# Literacy for Life

California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom Annual Report 2006

# Welcome...



As a child, I learned invaluable life lessons working on the farm alongside my father. He didn't say much, nor did he have to. Growing up in the fields and orchards was an education in and of itself. Out there, I learned by doing.

I can remember driving the family truck along the dirt road that crossed our farm as a young man, and feeling satisfied in knowing I was, and would always be, a steward of the land. While other boys at school talked of becoming astronauts, or firemen or baseball stars, I dreamed of being a farmer like my father, and like my grandfather.

Reflecting on such memories reaffirms my belief that teachers in our society have never been as important as they are today. We live in the nation's most agricultural and most urban state, and in order to remain productive and competitive in the future, we must teach our children and grandchildren how to exist in these two contrasting realities. At Ag in the Classroom, we believe that teachers are our best chance.

I have been fortunate to meet with teachers from all across California, from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and despite the growing challenges and limitations these educators face, they all have in common the belief that the effort they put forth in their classrooms today will contribute to a better tomorrow.

In the following pages you will meet several exceptional individuals who are today significant contributors to the world of agricultural literacy. From the son of an immigrant field worker, convinced he would never follow in his father's footsteps, to a first-year teacher who discovered that agriculture was an undying gift he could give his students.

These are only a few examples of the lives being touched by Ag in the Classroom. California students are introduced to agriculture every day, and similar stories of inspiration and opportunity will continue to come to light, thanks to your help.

We are grateful for your generous support of our organization as, together, we contribute toward making a lasting impact on the future of California.

Respectfully,

Doug Mosebar President, California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

2114 STUDIENTS CALLCATER AND STUDIENTS FOR THORE THAN 20 SCARS. Creating an apprectation of agriculture by all

...to a world where agriculture inspires literacy...

# Your support allows us

# What did you help us accomplish this year?

At Ag in the Classroom, we strive to make our resources and programs as pertinent to state teaching standards as possible. Our straightforward, classroom-friendly materials, teacher resources, and diverse programs allow California's thriving agricultural industry to be easily incorporated into classrooms anywhere in the state.

In 2006, AITC programs continued to grow and improve. Teacher ambassadorship increased by 11%, and our representation in California schools reached a remarkable 40%. The Foundation's Web site, www.cfaitc.org, is now recognized as a leading resource for ag education, hosting more than 9,000 visitors per month. Additionally, demand for AITC resources increased to a record high of more than 200 monthly requests.

The October release of our educational newspaper supplement, *What's Growin' On?*, was another high point. We are extremely proud of this fifth edition, and anticipate it reaching 500,000 students statewide.

Our Educational Resources Committee convened in Woodland and Tulare in 2006, continuing the tradition of productive bi-annual meetings, where educators, organizations, volunteers, ag industry leaders, and government agency representatives meet for a collaborative exchange of ag-related programs and ideas.

While celebrating our achievements, we also look forward to improving further. We plan to make positive advances in several areas in 2007, including our Outstanding Teacher of the Year Awards program. We believe in rewarding teachers who embrace agriculture in their classrooms, and hope to expand outreach efforts to new potential applicants.

Additionally, our University Student Teacher program is worthy of attention. We anticipate broadening relationships with California universities in order to better connect teaching students with our resources as they acquire their credentials. When introduced to our programs, university student teachers are overwhelmingly supportive, and very likely to utilize our materials when they have classes of their own.

Among others, these programs contribute to the success of our organization, and our strength as a distinctive source of information and ideas for more than 20 years. We are dedicated to providing educators with the resources and opportunities they desire, and the support they deserve.



# to strengthen literacy.

# Literacy and agriculture come together each year with *Imagine this...*





Since 1993 our Imagine this... story-writing contest has given 3rd-8th grade students an opportunity to write creative stories about agriculture. One statewide winner is selected from each grade level to have their stories animated and produced on film. The six winners also receive a trip to Sacramento for themselves. their parents, and their teacher to attend an awards ceremony where they are rewarded with certificates, medals, and free resources. Congratulations to our 2005-2006 winning authors!

