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A CONVERSATION WITH AN URBAN FARMER: JANNA ANDERSON

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Janna Anderson was featured in these pages in 2014 for her efforts in retail farming in an urban setting. It's time to get caught up again with this adventurous soul between farming, raising dogs and cruising backroads on her Harley.

A frequent shopper at area farmers' markets, third-generation Phoenix native Anderson saw there was a large demand for urban farmers even before the locally-grown movement became trendy. So, Pinnacle Farms was launched on a tiny plot behind the Scottsdale Community College in 2000. All began to unfold at a time when Anderson was just a semester shy of obtaining her nursing degree. Instead, she decided to follow her heart, and applied herself to filling this niche food market.

The small plot behind the college served Anderson well for a short time until she realized that the need for local produce was so great, she had to look elsewhere to grow produce to supply the demand.

Never one to rest on her laurels or get comfortable with the current market, Anderson ventured into grains and with a leap of faith began growing an heirloom variety of wheat that hadn't been popular until fairly recently, especially as the GMO debate raged on. The last few years, she's enjoyed fulfilling a niche for specialty veggies and ancient grains and will continue to grow heritage varieties as the market evolves.

Self-financed, Anderson grows naturally at her West Valley farm and every stage in her farming operation is carefully planned out.

And, in the thick of all this she's an advocate for biotechnology in agriculture. Arizona Agriculture always appreciates this young farmer's philosophy. This urban farmer, whose maiden name is McDonald, sees the irony in all sorts of things, including farming.

Arizona Agriculture: Back in 2014, you and I had a conversation about your retail farming. What has changed in your farm operation since then and talk about the crops you are growing?

Anderson: Almost everything has changed! Arizona now has a food cooperative that aggregates and distributes produce for smaller specialty crop growers, like me. This has enabled me to keep my focus on running the farm. While it's still difficult to always be in the right place at the right time, being able to sell my products to a wholesale market is a game changer. This is the missing link for small producers to enable them to stay on the farm and focus on production. Sun Produce Co-op is a great option for small farmers: <https://www.sunproducecoop.org/sun-produce-farms-statewide-map/>

Arizona Agriculture: What's been most important for you in managing your urban farm these last few years?

Anderson: Land availability is a huge issue, and water use is always top of mind. My farms are in Waddell and Laveen and went from 57 acres to 17 due to the need



This urban farmer is an advocate for biotechnology in agriculture. Arizona Agriculture always appreciates Janna Anderson's philosophy.

for new housing. We all know that Maricopa County is a hot housing and business area, but watching all the best irrigated farmland being paved over with concrete and warehouses makes me concerned that people who move here don't have that connection to their food sources anymore, and we all know the risks with losing farmland. You can only control the commodities that you produce, and outsourcing food is not a great plan.

Arizona Agriculture: How'd you operate through the pandemic, especially as it related to supply chain issues?

Anderson: Really, we didn't change much of anything. We still went to work and worked hard at producing food for buyers, although the way the buyers distributed their food changed to CSA boxes and food bank purchases. But in general, most of the supply chain issues were resolved by paying more for our supplies.

Arizona Agriculture: You've always had such a positive outlook with all methods of farming. You understand the compatibility of all agriculture. Why? What's your philosophy behind all this?

Anderson: I feel like our younger folks are predisposed to think that big agriculture is not sustainable, but that stems more from a lack of understanding why and how we stewards of the land do our job. I have changed my growing practices to become what is considered conventional, primarily because I see the similarities between the "sustainable movement" and the conventional farmers who treat the land as precious and need to protect it for the future crops used to feed Americans and the rest of the world.

Some years ago, I watched a demonstration by long-time farmer Ron Rayner about how the no-till practices protect and grow the biomass in the typical 3 to 4 crops that are grown as commodities here. Why they do what they do makes sense on a large scale, and all the while, they are protecting and growing our soils, using safe and sustainable inputs, not raping, and destroying like some activists might want you to believe. Education and firsthand experience make a huge difference, and the educational opportunities Farm Bureau works so hard at providing is an incredible way for the average Joe to understand how important and sustainable agriculture truly is.

Arizona Agriculture: You've had some rough times trying to continue to farm in an urban area. Talk about this and what's been the most proactive outcome of it all?

Anderson: In the metro-Phoenix area, land is always under threat from developers, which is to be expected. However, the city of Phoenix itself is one of the biggest perpetrators, robbing private property owners to create their newest project to build more infrastructure for the millions of people moving here. Obviously, this is a result of massive growth, however, as Arizona grows, we need to ask ourselves if the city we want to live in is going to be one stripped of agriculture?

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PRESIDENT SMALLHOUSE PARTICIPATES IN WESTERN CAUCUS SUMMIT

By Staff Reports

Last month, Arizona Farm Bureau President and southern Arizona rancher Stefanie Smallhouse met with Chairman Dan Newhouse (WA-04) and other Members of Congress, stakeholders, and congressional staff in North Texas for agriculture tours and a Western Caucus Foundation Farm Bill Summit in Fort Worth, Texas to discuss the farm bill and critical agriculture issues pertinent to the western states.

