



WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

January/February 2020



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WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

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FROM THE EDITOR

What are your 20 in 2020?

When I look back at 2019, I'll think of it as a year of personal growth. For many in the farming community, it had to be. Whether you were growing conventional row crops, flowers, market vegetables or livestock, Mother Nature kept us on our toes. Meanwhile, market prices and debt loads on many of our farms dampened spirits. It was a year that crushed this control freak, and made me realize how very little is truly in my control.

But it also was a pretty incredible year, in which I witnessed the power that can burst forth when hundreds of farmers join together for a common cause, be it around Dairy Together, the renaissance of industrial hemp, speaking up against monopolies or other issues of the day. We may not have won all of our battles yet, but we have raised the battle cry, and it is being heard.

As we shift into another trip around the sun, I'm thinking about what we can accomplish in 2020 to better life on our family farms or in our communities. In the first few days of this past year, a colleague introduced me to "19 in 2019." The concept was simple yet ambitious – set 19 goals for the year. January always seems a hopeful month, with its chance for a fresh start. I jotted down a few practical goals, while others bordered on whimsy. Did I accomplish all of them? Heck no. But I had fun trying.

Learn how to cross country ski. Check. (Kudos to that fickle Mother Nature who brewed snowstorms clear into April so I had no shortage



Danielle Endvick
Communications
Director

of time for that one.)

Get our farm grazing plan rolling. Check. This one finally came to fruition after years of procrastination.

Farmhouse upstairs. Check. Few things are more grueling yet satisfying than floor sanding.

Take the boys on a train. Check. I cringed when I bought the tickets but they were worth every single cent for the boys' wide eyes and audible gasps when we pulled into the depot parking lot.

Go on a family camping trip. We did. And slept next to a waterfall. Which is not as peaceful as you'd think – but memorable.

What started as a silly little list led to me finding tremendous joy in the simple things. Though the calendar has changed, a few tasks remain on my 2019 list. I still want to master homemade bread, make our farm more edible with fruit tree plantings, work on a long-overdue writing project, and a few other unfinished tasks. But overall, the list led to an inspiring year and adventurous paths I might not otherwise have taken.

The concept also has me thinking about our work in Farmers Union. What "20 in 2020" can we accomplish, if we keep this fire in our bellies and harness the cooperative spirit and legacy of this nearly century-old organization? Time will tell.

Endvick is communications director for Wisconsin Farmers Union. She raises beef cattle, chickens, one spicy pony, and a pair of rowdy boys on her family farm in Holcombe.

On the cover: It's not a winter scene, but we figured we all could use the dose of sunshine and laughter found in this great photo featuring Farmers Union swag-sporting Ellie, the daughter of Andrew and Romi (Pattison) Londre of La Crosse. (Photo submitted by Romi Pattison)

Stand up

Speak up

Advocate for family farms at Farm & Rural Lobby Day

MADISON – Register for Wisconsin Farmers Union's Farm & Rural Lobby Day in Madison on Wednesday, Jan. 15, and join family farmers and rural advocates in speaking up on issues impacting our farms and towns. Topics include preserving and transitioning farmland, protecting drinking water, and ensuring fair maps through nonpartisan redistricting.

"This is our day in Madison as regular citizen lobbyists," says WFU Executive Director Julie Bomar. "It's a powerful feeling to be an engaged citizen in solidarity with others."

The day begins at 10am with issue briefings at Bethel Lutheran Church, 312 Wisconsin Ave. Following lunch, the group will walk to the Capitol to meet with their senators and representatives, with the day's activities wrapping up around 4pm.

There is no cost to participate. Registration is open to all WFU members. Please pre-register as soon as possible so legislative visits can be planned accordingly. Members traveling from afar are encouraged to carpool; volunteer to ride or drive at <https://www.groupcarpool.com/t/f9jagm>. Register at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events or contact Angela at 608-590-5010 or intern@wisconsinfarmersunion.com for details.



"Legislators are eager to hear directly from their constituents about the issues of the day. Even in this world of modern communication, there's no better path for finding common ground than sitting down together and having a conversation face to face."

– KARA O'CONNOR
WFU Government Relations Director

Meet Angela Rivers, Farm & Rural Lobby Day Intern

Met Angela Rivers, Wisconsin Farmers Union Farm and Rural Lobby Day intern! Angela is new to the WFU, and to the farming world as of this year. She grew up in Milwaukee and lives there with her husband.

Angela studied Architectural Technology at Milwaukee Area Technical College and Dietetics at Mount Mary University. Her career has been in the customer service/food industry, but she envisions creating an urban farming curriculum to implement in urban schools. She is passionate about restoring

people's connection to food. Through the UW Madison Division of Extension, Angela is pursuing an organic vegetable farm manager apprenticeship with WFU member Peter Seely of Springdale Farm in Plymouth.

"The Lobby Day internship is a perfect fit, as I've been eager to learn and become more involved with our state government, particularly in regard to agriculture," Angela said. "I looking forward to staying an actively involved advocate with WFU after the internship ends."



FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Darin Von Ruden

A Look Back at the Decade

Time has a way of slipping by. As we gear up to enter a new decade, I was recently asked to reflect on the past 10 years in Wisconsin agriculture. The year 2020 also marks a decade in my time as Wisconsin Farmers Union president. A lot has changed through the years, both in our agriculture community and in Farmers Union.

My presidency started at a time when things were changing within the organization. We had been struggling financially for quite some time. Thanks to the foresight of some who came before me, smart investments in recent years, and advancements with Farmers Union Enterprises, we're on much firmer footing. Which in turn means we've been able to grow our programming and enhance the value of being a Farmers Union member. Our future is promising.

Unfortunately, the scenario is flipped out in farm country. In 2010, we were on the uphill side of the Great Recession, and things were looking hopeful for farmers. Commodity prices were on the uptick. Ethanol was becoming a big player. Food grade soybeans were causing excitement. New dairy markets were being touted. It looked like we were coming into a new era.

But the second half of this decade saw things changing in a hurry. A downward turn on all commodities spurred the exodus of thousands of dairy farmers here in Wisconsin. The ongoing price slough of the past few years – as well as cantankerous weather patterns – provided challenges that will be talked about by farmers for years to come.

I don't think many would argue that the model of Wisconsin agriculture has shifted, too. Nationally, average herd size grew 217 percent from 1992 to 2017, from 74 to 234 cows. Land and machinery prices skyrocketed. We saw increased monopolization of markets, consolidation of ag co-ops, and foreign and corporate investment in land.

On the plus side, we've become more efficient with advancements in technology, better input management, and animal nutrition helping ramp up production.

