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Tulare County lends a helping hand to Neighbors in Need

At the time of this edition going to print, the Castle Fire (SQF Complex fire) continued to burn in the mountains above Three Rivers and Springville, and structural damage and losses were just beginning to be assessed. While the firefighters and other first responders do what they do best, a large and caring community of everyday citizens were quietly going about their jobs and tending to their families and supporting fire victims in countless ways.

Out at the **Woodlake Lions Rodeo Grounds** the County set up a temporary evacuation center on Sunday, September 13. Another large intake facility for livestock was set up at the **Porterville Fairgrounds**. In addition **Tulare County Animal Services** was poised to clear their shelter and make room for nearly 100 additional new pets (dogs, cats, poultry, rabbits, goats, and even a tortoise) were housed at the county animal shelter during the peak of the fire evacuations.

Tulare County Farm Bureau was contacted on Sunday, September 13 to assist with livestock intake, and our executive director answered the call and volunteered to assist with the day to day operations at the **Woodlake Rodeo Grounds**. She reached out to the Farm Bureau's executive committee notifying them of the plan and went to work.

The next many days the rodeo grounds in Woodlake and the fairgrounds in Porterville provided temporary shelter to all kinds of species: cattle, goats, horses, donkeys, mules, longhorns, alpacas, and more. Daily the first week of evacuation, generous supporters dropped by to ask what was needed, and day after day supplies arrived. One of the most notable being a semi-truck with a load of 8 stacks of grass hay was sent out by **Western Milling** to both the rodeo and the fairgrounds. Later that week a pallet of 4-way livestock grain mix was

also donated by Western Milling.

Cody Baker with **California Livestock Services** and **Justin Locke** on behalf of **Double J Dairy**, owned by **Jay te Velde** also used their resources to send out two additional stacks of hay to **Woodlake Rodeo grounds**. **Woodlake Grower Supply** made many supplies available to the facility at cost. At the **Porterville Fairgrounds**, the local **Porterville 4-H members**, **Evans Feed**, **Tractor Supply**, and **Western Milling** have also been huge donors and helpers throughout the process.

Countless individuals were volunteering to haul animals. **Jake Vickers** of **Vickers Livestock** drove over 6,000 miles with evacuations from the Creek Fire and then the SQF Fire in the month of September alone. Jake and his life partner **Jean Myers** just had a newborn baby of their own and were housing over 40 head of livestock evacuated at their property in Selma. Jake would work at his day job doing electrical work, and then drop everything and respond to calls for help all during the day and night. He is now considered one of the most experienced local haulers along with countless others like **Blake Cadigan** who was featured on ABC 30 news for rescuing more than 1,000 head of livestock from the fires. **Blake and Jake** assembled a large network of private individuals with livestock experience and livestock trailers ready to deploy rapidly when evacuations began. Tens of thousands of miles were driven, and thousands of head of livestock were saved because of their teams of drivers.

The biggest direct contributor of time, talent, and sweat at the **Woodlake Rodeo grounds** was the **Woodlake Lions Club**. The club is made up of approximately 38 current members,



and about 10 a day were involved in various aspects of opening the gates, feeding/watering the animals, moving feed around, cleaning pens, running water trucks, picking up and clearing out manure, and helping with all aspects of daily care. The grounds were staffed for a minimum of 12 hours a day, and most days longer than that with the caring Lions Club members.

The **Woodlake Lions Club Rodeo** is held each year in May, but this year all their fundraising events including the rodeo were put on hold due to COVID. Still, the members were instantly rallied to respond to the need for help, and have made all their resources, equipment, pens, and rodeo office available to help manage the fire evacuation needs for animals.

Knowing that the Red Cross, and county and state agencies tend to get a lot of the press during times of crisis, Farm Bureau really wants to highlight and emphasize those volunteers and donors that don't always get their names in the limelight.

If you are looking to support locally, might we suggest you consider a donation to the **Woodlake Lions Club**. They have a small but mighty team of volunteers, and with no incoming funds from rodeo or their car show or brew fest (*all cancelled*), they could really use an

injection of funds. They have a tractor, water trucks, utility vehicles, buildings, water troughs and corrals to maintain all that need time and money to be kept functional.