In the meantime, American Farm Bureau and state Farm Bureaus are front and center on this latest effort with American's critical farm bill legislation. American and Arizona Farm Bureau support the following principles to guide development of programs in the next farm bill:

- Protecting current farm bill program spending
- Maintain a unified farm bill which keeps nutrition programs and farm programs together
- Any changes to current farm legislation must be an amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 or the Agricultural Act of 1949
- Prioritize risk management tools and funding for both federal crop insurance and commodity programs
- Ensure adequate USDA staffing capacity and technical assistance

"The Western U.S. is unique in so many ways," said Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse. "Farmers and ranchers in this region are keenly interested in the next farm bill given the importance of Arizona and other western states in our nation's food security. The Congressional Western Caucus is on the leading edge of gathering feedback from producers. I know Farm Bureau members are very grateful to have the opportunity to voice their concerns about sustainability, risk management, conservation, drought mitigation, and the ag operating environment in general. The respect and influence of the Western Caucus is well reflected by the strong attendance of

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Said Smallhouse, "Farmers and ranchers in this [western] region are keenly interested in the next farm bill given the importance of Arizona and other western states in our nation's food security."



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VIDEOS TELL THE ARIZONA AGRICULTURE STORY

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

According to digital marketing consultancy firm, DASH, on average in 2023 people are watching 17 hours of online video per week. That’s fallen from an average of 19 hours in 2022. Globally, people are watching around 84 minutes’ worth of videos every single day. And 96% of marketers say video is an important part of their marketing strategy, an increase of 5% from 2022.

Arizona Farm Bureau feels like it’s dipped its farm boot into the movie business, especially since 2017 when we began producing about two videos per month and sharing them on azfb.org and on our social media channels. To date, we’ve created more than 270 videos. We moved seriously into video production when social media analysts were telling marketers that videos became the number one way to view content in the social media space.

Our advocacy, communication and education (the ACEs) have realized the benefits of the effort including explaining complex issues with the ease of a modern-day video. Having covered simple to complex topics about Arizona agriculture, there isn’t a topic we haven’t tried to tackle. The average length of our videos is 90 seconds to four minutes. They’re concise, well written and it’s become a team effort.

HOW IMPORTANT VIDEOS HAVE BECOME

- According to the Social Shepard, videos are twice as likely to be shared than any other type of content.
- More people are watching video with closed captioning to avoid turning on the sound. Could that be people are watching during those long Zoom meetings?
- While marketers note that nearly 75% of viewers are watching short form video on their mobile (lasting no more than 60 seconds), more and more brands are creating long-form video content such as webinars and fireside chats. And viewers are watching them! In a Wistia’s benchmark report, they found that 16% of viewers stuck with a 60-minute video all the way through.

USE THIS RESOURCE TO TELL YOUR STORY AND THE ARIZONA AGRICULTURE NARRATIVE

We upload all our videos to azfb.org and you’ll also find them all posted on our social media channels, especially the “Friends of Arizona Farm Bureau” Facebook page. Since we’ve covered so many topics a simple “search” on azfb.org will determine whether we have a video you can share with your network. For example, plug into the search window in the upper right corner of azfb.org, “sustainability,” and you’ll find a video and articles on the topic. Here are other points to help you exploit this Arizona Farm Bureau resource.

1. **Share the videos with friends.** On our www.azfb.org/news/videos page, is our complete list of videos we’ve produced. We’ve tackled some complex issues, sharing a video is sometimes easier than trying to explain to your friend for example, pesticide use in agriculture. You have a topic we haven’t covered? Let us know and we’ll research and write a script.
2. **Share on your social media channels.** On average, we release a video a week.

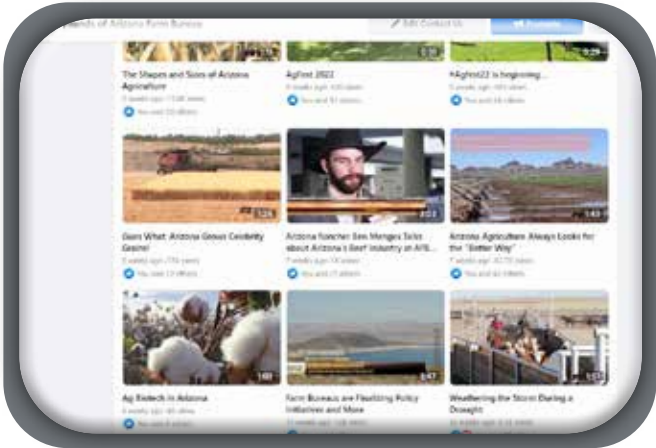
If you follow us on “Friends of Arizona Farm Bureau” Facebook, share with your network to organically extend the video’s reach.

3. **You’ve made cameo appearances, let your network know.** Family and friends love to see our wins and successes. So many of our farm and ranch leaders have become part of our videos.

4. **Send your friends to azfb.org/news/videos.** Since we’re always releasing new videos, it might not hurt to let your network know about our video page on the web.
5. **Make the videos part of your presentation:** Going to give a presentation about Arizona agriculture? Start by showing one of our videos. Staff often does this to set the stage for a presentation on a specific topic in agriculture.

Struggle with explaining farming to your network of friends? At a loss for words and visuals to explain a complex farm and ranch issue? Then let Arizona Farm Bureau’s videos help you.

Finally, we continue to stay committed to one of the more important tools to stay connected to the public. So, if you have an idea for a video topic, let us know. Contact us at outreach@azfb.org.



To date, we’ve created more than 260 videos that we host on our website, azfb.org and feature on our social media channels.

MORTIMER FARMS: MORE PROOF FARMERS ARE LIVING EARTH DAY EVERY DAY ON THE FARM

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director



Ashlee Mortimer has become a regular on Arizona Farm Bureau’s “Talk to a Farmer” Friday during the month of October when we feature all the farm families that host Fall festivals on their farms.

