

# Cowbelles promote cattle ranching

By JULIA HOLLISTER  
For the Capital Press

LaGRANGE, Calif. — Stand aside. The 50 women of California's Mid Valley Cowbelles are on the move promoting beef and educating the next generation of consumers.

Whether their riding group is appearing on horseback during a community parade or members are presenting a lesson to a class at a local high school, the Cowbelles volunteer their time and efforts to promote ranching and the beef industry.

"We founded our Belles about five years ago to support cattlemen," said vice president Pat Shepherd.

The coronavirus outbreak has put the group on the sidelines for a while, but they pledge to get back in the saddle once public appearances are approved.

"Unfortunately, our plans for the next eight months are canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic," Shepherd said. "Later in June we had planned a meet-and-greet for our scholarship winners. This virus has really stopped our Ag in the Classroom and beef promotions, too."

One of the group's favorite projects is Ag in the Classroom, she said. The



Julia Hollister/For the Capital Press

**Left to right are Mid Valley Cowbelles members Carol Kenyon, Johanna Kiernan, Pat Shepherd, Candy Peterson and Judy Elam. Their organization supports and promotes the cattle industry and beef.**

goal is to educate students about the beef industry.

Other educational events are also offered.

"Our members attend many Ag Venture field trips during the year to teach students about nutrition and how we care for our cattle," according to the group's website. "There are about 16,000 third-grade students at these field trips."

There are also five Ag Days celebrations that draw over 3,000 third-graders.

Each year the Belles offer \$5,500 in scholarships to five area high school seniors who want to go into the beef industry as a career. Recip-

ients' grades, FFA activities, community projects and other efforts are considered.

The Belles began as a way for women in the cattle industry and advocates to get together. They assist in the activities of the California CattleWomen's Association, California Cattlemen's Association and the American National CattleWomen.

The membership area encompasses Mariposa, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties.

Their volunteerism takes them into the kitchen, too. The group raises money by catering events with homemade menus for organiza-

tions around the region. For her work with the Cowbelles, Shepherd received the California CattleWomen Award for Beef Educator of the Year.

The Cowbelles riding group takes part in local parades and rodeos as a mounted unit. They pass out brochures and donate beef for school classes, reaching over 8,000 students.

"I think the Cowbelles are a very important part of our agricultural industry," said Tom Orvis, governmental affairs director for the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau. "Coming from ranch backgrounds, they are



**WESTERN INNOVATOR**

**MID VALLEY COWBELLES**

**Organization:** 50 members promote cattle ranching in four California counties

**Area:** Stanislaus, Mariposa, San Joaquin and Merced counties

**Occupations:** California cattle ranchers and advocates

**Quote:** "To teach the public the truth about beef production, farm life and that beef is good for the body."



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to set the record straight.

# Drive-thru corn stand a hit with consumers

By JUDY L. BEDELL  
For the Capital Press

PORTERVILLE, Calif. — Each year starting in June, Gisler Farms is the talk of Tulare County, Calif.

Customers old and new count down the days to the opening of the drive-thru corn stand that the family farmers are famous for. And when it opens each day, cars line up for blocks to purchase the freshly picked sweet yellow and white corn, which is sold in baker's dozen bags of 13 ears for \$7.00 a bag.

Farmers Dave and Kim Gisler love that Gisler Farms Sweet Corn Drive-Thru has become a community tradition that so many look forward to each summer.

In the early 1970s Dave's parents, Leo and Helen Gisler, decided to open a corn stand in Porterville.

"When their three kids



Judy L. Bedell/For the Capital Press

**Irene Andrade says she enjoys sorting and selling sweet corn at Gisler Farms and is following in the footsteps of her four brothers and sisters who have also spent their summers working for the Gislers.**

went off to college there was a break until Dave and I got married and started it up again in 1986," said wife Kim as they went about setting up the stand for the day's business.

"We pick the corn daily and usually sell out around noon or

early afternoon. If we do have any left at the end of the day, we donate it in the community. I love seeing our customers come back year after year, and then we always get new ones, too," explained Kim.

"And, we try to stay open

until the Fourth of July but it just depends on the heat and its effect on the corn," added Kim.

Once the corn is picked and sorted, it is loaded onto trailers and driven into town about five miles away. The trailers are backed into the stand and the selling begins.

In addition to the corn, if customers get to the stand early enough, they can also purchase vine ripe tomatoes, onions and squash.

With the COVID-19 situation, customers were worried that the stand would not open, but the way it is set up, it pretty much already met all of the social distancing requirements. Customers drive up to the stand and are greeted by a friendly staff member who asks how many bags they want of which type of corn. The corn is pre-packaged so there is very little wait time and then the corn

is placed in the vehicle by an employee.

Customers can also walk up to the stand and follow the directions and markings to maintain the required 6 feet of social distancing.

Gisler Farms is a favorite summer job for area youths, with brothers and sisters joining the team from year to year. They open the drive-thru stand mid-June, which works out great as their crew is out of school or college for the summer.

Irene Andrade is the youngest of five children in her family. All have worked a summer job at the Gisler stand.

"It is a fun job. We get here about 6 a.m. and start sorting the corn and then head in to the stand at 8:30 a.m. and then it just takes off. We have customers coming all day until we run out. We stay really busy," said Andrade.

# SW Idaho crop-sign program takes break in 2020

By BRAD CARLSON  
Capital Press

Roadside signs that identify many of the approximately 100 different crops grown in Canyon County, Idaho, are absent this year.

