

#METOO:

Should *women* speak up or remain silent when they experience sexual misconduct in the agricultural workplace?



State Qualifying Event: March 25, 2019



Stewarts Creek FFA

301 Red Hawk Parkway
Smyrna, TN 37167

Tennessee

615-519-0296



The Summary

Stewarts Creek High School is a multi-teacher agriculture program. The courses taught are: Agriscience, Small Animal Care, Large Animal Care, Veterinary Science, Plant Science, and Agriculture Business. There are over 260 non-repeating students enrolled in agricultural education and immersed in agriculture issues discussions.

The issue of sexual misconduct in agriculture is important now. Women in all aspects of agriculture are subject to sexual misconduct in the workplace. Sexual misconduct toward women farmworkers has recently received nationwide attention. “Women farmworkers have been forced to have sex at gunpoint, threatened, and been fired after filing complaints against their managers and foremen” (Kim, Vasques, Torres, Nicola, & Karr, 2016, par. 4). Recently, sexual violence has been highlighted in society. Awareness of sexual misconduct is at an all-time high as a shocking number of people have come forward. The stage has been set in society with the “#MeToo” movement creating a safe space where victims can tell their stories and feel supported, but are not forced into telling every detail—which is often why it is so difficult for victims to speak out (Clark, 2017). The purpose of this discussion is not to debate the acceptability of sexual misconduct, but rather the pros and cons of speaking up.

The nature of this issue is that we are seeing a workplace where sexual misconduct is becoming more prominent. Women represent an estimated 960,000 farmworkers in the United States (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2018). Women are far outnumbered by men in agriculture and constitute only an estimated 20 to 25 percent of the farmworker population. Fields are sparsely monitored; workers are often alone which is especially alarming for immigrant farmworkers (Padilla & Bacon, 2016). In a heavily male-dominated workforce, sexual violence against women is widespread (Kominers, 2016). A recent study found approximately 80 percent of women farmworkers claimed they experienced some form of sexual violence on the job (Ramchandani, 2018). Only two to thirteen percent of women report Workplace Sexual Harassment (WSH) to authorities (Kim et al., 2016).

Sexual misconduct is a prominent issue in agriculture that can affect anyone in the industry. There are an estimated three million farm workers in the United States. Of those, the National Agricultural Workers Survey published by the Department of Labor reports that 68% of those workers are men (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2018). While sexual misconduct can happen to anyone, this issue is most prevalent in immigrant farm worker women. Currently, 74,859 foreign workers are employed by H2A – a program offering temporary visas to immigrant workers – in the United States (Costa & Rosenbaum, 2017). With 77% of farm workers reporting that Spanish is the language they are most comfortable with and 30% reporting that they cannot speak English at all, language barriers contribute to the increased vulnerability of immigrant farm worker women in our male-dominated industry (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2018). In a study conducted by Maria Trevino, 90% of farm worker women interviewed in California reported that sexual assault is a major workplace problem (Community Alliance for Global Justice, n.d.). In the southeastern part of the United States, 77% of women agree that sexual assault is a major issue in the workplace (Community Alliance for Global Justice, n.d.). While this research shows a high percentage of women affected by sexual misconduct in the agriculture industry, many women continue to suffer in silence. Even when women do not want to tell their story, others continue to advocate on their behalf. In the brink of the #MeToo movement, The Alianza Nacional de Campesinas — an organization comprised of current and former farmworker women along with women who are from farmworker families — sent a letter to Hollywood actors to represent the 700,000 female farmworkers who are said to “suffer in silence” due to the widespread sexual harassment they face in their work on a regular basis. In response to that letter, on January 1, 2018, over 300 women who work in television, film, theater, and related arts wrote a letter expressing their solidarity with the farmworker women (Roberts, 2018). In addition, a GoFundMe campaign titled “TIME’S UP” was launched by the National Women’s Law Center to provide legal defense funds to those who have experienced sexual misconduct. To date, the fund has raised more than \$24 million to help those who cannot afford legal counsel (Roberts, 2018). Examples of women in agriculture whose allegations resulted in settlements include a Washington egg company that settled for \$650,000 in 2013 as one woman and four other workers alleged retaliation for their complaints of assault, and a California lettuce farm that settled in 2010 for an undisclosed amount as the manager was accused of raping a female farmworker (Roberts, 2018).

