

National Agriculture Day luncheon scheduled

Staff report

WATSONVILLE

National Agriculture Day Spring Luncheon on Wednesday, March 16 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Heritage Hall located at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds.

The luncheon aims to promote an understanding of food production as well as fostering an awareness of the role of agriculture in the economy.

The 2016 Al Smith Friend of Agriculture Award will be announced. To engage the youth of the area, poster and poetry contests are underway in the local K-12 grade schools, and the winners will be announced at the luncheon.

A live auction will be held during the event.

Proceeds help support the Santa Cruz Farm Bureau's Scholarship Fund and Agriculture's educational programs. The auction supports the production of the 2016 Santa Cruz State Fair Booth.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. For information, call 724-1356 or 724-5821.



Laurel Jones, president of Cabrillo College, was the featured speaker at the National Agriculture Day spring luncheon in 2015.

File photo by Tarmo Hannula/The Land

Ag Day luncheon highlights community

Sentinel staff report

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WATSONVILLE » The National Agriculture Spring Luncheon celebrates the region's largest industry valued at \$447 million, according to the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce.

The Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau and the educational nonprofit Agriculture hosted the annual event on Wednesday at the Santa Cruz Country Fairgrounds outside Watsonville.

At the luncheon, the 2016 Al Smith Friend of Agriculture Award was presented to the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County for its strong support of local agriculture despite not being directly involved in production.

Al Smith was the founder of Orchard Supply Hardware, and he donated Swanton Pacific Ranch's 3,000 acres on the North Coast to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. The ranch has row crops, timber and even a one-third scale railroad, which was Smith's hobby.

Other award winners were honored at the luncheon. Quinn Porterfield, from Mission Hill Middle School in Santa Cruz, won the National Ag Day poster contest. Joel Burchell, from Creekside School in Santa Cruz, won the National Ag Day poetry contest.

Aptos High School senior Maya Capurro-Frosch is this year's recipient of the Jimmie Cox Memorial Scholarship. An all-star student, she received the AP Scholar Award and a "Distinguished Student Award." She's also the team captain of both the varsity golf and basketball teams.

Capurro-Frosch said she's decided to study at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo to pursue a career in agricultural business.

Lance Linares, CEO of the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, was the featured speaker. He talked on topic of "Growing Now, Giving Forever - Agriculture: Invested in the Community."

Other notables in attendance include County Supervisor Zach Friend, Driscoll's President Miles Reiter, California Certified Organic Farmers Executive Director Cathy Calfo, Watsonville Mayor Felipe Hernandez and Scotts Valley Councilwoman Stephany Aguilar.

2016 NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY HONOREES

Jimmie Cox Memorial Scholarship Winner: Maya Capurro-Frosch, senior, Aptos High School.

Al Smith Friend of Agriculture Award: Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County.

Poster Contest Winners:

First Place: Quinn Porterfield, sixth grade, Mission Hill Middle School.

Second Place: Coral Pardo, fifth grade, Santa Cruz Waldorf School.

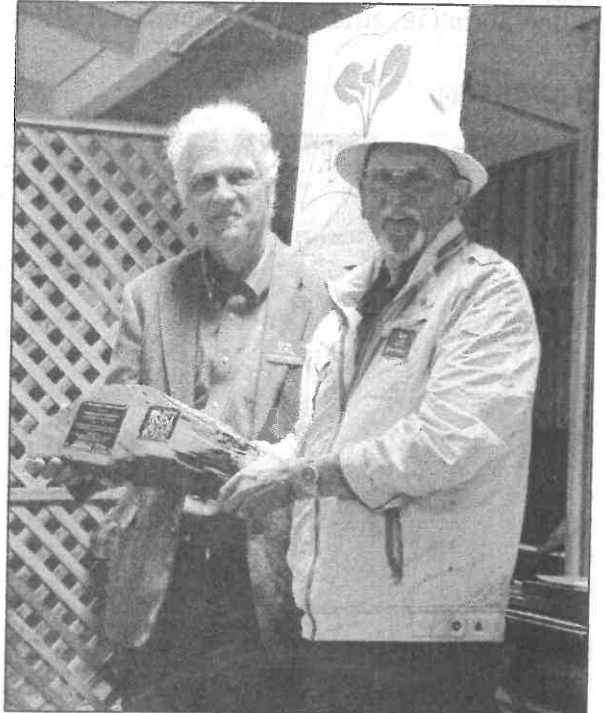
Third Place: Gabriel Rodriguez, fourth grade, Radcliff Elementary School.

