Team works closely with members and the legislature on a variety of issues that impact agriculture. In an effort to share the happenings at the legislature, Arizona Farm Bureau provides a weekly *While You Were Working* and monthly *Ag Issues Webinars* to help you and your students get to know the issues and what you can do to help. Katie Aikins also serves as the Arizona FFA Association Superintendent for the *Ag Issues CDE*. Why? The more informed you and your students are on the issues, the more advocates we will have!

Grant Programs

We partner with Arizona agriculture teachers each year to develop lessons that showcase the most current and up to date technologies and information from the farm and ranch. We benefit from having teachers understand and experience all aspects of the industry and then sharing that knowledge and experience with their students.

Industry Tours

We know the agricultural industry is diverse! The Arizona Farm Bureau provides teachers and students with the opportunity to learn firsthand and ask their

“The decisions your students make throughout their lives will dictate the future of agriculture from the food they eat, the dollars they spend, and the opinions they form about the regulatory environment.”

questions. This is accomplished through in-person industry tours with teachers and live virtual tours for students. The most recent industry tour, a trip to a grain farm, flour mill, and brewery, provided a glimpse into the STEM careers available in agriculture, showcased application of classroom skills, and provided an opportunity to see local agriculture at its finest!

Community Service and Partnership

No one recognizes the value of service more than our agricultural community. The Arizona Farm Bureau partners with classrooms - to offer service opportunities - to support communication about agriculture. Chapters can volunteer to organize and pack some of the nearly 3,000 envelopes of materials used by presenters of our *Ag Literacy Events*. Many FFA chapters volunteer each year to visit their local elementary classrooms and administer those presentations. This partnership not only provides a workforce to the Farm Bureau *Ag in the Classroom (AITC)* Program to continue its mission of educating youth about agriculture, but also provides FFA chapters with an extra opportunity to interact with students for recruitment. As an added bonus, many of our *AITC Interns* are students who worked with Farm Bureau through their classes in high school.

I hope something mentioned above excited you, inspired an idea of how you might partner with industry in your community, or at the very least opened your

eyes to the many opportunities available. I challenge you now to reach out to local organizations and businesses in your community and partner for the success of your students.

If you would like to get involved in any of the current partnerships or have an idea you would like to discuss about future partnership, programs, or opportunities please reach out to katieaikins@azfb.org.



Katie Aikins is the Director of Education for the Arizona Farm Bureau and performs the educational functions of the Farm Bureau that contributes to an increase in agriculture awareness in the K-12 classroom and beyond. This includes the development of new curriculum and programs that engage the public on hot button issues in agriculture. Aikins received a Master of Science Degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Arizona.

More Than Just Growing and Providing Fresh Vegetables and Poultry

by Casey Farnsworth

Not everything can be taught out of a textbook, not everything can be learned from lectures. There are many life lessons in agricultural education that must be grasped by doing, after all that is the FFA motto, isn't it? The words "Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve" is what we live for here at Casa Grande Union High School (CGUHS). We believe that to connect with our community we must be willing to serve them through meaningful partnerships between our agriculture students and community partners.

CGUHS agriculture students get more than just hands-on experience growing and processing their own poultry and fresh vegetables. Students are involved in the full circle as hundreds of pounds of fresh produce are donated annually to their local food bank, greenhouse tomatoes are sold to local restaurants, and poultry processed are sold to area butcher shops. Students are gaining valuable real-world skills and given opportunities to work with the community, make connections, and carry out business marketing plans that will help them be successful in their future as an entrepreneur or as industry personnel if they so choose.

What I have learned over the years is that to establish and sustain meaningful partnerships within your community, one must first build relationships with your students. Second, you

must be willing to take risks as you partner with students and your community. As you give students opportunities to grow as a leader and entrepreneur, this will allow many more possibilities to create and sustain meaningful partnerships. Get your students involved, create school based supervised agriculture experience (SAE) projects, and explore ways these experiences can serve your community needs.

First year agriculture students plan out and plant a garden which consists of two growing seasons. In the fall and winter, our students grow a large variety of crops in-

only raise egg layers, but can invest in batches of 200 meat birds throughout the year. Their investment covers the cost of the birds and feed. This seven-week project is managed entirely by students and then processed on campus in our program's processing facility. Shares are divided up and sold to costumers locally and across the state of Arizona. Students can re-invest back into the project numerous times throughout the year. On a good year, our agriculture students will raise and process close to 1,000 birds. It's exciting, especially as we have made partnerships with Forbes Meat Co. a butcher shop

and the University of Arizona's Wildcat Country Market both located in Tucson, AZ which is just over an hour drive from Casa Grande, Arizona.