Sexual misconduct has multiple definitions. Legally, it is defined as “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests of sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d., par. 1). Sexual misconduct is socio-psychologically defined as, “unwanted sex-related behavior at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being” (Quick & McFadyen, 2017). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission breaks sexual harassment into two categories. *Quid pro quo* is when “employment is contingent on an employee’s submission or rejection of sexual acts.” A *hostile environment* is when harassment “creates an unsafe and uncomfortable work environment that interferes with an employee’s ability to perform at work” (Kim, 2014, p. 6).

This issue did not just start now; it has a diverse historical background. It is dated back to slaves and indentured servants who had few laws to protect them. The first major case of sexual harassment in agriculture is with Hester Vaughn — a dairymaid and housekeeper. Vaughn was fired from her job after her boss discovered she was pregnant with his child. On February 9, 1868, Vaughn was found in a rented room with her dead newborn and was charged with infanticide. Vaughn's trial concluded with a guilty verdict and she was sentenced to death. Members of the Working Women's National Association, including Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony, protested the sentence. The governor of Philadelphia, John Geary, pardoned Vaughn and she was exiled to her home country of England (Knappman, 2002). The Women's Christian Temperance Movement also contributed to WSH advocacy by releasing guidebooks on how to prevent sexual harassment. However, these efforts began to dwindle in the 1920's as women were expected to deal with sexual harassment on their own (Reed, 2013). Then, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed making it unlawful for employers to discriminate based on race, religion, national origin, and sex. In 1991, this Act was amended to allow victims, when seeking compensatory and punitive damages, to have a jury trial (Reed, 2013). Cornell University Activists coined the phrase *sexual harassment* in 1975 (Reed, 2013).

There are many risks involved with speaking up about sexual misconduct in agriculture. False accusations do occur, so there is a risk of victims not being believed. When employees in businesses experience sexual misconduct, the business can earn a negative reputation, resulting in a loss of revenue with the public boycotting products and being understaffed due to employee discomfort. Farmworker women face many obstacles, including fear, shame, lack of information about their rights, lack of available resources to help them, poverty, and sexual harassment and assault (Kim et al., 2016). Due to this, few farmworker women come forward to seek justice (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010). After an assault, many women face guilt, depression, and shame for many years. Additionally, women farmworkers endure the chance of retaliation if they speak up, including demotions, fewer work hours, more demanding work, abusive treatment and job termination. Many families work the same job, so retaliation can mean the victim is fired along with her family, resulting in a total loss of income (Kominers, 2016). Women farmworkers have been threatened with deportation and held at gunpoint when they threaten to speak up (Kominers, 2016). Additionally, 94% of women who are raped experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within the first two weeks of the assault (Rothbaum, Foa, Riggs, Murdock, & Walsh, 1992).

There are many benefits to speaking up about sexual misconduct in the agricultural workplace. Speaking up is the only way for women to get criminal justice after an assault. Women telling their stories has contributed to education, awareness, and better resources for the safety campaigns concerning sexual misconduct. Safety campaigns across the United States — like sexual assault awareness month in April — are used to inform women about their rights and the resources available to them (Safe and Sound Schools, 2017). For example, “The National Sexual Assault Hotline (800-656-HOPE) will connect victims with trained staff members from a local sexual assault service provider who will walk them through getting support at their own pace” (Safe and Sound Schools, 2017). When victims speak out, convicted perpetrators face legal consequences, with prison sentences between one and 60 years and up to a \$50,000 fine — depending on the severity of the crime (FindLaw, 2018). Speaking up can also give women closure and a sense of relief (Herman, 2018). With women speaking up across the nation, individuals and organizations are working together to improve employer standards, increase sexual harassment policies and training, raise awareness, and educate survivors about their rights. For example, the Rape, Incest, and Abuse Network (RAINN, 2019) has helped over three million survivors in the past 25 years by providing hotlines to help support victims, providing public education about sexual misconduct, lobbying in political environments to create reform, and offering consultation and training to prevent sexual misconduct (RAINN, 2019).