Poetry Contest Winners:

First Place: Joel Burchell, eighth grade, Creekside School.

Second Place: Kaitlyn Rivera, seventh grade, Monte Vista Christian School.

Third Place: Erik Laut, seventh grade, Monte Vista Christian School.



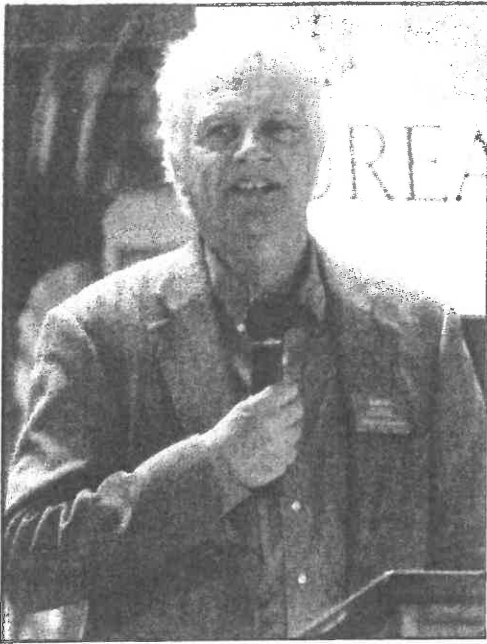
PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Lance Linares, CEO, and Terry Medina, president, of the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County receive the Al Smith Friend of Agriculture Award.



Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau President David Van Lennep awards National Ag Day poster contest winner Quinn Porterfield of Mission Hill Middle School.

A growing community



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Lance Linares, CEO of the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, was the keynote speaker. The Community Foundation was also named the 2016 Al Smith Friend of Agriculture.

More than 200 attend annual agricultural luncheon

By **TODD GUILD**
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — When the annual National Agriculture Day Spring Luncheon began in Santa Cruz County, it drew around 100 people, easily filling the Codiga Center.

That number has doubled since its inception three decades ago, a testament to the Pajaro Valley agricultural community, whose roots wend deep into the soil through numerous generations and fathomless years.

“We outgrew the Codiga Center,” Agricultural History Project CEO John Kegebein said.

In addition to giving the Pajaro Valley agriculture community a time to gather and let its hair down, the luncheon is also a symbolic springtime kickoff of the planting season, where efforts to sow crops traditionally begin in earnest, Kegebein said.

Bill Codiga, who helped fund the Agricultural History Project, and for whom the Codiga Cen-



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Terry Medina is the board president of the Community Foundation.