Five of our students manage

our program's egg layer operation, which consists of 70 pastured Rhode Island Red hens. Each student has an assigned week to check up on the general welfare of the hens, collect eggs, and package eggs to sell. All students have their own costumers they sell to weekly; one has even gone above and beyond selling to a local business who then sells out of their store front. Students cover their feed cost; the rest of their earnings are strictly profit. This has been a great experience for students to learn much more than just collecting eggs. They must work as a team, learn to communicate with each

“What I have learned over the years is that to establish and sustain meaningful partnerships within your community, one must first build relationships with your students.”

cluding: cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, cauliflower, cilantro, and brussels sprouts. These crops are harvested and donated to our local food bank and distributed to members of our community who may be in need as part of our feeding the hungry project. In the spring, our agriculture students plant and grow a crop of sweet corn that we harvest the first of June and sell to members of our community. This allows community members to see a piece of our program and helps educate others about where their corn is grown.

Second year agriculture students are involved in a pastured poultry project where they not



(TOP LEFT) Agriculture students at CGUHS processing a batch of 200 Cornish Cross that will be sold to various local customers including Tucson, Az butcher shops for resale. (BOTTOM LEFT) The Cougar Country Market at CGUHS is the newest addition to the classroom of its agriculture program which will sell products produced from students and support Arizona grown products, bridging the gap between the consumer and the farmer/rancher. (RIGHT) Junior and Senior agriculture students harvesting their crop of hydroponic greenhouse tomatoes which are then sold to area local restaurants such as Creative Café in Casa Grande, AZ.

other, and market the product of their toil.

Each year our agriculture program raises a number of turkeys in partnership with other CTE programs. This community service project allows us to serve those in need during the holiday season. Our DECA and agriculture students package food items to create complete Thanksgiving meals. Our culinary students bake freshly made pumpkin pies, which all are donated as part of these meals. Finally, you can't have a Thanksgiving dinner without a turkey. Our students process the

birds we raise from poults and donate half of these to families in need. The other half we sell to our customers who buy from us year after year. This year we have just over 60 turkeys our students are raising from start to finish. We partnered with our local Cargill Animal Nutrition plant - who donates six pallets of Nutrena's meat bird feed - to guarantee our birds are well fed.

Within our agriculture program here at CGUHS, our seniors train and teach our junior agriculture students to produce fresh hydroponic tomatoes, lettuce,

and basil in our greenhouse. This produce is grown, harvested, and delivered to Creative Café, a local restaurant here in Casa Grande. For years our program has been developing and sustaining this meaningful partnership. Our fresh romaine lettuce is used in their crisp delicious salads, our basil is used to make their own pesto, and our vine ripened tomatoes are used on their juicy burgers and cold cut sandwiches. We have started selling our pastured eggs to them as well and are currently working on our whole chickens. Our agriculture stu-

dents look forward to their junior and senior year of high school to be involved in this partnership and manage our program's greenhouse. Last year we had such an abundance of tomatoes that we sold out to another local restaurant, Hideout Steakhouse. We take pride in what we do, providing the best products we can offer to our local community.

Throughout all these opportunities to produce a product, I had felt one thing lacking within our program, the cherry on top. During our time spent in virtual learning (during the pandemic), I knew my students needed something to keep them motivated, something for them to look forward to when they returned. As we discussed and planned out this next project, students once again were excited and ready to get back to some sort of normalcy. We decided to create a classroom store front which to be called, Cougar Country Market. This store front would allow students once again an opportunity to gain real world experience. Our construction and agriculture students partnered to remodel part of our classroom to make room for a commercial refrigerator and freezer. The purpose of this store front is to market the products our students grow and process such as our garden produce, whole chickens, and pastured eggs to help bridge the gap between consumer and producer. We also plan to support Arizona grown agriculture products such as milk and cheeses from our local dairies, raw honey from local producers, and ranch raised steaks from local Arizona cattle ranchers.

Kaylynn Jordan, a sophomore agriculture student here at CGUHS, is involved in our Cougar Country Market with her SAE in food processing. Kaylynn sells her homemade brownies and cookies in the agriculture program. She began by borrowing money from her parents for the

initial start up of her SAE. She quickly realized how fast her product was selling and began developing and improving how she could make and package more product. She quickly paid off what she borrowed from her parents, and is now doing so well that she is going to open her own bank account to keep track of her finances as she continues to buy ingredients and sell her products. The Cougar Country Market has student interns who operate the store during the first five minutes of each class period. We have also hired two students who will be working the market each day after school as teachers and staff stop by to shop. As we return to normal, it is our hope to be able to open to the community and allow all to come and support our program and Arizona agriculture.

