

Calaveras GROWN

The migration of young people leaving small-town America for the big city isn't new. But for the past few decades, more and more of us have been doing it. As Alana Semuels pointed out in an article for *The Atlantic* a few years ago, "Over the past two decades, as cities have become job centers that attract diverse young people, rural America has become older and less populated. Between 2010 and 2014, rural areas lost an average of 33,000 people a year."

Calaveras County is unique in that we are not only a solid agricultural community, but we are also a growing tourism area. Tourism brings people and cultures from all over the world to the small towns we call home.

I believe that these two industries, agriculture and tourism, together can be a great attraction for our youth. Entrepreneurial opportunities are seeming endless for our small town youth. Vineyards and wineries, olive trees and tasting rooms, even organically raised livestock for our specialty restaurants are all exciting endeavors available to our youth.

Our schools could bring back the vocational programs they once offered, and enhance existing agricultural program to include viticulture, tree farms, and even specialty meat livestock education to give students viable career ideas that are available here in Calaveras County.

Local government support of agriculture and related business is another key element to making it desirable for young people to live and work in agriculture. Invest in rural development, relax regulation that makes starting a business confusing and expensive.

Young people often have the image of agriculture as being "old-fashion". Workshops and education on technology in agriculture, as well as integrating social media showcasing

young farmers and ranchers can be used to change the perception of agriculture careers as well as stimulating our youth's imagination to increase the use of technology in agriculture.

I am blessed to have grown up in Calaveras County, and to have been raised with a family that grows its own vegetables and raises livestock. I hope to return to this wonderful community when I complete college and eventually give my family the same wonderful lifestyle that I experienced.