This is an issue in Rutherford County, Tennessee, and across our nation. Randy Warren, the housing inspector for the H2A Program in Tennessee, visits 250 farms in 20,000 square miles of Middle Tennessee. He has developed a relationship with women and men farm workers alike, to promote a confidential and safe environment for unsafe working conditions to be reported. This type of interaction helps prevent sexual misconduct and promotes a safe work environment (Warren, Personal Communication, August 6, 2019). “In 2014, 203 sexual assaults and other sex-related crimes were reported in Rutherford County, and 5,368 sexual assaults were reported in Tennessee. Across the state, 451 of those cases resulted in arrests” (Willard, 2016, par. 12). Victims of sexual misconduct in Rutherford County have access to free services offered by the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center in Murfreesboro. These free services include counseling, legal resources and attorneys, shelters, safe houses, 24-hour crisis lines, and overall support for victims (Smith, 2019). With 74,859 foreign workers being employed by H2A in the United States, it is important to make sure all workers have resources available to be able to safely report sexual misconduct (Costa & Rosenbaum, 2017). Posters — in both English and Spanish — are required to be available to H2A workers in their housing assignment. This informational tool provides the steps for filing a complaint for immigrant workers who experience sexual misconduct. Steps include a referral to the American Job Center Management, where victims are put in contact with an advocate who will work together with the victim. (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2018).

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Community Forums

Date	Time	Location	Audience
November 7, 2018	3:30 p.m.	Stewarts Creek High School Agriculture Classroom — Smyrna, TN	Rachel Smith, <i>Sexual Assault Advocate</i> , Domestic Violence Program (DVP) Shelter
November 14, 2019	2 p.m.	Batey Farms (farm retail store) — Murfreesboro, TN	John Batey, <i>Owner of Batey Farms</i> , and two employees
November 16, 2018	4:30 p.m.	Tennessee Farmers Cooperative Headquarters — Lavergne, TN	Joe Huffine — <i>Manager of Farm, Home, and Fleet Division</i> & Sarah Geyer — <i>Communications Specialist</i>
November 27, 2018	7 p.m.	Middle Tennessee State University, Stark Agriculture Building — Murfreesboro, TN	Sigma Alpha Professional Sorority — 38 college women and young professionals
November 29, 2018	6 p.m.	Middle Tennessee State University, Stark Agriculture Building — Murfreesboro, TN	Dr. Alanna Vaught, <i>Professor at MTSU</i> ; 18 Agriculture Leadership Students
February 15, 2019	1 p.m.	Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce — Murfreesboro, TN	Amelia Bozeman, <i>Executive Director of Business Education Partnership</i> - and six of her team
February 15, 2019	4 p.m.	Lane Agri-Park and 4-H Extension Office — Murfreesboro, TN	Logan Hickerson, <i>Tennessee State University 4-H Extension Specialist</i> ; and a group of 10 Rutherford County 4-H Supporters
February 19, 2019	1 p.m.	Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) — Nashville, TN	Dr. Charles Hatcher, <i>Tennessee's 38th Commissioner of Agriculture</i> , and 12 Senior Staff Members at TDA
March 4, 2019	3 p.m.	Prevention Coalition for Success (PC4S) — Murfreesboro, TN	PC4S Advisory Board and additional community members - 32 advocates from varying professions
March 11, 2019	3 p.m.	DVP Board of Directors — Smyrna, TN	14 DVP Board Members including detectives, business owners, and community members
March 15, 2019	4 p.m.	DVP Staff — Smyrna, TN	10 DVP staff and personnel who work with victims of sexual violence daily

Domestic Violence Prevention (DVP) Presentations — Smyrna and Murfreesboro, TN:



Our meeting with Mrs. Smith was one of the most influential moments in our research. We built a relationship with her that proved to be our biggest support. She was so impressed that she asked us to come back and present to the DVP Board of Directors and her staff. Each time we presented we got new perspectives and learned from people who work with these situations everyday.



