



A CELEBRATION OF LOCAL FOOD, WINE & BEER
September 30 - October 2

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AWARD WINNER PHOTOS: <http://ow.ly/cd0Z303yGxx>

**Harvest Fair Names Karissa Kruse
2016 Friend of Sonoma County Agriculture**

Visionary Leader Puts Farming First in Sonoma County

SANTA ROSA, Calif. – August 26, 2016 – With deep roots in farming and a diverse background in business and marketing, Karissa Kruse brings passion and perspective to Sonoma County agriculture. From dairy farming to grape growing, Kruse has been working with farmers on improving the visibility and economics of agriculture for years. The Sonoma County Harvest Fair is pleased to honor Karissa Kruse with this year's Friend of Sonoma County Agriculture award.

Kruse shared that her passion for farming originates from spending her summers on her grandparent's farm in Nebraska. She stated, "Farms are paradise for kids and their active imaginations. What I didn't realize at the time, was that I was building a deep appreciation for farmers."

Born in South Dakota, Kruse dreamed of a big job in the city. She studied business and marketing and received a BS and MBA from Wharton School of Business at University of Pennsylvania. Championed by supportive parents and mentored by her older brother Anthony, she pursued the career of her dreams. Throughout her career she worked for large corporations such as Marvel Comics, General Mills, and Nike. After years of success in corporate America, Kruse realized that she needed a change. She then moved to Santa Rosa and in 2008 planted her first vineyard.

As a grower for and partner of Argot Winery, Kruse began to understand firsthand the trials, tribulations, and yet, pure joy of being a farmer. When presented with the opportunity to take on the role of Marketing Director for the Sonoma Winegrape Commission in 2012, she knew it would be the perfect fit. Within a year, she was named President.



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“Being a farmer is a 24-hour a day job and they do it with passion and a true love of the land. I am proud to work for Sonoma County Winegrowers,” said Kruse.

Kruse is most proud of her work with local farmers to position Sonoma County as a leader in sustainability. In 2015, Kruse was the first in Sonoma County to receive the Marshall Memorial Fellowship Award, where she traveled to Europe for a month to better understand transatlantic relations, sustainable farming, agri-tourism and wine marketing. She was selected in 2014 as a North Bay Business Journal Women in Business Honoree and 40 under Forty Award recipient in 2012.

Kruse is on the Advisory Committee for Wharton’s Initiative on Environmental Leadership and on the boards of the Sonoma County Tourism Bureau, Sonoma County Harvest Fair, Sonoma County Grape Growers Foundation, Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce, Santa Rosa Junior College Shone Farm Foundation, Ag Trust Committee and Viticulture Advisory Committee and is also a member of Leadership Santa Rosa Class 29.

“I am humbled to receive the Friend of Agriculture Award. I work every day to preserve agriculture in Sonoma County and promote our great region, so to be selected by a group of men and women who have been my mentors, motivators and friends is a true honor,” said Kruse.

The Sonoma County Harvest Fair is proud to recognize Karissa Kruse for her dedication to the preservation and prosperity of our local agriculture as this year’s Friend of Sonoma County Agriculture. Kruse will be honored during the Harvest Fair awards ceremony and dinner to be held September 25 at Luther Burbank Center for the Arts. A limited number of tickets are available at HarvestFair.org or at the Harvest Fair Box Office located at 1350 Bennett Valley Road in Santa Rosa.

The 2016 Sonoma County Harvest Fair is September 30-October 2 at the Sonoma County Events Center at the Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa. For information, visit HarvestFair.org or call (707) 545-4200. You can also follow "Sonoma County Harvest Fair" on Facebook.

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