

# COMPASS

Issue 2

March 2022



## President's Message

By: CWA State President Sharron Zoller

**It's all about the story—everyone has one**

Tell your Ag story or someone else will – and you may not like it!



Two percent of the American population are farmers who provide much of the food that 100% of us eat. Sadly, the average consumer is now three generations removed from a farm. Because the majority of consumers no longer understand the heart and soul of farming, it's up to us, the Ag community, to tell our stories and make those personal connections with consumers so they know that we, like they, are committed to producing a quality product, safe food, and that we are environmental stewards.

There are a million cool stats, data, and infographics out there that make our numbers-driven agriculturist hearts dance with joy. The data, however, does not have the same exciting effect with folks outside our Ag industry community. The Center for Food Integrity has done numerous studies about how agriculturists build trust with consumers. Their findings show that connecting with shared values first--and establishing that personal, family and life's values align--is the best and most effective way to begin engaging with consumers. Research by Antonio Damasio, M.D., Ph.D, professor of neuroscience at USC, has shown that emotions play a central role in social cognition and decision making. Ninety to ninety-five percent of our daily decisions are made based on gut reaction. We must speak to the gut (or heart) before we can speak to the brain.

When was the last time you had a conversation with consumers outside the Ag community about what you do on your farm? Sharing your challenges with life's problems and that you worry about the same things requires a lot of emotional and mental energy, but we need to inspire and engage through that emotional connection.

If you look at the times somebody has become open to new ideas, or beliefs have been changed, it's often because of a story that "hits them in the heart." Facts, data, and numbers don't matter until we connect. We are feeling machines that think, not thinking machines that feel.

We also need to remember that we are inundated by a loud barrage of social media input, often woven with emotion and sensationalism, all vying for our attention. Sleuthing to find credible sources is daunting. Determining the true, sort-of true, and fake news in all facets of life is an increasing problem.

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We need to listen and be willing to find common ground to open that Ag conversation. The power of storytelling builds the emotional connection and is a long-revered part of our shared human condition. Let's tell our stories!

Cheers,  
Sharron

Sharron Zoller  
State President  
California Women for Agriculture

## CA Women for Ag Displayed at World Ag Expo

By: Maria Azevedo

California Women for Agriculture was proud to be an exhibitor during the World Ag Expo® (WAE). The theme of being "Back in AgTion" was fitting. The world's largest annual agricultural exposition was back in 2022! The event was held February 8-10 in Tulare, California. We had a new space in Pavilion B Booth 1026.

More than 1,200 exhibitors display the latest in farm equipment, communications and technology on 2.6 million square feet of exhibit space. Free seminars focus on a variety of topics important to dairy producers, farmers, ranchers and agribusiness professionals. World Ag Expo® is a can't miss show for anyone in Ag.



Pictured Above: Marlene Miyasaki, Gabby Fink, Bianca Ramirez, Maria Azevedo, Lorna Rousch

Our volunteers were ready to share information about our organization. The diversity of the people we talked to ranged from high school and college students to professionals involved outside of agriculture. We offered a chance to gain more information or join our organization on the spot. For our mailing list, we gained 65 people interested in learning more about local chapters and events. The information is sent to the respective chapters to follow up and engage our visitors. Being at the WAE offered a chance for people to join CWA. We had 10 people join our organization. It is fun to see these students and regular members eager to jump into our organization.

We plan to attend WAE 2023! We hope you can join us as a volunteer. Your commitment is for a 3 to 4 hour shift and you may spend the rest of the day walking the WAE, attending one of the many seminars, enjoying good food. We offer each volunteer a free entry pass in exchange for their work. Thank you to Lorna Roush, Gabrielle Finke, Katrina Steinhauer, Marlene Miyasaki, Nanette Simonian (all from the Central Valley Chapter), President Sharron Zoller (Lake County Chapter), and VP Internal Bianca Ramirez and Wendy Flowers (both from Kern County Chapter). I want to extend a thank you and sincere appreciation to each one of our volunteers. Your support helps us leverage your knowledge and passion about agriculture to tell WAE attendees about CWA.



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# CWA Dues Reminder

Friendly reminder to pay your dues with your chapter! If you would like to pay now, please scan the QR code to pay your annual dues. We accomplish amazing things because of our chapter members and donor members. Collectively, we are powerful and can accomplish amazing things. Renew your dues to remain a part of a network of passionate volunteers dedicated to the stewardship and conservation of California agriculture. Select your choice of annual membership option, scan the QR Code and renew or join today! You may pay your dues directly to your chapter

## California Women for Agriculture Membership Options

### Chapter Membership



### Donor Membership



### Student Membership



Thank you for supporting our organization as we work to support California agriculture through education, advocacy and public relations.