As Mortimer Farms Chief Marketing Officer, Ashlee Mortimer is constantly answering media and public questions about the farm. Often, they veer in certain directions as it relates to humane treatment of animals, pesticide use, water management, organics, and climate change. In fact, this article could also be called, “How one Farmer Responds to Water Questions and Climate Change.”

Growing some 54 different crops, the Dewey-based Mortimer Farms (just outside of Prescott) features main crops of sweet corn, blackberries, strawberries, pumpkins, and vegetables. In just over a decade, they’ve taken the urban farm concept to the next level and have become known especially for their berries, entertainment on the farm and their farm store.

They also have a cattle ranch where just like our generational Arizona ranch families, they have been caring for the land the cattle graze on, the environment, and working hard to conserve natural resources.

Mortimer Farms primarily sell their crops right from the farm in their market (Mortimer’s Market). Secondly, they offer guests the opportunity to pick their own crops through the farm’s pick your own experience.

And they sell their produce at the local farmers markets and to wholesale customers.

Ashlee Mortimer has become a regular on See **EARTH DAY ON THE FARM** Page 7

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URBAN FARMER continued from Page 1

We have seen a few of the articles about other farms in Phoenix being used for water treatment plants, part of my property in Laveen has been condemned for a flood control project and several smaller farms in Phoenix around me, are also condemned or slated for future projects, particularly in Laveen. The city sees the farms as the easiest way to achieve their projects because it is the lowest and least density, but I feel like they should understand that value of property is not only in the dollar amount that it can be taxed. Open desert space is valued and protected in Scottsdale, and it remains a nice place to live. Farms could be viewed the same, at least protected from the massive city projects. In previous years, farms were provided significant tax benefits to remain agriculture. Right now, the city views us as a wasted property tax opportunity, rather than a valued partner of our community. If you look up the city’s general plan, they have completely left out any room for mixed-use agriculture properties.

Arizona Agriculture: I’ve asked you this before, but how can you be an organic farmer, yet pro-biotech ... otherwise known as GMO?

Anderson: I am now considered a “conventional” farmer. I use the least inputs possible and rely on sustainable techniques, along with trying to maintain a delicate balance with my land. Like all farmers do, we never use harmful chemicals when a simple crop rotation will do, and growing our own biomass can be a great help towards keeping it real. Unfortunately, “organic” techniques are using 1900s technology when 2023 technology can reduce or eliminate the need to spray chemicals. In a lot of ways, I feel like the organic movement is primarily misleading buyers into believing their products are never sprayed but, in reality, they allow using more “natural” sprays to control issues that could be eliminated by breeding better seeds or by growing crops that are precisely timed. Conventional agriculture seems to have a bad rap, but in general, we do more with safer inputs than ever before and the organic versus conventional farmers have more similarities than differences.

Arizona Agriculture: What trends and/or changes do you see emerging for the urban farmer?

Anderson: Everything is driven by costs, water and land availability. Unfortunately, costs of land, water and supplies are being driven to a crazy high with inflation and continuing hikes to minimum wages. And of course, this makes it harder to supply the demand with low-cost foods.

Arizona Agriculture: Does Arizona treat the urban farmer right? What else might need to be done to support small, organic farmers?

Anderson: Personally, I am a capitalist. I believe the pressures of the free-market system guide the usage of the land. That said, there are several ways Arizona can protect what used to be a very valued partner for our economic development. Unfortunately, Arizona and particularly Phoenix, are finding they have done too little and too late to protect those urban farms who want to stay and keep supplying the valuable commodities that we do.

One suggestion to help keep farmers and ranchers on their land, is to create zoning changes that allow Agritourism. Not only do these types of farms stay more profitable than their rising land values, but they perform valuable educational opportunities that people need to learn about how we grow their food. We can also learn from other states’ mistakes and help consumers understand the incredibly crucial role farms play in their everyday life. Farming in the desert is not a wasteful use of water. In general, farms provide far more than they use as far as resources, and as an economy, food is crucial. We can’t control commodities that we don’t produce, so it’s imperative that our food source

is protected and the way we grow safe, sustainable crops is kept within our own communities.

Arizona Agriculture: Successful urban farmers seem to need to understand market trends and what customers want. How do you keep up with this and then adapt to what you grow?

Anderson: As a specialty crop grower, most of what I grow is unique and new to many of the buyers. Lots of people enjoy trying new foods and I supply that market almost exclusively. I adapt every year to what I know the consumers want, and always try new veggies whenever I can. I also focus on growing crops that do well in our extreme climate, and helping create a market for those items will be key to our success at farming in the desert. Maktoom dates and l’ittoi onions are an example of successful crops that people enjoy here.

Arizona Agriculture: Arizona can claim to have the largest number of female farmers, listed as primary owners on the farm. Much of this is the matriarchal structure of our American Indian farmers where the woman is listed as primary owner. But you represent another demographic segment of the female farmer. What’s your take on all this?

Anderson: Since I have been farming for 20 plus years, it has always been an uphill battle. Buying land, equipment and then being super stretched trying to sell my products direct at farmers markets has been a challenge. Most people have mentors and family willing to do either the marketing or the growing which would make this more sustainable. The creation of Sun Co-op has streamlined the struggle and connected the missing link making this something a single woman could do much easier. So, I hope more women will be able to benefit from the new business model!

Arizona Agriculture: What advice would you give a beginning urban farmer?

Anderson: I highly suggest taking a job with one of the other large growers in Arizona prior to deciding to start your own farm. Experience is key and not knowing what you don’t know is extremely costly sometimes! Plus, that 401K will come in handy someday!

