

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Niman Ranch awards \$106,000 in scholarships to 32 students

Sustainable agriculture leader helps students reduce loan debt by awarding scholarships for college

NORTHGLENN, CO (September 28, 2017) — Niman Ranch, a national leader in sustainable agriculture and humane livestock practices, awarded 32 scholarships totaling \$106,000 through its annual Next Generation Scholarship Fund. Scholarships were presented to students from Niman Ranch’s network of independent farm families during its 19th annual Farmer Appreciation Dinner in Des Moines, IA. with more than 600 people in attendance. The scholarships are designed to raise awareness around the loss of traditional farming and ranching practices, and to ultimately help maintain agriculture opportunities by providing funding for college. The money raised for the fund far exceeded all other years.

Niman Ranch Founding Hog Farmer, Paul Willis, noted that 21 of the 32 award recipients were young women and that the applications from females were significantly higher than past years. The scholarships are a part of Niman Ranch’s Young Farmer 2.0 that was announced this summer to provide an open and transparent plan to grow the next generation of farmers. With student loan debt affecting two thirds of college graduates today, paying for college is a substantial barrier for young farmers and ranchers who face continually rising land costs. The number of beginning farmers in America fell by 20 percent between 2007 and 2012 alone. “Niman Ranch recognizes that combatting the burden of student loan debt is crucial to helping new farmers stay on the land,” said Willis.

Ten years ago, Niman Ranch farmers were four years older than the national average. Through a series of initiatives, the Niman Ranch network of more than 729 independent family farmers now averages 47 years old, 11 years younger than the national average. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the average age of farmers has steadily increased to 58-years old over the last 30 years, contrary to the Niman Ranch experience.

“Initiatives like the Next Generation Scholarship Fund within the Niman Ranch farm community are part of our overall commitment to the hard-working family farmers,” said Niman Ranch general manager, Jeff Tripician. “We’re proud to support the next generation of farmers with the funds needed to get a higher education and give agriculture the prominence it deserves.”

A new award was created this year to honor recently deceased Phyllis Willis of Fertile, IA. She was co-founder of the Niman Ranch Pork Company and enjoyed hosting farm tours for many guests from all over the country and sharing her knowledge of animal husbandry and sustainable agriculture. The well-known environmental activist hosted the first decade of Niman Ranch Hog Farmer Appreciation Dinners at their farm in Thornton, IA. Willis was a champion of clean

air and water causes as well as animal rights. Niman Ranch farmer advocate, Sarah Willis said, “We’re honored to have this scholarship every year to remember my Mom as a kind, caring environmentalist and to continue her tradition of supporting sustainable family farms.”

The first Willis Scholarship was awarded to Elle Gadiant of Cascade, IA. because her application focused on sustainability and the environment and her environmental science education.

“Through sustainable agriculture, family farms can be supported and young farmers generations from now will have the opportunity to raise outdoor pork with the pride we are able to today. This will only be possible if we continue to prioritize sustainability and quality meat rather than quantity,” said Gadiant. “Along with my environmental science education, involvement with the campus sustainability department, and experience raising animals on the farm, I am a proud advocate for sustainable agriculture and supporting family farms.”

Applicants receive awards regardless of their major, but those in an agricultural-focused degree program are eligible for the Serfling Memorial Scholarship, one of the highest awards available to students. This year’s recipient was Caleb Schnoor of Mount Ayr, Iowa. Caleb is currently seeking an Agriculture Studies major at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa.

Other Next Generation Scholarship recipients are from Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and California. All will have a greater chance of returning to the farm after college with the funds awarded to help pay for their education.

The Next Generation Scholarship is made possible by donations from Niman Ranch’s business partners, which includes chefs and family-owned food distributors in America and the Cayman Islands. Businesses raise funds through a wide range of events, sales from special menu items and private contributions. Donors include:

Cheney Brothers	Chef Alice V. Gonzalez
Chipotle Mexican Grill	Perdue Farms
Daniel Smith	Progressive Distributors
DeBragga, New York’s Butcher	Purely Meat Company
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Paul Mattison	Tonali’s Meats
Lone Star Foodservice	Turtle Beach Food Service
Lone Start Meats	Trevor Ortman & Sharen Hauri
Del Monte	Wasatch Meats
Marczyk Fine Foods	Ed Ryan
Fra’ Mani	

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With more than 40 years as an industry leader, Niman Ranch is a community of more than 720 independent family farmers and ranchers who raise livestock traditionally, humanely and sustainably to deliver the finest-tasting meat. All Niman Ranch pork, beef, lamb and prepared products are certified under the Certified Humane® program and available nationwide at both food service and retail locations.

Photo Caption:

2017 Scholarship Award Winners:

Front row from left to right (sitting) – Kallin Crile, Brandon Goellner, Anthony Scheer, Jaclynn Knutson, Kameryn Ingels, Michael Stender, Amber Miles, Caleb Schnoor

Back row from left to right (standing) – Hannah Taylor, Ruthie Carpenter, Lauren Banowetz, Brent Parker, Isabelle Stewart, Thomas Parsons, Kaitlynn Burke, Elle Gadiant, Sarah Willis, Abigail Hansen, Alison Knutson, Sarah Hansen, Raeanna Crile, Shyann Schultz, Ashlyn Stuckey, Grant Baumetz

Not pictured:

Mitchell Boros, Rachel Boros, Alyssa Frederick, Josephine Hamilton, Jessica Heiserman, Dane Kruse, Michael Mardesen, Elizabeth Scheer, Jordan Worthington