# Instructor helps rescue ag program

## Kimler-Richards puts know-how to work, rallies local farm community

By TIM HEARDEN Capital Press

REDDING, Calif. When Shasta College's agriculture program was on the verge of shutting down because of a budget crisis in 2009, Trena Kimler-Richards

A former high school and California State University-Chico instructor, Kimler-Richards had been hired part-time at the community college a vear earlier. She knew a few people, and she picked up the phone.

"I started calling anybody I could," she said.

Kimler-Richards helped rally local growers, county Farm Bureaus and alumni around the 60-year-old program, bringing overflow crowds to board meetings and persuading trustees to keep the college farm open.

Today the 90-acre farm which includes a dormitory program that immerses students in the operation — is a money-maker for its community college district.

"Now produce show-quality goats, pigs and cattle and we're able to sell them at a premium," said Kimler-Richards, 55, who's now a full-time instructor and program coordinator and advises a student leadership club. "The products off of the farm are actually generating revenue."

Kimler-Richards is quick to credit others — including the farm manager, B.J. Macfarlane, and former Dean Eva Jimenez — for the farm's success. But Kimler-Richards brought her experience in helping rebuild the ag program at Red Bluff High School in the late 1980s, which ballooned from 80 students to 580 in three years.

"I was familiar with this program," she said. "I knew



Trena Kimler-Richards, an agriculture instructor and adviser at Shasta College in Redding, Calif., holds a goat on the college farm. Kimler-Richards rallied the community to save the college's ag program from the budget ax in 2009. Now the farm returns revenue to the community college district.

what it should be."

Kimler-Richards' enthusiasm about ag shines through, said Kari Dodd, who took over as the Tehama County Farm Bureau's manager just before the college's 2009 budget crisis.

"She is very passionate about agriculture in general," Dodd said, "but also she really wants to educate our youth and the students at Shasta College and provide them with the skills and knowledge they'll need to further their education at a university, or give them the tools to go out and start their career."

Growing up on a ranch in Grass Valley, Calif., Kimler-Richards developed that passion for agriculture at an early age. Her parents grew up on farms during the Depression, and the family haved and raised hogs and cattle while operating an ag brokerage firm and later a feed store.

Kimler-Richards was in the FFA at Nevada Union High School in Grass Valley, and her livestock judging team was national champion in 1977. She later earned an agricultural business degree from CSU-Chico, where she returned as an ag education instructor and outreach coordinator for 11 years before

leaving to be a stay-at-home mother in 2002.

Today she and her husband, Laird Richards, raise horses on a small farm in eastern Tehama County, and she and her mother, Jeannie Gallagher, market gourmet cooking sauces and dressings under the Antelope Creek Farm label.

'We named it that because Antelope Creek runs through" the farm, she said.

Kimler-Richards worked for a computer data firm right after college, but soon discovered "I couldn't do the high heels and three-piece suits every day," she said. "It wasn't me."

She earned her high school teaching credential and took the position at Red Bluff High School in 1985, teaching there until moving to Chico State in

She developed her desire to teach while in high school,

"I had really good ag teachers who took an interest in me and helped me grow and be successful," Kimler-Richards said. "In college I was a 4-H adviser. I just really enjoy helping the kids, helping them grow and develop their interpersonal skills. The whole FFA component was a big factor in my decision to go back and get my teaching credential."

Kimler-Richards returned to teaching in 2008 at Shasta College, where she was recruited to take over for an ag science instructor who decided not to come back. The campus' budget issues came to light soon afterward, as the board was looking for places to cut and ag classes were only drawing about 15 students per class.

While the administration allowed the college's ag instruction to continue, the program was tasked with raising some of its own funds, which it started doing with an annual fall harvest festival that featured farm tours, locally produced food and beverages, and entertainment.

"Eva Jimenez was the new dean, and she said, 'Let's do a harvest festival,'" Kimler-Richards said. "She also hired B.J. Macfarlane as farm manager. Those two key factors really helped position the program.'

The college suspended the festival this year, partly because the program's new dean, Michael Sloane, had just started, Kimler-Richards

Another event is an an-Country Christmas Fair, which raises funds for

## Western **Innovator**

## Trena Kimler-Richards

Occupation: Agricultural in-

"It is a teaching tool," she said. "I just kind of oversee and coordinate. ... It's an incredible learning experience for the class.'

The farm also has made a sustainability push, dusting off and refurbishing old farm equipment and growing all of its hay and grain to avoid having to purchase feed. Today the farm is on solid financial footing, partly because it generates some of its own reve-The administration also is

supportive, having purchased ler-Richards said.

said. "Our farm dorm program builds high-quality students who have good skills when they leave here. We definitely have a family atmosphere.

"We take care of our students," she said, "and they

## structor, program coordinator Age: 55 Residence: Dairyville, Calif. Family: Husband Laird Richards, son Kegan Richards Website: https://www.facebook.com/shastaagriculture/

the student leadership team that Kimler-Richards advises. The fair, which includes Christmas tree sales as well as craft booths and kids' attractions, gives the students marketing, customer service and event-planning skills and teaches them how to work as a team, she said.

hay for the farm last summer when the drought diminished the farm's own yields, Kim-For Kimler-Richards, the

students and her colleagues are like family, she said. "This is where it's at," she

take care of us."

## Washington farm offers more than Christmas trees

By ANDREA BROWN The Daily Herald

SILVANA, Wash. (AP) — It's the proud home of Charlie Brown Christ-

Not all are perfect, but all are loved. For about 40 years, Happy Valley Tree Farm has offered 25 acres of unsheared happiness to generations of families.

"People who want a big, bushy, solid tree, they waste their time coming up here," said retired pathologist Dr. Clayton Haberman, 93, who runs the farm with his wife, Barbara, 83.

