

Between the Furrows

A Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau Monthly Publication

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Between The Furrows is a monthly publication of the SCoCFB. Members receive a subscription as part of their membership investment.

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Chef of Steel Competition Interacts with Susan K. Am Rhein Fund

Last month, Tom Am Rhein presented a \$1,000 check to the Gene Hoularis and Waldo Rodriguez Youth Center Culinary Program on behalf of the Susan Kim Am Rhein Memorial Fund, that is part of the Agri-Culture organization. Mr. Am Rhein set up the fund through Agri-Culture after his wife passed away. Susan had a strong interest in culinary arts, and also programs that helped develop skills for the youth. Earlier this year, the Youth Center held a Chef of Steel competition. Participants from that competition then prepared a meal served at Mr. Am Rhein's home that guests paid to enjoy. Mr. Am Rhein stated, "This is exactly

what I had hoped for when setting up the fund in memory of Susan." He further stated, "This event allowed these young chefs to take the next step of creating a menu, preparing a dinner and serving it in an environment that requires discipline, problem solving skills and professional interaction with adults. At the same time, all participants and attendees gained increased knowledge of the fabulous and healthy foods and beverages produced on our local farms." Mr. Am Rhein concluded, "Watsonville's Gene Hoularis and Waldo Rodriguez Youth Center is providing a great service to local youth who are interested in the culinary arts." ■



(L-R) Gogo Gorilla (Mascot), Andrea Rosas, Head Chef and Teacher, Culinary Arts Program, Student Participant, Tom Am Rhein, Susan K. Am Rhein Fund Founder, Student Participant and Jason Jall, Recreation

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ASK EMILY

**Emily Jane Freed, UC Cooperative Extension Area Director,
Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito Counties**

Santa Cruz County 4-H



Emily Jane Freed

Did you know that 4-H is a national youth development program administered by the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE)

under the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)? For more than 100 years, 4-H has provided educational and agriculture-based opportunities to six million youth and teens, and promoted learning through healthy living, civic engagement, and Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, and Math (STEAM).

Locally, the Santa Cruz County 4-H program includes a growing community of more than 200 youth and 65 adult volunteers. The Santa Cruz County 4-H program also helps youth and teens find their spark, build real world skills, become resilient and adaptable, and promote lifelong learners. Year-round activities

include animal and equine science, shooting sports, outdoor education, and food and nutrition. There is something for everyone at Santa Cruz County 4-H.

As we look ahead to 2026, we have an exciting and ambitious goal, and we are reaching out to the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau members for help. The local 4-H program seeks a two-acre (or larger) farm in Santa Cruz County, ideally in the Watsonville area, where youth and teens can house and care for their animals from April through September. A property with running water and power would allow the 4-H program to offer an authentic agricultural experience to local youth and teens and provide a hands-on learning that can inspire future careers and shape their professional paths.

If you have a farm or property in Santa Cruz County, which may be a good fit for our program, please reach out to Emily Jane Freed, ejfreed@ucanr.edu. To learn more about or join the 4-H Santa Cruz Community Club Program, visit our website: <https://ucanr.edu/county/santa-cruz-county/4-h-community-club-program>. ■

Your contributions to Agri-Culture are tax deductible!

Please visit agri-culture.us/donations and consider making a contribution to support agriculture education in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley.

Thank You

THE WATER NANNY

Gifts from Santa

*"The American Republic will endure until the day Congress discovers that it can bribe the public with the public's money". Alexis de Tocqueville, a French diplomat and historian, wrote in his seminal book *Democracy in America* (1835) with observations only an Old World visitor could make.*

Holidays are a great time for gifts and parties. Out at the Fairgrounds they held both early in December, with festive Sparky's Holiday Lights continuing through December 24th. Between gifts for sale and the remarkable Krampus Night party during the Lights walkthrough. Krampus is the perfect symbol of our holidays this year since in German folklore he accompanies St. Nicholas who rewards children, while Krampus punishes bad kids with birch rods.



