



# WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

November 2017

Volume 74 | No. 9

## CSA movement is building bridges

Farmers gathering Dec. 7-8 in Dells

**Danielle Endvick**  
Communications Director

C-S-A. The letters were foreign to me, but the idea was mesmerizing. I was standing amid the fresh-churned soil in a field on Dan Guenther and Margaret Penning's Common Harvest Farm, where I was one of a number of people who'd turned out for an event highlighting their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program on the Osceola farm. A fledgling reporter, I was there to cover the event for *The Country Today* newspaper.

I remember walking up the long rows of vegetables and staring wonderingly, not even recognizing some. At that point in my life, zucchini was a type of bread and words like kale, currant and kohlrabi were mysteries to me. **See p.8 ▶ CSA**



Photo by  
Deb Jakubek

*Left: From left, Caroline Reimer, and Jo and Zeke Bernstein cooled down with Farmers Union fans at the Green Fire Farm field day Oct. 4th. The event, hosted by WFU member Jacob Marty and his family, was attended by over 100 people.*

NON-PROFIT  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Permit No. 203  
Eau Claire, WI

FARMERS EDUCATIONAL & COOPERATIVE  
UNION OF AMERICA - WISCONSIN  
117 W. Spring St.  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729  
Return Service Requested

## Virtual conference eyes future of ag

**N**ational Farmers Union invites you to join in the second annual Growing for the Future, a free virtual conference for beginning farmers and ranchers. Set for Dec. 4-7, the series of webinars will cover mentorship, business planning, USDA programs, conservation, and women and veterans in farming.

The conference will highlight leaders in the field of agriculture and focus on building a network for beginning farmers throughout the country. There will be featured speakers from the Farmer Veteran Coalition, National Young Farmers Coalition, USDA Farm Service Agency, Female Farmer Project and more.

Register today at <https://nfu.org/growing-for-the-future/>. For any questions or concerns please email NFU Education Director Melissa Miller at [melissamiller@nfudc.org](mailto:melissamiller@nfudc.org).

## Farmers Union summer camp dates set for 2018

**D**ates have been set for 2018 Farmers Union Camps at Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood. Registration opens Jan. 1 at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

Generations of families have spent time each summer at Kamp Kenwood. Located along beautiful Lake Wissota near Chippewa Falls, the camp is the ideal spot for youth from across the Midwest to gather for cooperation, leadership and fun. Our education programs focus on cooperatives, sustainability and leadership. Activities include hiking, campfires, swimming, sports, singing, drama, speakers, workshops, co-op games, theme nights, and arts and crafts.

**Junior/JH 1 (Ages 8-14)**

June 11-14

**Junior Camps (Ages 8-12)**

Aug. 5-8

Aug. 8-11

Aug. 12-15

Aug. 19-22

**Junior High 2 (Ages 12-14)**

July 29-Aug. 2

**Senior Camp (Ages 14-18)**

June 18-22

**Family Camps (All Ages)**

July 27-28

Aug 3-4

## WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

A publication of  
Wisconsin Farmers Union  
117 W. Spring St.  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

ph: 715-723-5561 • 800-272-5531 • fx: 715-723-7011  
www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com

### WFU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Darin Von Ruden**  
*President*  
District 5  
608-634-4695

**Craig Myhre**  
*Vice President*  
District 4  
715-983-2167

**Ed Gorell**  
*Treasurer*  
District 3  
715-287-3383

**Chris Holman**  
*Secretary*  
District 6  
715-498-3276

**Linda Ceylor**  
District 1  
715-567-1010

**Dennis Rosen**  
District 2  
715-265-4519

**Tina Hinchley**  
District 7  
608-764-5090

**Rick Adamski**  
District 8  
920-373-7105

**Mark Liebaert**  
At-Large  
715-398-5234

### WFU STATE OFFICE STAFF

#### Tom Quinn

*Executive Director*

715-723-5561 • tqquinn@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Diane Tiry

*Administrative Assistant*

715-723-5561 • dtiry@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Cathy Statz

*Education Director*

715-723-5561 • cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Amanda Kollwitz

*Accounting/Member Services*

715-723-5561 • akollwitz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Danielle Endvick

*Communications Director*

715-471-0398 • dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Tommy Enright

*Communications Associate*

715-513-0460 • tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Sarah Lloyd

*Special Projects Coordinator*

608-844-3758 • slloyd@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Deb Jakubek

*Regional Membership Coordinator*

715-590-2130 • djakubek@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Kirsten Slaughter

*Program & Membership Organizer*

608-514-2031 • kslaughter@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Kara O'Connor

*Government Relations Director*

608-514-4541 • koconnor@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Nick Levendofsky

*Government Relations Associate*

608-234-3741 • nickl@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

#### Brad Henderson

*Facilities Manager, WFU Kamp Kenwood*

715-214-7244 • bhenderson@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Newsletter Editor, Layout & Design: Danielle Endvick  
Printed by: Leader Printing, Eau Claire, WI  
Bulk Rate postage paid in Eau Claire, WI

# From the Director's Desk

## Behind the Scenes: A WFU Update



**Tom Quinn**

*WFU Executive Director*

### Food Systems Projects

During our WFU Board meetings we review reports and updates on staff and member activities, and it is always remarkable to see the

number of things our organization is involved in. Here is a snapshot of a few of the cooperative development and food system investment projects we reviewed at our October 30th meeting.

### Wisconsin Food Hub Co-op

The Co-op's fifth year is coming into the fall sales season. It has been another year of ups and downs, with challenges in weather, markets and operations. Co-op membership continues to expand, and the Hub has also been able to consolidate new groups of Amish growers to help meet the demand for organic produce. Contracts with new distributors continue to expand. We are on target to reach the goal of \$2.6 million in annual sales for 2017.

### Food System Investments and Grants

Our board and investment committee approved a \$100,000 loan to the Vernon Economic Development Association Food Center in Viroqua to help finance the build out of space for a new food enterprise that will produce and nationally market a new protein snack bar using cheese from the Westby Co-op Creamery. The Co-op is assisting with the production process. VEDA is a food business incubator that provides space and technical assistance to numerous regional start-up food businesses. WFU has assisted with several start-ups at the Center.

### Solar-Powered Farms Initiative

This project is a partnership between WFU, Farmers Union Enterprises, Northwinds Renewable Energy and the Legacy Solar Co-op. The goal is to develop a new financing and development model that can assist our members in adding solar to their farms. Getting the details of first project in place has been a complicated process, but we are now certain that the initial pilot solar project will be completed this fall on a WFU member dairy farm.

### Farmers Restaurant Group

WFU has provided a limited level of investment to partner with North Dakota Farmers Union and several other states in establishing a group of Founding Farmers Restaurants in the Washington D.C. area. The sixth restaurant opened this week. NDFU President Mark Watne noted that the restaurants now serve 43,000 guests each week. Large portions of made-from-scratch comfort food, sourced from family farms and ranches, are served at affordable prices. This fall a special distribution network will increase the supply of food products to the restaurants coming directly from Midwest farmers.

### Time for a Transition

On a more personal note, this month our board will begin the process of identifying a new person to serve as Executive Director. Over the next few months I will be moving toward retirement and stepping down from my full-time position as Executive Director of WI Farmers Union. I'll share more about those plans in the future, and my personal thoughts on the great experience of working with our board, members and staff, but know that the board will do a good job of evaluating our needs and finding the right person.

## A Quick Clarification:

Wisconsin Farmers Union wishes to clarify a statement made in last month's newsletter regarding Farm to School funding in the final state budget. We wish to commend the strong bipartisan showing by the Joint Finance Committee for unanimously voting in favor of a provision to restore Farm to School funding in the state budget.

Funding for the program had been eliminated in the Governor's proposed budget this spring, and thanks to efforts from legislators on both sides of the aisle, plus the work of a broad coalition of groups that signed onto a letter circulated

to legislators in April, we helped secure funding for a program that spurs over \$9 million dollars in purchases of locally grown and processed foods by Wisconsin schools each year.

The Wisconsin Farm to School Program connects K-12 public and private schools, early care centers, hospitals, universities and other institutions with Wisconsin-grown and processed fruits, vegetables, dairy products, proteins and other nutritious foods. Created in 2009, Farm to School has a strong track record of maximizing local food purchases and is estimated to benefit 500,000 students across the state annually.

# Hawaii earns Farmers Union charter



**Darin Von Ruden**  
President

**A**loha. What an amazing month it has been. October kicked off with a Douglas County Farmers Union meeting Oct. 1. I'll be heading out to

more annual meetings throughout the next few weeks and look forward to hearing how things are in your neck of the woods. Chapters across the state are holding annual meetings to get together with farm neighbors and discuss policy resolutions they will bring forth at WFU's 87th Annual State Convention Feb. 2-4 in Wisconsin Dells.

