



THE DIRT

ALUMNI NETWORK GROWS

On Friday, April 21, Class 43 traveled to Spokane to complete their final seminar, Applied Leadership, followed by a reception with their family, friends and alumni from around to state to celebrate their graduation. Each class selects peers for three awards as well as the 'Stu Bledsoe Leadership award.

Awards went to:

- Inspirational award in honor of Carol Mercer for empowerment, encouragement and inspiration went to **Darcy Batura**, Director of Forest Partnerships, The Nature Conservancy.
- Leading Edge Leadership award in honor of Karl and Lexie Kupers for innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, and willingness to take calculated risks went to **Garrett Warren**, Precision Data Manager, Warren Farms.
- Making a Difference Community Service award in honor of Jack Felgenhauer for leadership through service, positively impacting communities, and sharing one's time went to **Karen Sheehan**, Co-Owner, J&K Dairy.



The class honored Washington State Director of Agriculture Derek Sandison with the Stu Bledsoe Leadership award honoring ‘an active leader with a distinguished career who has made a significant difference in natural resource industries and rural Washington’ for being an effective leader focused on solutions and collaboration with stakeholders.

The class speaker, also selected by the class, was Sean O’Brien, Eastern Washington Director for the Washington Policy Center who shared the class perspective on their last 18 months with impacts from current leaders including Lt. Governor Denny Heck, Alex McGregor (Class 6) and Congressman Dan Newhouse (4). [Read Sean’s speech here.](#)

Class 43 graduates are:

- Darcy Batura - The Nature Conservancy – Director of Forest Partnerships – Roslyn
- Maria Beltran - House Democratic Campaign Committee - Political Director – Seattle
- Pat Carter – Weyerhaeuser - Washington Marketing Team Lead - Battle Ground
- Erica Christie-Jones - Department of Natural Resources - Forest Practices Forester – Eatonville
- Allie Dobler - AgWest Farm Credit - Vice President-Customer Care – Spokane
- Collin Emmerson - Sierra Pacific Industries - Forester/Log Procurement – Eugene, OR
- Jordan Hansen - Amway / Nutrilite - Group Leader (Operations Manager) – Ephrata
- Jared Larwick - Department of Natural Resources - Natural Resource Specialist 4 – Vancouver
- Sean O'Brien - Washington Policy Center - Eastern Washington Director – Richland
- Danika Pink - Pink Farms – Quincy
- Karen Sheehan - J&K Dairy, LLC – Owner – Sunnyside
- Mikala Staples Hughes - Sakuma Bros. Farms and Processing - Director of Quality and Technical Services - Mount Vernon
- Garrett Warren - Warren Farms - Precision Data Manager – Dayton

CLASS 43 WRAPS UP WITH APPLIED LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

The class gathered in Spokane for their final seminar including giving their public policy project presentations, guided reflection, and visioning.

Steve Robinson, Craig Nelson (27), and Gretchen Lech (36) served as panelists for the policy projects providing insightful feedback and posing questions to each group to ensure class members captured lessons learned from the process. The evaluators emphasized that the journey is more important than the destination and in their individual reflections, class members expressed confidence and readiness to engage in policy discussions and process in the future.

The last day of the seminar included a “what’s next?” by Jordan McDevitt (38) sharing his leadership journey since AgForestry. Then the class was guided by Holly Henning, Curriculum Advisor, in an exercise to map their leadership futures. Lastly, Jaime Pinkham (9) provided an inspirational send off with the call to action, “what difference will you make?”.

Later that evening, Class 43 crossed the stage and joined the ranks of alumni!

CLASS 45 SELECTION IN PROCESS

Class 45 had interest from over 60 individuals, with 33 completing the application process. Now, the State Selection Committee, chaired by Karen Temen (22), starts their work. Application packets go out to interview panels in May with in-person interviews held June 1 by Area Conveners and area interview panels.

Convenors this year include:

Area 1 – Erin Ewald (40)

Area 2 – Trevor Faucett (39)

Area 3 – Erin Fonville (29)

Area 4 – Kyle Curtis (42)

Area 5 – Jerod Morris (42)

Area 6 – Mandy Galbreath (32) and Bruce LePage (16)

The State Selection Committee meets on June 6 to weigh application materials along with interview feedback to create a recommended Class 45 cohort which is presented to the board of directors on June 22 for final approval.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKS BOARD MEMBERS

The Nominating Committee begins its work in May looking to fill four board spots. The committee is seeking qualified candidates to serve on the governing body for the Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation that will ensure a mix of skills, experiences, and industries. The Nominating Committee presents the final slate of candidates to the board of directors at the June 22 board meeting.

