
**IMPERIAL COUNTY FARM BUREAU
PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Imperial County Farm Bureau Awards \$45,250 to Local Students

Imperial County Farm Bureau is proud to announce it has awarded \$45,250 to thirty-five local students who are pursuing educations and careers in the agriculture industry. We are always impressed with the great group of student applications we receive each year, and this year was no different. We applaud this year's students for continuing to pursue their goals. We are optimistic that they will succeed in their education and return to the Imperial Valley after college to become assets to our local agricultural industry.

ICFB administers six different scholarship funds: Matthew LaBrucherie Memorial Scholarship, Raul Rodriguez Memorial Scholarship, Jack & Pauline McConnell Memorial Scholarship, Al Kalin Memorial Scholarship, Jack Strobel Memorial Scholarship, and Imperial County Farm Bureau Scholarship.

This year, seven Matthew LaBrucherie Memorial Scholarships were awarded for a total of \$15,500. Matthew LaBrucherie lived the American Dream and spent his life helping others do the same. The son of French immigrants, Mr. LaBrucherie attended Imperial Valley College, Oregon State University and St. Mary's College, where he earned a degree in business administration before returning to Imperial Valley to farm. He was a founder of McCabe Cattle Company and personally built many of the corrals by hand, which are still in use today. He worked with partners to create El Toro Land & Cattle, El Toro Grain and El Toro Export. These businesses, along with his extensive investment of time, energy and perseverance in giving back to his community contributed immeasurably to advancing the agricultural economy of the Imperial Valley.

Recipients of the Matthew LaBrucherie Memorial Scholarship are three Imperial Valley graduating high school seniors and four current college students:

- Valia Castillo, a 2026 graduate of Southwest High School, attending University of California, Davis
- Kayzen Higginbottom, a 2026 graduate of Brawley Union High School, attending Oklahoma State University.
- Kylee Lamoure, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending Montana State University.
- Yolanda Tabarez, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending California

State University, Fresno.

- Maria Valverde, a graduate of Calipatria High School, attending Grand Canyon State University.
- Pedro Zavala, a graduate from Southwest High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
- Moses Zendejas, a graduate of Calipatria High School, attending Purdue University.

This year, five Raul Rodriguez Memorial Scholarships were awarded for a total of \$4,500. Raul Rodriguez, a former Farm Bureau board member, spent his life helping others, always ready to offer his time or resources to a good cause. A Brawley native, Mr. Rodriguez grew up working on his father's ranch. He attended Cal Poly Pomona where he earned a degree in crop science before returning to the Imperial Valley to begin his own farming operation with his brother. In addition to serving as board member at Farm Bureau, Mr. Rodriguez also served on the IID's Water Conservation Advisory Board as well as the USDA Farm Service Agency's County Advisory Committee.

Recipients of the Raul Rodriguez Memorial Scholarship were are current college students:

- Addison Castro, a graduate of Brawley Union High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, Pomona.
- Melanie Orrozco Gonzalez, a graduate of Holtville High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
- Oliver Popejoy, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
- Kristian Rubio, a graduate of Calexico High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, Pomona.
- Maria Valverde, a graduate of Calipatria High School, attending Grand Canyon University.

This year, two Jack & Pauline McConnell Memorial Scholarships were awarded for a total of \$2,000. This scholarship was established in honor of Jack and Pauline McConnell who were strong advocates for agricultural education. Mr. McConnell served on the Farm Bureau scholarship committee for as long as it existed, and outside of Farm Bureau, the pair shared their rich knowledge with many local and even international students of all ages. It is fitting, then, that their legacy continues on

through the Jack & Pauline McConnell Memorial Scholarship. Mr. McConnell had served as a Farm Bureau board member continuously since the 1950s, while Mrs. McConnell was extremely active in Farm Bureau Women as well as serving on the Farm Bureau Board of Directors and many other activities in service to our community and agriculture industry.

Recipients of Jack & Pauline McConnell Memorial Scholarship are one Imperial Valley High School graduate and one current college student:

- Jackson Irungaray, a 2026 graduate of Holtville High School, attending Texas Tech University.
- Payton Iten, graduate of Holtville High School, attending University of Arizona.