As an agricultural educator, I truly believe in the hands-on learning approach. When students are actively engaged in opportunities to work together, experiment, and not be afraid of failure, that's when they learn and grow. Things do not run smoothly and perfectly all the time. We've had whitefly infestations in our greenhouse that has introduced the tomato yellow leaf curl, killing most of our crop. We've had predator issues that have severely impacted our flock size. I tell my students all the time to "try and fail, don't fail to try." There is learning no matter the outcome, good or bad, big or small. I believe in a student run program with school-based SAE projects where students can have these opportunities and experiences. Real world applications allow them to prepare to be successful, not only in a career but in life. These will be experiences that they will remember for years to come, especially when they become part of the community. Because of their positive interactions within agriculture education and FFA in Casa Grande, they will more likely reconnect and develop

their own partnerships with agriculture programs wherever they may reside in the future.

Mr. Casey Farnsworth, Agriculture Educator and FFA Advisor at Casa Grande Union High School has been teaching agriculture education for 11 years, five of which have been at CGUHS. Mr. Farnsworth was recently recognized as the 2020 Arizona Agriculture Teachers' Association Teacher of the Year, 2020 AATA South Central District Teacher of the Year, 2020 AATA Outstanding Single Teacher Program, and the 2020 AATA Outstanding Community Service Award. He holds a bachelor's in Career and Technical Education from Northern Arizona University. He has been married to his wife Jenna for 12 years, and they have sons - Logan (10), Landon (8), and Lincoln (4).



Only One Zoom Call Away: Strategies for Service Learning In and Out of the COVID Era

by Dr. Ben Weikert

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many disruptions in our day to day lives. Our valued time with family and friends was eliminated or cut short. A simple trip to the grocery store was transformed into a masked dance of one-way traffic. Many of us experienced loss. Personally, I lost my grandfather in the spring of 2020 to COVID-19. Professionally, many of us longed for the joy of educating to a classroom full of students. During the peak of COVID, I felt that I could not enjoy familiar traditions and was almost unable to put new ideas to the front of my classroom agenda. Educating in the pandemic has been hard, and we have all had to adapt. How we deliver and structure our courses has adapted right along with us.

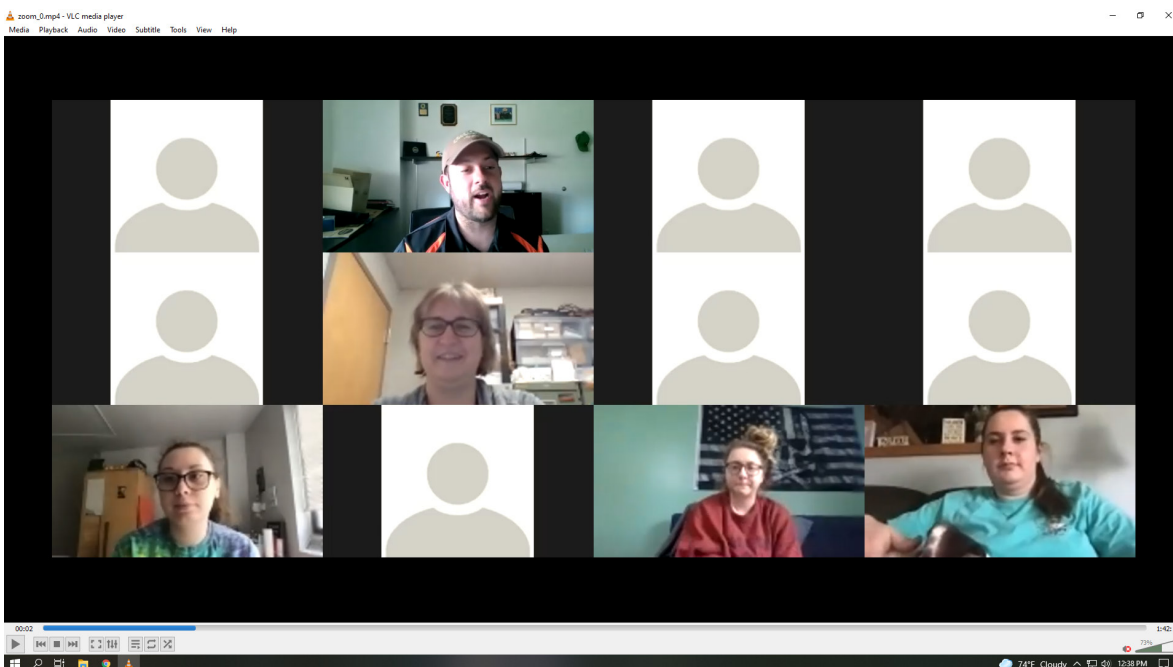
Luckily, we educators are used to adaptation. Students, classrooms, technology, or even