In early October, my wife JoAnn and I headed to the Aloha State for Hawaii Farmers Union United's State Convention and a milestone in their short history — they are now a chartered division of National Farmers Union. Congratulations to President Vincent Mina and the leadership team at Hawaii Farmers Union United on this accomplishment.

The convention started Oct. 6 with workshops at the University of Hawaii - West Oahu, then Saturday was a day of events held at the Kahumana Organic Farm, Cafe and Retreat Center. During the day there were presentations from elected officials and the official ceremony to charter Hawaii Farmers Union United was held with representatives from nine Farmers Union states. On Sunday they held a board meeting in the morning and then chapter updates from their local presidents. Sunday afternoon was set aside for policy and by-law debate.

**M o n d a y**

morning we had the opportunity to visit a 1,200-animal hog farm that implemented a Korean practice that uses home-grown microbes to improve soil structure and control flies and odor. We were impressed with very few flies and lack of odor, especially being accustomed to the odor sometimes associated with large hog operations in the Midwest.

On Tuesday I participated in a meeting at the Hawaii Department of Agriculture with representatives from their state legislature and other farm organizations. The meeting focused on how Hawaii could increase food production twofold by 2020. Hawaii imports about 90 percent of their food. The limited land they have available is one struggle, but they do have state-owned land that could be used for production agriculture. However, there are laws that limit who can farm those lands.

The rest of the week I took some time off, so we could take in the sites of Oahu and enjoy the friendship of the Hawaiian culture.

Back in the Badger State, I was pleased to participate in the Pepin-Pierce County Farmers Union meeting. Then, on Oct. 17-18 I was among Farmers Union staff who took part in the Food, Land and Water Conference at Elkhart Lake. Also lending their voices to this important discussion were WFU Executive Director Tom Quinn, Government Relations Director Kara O'Connor, South Central chapter president Kriss Marion and Government Relations Associate Nick Levendofsky.

Here at home in Vernon County, we're finally getting into the fields to chop corn and finish third crop hay chopping, and I'm looking forward to spending a little more time on the farm.



Photos by Darin Von Ruden

**Above:** Hawaii Farmers Union United received its charter from National Farmers Union in October.



**Above:** The convention included a tour of a 1,200-hog farm that is using innovative practices to reduce odor.



**Above:** Members of Hawaii Farmers Union United debate policy. During their convention, WFU President Darin Von Ruden took part in a panel focused on limited land access and ways to increase food production.

## WFU awards WFAN Conference scholarships

Wisconsin Farmers Union was pleased to award four scholarships to members planning to attend the Women, Food and Agriculture Network Conference in Madison Nov. 2-4. The recipients included Mariann Holm, Dunn County; Marie Raboin, Iowa County; Molly Plack Silver, Green County, and Janele Dupris, Oneida County.

Each of the women will receive \$250 in reimbursement of conference expenses. Priority was given to first-time attendees and in having distribution across multiple regions of the state.

The WFAN Conference will celebrate 20 years of engaging women in building an ecological and just food and agricultural system through individual and community power. Learn more at [www.wfan.org](http://www.wfan.org).

## WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

JOIN THE OVER 100,000 PEOPLE ENROLLED IN SPIRIT DENTAL!

- **NO WAITING PERIODS** for all services
- **CHOOSE** your own dentist
- **UP TO \$3,500** Annual Maximums
- **THREE CLEANINGS** per year
- **EVERY DAY** effective dates

**Spirit**  
DENTAL & VISION

For more information, visit  
[www.mynisi.com/farmersunion](http://www.mynisi.com/farmersunion)

Underwritten by Security Life Insurance Company of America, 10901 Red Circle Drive, Minnetonka, MN. This provides a brief description of the Plan. It is not the Insurance Contract nor does it represent it. Some provisions may vary by state. A full explanation of benefits, exceptions and limitations is contained under Individual Dental Policy form IP1000 (and any state specific) or One Life Group Dental Policy GH 1112 (and any state specific). This product may not be available in all states and is subject to individual state regulations. No agent has the authority to change benefits, to bind coverage with Security Life or to promise a certain effective date.

Form # S12031

**National Farmers Union**



# 87th Annual State Convention

February 2-4, 2018

Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells

## FRIDAY February 2

### PRE-CONVENTION CONFERENCE

#### Groundswell: Revitalizing Our Family Farms & Small Towns

We invite WFU members and friends to join in an empowering talk about what kind of future we want for rural Wisconsin. An afternoon of interesting speakers, workshops and discussions looking at the challenges and new ideas that are shaping the future of agriculture.

This year's Groundswell will highlight success stories and challenges of business owners, cooperatives, family farmers and others who are working to bring hope back to Main Street. Learn how you can step up to create change. Also, get advice from WFU members who have engaged as leaders in their communities.

Noon to 4:30pm. Lunch provided. Cost is \$35 for members, or \$65 for non-members (includes new membership).

### WFU FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER

A fun and informal way to raise money to support WFU Kamp Kenwood. Join us for a buffet dinner, socializing and a chance to win great prizes! Register at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

NOW SEEKING DONATIONS — Would you or your Farmers Union chapter like to donate an item to the convention silent or live auctions? Contact Amanda at [akollwitz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:akollwitz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or 715-723-5561.

## SATURDAY February 3

### KEYNOTE JOHN IKERD

Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics John Ikerd will address The Economic Colonization of Rural America.

Ikerd was raised on a Missouri dairy farm and earned his Ph.D. in ag economics from the University of Missouri. He worked in private industry and spent 30 years in various professorial positions at four state universities before retiring in 2000. He now spends most of his time writing and speaking on issues related to sustainability with an emphasis on agriculture and economics.



Keynote  
John Ikerd

### WORKSHOPS

The Future of Agriculture:  
The Next Generation of Farmers

Outside Investment in Agriculture

Farming Against Climate Change

Farmers Union History

Financing a Value-Added

Ag Enterprise



### NETWORKING ROUNDTABLES

New this year, take part in networking round tables on a variety of topics, including Farm Diversification, Dairy, Stepping up as a Leader, Cottage Food, and more!

### BANQUET

Join us for a formal meal, networking, the traditional Torchbearer Ceremony, and John Ikerd's keynote address.

## SUNDAY February 4

### INTERFAITH SERVICE

Our final day will include an interfaith program, highlighting the ties between faith and farming.

### POLICY DISCUSSION

Convention wraps up with resolutions and policy discussions. Join in thoughtful discourse on the future of agriculture and help guide WFU's work in the countryside and at the Capitol.

Youth Activities • Child Care Available  
Workshops • Local Food • Networking

**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ENDS**  
*January 18th!*

Register today at  
[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)  
or use the form on the following page.

**Please note the following before mailing the registration form:**  
Registration and payment must be mailed by Thursday, Jan. 18, 2018 to receive the early bird rate.

Find more convention details at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

All delegates and voting individuals are required to purchase a convention registration package, which include Saturday and Sunday meals. Delegates who are also youth/youth leaders must purchase a delegate registration and meal package.

Indicate names with your package and/or individual meal orders so we can prepare tickets in advance for ease during registration. Registration table opens at 4:30pm on Friday, Feb. 2 and will continue on Saturday, Feb. 3 at 7:30am. Convention officially opens at 9am Saturday.

**LODGING**

Chula Vista Resort  
2501 River Rd.  
Wisconsin Dells, WI

To reserve call 855-923-8144 and refer to **ID#F44235**. A room block is reserved through Mon., Jan. 1.

All individual reservations require a one-night deposit plus taxes at the time the reservation is made. Any cancellation inside the 72 hour cancellation period will forfeit the full deposit amount. There is also an early check out fee of one night's room and tax for departing before arranged departure date.

**YOUTH OPTIONS**

WFU holds concurrent youth activities during select times of Convention weekend for three age groups: Youth Co-op Convention (middle & high school), Co-op Youth Zone (elementary) and child care (infant-K).

**A \$40 per youth registration fee covers meals and programming/child care for all youth.** For more details about youth activities and child care, contact WFU Education Director Cathy Statz at 715-723-5561, [cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

**Cancellation Policy:**

Any cancellations must be reported to the WFU State Office by noon on Thurs., Jan. 25 in order to receive a refund. Please call Diane at 800-272-5531 with cancellations or questions.



**87th Annual State Convention**

February 2-4, 2018  
CHULA VISTA RESORT, WISCONSIN DELLS

**ATTENDEE REGISTRATION FORM**

Please PRINT CLEARLY all information as you would like it to appear on your name badge. List Youth Co-op Convention attendees in designated area and additional adults in lines below.

