



Calaveras County Farm Bureau

NOVEMBER 2015

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The Butte Fire

A day or two after the Butte Fire ignited, my uncle and I were staring at its dark, twisting plume that dominated the sky. I told my uncle that it looked like a monster.

"It is a monster," he replied.

According to Cal Fire, the Butte Fire burned over 70,000 acres, and consumed hundreds of homes and outbuildings. It is a natural disaster that the residents of Amador and Calaveras County are going to be recovering from for some time. Many have terrifying personal accounts of the Butte Fire, especially those who narrowly escaped the flames as they fled from their homes. It was a chaotic time; rumors spread of homes burning, both false and true, or worse, there were many more who had no news, and were left to wonder if they had homes left at all. For those who had animals, some were forced to simply turn their livestock out and hope they managed to survive, unable to find a way to evacuate them.



Photo by Rebecca Fischer

On the second day of the Butte Fire, my family and I were fortunately able to evacuate my dad's cattle out on Hawver Road outside of San Andreas. Driving down the narrow, twisting Hawver Road with a truck and goose-neck while meeting evacuees on their way out from the Jesus Maria area was no easy feat, but we managed to get down to my dad's cattle. As the smoke billowed out above me, I have to admit, I felt pretty small.

If it weren't for Rex Whittle and other friends who came out to help us, we would have had to go back for a couple more loads; who knows how close the fire would have been by the time we returned. Thanks to them, we were able to evacuate the last two loads of cattle out of Hawver Road safely.

There are many instances like these where the people of Calaveras stepped up to help their neighbors out during this devastating fire, including several Calaveras County Farm Bureau members. We were only a few of many people whom Farm Bureau member Rex Whittle helped out. Many more rose to the occasion to help their neighbors, in more ways than one.

The Calaveras County Fairgrounds served as an emergency evacuation center not only for people, but their animals as well.



Photo by Rebecca Fischer

On Thursday, September 10th, it was decided that the fairgrounds would be made available for evacuees and their animals. The Fairground RV park was opened, and the evacuees arrived. For the next twelve days, people were fed and registered for the Red Cross, animals were taken in and cared for, feed was donated (including 100 tons of hay!), and a hundred volunteers came to work round the clock to make sure it was so.

“We literally made no phone calls for help,” Farm Bureau Member Laurie Giannini said, who works at the Fairgrounds. People just showed up to offer their help, without

hesitation. In total, they assisted 160 people, and nearly 400 animals. On top of that, around 4,500 firefighters and 300 of the National Guard arrived and stayed there as well.

Soon, they had so many animals, they had to be transferred, and that was equally chaotic. Animals that had no owners at the Fairgrounds were sent to San Andreas, and many were sent to UC Davis to be treated for burns. To this day, there are still horses unclaimed at the Fairgrounds.

The newest president of the Calaveras County Farm Bureau, Michael David Fischer, worked as a liaison between CalFire and ranchers. His wife Toni Ann called Farm Bureau members in the fire perimeter to make sure they got the feed they needed for their animals.

One particular Farm Bureau member even made the news. Doug Joses, who has been a Farm Bureau for so long he’s forgot how many years its been, whose contribution to the Butte Fire has come to be quite well known in the area. When I called to talk to him about his experience with the Butte Fire, Doug was quick to tell me that it wasn’t just him who was responsible for saving his home. It was his family and neighbors who rallied to help him, and worked for hours to dig fire lines, using Caterpillars and water trucks. When the Whittles arrived to evacuate his goats, Doug simply told them he was staying, so they stayed, too. In total, there were at least twenty-five people helping the Joses family.

“I just had the tools and told them what to do with them,” Doug said. Those who helped the Joses family saved not only the Joses’ ranch, but several other properties as well. Hence, the infamous “white spot” on the Butte Fire map.

I’ve found, as I talk to people about their experiences, the list of people who pitched in to help their community during the Butte Fire just gets longer and longer. They all deserve to be recognized. It’s incredible, and I feel truly blessed to live in a town full of people willing to help their neighbors out during a tough, dangerous time. Even though the flames of the Butte Fire have been extinguished, I hope this spirit of compassion burns on. Recovering from the Butte Fire will be hard, especially during the holidays.

And so, I would like to mention that during our Christmas Party on December 15th, the Calaveras County Farm Bureau will be collecting canned food and financial donations for the Resource Con-

nection – although not specifically for those affected by the Butte Fire (the CCFB has been collecting canned goods at this party for a couple of years now), there is certainly a greater need because of it. So please, feel free to join us and bring side dishes and canned food! We'd love to have you!

We, at Calaveras County Farm Bureau, hope this newsletter finds you all well during this holiday season. Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

-Rebecca Fischer, Media Outreach Coordinator

P.S.