the weather affect our day to day lives as agricultural educators. In light of the global pandemic, we've all recently made many pedagogical and curricular changes including lecturing via Zoom, using more case studies to apply theoretical knowledge, and having our students turn their kitchen tables into laboratory benches. We have transformed our traditional approaches to the digital world, including methods like service learning.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, many institutions redirected resources into service learning curricula (Butin, 2010). Service learning is a form of experiential education that relates course objectives to community needs, while promoting deeper student reflection and transformative learning (Felten & Clayton, 2011). Many of us in the profession use service learning or it's related con-

cepts in our FFA programming, agricultural education courses, or leadership courses. As a college professor, I try to implement a service-learning component into most of my upper-level agricultural education courses.

When the pandemic hit, I was initially terrified to even approach the idea of adapting service learning to the circumstances of a COVID-19 world. How could it be done? How would it work? How can I make it engaging and meaningful for the students and the community? With some trial and error, I developed some strategies that worked well for me in implementing service learning during the pandemic. Many of these strategies were so successful that I plan to continue with them even when COVID is not playing such a large role in our educational planning.



Dr. Weikert and some of his AGED 309 students meet via Zoom with New York Agricultural Educator Jen Phelps to learn more about opportunities with New York Agricultural Education.

1) Continue with the service learning, just go virtual!

In my introductory agricultural education courses, where students are focused on learning the fundamentals behind formal and non-formal learning in agriculture, I have found that many service learning opportunities can be accomplished virtually. For example, I often get asked to judge 4-H and FFA public speaking or presentation events. I usually reply, "I would love to help, but could my students join in?" I find that having my students engage with 4-H and FFA events helps to give them a deeper understanding of the organization's objectives, allows them to gain perspective on the roles of the educator, teacher, or advisor, and also reinforces the communication and team building components outlined in our course objectives. Having students engage in virtual activities also allows them to work with diverse students and volunteers as the virtual format does not have geographical boundaries. For example, last semester my students helped to judge a county presentation event that was several hours away from campus and took place late in the evening on a weekend. If this event were held in-person, my students would have been unavailable to participate and would not have been afforded the opportunity to work with such a diverse group of people. As many FFA chapters, 4-H clubs, and other groups are rural or geographically isolated, using platforms like Zoom for virtual events opens up diverse experiences for students and communities alike.

2) Fundraise for a cause, in a meaningful way

When students engage in service learning, they may find that fulfilling community needs are dependent upon available resources. Engaging in fundraising gives students an opportunity to fulfill a community need while still growing their leadership, commu-

nication, and organizational skills. Fundraising can also be completed entirely via virtual platforms. My students especially enjoy this type of service activity when we incorporate a social media promotion as part of the project. Having students identify a community need that is meaningful to them is a great way to get them excited about a project. With many of my students being Animal Science majors, I find that they are very successful with animal centered causes such as animal shelter fundraising or acquiring equipment donations for a therapeutic horsemanship organization.

3) Focus on assessing needs and the planning process

Although service learning is assumed to be dynamic, having students focus on the needs assessment of a service project is an easy solution to service learning during COVID-19. With the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic and shifts in restrictions and requirements for different communities and settings, having students assess the needs of a community or organization with an emphasis on the planning of a future event is a unique opportunity for real world application. I have students complete planning and assessment projects as teams, fulfilling many course objectives without having to host an in-person service learning activity. As I teach a few different agricultural education courses, I have found that my Community Leadership course is best suited to this approach.

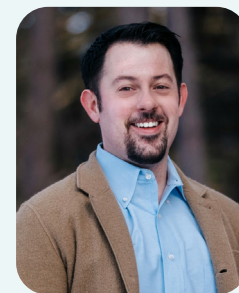
Conclusion

In adopting these strategies, students can still participate in service learning that addresses community needs, reinforces course content, and provides the students with an opportunity to engage and network with diverse groups of people. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been limiting in so many ways, its challenges have revealed silver linings

such as increased exposure to diversity and ease of access. For this coming academic year, I am planning several different service projects that involve out of state organizations, something I may not have considered previously. No matter how we look at it, some positive instructional adaptations have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, and they are only one Zoom call away!

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Dr. Ben Weikert is an Associate Professor at the State University of New York College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill (SUNY Cobleskill) where he teaches courses in Agricultural Education, Agricultural Leadership, and Livestock Production.