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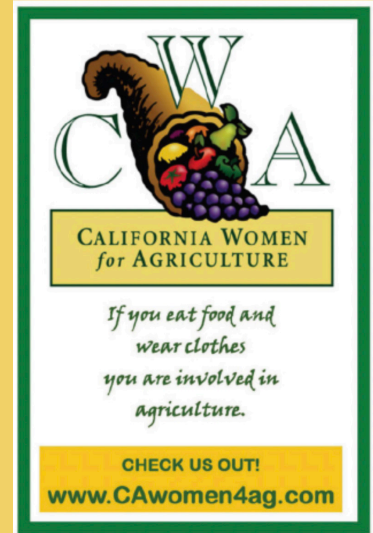
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The Compass is the external communication for California Women for Agriculture. Recipients include CWA members, agriculture organizations, associations, elected and appointed officials and other selected recipients. Chapters are encouraged to submit news, photos, announcements, articles, and suggestions. Directors should submit issue updates and information in advance if action is required.

The Compass is published four times a year by California Women for Agriculture as a service to members.

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# American Agri-Women

By: Rose Tryon VanCott  
First Vice President American Agri-Women

**“We are a force for truth and a reasoned, non-partisan voice for the agricultural community to the public.”**



American Agri-Women (AAW) officially began on November 14, 1974. Sister Thomas More Bertels, who helped form California Women for Agriculture, also helped form American Agri-Women.

AAW is now the nation’s largest coalition of farm, ranch, and agri-business women. Our members are ranchers, farmers, producers, agri-business professionals, educators, consumers, students, researchers, and many others.

AAW also has past international partnerships with Canadian Agri-Women and the Farmer-to-Farmer program. The Farmer-to-Farmer program is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and implemented by Catholic Relief Services. The program linked AAW members with farmers in East African countries to offer agricultural training and technical assistance.

Members of American Agri-Women have many opportunities to grow professionally and personally through skill-building, advocacy, leadership development, and networking.

Here are a few opportunities American Agri-Women offers:

- Connections to women who share your passion for agriculture.
- Networking opportunities with experts and ag industry leaders.
- Access to policymakers and high-level elected officials during our annual Washington, D.C. Legislative Fly-In.
- Updates on issues through a multi-media communications program.
- Support for your advocacy efforts at the local, state, and national levels.
- Online and in-person leadership and professional development training.
- International agriculture opportunities.
- Invitations to local, state, and national AAW events.

American Agri-Women values each member’s ability to be a “Force for Truth” in her hometown, in a conversation with consumers, or in Washington, D.C.

Please join American Agri-Women at our website [www.americanagriwomen.org](http://www.americanagriwomen.org)

Collegiate/Student membership \$25  
General Membership \$30

**Pictured Right: American Agri-Women Elects 2022 National Officers: Immediate Past President Karolyn Zurn, Secretary Kim Bremmer, Vice President Communications Laura Hart, President Heather Hampton Knodle, Treasurer Kathy Bassen Goodyke, Vice President Education Jacquie Compston, First Vice President Rose Tryon VanCott #aawconvention2021**



## Imperial Valley Chapter Relaunches

By: Natalie Peraza, President Imperial Valley Chapter

It was in 2019 when a couple of us decided it was time to relaunch the Imperial Valley chapter of CWA. It had been almost 20 years since the previous chapter had disbanded and it was time to bring it back. In fall of 2018, I attended the Ag in the Classroom Conference as a teacher and was fortunate to have Ellen Way on my bus as a tour guide. WOW! What an impression she made. She was a wealth of information, and it was an amazing day learning about agriculture in Riverside County. I had also learned she was a part of CWA. I remembered CWA because my Mom was a member years ago. I thought to myself that it was crazy that the Imperial Valley is not a part of this organization anymore.

So I returned from the conference and did a presentation at the Imperial County Farm Bureau on what I had learned at the conference. I shared with them that I really wanted to bring back CWA to the valley. Immediately, they told me Brea Mohamed was also interested, who at the time was the Imperial County Farm Bureau Executive Director.



Natalie Peraza, Imperial Valley Chapter President at the Chapter's relaunch

I met up with Brea and we figured out a plan to relaunch our local CWA chapter. When I contacted the state CWA, they recommended reaching out to Kathy Stroschein for support. Kathy and Gloria Stroschein attended and guided us every step of the way. In September of 2019, we had our first meeting. We had over 20 women show up and share their interest, and from there it took off. We created an executive board and established some goals, but first we had to get approval from the state.

I attended the statewide meeting in Merced, November of 2019. I shared our interest and that we had over 100 participants. Yes! Motion carried and we received our charter as the Imperial Valley chapter.

Our relaunch party was amazing with some very special guests. In attendance was Karen Ross, Secretary of Food and Agriculture, county supervisors, and many other political members that were excited for us. In 2020, we had a great year promoting at our local fair and fundraising at numerous farmer's markets.

As everyone's story goes, Covid 19 slowed us down. Our executive team still met on a regular basis. Fortunately, we were still able to give out scholarships to young women seeking an education in agriculture.