Arizona Agriculture: You’re proof Arizona Farm Bureau can support the urban farmer with our advocacy, communication and ag education since you’ve been a member from the beginning. But what else can we do?

Anderson: I would love to see a Farm Trails type of promo system for our Arizona Farms. Areas are linked on a map, and annually, farms will put on a little show for the public to see how they do what they do. All farms are included, big and small and advocacy for all different types of farms would be the biggest key.

In the South Mountain area, we have probably 15 farms within a few miles radius and folks could watch an alfalfa harvest, milk goats, chase chickens, buy fruit trees, pick up some worms and buy oranges and veggies, milk (from our local dairies), eggs, and honey, all on the same day. www.farmtrails.org is a great example of how the local farms join and help promote each other.

Editor’s Note: On Arizona Farm Bureau’s www.fillyourplate.org we have provided a searchable database where you can search for farms you can visit. We have also produced in the past an On the Road with Arizona Agriculture brochure that may need a resurrection of sorts.



Anderson says land availability for the urban farmer is a huge issue, and water use is always top of mind. Her farms in Waddell and Laveen went from 57 acres to 17 due to the need for new housing.



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2024 AG INNOVATION CHALLENGE: LET’S GET ANOTHER ARIZONA FARM BUREAU WINNER

By Staff Reports

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), in partnership with Farm Credit, is seeking entrepreneurs to apply online for the 2024 Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge. Now in its 10th year, this national business competition showcases U.S. startup companies developing innovative solutions to challenges faced by America’s farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

In 2018, Tucson, Arizona’s Merchant’s Garden AgroTech earned a nationwide semi-finalist spot with nine others in this national Innovation Challenge competition. Semi-finalists that year received \$10,000 each. “Being named a Top 10 Innovation from the American Farm Bureau, the largest farm organization in the world, brought significant value to our company beyond the \$10,000 in cash award,” said Merchant’s Garden owner and Arizona Farm Bureau-member Chaz Shelton.

Since then, Arizona Farm Bureau has had other volunteer member leaders submit to compete in the Innovation Challenge. We’re hoping for at least another top ten this year. But you must be a member and you must apply to compete.

“We know that in order to curb the migration of youth and big thinkers out of rural communities we need to provide opportunities for them to shine and expand entrepreneurial activities,” says Arizona Farm Bureau President and southern Arizona rancher Stefanie Smallhouse. “Strong communities depend on small businesses and the entrepreneurial spirit. We have already seen some great innovation in Arizona agriculture, and I would encourage others to take on this challenge.”

This year, Farm Bureau is offering \$165,000 in startup funds throughout the course of the competition, which will culminate in the top 10 semi-finalists competing in a live pitch compe-

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AMERICAN FARM BUREAU COMES TO ARIZONA

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

Arizona Farm Bureau (AZFB) recently hosted the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) President Zippy Duvall and the AFBF Board of Directors during a traveling board meeting, including Farm Bureau Presidents from around the nation. The stay in Arizona began in Phoenix and ended with a visit to the rural border town of Yuma, Arizona to observe the region’s agricultural prowess and highlights much of Arizona’s diversity in climate along the way.

The visit, which took place over several days, included tours of various farms and food processing plants. Meetings with local farmers and discussions with community leaders were also of particular interest. During the visit, AFBF had the privilege of meeting with AZFB member and First Vice President John Boelts, owner of Desert Premium Farms and Jonathan Dinsmore, commonly recognized by the name of “The Green Screen Farmer” to his followers across social media, who was able to provide valuable insights into the region’s agricultural industry given its proximity to the Southern Border of the U.S.

Yuma is known for its fertile farmland, which produces a wide variety of crops including lettuce, broccoli, melons, and citrus fruits. The region’s unique geography and climate, with its proximity to the Colorado River and the Gila River, provides an unreplicable agricultural oasis and highlights the region as ground zero for the ongoing water discussions in the west.

The American Farm Bureau Federation, which represents farmers and ranchers across the United States, was particularly interested in visiting Yuma to learn more about the region’s innovative farming practices and the challenges facing local farmers.

One of the highlights of the visit was a meeting with local farmers and community leaders to discuss the challenges facing the agricultural industry in the region. Many farmers express concern about the shortage of labor, as well as the increasing costs of water and other resources. The Farm Bureau representatives were able to offer insights and ask questions on these issues, drawing on their experience working with farmers across the country.

Another important topic of discussion was the impact of federal policies on the agricultural industry. Members of the Farm Bureau expressed concern about proposed regulations that could increase the cost of production and reduce profitability for farmers. They also discussed the importance of trade policies that promote exports of agricul-



Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse pauses with American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall long enough for a photo op between farm visits in Yuma.

tural products, which are a significant source of income for many farmers in the region.

Overall, the visit was a valuable opportunity for the American Farm Bureau Federation to learn more about the agricultural industry in Yuma from local farmers and members of the Farm Bureau Family. The region’s innovative farming practices and unique geography make it a vital part of the agricultural landscape in the United States, and the Farm Bureau’s visit highlighted the importance of supporting this important industry. We are grateful to the American Farm Bureau for allowing us to host and to President Smallhouse, John Boelts, Jonathan Dinsmore, Myrle Marlatt, and all members of the Arizona Farm Bureau for their insights and contributions to the visit.