Grabbing the Community by the Horns!

by John Hammond

Scholarships, cooking hot dogs, equipment rental, classroom speakers, mentors, facility upgrades, fundraising, judges, job placements and more. What do all of these things have in common? These are all things that I have utilized community partnerships for in my career as an Agricultural Educator. I have taught high school agriculture for 14 years in the same community and have been fortunate enough to develop relationships with hundreds of people who have a passion for either agriculture, education, genuinely helping kids find success, or a combination of the three. Can an agricultural education program succeed without meaningful partnerships? Possibly, but I can guarantee from my experience, that road will be a rough one to ride down alone.

Nelson County, Kentucky is a very interesting, unique, and beautiful place. In fact, a few years ago, Rand McNalley and USA Today called Bardstown, our county seat, the "Most Beautiful Small Town in America." It's sometimes hard to recognize the beauty as I have been nearly a lifelong resident of this place on Earth (with the exception of four years at Murray State University, GO RACERS). When I do stop and "smell the (four) roses" I take note of the privilege I have every day to serve in a community rich with people who really care about agriculture. If you are reading into my prior quotations, I should stop and also mention that Bardstown, KY is also labeled as the "Bourbon Capital of the World." We are home to large and small bourbon/alcohol distilleries

such as Jim Beam, Heaven Hill, Four Roses, Barton Brands, Lux Row, and Bardstown Bourbon, among others. This may sound inappropriate for a school or The Agricultural Education Magazine to mention, however, this plays a substantial role in the agriculture community I serve.

"Rain makes corn, corn makes whiskey" has never been more true than in Nelson County, KY. This connection to local processes is what allows this area to remain so steadfast in being agriculturally based and opens the door to a program to make these connections and partnerships. These

“One of the many pieces of advice I have gleaned from them is to always have a wish list.”

unique factors - to this area - are not limiting in nature for how you and your program can develop and sustain meaningful partnerships. So, with that all being said, "where should I start?" Let's explore this idea together.

Many of the programs you are working in may have had an agriculture program in the past. If you can, locate and reach out to the past program leader/advisor to find out some of the people in the community who had their back. You never know what kind of relationships have already been established, so it would be worth your time to just ask. In the same notion of "it never hurts to ask," consider not telling yourself things like, "they will never help" or "this will never work out." These negative thoughts will shut you down before you

even begin. Keep an open mind in these situations and you will continue to open doors for your program. Folks you encounter in your journey will be far more receptive to your requests for help. Speaking of asking for help, how can you do it?

In Kentucky, we are very fortunate to have a FFA Foundation director and staff we truly do not deserve. Their work in providing so many things for our students and teachers in Kentucky is really something to be marveled and they bring a wealth of knowledge in developing and fostering relationships. One of the many pieces

of advice I have gleaned from them is to always have a wish list. Simply develop a list of items and/or services including needs and wants that you could utilize within your department. Take that a step further by making different donor

levels for higher priced items and lower levels for lower valued items. Make that wish-list look nice and neat then share, share, SHARE. Anytime we have an event in our school we have these laying at the tables. We also promote on social media and hand to local businesses and agriculture commodity groups. Speaking of agriculture commodity groups, let's explore that as another way to connect with our communities.

The Conservation Office, Farm Service Agency, Farm Bureau Federation, Ag Extension Office, Cattleman's and Pork Producers, each of these groups brings a wide variety of people and experiences to each and every one of the small communities in which you may be living. Make it a goal to visit each of these places, introduce yourself as part of the local

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Legacy Sponsorships flyer representing diamond, platinum, gold and blue levels.

agriculture program, and ask when their next board of directors meeting is. Many times this is an easy, foot in the door opportunity to develop relationships with the experts in your community who can provide help when you need it most. This also comes with an added bonus: they often have a fantastic home cooked meal (looking at you Nelson County Farm Bureau!). Bring your chapter president with you on this journey and be prepared to share what is happening in your program, offer to help with any initiatives they may have, and share opportunities you are providing your students you may need assistance with. Heck, you could even bring a few of those “Asks Flyers” that I mentioned previously. Let’s not forget, sometimes a little old fashioned stopping in at the local breakfast gathering spot

and chatting with the regulars provides some unique insight into the small community around you.

Communication = Community. Can we truly harness the power of the people and resources around us if we don’t communicate? I like to think of this as the single most important aspect of establishing, and most importantly sustaining, those meaningful partnerships. Make a point to stop in at local businesses and drop off flyers for upcoming events and discuss what’s going on. Make phone calls, send text messages, even social media posts help in communicating what is happening in your program. I tend to frequent feed stores in the community to the point they all know who I am personally and professionally and the conversation usually leads to what big things we have coming up and how can they help. Lately,

its been asking to visit their establishments with groups of students in our classes to see how their agriculture business or farm works which has opened many opportunities for our students to ask questions and learn from local experts. In turn, those ag professionals discuss this with their friends and colleagues at their ag commodity meetings. That simple communication can also go a long way in harnessing the power of your alumni from the local agriculture/ FFA program. Keep a log of phone numbers or collect those people on social media to inform them of program events and initiatives. The number of people who will come out of the woodwork to show their support will be surprising and truly provide a unique connection to the community.

