

# ATWATER FFA SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

## MONTHLY MEETING ANNUAL BOWLING MEETING

Over 300 Atwater High School FFA members participated in the 20th annual FFA "Bowling Tournament" Meeting on September 27th at Bellevue Bowl in Atwater. The purpose of the meeting was to create an opportunity for FFA members to participate in a recreational activity and develop one's social and team building skills.

The Atwater FFA holds monthly meetings, scheduled at a regular time and guided by a sound agenda, that provide an efficient transaction of business, promote chapter unity and encourage better attendance. Chapter meetings are excellent learning and teaching tools. "The important thing to realize is that the chapter meetings are planned and run by the students," says FFA Advisor Kim Mesa, "Tonight's meeting was an excellent way to bring everyone together as a chapter."

Trophies were awarded to the top three teams. Atwater High School agriculture students Cristopher Alvarez, Robert Williamson, Jacob Willson, Christopher Torres, and Ethan Sotclo placed 1st overall as a team and won the tournament. Favian Tristan, Serodin Yepiz, African Tinco, Tony Corarrvbias, and Aaden Eisneros placed 2nd overall as a team. Beau Holliman, Bryan Heitman, Brian Soto, Luke Sanchez, Nathan Crardra were recognized as 3rd place team finishers. Specialty awards were given to individuals during the tournament. The "Stay Calm & Bowl On" award went to Serepin Yepiz, the "Oh Spare Me" award went to Felix Maldonado, the "I'm Just Happy to be Here" award went to Salvador Maldonado, the "Ms. Queen Pin" award went to Yareli Bolis, and the "Strike It Out" award went to Brian Soto.

FFA is a dynamic youth organization within agricultural education that changes lives and prepares students for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. FFA was created in 1928 as Future Farmers of America; the name was changed in 1988 to the National FFA Organization to represent the growing diversity of agriculture. Today, over half a million-student members are engaged in a wide range of agricultural education activities, leading to over 300 career opportunities in the food, fiber and natural resources industry. Student success remains the primary mission of the FFA. This was the 20th year the newly renovated Bellevue Bowl has sponsored and supported this popular student event. "Bellevue Bowl is just one example of the continued support our AHS students and agriculture program receives from our community and local businesses," said Atwater High School FFA advisor Shelby Fishman. "Our goal is to make a positive difference in young people's lives, and this event is an example of being able to get together and enjoy each other's company."



Grant Williamson, Jacob Willson, Christopher Alvarez, Christopher Torres, and Ethan Sotelo earned 1st place in the 20th Annual FFA bowling tournament

## CLUB RUSH

The 2023-2024 school year is off to a great start at Atwater High School with over 2100 students participating in the annual Atwater High School Club Rush last week. The purpose of this event was to promote and recruit programs, events, and students to the numerous activities and opportunities available at Atwater High School. "Club Rush was an amazing event," says FFA Chapter Parliamentarian Hailey Hereforth, "We were able to join other organizations

and clubs on campus and expose the various opportunities available to all students." With over thirty active clubs and youth organizations at the high school, students created various promotional activities in the quad during lunch. The event is organized by the Atwater High School Leadership class. Some of the highlighted "It was a great turnout overall, with a lot of kids having fun with genuine school spirit," said Atwater High School Director of Activities Nathan Braga. "We feel it is especially valuable for the new 9th grade students as it helps them get connected with Atwater High School."





## CHAPTER OFFICERS ATTEND COLC

The 2023-2024 Atwater FFA chapter officer team joined seventeen other FFA chapters from the Merced-Mariposa section at the annual FFA Chapter Officer Leadership Conference (COLC) held at Merced College September 12th. The annual leadership conference is held each year to help students develop and strengthen leadership skills and responsibilities within their offices. The 2023-2024 Atwater FFA officer team is composed of Brianna Duran, President; Allison Brewer, Vice President; Katelynn Medeiros, Secretary; Bryce Nickerson, Treasurer; Viviana Roach, Reporter; Ayde Renteria, Sentinel; Gizselle Avila, Historian; Hailey Herforth, Parliamentarian and Grace Agundis, Chaplin. This year the theme for the Merced-Mariposa Sectional FFA is "Lead Together, Serve Together". Various activities were held at the conference which included working with difficult people, building together, chapter fundraising, public speaking, facilitating a meeting, analytical skills, and finding team strengths. "Meeting new people and discovering they share the same passion for serving and improving their school FFA chapters was an amazing new experience," said Atwater FFA chapter officer Ayde Renteria. This conference is one of the many leadership opportunities that students can participate in, while being involved in FFA. Chapters from all throughout California will meet in Sacramento, at the Golden One Center for the annual FFA State Conference held in March. Students will be able to attend valuable sessions that teach students about leadership, working as a team, while advocating for the agriculture industry. The skills that the students learn will be taken back to the high school and shared throughout the 2023-2024 school year.

## FIRST ANNUAL GREENHAND MIXER

Over 200 Atwater High School first year agriculture students and FFA members participated in the 1st annual "FFA Greenhand Mixer" meeting last week. The purpose of this event was to connect first-year agriculture students with other first-year agriculture students through an FFA social, BBQ, and fun & games event. "This was an idea originated by this year's FFA officer team to encourage involvement and engagement outside the classroom for our first-year agriculture students," said Atwater High School FFA Advisor Taylor Helton. "The turnout and enthusiasm of the students was great to see."