This year, one Al Kalin Memorial Scholarship was awarded for a total of \$500. Al Kalin was an incredible storyteller, but the story of his own life is the best one of all. His family managed a feedlot, a 3000-acre farm, and the Planters Hotel. His mother eventually purchased eighty acres on the edge of the Salton Sea; this was Al's favorite childhood hunt where he spent countless days hunting, fishing and beachcombing. Al had many people and experiences in his early years that helped influence and nurture his love for the great outdoors, his respect for nature, and his vast knowledge of many aspects of agriculture and life in the Imperial Valley that would grow to expertise levels throughout his life. As a farmer, environmentalist, and foremost expert on the Salton Sea, he served on countless advisory committees tackling issues such as water conservation, restoration of the Salton Sea, water quality, and others. Al was also the recipient of several prestigious awards. As remarkable as Al was, it was his gentle spirit, quiet nature, willingness to help and teach others, and his down to earth personality that made him a dear friend to people of all walks of life. The Al Kalin Memorial Scholarship is awarded to a student who mirrors many of Mr. Kalin's characteristics including his love of farming and vast knowledge and care for our environment.

The Al Kalin Memorial Scholarship was awarded to one current college student:

- Angela Velasquez, graduate of Imperial High School, attending University of Arizona.

This year, ten Jack Strobel Memorial Scholarships were awarded for a total of \$5,000. Jack Strobel's early years were spent farming with his father. In the 1960's, he developed 320 acres of raw desert into farmland as one of the last desert entries to

be approved in the Valley by the Department of Interior. In the late 70's Jack became a real estate broker and opened his own office "Jack Strobel Ranch Realty" in El Centro. Because of his farming knowledge, honesty and trustworthiness, he never had to advertise his business.

For over 20 years he supported the California Midwinter fair Junior Livestock auction and 4-H swine program. He was so proud of these youth that he saved every letter, photograph and thank you note he ever received. Jack was always willing to go out of his way to extend a helping hand to a friend. So many farmers and others in the Valley can share a time when he helped them out of a dire situation. His door was always open and he took great pleasure in knowing that he had a part in helping someone succeed. Jack will be deeply missed.

Recipients of the Jack Strobel Memorial Scholarship are three Imperial Valley graduating students and seven current college students:

- Valia Castillo, a 2026 graduate of Southwest High School, attending University of California, Davis.
- Brianna Elizalde, a graduate of Brawley Union High School, attending University of California, Davis.
- Kate Grizzle, a graduate of Holtville High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
- Hannah Hoyuela, a 2026 graduate of Calexico High School, attending California State University, Chico.
- Gianna Irungaray, a graduate of Holtville High School, attending Texas Tech University.
- Jackson Irungaray, a 2026 graduate of Holtville High School, attending Texas Tech University.
- Kylee Lamoure, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending Montana State University.
- Madison Mills, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending California Western School of Law.
- Philip Minnick, a graduate of Imperial High School, attending OSU College of Veterinary Medicine.
- Keeley Poloni, a graduate of Holtville High School, attending The Royal Veterinary College.

The Imperial County Farm Bureau Scholarship is the longest standing of our

scholarships, and it is supported each year by the annual Farm Bureau Scholarship Barbecue. Because of all the generous support, this year, we were able to award thirty-two Imperial County Farm Bureau Scholarships for a total of \$17,750.

Recipients of the Imperial County Farm Bureau Scholarship included six Imperial Valley graduating high school seniors and thirteen current college students:

- Kimberly Alvarez, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending University of Arizona.
- Hudson Burch, a graduate of Holtville High School, attending Texas A&M University.
- Connor Chaliupnik, a 2026 graduate of Brawley Union High School, attending Oklahoma State University.
- Mia Contreras, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending California State University, Monterey Bay.
- Brianna Denault, a graduate of Imperial High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
- Loren Dhaliwal, a 2026 graduate of Holtville High School, attending Oklahoma State University.
- Kayla Estrada, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending University of California, Davis.
- Roberto Angel Gonzalez, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending University of Arizona.
- Kate Grizzle, a graduate of Holtville High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
- Hannah Hoyuela, a 2026 graduate of Calexico High School, attending California State University, Chico.
- Gianna Irungaray, a graduate of Holtville High School, attending Texas Tech University.
- Alejandro Lopez, a graduate of Imperial High School, attending University of Arizona.
- Gianni Mayo, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
- Madison Mills, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending California Western School of Law.
- Savannah Ocegüera, a graduate of Southwest High School, attending Imperial Valley College.

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- Juan Parada, a graduate Southwest High School, attending University of Arizona.
 - Alessandra Rangel, a 2026 graduate of Calexico High School, attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.
 - Kyle Self, a 2026 graduate of Holtville High School, attending Oklahoma State University.
 - Angela Velasquez, a graduate of Imperial High School, attending University of Arizona.

ICFB would like to congratulate all thirty-five recipients and wish them the best of luck as they continue their studies to become the next generation of farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, entomologists, ag lobbyists, and much more.