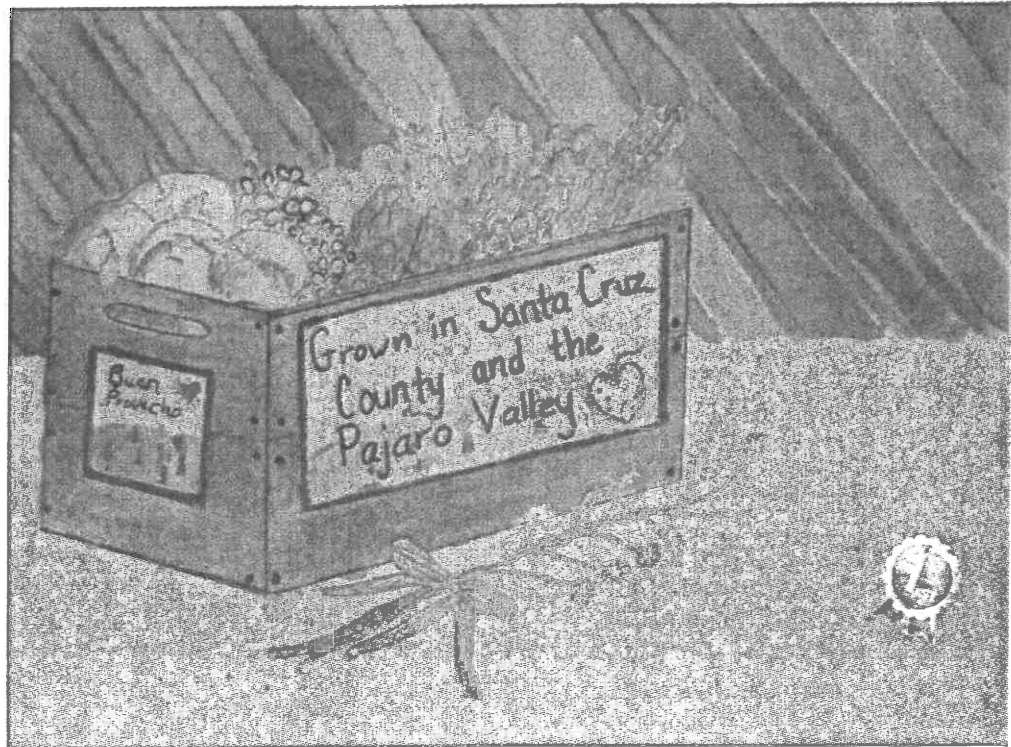
See LUNCHEON, page A10

‘A Santa Cruz County Bee’

By Joel Burchell

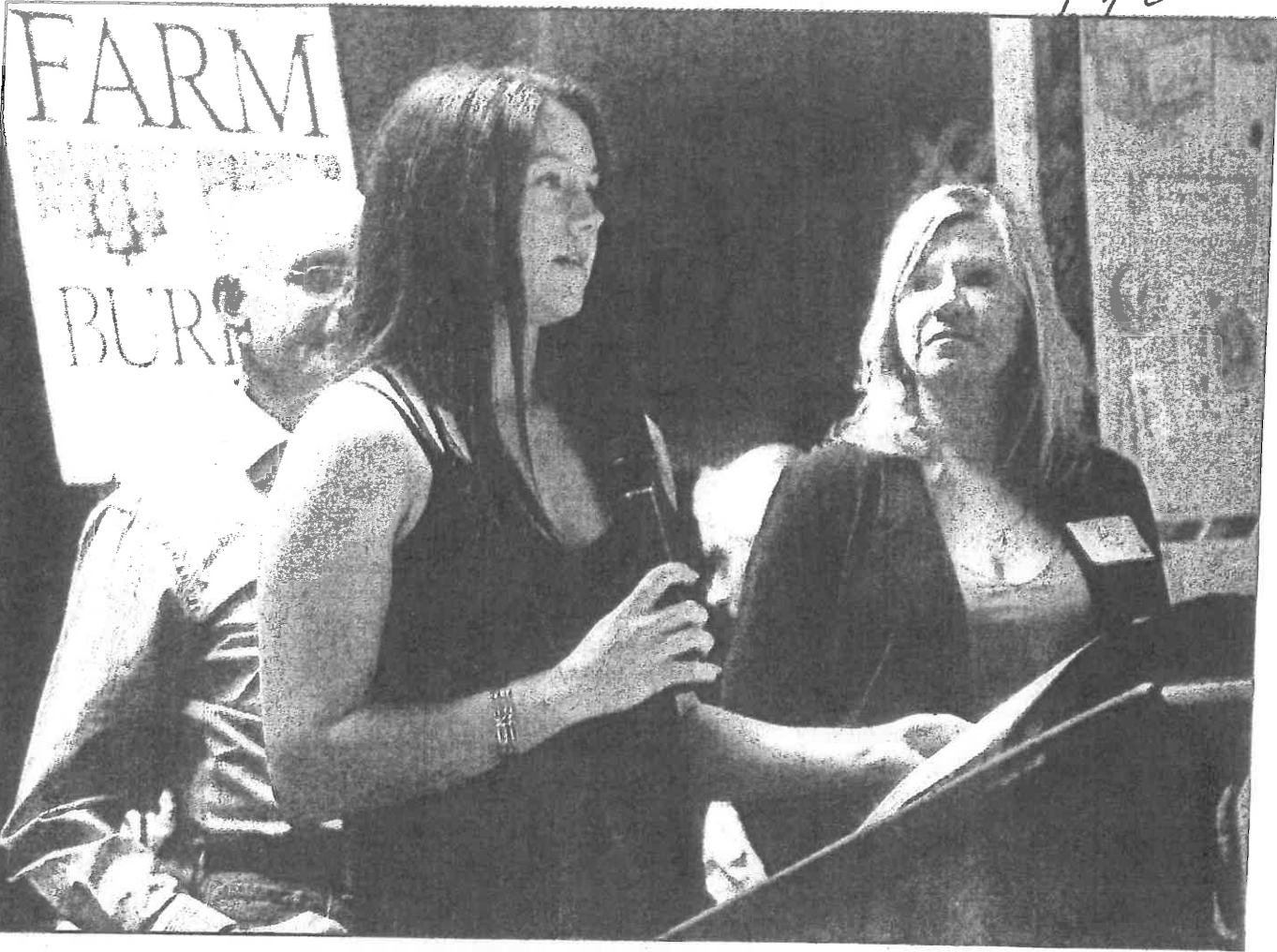
Eighth-grade student at Creekside School

