



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

1350 Bennett Valley Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
P: (707) 545-4200 x202
F: (707) 573-9342
HarvestFair.org

Publicity@SonomaCountyFair.com

Contact:

Leasha LaBruzzi

publicity@sonomacountyfair.com

(707) 545-4200 ext. 202

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

**Sonoma County Harvest Fair Honors Vino Farms'
Marissa Ledbetter-Foster
Third-Generation Winegrape Grower Receives
2016 Outstanding Young Farmer Award**

SANTA ROSA, CA – September 6, 2016 – Marissa Ledbetter-Foster loves agriculture and numbers. After graduating from Cal State San Luis Obispo in 2004 with a B.S. in Agricultural Business and a minor in Wine & Viticulture, she wanted to determine her best career fit. She considered Ag Finance, and she also felt the passion for farming that is in her blood. Marissa worked for several wineries over the next few years, gaining a wealth of experience and skills. Her quest to find the perfect niche, however, continued.

Then, one day, a conversation with father Jim Ledbetter set things in motion. “I started talking to my dad,” Marissa says. “I had left a job with another family winery, and when I told him I was going to start looking for work again, he offered me a job.” Marissa didn’t jump at the chance, but not due to a lack of interest. “I grew up watching my dad and my uncle grow their business,” she says. “In high school, my senior project was based on our company. In college, I saw how close my Ag major friends were with their families, and I realized, we really do have something special and unique. But when my dad offered me the job, I didn’t know if I was ready.”

The farming operation was started in the 1970’s by Marissa’s grandfather, Keith Ledbetter. Marissa proceeded to have further conversations with her father, her uncle, John Ledbetter, and her cousin, Kim Ledbetter-Bronson, all of whom worked in the business. The outcome was that Marissa, along with cousin Craig Ledbetter, joined Vino Farms in May of 2006.



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

1350 Bennett Valley Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
P: (707) 545-4200 x202
F: (707) 573-9342
HarvestFair.org

Publicity@SonomaCountyFair.com

Over the years, Vino Farms has earned a solid reputation within the industry, and Marissa has been a major contributor to this achievement. Among other things, Vino Farms is recognized for its dedication to employees, sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices and community involvement. As Vice President of Operations for the North Coast, Marissa travels between Napa and Sonoma Counties overseeing operations of both managed and owned vineyards. Her responsibilities include: new vineyard development and redevelopment; joint oversight of the Human Resources and Safety Departments; harvest scheduling; winery relations; and a multitude of other tasks that arise throughout the year.

“It’s all about family,” she states. “It’s about striving to be the best and provide the best for our employees and for our own families. I love working with my family and making my grandpa proud.”

Marissa is clearly doing just that. She seems to have found her niche, a niche where quality agriculture and impressive numbers abound. Vino Farms has approximately 100 vineyards in their North Coast region and sells to over 100 regional wineries, and 2016 marks Marissa’s 11th harvest.

In addition to deftly handling all that her job entails, Marissa has a history of active participation in local, state and federal organizations related to her industry. Currently, she sits on boards for the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG), the California Wine Grape Growers Foundation (CWGGF) and the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission (SCW).

Of being named 2016 Outstanding Young Farmer, Marissa says, “When I got the phone call, I was shocked...and honored. I was surprised to win the award because there are so many young, wonderful farmers in our community. I’m really honored.”

Marissa lives with husband Brian Foster, stepdaughter Kendra, 14 and son James, 2. The couple is also expecting a baby girl in January.

The Sonoma County Harvest Fair is pleased to recognize Marissa Ledbetter-Foster as this year’s Outstanding Young Farmer. A ceremony and dinner will be held September 25 at Luther Burbank Center for the Arts. The celebration is open to the public with a



A CELEBRATION OF LOCAL FOOD, WINE & BEER

September 30 - October 2

1350 Bennett Valley Road

Santa Rosa, CA 95404

P: (707) 545-4200 x202

F: (707) 573-9342

HarvestFair.org

Publicity@SonomaCountyFair.com

limited number of tickets 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. The popular and prestigious annual event includes the World Championship Grape Stomp, wine, beer and cider tasting, food and wine-related seminars, workshops and much more. For information, visit HarvestFair.org or call (707) 545-4200. You can also follow "Sonoma County Harvest Fair" on Facebook.

###