



AqForestry

LEADERSHIP

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... and more!



THE DIRT

MARCH 2024

FOUNDATION BOARD MEETS IN PASCO FOR TWO DAY RETREAT

The Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation Board of Directors annually meets in February for a two-day retreat with this year taking them to the AgWest Farm Credit office in Pasco. A longer board meeting allows the board a deeper dive into thoughtful discussions, analyzing infrastructure and budgets, and time for training. This year's agenda included discussions on revitalizing the finance committee, work on the Foundation endowment, confirming structure of a curriculum committee, finalizing an implementation plan for a diversity, equity, and inclusion policy (adopted in 2019), building out structure of a board matrix and board agreement, as well as a morning of training on the "fun" of fund development.

The meeting included reports from Carolyn Groom (44), AgWest, and Wioletta Skotnicka-Kowalec (44), Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, who shared the impact that AgForestry has had on them as individuals, as well as how they have applied their lessons in their work places.

The 15-member board is made up of alums and non-alums from across the state representing all sectors of natural resource industries.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

The 2024 Legislative Session has come to a close and bills are making their way to Governor's desk including funding for agencies. The State Department of Ag Legislative Priorities budget included funds for a program called: *Growing Diverse Leaders and Creating Education Opportunities in Agriculture*. The funds would provide programming grants to:

- Future Farmers of America (FFA)
- Washington State University (WSU), Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS)
- Washington State Tree Fruit Association (WSTFA) Agriculture Leadership Program
- Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation - AgForestry Leadership Program

Outcome of the final funding will be known by the end of the month.

SEARCH COMMITTEE SEEKS FULLTIME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AgForestry is recognized as the premier leadership development program in Washington State offering hands-on learning experiences for adult professionals in the agriculture, forestry, and other natural resources-based businesses to cultivate leaders who communicate, collaborate, inspire, and serve.

The Executive Director plays a critically important leadership role with ultimate responsibility for effective governance, donor growth, Board relations and development, resource development and advocacy on behalf of the organization. The Executive Director also provides overall leadership for the daily operations of the Foundation and AgForestry, including budgeting, financial management and reporting; developing staff and human resources.

The Foundation's Search Committee is looking to alums for help distributing the Executive Director job announcement:

- Post on your own social media accounts
- Share the post from the AgForestry LinkedIn profile on your profile
- If you are part of or have access to industry email lists, send an email to that list with the position announcement
- Share at upcoming conferences or seminars that have job boards
- Share with industry-related associations that have job boards
- Invite those you feel are interested and qualified!

LEARN MORE

WHITMAN COLLEGE SEEKS JOBS FOR INTERNS

The Whitman Internship Grant (WIG) is a student-driven competitive grant providing students with funding internship opportunities. Internships can take place at non-profit organizations, some for-profit organizations, and government or public offices. The funds for the Whitman Internship Grant program are allocated by Career and Community College Engagement Center based on student applications. Each selected recipient will receive funding to participate in a semester or summer internship (interns are paid by the grant so you don't have to).

LEARN MORE

PANAMA AND COSTA RICA: CLASS 44 GAINS INTERNATIONAL INSIGHTS

Class 44's international seminar traveled through the lush landscapes of Panama and Costa Rica that blended planned experience with unexpected challenges, revealing the true essence of leadership in the face of adversity.

Multiple flight cancellations led to unplanned overnight travel, replacing a plane trip with a memorable bus journey across international borders from Panama to Costa Rica. Despite physical discomfort, the class gracefully navigated stress, gaining insights into personal adaptability. This immersive experience brought life to conversations about migration in the region. Migration emerged as a theme throughout the seminar, emphasized by meetings with the UN's Office of International Migration, the Embassy in Panama and in Costa Rica, as well as in dialogue with locals everywhere. The real complexities of migration issues became alive from the bus ride, a 2:00 am bus breakdown, walking across the border, and experiencing animal check stations.

Awareness unfolded as participants realized the significant influence of the U.S., historically and presently, in both Panama and Costa Rica. Revelations became catalysts for reflections on leadership: ranging from personal insights to understanding large-scale organizational and national dynamics. Despite and because of the challenges, the seminar proved remarkably fruitful, equipping Class 44 with increased skills in their leadership journey.