**Event information: 800-272-5531**  
[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
County/Local \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

CIRCLE: Vegetarian Gluten-Free Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
Affiliation/Organization (guests/sponsors/exhibitors) \_\_\_\_\_  
Payment contact, other than attendee (where applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

<b>REGISTRATION &amp; MEAL PACKAGE</b> PLEASE NOTE THAT PACKAGE RATES INCLUDE ALL MEALS: Saturday lunch and banquet, Sunday breakfast and lunch. Use Separate Meal Tickets area below for non-delegate guests who need an individual meal only.					
Type of Registrant	Early Bird Price before 1/18/18	Price after 1/18/18	# of Packages	Total	
DELEGATE Member	\$70	\$90		\$	
ADULT Member	\$70	\$90		\$	
NON-Member	\$90	\$110		\$	
YOUTH or YOUTH LEADER (Member) (Please fill out youth info below)	\$40	\$60		\$	
Annual Membership (I wish to join WFU)	\$30	\$30		\$	
<b>PRE-CONVENTION WORKSHOP</b>					
		<b>Nonmember</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Total</b>	
Groundswell Workshop Registration (Workshop is noon to 4:30pm on Friday, includes lunch)		\$65 x # _____ (includes membership)	\$35 x # _____	\$	
<b>SEPARATE MEAL TICKETS</b> Tickets available for non-delegate individuals who want to join us for meals only (includes programs.)					
Meal (List attendee name after each meal)	Early Bird on or before 1/18/18	Price after 1/18/18	NON-MEMBER Rate ONLY	# of Tickets	Total
Saturday Lunch	\$20	\$24	\$30		\$
Saturday Banquet	\$35	\$38	\$45		\$
Sunday Breakfast	\$20	\$23	\$28		\$
Sunday Lunch	\$20	\$23	\$27		\$
<b>REGISTRATION TOTAL</b>					\$

<b>YOUTH CO-OP CONVENTION ATTENDEES</b> Please note number of youth attending and include Youth fee in table above.				
Youth Activity	First and Last Name	Age	Grade	Dietary
<input type="checkbox"/> Co-op Convention (Gr 7-12) <input type="checkbox"/> Co-op Youth Zone (Gr 1-6) <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare (Infant-K)				<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten-free <input type="checkbox"/> Allergies (we'll contact you)
<input type="checkbox"/> Co-op Convention (Gr 7-12) <input type="checkbox"/> Co-op Youth Zone (Gr 1-6) <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare (Infant-K)				<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten-free <input type="checkbox"/> Allergies (we'll contact you)

Please use this space to list additional attendees, if needed:

---



---

**MAIL REGISTRATION FORM WITH CHECK PAYABLE TO:  
WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION, 117 W. Spring St., Chippewa Falls, WI 54729**



## *Flood of letters inspire Opinions page*

One of my favorite authors, famed Western novelist Louis L'Amour, once advised, "Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on."

In the past few weeks, farmers across the state turned on that faucet — and opinion pieces came flooding into the Wisconsin Farmers Union office like I've never seen before.

What led to this inbox inundation? A cornerstone of our agricultural community was being threatened — cooperatives. October is Co-op Month, a time when we should be celebrating co-ops and all of the work they do. So it was ironic to see the timeless cooperative principle of "One Member, One Vote" come under fire in AB353/SB281. The bill would allow co-ops to change their bylaws to give non-members voting rights on the board and limit members' access to financial and other records of the co-op.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is blessed with a dynamic duo of a policy team in Madison, Kara O'Connor and Nick Levendofsky, who have been lobbying hard against these destructive bills. But with the support of farmer testimony through farmer letters — and a number of members even traveling to Madison for hearings — their voices were multiplied. On the following pages are some of these letters.

The fate of the bill remains to be seen. But no matter the outcome, I'm proud of the role Farmers Union members played in their democracy in this past month.

Our voices are as important as ever. That's why this opinions section will be a new mainstay within Wisconsin Farmers Union News. I urge you to consider submitting a Letter to the Editor (500 word limit) next month on an issue that matters to you.

If you'd like to submit a letter or would like to request help editing your letter, submit letters via email to me at [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or via mail to 117 W. Spring St., Chippewa Falls, WI 54729.

My hope is that this new section can serve as a place for Farmers Union members to hone their writing skills. But more than that, I hope it's a place where we can all learn about the issues that matter to our fellow Farmers Union members.

Cooperatively yours,

Danielle Endvick  
Wisconsin Farmers Union News Editor

## **Bills would weaken the nature of cooperatives**

Initiated by Cooperative Network, our state legislature presently is formulating a bill (AB 353 and SB 281) that would significantly change the fundamental nature of cooperatives through amendment of Wisconsin law pertaining to cooperative structure.

While enactment by each cooperative in the state is voluntary, this bill would significantly alter the nature and customary practice of cooperatives or cooperative holding companies. Some proposed changes are:

- Up to 20 percent of a co-op's board seats could be turned over to non-members (i.e. outside investors) who would be elected by the board, not the members.
- Co-op members could lose the right to review co-op records more than five years old.
- A co-op would be allowed to give patronage dividends over 8 percent of returns to capital investors.
- Instead of the time-honored practice of one vote per each member, a co-op could base voting on the amount of patronage and, thus, the larger the investment in a co-op, the greater the voting rights.
- Co-ops would need members' approval before liquidating any assets, not just fixed assets.

Cooperatives were formed and regulated as business associations under the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922 in order both to protect them from anti-trust suits and to support and protect small and mid-size business operators, who were mostly involved in agriculture, from the predatory effects of larger operators, suppliers, buyers, and processors.

The nature of cooperatives has been, is now, and needs to continue as one member, one vote. Co-ops are member-formed, member-owned, member-directed, member-managed, and member-benefited. Together we are stronger.

We need to oppose any attempt to change the nature of cooperatives that would allocate voting rights based on the size of patronage activity or equity, rather than individual membership. The practice of one member, one vote levels the playing field so smaller farmers can compete and coexist with larger members and get the same benefits of the cooperative.

Our cooperatives are formed to protect the interests of our members, not non-members. As our ag cooperatives legally determine the criteria and rights of their members, we need to avoid changes that would weaken the rights of members against non-members.

Other than weakening the nature of cooperatives, this bill seeks to widen the investment base beyond the criteria defining membership—i.e., institutional investors who are not, for example, farmer members.

To put outside directors or non-member investors on our cooperative board undermines the nature and benefits of cooperatives in protecting the mutual in-

terests of each member. While outside board members may provide alternative insights, this is already available to co-ops by contracting consultants.

Regarding demand for extra financing or investment capital co-ops may need to meet technical upgrades or to improve infrastructure, cooperatives can obtain this without jettisoning one-member-one-vote and diluting membership criteria. CHS, for example, has issued multiple series of non-voting preferred shares resulting in billions of dollars of supplemental financing from non-members. Other co-ops have issued debentures to augment capital expenditures.

If cooperatives or their members wish, for whatever reasons, to give rights to non-members, investors or others who have different objectives than the members, they should de-cooperatize and change to a conventional stock company. CF Industries was a cooperative for 60 years until they converted in 2007 to a stock company.

The proposed bill would also permit removal of the restriction that dividends on cooperative stock can exceed eight percent. This incentivizes non-member investors to purchase stock but undermines the nature of the co-op because cooperatives would price their services and goods for their members at the highest cost possible in order to produce greater dividend ratios. We do not need or want this. Our co-ops only need to produce enough profits to meet their equity stability and to produce enough reserves for unexpected market reversals.

Many of our cooperatives trade grain, fertilizer, and other commodities in their own accounts and need to be able to liquidate positions of their assets. This should not require votes of the membership as a regular course of business. The issue of selling the fixed assets of the cooperative without member authorization is a different matter, though.

Finally, members, because they are the owners of a cooperative, should not be disallowed from viewing the records, both financial records and minutes of board meetings, that are older than five years. To understand and appraise managerial performance, rationale for business developments, or the long-term effects of board decision-making, it is not unthinkable to request records back more than five years.

As cooperative members, we should oppose these bills, except for their section on electric cooperatives, because the bills endanger the fundamental nature of cooperatives and weaken our mutual interests in business associations that provide both for our farming inputs and for buying our products.

W. Michael Slattery  
Maribel, WI

We, Gerald, Charlotte, and Jeffrey Croes are members of J-C Croes Farm LLC and Croes Udder Dairy LLC. We milk 110 cows, raise 100 hogs farrow to finish and raise the crops for our animals. We each have a say in how our farms are run. Likewise, we are also members of Ellsworth Co-op Creamery, St. Croix Electric Cooperative, NorthStar Cooperative, Ag Partners Co-op, and Westconsin Credit Union. Gerald has been on the board of directors of Ellsworth Creamery for 8 years. All of these cooperatives have been very successful.