I am a bee — I pollinate flowers.
I work in the fields for hours and hours.
There are so many crops in the Pajaro Valley,
The number of kinds can be tricky to tally.
Juicy apples, crispy and sweet
Ripe red raspberries, so hard to beat!
Celery, lettuce, broccoli —
There’s much to do for a bug like me.
I think to myself as the last light is fading
I love to work here, just pollinating.



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

This poster, designed by Quinn Porterfield, a sixth-grader at Mission Hill Middle School, won first place in the annual poster contest.



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Aptos High senior Maya Capurro-Frosch is awarded with the 2016 Jimmie Cox Memorial Scholarship Wednesday at the fairgrounds during the annual National Agriculture Day spring luncheon.

LUNCHEON

From page A1

ter is named, said honoring farming and promoting the farming lifestyle is a way to make sure that fertile Pajaro Valley farmland remains undeveloped.

To do that, he said, agriculture leaders must recruit youth and tap their vast and growing technical knowledge.

"A lot of people don't understand that the next build-out is going to be with the youth," Codiga said.

Dick Peixoto, who owns Lakeside Organic Gardens, said the luncheon is a time to focus on the agriculture community.

He noted the diversity of the attendees in the room, an assemblage that included education officials and bankers, business people and politicians.

"We have so many people in this room who aren't involved in ag, but still support it," Peixoto said. "And that's so important."

The luncheon is also a time to honor the National Agriculture Day poster contest and poetry contest winners, along with the AI

Smith Friend of Agriculture Award.

That award went to Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, a 34-year-old organization that manages endowments to fund a wide variety of projects and organizations.

It has awarded \$94 million in grants throughout its history and has more than \$100 million in assets.

In 2014, more than \$764,000 of the foundation's \$13.4 million in grants went to Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley.

The Jimmie Cox Memorial Scholarship went to Aptos High School senior Maya Capurro-Frosch, 18.

Capurro-Frosch captains her school's basketball and golf teams. She topped eight other finalists to win the \$4,000 scholarship.

She will attend California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, where she plans to study agriculture business.

She said she was inspired by her family, which owns Moss Landing-based Capurro Farms.

"I grew up in the ag world," she said. "It's something I think is very honorable and it's something I want to be a part of."

Focus Agriculture Class XXVII selected

RP 3/8/16

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT

WATSONVILLE — Twenty-one people have been selected for Class XXVII of the Focus Agriculture program.

This “first-in-the-nation” program is designed for community leaders to learn about agriculture in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley. Class XXVII members include: Stephen Gray, Chief Administrative Officer, Sutter Health, Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center; Jacques Bertrand, Councilmember, City of Capitola; Cynthia Druley, Executive Director, CASA; Josh Schneider, President, Bluewater Construction, Inc.; Angela Gile, Field Representative, California State Assembly – Mark Stone; Rachel Kippen, Director of Programs, Save Our Shores; and Bruce Nicholson, Co-Founder/Principal, The Nicholson Company.