“I just really had no idea what all was going on in that part of the country – impressive,” said Mark McHargue, Nebraska Farm Bureau President. 🚜

ARIZONA FARM BUREAU IS DILIGENT WITH ITS COMMUNICATION TACTICS

By Joel Carr, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Manager, Membership Value

Arizona Farm Bureau (AZFB) ACES are key areas for our members and an easy way to explain our core competencies. The “C” stands for communication and this area highlights all our outreach to our members and the public. In this article, we will go over all the outreach efforts of the Arizona Farm Bureau. Arizona Farm Bureau utilizes traditional and new media to inform its members and the public of the latest news and information relating to agriculture. The Arizona Farm Bureau is the voice of agriculture.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Arizona Agriculture: is the voice of Arizona agriculture. This publication is circulat-

ed nine times and provides pertinent agricultural, legislative, and regulatory news and information exclusively to our agriculture members. The circulation of this publication averages 3,200 people. Because the average pass along rate is two to three other individuals around 6,400 people read this monthly publication.

Choices: is a member benefits magazine distributed to all Arizona Farm Bureau members. This publication aims to inform and educate our members on current and new member benefits, and we include an article or two on what is happening in Arizona agriculture. Choices provides Farm bureau members with choices for making informed decisions on our discount offerings. This publica-

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INNOVATION CHALLENGE

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tion in front of Farm Bureau members, investors and industry representatives at the AFBF Convention in January 2024 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

“The future of agriculture and rural communities depends on successful innovation,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “Through the Ag Innovation Challenge, we’re pleased to recognize start-up companies that provide solutions to problems facing rural America and support farmers in their mission to provide the food, fuel and fiber we all rely on.”

Applications remain open through May 12, and the 10 semi-finalist teams will be announced Sept. 12. Each of the semi-finalist teams will be awarded \$10,000 and a chance to compete to advance to the final round where four teams will receive an additional \$5,000 each. The final four teams will compete to win:

- Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Winner, for a total of \$50,000
- Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Runner-up, for a total of \$20,000
- People’s Choice Team selected by public vote, for an additional \$5,000 (all 10 semi-finalist teams compete for this honor)

Prior to the live pitch competition, the top 10 semi-finalist teams will participate in pitch training and mentorship from Cornell University’s SC Johnson College of Business faculty, and network with representatives from the Agriculture Department’s Rural Business Investment Companies.

Recent winners of the Ag Innovation Challenge include NORDEF, a company that developed technology to produce diesel exhaust fluid at the point of use (2023 Ag Innovation Challenge Winner) and Grain Weevil Corporation, a grain bin safety and manage-



ment robot that improves farmer well-being by controlling risks and costs (2022 Ag Innovation Challenge Winner). Other examples of successful Ag Innovation Challenge participants, as well as detailed eligibility guidelines and the competition timeline, can be found at fb.org/challenge.

Entrepreneurs must be members of a county Farm Bureau within their state of residence to qualify as top 10 semi-finalists. Arizona applicants who are not Farm Bureau members can visit Arizona Farm Bureau’s webpage and join online to become a member.

Editor’s Note: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on May 12.

Arizona Farm Bureau members Chaz Shelton and wife, Brooke, were 2018 semifinalist winners in the American Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge. It’s time for another Arizona winner in this national entrepreneurial challenge!

COMMUNICATION TACTICS

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tion is circulated three times a year. Choice’s circulation is over 25,000.

Agent Advantage: is a monthly e-newsletter delivered to Farm Bureau Financial Services Insurance Agents, reaching the current agency force of more than fifty. This publication informs our agents about what is happening at the state office and highlights the member benefits.

While You Were Working: is an e-newsletter sent out by the Advocacy team. The Advocacy team also posts it on their YouTube channel. With this communication tactic, you can learn about the latest news you need to know from the Advocacy team. The target audience for this publication is legislators and agriculture leaders. This publication is circulated weekly during the legislative session and bimonthly when not in session. It currently has over 800 subscribers.

Agriculture and Farm Bureau News: is an e-newsletter distributed to agriculture professionals, both member and non-member, with a current subscription of 1,800. This publication provides its subscribers with the latest general Arizona agriculture and Farm Bureau news. This publication attempts to provide more late-breaking information.

Videos: Our “Food for Thought” videos are an excellent informational source, covering various topics such as sustainable agriculture, climate change and other interesting ag facts. These videos are on AZFB.org, YouTube and our social media channels. Impressively, our videos have garnered over 155,000 impressions this last year alone. Typically, we release around 20 videos a year.

NEW MEDIA

Social Media: Arizona Farm Bureau also utilizes social media for its outreach efforts. Social media is a significant tool in AZFB’s arsenal when communicating directly with its members and the public, allowing us to connect with people all over the state and the world. Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.

Digital channels: Arizona Farm Bureau has a couple of Blogs: “The Voice” on azfb.org and Fill your Plate on fillyourplate.org, sponsored by the Arizona Farm Bureau. The Voice blog’s target audience is Farm Bureau members, partners in the agriculture industry and the media. We typically post three articles a week. In 2021 we had around 100,000 impressions on our articles. Our FillYourPlate.org blog articles target moms with children still in the home and foodies. This site had over 100,000 impressions in 2021. This blog also typically publishes three articles a week.

Webinar Wednesday: is a quarterly webinar series hosted by the Arizona Farm Bureau. These webinars cover a diverse set of topics. Some of our most recent topics included “The Road to Homeownership” and “The Legislative Session Wrap Up.”

With these various outreach efforts, it’s evident that the Arizona Farm Bureau is an organization that places significant importance on communication and outreach. The Arizona Farm Bureau is dedicated to effectively communicating with its members and the public.



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WESTERN CAUCUS SUMMIT continued from Page 1

House and Senate Ag Committee members and staff at the Summit.”