### Perfect Eggs

by Megan Harlander 3rd Grade, Kern County Valley Oaks Charter School

### The Grape That Couldn't Decide What to Be

by Riley Tomczak 4th Grade, Amador County Ione Elementary School

### The Adventures of Compost Man

by Daniel Kaplan 5th Grade, Los Angeles County Fremont Elementary School

### **Forest Friends**

by Mackenzie Allen 6th Grade, Siskiyou County Grenada Elementary School

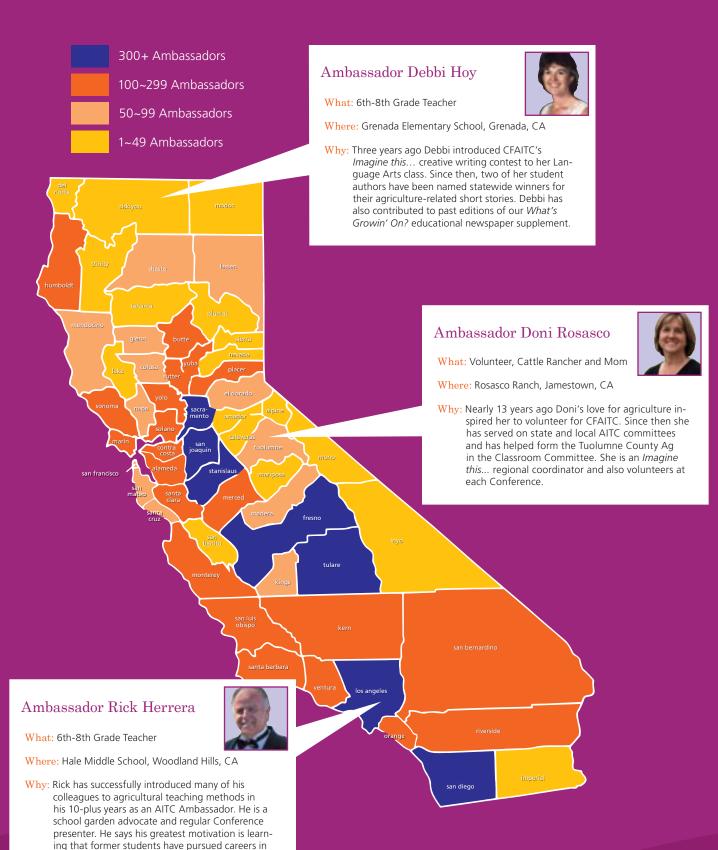
### Remembering

by Kaelin A. Swift 7th Grade, San Bernardino County Home Choice/Washington Alternative

#### What's the Difference?

by Tyler Sweet 8th Grade, Siskiyou County Grenada Elementary School

\*Artwork, animation and voice talent courtesy of Center High School, Franklin High School, Inderkum High School, and Sheldon High School.



teaching or agriculture.

# We can't <mark>spread</mark> the word alone.

# Statewide representation of AITC Ambassadors

AITC Ambassadors are our most direct and effective means of enriching the lives of California students with the gift of agricultural consciousness. Thanks to these devoted educators, administrators, parents, and community volunteers our unique curriculum and engaging resources have reached, literally, every corner of the state, from the Siskiyou County forestland to the Central Coast "Salad Bowl of the World," and down to the southern Imperial County line.

We are pleased to know that our organization is represented in every county in California, and are grateful for our Ambassadors and volunteers who are out teaching, supporting and encouraging agriculture education in the urban centers and rural towns throughout California.

The Ambassador Map, at left, is a geographic illustration of our Ag in the Classroom Ambassadors by county. Within the next several years, we will work to color more counties blue—by increasing outreach efforts and Ambassadorship numbers within specific regions. Being the state's most populous county, it is no surprise that Los Angeles is also home to the largest number of AITC Ambassadors, with an impressive 1,688 representatives within the county lines. Sacramento, California's eighth most populated county, ranks second with over 1,200 Ambassadors.