The program consists of once-a-month, daylong seminars, held over a period of nine months. The first session will

be held on Friday. Speakers ranging from farmers to elected officials to representatives from environmental groups will address the class. The sessions will cover such topics as ethnic groups in agriculture, new technology and diversity of commodities locally grown. In addition, there are many farm tours and hands-on experiences. The participants will spend one day working on a farm.

“Community leaders will find this program beneficial and, in turn, growers who present information to the class will learn the public’s current perspective of local agriculture,” said Agriculture President Steve Bontadelli. “The program is designed to be a two-way learning process.”

The Focus Agriculture program received a national award for its approach to bringing the public and the agricultural community together.

Class XXVII participants are:

• Jacques Bertrand — Councilmember, City of Capitola

• David Brody — Executive Director, First 5 Santa Cruz County

• Cameron Chabre — Conservation Land Manager, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County

• Doron Comerchero — Executive Director, FoodWhat

• Marie Cubillas — Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County

• Cynthia Druley — Executive Director, CASA of Santa Cruz County

• Marcelle Dupraw — Managing Senior Mediator & Facilitator, CSU Sacramento, Center for Collaborative Policy

• Angela Gile — Field Representative, California State Assembly – Mark Stone

• Stephen Gray — Chief Administrative Officer, Sutter Health, Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center

• Jan Kamman — Community/Corporate Relations Director, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County

• Kathie Keely — Retired,

Director of Sales, Santa Cruz Seaside Co.

• Rachel Kippen — Director of Programs, Save Our Shores

• Erin Larrus — Agriculture Teacher, Pajaro Valley Unified School District

• Barbara Mendenhall — Senior Trial Attorney, Zenith Insurance Co.

• Bruce Nicholson — Co-Founder/Principal, The Nicholson Company

• Josh Schneider — President, Blue Water Construction, Inc.

• Francisco Rodriguez — Assistant Vice President/SBA Loan Officer, Santa Cruz County Bank

• Keith Rushing — Realtor, Self-Employed Coldwell Banker Realtor

• Mary Russell — Broker/Principal, Mortgage Results

• Mike Watson — Property Manager, Shikuma Farms

• Jenni Veitch-Olson — Preschool Founding Director, United Presbyterian Church of Watsonville

Twenty-one Community Leaders Selected For Focus Agriculture Class XXVII 3/15/16

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Sutter Health, Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center; Jacques Bertrand, Councilmember, City of Capitola; Cynthia Druley, Executive Director, CASA; Josh Schneider, President, Bluewater Construction, Inc.; Angela Gile, Field Representative, California State Assembly - Mark Stone; Rachel Kippen, Director of Programs, Save Our Shores; and Bruce Nicholson, Co-Founder/ Principal, The Nicholson Company.

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In announcing the selected participants of Class XXVII, Agri-Culture President Steve Bontadelli, stated, “Community leaders will find this program beneficial and, in turn, growers who present information to the class will learn the public’s current perspective of local agriculture. The program is designed to be a two way learning process.”



Stephen Gray

The Focus Agriculture program received a national award for its innovated approach to bringing the public and the agricultural community Focus Agriculture Press Release ■

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ORGANIC KING GROWS AND GIVES BACK BIG



PHOTOS BY DAN COYRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Dick Peixoto is the most successful organic farmer in the county and as a philanthropist, he shares those successes with charitable causes when he can.

Dick Peixoto: Grower-philanthropist donates \$2 million toward learning center

By Ryan Masters

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WATSONVILLE » In 1977, Dick Peixoto was a young Watsonville farmer struggling to survive to another harvest. The outlook was grim. His fuel company had just cut him off due to an \$8,000 debt. Without fuel to run his equipment, Peixoto's fledgling business would go to seed.

"I was dead in the water until a guy from a local fuel business knocked on my door. He not only offered to sell me the fuel I needed, but he also paid off my debt and gave me 30 days breathing room and manageable terms to repay him," Peixoto said. "All he wanted in return was my business. I've been buying fuel from him for almost 40 years now."

Today that's a considerable

amount of business. During the past four decades, Peixoto, 59, has transformed 40-odd acres of conventional green beans into Lakeside Organic Gardens, the largest family owned, solely organic grower-shipper in the U.S. And despite experiencing 20 percent year-over-year growth, Lakeside Organic Gardens can't come close to fulfilling the massive market demand for its product.