When we heard about the changes proposed to cooperative law in Senate bill 281 and Assembly Bill 353, we were angered that the government would try to fix something that is not broken. The proposed bills would change the basic principle of what a cooperative is ... one member, one vote.

We attend the annual meetings of our cooperatives where each member has a vote to elect the board of directors and advise the board. We have pride when our cooperative is successful.

Co-ops are important to rural communities because they bring neighbors together to work for a common cause, making sure the co-op operates successfully so that in turn the members are successful. The members take pride in an organization that they are part of and that benefits them. Voting members should have a financial interest in the co-op. Outsiders may advise, but not have a vote.

We agree with the rural electric provision of the bill, but that should be a separate bill, not included with the rest of the bill, which should be voted down.

Co-ops are different than other forms of business in that there is pride in every member being a part owner of the co-op, compared to individuals working for a large corporation where they could be replaced easily. In co-ops the members share in the success of the co-op in the form of patronage dividends, whereas in corporations, a person feels as if they are working for the benefit of the owner.

Please urge our senators to support cooperatives as they were intended to be; do not change the laws of cooperatives.

*Gerald, Charlotte, and Jeffrey Croes  
Deer Park, WI*

I am a dairy farmer in Merrill, Wisconsin. On our farm, we milk 450 cows and employ 20 full and part time individuals. I am also a supervisor on the Lincoln County Board.

I am a member of Heartland Co-op, Genex, Ag-source, Provision Partners, Larsen Co-op, Equity Livestock, and CoVantage Credit Union. I also serve as a voting delegate for Genex, meaning that I vote on behalf of those members at the annual Cooperative Resources International (CRI) delegate meeting. I am also supposed to be a liaison between the cooperative and my fellow cooperative members in

the local area. I take this responsibility seriously, and stay informed by attending the fall delegate meeting where delegates are encouraged to express opinions and share our ideas with directors and Genex staff.

When I learned about the changes proposed in this bill, and specifically those related to my own cooperative, CRI, I was surprised and disappointed. I have been a voting delegate for this cooperative for several years and there has never been any discussion of a proposal like this within the cooperative. If there had been such a discussion, I would have expressed the opinion that the principle of one member, one vote is absolutely sacred and should under no circumstances be changed.

Since CRI did not take the opportunity to have this discussion with its members directly, I will share my opinions about this bill with you. This bill gets it wrong. First of all the Electric Co-op portion of this bill has nothing to do with the rest of it, and with all due respect the combination is dirty pool. Furthermore, motivation for changing the rules regarding who can be on a cooperative board and the 8 percent investment cap are coming from outside the cooperatives, not within.

Co-ops are important to rural communities because they help dollars bounce around locally rather than leave the area as they often do when big corporations are our only options for purchasing inputs. I think it's also important to remember how cooperatives help feed the very human desires of ownership and community.

Co-ops are different than other types of business entities in that they are democracy in action. A cooperative's fortunes are tied to the fortunes of its patrons and vice versa. That difference is important to our farm for the same reasons it was important to the founders of cooperatives who have been around for decades. We need inputs in good times and bad and we need markets in good times and bad. Cooperatives help keep us at least a few degrees removed from the chaos of Wall Street and the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Wisconsin has a strong Cooperative tradition and that tradition has helped our state do better than some other areas during times of recession.

There is no reason to change the rules governing cooperatives in our state. The changes proposed with this legislation will erode the basic foundation of what a co-op is. These changes would no doubt have a negative effect on the equity, morale and social fabric of our rural communities.

*Hans Breitenmoser Jr.  
Merrill, WI*

I am writing in objection to Senate Bill 281/Assembly Bill 353, which I firmly believe to be a blatant effort to undermine the principles of actually being a Cooperative and to disenfranchise the many voices who make up a Cooperative for the behest and

benefit of a few. It is my opinion those advocating for SB281/AB353 on behalf of their Cooperatives are betraying the many hardworking people who built these cooperatives along with the purposes they were intended for when being founded. Cooperatives should be run democratically for the benefit of all their members, anything else and it becomes a corporation just looking for tax loopholes and investment capital but lacking the financial transparency to hold such an organization accountable.

I also feel Cooperative Network is trying to paint themselves as a representative of all cooperatives in the state of Wisconsin when to my knowledge out of all the many member-owned dairy cooperatives in the state of Wisconsin only six are members of Cooperative Network.

As a dairy farmer, I am only a member of two cooperatives and am no longer a member of Cooperative Resources International due to their treatment of their smaller members who are contributing members but on a smaller scale. Members that helped make that cooperative what it is today.

Wisconsin Agriculture, with emphasis on the state's dairy industry, is in a pivotal time where owner-operator farmers are being cast aside in favor of policy that supports overproduction, creating a less than stable market for those who are not to blame for the agriculture economic instability. The cooperatives they built should work for all their members equally, not solely on how much they bring to the table that year as at some point I have little doubt that if SB281/AB353 passes the smaller hardworking owner-operator farmers that built our state and the reason many of these cooperatives were formed in the first place will be seen as nothing more than inconsequential or even a burden, and there will be nothing to protect these farmers as their voice and their vote within the cooperative they have entrusted will be lost.

*Nial Murray  
Barron County, WI*

I am a member of a successful 6-year old farm cooperative based in one of the poorest counties of the state in Northern Wisconsin. The most important thing keeping the co-op together? Trust. Trust in board members to make wise decisions in spite of the financial and social headwinds in rural America.

These nurturing co-op laws you are looking to meddle with protect co-ops and co-op members from predatory investing and outsider politics. These are our co-ops, financially strapped but successful. I trust my co-op board members but I do not trust the proposed changes to co-op laws contained in Senate Bill 281/Assembly Bill 353.

*John Adams  
Washburn, WI*

### From p.1 ► CSA

The day also featured the family's use of draft horses to work the fields, move haybales and accomplish other chores on the farm. As the horses strained against their harnesses, Dan sat, relaxed, at the reins and spoke of some of his experiences with the CSA model – where members buy vegetable shares at the start of the growing season. In doing so, they help with planting season costs and share some of the risks the farmer faces – if the farm suffers drought or other catastrophe, members' shares may be smaller.

The idea seemed so simple but meaningful. To a girl who had grown up on a conventional Chippewa County dairy farm, my world of agriculture had largely centered around cattle, corn and soybeans. The risks that came along with farming were risks my family well understood, but, by and large, we were on our own. Listening to Dan talk about members coming out to visit and volunteer at the farm and hearing his vision for how the CSA movement could build community — what farming *could be* suddenly seemed bigger.

It was clear to see the care that the family put into the land and the food they raised. More intriguing to me were the relationships they were creating with members, some whom returned year after year because they realized vegetables fresh from the farm tasted fresher than supermarket offerings.

In a time when generations are becoming further removed from the farm, the CSA movement is helping many reconnect with those lost roots.

Through the years I've been blessed to meet more CSA farmers and



*Above: CSA farming is helping to bring young and beginning farmers into our rural communities — farmers like WFU members Tenzin and Stacey Botsford and their daughters, who farm near Athens and run Red Door Family Farm.*

see them in action on their farms. I'm humbled by folks like Mike Racette and Patty Wright, who just wrapped up their 25th CSA season and are an incredible example of how a CSA farm can build community. Members of Mike and Patty's Spring Hill Community Farm near Prairie Farm travel from as far away as the Twin Cities to help with harvest and projects around the farm. The members are more than just consumers. They help guide the farm's decisions and even helped fund a solar panel project on the farm.

#### Returning farmers to the land

In an era when we see all too many empty barns sitting alongside our rural roads, Community Supported Agriculture is bringing life back to some farm communities. Beyond connecting consumers to their farmers, it's providing another avenue for begin-

ning farmers to start farming – often on rented land and at a lower commitment than the hundreds of thousands needed to buy cash cropping equipment or a dairy herd.

On a visit to Red Door Family Farm near Athens last spring, I met Tenzin and Stacey Botsford, who moved back to Wisconsin from the West Coast to start a farm and a family. Watching their sweet young daughter, Leona, tag along behind her parents around the farm, I was struck by the value of the CSA model in bringing families, even first-generation farmers like the Botsfords, to rural areas. Leona gleefully handed me a turnip pulled straight

from the soil, and brushing it off, I took a bite, reveling in how sweet this lifestyle is, not only for the farmer, but also for the CSA members who can take pride in knowing they are helping farm families stay on the land.

