

## **Cheryl LaFranchi Honored with 4-H Recognition Award**

Cheryl LaFranchi, a Sonoma County cattle rancher who is a legend in her own time for her grit and determination to preserve a way-of-life on family land, is the recipient of the 2026 4-H Alumni Recognition Award.

LaFranchi, who is 64, was an award-winning member of the Bennett Valley 4-H Club in the 1970's. Her projects were Ayrshire dairy cattle and Angus beef cattle, which led to her storied career in cattle ranching.

The 4-H Alumni Award, presented by the Youth Ag & Leadership Foundation of Sonoma County, honors a former 4-H Club member who upholds the values of leadership, citizenship and community service, which are the hallmarks of the 4-H program. LaFranchi and her many achievements will be celebrated at the Foundation's annual BBQ on August 29th at Richard's Grove and Saralee's Vineyard in Windsor.

A third generation-Sonoma County rancher, LaFranchi operates the historic 1,200-acre Oak Ridge Angus Ranch that her grandfather Massimino LaFranchi, a Swiss immigrant, settled in 1912. Today, she raises Angus cattle for breeding as well as trademarked beef sold under the Oak Ridge Angus label.

LaFranchi's husband, Dr. Frank Mongini, a large animal veterinarian, assists in managing the veterinary needs of the Angus cattle herd.

LaFranchi considers herself the caretaker of land and legacy that will be passed down to future generations, upholding the values of the hard-working family members who came before her.

LaFranchi calls herself a “proud American cowgirl” but she is much more than that. She’s a savvy businesswoman, community leader, friend to many, philanthropist and Mother Courage to her family. She started and continues to support the Range-to-Table program that provides meat to the Redwood Empire Food Bank.

LaFranchi is a staunch supporter of 4-H, FFA and agriculture. She offers her ranch and expertise to students who want to learn about livestock production, land management and environmental stewardship.

“4-H is a great organization that encourages kids to learn by doing and to get outdoors to experience nature, animals and land,” said LaFranchi, who is eager for her great nephews and niece to become 4-H members.

LaFranchi’s courage, strength and resilience came through loud and clear in 2019 when the Kincadee fire storm blasted across her family’s ranch in the Knight’s Valley near Calistoga. The fire destroyed everything -- houses, redwood barns and more than 100 years of ranching history. Even some of the prized cattle perished.

But the disaster didn’t diminish LaFranchi’s indomitable spirit. She never, ever, considered giving up on the family land and way-of-life she loves. She spent more than four years rebuilding, restoring and restocking the family ranch to the showplace it is today.

In the 4-H spirit she persevered to preserve the land and ranching legacy that has defined her and her family.