Much like the local fuel company Moreno Petroleum, which saved his business in 1977, Peixoto has made a habit of remembering the community from which his organic empire sprang.

In 2015, Peixoto donated \$375,000 to 17 local organizations, including Pajaro Valley Shelter Services, CASA of Santa Cruz County, The Salvation Army and Second Harvest Food Bank.

"I've been broke twice



Dick Peixoto and his daughter Ashley, at right, receive the United Way Golden Carrot Award in 2013 for offering healthy items at their California Grill restaurant in Watsonville.

since I started growing organic. There was a time when I couldn't even go down to Taco Bell and charge a burrito on my credit card. I understand tough times," Peixoto said. "People often experience circumstances beyond their control and they need

some help."

In early January, Peixoto announced that Lakeside Organic Gardens was investing \$2 million toward a learning center that could help shape the future of organic and sustainable agriculture.

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Peixoto

FROM PAGE 1

Project coordinator Agri-Culture, a Pajaro Valley nonprofit, is developing an organic and sustainable agriculture education facility that will serve as a resource to people interested in starting an organic farm, learning about organic farming, or seeing how their food is grown organically.

"I'm concerned where the next generation of farmers is coming from," Peixoto said. "The learning center is about getting young people back on the farm and discovering agriculture as a viable modern career path."

Peixoto also provides sizable year-end bonuses to each of his employees: "from the guy hoeing weeds and picking radishes to my harvesting manager."

When describing the success of his business, Peixoto refers to something he calls "The Lakeside Way." When asked to define it, he shrugs and says, "Get 'er done."

As the company's owner, grower and planner, Peixoto gets 'er done. Every day he's up before dawn to meet with his managers and provide specific plans for as many as 400 to 500 different blocks of produce growing around the Pajaro Valley. He spends most of the day behind the wheel of his "office," a 2014 Ford Raptor truck, personally checking every single one of those blocks.

"We had some management consultant types come in here a while ago to examine our operations," Peixoto said. "After three days, they said, 'We don't know



DAN COYRO — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Dick Peixoto is the most successful organic farmer in the county and as a philanthropist shares those successes with charitable causes when he can.

how you do it, but it works. Don't stop."

In addition to an undeniable work ethic, Peixoto's success can be tied to foresight and an appetite for risk.

In 1996, Peixoto became frustrated with the constraints of conventional gardens and decided to dedicate 50 acres to 40 different certified organic crops. His colleagues thought he was nuts.

"Fifty acres is kind of a joke when you're growing 2,500 acres," Peixoto said. "But transitioning to organics was a steep learning curve because I'd just been a grower up to that point. Now I was responsible for every aspect of the business; packaging, shipping, marketing, the whole thing."

It was tough going at first. Peixoto tried selling at local farmers markets, but found he had to go as far away as Fairfield to find available space. Instead, he hired a salesperson and began selling wholesale.

"I got better at growing organic by applying conventional techniques to the process," he said. "But it was dif-

icult. You have to grow carefully because it takes three years to transition 200 acres. I went broke twice."

However, it wasn't until Peixoto began growing in the Imperial Valley to provide year-round produce that the company "took off like a rocket." While he has a manager in the Imperial Valley, Peixoto still travels south for one to two days every 2 weeks to oversee the operation.

Today, Lakeside Organic Gardens consists of 1,000 acres in the Imperial Valley and 1,500 acres in the Pajaro Valley. He also takes an interest in the California Grill, the Freedom-area restaurant he bought for 25-year-old daughter Ashley more than three years ago. The restaurant uses primarily locally sourced food, including Lakeside Organic Gardens produce and its walls are decorated with a revolving gallery of photos on loan from the Pajaro Valley Historical Society.

"Our motto is 'Perpetual Pajaro Valley Pride,'" Peixoto said.

DICK PEIXOTO

Who: Founder and owner of Pajaro Valley's Lakeside Organic Gardens, the largest family owned, solely organic grower-shipper in the U.S.

Age: 59

Education: Peixoto was already farming 40 acres of green beans while attending Watsonville High School.

