Cal Poly Brings Autistic Colorado State Animal Science Professor Temple Grandin to Speak at Nov. 5 and 6

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Colorado State Animal Science Professor Temple Grandin, a well-known and highly accomplished adult with autism, will give two presentations -- one on autism and another on sustainability and animal welfare -- as part of a visit to Cal Poly Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 5 and 6.

Her Nov. 5 talk on “Personal Perspectives on Autism” will be from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Cuesta Community College Auditorium, (Room 5404). On Nov. 6 Grandin will talk on animal welfare from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the San Luis Obispo Veterans’ Hall on Grand Avenue. The presentation will include a panel discussion comprised of local and national meat suppliers.

Grandin’s visit to Cal Poly will be spent touring facilities and talking to students in the College of Education and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

Grandin, who has Asperger syndrome, is a foremost authority on autism. She is also considered one of a very few successful livestock handling equipment designers in the world. She has designed the facilities for handling half of the cattle in the United States, and she consults for firms such as Burger King and McDonald’s.

According to Grandin, she was considered “weird” in her younger years, eventually finding a mentor who recognized her interests and abilities. She attributes her success as a livestock designer to her “visual memory” -- her ability to recall vivid details.

Grandin compares her memory to full-length movies in her head that can be replayed at will, allowing her to notice small details that would otherwise be overlooked. She says her “insight into the minds of cattle has taught her to value the changes in details to which animals are particularly sensitive.”

She has been featured on such television programs as “ABC’s Primetime Live,” “The Today Show,” “Larry King Live,” “48 Hours” and “20/20.” She has been highlighted in national publications, including Time magazine, People, Forbes, U.S. News and World Report, and The New York Times. In addition to being featured on Bravo Cable, she was one of the “challenged” people featured in the best-selling book “Anthropologist from Mars.”

Grandin’s visit is co-sponsored by Cal Poly’s Animal Science Department, Agribusiness Department, Sustainable Agriculture Resource Consortium and College of Education, with support from the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.
Both presentations are free and open to the public, although reservations are required to attend the Nov. 5 talk. Call 543-3277 to reserve space. For more information, visit her Web page at http://www.grandin.com/.

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