Out in Washington we hear that our government is broke with too much debt, so they are going to give everyone a \$2,000 tariff bonus dividend this year. The President wisely said *"children should be content with two dolls instead of 30 for Christmas gifts."*

In my childhood, girls were content with dolls, but I never had 30, while boys received cooler gifts, toy HO or Lionel railroad train sets. Trains were very important to our parents, they moved out produce and commerce, and gave us transportation everywhere in the country. Now, not so much. There used to be a wonderful roundhouse in Pajaro, and trains with lumber and cement going from Felton and Davenport. It is all quiet on the Capitola railway bridge now. Union Pacific sold the branch line from Pajaro to Davenport to the Santa Cruz County RTC in 2010 for \$14.2 Million. The RTC trumpeted that they got the line for free, as it was funded with a state grant, which stipulated that it is for "rail projects within Santa Cruz County that facilitate recreational, commuter, intercity and intercounty travel." *"Beware of Greeks bearing gifts,"* Now hundreds of million dollars later the RTC is looking for another sugar daddy.

roads. Highway 1 in Santa Cruz County, weekday average of 97,000 vehicles, or about 145,000 people per day. The Santa Cruz Metro Transit District (SCMTD) has about 15,800 daily riders, including lots of UCSC students. Last month the RTC revealed to their board the capital costs and operating expenses for our mothballed railroad. It will cost \$4.3 billion to build and \$41 million annually to operate, plus another \$121 million to finish the coastal rail trail. Just to have the choo-choo run up the coast will require replacement of 28 bridges and repairs of five other bridges, out of 35 bridges total, some dating back to 1905, with an estimated cost of \$980M. The train would be completed by 2045, with 4,200 to 5,400 riders per weekday, with operation costs that's about \$284/passenger. The estimated ticket cost per passenger, is \$3-\$6 per ticket, for a \$280 per ticket subsidy.



In the past the RTC has presented cost options to your Farm Bureau for bond elections. There were several tradeoffs, for example 40% would go to bicycles and trails, with only 60% to freeway and roads. Just think about how little will be allocated to repair Freedom Blvd, or Bear Creek Rd., which serves real drivers, when our railroad will drive funding for the next 20 years. Maybe the railroad gift should have been turned away the way the Trojan Horse wasn't.

There have been other ideas for transportation within Santa Cruz. Who can forget the idea of a ski lodge gondola hauling students from Pacific St to UCSC. In the 40's Watsonville had a Blimp base, maybe a great way to travel to Davenport or Scotts Valley. But alas all these ideas were far too expensive, but still less than an electric train between Pajaro and the Boardwalk. *"It is a popular delusion that the government wastes vast amounts of money through inefficiency and sloth. Enormous effort and elaborate planning are required to waste this much money."* (P. J. O'Rourke) ■

We have a lot of commuters and businesses crowding our



FAVORITE RECIPES

Cranberry Loaf

This recipe has been in my recipe box for many years. I believe I originally picked it up from *12 Tomatoes* or *Pinterest*, I don't really remember, but I do know that it is a tasty loaf to pull out on Christmas morning and serve while enjoying the festivities with family and friends. Hope you enjoy this holiday treat! Editor

2 cups flour

1 1/2 cups sugar

1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, room temperature

1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 cups cranberries, fresh or frozen

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature

4 eggs, room temperature

1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda

Preheat oven to 350°F and lightly grease two 9x5-inch loaf pans with butter or non-stick spray. Cream together butter, cream cheese and sugar in a large bowl or mixer, then, one at a time, beat in eggs and vanilla. In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda and salt until combined. Gradually mix dry ingredients into wet ingredients, stirring until just incorporated.

Gently fold in cranberries, then pour mixture into prepared loaf pans.

Place in oven and bake for 60-70 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool at least 15 minutes before serving. Enjoy! ■

Fun Facts About Farming

1.9 million farms dot America's rural landscape, and 95% are operated by families – individuals, family partnerships or family corporations (USDA Census of Agriculture, 2022).

- Family farms and ranches account for 90% of total agricultural production value.
- Farmers and ranchers receive only 15 cents (on average) out of every retail dollar spent on food at home and away from home. The rest goes for costs beyond the farm gate: wages and materials for production, processing, marketing, transportation and distribution.
- 30% of all farmers are beginning farmers (in business less than 10 years); their average age is 47.
- 9% of U.S. farmers are serving or have served in the military.
- Americans enjoy a food supply that is abundant, affordable and among the world's safest, thanks in large part to the efficiency and productivity of America's farm and ranch families.
- One acre of land can grow a variety of crops, including 50,000 pounds of strawberries or 2,784 pounds (46.4 bushels) of wheat.
- One day's production for a high-producing dairy cow yields 4.8 pounds of butter, 8.7 gallons of ice cream or 10.5 pounds of cheese.

