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## FOCUS AGRICULTURE CLASS XX GRADUATES 20 COMMUNITY LEADERS

This fall, Focus Agriculture graduated Class XXI. Class members pictured above are: **Row 1:** (L-R) **Samantha Haschert**, Development Review Planner, County of Santa Cruz; **Robin Larsen**, Donor Services Officer, Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County; **Patty Quillin**, Community Volunteer; **Stuart Kitayama**, Property Manager, Kitayama Bros., Inc.; **Laurie Mireles**, Director of Grant & Outreach, Salud Para La Gente; **Jane McKenzie**, Financial Advisor, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney; **Ryan Bolduan**, Greenhouse Supervisor, Driscoll's; **Robert Corbett**, Self-Employed, Robert D. Corbett, Architect AIA; **Donna Mekis**, Director, Honors Transfer Program, Cabrillo College; **Rose Kevern**, Staff; **Jess Brown**, Executive Director, Agri-Culture; **Row 2:** (L-R) **Ron Duncan**, Conservation & Customer Service Field Manager, Soquel Creek Water District; **Dave**

**Moeller**, Agricultural Commissioner, County of Santa Cruz, Retired; **Monika Maier**, Senior Loss Control Consultant, State Compensation Insurance Fund; **Alicia Moss**, Program Specialist, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County; **Brooke Parker**, Warehouse Manager, Second Harvest Food Bank; **Erin Kurtz**, Soil Conservationist, USDA; **Kathy Moeller**, Retired Educator; **Carol Polhamus**, Career & Technical Education Project Director, Santa Cruz Office of Education; **Eliseo Tatayon**, Seed Analyst, Germain's Technology, Inc.; **George Ow, Jr.**, Chief Executive, Ow Family Properties; **Matt Freeman**, Director of Conservation, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County. Not pictured: **Elias Alonzo**



# BRANCHING OUT

Fall/Winter 2010

A SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT OF AGRI-CULTURE

## A DAY ON THE FARM

### Dick Peixoto and Lakeside Organic Gardens

By George Ow, Jr., Chief Executive, Ow Family Properties, Class XXI

*The nine month Focus Agriculture program has one session where each participant spends a "Day on the Farm." They are asked to write a report about their experience. These reports will someday be turned over to a museum. Below is the report from George Ow, Jr. spending a day this year with Dick Peixoto at Lakeside Organic Gardens.*

**D**ick Peixoto is a dynamo and bigger than life person. He is a farmer, entrepreneur, businessman, community leader, employer, family leader. When I was with him for a day, he was always talking to people and making decisions. People routinely came up to him to get answers and hear what he had to say. Mr. Peixoto was always asking questions, assessing and making decisions. He was on the go non-stop. I was very lucky to be watching a master play his game of life. It was like watching Willie Mays or Luciano Pavarotti or Kristy Yamaguchi at their best.

Dick Peixoto operates under the Lakeside Organic Gardens label and grows, packs, cools and ships over 40 types of vegetables throughout the United States and Canada. He leases and farms 1,200 acres on 37+ sites in the Pajaro Valley, 500 acres in the Imperial Valley and has now started farming in Oxnard. Mr. Peixoto is in partnership with his brother Bob in Pajaro Valley Laser Leveling (since 1984) and brother Gary in Pajaro Valley Irrigation. He also provides picking and field preparation work.



George Ow, Jr. accepts his "diploma" at Focus Agriculture graduation

Here is a list of what makes Mr. Peixoto and Lakeside Organic Gardens survive, succeed and prosper:

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## FOCUS AGRICULTURE WINS NATIONAL AWARD

**T**he organization Agri-Culture has earned national recognition for an innovative program that informs people about local farming and ranching. It will be among 15 programs from throughout the nation that will be showcased during the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Annual Meeting next January in Atlanta, Ga.

Agri-Culture earned an "Activity of Excellence" award for its grassroots Focus Agriculture program. The program seeks to bridge the gap between rural and urban communities by annually educating 20 local elected officials and community leaders about agriculture in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro

Valley. Participants learn about local agriculture during an intensive, nine-month program, composed of daylong, once-a-month sessions.

Now in its 22nd year, the Focus Agriculture program includes farm experiences aimed at showing participants the current issues affecting local farms and ranches. There is a waiting list of more than 200 community leaders who hope to be chosen for the program. Agri-Culture President Bill Ringe stated, "Building relationships with local leaders early in their careers is critical to establishing a long-standing support system for local farmers and ranchers."