(top to bottom) Class 44 at Blanco y Negro, on the beach at Manuel Antonio, Siempre Verde Lodge, and getting off the bus on the last day of their travels

EMPOWERMENT IN THE STATE CAPITOL: CLASS 45 NAVIGATES OLYMPIA

Class 45's Olympia Seminar was transformative: challenging assumptions and fostering a deeper understanding of the intricacies of state government. Class members expressed they felt "small" coming into the seminar, but emerged empowered, realizing their potential to impact policy and governance with a takeaway learning the significance of



Jackie Hancock with Representative Tom Dent

consistent engagement with legislators. One class member noted it was an "aha" that maintaining meaningful relationships with legislators takes at least three interactions each year. This insight, coupled with the realization that our voices are heard when we actively participate, shifted many participants perspective from passive observer to engaged contributors.

The seminar demystified Olympia, turning apprehension into excitement. The class learned the importance of visibility, repetition, and connection-building in effective advocacy. Another realization

revealed the reciprocity in engaging with policymakers, emphasizing the importance of both sharing their perspectives and understanding legislators' priorities.

The experience highlighted the accessibility of the system, inspiring a commitment to action over complaining. Participants expressed less patience for inaction, recognizing the impact of engagement. As they bid farewell to Olympia, it was with a sense of pride, having conquered initial fears and emerging with a renewed sense of purpose and passion for active participation in shaping the state's future.

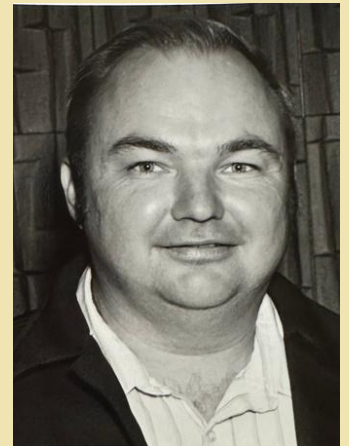
IN REMEMBRANCE

Dennis Swanberg 1948 - 2024 (pictured)

Dennis shared in his application for AgForestry Class 4: "I feel that a leader today must be dedicated to his cause... Along with this is a necessity to be able to work with people, for in the long run, it is the general population that must help to achieve a major goal."

We also just learned of John's passing:

John Penney 1942 - 2018



CLASS 44 TO GRADUATE

Class 44 is about to enter the ranks of “alumni”! Will you help us celebrate them? There are two events to join us for this this year: public policy presentations and/or graduation. You are invited to attend both!

Public Policy Presentations:

- When: Thursday, April 11 at 8:30 am
- Public Policy topics include:
 - Agriculture Pest and Disease Revolving Fund
 - Addressing the Commercial Driver Shortage in Agriculture and Natural Resources
 - Addressing Barriers to Access
 - Building Awareness about Careers in Agriculture and Natural Resources in Washington

Graduation Celebration:

- When: Friday, April 12
 - 5:00 pm – Social Hour
 - 6:00 pm – Dinner and Ceremony

Both events will be held at the Hotel Indigo in Everett.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL
DETAILS AND TO
REGISTER](#)

Class 44 graduates include:

Ryan Baye Wash. Assn. of Conservation Districts, *Director of Leg. & Membership Services* | *Lacey*
Rosa Dekker East Columbia Basin Irrigation District, *Treasurer/Assistant Manager for Administration* | *Othello*

Eric Dixon South Columbia Basin Irrigation District, *Assistant Manager* | *Kennewick*

Tammy Edmonds Darigold, *Field & FARM Manager* | *Kennewick*

Maggie Elliot Washington Hop Commission, *Science and Communications Director* | *Moxee*

Derek Friehe Friehe Farms, *General Manager* | *Moses Lake*

Carolyn Groom AgWest Farm Credit, *VP- Credit* | *Pasco*

Amber Itle Wash. State Department of Agriculture, *State Veterinarian* | *Bellingham*