Many of California's more agricultural and rural counties have also turned out remarkable Ambassador statistics despite relatively lower populations. The Central Valley counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Fresno, and Tulare all maintain between 300 and 600 Ambassadors each.

Ambassador growth continues. At the end of 2006, we counted 9,853 Ag in the Classroom Ambassadors —an 11% increase from the previous year. Looking back even further...our current number of Ambassadors has increased by nearly 400% since 2000! Such extraordinary statistics suggest that our Ambassadors truly are changing the face of education in our state. We are confident that we are on our way toward a more agriculturally aware society!

# "AITC has completely changed my life!"

Lance Omeje's life is literally a world away from where it began nearly 50 years ago. Lance was born in Amuria Village in eastern Uganda, where he spent his childhood shadowing his father as he farmed, using a metal plow pulled by oxen, looking after goats and herding cattle on his family's subsistence farm.

As a teenager, he was selected to study abroad and spent 12 months living in the Sierra foothill town of Auburn. Lance knew from this experience that he would one day call California his home. He immigrated to the United States in the early 70's, determined to make the most of the educational opportunities being offered to him.

Lance completed his college education and spent 10 years as a consulting Agronomist/Entomologist before recognizing that his true place was in the classroom. "I loved being in the fields with the soil and crops, but I felt it was no longer enough. I was keeping this scientific wonder to myself, when I wanted to share it with others," he says.

Lance traded his soil probe for a teaching credential and began his current career 11 years ago at Turner Elementary School in Fresno. It was one particular experience during Lance's first year as a teacher that made him realize how he could apply his agricultural knowledge in the classroom.

"One afternoon, a student noticed a plant growing below the classroom steps and brought it to my attention. We identified it as a pumpkin seedling, and agreed to watch it grow. A week later, the student sadly reported that the young plant had been crushed, and was lying limp. We dug out the injured seedling, planted it in the school garden, and after tender care the plant successfully recovered. The next fall, we harvested eight healthy pumpkins in time for Halloween!"

Since that day, Lance has used gardening to keep students active in their own education. From a neglected dirt patch on campus, Lance brought to life The Environmental Center at Turner Elementary, an outdoor "living laboratory" now a dynamic, year-round, state of the art school garden.

Through lessons in the garden, standards in nearly every subject are turned into actual practices, helping students connect their physical actions to what they are learning in the classroom. The garden also supports the school's favorite fundraiser, the Annual Salsa Fest. Nearly the entire student population assists in growing, harvesting, preparing and selling homemade salsa each year utilizing the fresh fruit and vegetable crops from the garden.

In 2006, Lance accepted a unique and exciting challenge when he began teaching at Yokomi Elementary, a new science and technology magnet school in downtown Fresno, where he is leading the development of an advanced, ultra-modern, garden-based learning program.

When Lance became a teacher over a decade ago, he had never heard of Agriculture in the Classroom. Since then he has graduated from the AITC Summer Ag Institute, is a popular presenter at AITC Conferences, and works with many agricultural organizations including the Fresno County Farm Bureau. Lance's dedication to ag education earned him the title of CFAITC's 2006 Outstanding Teacher of the Year, and later the National Agriculture in the Classroom's 2006 Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture Award in Atlantic City, New Jersey.







### Lance Omeje

"Discovering Ag in the Classroom has completely changed my life! Through this organization I have found a way to connect my students to the world of agriculture, traveled to places I never imagined, met incredible people, and most importantly, I have learned how to be a better teacher."

# "It started with a story I my chicken,

As a child, Jonnalee Henderson imagined living a quiet, dreamy existence far out in the countryside, where she could envision dramatic storylines, develop complex characters, and allow her writing to be inspired by the beauty that nature had to offer.