March 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I had the pleasure of meeting with the Stewarts Creek FFA Agriculture Issues Team about their presentation regarding sexual misconduct in the agriculture industry in the agriculture classroom at Stewarts Creek High School on Wednesday, November 7, 2018 at 3:30 p.m. We had the opportunity to sit down, go over the serious nature of their topic choice, and talk about important aspects of the issue they may not have thought of before.

After our meeting, I knew that I had to have the members of my staff and our board of directors see the work these students were putting into the topic that has affected so many women. The students came to the DVP on March 11, 2019 to present to the DVP Board of Directors. They returned on March 15, 2019 to present to our staff members.

We have a multitude of support at DVP Shelter. Community members serve on our board, including police officers, business owners, and even victims. It was a privilege to have the SCHS agriculture issues team present to us in front of so many different audiences. It shows that the future is bright!

Thank you for the opportunity to work with these students. They are phenomenal!

Sincerely,



RACHEL SMITH

Sexual Assault Advocate

www.dvpshelter.org

(615) 896-7377



Batey Farms — Murfreesboro, TN:



November 14, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

The Stewarts Creek FFA Agriculture Issues Team presented their forum regarding sexual misconduct in the agriculture industry at our farm — Batey Farms — to myself and my employees on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 2 p.m. We are a fully operational farm and produce pork, strawberries, sunflowers, and much more throughout the year. We also participate in agritourism throughout the year at our farm. Hearing about this topic was extremely informational and gave us many new ideas to implement to protect our workers from sexual harassment. Thanks for coming!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Batey".

John Batey
Batey Farms; Owner
615-848-4116



It was neat to get to discuss this topic with a local farm in Rutherford County. Batey Farms has workers year around to tend to their variety of crops, pork, and agritourism events. They were extremely interested in what they could do to help and prevent this issue from happening at their farm.

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative Headquarters — Laverne, TN:



November 16, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

The Stewarts Creek FFA Agriculture Issues Team presented their forum regarding sexual misconduct in the agriculture industry for professionals at Tennessee Farmers Cooperative on Friday, November 16, 2018 at 4:30 p.m. at the Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC) headquarters in Laverne, Tennessee. The students were able to present their issue to Joe Huffine, the manager of the farm, home, and fleet division of TFC, and Sarah Geyer, a communications specialist with the Cooperator Magazine. Bringing this topic to our attention was timely and extremely relevant as we have policies in place for sexual misconduct, but it is always good to be reminded of the issue and hear the startling statistics about this topic.

Thanks for visiting,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Huffine".

Joe Huffine
Tennessee Farmers Cooperative
Manager of Farm, Home, and Fleet Division
jhuffine@ourcoop.com



We had the opportunity to speak with Joe Huffine and Sarah Geyer, who both work at the Tennessee Farmers Cooperative headquarters. They were able to give us valuable insight into their company policy on sexual harassment and assault — a zero tolerance offense at TFC. We also got to learn what the day-to-day life of a woman in agriculture looks like for Sarah, who is a communications specialist. Sharing of these personal experiences were priceless for us in our research journey.

Sigma Alpha Sorority – Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN:



Meeting with agricultural college students gave us a great opportunity to meet women who are in the age range of highest susceptibility of sexual misconduct (ages 18 to 34) and hear how they have been affected by the issue. They gave us great insight about the issue, how to better our presentation, and how to answer questions. Even with the risk involved, these passionate women remain positive about entering into the agriculture industry.



Dr. Alanna Vaught's Graduate Class — Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN:



Speaking to graduate students brought us our toughest round of questioning yet. It was a great audience to speak to because they were inquisitive about the topic. We thought this was a great opportunity to inform the agriculture community about the topic, and learn from them as well.



Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce — Murfreesboro, TN:



February 19, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The Stewarts Creek FFA Agriculture Issues Team presented their forum regarding sexual misconduct in the agriculture industry at the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce to myself and my leadership team on Friday, February 19, 2019 at 1 p.m. at the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce Building in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We enjoyed listening to the students, asking questions, and helping them prepare for the state contest!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Amelia Bozeman".

Mrs. Amelia Bozeman
Executive Director of Business Education Partnership
(615) 278-2008
abozean@rutherfordchamber.org



The Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce was a unique visit because they are featured as one of the characters in our script — played by Leah! Mrs. Bozeman had her entire team assembled from the educational side of the chamber to help us with our forum. This gave us a great opportunity to speak to them not only about our topic, but to gear their reactions to the way they were depicted in our narrative. It was all positive feedback!

Rutherford County 4-H Extension Office — Murfreesboro, TN:



February 19, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The Stewarts Creek FFA Agriculture Issues Team presented their forum regarding sexual misconduct in the agriculture industry at the Lane Agri-Center to myself, a group of 4-H extension agents, and supporters of 4-H in Rutherford County. These members included member of the Rutherford County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and other advocates for agriculture within our county. The group presented their forum on Friday, February 19, 2019 at 4 p.m. at the Lane Agri-Center Building in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Thank you for visiting with us!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Logan Hickerson".

Logan Hickerson
Rutherford County 4-H
Tennessee State University
lhicker2@utk.edu



Rutherford County 4-H Extension Agent, Logan Hickerson, asked a group of agriculture supporters to come together and listen to our presentation. The group consisted of 4-H Extension Agents, Farm Bureau Board of Directors, and other community members and supporters who wanted to hear the forum and support the youth. It was a diverse group of individuals from a broad background who were all willing to help and listen! Special thanks to Mr. Hickerson for bringing everybody together and allowing us to present!

Tennessee Department of Agriculture — Nashville, TN:



February 19, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It was a pleasure to host the Stewarts Creek Agriculture Issues Team at the Tennessee Department of Agriculture on Tuesday, February 19, 2019 at 1 p.m. Commissioner Hatcher was happy to meet with the team and discuss this topic. We commend your students for their ability to discuss such a sensitive topic with maturity, grace, and poise. We have no doubt the Stewarts Creek Team is full of the leaders of Tennessee's future. Thank you for sharing your research with us and good luck in the future!

Sincerely,

Jessie Campbell
East Tennessee Public Affairs Coordinator
Tennessee Department of Agriculture

The Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr. Charles Hatcher, the Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture, Carol McDonald, and their staff made time in their busy schedules to meet with our agriculture issues team. What an honor! We discussed how sexual harassment affects agriculture at the local, state, and national level. This was by far the best forum we had the opportunity to attend.

Prevention Coalition for Success (PC4S) — Smyrna, TN:



March 4, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It was a pleasure to host the Stewarts Creek Agriculture Issues Team at our Prevention Coalition for Success (PC4S) meeting on March 4, 2019. We enjoy partnering with schools, but this was a unique experience. The passion your students feel about this topic shines through them, their presentation, and their question answers. With such a diverse audience, this was an excellent topic to cover. With sexual abuse advocates, police officers, and victims of abuse all in the audience, this topic hit home for many. Thank you for your willingness to discuss the difficult issues. SCHS agriculture students are welcome at our meetings anytime. Thank you for coming!

Best Wishes,

Kaysi Paul, CHES
Prevention Coalition for Success
Rutherford County
Grants Manager/Administrative Assistant
415 N. Maple St. Murfreesboro, TN 37130
Office: (615) 225-9474
Email: kpaul@pc4s.org

We worked with Kaysi Paul to set up a time to present at their meeting. This was a great opportunity to speak to an open group about our issue. Little did we know that there was a victim of sexual assault in the audience, but she was proud of the way the issue was presented and our willingness to discuss such a sensitive topic in order to advocate for the cause. We were even asked to join the Youth Coalition of Rutherford County to continue to give back to the community in even more ways!