But I'm seeing that the race to produce more than thy neighbor is shifting some, too. While we recognize that yields are an important part of our bottom line, I find that



“There's been a shift from the narrative of 'we need to feed the world' to recognition that we need to be able to afford to feed our families in the process.”

many farmers are also realizing more of a need to calculate impact on our neighbors, our land, and watersheds.

Through movements like Dairy Together, there's been a shift from the narrative of "we need to feed the world" to recognition that we also need to be able to afford to feed our families in the process. That means taking a hard look at overproduction and considering things like growth management, along with better management of our natural resources and implementation of practices to protect our groundwater. Amid trade war tensions and as more countries look to feed themselves, we also are realizing a need to reevaluate how heavily we rely on exports.

Things are certainly changing. But I'm encouraged by this trend toward looking to the future and the role we have in ensuring a future for family farms. There are still plenty of causes for hope: renewable energy, investments in beginning farmer programs, bridge building with other organizations. Looking back – and as I move ahead – I'm realizing it's increasingly important to educate about what's happening with the food system. We should be mindful of the past decade's trends and how we can keep a more diverse ag system versus the monolithic agriculture we're headed into. The next 10 years could bring a great deal more changes. The question that remains is who will control American agriculture: family farmers or corporate agriculture?

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF STATE CONVENTION

Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America – Wisconsin Division

Notice is hereby given that the annual convention of delegates and members of the Wisconsin Farmers Union will be convened at 9am Saturday, Feb. 1, 2020, at the Central Wisconsin Expo Center, Rothschild, for and in consideration of action upon any and all matters which may lawfully come before said meeting, and said meeting shall continue in session from day to day until the disposition of all proper business.

Darin Von Ruden, President & Chris Holman, Secretary



President Johnson will not seek reelection

WASHINGTON – After serving as president of National Farmers Union for over a decade, Roger Johnson announced he does not intend to seek reelection next year. His current term will end at the organization's annual convention in March, at which point an election for his successor will be held.

During his 11-year tenure, Johnson has led efforts to fight corporate consolidation in the agriculture industry, help farmers adapt to and mitigate climate change, develop fair international trade agreements, provide information and resources to rural communities struggling with mental health issues and opioid misuse, and ensure the economic and social viability of family farm agriculture. Prior to leading the family farm organization, he served as North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner and as president of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA).

Johnson, a third-generation family farmer from Turtle Lake, North Dakota, grew up in Farmers Union, participating in the organization's youth programs and serving as a county president and chairman of the board of a local Farmers Union cooperative.

Johnson released the following statement about his retirement:

"Farmers Union has been a fundamental part of my identity for my entire life – and it has been my greatest honor to serve this organization and the admirable farmers and ranchers who comprise its membership. It's a bittersweet feeling to take a step back from this career-defining role, but ultimately, it's time for me to spend more time with my wife and four grandchildren.

"My top priority, as president and now during this transition process, is to protect the future of family farmers and rural communities, and I am confident that National Farmers Union is well-positioned to keep doing just that. Compared to where we were eleven years ago, today we are more financially secure, our membership is growing, and we have built our reputation as a leader for progressive agriculture – all thanks to our highly capable and dedicated team. My decision will change none of these things. While I enjoy my quiet retirement, I am sure that Farmers Union staff and members will continue the organization's 117-year-long mission to build a better, more sustainable, and more equitable food system."

Women's Conference scholarships announced

Four Wisconsin Farmers Union members received scholarships to attend the National Farmers Union Women's Conference Jan. 19-21 at Catamaran Resort in San Diego. They include Danielle Kmiecik, Chippewa County; Bethany Storm, South Central; Molly Waisman, Dane County; and Ursula Hymes Fecht, Iowa-Grant.

The conference prepares attendees for success in agriculture and provides a network of women farmers. Farmers, policy makers, educators, and specialists will present on financial management, farm labor, leadership, and more. Learn more at <http://nfu.org/education/womens-conference/>

Membership needs to be up-to-date for delegates

A friendly reminder: if you plan to serve as a delegate for your chapter or vote your own vote at the 2020 WFU State Convention, your membership must be current at the time of convention. If your membership is coming due, please renew. Or if you'd like to check your renewal date, please contact the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.



WFU members to elect directors, delegates at convention

Delegates at the 89th Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention Jan. 31-Feb. 2 in Rothschild will carry out the important task of electing directors to the board. Three seats are up for election in 2020: District 1, District 4 and the At-Large position, which is not tied to a certain region. Below are bios submitted by those who have announced intention to run for the board in response to notices posted in the last *WFU News* and e-news. It is not too late to announce intent; candidates may announce at the convention or by sending a photo and bio (400 words or less) to Danielle Endvick at dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com or 117 W. Spring St., Chippewa Falls, WI 54729. Those received by January 15th will be included in delegate packets.

During the caucus at convention, two delegates will also be elected to represent WFU at the National Farmers Union Convention in Savannah, Georgia March 1-3. Board candidates or those running for National Convention delegate seats may place an informational double-sided 8.5x11-inch letter-sized sheet on a designated table in the convention exhibit area. Call the WFU office at 715-723-5561 for more details about board duties or the election process.

DISTRICT 1

Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas & Washburn Counties

Linda Ceylor (Incumbent)

Linda Ceylor owns and operates Hillside Dairy, a 50-cow organic dairy farm. Linda and her late husband, Jerry, began farming in Washington in 1990 but due to urbanization moved to Catawba in 1997 with their two children and cows. Jerry recently passed away; Linda is continuing to farm in a milk share agreement with neighbor Caleb Kopecky. In 2006, Linda attended the National Farmers Union Fall Fly-In and two years later represented WFU at the NFU Convention in Las Vegas. She served on the WFU Policy Committee and Bylaws Committee. She started the Taylor-Price WFU chapter, coupling it with the Taylor County Farmers Union Youth Group, and was elected chapter president. Under her leadership, Taylor-Price has sponsored candidate forums, assists with the Tour de Kolachy bike ride, and helps at local dairy breakfasts and fairs. Linda is a member of the state Farm Services Administration Board. She is a leader of the KC Clovers 4-H Club and was a Price County Fair Board member for 10 years. Linda retired from the U.S. Postal Service Aug. 1. She has been active as president of the Price/Taylor National Rural Letter Carriers Association and as the vice president and a board member for Save Our Unique Land, a group working against construction of the Arrowhead-Weston transmission line. She also serves on the Bethany Lutheran Church Council.