The summit gathered Western Leaders from around the country allowing a western states focus. The discussions were broad and well-received by the Western Caucus.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM OTHER AG VOICES

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller: “My congratulations to Chairman Dan Newhouse and Chairman “GT” Thompson for a successful Western Caucus Summit in Texas last week. I’m confident we will get a good Farm Bill that addresses our concerns about water, property rights and minimal government intervention when it comes to agricultural commerce and production. American agriculture needs an effective and realistic 2023 Farm Bill; thanks to leaders like Newhouse and Thompson, along with Appropriations Chairwoman Kay Granger of Texas, we’ll get the job done for our farmers and ranchers.”

Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening: “Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) appreciates the Western Caucus Foundation for coordinating a trip to Texas and having us participate in key discussions about the importance of passing a new Farm Bill. I enjoyed visiting with agricultural leaders and members of Congress about the critical needs of our nations’ hardworking farm and ranch families. We appreciate Chairman Newhouse and Western Caucus members for recognizing the importance of agriculture and the key role farmers and ranchers play in ensuring a stable food supply.”

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) President and Director of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture Doug Miyamoto: “The Western Caucus ag tour and summit provided an invaluable opportunity for leaders of State Departments of Agriculture to have less formal, more direct discussions with congressional members that were beneficial and productive.”

Washington State Department of Agriculture Director Derek Sandison: “I’m grateful for the work of the Congressional Western Caucus and the role they play in advocating for our western states. Gatherings like the Western Caucus Ag Tour and Summit are critical for understanding and addressing Western states’ challenges, such as agricultural competitiveness, trade, and water availability, as well as to help ensure a strong 2023 Farm Bill.”

Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur: “The Western Caucus Ag Summit and Field tour provided a unique opportunity to discuss incredibly important agriculture issues with members of Congress in a true agriculture setting. Having the chance to visit with decision makers as we all work towards a Farm Bill that benefits farmers and ranchers across the United States was invaluable.”

Public Lands Council Executive Director Kaitlynn Glover: “As we move into the upcoming Farm Bill, the Public Lands Council is encouraged by the robust dialogue between the Western Caucus and the House Agriculture Committee. In the West, strong forestry provisions and accessible conservation programs are critical to the cattle and sheep producers who manage millions of acres in these important landscapes. Thank you to Western Caucus Chairman Newhouse, Agriculture Chairman Thompson, and all of the key leaders who are developing a bill that recognizes the important role public lands grazing plays in environmental stewardship and food security.”

American Stewards of Liberty Executive Director Margaret Byfield: “We appreciate Western Caucus Chairman Dan Newhouse, House Agriculture Committee Chair “GT” Thompson, and Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller for the opportunity to offer specific recommendations to the 2023 Farm Bill as it pertains to the Biden administration’s unauthorized 30x30 initiative. We look forward to working with the Western Caucus and House Agriculture Committee members to protect private property rights and strengthen protections for farmers and ranchers nationwide.”

International Fresh Produce Association VP U.S. Government Relations Rebeckah

EARTH DAY ON THE FARM continued from Page 2

Arizona Farm Bureau’s “Talk to a Farmer” Friday during the month of October when we feature all the farm families that host Fall festivals on their farm. Plus, we feature her and Mortimer Farms a few times a year for NRCS’ mentor program on the live “Friday’s on the Farm.” Ashlee has become a wealth of information.

She’s happy to answer any questions anyone has and if she doesn’t know the answer she seeks it out with the family. And she gets plenty of questions.

Below are answers to the typical questions Ashlee gets and proof our farm and ranch families are living Earth Day Every Day on the farm!

How has your farm adapted to the change in weather and increasing drought in Arizona?

Mortimer: For as long as recorded history weather features its ebbs and flows. This is not only the case from year to year but also the case from season to season. As farmers and ranchers, we work directly with Mother Nature. We work in correlation with the seasons. Watching weather reports and yearly trends is instrumental in executing our planting, watering, harvesting, and farming plans. Our biggest challenge is early frost. Frost can damage crops that have not completed their growing/harvesting season. To combat early frost, we implement row cover to insulate the crops and greenhouses to create ideal growing conditions.


Have you seen the need to increase your water usage as Arizona has become drier?

Mortimer: Arizona has always been an irrigation state. The earliest traces of irrigation in Arizona date back to 1200 BC. Arizona does not have consistent enough rain to rely solely on rainfall. Therefore, we use the tool and technology of irrigation. Other states in our country can rely solely on rainfall. In fact, many states receive more than the needed amount of rainfall and must work to remove water from fields.


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Adcock: “Finding the time and venue to foster meaningful relationships and unforced dialogue between Congressional offices and private sector advocates is rare in DC. The Western Caucus Foundation Ag Summit & Field Tour gave the fresh produce industry the opportunity to learn new ideas and discuss existing issues alongside policymakers in Congress – an especially timely and invaluable experience heading into the next Farm Bill.” 🌾

When did you see the need to use more water than normal?

Mortimer: Each season requires a different amount of water. In the heat of the summer, just like humans, crops require more water to combat the heat. The 2022 monsoon season was incredible. So much so that we were able to turn off our irrigation systems for 2 months during the heat of the summer. We keep rainfall data, irrigation data, etc. and can refer back to the and see trends over the years.

How has the need for more water hurt the farm financially?

