



Press Release

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The Santa Maria Fairpark Announces it's 2024 Agricultural Award Recipients

The Santa Maria Fairpark held their Annual Agricultural Awards Recognition Dinner on Tuesday, June 2, 2024, at the Fountain Pavilion, in Santa Maria.

Each year recipients are chosen who have displayed outstanding community leadership and service in Livestock, Farming, and Agri-Business. The Board of Directors also selects the recipient of the Director's Choice Awards who is chosen based on their leadership and dedicated service to the Fairpark.

Last night a new category was introduced; Sponsor of the Year. This award recognizes a sponsor who has shown immense generosity by giving of their time, talent, or treasure.

The Santa Maria Fairpark also rededicated the Minetti Arena and renamed the arena; Clarence and Rosalie Minetti Arena.

Rededication of the Minetti Arena

Whether you were born and raised in the Santa Maria Valley, or you are a transplant, almost everyone here has- at a minimum - heard of Clarence and Rosalie Minetti.

Clarence was such a big part of our community, he, along with Rosalie and Rosalie's cousin, Richard, brought us the Far Western Tavern – which is arguably still one of the best places to get a steak.

He was a rancher and businessman who led the community with a servant's heart. The list of honors and achievements are numerous, including 1985 Santa Barbara County Fair Livestock Man of the Year.

Clarence married Rosalie Maretti in 1940. Rosalie grew up on the Corralitos Ranch, the Marettis' family ranch. Clarence learned the ins and outs of the cattle business from Rosalie's father, Charles Maretti.

In 1947, after the passing of Rosalie's father, Charles, Clarence and Rosalie jumped into the daily operation of the family ranching business. Together with Rosalie's Brother, Ralph Maretti and his wife

Wilma, the two couples formed the Maretti and Minetti Ranch Company, which is still in operation today.

Rosalie was known for her meticulously handwritten bookkeeping for the family ranch, her amazing culinary skills, and her total inclination for hospitality.

The couple passed down the passion for ranching and community to their children: Tyke, Marie, and Susan. All of which carry on the traditions of Clarence and Rosalie.

Clarence served as president of the Guadalupe Lions Club and served on the Board of Trustees for the Guadalupe Joint Union School District. He also served on our very own 37th District Agricultural Association's Fair Board in the 50s and 60s.

The Minetti's countless contributions to our community remain an example of selflessness, hard work and humility for our youth today.

Our arena was dedicated to and named the Clarence Minetti Arena in the late 1960s, and tonight almost 65 years later, we continue to pay tribute to these two soulmates and pillars in our community. The Santa Maria Fairpark is pleased to announce the rededication of our beloved Clarence Minetti Arena. We are updating the name and from this day forward it will be known as the Clarence and Rosalie Minetti Arena.

Tom Gulliver Agri-Business Person of the Year

Tom was born and raised in LA and grew up at LA Pierce Agri College, where his father was the farm manager. Tom rode his little stingray bicycle all over the farm and witnessed the education of many agriculture students. He has fond memories of following the veterinary students around and dreaming of being a vet one day.

However, as is often the case, his path was redirected. After he graduated from high school he went to junior college. After junior college he went on a mission trip to Tahiti in the South Pacific. Missionary work is hard work, but very rewarding. He was able to communicate with the locals by being fluent in Tahitian and some French, too.

Tom returned home and attended Brigham Young University and studied Agriculture Business with an emphasis on economics. Tom graduated from BYU in 1983 and immediately went to work Farm Credit. His first assignment was in Ventura.

He married his wife Kathy in 1984. He and Kathy have 4 daughters and 14 grandchildren.

He was transferred to Santa Maria in 1988, where dedicated his entire career to working in agri-banking. Agri-banking on the central coast definitely has its challenges, but Tom's love for his customers kept him at AgWest Farm Credit for his entire career.

Tom started participating in the Ag Awards committee about 20 years ago. When the past chair retired from the committee, Tom picked up the torch and kept the program and the committee going. When he retired from AgWest Farm Credit, he continued on the committee for a few years.

Tom is a long-time member of the Allan Hancock Agriculture Advisory Committee and continues to serve in that capacity. Tom

Jenny Hardin Livestock Person of the Year

Jenny was born and raised on the family ranch in Los Alamos, where she still lives today. The family ranch was a part of the Spanish Land Grants roughly 200 years ago. So it is safe to say that ranching runs in her blood!

While the family has always tended cattle on the family ranch, her father and uncle, the King Brothers, started running cattle in Parkfield, California in the 60s. There is not a time in Jenny's life she can remember that she was not involved with cattle, and she attributes her love of cattle to her father and uncle.

Jenny went to Saint Joe's High School, Alan Hancock College, and on to Cal Poly. From there, Jenny worked as a waitress to put herself through college as she studied Ag Business.

Jenny left Cal Poly and went to work with her father and do what she loved the most, run cattle. Cattle has been a family affair her whole life. Her brother helped run the ranch, and after she got married, her husband also jumped in to help do whatever needed to be done!