If you are in South County, the **Porterville Fair** is also a local community based fair that can certainly use your donations in support of their grounds upkeep, maintenance, and all the work they do to help the community year round. As COVID disrupts our lives, these nonprofits have continued to answer the call for help even with diminished income this year.

This article could not begin to chronicle all the amazing efforts throughout the region that have helped rescue people and animals in need of help this past month as the Castle (SQF) Fire and the Creek Fire have scorched over 200,000 acres of land in the eastern foothills of Tulare and Fresno Counties. The social media networks have helped connect neighbors and strangers, friends, and those who have never met one another be connected to resources of all types and sizes. Companies and individuals have stepped forth to deliver aid in many ways, and neighbors and friends have helped strangers through countless perilous days as the fires raged.

Belonging to a community like this is what makes rural America such a great place to call home. Farm Bureau is grateful for the opportunity to tell these stories and celebrate the rural places and people that make Tulare County great.

We pray for all the families, farms, ranches, and animals displaced by these fires and hope that we can get our Great State back to a more balanced approach for the health of our forests and wild places.

Lifelong Educator and Farm Bureau Ag Education Leader Passes

Sandi Gist Langiano, a life-long educator, and a devoted Agricultural Literacy leader for the Tulare County Farm Bureau, died, Sunday, September 20. We will let our friends and members know more about the family's memorial arrangements when announced.

Sandi was the Tulare County Farm Bureau's Education Committee co-chair for over 20 years and devoted to all our educational programs for children. She was a teacher at **Sundale Elementary**, where she ignited a passion for agriculture literacy, was a renowned school garden enthusiast, and helped TCFB develop numerous agricultural programs for youth including our calendar art contest, garden grants program, garden workshops, fair displays, youth leadership mentoring, and so much more. She will be dearly missed.

A retired elementary school

teacher, Sandi first began her involvement with Farm Bureau in 1996 when she attended a summer ag seminar hosted by the Farm Bureau. With the help of the education committee's school garden program, she created a garden for her own school. In 1998, she felt it was time to give back to the school garden program and joined the Education Committee. For the past 22 years, she has been a fundamental resource to teachers who wanted to start gardens at their own schools.

Sandi and her husband **Terry** were devoted to the Tulare County Farm Bureau supporting every major event, selling tickets, sponsoring friends to join them at our fundraisers, and being our biggest fan in all things agricultural education related. She would drop by the Farm Bureau office to visit with our staff, help stuff teacher packets, put together ideas for creative ways to share info with teachers and work



Sandi Gist Langiano, and husband Terry Langiano attending one of countless fundraisers they always so generously supported.

to build bridges with schools and programs.

She was also very active in her community, and a true philanthropist who cared deeply about the agricultural community, about children, about education, and contributed her time, talent, and treasure to many worthy causes. If you would like to contribute to the Tulare County Farm Bureau's educational programs in her memory, please contact our office at 732-8301.



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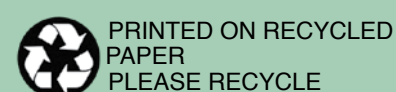
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What just Happened?

Notes from Executive Committee

Zack Stuller- Treasurer
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As we enter the final quarter of 2020, I find myself asking the same question as many other folks, what the hell just happened? This year has been a roller coaster for everyone from political uproar, racial division, riots, pandemics, economic turmoil, wildfires, and who could forget the murder hornets, this year has been one for the books. As I reminisce on all the bad things that have happened in the past 9 months and what the consequences of these occurrences has been, I find myself wondering how the outcome of these events may have been if they had happened only 20 years, 60 years, or perhaps 90 years ago.

Nearly 20 years ago on 9/11, one of the darkest times in in American history, our country burst with patriotism and seemed to have an overwhelming love and respect for police and first responders. After that horrible day in September our country was very united, focused, and unselfishly looked ahead to persevere and prosper. American Flags sold out in record numbers and Americans helped other Americans in need. There was an overwhelming amount of support for our military, and our Media seemed to have a united front of patriotism showing the good that was coming out of the horrible events rather than all of the bad and casting political blame as it seems to be the trend in current times.

Sixty years ago, when our country was entrenched in the historical Civil Rights movement, we observed massive

protests, marches, and gatherings of citizens that wanted to voice their views on racial injustice.

The difference between now and then, is back then people did not burn down their cities, vandalize public and private property, injure, and kill innocent citizens, and worst of all not be held accountable for it. Back then people had just as strong of views and beliefs as they do today, however the difference is people still had respect for their country, its laws, and the constitution that binds it together.