Family: Wife, Marisella, 55; daughter, Ashley, 25; daughter, Amanda, 23; and son, Ricky, 21. Peixoto's grandfather, Joseph Peixoto was a Watsonville potato farmer who immigrated from the Azores Islands in Portugal in the early 1900s. Peixoto's father, Joseph Peixoto, was a commercial fertilizer and chemical supplier.

2015 LAKESIDE ORGANICS DONATIONS

California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom
CASA of Santa Cruz County
Dominican Foundation Katz
Cancer Resource Center
Families in Transition in Santa Cruz County
Toys for Tots
Jacob's Heart
Pajaro Valley Shelter Services
Pajaro Valley Loaves and Fishes
Salinas Circle for Children
The Salvation Army
Second Harvest Food Bank
Survivors Healing Center
Teen Kitchen Project
Jovenes Sanos
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Monarch Services
Youth NOW

AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGY

Apps for Ag unites coders, farmers

Event aims to part the 'lettuce curtain' that divides Silicon, Salinas valleys

By Samantha Clark

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@samanthabclark on Twitter

WATSONVILLE » Silicon Valley and Salinas Valley are about an hour away, but they need not be different worlds.

Another new program aims to part the so-called "lettuce curtain" dividing the two industry hubs. The first local Apps for Ag hackathon took place this weekend at Cabrillo College's Watsonville campus, uniting coders and

commercial farmers.

"It's cool to see the agricultural industry plant seeds, so to speak, of ideas and say this is what we need," said Michael Matera, a computer at information systems instructor at Cabrillo who helped organize the event.

Representatives from the US Department of Agriculture, Driscolls and Lakeside Organics spoke to students and professionals about what kinds of technology they would like to see to ease the pressures farmers face,

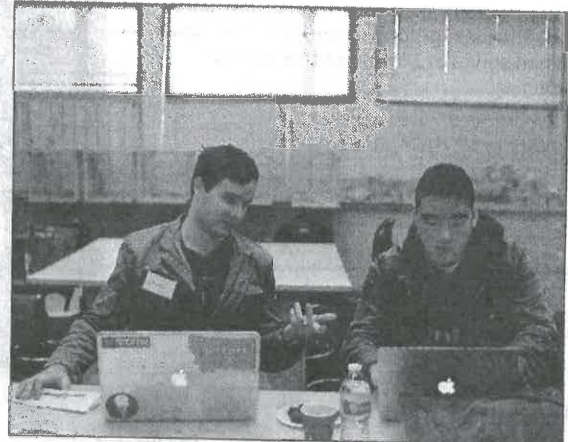
including food demand, sustainability, regulations and water and labor shortages.

"We need an outside look into agriculture," said Juan Gonzalez, operations manager at Lakeside Organics.

He told the participants he'd like a program that can help with planting plans.

"It's easy to divide up the percentage of crops when the plot is a square," he explained. "But what if the land is shaped like Virginia?"

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Brendan Dugan, left, and Ji Baik brainstorm ideas for their app during the Apps for Ag hackathon at the Cabrillo College campus in Watsonville on Saturday.

KEVIN JOHNSON
— SANTA CRUZ
SENTINEL

Ag

FROM PAGE 1

Lesley Amezcua of King City and Emily Garcia of Salinas are freshmen students in the CSin3 program at Hartnell College and CSU Monterey Bay. They're hoping to graduate with computer science degrees in three years.

"We're thinking about making a food traceability app," Garcia said. "It tells consumers where their food came from, and if food is contaminated, it helps farmers know where it came from."

Jessica Gonzalez and Patrick Zelaya of Salinas were brainstorming a scheduling platform for neighboring farmers who have to communicate and negoti-

ate with one another about tasks such as who gets to spray or water when.

"If the field next to me is spraying, I can't have my crew in, so I'll have to take them out," Juan Gonzalez said. "If this farmer wants to water when I want to, we have to talk about it since we share the same well."

More than a dozen hackers at the event went to work, sowing such solutions for the field. At the end of the event Sunday evening, the different teams will have to finish their product and pitch it to investors in a mock marketing exercise.

Cabrillo College, California Community Colleges, Digital Nest, the **Farm Bureau** and the Small Business Development Center of the Central Coast organized the hackathon.