

48th District Agricultural Association  
Schools' Agriculture and Nutrition Program/Fair  
Silvia K. Bishop, Chief Executive Officer  
Los Angeles County

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**How long have you been teaching or working with students?**

I have been with the 48th District Agricultural Association (48th DAA) for 12 years. Before this, I was the Tapestry of Tradition (Home Arts) Coordinator with the Los Angeles County Fair for 18 years. For those unfamiliar with the 48th DAA, it is a state entity, one of the 78 fair districts in the state, and a part of the Division of Fairs and Expositions under the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

**Why did you choose to become an educator?**

Although I'm not a certified teacher, I think I must have earned a credential by osmosis somewhere along the way! My husband was a school administrator in Charter Oak School District in Covina for 37 years! We have always made education a priority in our family—we feel it's a prerequisite for life. Our two sons graduated from Cal Poly, Pomona, and now two daughters-in-law are also teachers. It is an absolute pleasure working with educators and students from around the greater Los Angeles area. The transition from home arts, crafts and food was a terrific precursor to working at supporting agricultural literacy.

**How do you integrate agriculture into the curriculum or activities you teach?**

I am involved as a resource for teachers in our agriculture program. We work with teachers throughout the year to make it easier for them to teach agriculture in their classrooms. Teachers are invited to our offices for workshops and to learn about the program and how it can benefit them and their students. Upon request, we can do in-services at schools or at district meetings. Our mandate is to put on a fair, which is increasingly difficult as the area becomes more and more urbanized, but is just more proof that education about food and fiber production is needed more than ever. Ag Day LA is an additional program we participate in that is wonderfully successful, and is now in its 10th year. At Ag Day LA we invite all 3-4 grade teachers from Los Angeles County, and their students, to learn how agriculture completes the many pieces (water, plants, bees, fiber, food and dairy) that form the puzzle of our everyday lives.

Ag Day LA is filled with valuable hands-on educational experiences and provides a fun and exciting way for teachers to address state standards, as well as to promote agricultural literacy. Ag Day LA is an eye-opening event for many kids who don't know where their food comes from or have never seen a live farm animal.

Ag Day LA 2011 will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, April 13-14, 2011. Grants are available for teachers who need bus funding in order to attend.

Give an example of how you use agriculture to teach in your classroom or in your program.

We offer project kits that stress hands-on activities such as vermiculture, hatching chicks or trout, gardening, bread-making and hydroponics. We maintain a library of reference books, children's books and videos that may be borrowed. All of our materials are provided free of charge in exchange for exhibits, which demonstrate what students have learned and are the components of our fair. Bimonthly,

we publish a newsletter to advise teachers about upcoming events and to provide information on a variety of agriculture-related topics. Our resource center provides a one-stop shopping center for teachers—materials for about 60 projects in one place. Most projects are adaptable to a variety of grade levels. We rely on Ag in the Classroom for so many of our resources—I don't think there's a bigger proponent or supporter of this program than us here at the 48th!

**Tell us about a golden teaching moment.**

I think that a golden "learning" moment for me was understanding that farmers and others involved in agriculture are true keepers of the earth. I was here on campus at Mt. San Antonio College during a heavy rainfall and there was work to be done at the campus farm that still had to be done in the pouring rain! I realized then that agriculture is a 24/7 job!

Why is it important for our students to be agriculturally literate and aware in today's society? Living in the Los Angeles area, there is no visual agriculture. It's our mission and challenge to educate students about where milk or lettuce comes from. Agriculture has a history and a process and to try to convey this to millions of students in an urban society—that's a challenge.

Photo caption: *Silvia Bishop and A.G. Kawamura, former California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary, visiting the Schools' Agriculture and Nutrition Fair in 2010.*

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