

CALIFORNIA WOMEN FOR AGRICULTURE

Questions for all Chapters

Chapter: Coachella Valley _____

- What is your signature event? The Coachella Valley Chapter's signature event is our annual Farm to Fork celebration. At this special event, we honor an Agriculturist of the Year and our scholarship recipients. Approximately 200 people attend annually, including chapter members, local farmers, and members of the non-farming public who support our organization. The 2023 event was held on a local small farm/special event site, the Packhouse at Aziz Farms. The evening started with appetizers and a silent auction. Guests enjoyed live music, great California wine, and good company. Our local FFA chapters created the centerpieces, helped with set-up and clean-up, and this year they served a catered dinner to our guests; the students did a great job! Our chapter has had an agricultural celebration like this for 40 years. We are very proud of the many students we have helped pay for college and the many distinguished people we have honored. The event also helps us recruit members and raise funds for our scholarship program.

- Scholarships- What kind of scholarships do you give out (only agriculture related majors)? Do you have memorial scholarships? No. Do you have any outstanding past recipients?

We offer four year scholarships for students who are pursuing a career in agriculture. Currently, the scholarship is \$3,000 per year for four years for students attending a four-year institution and \$1500 per year for those attending two-year institutions. We also partner with American Ag Credit to offer one outstanding student an additional one-time scholarship of \$2,500.

We have many outstanding recipients. Several are working for local Agricultural companies. One has been named President of Operations for a local company. Several recipients are working as Ag teachers. We also have a zoo keeper, and a couple vet students as past recipients.

- Do you have any special events to build membership?

We usually have at least one or two member meetings that are focused on bringing in new members. Every January, we do drawings for prizes for everyone who has renewed their membership at the meeting or prior. We also enter members who have renewed by the end of February in a drawing for tickets to attend our annual Farm to Fork dinner. We try to have a couple

of educational member meetings throughout the year to draw in new members.

- History perspective – Do you have any charter members? If so, who are they? Do you have any past state presidents in your chapter? If so, who are they? Get pictures of them.
- CWA was founded in the Coachella Valley; many of our charter members have passed, but Cherry Ishimatsu (the first State President) is 96 and still a chapter member as is Lois Anderson. Our history is best told by Cherry, attached below.

Past State Presidents: Cherry Ishimatsu and Ellen Way
Photos and historical video sent in separate email.

- What is unique about your chapter and what contributes to its longevity?
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- Our chapter is unique because Coachella Valley is not a large agricultural region and certainly not the place one would expect CWA to be founded. While our active membership is small, we endure because our members have a passion for agriculture and we are loyal to the mission of the organization. We are proud to be the founding chapter and we continue our work in honor of the incredible women who came before us. CWA is filled with strong, smart, independent women who love agriculture. We must respect one another and remember that we are a grassroots, volunteer family working to protect the most valuable resource in this state, **AGRICULTURE!**



Cherry Ishimatsu (left) and Ellen Way (right) with Lois Anderson and Betty Johnson. 2 - 1974