All in all, finding great community partners isn’t a tough concept to understand. You need these folks to make your job as an agricultural educator easier. They want to support you and your program and your students will appreciate seeing the real world perspective they provide. Keep your ear to the ground, put your program out there, and ask people for help. The power of community provides the foundation to build a successful program.



John Hammond has been teaching agriculture at Nelson County Schools in Bardstown, KY for 14 years. He is the current Past President of Kentucky Association of Agricultural Educators, serves as a CASE Master Teacher, National Agriculture Ambassador, and current Global Food Guide.

College Community Gardens: Impact on Student Learning and Community Engagement

by Oybek Turayev

There is alarming research based evidence that there are many food desert areas across the United States. Every state has its own areas belonging to food deserts. Due to the industrialization of our food processing system, we are heavily dependent on large grocery store chains to deliver and provide our daily food needs. Unfortunately, not everyone lives in close proximity to large grocery stores. Furthermore, many residents in rural areas do not have reliable transportation to get to the closest food stores or have access to healthy foods. Additionally, many residents in food desert areas are not well prepared to grow their own fresh vegetables and foods and lack knowledge of running and managing simple vegetable gardens.

College community gardens can be one practical solution for teaching residents how to grow and manage their own produce. Community college gardens are unique environments for students, local residents, and community volunteers to come together and learn the practical application of growing their own food to combat food insecurity and increase access.

At Lake Region State College (LRSC), agricultural students, community members, and volunteers actively engage in community gardening and grow many vegetables. Tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, pumpkins, squashes, potatoes, and sweet corn have been grown by students and local community volunteers for

the past five years. The goal of the college community garden is to teach individuals how to garden and engage youth, FFA, and 4-H members with the basic principles of growing local garden vegetables. The gardening team works as a group under the leadership of the Precision Agriculture Club within the LRSC. Agriculture faculty in the Precision Agriculture program work closely with students and integrate gardening activities into hands-on course projects. Gardening projects are built around basic general education goals and North Dakota (ND) state agricultural education standards. The following ND agricultural education standards can be broadly fulfilled through gardening projects:

1. Develop and implement a crop management plan for a given production goal that accounts for environmental factors.
2. Apply principles of classification, plant anatomy, and plant physiology to plant production and management.
3. Propagate, culture, and harvest plants and plant products based on current industry standards (North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education, 2021).

Furthermore, students explore the moral and ethical problems associated with safe food production and the sustainability of food systems. Students conduct research and review short You-

Tube videos about gardening and gardening management practices. They work as a group and communicate with each other throughout the growing season. Students and diverse community volunteers share various food production ideas and traditional pest management techniques focused on gardening and food production. Students learn about and share various cultural ways of cooking, such as making salads. During gardening activities, students apply basic math skills through measuring garden plot sizes, seed quantities, and plant variety selections. Students also use basic laboratory skills to measure soil pH, soil organic matter, and basic fertility requirements for soil nutrients. Finally, students utilize small drones to fly over garden plots to capture vegetation index pictures.

Many college community gardens provide exceptional experiential learning opportunities for students. Agricultural Education faculty at LRSC integrate gardening activities into the Introduction to Soil Science and Principles of Crop Production courses. Students are able to compare and contrast soil types, texture, color, and other soil health related characteristics. Students learn about life in the soil such as bacteria and fungi and the mutual relations they bring to soil solution and nitrogen fixation. Through soil testing projects, students analyze soil pH, acidity, and salinity, compaction, and cation exchange processes. By examining plant leaves, sizes, shapes, colors, and vegetative structures, students explore



Students work together to grow and harvest a variety of crops in the Lake Region State College (ND) community garden.

“Collaboration is a key element in community based learning.”

the growth stages of monocot and dicot plants including sweet corn, green beans, pumpkins, and potatoes. Finally, students discover similarities and differences of various vegetable seeds, seedlings, and growth stages.

Community gardening activities also support the social, cultural, and psychological well-being of the students on campus and in the community. Throughout the growing season, students work as a group to complete different tasks including planting, harvesting, sorting, and marketing vegetables and crops. These tasks allow students to engage with one another, build great friendships, and develop a strong work ethic. Collaboration is a key element in community based learning. As Ravenscroft (2002) indicates, knowledge gained through collaboration is greater than individual knowledge. Similarly, learning experiences of many individuals holds greater value than a single individual's experience when comparing final outcomes. Vygotsky (1978) also indicates that engagement in the learning process enhances individuals' ability to learn at a higher level.