#### Join the discussion

Wisconsin Farmers Union is pleased to be bringing together CSA farmers Dec. 7-8 in Wisconsin Dells for the Midwest CSA Conference. This biennial event provides a forum for discussing the shared values, emerging opportunities and challenges of the growing CSA movement.

Planned "by CSA farmers, for CSA farmers" this year's event will highlight the issues impacting the CSA movement and work to build a shared vision for the region. Sessions will provide time for facilitated discussion and dialogue, led by panels of farmers. CSA member voices will also be part of the discussion. The conference features four tracks: Production; Logistics; Beginning Farmers; Building Community; and Financial Management & Business Planning.

CSA farmers, advocates or those just wanting to learn more are invited to attend the conference, which organizer Sarah Lloyd said "is planned to focus on farmers and give them a space to reflect on their past season, come together with other farmers and advocates, and to inspire and build energy for the growing season ahead." Learn more at [www.MidwestCSA.com](http://www.MidwestCSA.com).



*Photo by Ilisa Ailts*

*Above: The CSA movement is helping reconnect people of all ages with the land. (Photo taken at Threshing Table Farm in Star Prairie.)*

## Midwest CSA Conference

December 7 & 8, 2017

Chula Vista Resort • Wisconsin Dells, WI

SAVE THE DATE



Join the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the Midwest for two days of shared learning, practical workshops and lively discussions. We invite farmers, members and advocates to come together for important conversations about the core concepts and practices of CSA, as well as farm and community viability. In addition, hands-on workshops will give CSA farmers time to reflect and plan for the future.



# U.S. Dairy's Loonie Obsession



**Chris Holman**  
WFU District 6 Director

By now, Canada must have come to regret its move to bring ultra-filtered milk out from the regulatory shadows earlier this year and to create a new, special price class for it at home. In doing so, Canada inadvertently provided leaders in the U.S. dairy sector with a trumped up political drama that now has the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) telling the world that, “The only way we believe we can address that issue [creating a new class of milk] is the complete elimination of the supply management system, the complete elimination of all tariffs and the complete free flow of dairy products among the United States, Mexico and Canada.”

At least, that’s what NMPF’s Jaime Castaneda told The Canadian Press prior to his recent arrival in Ottawa for the much-ballyhooed “Round Three” of talks centered on the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Curiously, Castaneda went on to explain that NMPF would be working with Mexico to achieve, “nothing short of the full-scale destruction of [Canada’s] supply management.”

For some reason, Canada has become the milk-white whale for the most powerful people in U.S. dairy, and though the Canadians might not realize it yet, their interests in maintaining a healthy marketplace for their farmers has leaders on this side of the border insinuating that this is a big part of what’s ailing American dairy farmers. Of course, the Canadians won’t get credit for helping to convince the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to change its mind on how U.S. processors can use ultra-filtered milk in their dairy products. Ultra-filtered milk is the very product that was at the heart of the dairy dispute and surprise dropping of dairy farms earlier this year. You may remember that Grassland dropped dozens of Wisconsin dairy farmers with just 30 days notice pointing its finger northward at Canada. One might also think that this policy shift from the FDA would bail Canada out a bit since it was apparently their action that pushed the FDA to do something that dairy leaders in the states have coveted for decades. Sadly that is not the case, as industry leaders like the NMPF would rather take Canada on and try to undermine its market—a curious tactic riddled with double standards—than to tackle the thorny issues of overproduction in the U.S. dairy sector and farm economy in general.

“This unhealthy obsession with destroying Canada’s supply management system is being motivated by the concern that it provides a working model that meets domestic needs while allowing some dovetailing with international trade. It provides a precedent for a dairy industry and government showing concern for its farmers and not just their production.”

— Chris Holman

We know that Canada is one of our biggest and best trade partners, but importing \$631.6 million worth of American dairy products isn’t satisfactory enough for American dairy leaders and despite the fact that America imports just a tiny fraction of that amount in return. Just this week, US negotiators left reason in their wake and demanded ten times the access to Canadian markets than what was agreed to under the now-abandoned Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Industry leaders also seem to think that Canada concerning itself mostly with domestic dairy consumption is an out-dated and inefficient approach. Unfortunately, the scapegoating that this “Blame Canada” crowd began earlier in the year will continue, and given the hostility of their rhetoric it looks to continue until Canadian trade representatives cave to our demands and abandon their dairy farmers and their cows to our wolves.

This unhealthy obsession with destroying Canada’s supply management system is being motivated by the concern that it provides a working model that meets domestic needs while allowing some dovetailing with the international trade. It provides a precedent for a dairy industry and government showing concern for its farmers and not just their production, and for some reason that is unacceptable to industry leaders here in the US. Maybe it’s because Canada is giving something for American dairy farmers to look at and ask, “Why can’t we have something like that?”

It’s worth noting that American agriculture is somewhat hypocritical when it comes to the notion of managing the supply of a commodity. Farmers who grow sugar beets in the U.S. have a form of supply management that seems to work for them, and sugar not only tends to pay well but has also become one of the strongest lobbies in D.C. According to the USDA, “The U.S. sugar program uses price supports, domestic marketing allotments, and tariff-rate quotas (TRQs) to influence the amount of sugar available to the U.S. market. The program supports U.S. sugar prices above comparable levels in the world market.” Even here in America’s Dairyland—the great state of Wisconsin—cranberry farmers are drowning in their bogs of overproduction and many are now clamoring for their own supply management.

Why would they do that if NMPF is right and supply management schemes must be completely eliminated?

When supply management is brought up in dairy circles, it’s often argued that if American dairy farmers were to adopt that system, someone else would produce what they don’t, and they’d have just put themselves at a market disadvantage. The sad and frustratingly ugly part about that is that it wouldn’t be Canada, but other American dairy farmers who would be the most likely culprit to sink their fellow dairy farmers given the full-throttle mentality that has infected American agriculture.

Despite the constant barrage of attacks against Canada and declarations of trade war like those that NMPF has recently fired into the middle of the Canadian dairy industry, we are also seeing an ironic attempt at supply management being carried out by U.S. processors—both cooperative and non-cooperative alike—who are implementing base plans that disincentivize production for their farmers. That’s great for them, but it still does nothing for farmers and that’s the point.

The leadership in the U.S. dairy sector, led by the NMPF, isn’t concerned with the plight of all of their farmers. They are concerned with taking the easy way out, blaming Canada, and increasing domestic production because they all—checkoffs included—make more money from every additional hundredweight of milk produced. Taking out Canadian dairy will, they hope, provide even more room for American production to pad their paychecks. That’s what they’re ultimately concerned with, and getting paid a fair price is proving to be just another thing that our leaders feel they are worthy of but American and Canadian dairy farmers are not.

## Industrial hemp could provide new opportunities for farmers



**Tommy Enright**  
Communications  
Associate

"As recently as World War II, Wisconsin farmers were leaders in producing industrial hemp for things like rope in the war effort, and, because of a mistaken identity association with its recreational cousin, this industrial and nutritional product was pulled out of farmers' fields, and thereby farmers lost one option for their financial viability," said Kara O'Connor, WFU government relations director at a recent hearing at the Capitol in Madison.

Indeed, the last crop of industrial hemp produced in Wisconsin was in 1958, and the United States has had to import all our hemp products from Canada, China, and Europe ever since. Thankfully, the 2014 Farm Bill loosened restrictions on growing the plant, and 31 states have started growing it since, including Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota and Indiana.

Now, a bill introduced by Rep. Jesse Kremer (Kewaskum) and Sen. Patrick Testin (Stevens Point) with bipartisan support will give Wisconsin the opportunity to become the 32nd state to allow for the production of industrial hemp.

Additionally, U.S. Reps. Glenn Grothman, Ron Kind, Mark Pocan, Gwen Moore and Mike Gallagher are co-sponsors of a bipartisan federal bill that would remove industrial hemp from the definition of marijuana under the Controlled Substances Act.

At our 86th annual Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention, delegates adopted a policy resolution in favor of the legalization of industrial hemp as well as its removal from the Controlled Substances Act. The resolution passed with overwhelming support after a spirited debate over the difference between industrial

hemp and its distant cousin marijuana (industrial hemp contains 0.3 percent or less THC, the psychoactive compound found in marijuana).

As consumers and producers become more educated, perception continues to shift in favor of this super-plant, and with good reason. Hemp has a seemingly endless number of high tech, manufacturing and health applications- it's used in health foods, body care products, clothing, construction materials, biofuels, battery components, plastic components, and more in addition to its traditional uses for fiber, textiles, and rope. Non-psychoactive CBD seed oils are higher in Omega 3 than fish oil, and WI health advocates and nutritionists have taken notice since the legalization of CBD oil in WI.

