

Shenandoah Valley artist/farmer named 2013 UC Davis School of Education 'Distinguished Alumnus'

By JOHN TUTTLE
LEDGER DISPATCH CONTRIBUTOR

Native Amador County resident Daniel D'Agostini was honored this year as the 2013 UC Davis School of Education Distinguished Alumnus. Many may know D'Agostini for his photography and recent table-top book, "Into The Earth, A Wine Cave Renaissance," or for his organic farm in the Shenandoah Valley, which he has named, "Abbondanza," Italian for "abundance." However, there is much more to his story.

D'Agostini received his elementary credential through the UC Davis Department of Education's teaching internship program. While a student at UC Davis, he served as the first student advisor to a UC Davis chancellor and graduated with honors in rhetoric. He began his teaching career in Dixon, where he and fellow teacher Paul Moering created an innovative, dynamic, team-teaching classroom for 4th and 5th grades called the "Rainbow Room." At that time, he al-



Daniel D'Agostini describes his planting methods to visitors to 'Abbondanza,' his organic farm on his family's ranch in Amador County's Shenandoah Valley.
LEDGER DISPATCH PHOTO BY JERRY BUDRICK

so taught wilderness ethics and camping skills to junior high students in the mountains above Silver Lake, and he became an EMT 1 and an American Red Cross CPR Instructor of instructors.

During the 80s, he taught 7th and

8th grades in Somerset, in El Dorado County, where he introduced 8th graders to the concepts of chemistry and ecology by taking the entire class to Mono Lake during the first month of the school year. From 1989 to 2008, he taught middle grade and junior

high in Yuba City, where he created two award-winning school gardens. In 1976, he was commissioned by the State Department of Education to help draft the "Garden in Every School" project and to produce a poster to encourage that vision. From 2000-2008, he developed and coordinated an extended day program that daily served 300 to 550 students and received "exemplary recognition" from the California After School Network.

"D'Agostini is a model of the very best in teaching. He has every student involved and his former students consider him their best teacher and his colleagues agree," said Doug Minnis, Professor Emeritus, and Jo Ann Skinner, Professor Emerita.

D'Agostini retired in 2008 to return home and care for his mother, Kay, during her last years. There he has his photographic studio and is developing Abbondanza, which provides produce to local restaurants, caterers, MotherLode Harvest and the Plymouth Farmer's Market.



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