The United States Department of Education investigated community learning and its impact on student academics, behavior, and persistence of learning. There were several factors identified in the study that contributed to positive student outcomes. First, students in the community learning environment participated in group learning activities and their tasks were designed by their own group members. Second, students were involved in active, meaningful learning, even outside of formal class hours. Third, students improved their knowledge of the learning process. Fourth, students actively participated in different group activities that increased their overall knowledge about the course or concept. Fifth, students were

engaged with their course activities and content which contributed to positive social and academic outcomes (National Institute of Education, 1984).

From a broader perspective, students and volunteers in the college community also learn about food sustainability, local food markets, and community vitality. Lake Region area is a predominantly agricultural community. Many residents are involved in agriculture through local credit unions, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, public schools, and many more. Every year the garden produce generated from the college community gardens are donated to the local "Hope Center" and Lake Region State College Community.

I believe college community gardens have a tremendous impact on student learning and community engagement. Here at LRSC, we are creating a unique learning environment that engages faculty, staff, students, and the community members in the learning process. We are following our community college mission to enhance lives and community vitality through quality education.

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The Power of Alumni

by Melissa Veo & Don Tramp

The local community can play a vital role in the success of the local FFA chapter. The goal of every program should be to get a local alumni group started to help provide opportunities for your students and take a few things off your plate as the ag teacher. They can help coach CDE and LDE teams, help with transportation to and from events, donate items needed for your program, be a voice to your administration in good times and bad, and fundraise for your program and your students. Many chapters have a difficult time fundraising or spending money through their school district, so an alumni group is another great resource you could have to help your chapter financially.



The Buckeye FFA Chapter (AZ) reaps the benefits of an active and supportive FFA Alumni.

The Start:

The Buckeye FFA Chapter was started in 1929. Since then, our rural, agricultural community has been extremely supportive of our program and students. Although we are unaware of the exact year our alumni was created, it has been a very important component to the success of our program for longer than our lifetimes.

In 1981, The Buckeye FFA Alumni started The Buckeye Ag Day Livestock Show, held at the high school ag department. This show was originally created to help students prepare to exhibit their animals before our county fair. Our community has a very strong presence at our fair, so the alumni felt it was important to give the students another opportunity to prepare. At the last minute, the alumni group decided to throw together a BBQ lunch for the event so those competing and watching would have something to eat. The event ended up raising more money than antici-

“As teachers, we value the incredible relationship we have with our alumni group. We know and understand the importance of their presence in our community, program, and school.”

pated and left the alumni with a good problem to solve; what do we do with this leftover money. The alumni decided to use the money to offer scholarships to graduating seniors but also set strict guidelines for the scholarship. The alumni recognized that many outstanding students participate in various activities at school, work, and hobbies but do not necessarily focus on their grades nor receive scholarships to further their education. The alumni scholarship decided to not focus on students' academic history, but instead look at their

involvement in Buckeye Ag Day, participation in our community, and financial need. The alumni also recognized that many of these students do not attend a four year university and need money for technical schools, so the scholarship was also open to students who wanted to attend vocational or trade school, which was unheard of at the time.

40 Years Later:

When the alumni members saw the impact this scholarship had on our local students, they got to thinking about how these

efforts could be expanded to serve more members. The BBQ continued to grow, becoming a staple event in our local community. Businesses who sponsored an award for the livestock show would receive free tickets for the luncheon. Many local business owners, farmers, ranchers, and other members of our community would gather once a year for the lunch while watching the livestock show. With all these people gathered together, the thought of adding a dessert auction to raise additional money specific to the scholarship fund was born. Parents of members participating in the show would donate desserts and they would be auctioned off during the BBQ during a live auction. As the auction continued year after year, special desserts became ticket items to members of our community. Watching cinnamon rolls and Oreo truffles sell for almost \$1,000 each was always thrilling, but knowing the money was helping students grow their future was even more exciting!

Students were asked to donate their time before, during, and after Buckeye Ag Day to be considered for the scholarship. The scholarship fund would raise about \$7,000 a year, distributed at the end of the year in the form of scholarships, through an application process. With the cost of college and trade schools continuing to rise, the alumni soon felt the need to raise the amount of scholarships provided. They decided to change the award sponsorship form to include half of the amount donated going directly into the scholarship fund. In the first year, this increased our scholarship fund to \$15,000. This donation has continued to rise for the past three years, reaching almost \$30,000 this past year for the scholarship fund. The alumni still place a large value on the students' involvement in Buckeye Ag Day, the community, and financial need when choosing the scholarship recipients.