Mortimer: All our water at the farm is well water. To use the water, we pump water from our wells using electricity. Our electricity bill directly correlates to the amount of water our crops need. Additionally, we (like many farmers) utilize the best water efficient programs and technology available. A huge goal of ours is to protect our natural resources and conserve water. We can do so by using drip irrigation and pivot irrigation. Since converting the farm to these two forms of irrigation we save 90% of the water that was historically used on this farm.

Have the water problems created any other problems regarding the production of other goods?

Mortimer: Conserving water is essential to a farmer’s daily job. Not only is water conservation important to grow food for this generation but for many generations to come. Because we are so efficient with our water usage, we have plenty of water to farm. Some areas in Arizona have better water situations than others. No one region of the state is the same when it comes to water availability. We are fortunate to be situated in a good water setting.

Are there any other situations or events that changed the production of goods or farm practices?

Mortimer: Labor is a huge challenge across all of agriculture. The cost of labor and the ability to find people willing to work in the fields is increasingly more difficult. Another challenge is weeds. 🌾

MENTOR PROTÉGÉ CAMP CLASS 2, PROFILE 4: HAYLEY ANDRUS AND JAMES EDDY

By NRCS Natural Resource Specialist James Eddy and Apache County rancher Hayley Andrus

The CAMP mentor/protégé series continues with this fourth profile for Class 2 with NRCS Natural Resource Specialist James Eddy and Apache County Farm Bureau President and rancher Hayley Andrus. They have already met more than once, and both have exchanged insights and appreciation for the experiences.

With the launch of the Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP) in Arizona, in partnership with Arizona Farm Bureau, The NRCS team has been front and center in enthusiastically driving this unique partnership. While several other states have the CAMP program, Arizona is unique in its partnership effort with Arizona Farm Bureau.

The Andrus Eddy partnership, along with all the mentor protégé partnerships, works to understand Arizona agriculture and conservation opportunities, joining forces to provide firsthand experience of the conservation practices and agricultural happenings.

FROM HAYLEY ANDRUS

Talk about your first meeting. We first met JD at the graduation/kickoff event, although we had known him previously through his former work at the Arizona Game and Fish. The kickoff event was fun to have our outgoing protege and our incoming protege to both be there and share stories.

The first time JD came out to the ranch we were in the middle of our fall work. He was able to be chute side with us and able to see the cattle records and the strategies we use to manage and make decisions about herd health and the future of our herd.

Share specifics about what you got out of it as the rancher. JD has extensive knowledge from his career in Arizona based in several agencies. Having him around is a great and broad resource for us from rangeland exper- See **MENTOR PROTEGE CAMP** Page 8

MENTOR PROTEGE CAMP *continued from Page 7*



NRCS Protégé Kelsey Taylor (right) from Class One and James Eddy with Class Two are both proteges of mentor Hayley Andrus. During last year’s event graduation for Class One and Kickoff for Class Two the fellow NRCS employees sat together discussing the value of the program.

farm and have his knowledge advise for making it more efficient and productive.

FROM JAMES EDDY

What’s been the biggest takeaway so far from your first gathering? I had the opportunity to assist Milo and Hayley Andrus’s pregnancy checking efforts just before win-

tise to beneficial government programs. JD has a commutative and personal personality that makes him very enjoyable and easy to be around. Learning from him will be one of the best benefits from the CAMP program.

For the remaining time with the program, what do you also hope to help with? We hope to give JD a range of experiences that give him an idea of what our ranch operation looks like over the course of a year. We hope to show him more of the range and the variations in grass types and work together in improving our system. We are excited to have him out to our newly acquired

ter set in this year. It was good to see how much of a family/community event that was. I could imagine the work that went into the gathering to having all the cattle in the right place for sorting to take place. I enjoyed working alongside Hayley’s family and friends that came to help as well. I did my best to keep the pace a good steady flow despite the wind. It was good to learn what went into this effort and talking about how Milo and Hayley wanted their operations setup to improve so it’s easier to move the cattle in the future.

Share specifics about one of your meetings. What did you learn? I got to discuss with the Andrus’s how opportunities to work with all kinds of folks have allowed their operation to grow in a sustainable way. They are doing a great job of getting conservation into the ground in a way that helps to maintain a sustainable operation.

Why have you felt this program has been helpful? I have enjoyed the opportunities presented through this program to network with local farmers and ranchers across the state to better understand how I can help them help the land.

What more do you hope to learn in the coming months? I hope to gain a better understanding of the challenges of the local farmers and ranchers to my area and work to find creative solutions to these needs. I also am learning more about surface water challenges and opportunities including working to be able to assist the farms and ranchers with their irrigation needs through our respective programs.

What are you looking forward to in your other meetings/gatherings/learning and sharing sessions in the future? I look forward to continued opportunities to meet more like-minded individuals from the area through this program. I also continue to develop and implement creative ideas that will hopefully benefit the Andrus Ranches and other producers around them.

ARIZONA TAKES OVER FLORIDA OR MAYBE JUST FUSION

By Christy Davis, Arizona Farm Bureau Senior Outreach Manager of Program Excellence

Every two years the American Farm Bureau Federation hosts FUSION, a leadership conference for the three volunteer programs within Farm Bureau: Young Farmers and Rancher, Women’s Leadership and Promotion Education. Arizona’s delegation was tremendously represented despite being classified as one of the smaller Farm Bureau states.