Being a Member Pays Off!



BECOME A FARM BUREAU MEMBER

Join the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau



The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau is an important voice for the Santa Cruz County and Pajaro Valley agriculture industry. Everyone is eligible to be a member and receive the many benefits and services available. By joining the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau you help support agriculture in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley.

How to Join

Go to www.cfbf.com and click on the "JOIN" button. No need to log in on this page. Go to the bottom of the page and click on NEVER BEEN A MEMBER to set up a new account.

Questions? Contact the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau
sccfb@sbcglobal.net
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I am a Farm Bureau member because...



"I am a Farm Bureau member because I believe in securing a sustainable future for Santa Cruz agriculture through policy advocacy and educational outreach that connects the next generation to the land."

Dane Scurich, Berry Grower
Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau
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For more information on Farm Bureau discounts, go to www.cfbf.com/membership/discount_codes to view the benefit guide.

All offers shown may be subject to change. Please email membership@cfbf.com with any questions or concerns.

NEW YEAR... BUT A FEW FAMILIAR FRIENDLY REMINDERS!



David Sanford

With the start of 2026 right around the corner, it can be helpful to think about new directions, innovations, and challenges that will accompany the new year... But it's also important to be reminded of the things that are done yearly to ensure success on your farms and ranches. For growers, these

activities are many and undoubtedly time-consuming, from the field to the office.

As we approach the start of a new calendar year, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office would like to remind Santa Cruz County growers to review and prepare for their regulatory responsibilities. Staying compliant not only supports a fair and safe agricultural system, it also protects your operation.

Here are key reminders and obligations for 2026:

Operator ID and Permit Renewal – Check expiration dates and contact our office at 831-763-8080 to arrange renewal appointments.

Business Registration Renewals – Commercial pesticide applicators, agricultural pest control advisors, and farm labor contractors need to register with our office prior to engaging in work in the county in the new year.

Private Applicator Certificates – Do you need to renew this year? Have your continuing education credits in order or contact us to set up a renewal exam.

Pesticide Use Reporting - Monthly use reports are required by any Operator ID holder or Permittee who makes applications in a given month; they are due by the 10th of the following month.

Recordkeeping & Documentation – Maintain pesticide use records for at least 2 years; review worker safety training records and field posting requirements; keep employee training logs, SDS sheets, and fieldworker safety documentation up to date and accessible.

Pest Management & Monitoring – Stay alert for invasive pest alerts and quarantine updates; participate in compliance agreements if you grow regulated commodities.

Organic Growers – Renew CDFA Organic Registration annually and ensure your certifier has submitted updated documentation to CDFA.

And **please** update your contact information with our office if there are changes!

Our office is here to support you. Whether you need assistance with permit renewals, compliance questions, or training resources, don't hesitate to reach out.

Let's start 2026 strong—together we can ensure a productive, safe, and compliant growing season. ■

More Fun Facts About Food & Farming

- Of the 11% of disposable income Americans spend on food each year, the dollars are split fairly evenly between food eaten at home and dining out, takeout or delivery.
- Many Americans celebrate holidays with food, spending a total of nearly \$14 billion each year.
- On average, one U.S. farm feeds 169 people annually in the U.S. and abroad. The global population is expected to increase by 1.8 billion by 2050, which means the world's farmers will have to increase total annual grain production by almost 1 billion tons and total meat production by more than 200 million tons.

Announcing... Agri-Culture, Inc.'s 2026 Scholarships

Applications Are Now Being Accepted

Agri-Culture is now accepting applications for its 2026 scholarship. The seven scholarships offered through the organization are for students entering or currently attending college and majoring in agriculture, animal science, political science, history, culinary arts, etc. The seven scholarships are:



Jimmie Cox Memorial Scholarship - A \$12,000 award for a student entering or currently attending college and majoring in agriculture.

Jeannie Witmer Memorial Scholarship:

A \$4,000 award for a student active (past or present) in California High School Rodeo Association District 4 or California 4-H Horse Program, entering or currently attending college and majoring in agriculture and/or animal sciences. This award includes \$2,000 from American AgCredit.