She never believed her career would place her in and around the bustling Capital City. These days, she can be found jetting across the state, spending days with legislators and agriculture-industry advocates, and attending meetings on behalf of her employer, the state's leading expert in his field. Jonnalee works directly with the Secretary of Food and Agriculture, A.G. Kawamura, and her office is only steps from the Capitol grounds in Sacramento. She is a policy analyst for the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Jonnalee's introduction to Ag in the Classroom was in the eighth grade when she submitted her story, "Harvest Laughter" to the Foundation's *Imagine this*... creative storywriting contest. She was named the regional winner in her grade-level that year. When asked about her award-winning story, she smiled widely and said with pride, "It was a story I wrote about my chicken, Jim. I loved that guy." She admits that being selected as a winner in the *Imagine this*... contest affirmed her confidence as a writer, but also convinced her that her agricultural upbringing would anchor whatever her future held.

After graduating from Pierce High School, Jonnalee left her northern California hometown of Arbuckle and attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo where she majored in Agricultural Business and became an Ag Ambassador for the university, promoting higher education and the study of agriculture.

After college, Jonnalee had the opportunity to blend her writing talents with her knowledge of agriculture as editor for the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau's *Farmer* & *Rancher* magazine. She also interned at the California Farm Bureau Federation's *Ag Alert* newspaper, where her debut article covered the appointment of CFAITC Executive Director Judy Culbertson to lead the National Ag in the Classroom Consortium.

Jonnalee continues to be a strong agricultural education advocate, evident by her close professional and personal ties to Ag in the Classroom and other organizations such as the California School Garden Network, and the California Farm-to-School Taskforce.

"Education in this country has historically been tied to agriculture, back when most children were raised on family farms, and working the ranch or field was their livelihood. Even though this is no longer a reality for today's students, there are so many life lessons that can be learned through a basic understanding of the food system," she says.

She explains that the most memorable moments of her education took place in her family's orchard. "I learned how to care for and sustain life, and the virtue of patience and responsibility, all through this connection to the walnuts, almonds and peaches we grew, and the animals we raised."

# wrote about Jim. I loved that guy."



Jonnalee Henderson "Ag in the Classroom has touched so many students, and introduced them to a completely new way of looking at the world. I wish I could tell every teacher about it!"











### Lonna Torrico

Lonna's inspiration are students who have developed a passion for agriculture and created a life around it. She proudly reports that many program graduates now have careers in teaching, government, and ag industry while others have pursued higher education in agriculture.

# The seeds of a teacher's enthusiasm for agriculture.

Lonna Torrico had her career path designed early in life... she believed. By the time she was four years old, she knew she wanted to be a teacher. Although the youngest of the group, she would gather children from her Fresno neighborhood on the closest curb or front lawn, and proceed to "teach" them, explaining and talking about whatever came to mind.

Like most Central Valley residents, she remembers visiting roadside produce stands as a child. She also recalls her family's small backyard garden, but preferred spending time reading and writing rather than exploring the garden plot. As a student at Fresno High School, she had no interest in agriculture classes, and to this day cannot recall if such courses were even offered.

As she grew up, Lonna's plan appeared to be right on track. The first in her family to go to college, she attended California State University, Fresno where she obtained her Bachelor's degree and teaching credential. When Lonna began teaching elementary school as a 20 year-old in the Fresno Unified School District, she was still unaware of the impact agriculture had on the Central Valley.

"Growing up in the nation's most productive agricultural area does not make a person agriculturally aware. It didn't do it for me and it won't for other educators nor for our students," Lonna explains.

After 20 years as a teacher and administrator in Fresno, Lonna's first true exposure to agriculture was in 1984 when she was urged to attend CFAITC's Summer Ag Institute for educators, an experience that radically changed her life. She suddenly recognized the extraordinary teaching and career opportunities available in the orchards, farms and fields of her own hometown.

Lonna barely remembers the drive home from Sacramento as her mind raced with plans to share her newfound awareness of agriculture with everyone at home. She describes the Summer Ag Institute as being an exceptional educational experience, one that inspired her to develop what is now the enormously successful Ag Summer Bridge Program, part of the Central Valley Ag Literacy Program at the College of Agricultural Science and Technology at CSU Fresno.

As Director of the Ag Summer Bridge, she hopes to provoke similar enlightenment in incoming college-age students, many of whom harbor unfavorable views of agriculture as a career option. Lonna introduces Ag in the Classroom programs and resources to her students, as an example of motivational and accessible agriculture education.