AT-LARGE

Dela Ends

What's the key to creating a vibrant future for our Wisconsin family farms and rural heartland? New ideas and fresh leadership. For over 25 years, Dela Ends has had her hands in the soil and heart dedicated to Wisconsin, shaking things up through collaboratively building community. With her family, Dela runs Scotch Hill Farm, a certified organic diversified farm. Now transitioning to the next generation and starting a farmstay, she has experienced the need for member-led leadership and stands ready to dedicate her energy to the Farmers Union board:



- Farmers Union Leader – Identifying an opportunity for Farmers Union growth, Ends served as secretary for the South Central chapter, fostering new members from the first meeting of 6 to over 200 members in 5 years. This spawned the Iowa County chapter from South Central's membership in 2019. She has participated in WFU's Fly-In, WILD training and Lobby Days.

- Board Expertise – Ends brings experience in what it means to be a collaborative board member. She serves on the board for the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), helped launch the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training and served on boards ranging from FairShare CSA Coalition to church vestry to 4-H. Ends was also elected clerk of the Town of Spring Valley.

- Advocate for Women Farmers – A dedicated leader in amplifying women's voices, Ends collaboratively founded Soil Sisters, providing educational opportunities for the public to connect with women-owned farms. She is passionate about mentoring women farmers, including hosting MOSES workshops, an annual women's leadership retreat, and networking gatherings. Her story has been featured in national outlets including Modern Farmer, Farm-

DISTRICT 4

Buffalo, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe & Trempealeau Counties

Incumbent Craig Myhre is not running for re-election. No other candidates have announced their intent to run. Please encourage leaders in this region to serve!

Her, FarmAid and Wisconsin Public Radio.

- **Cooperative Champion through Cookies** – After 6 years of testifying at hearings with WFU attempting to pass the “Cookie Bill” through legislation, Ends and two other WFU members took the issue to the judicial side and successfully sued the State of Wisconsin to declare the ban on home baking unconstitutional. Ends’ advocacy opened the door for thousands of bakers across the state to sell their products legally.
- **Dedicated Educator** – Cooperative education and sharing experiences is the heart of Ends’ farming approach. Ends and her husband, Tony, have gone to Senegal on Farmer to Farmer trainings to teach composting, organic vegetable production, food preservation and tool implementation. She was awarded 3 USDA Small Business Innovation Research Grants to work with dairy goat farmers on value-added production and marketing.

Sarah Korte

My name is Sarah Korte and I am running for At-Large director. Wisconsin Farmers Union has been a positive force in my life, and I hope to pass on the WFU blessing to others. I was an active member in high school and college, where I gained many unique leadership experiences, such as traveling to Washington, D.C. to lobby for passage of the 2014 Farm Bill.



After attending law school and practicing law in the Twin Cities for a few years, I returned to rural life and WFU two years ago and became the president of the Chaseburg Local Chapter. Our chapter has a very involved and active membership. This past year, we took part in public hearings on the new ATCP 51 regulations (regarding CAFOs), hosted a speaker on protecting local watersheds, and organized a showing of “Little Pink House,” a movie on eminent domain.

I have strong farming roots which I think many WFU members find important for board members. I grew up on an organic dairy farm and have the (now rare) experience of a life of milking cows twice a day every day. Today, my husband and I own a 27-acre “farm-ette,” complete with chickens, beef, and Gloucestershire Old Spot hogs. We are transitioning the 19 acres of tillable land from conventional corn and soybeans into organic pasture. We are also restoring the overgrazed ridge pastures by planting hazelnut, apple, and hickory trees.

I am an attorney licensed to practice law in Wisconsin and Minnesota. I especially enjoy farm transition planning, helping entrepreneurs form new businesses, and defending landowners and local municipalities against irresponsible CAFOs, unwanted 5G cell towers, and frac sand mining. Together with my farming experience, I believe that my legal and business experience would be an asset to the Board.

We cannot do anything more valuable for our society than spread the message of local democratic control and the morality of good, humane, fair food. Wisconsin Farmers Union is an amazing non-partisan example of small groups of people from a large geographic area with diverse backgrounds working together for a common noble goal. I would love to help bring WFU’s mission and model to the rest of society and help the board set an example for the membership of transparency and communication. As a board member, I would work diligently to serve you and to strengthen Board processes and functions.

Mark Liebaert (Incumbent)

Mark lives on a 600 acre farm that has been in his family for over 100 years. Together with his children and grandchildren, Mark runs a direct market beef operation. He also serves as Amnicon Town Board



supervisor, Douglas County supervisor, Douglas County Forestry Committee chairman, Land and Conservation Committee member, and Energy Committee member. In 2008, his farm was the Wisconsin Conservation Farm of the Year. In 2009, his family received the Wisconsin Farmers Union Builders Award.

Alicia Razvi

My name is Alicia Razvi. I am running for the At-Large board of directors position. I have been farming 4 years. I operate a small scale CSA, offer halal butchered poultry, value added products at Farmers Markets and in a local bakery. In general, I love to feed people real food.

I joined WFU 5 years ago. I have held County-Local board positions each year, two years as the secretary/treasurer and three as the president. A highlight of my kids’ summer is attending Farmers Union Camp. I am an active participant at Farm and Rural Lobby Day in Madison. I have attended Emerging Leaders twice, I am a Beginning Farmers Institute graduate, I attended the Women’s Conference, two NFU Fly-ins and two NFU National Conventions. And, one of my family’s summer highlights is entering the pie contest at Summer Conference.

I am thankful for the opportunities that WFU has provided for leadership building these past 5 years. At Plate to Politics sessions, I honed my story and have shared my message as a keynote speaker at MOSES, and a representative of the Organic 2051 Forum. I was featured on the In Her Boots Podcast, the Women Farm and Agri-



See p.9 ► BOARD



Building rural strength with racial justice



Tommy Enright
Communications
Associate


Wisconsin Farmers Union's mission is a commitment to "enhance the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement." As a member-driven, grassroots organization, our members come together each year at convention to debate, discuss, and adopt policy resolutions to guide our actions for the year. Though interconnected, these policy resolutions aren't always ag-specific, yet nonetheless are a vital part of who we are as an organization.

For the past several years, WFU has hosted a pre-convention event titled "Groundswell," focused on the community-building and civic engagement aspects of our advocacy and organizing. Groundswell can be defined as (1) a broad, deep swell or rolling of the sea due to storm or gale or (2) a surge in support or enthusiasm.

"That surge is precisely what we need to see today across our rural landscape," stated former WFU Executive Director Tom Quinn when the idea was conceived. "Our agricultural community is at a pivotal point where the future hangs in balance – it's going to take a groundswell movement from the grassroots to ensure a vibrant future that continues our family farm heritage."

This still holds true.

We've covered a variety of topics




GROUNDSWELL

January 31st | Central Wisconsin Convention & Expo Center | Rothschild, WI

How do we encourage racial justice and diversity in our rural communities?