We are back on our feet and getting stronger every day. Our membership is growing daily, we have a scholarship fundraiser in the works, and many other plans in the future. We are also hosting the statewide meeting in March and are super excited about that. None of this would be possible if it weren't for the dedicated team of members.

A promotional graphic for the California Women for Agriculture Statewide Meeting. On the left is the CWA logo, which features a cornucopia overflowing with produce and the text "CALIFORNIA WOMEN for AGRICULTURE". The main text is centered and reads: "Your opportunity to GET INVOLVED" in green, "California Women for Agriculture" in black, "May 16-17, 2022" in black, and "Sacramento Legislative Statewide Meeting" in a large, bold, black font. The background is a light grey sketch of the California State Capitol building.



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## Planning Lake County's 2022 CWA Statewide Convention

It started with lunch on the veranda at the Saw Shop Public House last May. Four friends and longtime members of CWA getting together for a face-to-face lunch – a treat any time, but especially welcomed after months of Zoom meetings. We were excited for the opportunity to plan the 2022 CWA Statewide Convention in Lake County and to welcome our own Sharron Zoller as the incoming State President.

Work started in earnest after our initial meeting – Annette created a list to guide the work, Terry created a sponsor solicitation, and we all started thinking about ideas for tours and speakers. Since beautiful Lake County is a bit off the beaten track, we knew we wanted to entice and welcome chapter members from all over the state with a fun, interesting and educational experience. We were fairly certain COVID would be mostly on the wane by January 2022, and that folks would be vaccinated and even boosted.

Little did we know about the oncoming Delta variant that showed up in July 2021 and then the Omicron variant followed in December 2021. It became a nail biter time of planning. Go ahead in person? Go virtual only? We had secured our event site and hotel accommodations, our tours, transportation and caterers, terrific speakers, and a great local band for Saturday night. We were ready to go, and we made the leap and decided to go.

Little by little the registrations came in and we found most participants were happy to attend in person. We also had a virtual option for attendance and several members took that option. Even with a few cancellations, we had good attendance.

Of course, there are always glitches. One of our speakers decided at the last minute that he preferred to present by Zoom. During our tour day on Friday, a telephone pole was taken out by a car avoiding a deer and the power was out for a short time at one of our tour stops. But that power outage also affected the heating system at our convention event center and until the system could be re-set, we sat with our jackets on in a cold room most of Saturday. Thankfully the heat was back on by our evening banquet and entertainment.

Ah, Zoom....it requires a knowledgeable and savvy operator. Our chapter vice president, Blair Smith, knew just what to do. That also included roping in her sister, Becca, as an assistant and acquiring a techie item called Meeting Owl. Whooo knew what that was? Now we do. It allowed a more immersive viewing experience for the Zoomers.

Saturday night brought a fond farewell and job well done for Rose. She led CWA through the pandemic with Standing Tall. We also welcomed Sharron in as our new President, enjoying a night of celebration and good company.

Our hardworking Convention Committee had some superstar support. The Chico chapter shared planning information with us that helped us get started. A local graphic artist assisted Sharron with her new United for Ag logo. Our sponsors were most generous. Konocti Vista Casino & Hotel staff bent over backwards to make sure our event was a success. Renee Avila and her team not only did a standout job with the Hospitality Suite but supported us wherever they could.

We are happy to have this successful event in our rear view mirror and are looking forward to what the new year holds for CWA at the State and all chapter levels. We had to make some hard decisions and take some chances, and we do deserve a celebration! Thank you for supporting us and discovering what Lake County has to offer.

Convention Committee Terry Dereniuk,  
Annette Hopkins, Toni Scully, Sharron Zoller



**Pictured Above: 2022-2023 Executive Board** Nanette Simonian, Central District Director; Marlene Miyasaki, Secretary; Bianca Ramirez, Vice President-Internal; Brandi LoForti, Vice President-External; Sharron Zoller, President; Maria Azevedo; President Elect; Paige Gilligan, Asst. Treasurer; Cheryl Lambert, Northern District Director; Rose Tryon VanCott, Past President. Not pictured; Debra Keenan, Southern District Director; Mary Vanoni, Central Coast Director; Terry Paoletti & Leslie Avansino, North Central Directors; Kathy Stroschein, Treasurer.

Photos Continued on Page 7



# California Women for Agriculture

## MARCH 25 - 27

"United in Imperial Valley"



### Sign Up Now!

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### CWA Upcoming Events

#### March

15<sup>th</sup>: Items for April President's Newsletter

Submit to Sharron Zoller

22<sup>nd</sup>: Capitol Ag Day – Sacramento

24-26<sup>th</sup>: AAW Mid-Year, Salt Lake city, UT

26-27<sup>th</sup>: CWA Statewide Meeting, Imperial Valley Chapter

#### March

31<sup>st</sup>: \*\*Membership Report – Membership list Membership Task Force Director

#### May

16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>: CWA Statewide Meeting, Legislative Advocacy, Sacramento, CA