Funded by the USDA, WK Kellogg and CAST, the Central Valley Ag Literacy Program works to increase enrollment in agriculture-related fields at CSU Fresno by hosting select groups of traditionally under-represented students for one or two weeks during the summer before they enter college. For eight years the Ag Summer Bridge has offered students agricultural enrichment activities, academic advisement and career exploration in addition to campus orientations, ag industry tours, motivational activities and guest speakers. "We are very lucky to have this vibrant industry right in our own backyard, and should help young people recognize it as a promising career path," Lonna says.

A long-time Ambassador and friend to Ag in the Classroom, we acknowledge Lonna Torrico as one of California's most instrumental ag literacy advocates. We are pleased to have been the seed of her enthusiasm for agriculture.

# "It's my life, and I'm proud my muddy boots at the

Julio Fernandez thanks his parents for his successful agricultural career although he admits during his upbringing, he was at odds with them over plans for his future. The son of an immigrant farm laborer, Julio was raised with the understanding that he would not follow in his father's footsteps working in the fields. Growing up in the small, agricultural town of Riverdale in the Central Valley, Julio understood and respected agriculture. It was everywhere, yet it was out of his reach.

As a child, he was always told that when he grew up he would not have to come home from work covered in dirt like his father. Both his parents shared the hope that their son would take a different career path. They urged him to study business or engineering. They imagined Julio sitting at a desk wearing a suit and tie, far from the fields and the dirt and the elements where his father spent his days.

High school granted Julio numerous opportunities to grow his interests, including football, tennis, music, and mechanics. "I was sure I would study engineering in college and would have my dream job—designing engines and cars for NASCAR," Julio recalls.

Julio's plans changed at California State University, Fresno, where he met Lonna Torrico of the Central Valley Ag Literacy Program, whom he now calls one of his mentors. She encouraged him to enroll in the well-known Ag Summer Bridge Program to explore a different agricultural perspective.

For Julio, the summer he spent learning about the variety of agricultural careers available to him was monumental in determining his future. His introduction to agricultural literacy included learning about Ag in the Classroom as an important educational base for all California students. Years after his own participation in the Ag Summer Bridge, he returns as a volunteer, visiting Central Valley high schools to familiarize students and teachers with AITC resources.

Ag in the Classroom helped Julio realize that agriculture can easily be taught to children of all ages. He tells us that several of his fellow Summer Bridge colleagues are now teachers, spreading ag literacy and awareness to a new generation of students.

After an internship at the USDA's Animal and Plant Inspection Service, Julio was determined that agriculture was indeed his calling. When met with objections by his parents, Julio says, "I had to prove to my mom that working in agriculture doesn't have to mean ten hour days in the heat bent over with a shovel and a hoe."

Today, Julio is a Fresno State graduate, owner of a Horticulture degree, and works as a food safety manager at River Ranch Fresh Foods, one of the largest fresh produce processors of lettuce, spinach and cut vegetables in the country. Julio travels frequently to assess field safety in the company's Salinas and El Centro facilities, and works to implement newly mandated food safety regulations. Particularly in light of the spinach scare of 2006, Julio feels even more determined to assure consumers that California grown produce is safer than ever.

He says about agriculture, "I won't ever leave it. I love the contact with the soil, the food, the people. It's my life, and I'm proud to kick off my muddy boots at the end of a work day."

# to kick off end of a work day."







Julio Fernandez "My parents are proud of me, and I think in a strange way, proud that I am carrying on a family tradition of working in the fields. I believe that I helped them understand that there is no shame in this work. This is good, honest, important work that affects a lot of people, and I am grateful to be a part of the process." "The impact of Ag in the Classroom is undeniable. The students and teachers we touch gain an awareness and appreciation of the bounty that not only feeds us but also enriches our lives."