Nick Olson of Land Stewardship Project joins us to help foster an inclusive rural landscape.



\$35 Members | \$65 Non-Members | 2 scholarships available per WFU chapter
Register at wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention

since Groundswell's inception, such as rural voices in Wisconsin politics, building a cooperative economy, engaging in local government, DIY economic development, and community rights.

Wisconsin's food system is culturally rich and diverse. One need look no further than our farmers markets, farm workers, urban farms, and farms themselves to find people of all colors and cultural backgrounds. One might also notice that many of these people are incredibly underrepresented in narratives of agriculture.

At Farm Aid this year, WFU staff and members attended "Forward From Here," a pre-concert rural advocate workshop designed to promote better understanding and collaboration between food and agriculture organizations. This powerful gathering included representatives from urban, rural, and tribal groups and set the stage for moving forward as allies to fix our broken food system. We were able to learn directly from other organizations about their efforts in creating organizational cultures that reflect racial equity and shared prosperity.

This year's Groundswell event, led

by Nick Olson of Land Stewardship Project and Rachel Henderson of Dunn County Farmers Union, is called Building Rural Strength and Resiliency by Advancing Racial Justice. This interactive workshop will take a look at agricultural migration and examine how race and cultural narratives affect our rural landscape, as well as what we can do as an organization to move racial justice forward.

If we want to achieve our mission of enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people, we need to engage and involve a much broader cross-section of people than we have historically. We cannot have social justice without racial justice and equity, and the first step toward this goal is to educate ourselves.

The workshop, which runs from noon to 4:30pm, is \$35 for members or \$65 for nonmembers (includes one-year WFU membership). Cost includes lunch. Two free registrations are being offered per WFU chapter – check with your local leadership for availability. Sign up today at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention.

From p.7 ► **BOARD**

cultural Network and have shared my thoughts on farming with the League of Women Voters and the Interfaith Environmental Council in my community. I proudly represented the Wisconsin Farmers Union at the MREA Energy Fair, at Farm Aid and on the Antitrust bus trip to Iowa last spring. This year, I accepted a seat on the SARE grant review committee. In short, I love Farmers Union to my core and can't stop talking about it.

I deeply respect the work the Farmers Union has done advocating for issues that have touched my life directly like Affordable Healthcare for All, and home baking laws and indirectly like supporting our dairy farmers. The policies adopted each year at convention reflect my values. I have a great appreciation for the "big tent" nature of Farmers Union. Where else could dairy farmers, grain farmers, vegetable farmers, direct market farmers and CSA farmers of all scales come together around shared values and advocate for each other?

Our diversity is our strength.

Speaking up for the Farmers Union's policy and advocacy work they do, coupled with my desire to give back to WFU, are the reasons I am seeking election to the Board at this year's convention.



Wisconsin Farmers Union
UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

CANDIDATE

MEET & GREET

JANUARY 31 | 6 PM

Join us for a fun evening of networking, food, and a chance meet candidates in the upcoming 2020 elections!

Register at
wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention

WFU Convention heads to Rothschild Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2020

Visit www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention for the latest details on the 89th Annual Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2020 at the Central WI Expo Center in Rothschild.



Highlights of this year's convention include:

- Friday Groundswell: Building Rural Strength & Resilience by Advancing Racial Justice
- Saturday Keynote address by Barry Lynn of Open Markets Institute on Monopoly Power in U.S. Agriculture
- Candidate Meet & Greet – networking & a chance to hear from 2020 candidates!
- Grassroots policy discussion
- Child care and youth options making for a family-friendly event!
- Networking with other family farmers and rural advocates from around the state

Early bird rates ends Jan. 9th!

www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention

Taxing & Responsibility



Julie Bomar
Executive Director

As you get your financial records together for the upcoming tax season, think about how you compare with many U.S. corporations. The news this week is that 91 profitable Fortune 500 companies paid \$0 in taxes on U.S. income in 2018 due in large part to Trump's tax reform package, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. You may recognize Amazon, Starbucks, Delta Airlines, Chevron, FedEx, in the list of federal tax dodgers.

The truth is multiple administrations own the corporate tax problem. From 2008 to 2012, 288 large, profitable Fortune 500 corporations paid an average effective tax rate of just 19.4 percent, not the 38 percent that corporate lobbyists labeled unfair for years. With loopholes and tax breaks, the effective corporate tax rate has arched lower than many OECD states and now is much lower (21 percent) after sweeping 2017 tax reforms.

I would expect that Farmers Union members have ambivalent feelings about the recent tax reform, as some benefits did pass through for ranchers and farmers. However, I also expect many of our members do not believe it is okay for highly profitable U.S. corporations with wealthy CEOs and shareholders to break free of their responsibilities to pay fair taxes like the rest of us do.

Our members are not unlike the American public. Over 80 percent of voters believe reforming the tax system by closing loopholes and limiting deductions for the wealthy should be used to reduce the budget deficit and make new investments. Over 75 percent of voters want to close tax loopholes to ensure American corporations pay as much on foreign profits as they do on profits made in the United States. As you pay your taxes this next season, don't lose sight of our common concerns over fair taxes and corporate responsibility and engage with others to petition your elected officials to act on those values.

Ag Outlook forum to highlight hemp

The business and marketing of Wisconsin industrial hemp will be the focus of the Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum Jan. 28 at UW-Madison. The forum, organized by the UW-Madison's Renk Agribusiness Institute, runs from 10am-3pm in Varsity Hall in Union South, 1308 West Dayton Street, Madison.

The morning session will feature the status of Wisconsin's farm economy, including the outlook for farm income, corn and soybeans, dairy, and livestock. After lunch, the forum will focus on hemp, beginning with a presentation by UW agricultural economist Paul Mitchell. Then, speakers from Canada, Kentucky and Colorado will share perspectives.

This year, the Renk Institute will provide a free shuttle bus between Union South and the State Street Capitol Garage at 214 N. Carroll St. (parking is \$1.20/hour). Info: <https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/ag-outlook-forum/parking-for-the-2020-wisconsin-agricultural-outlook-forum/>.

Registration is open through Jan. 20. The \$20 fee includes lunch. Registration and details: <https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/ag-outlook-forum/>. Questions? Contact Jeremy Beach at jpbbeach@wisc.edu or (608) 262-9485.



Farmers Union Members,

Now, with your Farmers Union membership, you will receive a 9% special group discount on your Hastings Mutual Farmowners policy premium!



We'll Be There.

Jakubek steps down from membership

Deb Jakubek, membership director of Wisconsin Farmers Union, has stepped down to pursue other opportunities. Her last day with Wisconsin Farmers Union was Dec.. 13.