The role of the AgForestry board is to:

- Function as trustees of Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation
- Define and adopt long-range strategic plans
- Determine mission, set objectives, general policies
- Preserve mission and goals of the Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation
- Hire competent and inspiring Executive Director
- Require accounts and records be kept
- Ensure adequate revenue to meet demands of robust leadership program

The board meets four to six times a year at locations around the state. If you're qualified, interested and have the time available, contact Vicky Scharlau at: vicky@agforestry.org

CLASS 44 KICKS OFF MODULE 3 AND MORE

Class 44 heads to Longview next month kicking off Module 3: Systems Thinking with Holly Henning, Curriculum Advisor from WSU, who will guide reflective journaling throughout the module. Class members will be introduced to and challenged to understand the systems experienced at seminars, systems each class member is part of, and become more effective in leading change in their industries. The topic focus of the seminar is understanding the forestry industry with thanks to Weyerhaeuser for hosting the class. Plus, many alumni volunteer time to create an impactful experience.

Four members of Class 44 joined Class 43 in Spokane to watch the policy project presentations, and taking notes for their presentations next year. The class takes the summer off but will be working to further develop policy ideas and move projects forward. Each group has identified an issue they care about to pursue for their projects:

Group: Justin Stang, Megan Schultz, Tiffany Pitra, Tammy Edmonds, Ryan Baye
The Issue: Various factors have led to a labor shortage in the agricultural, forestry, and natural resource fields that, if unaddressed, is projected to continue and potentially worsen.

Group: Natali Sahli, Eric Dixon, Derek Friehe, Wioletta Skotnicka-Kowalec

The Issue: The nationwide shortage of commercial truck drivers is affecting everyone.

Washington state agriculture and timber industries heavily rely on trucking to move materials, equipment, crops, animals, and get supplies to farms. The significant shortage of truck drivers is creating a competitive environment. The higher cost of trucking is affecting prices of supplies, fertilizer, feed, fuel and at the end consumers.

Group: Colin Towne, Carrie Nelson, Carolyn Groom, Madi Roy
The Issue: Young, beginning, small, and historically underserved producers face barriers to entry into agriculture, specifically access to education and extension.

Group: Maggie Elliot, Rosa Dekker, Andy Perleberg, Amber Itle, Tyler West

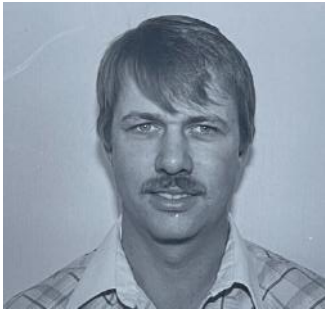
The Issue: Washington's agriculture, food, and livestock fiber industries face increasing economic risks associated with pest and disease outbreaks, which have increased across the state in frequency and severity due in part to global trade flows and changing climate patterns. The Washington State Department of Agriculture currently lacks readily available funds to prepare for, prevent, detect, and respond in a timely manner to pest and disease outbreaks that impact agricultural producers, the overall economy, and our state's food system.

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS



Sue Lani Madsen (29) joins Braver Angels

"Braver Angels seeks to nurture communication between diverse points of view nationally, and that's always been the goal for Ag Forestry in the State of Washington. A state as geographically and culturally diverse as Washington requires leaders who are committed to seeking common ground without compromising their own core values. It's an honor to be helping coordinate the work of Braver Angels across the state, building on the Ag Forestry experience." -Sue Lani Madsen



Gene Warren (8) – National Wheat Award

Congratulations to Gene Warren, his family, and employees for winning the National Wheat Foundation/Progressive Farmer magazine's "Dryland Winter Wheat" category with a 166.12 bushel-per-acre yield!



Wade Troutman (19) - National Assn. of Conservation Districts

Received the Olin Sims National Award from the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Upcoming Events



Roast & Toast honoring Sid Morrison

Saturday, June 24, 2023

State Fair Park & Event Center, 1301 S. Fair Avenue, Yakima, Washington

Social Hour 5:00 pm | Dinner 6:00 pm

[Register Here](#)

In Remembrance



Albert Roberts, Class 20

It was shared in a reference from Albert's Class 20 application, "*He has a desire to get to the truth on subjects and stand up for what he believes is the truth.*"

Thank You to our Graduation Sponsors!



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Class Sponsorship

2, 10, 18, 22, 27, 31, 32, 33, 38, 40, 42

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