For farmers, hemp could be an important commodity, especially given the current agricultural economic climate. Most commodity prices have been low to dismal for some time now, and the introduction of a new crop would provide options. If enough farmers got onboard, it could even possibly help balance some of our oversupply issues that seem perennial in the commodity market. That may be a longshot, but we farmers are optimists.

For its part, hemp is drought tolerant and can be grown in a variety of climates and soil types, meaning less irrigation is needed. It is naturally resistant to many pests, meaning less pesticide use. Lastly, hemp is planted densely, which means that it outcompetes weeds, leading to less herbicide use. Therefore, farmers pay less in inputs and resources while environmental concerns are mitigated.

It's high time for Wisconsin to get with the program. Industrial hemp is part of our state heritage, our national heritage (heck, the Declaration of Independence was written on hemp paper), and Wisconsin Farmers Union hopes that it becomes part of our agricultural future.



### Wisconsin Farmers Union KAMP KENWOOD

CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI

## CABIN ON WISSOTA



**T**he cozy Cabin on Lake Wissota at WFU Kamp Kenwood is available to rent from mid-October through April. A perfect getaway for the outdoor enthusiast, the cabin offers convenient access to hiking and cross-country trails in Lake Wissota State Park.



**Family Gatherings • Business Retreats  
Birthday & Holiday Parties • Winter Fun**

### WFU Kamp Kenwood

19161 79th Avenue • Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

[www.kampkenwood.com](http://www.kampkenwood.com)

[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

To reserve, contact Brad Henderson at 715-214-7244.



*Above:* A great group wandered out in 30-degree temperatures Oct. 28 for the final Graze River Country pasture walk of the season at Larson Valley Farm near Colfax. Highlights of the walk, hosted by Brad (far right) and Melissa Larson, were the use of cover crops, including a rye/corn/pasture rotation, and a silviculture project to restore oak savanna on the farm.



*Above:* WFU Executive Director Tom Quinn, right, was among panelists on a panel discussing the challenge of dwindling farm land during the Food, Land and Water Conference in mid-October in Elkhart Lake.



*Above:* Pierce-Pepin Farmers Union has had an incredible year of revitalizing their now-combined chapter and building community among farmers in their region. They celebrated their success during an Oct. 15 meeting.

# Chapter Chatter

*Share it here!* Submit chatter to Danielle at 715-471-0398 or [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

## Convention sponsors & exhibitors sought

Sponsor and exhibitor registration is open for the 87th WFU State Convention Feb. 2-4 at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Cooperatives, farm organizations, and agribusinesses are encouraged to take part in the trade show, which runs throughout the weekend. Or consider investing in an ad in the convention program. Registration is open at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

For sponsorship details, contact Tommy Enright, 715-563-2169 or [tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com). Some local food items are needed. Farms or businesses interested in selling or donating local food for the weekend's menu or snacks for break times are asked to contact the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.

## Convention fundraiser donations sought

Wisconsin Farmers Union invites you to join us for the WFU Foundation Fundraiser from 6-9pm on Fri., Feb. 2, kicking off convention weekend at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells! Enjoy a buffet dinner, raffle, live auction and networking with Farmers Union friends! The evening supports the WFU Kamp Kenwood facilities fund.

Individuals and WFU chapters are encouraged to donate an item or basket! Donations can be dropped off at the WFU Office (117 W. Spring St., Chippewa Falls or 108 S. Webster St., Suite 201, Madison) or brought to the County President's Meeting Jan. 13 in Tomah. Donations are preferred prior to convention. (Late additions still welcomed at registration table.) Contact Amanda at 715-723-5561 or [akollwitz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:akollwitz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) for more details.

## Scholarships available for NFU Women's Conference

SAN DIEGO — Calling all women in agriculture: are you looking for applicable business skills, innovative marketing tactics, advice for running for local office, and a strong network of other women in agriculture? National Farmers Union's Women's Conference, Jan. 14-18 in San Diego, CA, offers all that and more. WFU is offering four \$1,000 scholarships for first-time attendees to the conference. Apply under events at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

The conference will prepare attendees and their operations for their own future in many areas, including: business planning, succession planning, running for local office, networking, telling their own stories, innovative marketing and much, much more. NFU hopes to provide attendees with a network of female producers that they can reach out to throughout the year, as well as provide attendees with important tools that will help set their operations up for a future of success.

This year's agenda features several familiar faces within Wisconsin Farmers Union, including Sarah Lloyd and Lisa Kivirist, as well as a special panel featuring the Soil Sisters. Register today: <https://nfu.org/education/womensconference/>.

## 'Reluctant farmer' to share her farm story Nov. 9

MENOMONIE — Writer, marketer and self-proclaimed reluctant farmer Lucie B. Amundsen will speak about "Connecting with your Consumers and Middle Agriculture" during a Nov. 9 event in Menomonie hosted by Dunn County Farmers Union.

Amundsen and her husband co-own Locally Laid Egg Company, a farm that provides pasture-raised eggs in Northern Minnesota and partners with a total of seven other mid-level producers. A former contributor to the Minneapolis Star Tribune and former editor at Reader's Digest Association, Lucie has written for scores of publications in her decade-plus freelance career. She's also authored a narrative nonfiction, *Locally Laid*, about her farm startup horror show and the stressed economics of Middle Agriculture.

Amundsen's talk will be from 6-8pm at Micheels Hall 290 at UW-Stout. Reserve your free ticket at <http://bit.ly/2yYS7AY>. The event is being hosted in partnership with Just Local Food Cooperative and Menomonie Market Food Co-op, with support from UW-Stout sponsors greensense and Sustainable Stout.

# Grow your chapter: Consider new board roles



**Kirsten Slaughter**  
Membership Organizer

To be chartered as a WFU chapter some requirements include holding at least three meetings a year, having 10 or more members within chapter borders, and creating a board consisting of a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. While each chapter must have these four positions, there are a number of other roles that a chapter board can utilize that add value and support to the organization.

New positions help share the responsibility of running a chapter, allow chapters to take on new projects, encourage the development of new leaders from your membership and can increase overall member engagement. Below are some ideas for new positions your chapter can integrate. These positions can be modified to fit into your chapter's needs.

## Cooperative Director

Co-ops and cooperative education have been and continue to be an important part of Wisconsin Farmers Union. Currently many co-ops across Wisconsin help sponsor chapter activities and provide scholarships for families to attend WFU Kamp Kenwood. The Cooperative Director plays an important role in forming relationships with area cooperatives and credit unions. This person can:

- Get to know local co-ops/credit unions and find out which (if any) support campers/ promote camp
- Communicate with the state office if donations/support are solicited to coordinate efforts
- Attend meetings, help them understand the local chapter role, and participate in events

## Legislative Director

WFU takes a very active role in advocating for members. But protecting farmland and farmers needs everyone in the organization. The Legislative Director stays up-to-date on issues and organizes members when needed. This person can:

- Pay attention to key issues and give legislative updates at chapter meetings to share how members can get involved
- Attend WFU Lobby Day if possible, help coordinate local attendees, and arrange carpool of members down to Madison
- Help members in writing Policy or Bylaw resolutions for the Annual Convention

## Communication Director

The Communication Director is in charge of making sure that members, community members,

and the media are up-to-date on chapter happenings. This person can:

- Run an email list to chapter members (Communications staff recommend MailChimp)
- Maintain a connection between the chapter and local media and send press releases to local media about chapter events with dates and times
- Help connect members interested in writing/interviewing on issues with WFU staff
- Create and/or maintain a chapter Facebook page and use it to help promote events
- Take photos at chapter events and submit to the WFU Communications Staff for social media and the newsletter Chapter Chatter

## Membership Director

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a membership organization which means maintaining current memberships and encouraging new members is a very important job. A Membership Director can:

- Seek new members for the chapter
- Let members know about WFU benefits
- Work on membership renewals with WFU staff and make contacts to encourage renewals
- Help state office get additional information about new members so we can better reach out
- Call and welcome new members and invite them to meetings and events

## Youth Leader

Our youth are the future of the organization. Encouraging their involvement and education is some of the most important work we can do. To have an active youth program, participants must take part in four meetings annually and complete two projects each year. A Youth Leader can:

- Find exciting new projects and meetings youth can take part in. There are a variety of ways to fulfill youth program requirements.
- Encourage youth to attend regular chapter meetings and the Youth Co-op Convention
- Start a chapter youth program where youth in grades 1-12 with an active Farmers Union membership may participate in WFU youth activities
- Use the National Farmers Union curriculum each year to learn and grow with youth

As annual meetings approach spend some time thinking about how you could integrate new members and positions into your chapter. If you find that each job is too big for one person, think about forming a committee of members. Remember, you do not need to be limited to these options, but can create positions that work for your chapter and its members. If you have questions or would like further information about each position, please contact me at [kslaughter@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:kslaughter@wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

## FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

NOV 3, Deadline for early bird Midwest CSA Conference registrations, [www.midwestcsa.com](http://www.midwestcsa.com)

NOV 3, Buffalo County Farmers Union Annual Meeting 6pm, Donna Mae's, (formerly KD's), Highway 85, Mondovi. Info: John Gehrke, 715-926-3790

NOV 6, South Central Farmers Union Annual Meeting, 6pm, Blanchard Hall, 204 & 206 South Main St., Blanchardville. Contact Kriss Marion, 608-523-4341

NOV 8, Wood-Portage-Waupaca Farmers Union Annual Meeting, 6pm, Central Rivers Farmshed, 1220 Briggs Ct, Stevens Point

NOV 9, Connecting with Your Consumers & Middle Agriculture, 6-8pm, Micheels Hall, UW-Stout, <http://www.mmfc.coop/calendar/>

NOV 11, St. Croix Farmers Union Annual Meeting, 7pm potluck followed by meeting and cards, Deb and Dennis Rosen home, 2722 200th Ave., Emerald. Info: Char Croes, [jccroes@amerytel.net](mailto:jccroes@amerytel.net)

NOV 13, Pepin-Pierce Farmers Union Annual Meeting, 5pm potluck, Community Church of Christ, Arkansasaw. Info: Brad Richardson, 715-285-5353, or Robbi Bannen, 651-380-5669

NOV 15, Columbia County Farmers Union, Columbia County Sheriff's Office Community Room, 711 East Cook Street, Portage. Info: Sarah Lloyd, [sarahlloyd53965@gmail.com](mailto:sarahlloyd53965@gmail.com)

NOV 15, End-of-year deadline for all grant requests, local chapter initiative grants and other small grants/sponsorships

DEC 1, Deadline for 2018 Resolutions and Articles & Bylaw Changes sent to WFU Office

DEC 3, Dane County Farmers Union Annual Meeting 1pm, Daniel & Lori Kvalheim Farm, 2256 Cty. Rd. T, Sun Prairie. Info: Krist Kvalheim, 608-658-9106

DEC 4-7, Growing for the Future Online Conference, register for free at [www.nfu.org](http://www.nfu.org)

DEC 7-8, Midwest CSA Conference, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, [www.midwestcsa.com](http://www.midwestcsa.com)

DEC 9, Sauk County Annual Meeting and Cookie Exchange, noon to 2:30pm, Driftless Glenn, Distillery & Restaurant, 300 Water St., Baraboo. Bring cookies for a cookie exchange. RSVP to Erin at [e.schneider.hilltopfarm@gmail.com](mailto:e.schneider.hilltopfarm@gmail.com) by Dec. 6

DEC 22, Exhibitor registration deadline for WFU State Convention

FEB 2-4, 87th Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention, Chula Vista, Wisconsin Dells

Submit events to Danielle Endvick, 715-471-0398 or [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

# WHAT'S ON YOUR TABLE? *with Diane Tiry*



## Homemade Seasoning Mixes for Holiday Gift Giving

I am looking forward to putting together some holiday seasoning mixes for gift giving and just might include some in a silent auction basket for the WFU State Convention Feb. 2-4 in Wisconsin Dells.

Now is the perfect time to find the spices needed, and if you have grown some in your garden, this month's recipes are perfect to dry them for use. Choosing which mixes to include was the difficult part. Online at [www.budget101.com](http://www.budget101.com), there are around 200 seasoning mix recipes, but also 31 different categories of other mixes for bread, muffin, cake mixes and more to choose from.

What prompted me to include these mixes was seeing a Facebook post displaying a pretty bottle of ranch dressing and dip mix recipe with a ribbon tied around the neck of the bottle that lured me in. I couldn't resist checking out other Taste of Home's seasoning mixes. What an efficient way of creating a three-month recipe planner by putting together mixes; generally, when stored in airtight containers these mixes will last from 6 months to one year. Consider recycling baby food jars to be kind to the environment.

### RANCH DRESSING & DIP MIX

Source: *Taste of Home* ([www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/ranch-dressing-and-dip-mix](http://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/ranch-dressing-and-dip-mix))

#### Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. plus 2 tsp. dried minced onion
- 1 Tbsp. dried parsley flakes
- 2 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. pepper

#### Directions:

1. In a small bowl, combine the first seven ingredients. Store in an airtight container in a cool dry place for up to 1 year. Yield: About 6 Tbsp. (enough to make 6 batches).

TO PREPARE DRESSING: In a bowl, combine 1 Tbsp. mix with 1 cup mayonnaise and 1 cup buttermilk; refrigerate. Yield: 2 cups. Keep in refrigerator 2 weeks.

TO PREPARE DIP: In a bowl, combine 1 Tbsp. mix and 1 cup sour cream; refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving. YIELD: 1 cup.



### CHILI SPICE MIX

Source: *Taste of Home* ([www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/spice-mix-for-chili](http://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/spice-mix-for-chili))

#### Ingredients:

- 3 1/2 tsp. garlic salt
- 3 1/2 tsp. chili powder
- 2 tsp. each salt, onion powder, pepper, ground cumin, paprika and dried parsley flakes
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper



#### Directions:

1. In a small bowl, combine all of the seasonings. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to 6 months. YIELD: 3 batches (about 6 Tbsp.).

For your favorite chili recipe, add 2 Tbsp. spice mix to cooked one pound ground beef along with your other ingredients, bring to a boil, reduce heat; cover and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

### DIXIE HERB RUB

Source: *Taste of Home* ([www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/dixie-herb-rub](http://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/dixie-herb-rub))

#### Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp. each dried basil, thyme and rosemary, crushed
- 1 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 1/2 tsp. dried marjoram
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3/4 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 tsp. onion powder
- 1/4 tsp. cayenne powder

#### Directions:

1. In a small bowl, combine all ingredients. Store in a covered container. Rub over poultry or meat before grilling, baking or broiling.

YIELD: 1/3 cup. This rub is great on chicken, beef and pork. Slice the leftover meat for sandwiches the next day.



### ZESTY SALT SUBSTITUTE

Source: *Taste of Home* ([www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/zesty-salt-substitute](http://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/zesty-salt-substitute))

#### Ingredients:

- 5 tsp. onion powder
- 3 tsp. garlic powder
- 3 tsp. ground mustard
- 3 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. celery seed
- 1/2 tsp. white pepper

#### Directions

1. In a small bowl, combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container for up to 6 months. Use to season meats or vegetables.

YIELD: about 1/4 cup.

Take the plunge and try some homemade pantry seasoning mixes or other mixes for gift giving or include in your menu planning for the colder months.



*Happy and Healthy Eating to All!*



# WASHINGTON

from National Farmers Union

## Corner

NOVEMBER 2017

Last month, during the Fall Legislative Fly-In, 350 Farmers Union members traveled to the nation's capital to speak with members of Congress about the most important issues they're facing, including the farm safety net, renewable fuels, and access to health care. Though they have since departed, NFU is still busy advocating for those same issues in D.C. In August, NFU launched a new initiative to encourage the transition to homegrown, renewable energy. As part of that initiative, the organization is advocating for the Renewable Fuel Standard, E30 and higher blends of ethanol, and advanced biofuels. Additionally, NFU has ramped up its 2018 Farm Bill activities, urging lawmakers to provide an adequate safety net, address corporate consolidation in agribusiness, and strengthen the legislation's conservation title. As the farm bill process progresses, NFU will continue to advocate on behalf of this nation's family farmers and ranchers as well as the rural communities in which they reside.

### FARMERS UNION PROVIDES ADMINISTRATION WITH PATHWAY TO EXPANDED ETHANOL USE

Between a persistently weak farm economy and grain surpluses, family farmers and ranchers have had a tough go of it for the past several years. But there is a bright spot among in the agricultural gloom and doom: biofuels.



Biofuels, including ethanol and advanced biofuels, offer myriad benefits. For farmers, they open new markets and cuts into surpluses, thus bolstering incomes and stabilizing prices. At the same time, biofuel production brings thousands of new, good-paying jobs to rural communities, strengthening local economies and stemming rural flight. The advantages extend beyond the communities in which ethanol is produced: wider adoption of biofuels decreases transportation fuel prices for consumers, reduces American dependence on foreign fuel sources, improves air quality, and decreases carbon emissions.