Deb wanted to take this opportunity to say the following:

It's been my pleasure to serve as the State Membership Director of Wisconsin Farmers Union since 2012, being the face of the organization at conferences and events and building relationships with members, other organizations, businesses and agencies to further the work of our organization.

As I close this chapter of my life, I want to acknowledge our organization and reflect on how far we have come in that time. We have grown our membership from 899 families to well over 2,000 families currently, which includes affiliate Wisconsin Organic Valley producers. We have gone from hosting a handful of events across the state each year to close to 100 that we as a state organization were a part of organizing in 2019! Five new chapter units were formed and numerous other chapters either brought in new counties or joined with another chapter to revitalize their area. We have made the gigantic leap to a web-based database system with the goal of providing better tracking and communication to our members and partners. We have a lot to be proud of.

Thank you for the past almost 8 years. I look forward to enjoying my new (old) role within the organization as a member continuing to advocate for family farmers. Membership-related questions can be directed to the Wisconsin Farmers Union office in Chippewa Falls, 715-723-5561 or info@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.



Jakubek, left, has been a friendly face at WFU booths since 2012.



Wisconsin
Farmers Union

KAMP KENWOOD



REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Make a Difference this Summer!

Do you love the outdoors?
Enjoy spending time with kids?

Seeking Summer Staff Applicants!

Employment available
Mid-May through August 2020

Each summer, Farmers Union hires motivated, energetic and co-op minded individuals to fill staff positions at our educational summer camp and for outreach at special events around the state. Kamp Kenwood is near Chippewa Falls. Work and live in an outdoor setting at a beautiful lakeside camp facility.

Staff develop and lead educational lessons as well as recreation for youth ages 7-18. Staff training is in May and camps are in June, July and August.



To apply, contact Cathy at 715-723-5561
or cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com





UNITED TO GROW



FAMILY AGRICULTURE

Taylor-Price meeting on fair maps

Attendees to the Taylor-Price Farmers Union Annual Meeting learned about the value of nonpartisan redistricting from Matt Rothschild, Executive Director of Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, and Hans Breitenmoser (pictured), a Lincoln County supervisor, dairy farmer, and fellow Farmers Union member.



Photo by Danielle Endvick

Want to share what's going on in your neck of the woods?

Submit Chapter Chatter to Danielle at 715-471-0398

or dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com



Photo submitted by Lisa Kivirist

A fun crew turned out for some sugary abundance at the fifth annual Holiday Cookie Exchange held Dec. 3 at the Monroe Arts Center and hosted by the WFU South Central Chapter and Wisconsin Heritage.



Photos courtesy of
Dunn Co Farmers Union



Community Harvest Dinner features local farmers' goods

Attendees to a Nov. 17th Community Harvest Dinner in Ridgeland enjoyed an evening amongst friends both new and old. The meal was co-hosted by the Dunn County Farmers Union and Barron County Farmers Union.

A great crowd turned out for delicious camaraderie. Special thanks go out to the many members who donated food or flowers, who rolled up their sleeves to cook, or pitched in as the after-hours clean-up crew!

Farm succession planning workshops set

The UW-Madison Division of Extension will host workshops on farm succession and estate planning in January 2020. The workshops will run from 9:30am-2:30pm. Participants will have an opportunity to meet individually with speakers, including attorneys and tax specialists, to ask specific questions about their situations.

As the average age of U.S. farmers continues to inch upward, the need to plan for the transition of land, livestock, machinery, and management decisions has become a top priority in U.S. agriculture. While the ongoing economic downturn in almost all sectors may have dampened the short term outlook for some farms, long term business and estate planning decisions should still be on farm businesses' to-do lists.

Having intentional conversations around farm succession and developing future plans for the farm provides a better chance of transition success. Even if the owner generation is planning to be a part of the management for 10+ years from now, starting early can help the process go more smoothly. It provides the succession generation time to develop their management skills and provides the farm time to build or increase its financial stability to include another generation.

Agenda for each workshop:

- 9:30am Refreshments/check-in
- 10am Resource Presentations (tax implications, retirement resources, USDA Farm Service Agency loan programs, business plans, estate planning tools, SWOT analysis)
- 12:30pm Lunch
- 1:00pm Q&A with all Resource Speakers
- 1:30pm Individual Meetings w/ Resource Professionals
- 2:30pm Evaluations/Adjourn

Follow up meetings will be offered in the host counties in February and March and will be based on feedback from January workshops. Farms can also request individual meetings with Extension educators or specialists or WDATCP's Farm Center staff.

Registration is \$20/person and includes lunch and materials. For more details go to <https://farms.extension.wisc.edu/programs/cultivating/>.

Workshop locations and dates:

ELKHORN – Jan. 21, Walworth County Government Center, 100 W. Walworth St. Info: Jim, Jim.Versweyveld@wisc.edu or 262-741-4951.

DODGEVILLE – Jan. 27, Iowa County Health and Human Services Building, 303 W. Chapel St. Info: Jackie, Jackie.McCarville@wisc.edu or 608-328-9440.

MARSHFIELD – Jan. 28, Marshfield Ag Research Station, 2611 Yellowstone Dr. Info: Heather, Heather.Schlessor@wisc.edu or 715-261-1230.

KEWASKUM – Jan. 28, location to be determined. Info: Stephanie, Stephanie.Plaster@wisc.edu or in Ozaukee County at 262-284-8288 or in Washington County at 262-335-4477.

LA CROSSE – Jan. 29, St. Joseph's Ridge. Info: Kaitlyn, Katilyn.Lance@wisc.edu or 608-785-9593.

MENOMONIE – Jan. 29, Dunn County Community Services Building, 3001 US Hwy 12. Info: Katie, katie.wantoch@wisc.edu or 715-232-1636.

DEPERE – Feb. 26, Lawrence Town Hall, 2400 Shady Ct. Info: Liz, eybinversie@wisc.edu or 920-391-4612.

FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

Find more details at
www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events

Farmers Union Emerging Leaders Retreat
Jan. 10, Cranberry Country Lodge, Tomah.
Info: contact local leaders or Tommy Enright, tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

WFU County Presidents Meeting
Jan. 11, Cranberry Country Lodge, Tomah.
Info: 715-723-5561

Deadline for WFU board candidates to submit bio for delegate mailing
(Details on page 6)
Jan. 15

NFU Women's Conference
Jan. 19-21, Catamaran Resort, San Diego
Scholarships available! See pg. 5 for info

Grassworks Grazing Conference
Jan. 23-25, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells
www.grassworks.org

Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum
January 28, 10am-3pm, Varsity Hall, 1308 W. Dayton St., UW-Madison. Info: Jeremy Beach, jpbbeach@wisc.edu, 608-262-9485, <http://renk.aae.wisc.edu/ag-outlook-forum/>

89th WFU State Convention
Jan. 31-Feb. 2, Rothschild
Details on pg. 8-9

Starting a Producer-Owned Cooperative
(Scholarships available! See page 19)
Feb. 27, 10am-5:30pm, MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse
<https://mosesorganic.org/organic-university/producer-owned-cooperative/>

MOSES Organic Farming Conference
Feb. 27-29, La Crosse
mosesorganic.org/conference/

National Farmers Union Convention
March 1-3, Savannah, Georgia
www.nfu.org

Red Cedar Watershed Conference
March 12, 8:30am-4:15pm, UW-Stout
Free registration for WFU members - code 'UNION' at www.redcedarconference.tmlia.org

Deadline for FUE Leadership Program
March 23 - Application details on page 17



Making the ask

Working together to grow Farmers Union's collective power



Kirsten Slaughter
Chapter & Education Organizer

Wisconsin Farmers Union is built on membership. As a grassroots organization, our members set the policy and educational initiatives, fill rooms with people ready to get work done and have fun, and spread ideas both locally and nationally. Membership is the lifeblood of our organization, and we all play a part in building its strength.

When talking with someone about Farmers Union, one of the most important things you can do is include an “ask.” Though this may seem pushy at first for us Midwesterners, an ask is a specific yes or no question that can be as simple as inviting someone to your next meeting. People want to feel included, so ask them! Regardless of their answer, you at least know where they stand. So the next time you are talking with someone about why you are a member of WFU, end the conversation with an ask, and invite them to join.

I recently had the chance to talk about the philosophy of involving people in the organization with two members who have done great work building membership in their regions. Mary Dougherty is a member of the Ashland/Bayfield chapter and Kriss Marion is a member of the South Central chapter. Their responses have been edited for length.

Where do you find people to recruit as members?

Mary Dougherty: Our chapter is unique in that it is not a majority of farmers. I found my way to Farmers Union while looking for an organization that represented my progressive values. As a member of rural Wisconsin, but not a farmer, I still have vested interest in seeing that farmers and our rural communities are supported. I see those as going hand-in-hand because the consolidation we are seeing in ag is really hurting rural communities. If we lose family farmers, we lose a living base of people who have jobs and connections and

roots in places, and that hurts rural Wisconsin. It would be such a shame to lose that, because it is such a part of who we are as Wisconsinites. Up here, we have done our recruitment by just speaking that language. We all live here for a reason; we live in rural northern Wisconsin because we love it. So then the question is: what do we need to do to make sure what we care about is preserved?

Kriss Marion: We were able to build our South Central Farmers Union chapter quickly because we were already having potlucks as part of Soil Sisters, a gathering of women farmers. We believe that gathering informally and having food is key to getting new people involved, because most people desire to get together with like-minded people. Potlucks are great ways to do that. Issues in the community can also bring people together, whether county board problems, water quality concerns, or economic issues, people will come to educational events around a topic they care about. Our chapter grew because we first had the Soil Sisters, then the Cookie Bill (to legalize sales of home-baked goods), and water quality concerns – those issues motivated people. It is important capitalize on hot topics. Hot topics and hot food!

What do you tell people when you first talk about WFU?

MD: I am a firm believer that the individual voice is important but the collective voice is more powerful. I see WFU as an organization that can help build power. When recruiting members, we talk about WFU doing this work on the ground right now – it really is grassroots. An example of that is last year when our chapter brought forward a resolution on the livestock siting rule, and it was adopted in the policy book. Then I saw the work that was done in Madison to really move that policy forward. It is an inspiring example of what grassroots passion looks like when you are working with an organization that amplifies that passion and translates it into power. Most of the people up here are not farmers so we have to use talking points that are much more focused on building power and working with an organization that respects and

amplifies grassroots voices and values. And food is a huge part of it. People are keenly interested in where their food comes from. Our chapter isn't solely farmers, but it is in full support of farmers and rural communities.

KM: Wherever we could, our chapter tabled and tried to sponsor every kind of event that could connect to us. I think partnering with other groups that are like-minded is another big way to find people. When first introducing WFU when tabling, I would note that we're a grassroots group that brings both farmers and consumers together to work for the good of rural communities and family farms. I am also a big believer in just basic community organizing and building a foundation through one-on-ones. The strategy of one-on-ones, which I learned from community organizer Tom Mosgaller, is that you are just trying to connect with someone. Get them to talk to you about what they care about and share what you care about. I really care about Farmers Union, so that came out a lot. I recruited a lot of my early leaders, some who are still leading today, just by saying, "Hey you are really cool. I would like to know more about you. Can we have coffee?" and then finding out what they care about, what they do, their availability, etc. Then I am pretty good at roping people in. And I really like to ask people to do jobs – people like to be a part of a cause.

Those one-on-ones are key to building our chapters. A lot of us feel a little uncomfortable initiating one-on-ones because it seems like you need to have a big goal for getting together with someone you don't know that well. But the community organizing framework teaches that you should always be looking for allies, and I think chapter leaders need to feel that way. Farmers Union is fabulous – we have something to offer the rest of the world! You are not asking someone to be a part of something for your own sake, but rather to be a part of the revolution, which is fun!

After you talk to someone, do you have an "ask" of them?

MD: I'm just pretty straightforward. I don't ask, I just say "you should join Farmers Union." Our chapter is young, and we are new at this. But we have a well-attended Harvest Dinner every year, which is a huge membership driver, and we pick up a ton of members out there because you have to be a member to come to the meal. As far as one-on-one conversations, I say why I am passionate about Farmers Union, and I ask them to join on the spot. In my opinion, the membership fee is very reasonable, which I appreciate because it makes it an easier ask. The value you get from membership is great.

KM: Even if I am inviting someone to a potluck, I phrase it in a way that invites others to make an impact, like "this is a really cool group, and we have been able to get a lot of things done." I tend to be impatient with small talk so I want to immediately bring people into the possibility that they can make a difference. Even if you are just coming to a potluck you are making a difference, because you are making connections with potential future allies.



Above: The South Central chapter celebrated its 5th anniversary at their 2019 Summer Picnic.

How do you keep members engaged?

MD: It's always harder to keep someone engaged than to get them to join. Because once they are engaged the question becomes "what is the common thing we are working on?" and that is a difficult process to have every year. How do we keep people engaged so they want to show up and don't feel like it's an obligation? What I have noticed is that the dinner we host is a great way to get people engaged, because it is about food, celebration, and being together. When I do community organizing, I see it is easy to organize when there is an immediate threat, but it is a very hard thing to just proactively organize. So gatherings need to be focused on celebration, having fun, getting together and sharing food or watching a movie and having a discussion. People have a lot of demands on their time so you need to show what is your point of difference. And I think that WFU's point of difference is its grassroots nature.