If you would like more information about the Butte Fire recovery, visit the Calaveras County Farm Bureau website at www.calaverasfarmbureau.org. Under the "Member Services" tab, click on "Butte Fire Recovery Information". There will be several links connecting to local organizations working through the recovery process.

The Calaveras County Farm Bureau would like to thank our fellow branch, San Joaquin County Farm Bureau, for their donation to help those affected by the Butte Fire. We'd also like to thank everyone else who donated.

**HEY! DID YOU KNOW THAT CCFB HAS A
NEW WEBSITE?**

www.calaverasfarmbureau.org

WE'RE ALSO ON FACEBOOK!

CFBF ANNUAL MEETING

DECEMBER 5-9, 2015

DELEGATES

Michael David Fischer, Jr.—President
Mindy Rasmussen—1st Vice President

ALTERNATES

Stuart Mast—2nd Vice President
Eloise Fischer—Board Member

The California Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting will be held at the **Peppermill Hotel** in **Reno, NV**. This year's theme is **Growing Agriculture's Sphere of Influence**. The **Keynote Speaker** will be Brian Shul, who is a Vietnam Veteran. He was shot down and had major burns all over his body, and he wasn't expected to survive. He did, and even returned to full flight. You can register **now** on the CFBF website. **Breakout sessions include: WOTUS** rule and what you need to know, **Sustainable Groundwater Management Act** update, **food safety, agriculture labor, and new antibiotic issues**.

Leadership Farm Bureau Applications are now available for the class of 2016!

This program offers valuable training and personal development to those interested in expanding their leadership role in the agriculture industry. Classes should take place in February.

Excellent candidates for LFB is a CFB board member, staff member, or Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee member who is interested in taking a larger leadership role within the organization. More information and packets are available for download at www.cfbf.com/lfb. You can also contact Lindsey Liebig at lliebig@cfbf.com or (916) 561-5593.

ATTENTION! HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS!

Each year, CCFB offers scholarships to Calaveras County High School Seniors. Please ask your high school counselors for more information about this scholarship opportunity! Also, check out the Calaveras County Farm Bureau website www.calaverasfarmbureau.org under Programs > Scholarship Program.

The California Farm Bureau Federation also has scholarship opportunities for California residents! For more information, go to the California Farm Bureau Federation website www.cfbf.com and look under the Programs > Scholarship Foundation page.

Applications can be found on both websites. Note: You must be a CFBF Collegiate Member in order to apply! www.joinfb.com

2015 CCFB Scholarship Recipients



Nick Elliot
Calaveras High School

Nick is attending Modesto Jr. College. He enjoys living and working on the school farm at the poultry unit.



Laura McGary
Calaveras High School

Laura is attending Brigham Young University in Idaho. She has a passion for Agricultural Business. She would like to expand her perception of agriculture by understanding different states practices and methods.



Hailey Sadler
Bret Harte High School

Hailey is attending Feather River Jr. College studying agriculture.

Where Are They Now? 2014 Scholarship Winners

“I am currently attending the University of Nevada Reno and studying Veterinary Science. The best part of my freshman year was becoming a stronger person and realizing that I can accomplish my goal of becoming a veterinarian with the help of my family and friends along the way.” —Maya Fleck

“My year at UC Davis has been fantastic! I could never have expected to be doing all the things I am or enjoying them so much. School itself has been difficult, as it is much more intense work than high school. However, I have really enjoyed my Animal Science class which makes me think I am in the correct major! The topics we have learned about and the labs I have gotten to take part in (such as milking cows, dissecting reproductive tracts, and watching live slaughter) have been so much fun!

I have expanded my horizons outside of class as well. I am a part of the Aggie Ambassadors Organization for the UCD College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (and am running for an office next year). This organization has been so much fun to be a part of and has helped me continue to stay involved with agriculture and leadership in college. I am also horseback riding on the UCD Western Equestrian Team, which has been such a blast!

This upcoming year I plan to continue my studies in Animal Science and Management. I also plan to stay involved with both the Western Equestrian Team and Aggie Ambassadors. I hope I will also be able to get involved with research or an internship on campus next year in my field of study to better prepare me for the real world.” —Julia Kalika

“I'm attending Modesto Junior College. My best experience was seeing how good the Modesto Junior colleges AG program is. It is much more than I expected. Great teachers and facilities. It was my favorite experience because it made me feel like I made the right decision on where I decided to go to school.” —Wyatt Durham

Logan Sullivan, another 2014 Scholarship Winner, could not be reached for comment.

A New Benefit for Farm Bureau Members

Farm Bureau has a partnership with Caterpillar to offer discounts on equipment.

\$2,000 off small wheel loaders

\$1,000 off small dozers (<D5), backhoe loaders, compact truck loaders

And much, much more!