"It's not like a Christmas tree farm where they shear the trees and they look like a hedge. I just let them grow. As a result they are natural trees with distinct limbs.'

Clayton is a distinct figure as well. Decked out in his big coat and hard hat festooned with holly, he sharpens the saws that Barbara hands out to shoppers, who are more like friends than customers.

"They go out there and walk around and pick their tree and cut it and drag it through the mud," she said. "They do the work."

There are big pots of hot apple cider and a crackling fire to thaw cold fingers



lan Terry/The Herald via AP In a Nov. 28 photo, 93-year-old Dr. Clayton Haberman sports a hard hat decorated with holly at the Happy Valley Tree Farm, which he owns with his wife, Barbara, in Stanwood, Wash. The Habermans purchased the 25-acre property in 1968 and began selling Christmas trees in 1977. They say this may be their

All trees are \$20. Have been for years. "I don't criticize the people who sell trees for \$50 or \$60," Clayton said. "If you want to raise those sheared trees, it's lots of work. I tried it in the beginning. I

like a natural tree. I used to have a flyer that said 'Happy Valley Tree Farm, home of designer trees.' People say, 'Well, what do you mean by designer trees?""

Designed by nature, he explained. Deer damage and all.

"Deer hit them with their antlers and break branches and they make some of the goofiest looking trees," he said. "Every year a few people come up looking for the most grotesque tree. A Charlie Brown tree."

Of course, it's more than a tree. It's a memory cut fresh every year.

Clayton bought the 25 acres as an investment in 1968, a few years after he and Barbara were married.

"I think it was about \$2,000 an acre, if I remember correctly," he said. "A real estate friend of mine convinced me I should do this. I hadn't planned to do anything other than to buy it and hold it and sell it sometime later."

The land had been logged with minimal cleanup.

"I didn't know anything about growing trees or anything like that, other than when I was a Boy Scout years ago I planted some trees back in Wisconsin," Clayton said.

"I decided, 'Well, we ought to plant some trees on it.' So I bought 2,000 seed-

lings, not knowing what I was doing and planted them on this logged-off piece of property. I just planted it amongst all this slash and brush and everything else on the property. All the other weed brush grew vigorously and we lost all of the seedlings we planted except there's a couple still standing which are now big

The couple devoted weekends over the next few years to burning brush, then turned to the county extension agent for help.

"He gave me some idea of what should be done and how to do things," Clayton said. "I got the idea to maybe sell some Christmas trees."

A tradition was born.

Year after year, the couple planted new seedlings.

"He carried the trees and would dig the hole," Barbara said, "and I'd put the tree in and finish the spot."

Year after year, people came back, filling the forest with holiday spirit.

"One group, the guy was the choir director and he'd come up with a lot of his choir members and they would bring lunch and be back in the woods and then they'd start singing," Clayton said. "We'd get churches come up and I'd give them a tree. A big one."

Wednesday, Jan. 27

Northwest Agricultural Show, Portland Expo Center, Portland,

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omission or factual error in a headline, story or photo caption, please call the Capital Press news department at 503-364-4431, or send email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

set the record straight.

## Calendar

To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www. capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

## Thursday, Jan. 7

2016 Precision Farming Expo, Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash.

Idaho Irrigation Equipment Show & Conference, Nampa Civic Center, Nampa, Idaho.

#### Friday, Jan. 8 2016 Precision Farming Expo,

Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. American Farm Bureau Annual

Convention, Orlando Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. Saturday, Jan. 9

American Farm Bureau Annual

Center, Orlando, Fla.

Sunday, Jan. 10 American Farm Bureau Annual Convention, Orlando Convention

Convention, Orlando Convention

last year selling trees.

## Center, Orlando, Fla. Monday, Jan. 11

Tuesday, Jan. 12

American Farm Bureau Annual Convention, Orlando Convention Center, Orlando, Fla.

American Farm Bureau Annual Convention, Orlando Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. Far West AgriBusiness Association annual winter conference,

Falls, Idaho. Potato Expo 2016, Mirage Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev.

American Farm Bureau Annual

Wednesday, Jan. 13

College of Southern Idaho, Twin

Convention, Orlando Convention Center, Orlando, Fla.

Far West AgriBusiness Association annual winter conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls, Idaho.

Potato Expo 2016, Mirage Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev.

#### Thursday, Jan. 14 Far West AgriBusiness Asso-

ciation annual winter conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls, Idaho. Oregon Mint Growers 67th An-

nual Meeting, Salishan Lodge and Golf Resort, Gleneden Beach, Ore. Potato Expo 2016, Mirage Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev.

#### Iomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, Calif.

Friday, Jan. 15 Oregon Mint Growers 67th Annual Meeting, Salishan Lodge and Golf Resort, Gleneden Beach,

#### Iomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, Calif.

Wednesday, Jan. 20

Thursday, Jan. 21 2016 EcoFarm Conference, Asi-Iomar Conference Grounds, Pacific

2016 EcoFarm Conference, Asi-

#### Friday, Jan. 22 2016 EcoFarm Conference, Asi-

Grove, Calif.

Iomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, Calif. Saturday, Jan. 23 2016 EcoFarm Conference, Asi-

## Monday, Jan. 25 Oregon Blueberry Conference, Red Lion Hotel, Portland, Ore.

Tuesday, Jan. 26 Northwest Agricultural Show, Portland Expo Center, Portland, Ore.

## Northwest Agricultural Show, Portland Expo Center, Portland,

Tuesday, Feb. 2

Thursday, Jan. 28

Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, Spokane Spokane, Convention Center,

#### Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, Spokane Convention Center, Spokane, Wash.

Wednesday, Feb. 3

Thursday, Feb. 4 Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, Spokane Convention Center,

## If you see a misstatement,

We want to publish corrections to