



*Rick Shade*

## New Year Brings New Chairman

**H**ello to my fellow avocado people across the state. As I write this, at the end of the Thanksgiving weekend, I am happy to see a nice rain falling outside of my office windows. I have quit hoping for that drought-busting El Niño, and would be really happy with an average rain-fall year. By the time the magazine is printed and mailed we will be in the New Year. I will take this opportunity to wish you a happy and prosperous New Year. I hope that you are able to enjoy the news and information in this issue with the sound of a steady rain falling in the background.

Shortly after being voted in as chair of the California Avocado Commission this year, I was asked what kind of imprint I would like to leave on the Commission when I am done with the chairmanship. I had to take some time for my thoughts to come together and jell, but I settled on two main areas upon which I want to focus my energy.

The first area is to usher in a youth movement on the board. I am too long in the tooth and gray in the

hair to lead such an effort, but I want to do my best to foster the change. With no disrespect to my fellow gray-haired board members, the world is changing. The next group of leaders is comfortable with and works in a very different world than we are used to. Communications technology and social media are leading the charge. I have a personal experience I will use to illustrate the point: I learned just a couple of months ago that our business has had an Instagram presence for more than a year, an account my youngest son and business partner started up. I looked at the site and thought it was cool and showcased what we do in a nice way. What truly stunned me were the numbers. My son showed me the number of followers we have, and more importantly, the amount of business we have picked up solely through that account. This, my friends, is where marketing is going. The people making the decisions on the future of our business must understand and be part of the new wave of business!

My second area of concern is

to get our grower board members as engaged as possible with you — the growers and farmers they represent. I am going to push each of them to hold district meetings and talk about what is happening at the Commission and get your thoughts as well. I also want your representatives to listen to you and bring your concerns back for discussion. We can't work on what we don't know about. Do not hesitate! Contact your representative if you have a question, a concern, or an idea. That is what we are here for. Find out about the trends in the industry, learn where our marketing is focused so you can be in that sweet spot where California avocados are the force in the marketplace. Go to the meetings and learn about new and updated production methods that will help you remain competitive in a changing world.

In closing, let's do what we can to make the most of every day — smile, laugh and be thankful that we are California avocado growers. 🥑