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Mountain Oaks

## Calaveras Grown Scholarship

In my youth, some of my fondest memories involve participating in the gardening program provided by my elementary school, Jenny Lind Elementary. The garden was small -- limited to vegetables and flowers, yet still an exciting atmosphere. Groups of children happily scattering into the fenced area to gawk at the beautiful flowers and bugs we discovered. I believe these memories are ones that stick with us through life, inspiring us to engage in long term commitments to our community.

We are surrounded by nature everywhere we go, which should push us to ensure our environment is pleasant to experience. People travel all around the world to witness beautiful scenes, so why not create alluring views at home? Personally, I believe by creating spaces such as a community garden would cause our county to become more involved within our home. Giving parents, teenagers, and younger kids resources such as how to grow your own plants, for food and aesthetic reasons, will allow them a positive outlet and productive way to spend their time. In rural areas such as Calaveras County, there are not many things to do besides outdoor activities; therefore, it is essential people have enjoyable ways to experience them. By also creating a community garden, we open more doors for healthier eating, and essentially living. People like to know where and how their food is grown, and are willing to pay more to guarantee they are getting fresh food that is of good quality. Growing our own produce would help our economy grow, as well as benefit the overall satisfaction of our area. Even in small places like our county, it is important that our growth is continuous and we do not become a stagnant community.

In order for Calaveras to be an attractive place to return to, we need to allow economic progress from within. Giving more opportunities for healthy activities to those who live here creates better chances of people continuing to stay in the county, and provides a reason to return. Having a large team of individuals work together to create something so positive in every direction also strengthens the sense of a family-like community. In small towns like ours, it is important we have bonds that connect us as a whole. With more local produce being grown, there are more chances to hold farmers markets, which would also bring in more money to our town as well as to the people living here.

Being involved in local activities is something that will stick in my memory for the rest of my life, and I am positive others share similar beliefs. Things we do within our home follow us everywhere we go, and make us proud to talk about our past. Creating community gardens is a realistic and easily achievable way to create a safe solidarity between our people, environment, and town. To ensure people will want to return to Calaveras County, we need to make it easy for them to find reasons.