

BENEFITING U

SPECIAL EDITION – CONFERENCE SUMMARY



CONNECT Conference 2024: A Resounding Success

As the curtains close on the 44th Annual CONNECT Conference, the reverberations of its insights and initiatives are sure to echo throughout the agribusiness community. UnitedAg's unwavering commitment to fostering collaboration has set the stage for a new era of leadership. As we reflect on the milestones achieved and the challenges ahead, one thing remains clear: the future of agribusiness is brimming with possibilities, and together, we're poised to seize them.



All Aboard the Napa Wine Train

The 44th Annual CONNECT Conference embarked on its journey with a memorable networking event aboard the illustrious Napa Wine Train, setting the stage for what promised to be a transformative gathering. Against the backdrop of Napa's breathtaking vistas, over 100 attendees seized the opportunity to forge new connections and deepen existing ones within the agribusiness community. As glasses clinked and laughter filled the air, attendees exchanged insights, ideas, and aspirations, laying the foundation for meaningful collaborations.

Napa Wine Train

Welcome reception event Wednesday, April 10th



From left: Celestina Jones, Santiago Martin and Lennet Giron



From left: Sarah Gargan & Marvin Baxter

From left: Delia Kobayashi, Elizabeth Cherry & Tina Barlocker

Row below: Doug Lightle and Sam Eastman

Row below: Gary & Kris Kaprielian, David & Mary Nikssarian



CONNECT24

WomenAg Session

Led by Lorraine Moos, an expert in leadership coaching, the WomenAg breakfast session offered attendees a transformative opportunity to identify and overcome internal barriers hindering personal and professional growth. With a focus on empowerment and self-discovery, the session aimed to equip attendees with the tools and insights needed to lead more abundant and peaceful lives.

Through engaging discussions and interactive exercises, attendees delved deep into the intricacies of personal development, exploring strategies to overcome self-doubt, fear, and limiting beliefs. Drawing upon her wealth of experience in leadership coaching, Lorraine Moos provided invaluable insights and practical techniques to help attendees unleash their full potential and become better, more authentic versions of themselves.





Breakfast Keynote Chris Barton

As the keynote speaker, Chris Barton captivated the audience with his visionary insights and groundbreaking achievements. Drawing upon his journey as the founder of Shazam, he shared the remarkable story behind the app's creation and its profound impact on the music industry and beyond.

At the heart of Chris Barton's keynote was a testament to the power of innovation and technology to drive meaningful change. As we look towards the future, let us draw inspiration from Chris Barton's pioneering spirit and continue to push the boundaries of what is possible, one transformative idea at a time.

Session 1: ERISA

In Session 1 of the conference, attendees learned about the core aspects of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), led by Mark Nielsen, Esq. Throughout the session, attendees delved into key provisions of ERISA, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the rules governing plan management and the enforcement agencies tasked with upholding its mandates. Mark Nielsen's expertise illuminated the complexities of ERISA, empowering participants to navigate its regulatory framework with confidence and clarity.



Luncheon Keynote Astronaut Jose Hernandez



The luncheon reached new heights of inspiration as attendees had the privilege of hearing from Jose Hernandez, entrepreneur, and former NASA astronaut. With a captivating keynote address, Jose shared not only his personal journey but also his recipes for success and leadership, leaving a lasting impact on all who were present.

Jose took center stage, captivating the audience with his engaging storytelling and profound insights. Drawing upon his experiences as the child of a migrant farmworker family turned astronaut, he shared the invaluable lessons he learned along the way—lessons of perseverance, resilience, and unwavering determination.

Through anecdotes, Jose painted a vivid picture of his journey from humble beginnings to the reaches of outer space. His story served as a powerful reminder that with passion, hard work, steadfast belief in oneself, and community support anything is possible.

Advocacy in Action

Annual PAC Golf Tournament at Eagle Vines Golf Course in Napa, CA



Top Left: Santiago Martin and Robert Myers
Top Center: Derek Daggett and Nick Gambini
Top Right: Bruce and Lisa Thomas
Bottom: Sachin Varma, Matt Bastone and Santiago Martin



Session 2: Advocacy in Action



The dynamic conversation from our expert panelists delved into strategies for expanding advocacy and educational initiatives, fostering informed communities that champion and sustain agriculture.

One key strategy emphasized by the panelists is the crafting of compelling narratives. By telling stories that resonate with people on an emotional level, agricultural advocates can connect with broader audiences and convey the importance of agriculture in their lives. These narratives humanize the agricultural industry, highlighting the hard work, dedication, and passion of farmers and ranchers, as well as the vital role that agriculture plays in providing food, fuel, and fiber for communities around the world.

In addition to storytelling, the panelists underscored the importance of leveraging data-driven insights to support advocacy efforts. By using data to illustrate the economic, environmental, and social impact of agriculture, advocates can provide evidence-based arguments that resonate with policymakers, stakeholders, and the public. Data-driven insights can help quantify the value of agriculture in terms of job creation, economic growth, environmental stewardship, and food security, making a compelling case for policies and investments that support the long-term sustainability and viability of the agricultural industry.