The current state of the farm economy, coupled with biofuels' potential to mitigate the problem, has led National Farmers Union to promote policies that support the production and adoption of biofuels. In October, NFU President Roger Johnson submitted comments to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) outlining regulatory changes that would promote use

of higher blends of ethanol. A week prior, NFU joined 10 prominent biofuel organization to urge the agency to maintain its commitment to the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). Additionally, Johnson joined the advisory board of New Energy America, a new organization created to promote clean energy jobs in rural America.

### FARMER FAIR PRACTICES RULES DUE TO GO INTO EFFECT

The Farmer Fair Practices Rules' (FFPR) "competitive injury" provision is due to go into effect in late October. The rule will eliminate the unreasonable burden that for livestock producers to be able to sue for abusive practices, they must prove that harm was done to the entire industry rather than just to themselves.



NFU and the U.S. Cattlemen's Association released a joint statement emphasizing the importance of FFPR and urging

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue to allow the rule to be finalized on schedule.

The rule, which is a clarification that is required for family farmers to remain protected under the Packers and Stockyards Act, has been debated thoroughly for the past seven years - the U.S. Department of Agriculture has solicited comments and rewritten it several times, only to have industry groups funded by the meatpacking conglomerates stall their progress through backchannel legislative and regulatory means. This has occurred at the expense of family farmers and ranchers, who have long been waiting for the basic protections the rule will offer.

### 2018 FARM BILL SHOULD ADDRESS CONSOLIDATION

In a letter sent earlier this month, NFU joined a coalition of 210 farm, rural, worker, and consumer advocacy groups to urge Congress to address the lack of competition in the food chain.



Farmers and ranchers have been dealing with rapid consolidation in the industries that both supply and buy from their operations over the past several decades. It is hard to think of a sector in which this isn't true - fertilizer, seeds, agrichemicals, biotechnology, farm machinery, slaughter houses, meatpacking, cane sugar processing, food

distribution, processed food, and supermarkets are all heavily consolidated, with only a handful of companies controlling the majority of the market.

This level of consolidation has serious consequences. For one, input producers are able to increase the cost farmers must pay, while meatpackers and supermarkets lower prices paid to farmers and ranchers, cutting already slim profit margins. At the same time, consumer prices continue to rise. This can wreak havoc on rural communities, as small and mid-size farms are priced out of the market. Consolidation removes money and power from local communities, leading to rural depopulation and depletion of essential services and infrastructure. Additionally, monopolies and oligopolies have little motivation to compete or innovate, leaving farmers and consumers with fewer and worse choices.

NFU and the rural coalition are urging Congress to include commonsense protections to level the playing field for farmers, workers, and consumers by prioritizing antitrust enforcement, anticompetitive behavior and market transparency.

### CONSERVATION COALITION MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT FARM BILL

NFU joined a coalition of 20 farm, food, wildlife, and environmental organizations in establishing principles and recommendations to strengthen the 2018 Farm Bill's conservation title.

The farm bill's conservation title programs provide farmers with technical and financial assistance to implement practices that conserve

natural resources, protect wildlife, improve soil, water and air quality, and enhance on-farm sustainability. As temperatures rise and extreme weather events become more common, these programs are increasingly critical to ensure the future of American agriculture.



The coalition's recommendations, which were sent to congressional agriculture committees this week, call for a farm bill that ensures farmers and ranchers can both increase the productivity and sustainability of their operations and have access to a variety of tools they can choose from to conserve, manage, and enhance shared natural resources. Among the specific requests were adequate funding, increased flexibility, improved conservation benefits, and strengthened accountability of program outcomes. The letter also included specific asks for individual programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

---

The Washington Corner can also be found at [www.nfu.org/corner](http://www.nfu.org/corner).

# That's you



Alan Guebert

If you wanted to renegotiate an aging but working trade treaty with two of your biggest, best customers, you'd think sweet talk and calm persuasion might work better than boorish bombast and shrill demands.

Well, think again because the Trump Administration is now in charge and bombast and demands are standing protocols whether you're dealing with a nuclear-fanged North Korean dictator or a mild-mannered Canadian dairy farmer.

Sure, you and I know there's a difference between rogue nations with nuclear weapons and friendly neighbors with too much blueberry yogurt. Team Trump, though, not so much.

After Canada recently offered to open 3.25 percent of its domestic dairy market to U.S. imports, the Trump Administration countered that it needed 10 times more access, or nearly one-third of the Canadian dairy market, dedicated to U.S. products.

Canadian negotiators, understandably, blanched at the demand. CBC/Radio Canada called the U.S. counterproposal "so far beyond the realm of what's palatable... that it's all but exploded earlier hopes of a quick, easy negotiation."

The Americans suspected as much. "One non-U.S. official described the body language of American negotiators as: 'Kind of sheepish. They say, "We don't have any flexibility on this,"' noted the CBC.

A second observer described it this way: "The (U.S.) negotiators are like lawyers who hate their clients."

But the "sheepish" American negotiators have only one client, Mr. Art of the Deal himself, President Donald J. Trump. He and his always open, always rambling Twitter stream compose the entire White House policy-making machinery.

The American press was equally baffled by the White House's most recent take-no-prisoners approach in the ongoing North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) talks. Even the typically friendly editorial page of the Wall Street Journal threw some hard punches at the President's NAFTA demands.

If the bullying was just a "negotiating tactic" in an effort "to settle for much less and

claim victory," the Journal noted, then fine. If it's for real, however, then "Mr. Trump is playing a game of chicken he can't win."

In fact, "blowing up" NAFTA, "could be the worst economic mistake by a U.S. President since Richard Nixon trashed Bretton Woods"—an international agreement that tied major currencies, including the dollar, to gold—"and imposed wage and price controls." (Both were market sins so egregious that the Journal has neither forgotten nor forgiven either almost 50 years later.)

As badly as the recent round of talks began Oct. 15, they ended worse just two days later. Canada's lead negotiator, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, publicly chided U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer for American demands that would "severely disrupt supply chains," weaken North American productivity, and "jeopardize thousands"—really millions—"of jobs in all three countries."

Lighthizer, in turn, tried to make light of the tough hand he has been dealt as Trump's bellicose trade talker.

"Concluding a trade deal that Mr. Trump did not like," explained the Financial Times quoting Lighthizer, "would be a quicker way to lose your job than chartering an airplane," a reference to other Trump Cabinet officers who are under fire for using costly private aircraft for public travel.

The joke fell as flat as Lighthizer's latest demands; neither is going anywhere anytime soon. Nor are the NAFTA talks. All agreed to add new rounds for 2018, something no one wanted when talks began this summer.

But that's where three nations and their farmers and ranchers are after four fruitless rounds of mostly pointless talks to update a trade deal that covers one-fourth of the world's economy. Even worse, the talks could collapse.

If they do, failure will pack a very unpleasant surprise for Team Trump, noted the Journal. "Mexico and Canada know that... reverting to pre-NAFTA tariff levels could hurt the U.S. more. Mr. Trump can hurt our neighbors if he wants, but the biggest victims will be Mr. Trump's voters."

Or nearly seven out of 10 rural Americans. That's you.

© 2017 ag comm - The Farm and Food File is published weekly throughout the U.S. and Canada. Sources and contact information are posted at [www.farmandfoodfile.com](http://www.farmandfoodfile.com).

**Sweat Scoop**  
Natural Wheat Litter

Eliminates litter box odors so well,  
you'll think you lost your cat!

Naturally effective.

Sweat Scoop litter's natural wheat enzymes work to eliminate rather than mask litter box odors, no matter how many cats you own. Plus, natural wheat starches form solid clumps fast to make cleanups easy.

No clay, chemicals or fragrances.

Sweat Scoop litter doesn't contain any silica, sodium bentonite, chemicals or flowery fragrances. It's so safe, it's vet-recommended for use with kittens. Wheat litter also tracks less and doesn't raise clay dust clouds when poured.

Good for the Earth.

Unlike clay litters that are mined and never decompose, Sweat Scoop litter is made from wheat, a renewable resource, and is completely biodegradable. It's also certified flushable and sewer/septic safe.

Multi cat formula.

Sweat Scoop makes an excellent multi cat formula, no ammonia odors, firm clumps which don't break and you'll use 10 lbs. per cat per month so it is economical as well.

You'll find Sweat Scoop litter at local grocery and neighborhood pet stores, national pet chains and natural food stores. To learn more, visit [www.sweatscoop.com](http://www.sweatscoop.com) or call 1-800-SWHEATS (794-3287).

**Sweat Scoop**  
Natural Wheat Litter

Make a natural change for the better.



BOVINE INSEMINATION  
ISN'T  
AS ROMANTIC  
AS IT SOUNDS.



THE TOUGHEST SPREADERS ON EARTH FOR THE TOUGHEST PEOPLE EVER. [WWW.ARTEXMFG.COM](http://WWW.ARTEXMFG.COM)