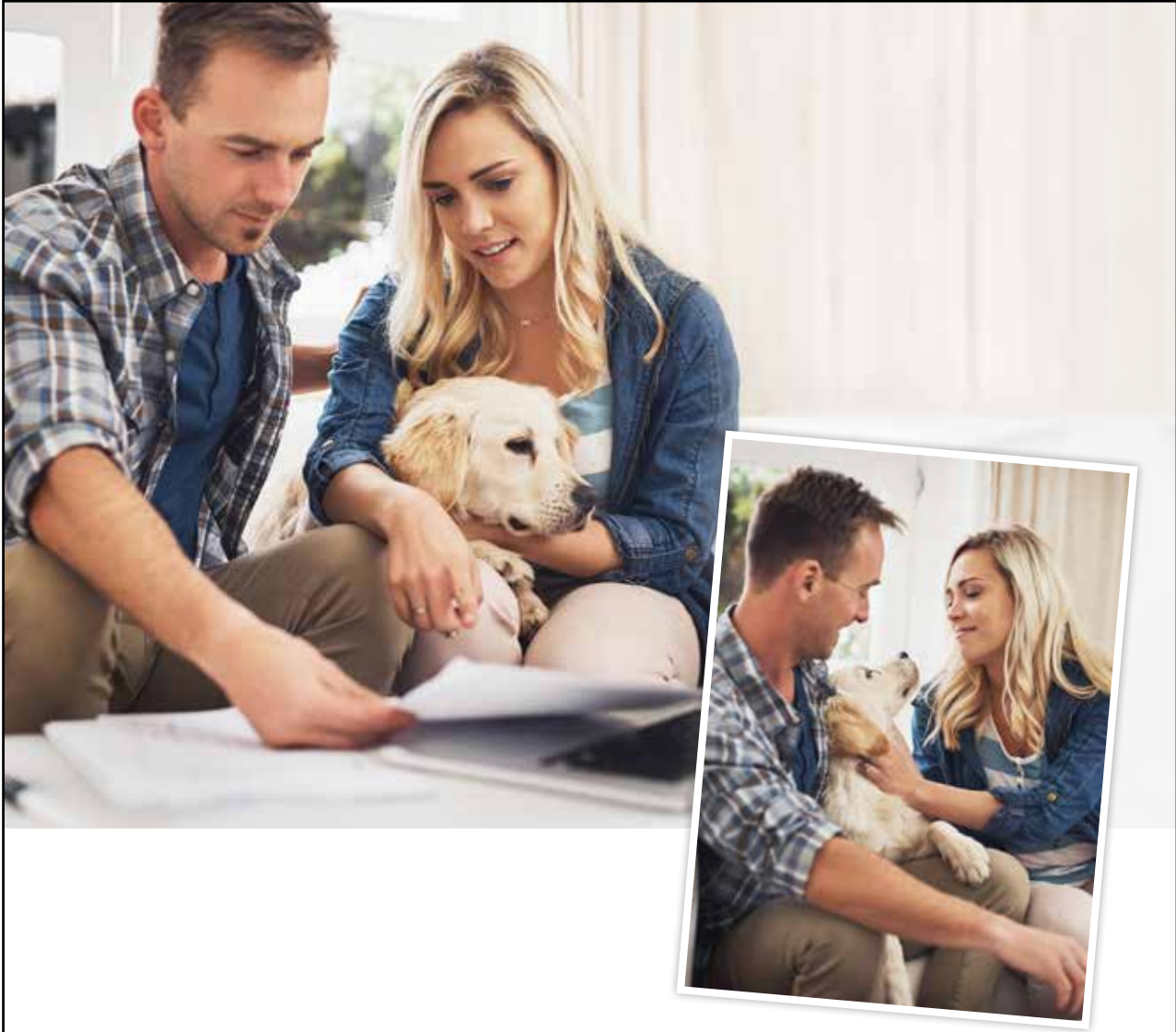
Over 1,000 volunteer leaders from all three programs came together this year in Jacksonville, Florida to learn, share and grow together to build a stronger Farm Bureau. During the FUSION conference, members heard from great speakers, participated in breakout session that included everything from social media tips to a farm bill update. Every evening offered opportunities to grow and network with members from across the country. FUSION is great way for members to learn more about their programs and Farm Bureau.

American Farm Bureau also hosts the Collegiate Discussion Meet during the FUSION conference. This year over 38 collegiate students from around the country competed for scholarship money from sponsors CHI. Discussion Meets simulate a board meeting where competitors build discussion skills, understand agricultural issues, and work toward consensus. This year Discussion Meet topics consisted of everyday policy issues like infrastructure to member engagement. Robbie Carasco of Yuma, Arizona represented Arizona in this year’s Collegiate Discussion Meet. Robbie is a full-time student at the University of Arizona Yuma and works for Barkley seed. Robbie did a great job representing Arizona in a tough competition.

This year the Arizona Farm Bureau had 26 participants from the Young Farmers and Ranchers program and the Women’s Leadership. 19 of the 26 participants were members of the University of Arizona Collegiate Young Farmers and Ranchers program. The University of Arizona Collegiate YF&R is one of four collegiate chapters in Arizona. Collegiate Farm Bureau brings together agricultural students on college campuses and introduces them to the Farm Bureau organization while engaging them in educational and leadership-based activities that will enhance their future.

“I had a wonderful time at the FUSION Conference in Florida where I was able to develop an even greater appreciation for the producers of our nation,” explained Hannah DalMolin, chair of the University of Arizona Collegiate YF&R. “I was able to learn about how to grow membership numbers, work life balance, the farm bill and much more! I am grateful I had the opportunity to get to network with others in the Agriculture Industry from around the country!”

“The Arizona Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership was also well represented at the FUSION Conference. Five women from across the state participated and learned about topics that will help them be better advocates for agriculture.



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