As teachers, we value the incredible relationship we have with our alumni group. We know and understand the importance of their presence in our community, program, and school. Over the past 40 years, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised to help our students with life after high school. Nothing is better than watching a hard working student be recognized for their time and dedication to our program!



Fourth generation Buckeye Union High School Graduate, Melissa Veo, has strong ties to the agricultural community in Buckeye and was a recipient of the Buckeye FFA Alumni Scholarship. This scholarship helped her accomplish the goals of receiving a Master's in Agricultural Education from the University of Arizona. Since then, she has spent the past 10 years teaching at her former high school.



Don has an undergraduate degree in Environmental Resources in Agriculture from Arizona State University, a Master of Education from the University of Phoenix, and is a National Board Certified Teacher. He has worked all over the state of Arizona in various agricultural settings and currently teaches at Buckeye Union High School. This is his 25th year in public education.

Professional Development Through Community Connections: A Local and Global Perspective

by James E. Patterson

As an agricultural economist and educator at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Washington, D.C., I strongly support professional engagement by agricultural educators and other agricultural professionals in community activities. My career benefited from professional involvement in community activities, including in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terror attack.

Aside from my responsibilities as an agricultural economist at USDA and an agricultural educator with USDA's Graduate School, a continuing education program, I had a leadership role with USDA's Alpha Zeta (AZ) Alumni Association. My duties included, among other things,

scheduling speakers for our monthly meetings. I sought additional opportunities to use my agricultural skills in communities outside USDA. After all, President Abraham Lincoln called USDA "The People's Department."

In 1989, USDA's participation in the President's Points of Light initiative motivated me to help serve the needs of D.C.'s underprivileged communities. I began working as a volunteer with D.C.'s Capital Area Community Food Bank (CACFB). The D.C. warehouse accepted shipments of retail food products for distribution to smaller food banks operated by Houses of Faith and other charities.

During holidays, I managed USDA-wide food drives so my col-

leagues could contribute canned and dry foods to small D.C. food banks. The Office of the Secretary even contributed to these food drives. Then-Sec. Clayton Yeutter acknowledged my community work. In a November 30, 1990, letter, Mr. Yeutter wrote: "Through your community service, life for many has been made better." Secretary Yeutter personally thanked me and said my work benefited the reputation of USDA as "The People's Department." After this important recognition for my community work, I continued to use my agricultural experience at food banks and other food charities in D.C. communities.

As an agricultural diplomat with USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, I reported from Mexico,



James Patterson with former Sec. Clayton Yeutter receiving community service recognition.

Canada, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, France, Holland, the United Kingdom, and Washington, D.C. While abroad on foreign assignments, I also worked with food donations, food banks, and food charities. I expanded my knowledge of food operations in other countries so I could be more effective with my work.

In 2000, I was elected as a Commissioner in my D.C. neighborhood of Foggy Bottom, an area which includes the U.S. State Department, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and The George Washington University. Hunger was an important issue in my scope of work.

The terror attacks of September 11, 2001, significantly disrupted food shipments into Washington, D.C. This presented an issue I could not have imagined. D.C. senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, and families with young children expressed strong concerns about the possibility of food shortages. Federal officials working with D.C. government officials mobilized military support to minimize disruption of the food supply. Volunteer opportunities in areas affected by major weather events are another way to get excellent professional crisis experience.

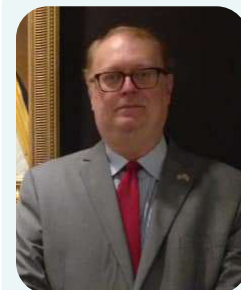
Through my community work, which began at USDA, I was better able to serve D.C. residents during the September 11, 2001 crisis. Continued professional development in agriculture throughout my career from working professional, elected official, and community anti-hunger activist, helped me use my agricultural experience to meet the complex food needs of diverse communities in Washington, D.C.

I encourage others to explore ways to use their agricultural experience to help their communities. Many cities have experienced a growth of farmers' markets on weekends. Agricultural professionals can help these markets

succeed and combat hunger. Agricultural professionals might consider food drives to aid families in areas hit by major weather events. As I learned, experience in crisis situations saves lives and develops careers.

Development as an agricultural professional happens in classrooms, offices, and communities. Learn the lessons that community involvement can teach and find your way to give back, both locally and globally.

I encourage others to explore ways to use their agricultural experience to help their communities.



James E. Patterson, M.S. Auburn University, is a life member of the American Foreign Service Association and a member of the Agricultural History Society.



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