In the late 1990s the herd had grown to a point where Jenny could work full-time with her father, and she became a full-time partner in the business. She and her father managed to keep the herd together during the drought. In one year, they moved the herd to four times just to keep them together.

Jenny loves everything about the Livestock Industry. She and her family ran the receiving station at the old sales yard in Buellton. They would get a load of cattle together and take them to the sale in Templeton to be sold on behalf of the local ranchers.

Jenny has been a member of the Cattlemen's Association for 35 years and has served as the Secretary for 20 of those years. She has dedicated her entire life to working with cattle, and continues to help neighboring ranches as often as possible.

also let and continues to participate in the Santa Barbara Regional FFA Project Competitions. He also spent many years leading a young farm institution program to serve young, beginning, and smaller farmers in the industry.

Tom's life work is made up of a love for his customers, the ag community, and our up-and-coming young farmers and ranchers.

It is an honor to present this year's Livestock Person of the Year Award to Jenny Hardin.

John Will Sponsor of the Year

Sponsorship comes in all sizes and forms. Time, Talent, and Treasure. John Will of the JF Will Company, our first ever recipient has blessed the 37th District Agricultural Association with all three.

The Will family has been supporting the Santa Maria Valley for 4 generations. John married his wife, Karen in 1992. Together they have 4 children and their first grand baby is on the way. We know that generation 5 is already watching and learning from John, and have no doubt that generation 6 will be brought up with the same can-do spirit and love for the Santa Maria Valley.

John graduated from St. Joseph High School and went on to major in business at The University of Portland. John started the JF Will Company in 1999 and has been successfully running the business, taking care of his family, and taking care of his community for several decades.

John has dedicated his time to many local organizations including People for Leisure and Youth Inc., Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department, Santa Maria Police Council, Boys & Girls Club of Mid Central Coast, Marian Regional Medical Center, the Santa Maria Valley YMCA, and of course, the 37th District Agricultural Association.

John has provided countless hours to many grounds improvements at the Santa Maria Fairpark.

Joe Jorge Farmer of the Year

Joe was born on a dairy farm in the San Joaquin Valley and moved to Santa Maria with his family when he was just 10 years old.

Joe was introduced to FFA at Santa Maria High School, where he competed in many activities and his love for the farming sector of the ag industry took a strong hold. His mentor in FFA was Dale Peterson, a name most of us know. While in FFA he participated in judging competitions and showing livestock at the Santa Barbara County Fair.

Shortly after graduation in 1973, he went to work on a lettuce crew for Western Packing in Guadalupe, and married his high school sweetheart, Patti, in 1975.

In 1985 he, and a few others, partnered up to create Byrd Harvest, Inc. in Guadalupe. They started with harvesting and by 1990 they were farming.

Today, Joe is still a partner at Byrd Farms, but he is also a long-time leader and board member of the Grower-Shipper of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties. Joe is one of the hardest working, truly humble, and most effective leaders in our farming community.

Rick Tomasini Director's Choice

Rick Tomasini dedicated 23 years of service to our livestock program.

Rick is 4th Generation in the Santa Ynez Valley. He graduated from Santa Ynez High School in 1982. Rick's love for our fair started when he was in high school. The Santa Barbara County Fair was where he showed cattle.

Rick went straight to work after high school, and honestly, he has not stopped! His first job was in the County of Santa Barbara's Maintenance Department, working on the operating end of a shovel. He worked hard and earned various promotions throughout his years with the County of Santa Barbara and when he retired in 2021, he was the Supervisor of Operations for the Maintenance Department.

In 2001, he and his wife, Sandra introduced their kids to 4-H, and were instrumental in starting the Valley 4-H Club in 2002.

Of course, we all know that when you have a love of livestock – and generally speaking, the fair – it doesn't take long before you become a fixture around here. And that is just what happened with Rick. Before he knew it, he was volunteering for then Livestock Superintendent, Candy Evenson, and throughout the years he got more involved.

Joe's love of agriculture has spread throughout his family. Both of his sisters, Mary and Rosalie, work in the family business, as well as his son, Joey. Janelle and Jessica, his daughters also spent time working in the family business while they were in high school.

Joe's grandchildren have been showing at the Santa Barbara County Fair for a number of years. From peewees to 4-H, the Jorge grandchildren are right at home in the showing.

In 2014, he was asked to be the Livestock Superintendent, and if you know Rick, you know the first response was no thank you. However, with a little arm twisting, he finally said, "yes," and stayed on with us until the end of the 2023 Santa Barbara County Fair. During his time as superintendent, his goal was to make improvements where he could. He listened to the parents, club advisors, fair staff, and the fair board to keep our Livestock Show and Auction – not just alive but improving with every year.

He helped make improvements to the grounds by building the shade structure over the beef ring and by the sheep pavilion. Rick created a suggestion box where parents, leaders and participants could drop a suggestion. He read them each year to see where he could make improvements that mattered to everyone. We will miss seeing Rick making magic happen here at the Santa Barbara County Fair.



Santa Maria Fairpark



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