The term "Greenhand" comes from the National FFA Organization's degree program. To be eligible to receive the Greenhand FFA Degree from the chapter, a member must meet the following minimum qualifications: (1) Be enrolled in agriculture education and have satisfactory plans for a supervised agriculture experience program. (2) Learn and explain the FFA Creed, motto, salute, and FFA mission statement. (3) Describe and explain the meaning of the FFA emblem and colors. (4) Demonstrate a knowledge of the FFA Code of Ethics and the proper use of the FFA jacket. (5) Demonstrate a knowledge of the history of the organization, the chapter constitution and bylaws and the chapter Program of Activities. (6) Personally own or have access to the Official FFA Manual and the Official FFA Student Handbook. (7) Submit written application for the Greenhand FFA Degree. Current 1st year Atwater High School agriculture students are working towards their degrees with a degree ceremony scheduled for those who earn them in November this year.





# NEW AG TEACHER ALERT

## MEET MS. ZITTEL

The Atwater High School Agriculture Department has welcomed Maddie Zittel as its ninth agriculture teacher to the team. A former Frontier-Bakersfield FFA member, Fresno State University graduate, and three-year Golden Valley agriculture teacher, Zittel adds Agriscience pathway courses, FFA judging teams, and fair project experience and opportunity to the program.

"I am excited to join the Atwater Agriculture Department and help students gain knowledge and skills while finding a purpose in life through agriculture education and the FFA," says Zittel.

"Atwater FFA is a highly recognized chapter throughout the state and I am excited to join the team." Zittel grew up around agriculture and found her passion in sharing it with others. "I've

been raising and showing hogs at county fairs basically my whole life and that's a really big part of my story," said Zittel. She hopes to share her passion for raising and showing livestock as the new FFA advisor for market goats.

Ms. Zittel is teaching Ag Biology, Ag Chemistry, and Ag Earth Science during the 2023-2024 school year. She will also be coaching both Career Development Experience (CDE) and Leadership Development Experience (LDE) events and activities with students. Atwater High School has over 1100 individual agriculture students. "The challenge agriculture education faces is the stereotype that agriculture education is for agriculture students only," says Atwater High School agriculture instructor Dave Gossman. "The reality is that agriculture education and the FFA have value for all students in terms of knowledge, skills, experiences, activities, and involvement that benefits every student regardless of career interests."

The Atwater High School agriculture education program and FFA focuses on academic success, personal growth, leadership, and career exploration for students. The Atwater and California FFA is a high school youth leadership and career development organization that is a state association of the National FFA Organization, a federally chartered corporation under Public Law 105-225. The California Association currently serves nearly 100,000 student members in over 320 high schools, from urban schools in Los Angeles and the Bay Area to rural schools all across the state.



FFA advisor Maddie Zittel works with agriculture students Nash Ambriz, Sara Martinez Gutierrez, Rey Gaytan Perez, and Joseph Aguilar

## FIRST BBQ OF THE YEAR

Over 1,000 BBQ tri-tip and pork loin dinners were cooked, prepared and picked-up by various community families through the annual Atwater "FFA Take-Out BBQ" dinner. With 4500+ lbs of tri-tip, pork loin, salad, beans, and rolls packaged and sold by Atwater FFA students, the BBQ dinner turned out to be a success for this FFA fundraiser. "This is a win-win situation. The community gets a great tasting BBQ meal and the agriculture program benefits from the funds that will be focused directly on the students," said FFA advisor and BBQ coordinator Kim Mesa.

This fundraiser is one of four take-out BBQ fundraisers for the Atwater FFA throughout the upcoming school year. The students sell the tickets in advance followed by the ordering of food. The Atwater FFA has worked closely with Atwater's Smart & Final, Richwood Meats, Sysco, and Costco as they have supported the program's fundraiser every year. The morning of the BBQ, students arrive early before school to prepare the salads, meat, beans, and dinner bags. Throughout the day, students take a "hands-on" approach towards the preparation, cooking, and organization of all the meals. "The students are invested in this event as they put forth tremendous effort in organizing and implementing the event," said FFA advisor and "BBQ Extraordinaire" Sam Meredith.

The "FFA Take-Out BBQ" is one of two current fundraisers for Atwater FFA. The other current fundraiser taking place is the placemat ad sales. "All the money that is raised goes directly toward the students in providing resources and opportunities for all of them to achieve personal growth, academic success, and career objectives," said FFA advisor Shelby Fishman. Over \$25,000 in funds and agriculture resources is expected to be raised this school year to help support the agriculture program's operation and activities.

The success and growth of the Atwater FFA and agriculture program is due to the continued support of the Atwater High School staff and administration, the Merced Union High School District, the Atwater Ag Boosters, and the hundreds of local community members and parents. "We want to ensure that there is a return on the community's investment by motivating and encouraging our students to go after their educational and career interests," said FFA advisor Taylor Helton, "The excitement and effort we are seeing this year from our students is generating just a "taste" of what is still to come!"



Atwater community member Jennice Whitby picks up her Atwater FFA tri-tip BBQ meal from agriculture students Sophia Lomeli and Viviana Roach.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

SAT, OCT.7- FALL FEST XII

OCT.13-14- FFA PLANT SALE

TUE, OCT.17- GREENHAND LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

WED, OCT.18- MMS OPENING & CLOSING CONTEST

THUR, OCT.19- LOCAL FFA PROJECT COMPETITION

THUR, OCT.19- FFA 'BEAUTIFICATION' DAY

FRI, OCT.20- END OF QUARTER

THUR, OCT.26- OCTOBER FFA MEETING

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