



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Fresno County Farm Bureau Annual Banquet will be held on May 3

Organization celebrates 90 years

The Fresno County Farm Bureau (FCFB) will celebrate its 90th Annual Banquet on Thursday, May 3 at Rancho Vista Del Rio (Borba Ranch) at Highway 99 and the San Joaquin River. The celebration begins at 5:30 p.m. with the announcement of the Distinguished Service Award recipient at 7 p.m.

A special program is being planned for Farm Bureau's 90th year, recognizing different cultures that have contributed to Fresno County agriculture's diverse heritage. By way of the theme, "Fresno County Farm Bureau – Your Passport to Agriculture," participants will be able to sample foods prepared and served by various cultural representatives.

Highlighting the evening's program will be the sealing of a time capsule to be opened at the 100th anniversary celebration. The banquet committee is asking for donations of FCFB items to be placed in the time capsule. The committee is looking for photographs, signs, brochures, programs or other items of Fresno County Farm Bureau memorabilia.

"On behalf of the banquet committee and Fresno County Farm Bureau, I would like to invite you to help us celebrate our 90th year of service to the agricultural industry," said FCFB President Russel Efird. "We are looking forward to celebrating with the many individuals who make up the largest agricultural county in California."

Looking back on 90 years

Like many other farm bureaus, FCFB began with the need for the Agricultural Extension Service to disseminate information and promote better farming methods.

Today, Farm Bureau is one of the lead agricultural organizations to educate its members and to advocate for political action and community outreach.

With visionary farmers like George Feaver, J.A. Poytress, Sam Heisinger, Leroy Smith, H.W. Wrightson and Charlie Parlier, the founding fathers for FCFB paved the way for 90 years of successful agricultural advocacy through their vision and determination to succeed.

George Feaver, the first president of FCFB (1918), took on issues such as the promotion of wheat production to help the World War I effort and the 1918 Armistice-related livestock marketing problems. While issues may appear to be simple during the early years of Farm Bureau, these issues were as challenging and complex as the issues are today. Some issues that have remained constant throughout FCFB's 90 years have been water, labor, weather, land use and marketability of commodities.

In the early years, centers were set up throughout the county so local farming community members could gather to update each other on the industry. Information dissemination about crop production and research and local issues was the trademark of these meetings, but it also provided a network of close friends and family, which has been passed down from generation to generation.

The more things change, the more they stay the same

A 1919 FCFB annual report discusses local agricultural issues, many of which are similar issues discussed by agricultural leaders today.

Notwithstanding the passing of 90 years, the report recapped a successful year for the distribution of seasonal labor; a report on marketing efforts of commodities, especially livestock; successful presentations on deciduous fruit tree pruning; a proposed irrigation district of 184,000 acres of farmland; cooperation with county

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officials; and work with local farm advisors. Other important local projects included the promotion of youth agricultural clubs and organization for fire protection in rural areas.

Ninety years later, we still face much of the same challenges. Today, we are faced with immigration issues, competing global markets, a dwindling water supply, agricultural literacy, ensuring adequate rural fire protection and cooperation with local, state and federal government officials.

Since it began in 1917, FCFB has been an organization that develops and nurtures agricultural leaders. It is essential the number one agricultural county in the country has the leadership to sustain Fresno County's most vital industry, which was valued at \$4.6 billion in 2005. Today, FCFB membership exceeds 5,000 members, part of a network of over 5 million members nationwide.

Tickets for the Annual Banquet are available from the Farm Bureau office for \$40 per person, or \$375 for a group of 10 before April 27. After April 27, prices will be \$45 per person and \$400 for 10 tickets. In addition, sponsorship opportunities are available at various financial levels. For details about sponsorships or to order tickets, contact the FCFB office at (559) 237-0263 or e-mail: info@fcfb.org.

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