



2017 Valley of the World Education Award Janice Souza

Born in the San Joaquin Valley, Janice moved to Salinas with her family when she was in the second grade. She grew up on an 80-acre ranch on River Road raising sheep, hogs, and calves. While in high school she was active in the Salinas FFA and a member of the Spring and Buena Vista 4-H clubs, obtaining the “All-Star” rank. After her 1973 graduation from Salinas High, Janice attended Whitworth College in Spokane, WA as a political science major and Cal Poly, SLO as a crop science major.

While her goal was to pursue a career in teaching, the first part of her career was spent in product development and marketing with Royal Sluis, an international vegetable seed company. But in 1990, Janice was hired to teach an agriculture business occupations class for the Salinas Union High School District at Everett Alvarez High School. After the first year, she was asked to start the agriculture program at Alvarez and to establish an FFA chapter. At first she taught Agriculture Science and the Ag Business class in a portable classroom. With the passage of “No Child Left Behind,” Janice went back to school to obtain an agriculture science degree and her agriculture teaching credential, while continuing to run Ag Program at Everett Alvarez. Today, the program has grown to a three-person department, is no longer housed in temporary classrooms, and regularly attracts 150+ students.

Today’s program features not only a solid FFA program but also an International Agribusiness Program. The program also includes an operating greenhouse, shade house, and garden area, computer lab, and science laboratory. The livestock program is housed with the North Salinas FFA. In addition, the Alvarez agricultural building includes the Eagle Produce Store where students are trained in entrepreneurial and customer service skills. Students are allowed to market and sell their projects to the students and staff—and this fall will sell to the public. While the program began with 60 students, now there are over 300 enrolled in Biology and Sustainable Agriculture, Ag Systems Management, Environmental Horticulture, Soil and Ag Chemistry, Floral, and Ag Business classes. The curriculum meets the UC/CSU standards.

During her tenure at Everett Alvarez High School, Janice has served as the Department Chair, the coordinator for the International Agri-business Academy, and an advisor for the FFA. She has been a mentor for other agricultural teachers in the district, section,

and state. In 2014-15 she served as Regional President for the South Coast Region of the California Agriculture Association; was the Region's candidate for the Teacher of Excellence Award; and was selected Teacher of the Year for Everett Alvarez High School.

Janice is proud of her students. Perhaps her greatest joy comes from watching a non-traditional agriculture student who develops a love for agriculture and thus moves forward to a career in the agriculture field. Janice currently has two former students who are successful agricultural teachers. Several graduates are employed in management positions in the Salinas Valley. She credits their success, in part, to job-shadowing and trade show experience, where students work with various grower-shipper companies who mentor her students.

Janice was married to her husband Sam for twenty years prior to his passing in 2009. In 2012 she adopted two teenage children, Mario and Alma, whom she is very proud to call her own.