

Notes from Country Ventures mtg, Nov. 29, 2010 at UCCE library, Merced, Ca
Attending: Maxwell Norton, Alan Schoff, Mary Bettencourt, Cindy Lashbrook, Sam Minturn, Jean Okuye, Stephanie Rivero (Merced County CAED srivero@co.merced.ca.us), David Silveira, Rosie Burroughs

A mission statement was developed: **To develop, promote and sustain agricultural tourism in Merced County, featuring agriculture, nature and the arts.**

A vision statement was developed: **Merced County will be a vibrant tourist destination and provide opportunities to explore and value our art, ag and nature.**

A **committee** was suggested to work on an ordinance to permit right, administrative and conditional use permits. These people will be asked to join; however, others may be added: Mary Hemminger, Mark Hendrickson or rep, Cindy Lashbrook, Jean Okuye, Tim Whitfield, Heidi Raggio, David Silveira, Stephanie Marchini, Patti Kishi, Sheryl Sauter, and others who have expressed interest in helping develop an ordinance.

Suggestion was made to have the Merced County General Plan Update focus groups for agriculture and economics meet before the scheduled meeting in the new year. Jean will contact Peter Koch who is on the economic focus group. Maxwell will contact ag focus group members.

Jean shared two articles on Country Venture project of audio tour which were in the Sep. and Oct. California Fresh Fruit magazine.

State Fair Booth was discussed. To promote Merced County ag, art and nature tourism the suggestion was made to talk to the County. Possibly CV could take a lead. Alan stated he will be talking to Mark Hendricksen, economic development director for Merced County. Having a couple proposals to suggest was discussed. Alan stated in January the exhibitor guide will be posted. Dates for State Fair are July 13-31, 2011.

Audio tour Hwy 165: Maxwell, Jack Sparks, and Denise Skidmore will plan the next audio tour. This will be from Turlock south to Los Banos area.

Jean shared some ideas for a map of Merced County showing off its assets. Rhonda Lowe had suggested this could possibly be developed for tourism. Jean will talk with Rhonda and Karen Baker regarding this.

Growing Agritourism workshop info was handed out. **Wed. Jan 19, 2011, 8:30-4:15** at UC Cooperative Extension Merced County, 2145 Wardrobe Ave, Merced
Register online: <http://ucanr.org/mercedagtour>
More info: paleff@ucdavis.edu 530-752-7779

Mark your calendar. We are the first to have a workshop on this subject dear to us all.
Jean Okuye

An update on what happened just 24 hours after our mtg.

Re State Fair Booth: Realizing last night after our meeting that on the Board of Supervisors (BOS) agenda for today was a vote to “Authorize the Merced County Chamber of Commerce as the Official Representative of the County to create the Exhibit at the 2011 Calif. Sate Fair...” I attended and spoke at their mtg. I asked what the county policy was. Sup. Kelsey spoke about the importance of having a booth which represents our county, suggesting input be given by interested people. The outcome was the BOS directed staff to organize a meeting among interested parties with the County Chamber, then report at the Dec. 14 BOS mtg.

If you are interested in attending please let me know. County staff will be getting back to me soon.

jean