The joint agribusiness committee of the Caldwell and Nampa chambers of commerce suspended the program due to COVID-19 impacts, representatives said.

Since 2004, committee volunteers have placed the signs near farm fields along high-traffic roads as a form of agricultural education.

Canyon County has had a crop-sign program in one form or another since the early 1980s.

"It's disappointing from the standpoint that we've always done this, and a lot



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

**From left, agribusiness committee members Darrell Bolz, Stephen Parrott and Samantha Ball at Caldwell, Idaho, on June 17.**

of people appreciate that we do it," said Darrell Bolz, a committee member who is a retired University of Idaho Canyon County Extension agent and former state legislator.

COVID-19 restrictions in March, April and May dis-

rupted scheduled planning meetings as well as a new effort to involve FFA and 4-H members, said Stephen Parrott, a Nampa-based agricultural lender who chairs the committee. School closures affected the outreach to FFA and 4-H.

Members also expressed concern about social distancing — five or more teams of two usually spend a day driving the roads and placing signs, he said.

The committee works on agricultural promotion and education efforts including the Canyon County Farm Family of the Year recognition program, participation in a vocational agriculture advisory committee for a local high school and ag-related tours and events.

"The committee's goal is to educate about and promote agriculture in Canyon County," Parrott said.

He said the committee aims to involve FFA and 4-H in the crop-sign program next year. Committee Secretary Samantha Ball, UI Canyon County livestock and

small-acreage extension educator, said the crop-sign program provides free information that is important and can pique further public interest.

"We try to hit as many crops as possible on the routes we cover," Bolz said. Signs often are placed over the Memorial Day weekend, depending on weather.

The committee doesn't have a sign for every crop grown in the county because some aren't grown next to major roads and farmers' crop selections vary from year to year, he said. And some of the signs don't detail variations of the same crop, like corn grown for grain versus seed.

Parrott said the committee over the years has added signs for crops that were fairly new at the time, such as teff, turf grass and grapes.

## CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on [www.capitalpress.com](http://www.capitalpress.com) or by email to [newsroom@capitalpress.com](mailto:newsroom@capitalpress.com).

**TUESDAY, JUNE 30**  
**Snake River Pest Management Tour:** 8:30 a.m. University of Idaho Aberdeen Research and Extension Center, 1693 S. 2700 W., Aberdeen, Idaho. Potato weed-control trials to be featured. Participants to drive their own vehicles to tour stops and adhere to various COVID-19 safety practices. Three Idaho pesticide applicator recertification credits to be offered. Information: [phutch@uidaho.edu](mailto:phutch@uidaho.edu), 208-397-4181.

**HAACP Online Course:** Online, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) is an internationally recognized method of identifying and managing food

safety-related risk. It can provide customers, the public and regulatory agencies assurance that a food safety program is well managed. Participants will receive an International HACCP Alliance seal and certificate. This online course will help identify hazards associated with raw materials and process steps and assign controls. Contact: 208-863-4259, [wiliammullane@techhelp.org](mailto:wiliammullane@techhelp.org) Website: <https://techhelp.regfox.com/haccponline2020>

**FRIDAY, JULY 24**  
**16th Annual AgForestry Golf Tournament:** 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Apple Tree Golf Course, 8804 Occidental Ave., Yakima, Wash. Join the AgForestry network of alumni and supporters for an afternoon of golf, camaraderie and supporting future AgForestry Leaders. Con-

tact: Melissa Skomer-Kafton, 509-926-9113, [melissa@agforestry.org](mailto:melissa@agforestry.org) Website: <http://agforestry.org/golf-tournament-2020/>

**THURSDAY-FRIDAY**  
**JULY 30-31**  
**Soil Health Institute Annual Meeting (virtual):** 10 a.m. The two-day virtual meeting will offer 28 speakers on advancing, measuring and adopting soil health strategies. It will also address related economics, policies and programs. Those wanting to attend must register. Website: <https://soilhealthinstitute.org>

**TUESDAY, AUG. 11**  
**7th Annual Ag World Golf Classic:** 11 a.m. Canyon Lakes Golf Course, 3700 W. Canyon Lakes Drive, Kennewick, Wash. The Ag

World Golf Classic supports the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Inland Northwest. Contact: 509-765-0698 Website: <http://www.agworldgolf.com/golf>

**THURSDAY, AUG. 13**  
**7th Annual Ag World Golf Classic:** 11 a.m. The Links at Moses Pointe, 4524 Westshore Drive NE, Moses Lake, Wash. The Ag World Golf Classic supports the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Inland Northwest. Contact: 509-765-0698 Website: <http://www.agworldgolf.com/golf>

**SATURDAY SEPT. 19**  
**Small Farm School 2020:** Clackamas Community College, Clairmont Hall, 19600 S Molalla Ave., Oregon City, Ore. Small Farm School is a full-day event with hands-on workshops and class-

room sessions for beginning and small-scale commercial farmers. Subscribe to the mailing list for updates. The school is a collaboration between OSU Extension, Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District and Clackamas Community College. Fee: \$75 Contact: Clint Taylor, 979-820-3980 or [clint.taylor@oregonstate.edu](mailto:clint.taylor@oregonstate.edu)

**FRIDAY-SATURDAY**  
**SEPT. 25-26**  
**Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association Trade Show:** Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland. This is the annual meeting and trade show of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association. Contact: Angie Smith, 503-364-2942, [smith@pacwestcom.com](mailto:smith@pacwestcom.com) Website: [www.pnwcta.org](http://www.pnwcta.org)