KM: One of the keys, and this isn't always possible, is meeting monthly and treating the chapter as a serious commitment. That is more attractive than meeting quarterly and just doing the minimum. I am not just inviting people to hang out, I am inviting them to be involved in a movement. I think that we are going to be more effective, more nimble, more cohesive if we meet often. And it's really important to take on issues. So when we first started we had this cookie bill that was a motivator and then running alongside that was learning how our government works. For some of our meetings, we just had trainings to teach us how to write policy, talk to a legislator, or communicate effectively. I talk a lot about potlucks and having fun, but we also always had an air of seriousness about why we were getting together, and I think that also helped us build, and the chapter continues to be that way. I think having goals that are real and doing real trainings is super motivating. We're helping people believe in what is possible!



Why DFA should not be allowed to buy Dean Foods



Bobbi Wilson
Gov. Relations
Associate

The looming threat of a milk monopoly made headlines in December as the nation's largest dairy cooperative, Dairy Farmers of America, negotiates the purchase of Dean Foods following their bankruptcy announcement. If the deal is approved, it would give DFA near total control over regional fluid milk markets in New England and the Midwest. The news comes on the heels of a Government Accountability Office report showing reduced farmer earnings and power imbalances resulting from dairy co-op consolidation.

Meanwhile, the staff of National Milk Producers Federation put out an opinion piece celebrating cooperative strength in light of the Dean Foods Bankruptcy:

"...a missed milk check - the interruption of the cash flow that's necessary to keep a dairy operating. That's the disruption some farmers have worried about in recent weeks, following the Dean Foods bankruptcy announcement. It's one we at National Milk have followed closely, and it's one that forcefully reminds us of the value of the cooperatives we serve."

Perhaps this is simply a message of comfort in light of economic uncertainty. Or perhaps it's meant to assuage growing concerns over the proposed merger. After all, NMPF has a stake in the DFA milk monopoly: DFA is their largest cooperative member, holding a third of the seats on their 53-member

board of directors.

The article capitalizes on farmers' fear of losing their market and their milk check, reinforcing the familiar message that having a home for your milk is the most important thing. The worry of plant closures sets DFA up to look like the hero on a white horse as they stride in to scoop up Dean's failing facilities. As long as you have a home for your milk, don't worry about the long term financial risk of giving DFA ultimate control over your milk price.

Cooperatives certainly play an important role in the agricultural economy, and they are largely why the dairy industry has not experienced the same level of consolidation as the poultry or beef industries. However, DFA has a long pattern of behavior to acquire competitors and drive out competition in the dairy processing sector. Keep in mind that consolidation was a major cause of Dean's financial demise after they spent years buying out competing dairy businesses. The remedy to their anti competitive business practices is not to be gobbled up by another milk giant, cooperative or not.

The prospect of a merger is still up in the air, and it seems that antitrust enforcers and even Dean Foods bondholders are exploring alternatives. If Dean's assets are broken up, regional buyers will almost certainly emerge to operate the plants. The Dean Foods debacle could be an opportunity to break up growing consolidation in the dairy processing sector, rather than perpetuating the march toward monopoly that puts farmer livelihoods at risk.

Report shows reduced farmer earnings with co-op consolidation

At the request of New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, the U.S. Government Accountability Office released a report detailing the impacts of consolidation in dairy cooperatives on the farmers they represent. The report highlights power imbalances and reduced farmer earnings as a result of consolidation.

A slew of mergers, most notably the quadruple merger that formed Dairy Farmers of America in 1998, have whittled the number of dairy co-ops down from 1,224 in 1964 to 118 in 2017. As cooperatives get fewer in number and larger in size, they represent a broader range of farmer-members, oftentimes with disparate economic interests. According to the report, "as a cooperative grows and encompasses potentially competing interests, some farmers may feel that they have lost control over the cooperative's priorities and strategic direction."

Power imbalances are exacerbated in cases where voting structures diverge from the traditional principle of 'one member, one vote'. Several states have passed laws that allow co-ops to base voting power on patronage, rather than maintaining equal voting rights for all members. This can be especially problematic in dairy co-ops where the majority of members are often small producers but a handful of farms that produce the most milk gain control over financial decisions that impact everyone.

Decisions about investments in processing or infrastructure can be a point of tension. "There is a trade-off between the amount of patronage refunds that cooperatives distribute as cash payouts to farmers and the amount that cooperatives retain for longer-term investments and other activities." Co-op members may feel that what is good for the co-op as a business conflicts with their needs as members. This is particularly true when milk prices are low and farmers need every possible dollar to stay afloat.

GUEST OPINION

Farmer profitability not a focus of dairy cooperative meeting

This year I attended the National Milk Producers Federation annual meeting for the first time. I've been involved in my co-op, and last year I helped pass a resolution stating we will consider a national dairy supply management program. It's hard to ignore something that would improve prices and end these crazy boom and bust cycles that have only gotten worse over the years. And we're not the only ones thinking about it - several co-ops like California Dairies, Agri-Mark, Land O' Lakes, and DFA use base-excess plans to manage milk inventories. But if we want to improve prices for everyone, we need a national, mandatory program so all dairy farmers participate.

Because it's a federal issue, I wanted to know how the supply management discussion was taking hold at National Milk. It turns out, it wasn't. At least not if I hadn't been there to bring it up. Not only was supply management not on the agenda, but improving member profitability - the very purpose of cooperatives' existence - was not the focus of the discussion. Instead, the meeting focused on growing export markets - an effort that has brought tremendous wealth to the industry but has failed to return a fair pay price.

In side conversations, I didn't talk to a single person who was opposed to the idea of supply management. Everyone agreed that we are producing ourselves out of business and were open to discussing alternatives. But farmers have been told for a long time that we need to trust the experts.

One of those experts is Jaime Castaneda, a staff member for National Milk and the U.S Dairy Export Council. I stood up after his talk and said my piece about supply management, citing low milk prices and the sustained loss of family farms. Jaime said the situation is very emotional, adding that "even though we as staff are not farming, we have a lot of friends who are farmers, and more than once we have actually cried because we know we have friends who have left the industry." His response was polite, but I wasn't looking for sympathy. I want action. In particular, I want action from an organization that exists to improve my prices and speak up for farmers. It was frustrating to see them acknowledge the number of farms going out of business, but the only solutions they had were growing demand and increasing trade.