> —Doni Rosasco Ag in the Classroom Ambassador Tuolumne County

# Financial Highlights 2006

# Public Support & Revenue

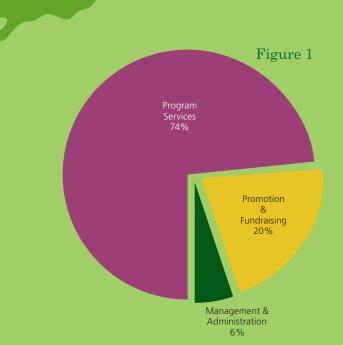
	2006	2005
Contributions	\$ 880,870	\$ 822,688
Special Event Revenue		
(net of direct benefits)	330,199	251,859
Program Fees	48,675	39,805
Investment & Other Income	52,801	32,569
Net Assets Released from		
Program Restrictions	110,668	82,574
Total Unrestricted		
Public Support & Revenue	\$ 1,423,213	\$ 1,229,495

# Expenses {see fig. 1}

Program Services	\$ 876,336	\$ 827,855
Promotion & Fundraising	240,314	198,361
Management & Administration	67,163	66,503
Total Expenses	\$ 1,183,813	\$1,092,719

# Statement of Financial Position

Assets		
Current Assets	\$ 1,083,936	\$ 951,192
Endowment	84,463	84,463
Investments	68,260	—
Property & Equip., net	178	711
Total Assets	\$ 1,236,837	\$ 1,036,366
Liabilities & Net Assets		
Current Liabilities	58,841	67,102
Net Assets, Start of Year	969,264	813,462
Increase in Unrestricted		
Net Assets	239,400	136,776
Increase (Decrease) in Temporarily Restricted		
Net Assets	(30,668)	19,026
Increase in Permanently		
Restricted Net Assets	_	_
Net Assets, End of Year	1,177,996	969,264
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 1,236,837	\$ 1,036,366



### California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

thanks our donors for keeping literacy alive with their seperous support of our proon

#### \$300,000

California Farm Bureau Federation

#### \$50,000

The James G. Boswell Foundation Nationwide: Allied Insurance Nationwide Health Plans Nationwide Insurance

#### \$25,000

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo Warne Family Charitable Foundation

#### \$10,000~\$24,999

Bank of America California Teachers Association Rabobank Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc. Wells Fargo Edwin and Jeanne Woods Family Foundation

#### \$5,000~\$9,999

Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium AMVAC CALAMCO California Avocado Commission California Forest Products Commission California Milk Advisory Board CAPCA Don Diego Fund Farm Credit: American AgCredit Farm Credit West Fresno Madera Farm Credit

Northern California Farm Credit Sacramento Valley Farm Credit Grand National Foundation Eva Kasparian Monrovia Nurseries Paramount Citrus Pauli Ranch Quotit Safeway, Inc. VJK Properties, Inc. Walnut Marketing Board/California Walnut Commission Zenith Insurance Company

#### \$2,500~\$4,999

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Western Plant Health Association Western United Dairymen Yosemite Farm Credit

### \$500~\$999

A. L. Gilbert Company Allied Grape Growers Anderson Marketing Willard E. Bartel Foundation P & A Bavaro Benko Insurance John Calandri Farms, Inc. Calavo Growers of California Cal-Bart Orchards California League of Food Processors Carver Bowen Ranch, Inc. Central California Irrigation District Check Processors, Inc. CIMS CoBank CRS Farming, LLC Jim and Judy Culbertson CWA, San Joaquin Chapter Cypress Abbey Company **DB** Specialty Farms Martha and Richard Deichler Del Mar Growers Packers Shippers Diedrich's Ag Spray Dole Food Company, Inc. Michael Dysart Employer's First Choice Insurance Services R.M. & Carolyn B. Farnsworth Trusts Fetzer Vineyards Filipponi & Thompson Vineyards, Inc. Firebaugh Canal Water District Fresno Trap & Skeet Club Fruit Growers Supply Company Gragg Canyon Ranch Neal and Beverly Harding Health Net Pharmaceutical Services Healthcare Solutions

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Sunsweet Growers, Inc. Sutter Home Winery Billee Zanker

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