Ninety years ago we were hit with the Great Depression and eventually the onset of World War 2. While I was not around back then, the history books do not lie, Americans had to endure a level of poverty that we as a modern-day society cannot begin to fathom. Our country and its citizens were in of the lowest points in U.S. history from not only an economic standpoint, but the future of modern-day democracy was uncertain. Yet, the American people, regardless of race, gender, social status, pulled together and sacrificed all that they had to fight for our country's future and its ideals.

My point of this rant is that although our country is an ever-changing society, something in the past 20 years has occurred and led to what we are currently experiencing in America. I am not saying that COVID-19, racial inequality, or political elections are not significant. What I am saying is that the lack of respect for our fellow

citizens that has erupted in the path of these occurrences is leading to the degradation of our society.

The fact that the idea of violently rioting, murdering police, and destroying billions of dollars' worth of property is being socially accepted is unbelievable to me. The idea that someone can trespass and destroy property all based on a political sign is asinine. I have my own political views, but I respect others for having their own and the last thing I would ever think of doing is damaging others' property because they put up a candidate's sign that I didn't agree with. First of all, I respect others' property too much to do that and secondly, I don't have the time to worry about it because I am too busy working.

There are 330 million people in this country so that means there are 330 million answers on how to fix these issues and I am not about to voice all my recommendations in a 750-word column. The simplest answer that I see is respect. Respect for your fellow citizens, respect for the laws, regulations and the people that protect us, respect for the men and women that have given the ultimate sacrifice to allow us to live in peace, protest, and voice our opinion. If we practice the same amount of respect that we have in the past, then I truly believe that the ideals of this country and what is morally right and wrong will prevail.

***Stay safe everyone,
 keep your head down,
 and keep charging.***



Castle (SQF) Fire Brings out the Best in our County's Servant Leaders

Executive Comments

by Patricia Stever Blattler, Executive Director
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Mid-September brought about an unexpected crisis, not as if 2020 had not already been full of bumps and hurdles, but in addition a catastrophic forest fire in the Sierras above Springville and Three Rivers also left our communities in chaos.

Sunday, September 13 I was contacted by a friend and colleague, the manager of the Tulare County Animal Services division for the County, Cassie Heffington. She sent me a short text that said, "it is GO time" and could I help with livestock and animal evacuations. I readily and eagerly said "yes, put me to work! "

Farm Bureau's membership is a great community of caring and generous people, and calls came in for help, and financial support, donations of feed, supplies and more. My executive team also provided support and approval to jump in and help without delay.

Even more amazing was the response from the Woodlake Lions Club, a dedicated, tight knit crew of folks that manage the rodeo grounds

in Woodlake. They are an amazing, generous, humble team of servant leaders who worked along side me for days providing 14 hours plus of care, feeding, stall cleaning, tractor work, and support to the evacuee animals and their owners. This is symbolic of so many hidden helpers in these times of crisis that I really want to call out and say thank you to all of them.

Often the county animal control division gets a bit of a bad rap, as merely the dog catcher, or the dog pound. I can tell you this current management team, headed up by Cassie Heffington is far and above such an amazing shelter doing awesome work. Since Cassie came over from Kings County in 2019, I was honored to be on the selection team that interviewed and subsequently hired Cassie for her current role at TCAS.

Cassie gets that we make our living raising animals, and she respects deeply the farm and ranch community and will work along side us with any issues that arise. She has taken the shelter from a 62% to over a 90% live

release rate, meaning over 90% of the animals that they take in from the unincorporated areas of Tulare County leave the county's shelter for rescue, adoption, or transfer back to owners. This is a remarkable achievement and earlier this year the TCAS was provided much deserved recognition in the form of a prestigious award from Best Friends Animal Society.

Animal Control in general has a difficult job, they are who gets the calls when people dump dead animals on the road, when people have loose, stray, or vicious animals threatening their homes or livestock, and they are the agency that gets stuck with a lot of internal duties within the Health and Human Services Agency that often go unsung and unnoticed.

I just want to say to Cassie and her team, I notice you, I see you, I hear you, and as your local Farm Bureau, I'm here to work with you to help improve our county as a place to live, farm, raise animals, and responsibly improve the lives of pets for companionship too.