

# Growing interest in agriculture

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LAKE COUNTY -- The California Women in Agriculture got a new crop of students for the AgVenture class of 2013.

The course is a concept in agricultural education designed for non-farming community leaders who want to understand the workings of the agricultural industry, according to Terry Dereniuk, AgVenture program coordinator and a graduate of the 2010 AgVenture program. Members of the class were selected based on interest, professional position and ability to help maintain a viable agricultural industry in Lake County. A dozen community members from various fields were invited to take the class, now in its fourth year, to learn about four agricultural industries in Lake County.

The class learned what it takes to be a farm owner and saw the fruits of farm workers' labor. They also learned about financial and environmental impacts of farming in Lake County.

The course was spread out, with a full-day class in August, September, October and November.

The first class focused on the pear industry and was held at the Saw Shop Gallery Bistro in Kelseyville.

The class began with Alan Flora, Lake County deputy administrative officer, and his presentation about the agricultural industry's impact on the county's economy.

Pears make up the second largest sector of the agricultural industry, with winegrapes leading at 56 percent of the share, he said.

Adobe Creek and Scully pear packing companies are two of the top 25 employers in Lake County, Flora said.

Diane Henderson, a fifth-generation Lake County resident and fourth-generation pear farmer, gave a presentation followed by a tour at Henderson Orchards, where students were able to pick pears to take home and to get a feel for what the work is like.

Other guests included Broc Zoller, who is known as The Pear Doctor, and Myron Holdenried, owner of Holdenried Ranches, whose presentation included turn-of-the-century photographs, and he gave a timeline of Lake County, beginning with cattle hide trade of the 1800s, and gave insight into how today's agriculture industry was shaped by past events, acts and treaties.

The September class held at Umpqua Bank in Lakeport focused on the wine industry in the county.

Public Works Director Scott De Leon gave a presentation on water quality monitoring for the irrigated lands waiver program, and Lake County Farm Bureau Director Claudia Street also spoke about environmental impacts from farming to the lake.

The class then took a bus tour and visited Beckstoffer Vineyards and ate lunch at Vigilance Winery and Vineyards, where Debra Sommerfield, president of the Lake County Winegrape Commission, spoke about marketing Lake County winegrapes.

Students were also treated to a tour and wine tasting at Gregory Graham Winery led by Gregory Graham.

In October, the AgVenture class met at the Tallman Hotel to learn about the walnut industry.

Guest speakers included agricultural biologist Katherine Byleven of the Lake County Department of Agriculture, who spoke about regulatory functions including spray permits; Paula Bryant of Umpqua Bank, who spoke about crop financing; Lake County Community Development Director Rick Coel spoke about land use and Sky Hoyt gave a presentation on the challenges and opportunities of farming in the county.

Students then took a tour Suchan Farm and Nursery in Upper Lake, led by owner and longtime walnut grower Alex Suchan.

The final class on Nov. 8 focused on olives. It was a new class added to the AgVenture course and had what the majority of students felt was the most impactful presentation.

A panel of migrant farm workers, moderated by Henderson, spoke of the trials and tribulations of the laborious work and gave their personal stories on how they traveled from Mexico to the United States.

While the work can be difficult and tiresome, and his journey crossing the boarder was not an easy one, Octavio Jiminez said he enjoyed the work and "if I'd die and come back again, I'd do the same thing."

The class then got a tour of the Chacewater Wine Company and Olive Mill Tour led by Mill Master Emilio dela Cruz.

At the end of the day, students received certificates for completing the course.