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Branching Out is the Semi-Annual Report of Agri-Culture  
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*A Message From the President...*

**Ag Tours Continue**



**W**e take great pride in offering tours to people who want to learn about agriculture in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley. Since our last communication, we have given tours to a diverse group, both international and local.



Bill Ringe, President

In August, a group of farmers and agricultural researchers from the Ukraine visited the Pajaro Valley touring a Driscoll's research facility, Sambrailo Packaging, strawberry grower Edward Ortega, raspberry grower John Eiskamp, apple grower Jim Rider and Gizdich Ranch.

In September, Leadership Farm Bureau, a program through the California Farm Bureau Federation, toured local agriculture including raspberry grower John Eiskamp, Gizdich Ranch and strawberry grower Edward Ortega, Brussels sprout grower Steve Bontadelli and a Driscoll's research facility.

In October, visitors from the State Compensation Insurance Fund toured agriculture in the Pajaro Valley including visits to strawberry grower Marc Cervantes, a Driscoll's research facility, raspberry grower John Eiskamp and Gizdich Ranch.

For more information regarding agricultural tours, contact Agri-Culture at (831) 722-6622 or agri-culture@sbcglobal.net.

Pictured top left: Ukrainian visitors enjoying a strawberry field; Bottom (L-R): Marc Cervantes; Ukrainian visitors at Jim Rider's apple ranch; Nita Gizdich with Jamie Johanson, CFBF Second Vice-President. Photos by Bill Ringe



**Save The 2011 Dates:**

**NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY, MARCH 16, 2011**

**DOWN TO EARTH WOMEN LUNCHEON, MAY 12, 2011**

**CALIFORNIA STATE FAIR, JULY 14 - JULY 31, 2011**

**18TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT, JULY 15, 2011**

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIR, SEPTEMBER 13-18, 2011**

**15TH ANNUAL PROGRESSIVE DINNER, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2011**

**A Day on the Farm - Continued from Page 1**

1. His operations are vertically integrated (growing, packing, cooling, sales and shipping) so that money can be saved and control maintained.
2. His produce is organic, which commands a higher price and segments him from the mass of American/foreign produce on the market. Mr. Peixoto was initially skeptical about organic produce, but evaluated the situation and made a move that has worked out very successfully.
3. His growing so many different crops makes it so that if one crop is not doing well for any reason, he has many others that are.
4. He is big enough in organic produce and smart enough to be able to somewhat control/influence the market to his favor and not be an anonymous farmer that just has to take any price that comes.
5. He is very good with people. He treats people with respect and you feel that you can make a deal in a straight-forward, business manner. His interactions with "underlings" seemed very open, with a good two-way flow so that problems could be solved in the best way. He speaks Spanish like a native speaker.
6. He has a team approach to things. People working together to do better together can accomplish almost anything.

The main thing that works is that Dick Peixoto is the boss. A maestro who knows what needs to be done with thousands of moving, whirling, constantly changing variables in terms of many fields, much farm equipment, many crews consisting of hundreds of workers, plants maturing, markets changing, working with the government and so on. I think they broke with mold when they made Dick Peixoto.

**Future Possible Problems:**

1. Who can replace Dick Peixoto when he retires?
2. Any possible fluctuations with labor supply
3. Possible shutting off of water resulting from the overdraft in the Pajaro Valley.



Dick Peixoto, "out standing" in his field

Photos by George Ow, Jr.

I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to meet and spend the day with Dick Peixoto. It is good knowing that our food is being supplied by such a capable, high level person and it is fascinating seeing some of how a successful farm operation works.



**FOCUS AGRICULTURE, CLASS XXII**

**Focus Agriculture** is Agri-Culture's "first-in-the-nation" educational program. It's an opportunity for community leaders to participate in a nine-session intensive program acquiring knowledge about a broad spectrum of agriculture. These day-long seminars cover such topics as:

- PRODUCTION AND LABOR
- ETHNIC GROUPS IN AGRICULTURE
- GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND POLITICS
- REGIONAL DIVERSITY OF COMMODITIES PRODUCED
- ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY
- MARKETING AND FOREIGN COMPETITION
- FARM TOURS AND HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Twenty participants will be chosen for Class XXII. Seminars will be held one Friday each month, unless otherwise scheduled, commencing **Friday, March 25, 2011.**

**Applications for Focus Agriculture Class XXII are due Friday, January 21, 2011 and are available online at [www.agri-culture.us](http://www.agri-culture.us)**

For more information please contact **Agri-Culture at (831) 722-6622.**