



Fresno County Farm Bureau

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San Joaquin Political Academy application deadline is Aug. 14

The deadline to apply for the Fall 2009 Class of the San Joaquin Political Academy is this Friday, Aug. 14. Applications should be submitted by 3 p.m. to the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, downtown Fresno.

The Political Academy provides an education and training program for civic, professional and business leaders so they may enter public service with the appropriate skills and vision to address the problems of the region. Fresno County Farm Bureau is a co-sponsor of the program. Classes begin in September. For an application or additional details, call (559) 313-3304, or email at: sjpoliticalacademy@yahoo.com.

Drought relief volunteers are needed

As part of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's declaration of Fresno County as a drought disaster area, more than three million pounds of food each month will be distributed to five rural communities in west Fresno County. Volunteers are urgently needed to assist with the distribution effort in Huron, San Joaquin, Firebaugh, Mendota and Selma.

The joint effort is administered by the Community Food Bank, County of Fresno, HandsOn Central California, along with federal and state agencies. The Food Bank estimates at least 450 volunteers will be needed each week to distribute the food. The distributions are held on the first and third Thursdays of the month in Huron; first and third Tuesdays in San Joaquin; second and fourth Fridays in Firebaugh; second and fourth Tuesdays in Mendota; and second and fourth Thursdays in Selma.

For details about becoming a volunteer, contact HandsOn Central California at: (559) 237-3101 or the Food Bank at (559) 237-3663.

Beef producers strive to produce safe product

With the recent recall of ground beef products that may be linked to an outbreak of salmonellosis, the California Beef Council and beef producers want to assure consumers of their role and responsibility for

producing safe food. Beef farmers and ranchers alone have invested more than \$27 million since 1993 in beef safety research, and the industry as a whole invests an estimated \$350 million annually on safety.

That research has made the implementation of numerous safety hurdles possible. Still, the industry continues to look for more solutions. Current research is focusing on steps that can be implemented at the farm or ranch level that will add another layer of safety to the system. A focus on a total chain approach to safety, extending from farmers and ranchers to packers, processors, retailers and foodservice is the best way to solve safety challenges. The Beef Industry Food Safety Council, an industry-wide group that develops science-based strategies to ensure beef safety, works with all sectors of the industry, including the USDA and other food chain partners to further strengthen the food safety systems and to share information, research and best practices.

All beef is produced under strict government oversight. Every meat processing facility operates under strict USDA oversight. This collaboration results in constant improvements to the beef safety chain. The Beef Council reminds consumers of their role in food safety by following food handling, cooking and storage steps that can prevent food borne illness. Cooking ground beef products to an internal temperature of 160-degrees F – as measured with an instant read meat thermometer – ensures beef safety.

Water conservation funds available to local farmers

Kings River Conservation District area growers can receive cost-share funds to help with water conservation projects. KRCD entered into a partnership with U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide \$14 million of financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers through provisions of the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program.

The five-year program focuses on getting landowners to employ high-efficiency irrigation systems to reduce the risk of off-site movement of agricultural materials and conserve irrigation water. The majority of the funds will be used to install improved irrigation systems, mainly micro-irrigation on permanent crops and irrigation pipelines and tail water recovery systems on row/field crops. Installation of soil moisture instruments to positively impact irrigation scheduling efficiencies could also be funded.

Technical assistance could include individual site evaluations for the potential to impact nearby surface waters, the efficiency of the existing irrigation system and a follow-up evaluation to track the improvement in water use.

Applications to participate in the first year of the program will be accepted until close of business Aug. 27. Applications will continue to be taken after this deadline, but will be deferred until after Oct. 1, the next fiscal year funding cycle. To be eligible, agricultural producers must be within the boundaries of KRCD and eligible for NRCS conservation programs.

For application assistance or additional details, call the Fresno NRCS Field Office at (559) 276-7494 or KRCD at (559) 237-5567 ext. 130.

Regional water board to hold public workshops about developing groundwater strategy

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board is holding a series of workshops to seek input from various stakeholders to develop a regional groundwater protection strategy. The Fresno workshop will be held on Aug. 28 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Board office, 1685 E

St. in Fresno. Additional workshops will be held in Rancho Cordova on Aug. 24, in Redding on Aug. 25 and in Delano of Aug. 27.

The Regional Water Board hopes to work with ongoing programs as well as coordinate with other agencies and all stakeholders for help in identifying deficiencies, conflicts with other agency's programs, and/or gaps in protection of groundwater quality

According to Regional Board staff, the intent of developing a strategy is to provide a summary of the current state of groundwater quality and to identify current groundwater regulatory programs being implemented by the Central Valley Water Board and other agencies. The strategy will be a document that serves as the Central Valley Water Board's roadmap of how current and future regulatory and control activities will be implemented in a comprehensive, consistent, and coordinated groundwater protection program throughout the Central Valley Region.

To register to attend the workshop, email Pam Buford at: pbuford@waterboards.ca.gov, or call (559) 445-5576. Additional information is available on the Central Valley Water Board's website at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/groundwater_quality/index.shtml.

Viticulture leader set to retire; celebration planned

Friends and colleagues are invited to attend a retirement celebration on Friday, Aug. 28 for Dr. Robert Wample, the director of the Viticulture & Enology Research Center and Chair of the Department of Viticulture & Enology at Fresno State. The event will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Viticulture & Enology Conference Room, Second Floor, Viticulture & Enology Building, 2360 E. Barstow Ave., on campus.

The reception provides a chance for people to stop by to wish Dr. Wample a fond farewell. It's described as "No program, no awards, no speeches, no gifts.... and no need to RSVP." For details, contact the Department at (559) 278-2089.

Check out California Country's new Web site

California Farm Bureau Federation's *California Country* Magazine has a new page on its Web site, providing information about Farmers' Markets held throughout the state. The site gives the date, time and location of the hundreds of markets held in California. To find one near you, visit the site at: <http://californiacountry.org/going-to-market/farmers-markets.aspx>.

Did you know?

It's hard to believe that Smokey Bear is eligible for Medicare! On Aug. 9, the American icon and symbol of the U.S. Forest Service turned 65 years old!

As part of the celebration, the USDA released a new Smokey Bear Story "big book," a bilingual illustrated educational book that introduces Smokey Bear and fire prevention messages to a new generation of American children.

Since his birthday on Aug. 9, 1944, Smokey Bear has been a recognized symbol of conservation and protection of America's forests. His message about forest fire prevention has helped to reduce the number of acres lost annually to forest fires, or wildfires, from about 22 million (1944) to an average of 6.5 million annually today, according to the USDA. Nine out of 10 wildfires nationwide are started by humans. The

principle causes are campfires left unattended, trash burning on windy days, careless discarding of smoking materials and BBQ coals, and operating equipment without spark arrestors.

To learn more about Smokey Bear and wildfire prevention visit www.smokeybear.com. Smokey's "big book" is available for purchase (free to teachers) at www.symbols.gov.

Remember, only you can prevent wildfires!

Quote of the Week

"The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his own weight." Theodore Roosevelt, the nation's 26th president who served from 1901-09. At age 42, he became the youngest president in U.S. history.

Next Week's calendar

Aug. 19 Fresno Chamber Board of Directors, 3:15 p.m., Chamber office, downtown

This Week's Calendar

Aug. 11 FCFB Board of Directors' meeting,

Aug. 12 Clovis East FFA presentation; Fresno Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee

Aug. 13 Chamber breakfast meeting with Rep. Devin Nunes;

Aug. 14 Agriculture and Land Use Committee, noon, Chamber office

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