J.J. Crosetti, Jr. Memorial Scholarship: A \$1,500 award for a student entering or currently attending college and majoring in agriculture.

Laura Brown Memorial Scholarship: A \$4,000 award for a student entering or currently attending college and majoring in agriculture or a related field or majoring in culinary arts.



Frank Prevedelli Memorial Scholarship: A \$2,000 award for a student entering or currently attending college and majoring in agriculture or a related field.



Lou & Carol Calcagno Memorial Scholarship: A \$1,000 award for a student entering or currently attending college and majoring in agriculture, or a related field, Political Science, History, Marine Biology, Wildlife Management or Culinary Arts.

Georgeann Cowles Eiskamp Memorial Scholarship: A \$2,000 award for a female student who has graduated from a high school within the Pajaro Valley Unified School District boundaries (public or private) and majoring in agriculture-related field. Applicants must have completed at least two semesters of college studies.



Eligibility for the scholarships is listed on the application. The deadline for submitting applications is Friday, February 13, 2026. Here is a link to the online application: [2026 Scholarships - Agri-Culture](#). To request an application, please contact the Financial Aid office at your school or the Agri-Culture office, 141 Monte Vista Ave., Watsonville, CA 95076 (831) 722-6622 or (831) 818-1193. Email: agri-culture@sbcglobal.net ■

**Deadline for submitting applications:
Friday, February 13, 2026**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Wet Vs. Dry Rainy Season



John Pisturino, President

not always the case. I've seen it rain in October then nothing till January and we lose that crop of grass. We have three chances then. If the rain doesn't keep coming, we lose our grass for the year.

Then we've had bad draught years, like the 1975-1976 draught, which extended through 1977. We lost two bulls that year because there was no grass and the only thing that was left were the foal weeds like hemlock which the bulls ate down to the roots where the most poison is and it killed them. In Santa Cruz County, the draught resulted in severe water shortages, forcing farmers and ranchers to increase ground water pumping and experience depleted surface water supplies like the San Lorenzo River and Loch Lomand Reservoir and suffer economic loses. The overall agricultural industry, especially livestock, was among the hardest hit in the state.

The draught was characterized by exceptionally low rainfall with one winter registering less than 9 inches in rain events for the area. Some farmers were forced to switch to crops requiring less water. Livestock producers in Santa Cruz County were severely affected as they struggled to find adequate pastures for their animals.

The draught prompted a strong water conservation movement locally and statewide with strict restrictions implemented for urban and rural residents alike, e.g. shorter showers and using gray water to water plants. Then there was the 2011-2014 critical record setting droughts in Santa Cruz County and across California. 2014 was the third year

The rainy season has started and it has been coming often in short soaking storms. The events were nothing to cause much damage or flooding, like we like to see. For the cattlemen like me, it got the grass started and then we got some heat to get it growing and then we got a nice soaking rain to keep it going. But, that is

of the drought which collectively formed the driest three-year period on record for statewide precipitation in California history. The draught was primarily caused by a persistent ridge of high pressure in the Pacific Ocean (dubbed the Ridiculously Resilient Ridge) that diverted powerful winter storms away from the state. In my opinion, Californians should always be on a draught footing. Because, as we all know, the next draught could be just around the corner.

In closing, I want to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year. ■

*From All of Us
To All of You
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Merry Christmas
&
A Happy, Healthy and
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Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau **CULTURE**

- The SCCFB is firm in its **COMMITMENT** to provide responsive and effective services to its members, and to be a positive and integral part of the broader community through collaboration, education and social interaction.
- The SCCFB grows on a foundation of **TRUST**, bringing expertise, experience and good faith action to bear on topics related to agriculture, which can be relied upon by farmers, the agricultural community, and the community at large.
- The SCCFB honors and keeps its **TRADITION** of service to the diverse people, commodities and production systems that comprise the unique and complex agriculture community in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley.



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as long as you do not stop."**

Confucius

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Christmas Observed
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THURSDAY - JANUARY 1
New Year's Day
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FRIDAY - JANUARY 2
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THURSDAY - JANUARY 8
Policy & Resource
Committee meeting

MONDAY - JANUARY 19
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Holiday
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THURSDAY - JANUARY 29
Board Retreat

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