A Leader is Recognized

Amidst the jovial atmosphere of the luncheon, a poignant moment unfolded as attendees came together to commemorate Kirti Mutatkar, CEO of UnitedAg. In a special recognition ceremony marking her remarkable tenure of ten years at the helm, Kirti was celebrated for her transformative leadership and unwavering dedication to UnitedAg and its membership.

Congratulations Kirti!

Session 3: The Power of Connection

In a session led by CEO, Kirti Mutatkar, the session delved into a dynamic panel discussion featuring eight of our industry partners. This interactive roundtable served as a forum for exploring and addressing the barriers and issues affecting our members' access to provider networks, benefits, and resources.



Welcome New Board Members



The annual membership meeting, a cornerstone of the conference, was a testament to the unity and collective strength of the agricultural community. Eric Bream and Richard Plato opened the meeting with a comprehensive financial and membership update, offering attendees insight into the organization's healthy growth and robust financial position. Their informative presentation underscored the dedication and diligence of the leadership team in navigating the organization towards continued success.

Top Sales Rep Awards

Annual Awards Luncheon - Thursday, April 11th



Top left: Jayson Welter, Bruce Thomas, Kirti Mutatkar & Eric Bream

Top center: Mike Davidson & Charles Ernst

Top right: Jayson Welter, Sam Eastman, Kirti Mutatkar & Eric Bream



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Session 4: Economic Outlook

Session 4 of the conference proved to be a pivotal moment as Dr. Thornberg took the stage to share his expertise and extensive research, providing attendees with a comprehensive analysis of economic trends, key indicators, and potential impacts on various sectors. Dr. Thornberg's insights offered participants a deeper understanding of the economic landscape and actionable strategies to navigate potential challenges and opportunities.

With precision and clarity, Dr. Thornberg dissected complex economic data, offering attendees a glimpse into the factors shaping the current economic climate. From fluctuations in GDP growth to shifts in consumer behavior, Dr. Thornberg provided invaluable insights into the forces driving change and disruption across industries.



Iron Chef Throwdown

Networking event Wednesday, April 10th



From top left: Team three (Charles Ernst, Rocio Rodriguez, Marylu Ramirez, Mary Bream, Liz Granadeus, & Danielle McShane).

Center picture: Marylu Ramirez, Mary Bream, Rocio Rodriguez & Veronica Blanco

From top far right: Team two (Chana Hauben, Eric Bream, Kirti Mutatkar, Veronica Blanco and Clare Einsmann).

Bottom right: Team one (Sarah Gargan, Laretta Griffin, Kiran Sibia, Bridget Sanchez, Nikki Galvan, Maribel Ochoa, Kirti Mutatkar, Erika Branch)

WomenAg Graduates

The luncheon took on a special significance as it served as a platform to celebrate the remarkable achievements of six graduates from the 2023 WomenAg Leadership Academy. Founded by our visionary CEO, Kirti Mutatkar, the academy stands as a beacon of empowerment, designed to nurture and cultivate leadership skills among women in agribusiness.

Against the backdrop of camaraderie and celebration, attendees gathered to honor the journey and accomplishments of these exceptional women. Each graduate, a testament to the transformative power of education and mentorship, exemplified resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to excellence.



Masquerade Gala

The Gala was a night to remember as attendees were treated to inspiring stories from two remarkable scholarship recipients, Bridget Sanchez and Maggie Farlow. Their personal educational journeys illuminated the importance of the scholarship program, showcasing the transformative impact it has on the lives of aspiring agricultural leaders.



Silent Auction

The Annual Silent Auction, a beloved tradition that benefits our Agribusiness Education Foundation, proved to be a resounding success, raising an impressive 11k. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all donors and participants whose generosity and support made this achievement possible. A special thank you is owed to our esteemed auctioneer, Louie Brown, whose charisma and expertise once again elevated the event to new heights. Louie's dedication and enthusiasm were instrumental in engaging attendees and driving spirited bidding wars, all in support of a worthy cause.

Silent Auction Donors:

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Thank You to Our Sponsors



Thank You to CalVans

As CONNECT Conference 2024 comes to a close, a heartfelt expression of gratitude is extended to CalVans for their unwavering commitment to ensuring safe and reliable transportation throughout the event. Day in and day out, the dedicated team at CalVans exemplifies excellence in service, playing a pivotal role in keeping our roadways safe and our agribusiness community thriving.

The significance of CalVans' contributions cannot be overstated. In a landscape where transportation is often a logistical challenge, particularly for agricultural workers in rural areas, CalVans emerges as a beacon of reliability and support. By empowering individuals with the means to commute to work safely and conveniently, CalVans plays a vital role in sustaining the backbone of our agricultural economy.

