

## Women in Leadership Positions in Canadian Agriculture

### SARA AVOLEDO | ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM [GUELPH, ONTARIO]

Sara Avoledo wasn't raised on a farm, but she has always been interested in agriculture. Originally from Embro, Ontario, Sara loved her rural life and volunteered for many agricultural events in her hometown

"I was very involved in the farming community," said Sara. "I was on the Fair board and a Fair ambassador." Sara also participated in many rural fairs and was involved in the Junior Farmers Program and Oxford 4-H.

After graduating high school, Sara was accepted into the University of Guelph's business program. She earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree and then transferred to the Ontario Agricultural College's Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP), where her classmates voted for her to become one of two student board members on the program's advisory council.



Sara believes in supporting agriculture through volunteering, and after serving her initial three-year term, Sara chose to continue serving on the AALP advisory council board member. She has also served on the board of the Ontario Agricultural College's Alumni Association for the past seven years, recently accepting the position of president. In this role, Sara works to keep the alumni connected with each other, to connect former students with new students, to provide media training to board members, and to organize events that help to fund scholarships and bursaries.

"We have an annual golf tournament and curling bonspiel for the alumni." Sara said. "We also run smaller events. We host 'Careers and Cocktails,' where alumni come in to talk to the students about their careers and networks. We have a 'Dean's Lunch,' which includes twenty students and guest speakers from across the agricultural industry. For example, we had the Dean of the Ontario Agricultural College as a speaker. The students listened to him speak, then had a chance to ask questions."

Sara thinks that those involved in the industry need to continue to ask questions and to provide information and education about Canadian agriculture.

"It's important to talk to the general public about agriculture, to dispel myths, and provide correct information," she said.

Sara believes that social media is a great communication platform, and uses it as a tool to inform and teach the general public about farming. Sara can be found on Twitter at @SaraAvoledo.

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