Carrie Nelson Wash. State Dept. of Natural Resources, *District Manager* | *Tacoma*

Andy Perleberg Washington State University, *Extension Forester* | *Cashmere*

Tiffany Pitra Yakima Chief Hops, *Senior Sensory Manager* | *Yakima*

Madi Roy Wash. State Department of Agriculture, *Agricultural Economist* | *Yakima*

Natalie Sahli Wash. State Dept. of Natural Resources, *Aquaculture Land Manager* | *Olympia*

Megan Schultz Weyerhaeuser, *Logistics Manager* | *Kalama*

Wioletta Skotnicka-Kowalec Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, *Director Grower Relations* | *Richland*

Justin Stang Hama Hama Co., *Wholesale Manager* | *Olympia*

Colin Towne Weyerhaeuser, *Forester* | *Centralia*

Tyler West AgWest Farm Credit, *Relationship Manager, VP* | *Seattle*

CLASS 44 TO GRADUATE (cont.)

Class award winners include:

Carol Mercer Inspirational Award – Amber Itle

Karl and Lexie Kupers Leading Edge Leadership Award – Justin Stang

Jack Felgenhauer “Making a Difference” Community Service Award – Andy Perleberg

Class Speaker – Maggie Elliot

Stu Bledsoe Leadership Award - Class 44 selected Jaime A. Pinkham (9) recognizing his impactful leadership in affirming tribal sovereignty and environmental stewardship.

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP OPEN TO AGFORESTRY ALUMS

The spring session of Gonzaga’s **Authentic Leadership Program** is open and AgForestry has been invited to join. The session is set for May 29-31 and participants can **enroll directly in the course here**. The Authentic Leadership Program is a 3-day, in-person leadership experience that will deepen self-awareness, develop leadership identity, and enhance communication skills. The experience is designed for executive and middle level leaders for personal growth and impact and held at the Ross Point Conference Center on the Spokane River. The program is led by leadership experts and practitioners, Dick Mandeville and Kristin Telin and includes:

- Emotional intelligence
- Leadership and identity
- Courageous communication
- Inclusive leadership
- Personal assessments (Checkpoint360 Review, ProfileXT, Emotional Intelligence Profile) with individual debriefs with certified practitioners
- Hands-on, skill-building activities

You will:

- Increase self-awareness of your leadership style, strengths, unconscious biases, and growth areas.
- Develop greater capacity to motivate and engage others.
- Gain an understanding of emotional intelligence (EQ) and learn skills to increase it.
- Learn best practices for engaging in difficult conversations, particularly addressing issues related to diversity and inclusion.
- Gain strategies for addressing the challenges for executive leadership.

The program is \$4,500 and includes accommodation and meals, and three assessments with individual debriefs with certified practitioners.



ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

Kate Delavan, Class 42, promoted to acting Policy Director, Washington State Conservation Commission

LEARN MORE

NETWORK ZOOM UPDATES SCHEDULED

Join the Board of Directors for a monthly network update to learn about:

- Fund drive and fundraising plan
- Program update
- Executive Director search
- Q&A: Bring your questions, we want to hear from you!

Zoom network updates (click date to register)

- [Wednesday, March 27: 9 – 9:45 am](#)
- [Tuesday, April 23: 4 – 4:45 pm](#)
- [Tuesday, May 14: 12 – 12:45 pm](#)
- [Tuesday, June 25: 4 – 4:45 pm](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Public Policy Presentations

- *When:* Thursday, April 11 at 8:30 am
- *Where:* Hotel Indigo in Everett

REGISTER HERE

Graduation Celebration:

- *When:* Friday, April 12
 - 5:00 pm – Social Hour
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- *Where:* Hotel Indigo in Everett

REGISTER HERE

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING AGFORESTRY!

Click here to view our full list of donors.

We have raised \$498,414 toward our goal of \$600,000 by June 30.....so we have \$100,000 left to go!



Mission

We cultivate leaders in agriculture, forestry, and natural resources who communicate, collaborate, inspire, and serve.

Vision

To positively impact and enrich lives and communities in Washington State to meet challenges faced by agriculture, forestry, and natural resources.

Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation

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