

Board Member Profile: Karen Musson

Meet FCFB Board member Karen Musson. Karen is a farmer's daughter, a Central Valley native and a graduate of California State University, Fresno. Her parents established Gar Tootelian, Inc. in 1949, initially selling fertilizer to their neighbors to support their vineyard and eventually growing the family business by hiring a salesman or two and adding pesticides to their crop protection inventory.

Karen's career began at home working in the family business at an early age. There was always something to do whether it be at home, school, church, Rainbow Girls or P.T.A. Her early professional career encompassed managing internal controls and accounting technology conversions in Oakland (Carter Hawley Hale's Capwell's) and San Francisco (The Harper Group's Circle Airfreight).

Naturally, technology was top of the "To Do" list when she returned to the family business in 1982, converting and overseeing the design of propriety accounting and inventory software. Later, as P.T.A. president, her experience proved helpful to "cash in on receipts" to equip and establish the school's first computer lab.

In January 2020, Karen's family business, Gar Tootelian, Inc., began a new chapter as GAR Bennett, LLC. (GB). The new women owned entity was the result of a merger between two Valley family businesses with an extensive offering of services ranging from water systems to crop protection and regulatory compliance.

Musson became involved with FCFB through her extensive relationships with Valley growers, community engagement and friends. Karen feels it was a natural fit to become part of Farm Bureau. She is passionate about growing future mentors for women in agriculture. Karen's grandfather had a saying that she lives by today: "Roots run deep" and you thrive where you are nurtured and planted.

Karen is the managing partner and a member of the GB Board. She works with her daughter, Christina, overseeing marketing, public relations and community outreach activities. She is also the C.E.O. of the Gar & Esther Tootelian Charitable Foundation established in 2003 to engage, develop and direct philanthropic gifts promoting agricultural careers, activities and awareness. The Foundation has granted more than \$2.1 Million in scholarships and gifts in support of local agricultural groups, educational institutions, community outreach and charitable organizations it considers critical to the future of Central Valley agriculture. In 2012, the Foundation raised over \$1.5 million to honor "Central Valley Farmers and Families" in the Clovis Medical Center's Emergency Room and annually sponsors the California Specialty Crops Council tour.

A few of Karen's contributions include serving as the board chair for Valley PBS (2020-2022) and president of the Rotary Club of Fresno (2021-2022). She is also the recipient of the Fresno Chamber's 2020 Leon S. Peters Award, Fresno Compact 2020 Business-Education Partnership Award, Marjorie Mason Top Ten Professional Women (2017) and Ag One Common Threads (2011).

Karen's husband, Gregory, joined the family business and succeeded Gar as C.E.O. in 1986. Their daughter, Christina, and son-in-law, Ralph, have two children and are active third-generation GAR Bennett partners.

There is always something to do in agriculture. As GB's slogan goes: "We Help Growers Feed the World."