They keep saying the dairy industry needs to be united if we want supply management. In some ways that makes sense, but I also know that processors, food companies, and even the largest farms actually benefit from low prices that force the rest of us out of business. How will we ever unite an industry that has already chosen winners and losers? If we want change, we need to get involved in our co-ops and push them to put farmer profitability first. We need to speak up at meetings, get to know the members, even run for the board if the board isn't listening. If we don't, the experts will make the decisions for us. And right now, I don't think they have our best interest at heart.

James Juedes is a Farmers Union member from Ringle, WI. He has been dairy farming for 29 years. His farm has been in the family for 125 years.

FUE Leadership Program Apply by March 23rd

Each year Farmers Union Enterprises sponsors a program that is committed to developing and empowering future Farmers Union leaders in the FUE region of Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Participant(s) experiences include:

- Visits and activities that enhance their knowledge of cooperatives and the role that Farmers Union plays.
- Training and hands-on experiences enabling effective leadership.
- Know-how to manage, coordinate and orchestrate meetings.
- A fly-in to Washington, D.C. to take part in the legislative process.
- Relationship-building and networking with other local, state, and national Farmers Union leaders through the National Farmers Union Convention and a State Convention.
- The pleasure of being involved with hard work and good times.

Nomination/Application Process:

To nominate an individual or couple from your chapter or to submit your own application, please call 715-723-5561 or email Diane Tiry at dtiry@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

Applicants must submit a 1-2 page essay by March 23, 2020 that includes:

- Description of their farming enterprise
- A brief resume of each candidate
- Explanation of why you would like to be considered for the program

Email essays to Diane (via email above) or mail to: WFU, 117 W. Spring Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

The WFU Board will review the essays and notify the selected individual or couple by mid-April.

WFU Foundation announces grants

The Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation announces its fourth quarter 2019 grant recipients:

- Wisconsin Ag Outlook Forum
- Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Co-op Conference
- Local Food Fair, Stevens Point
- WI Land + Water's 67th Annual Conference
- Animal Well-Being Conference
- John Kinsman Beginning Farmer Food Sovereignty Prize - Family Farm Defenders
- Cultivating Your Farm's Future: A Workbook for Farm Succession Planning in Wisconsin
- Emerging Leader Conference - The Food Group
- Kitchen Wellness Program – Rural Health Initiative Inc.
- Market-to-Market – PBS
- Eau Claire Co. F.U. Local Initiative Grant – Membership Drive and Public Education
- Dodge-Fond du Lac-Sheboygan-Ozaukee Co. F. U. – Soil Health and Cover Crop Forum
- Red Cedar Watershed Conference – discount registration for WFU members
- Around the Farm Table-PBS

The WFU Foundation reviews grant applications quarterly. Deadlines are Feb. 15, May 15, Aug. 15, and Nov. 15.

Grant requests must meet the WFU Foundation's mission of supporting projects and programs for all ages that foster family farming, rural life and public education on the important role of cooperatives and agriculture in society.

Learn more about WFU Foundation grant opportunities at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/grant-program.

WFU mourns passing of members

Wisconsin Farmers Union lost several long-time members over the past few months that we'd like to take a moment to honor and remember:

Bruce Miller, 68, died Nov. 9. Known for his big heart and boisterous personality, Bruce will be fondly remembered by many. He could be found taking bids and entertaining the crowd each year at the WFU Convention live auction. Though he worked as Membership, Outreach and Minnesota Cooks Director, Bruce and his wife Chris Fullerton also had a cabin in Hayward and were WFU members. Bruce had a long career in nonprofits and dedicated his life to working for social justice and progressive politics. He produced the Emmy-award winning *Farm Fresh Road Trip*. He also was an actor who appeared in major motion pictures and independent films, commercials and music videos. A celebration of life was held Nov. 26 in St Paul. Memorials can be sent to the family c/o MFU, 305 Roselawn Ave. E. #200 St Paul, MN 55117.



Robert Denman of Chippewa Falls died Nov. 19. Bob was born in San Antonio, studied journalism and went on to travel in the Press Corps. He worked for National Farmers Union in Washington, DC drafting farm policy and handling public affairs. In 1998 he joined the Wisconsin Farmers Union staff and became operations manager for the state office in Chippewa Falls. Bob loved the outdoors, photography, cooking and reading. A memorial service was held Dec. 1.



David Krug, 80, of Owen passed away Aug. 18. David was born on the Krug Homestead on July 1, 1939. He married Juanita Wiese of Abbotsford in 1961. He served in the US Army during the Berlin Crisis and was a member of the American Legion Post 519 of Stetsonville. David farmed for 39 years, worked for Berry Farms and Foremost Farms Cheese Plant. He was a director and officer on many local, district, state, national and international dairy boards, including the Taylor County and State Farmers Union. He was a Farmers Union Youth Leader and received many awards for his service to agriculture. He enjoyed the outdoors, restoring his 1957 WD Allis Chalmers tractor, and playing harmonica, but most of all, being with his family and grandchildren.



Gerald (Jerry) Ceylor was born on Jan. 20, 1952, in Bellfountain, Ohio. Jerry died suddenly on Nov. 28 while en route to his home in Catawba. Early on, Jerry served in the U.S. Marine Corps and worked on farms in Ohio before making Rochester, Washington his home. He married Linda (Leonard) Ceylor in 1977. In 1990 the Ceylors began milking cows. Jerry was a dedicated dairy farmer. In 1997, based on Washington dairy policy changes and increased urbanization, the family (and cows) moved to Catawba and operated Hillside Dairy. Linda, who serves as WFU District 1 Director, is continuing to farm. A Celebration of Jerry's Life will be held Jan. 1 at noon at Bethany Lutheran Church, Catawba. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations be made to Farm Aid or Wisconsin Farmers Union, or that a tree be planted in Jerry's memory.



Visit the WFU booth at MOSES

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a proud sponsor of the MOSES Organic Farming Conference Feb. 27-29, 2020 in La Crosse. More than 3,000 people are expected to gather for the conference, which features 60 workshops spanning all farming topics for beginning to experienced farmers. Come visit Wisconsin Farmers Union at our booth in the exhibit hall! Learn more and register at mosesorganic.org/conference.

Scholarships to MOSES co-op session

WFU is offering several scholarships for members to attend "Starting a Producer-Owned Cooperative," a special session being held from 10am to 5:30pm Feb. 27 at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse.

Featured presenters will include; Kelly Maynard, University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives; FL Morris, South Central Hemp Cooperative; and Rod Ofte, Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative.

Topics will include increasing understanding of what a cooperative can do; steps for starting a new cooperative; strategies for working through challenges; and developing a business outline and actionable steps. Whether your cooperative is still a dream or something you're actively planning, you'll find this class relevant. If you are actively planning a co-op, bring along your plans to "workshop" your ideas during the day and leave with a rough business outline and actionable steps.

Find scholarship details at <https://mosesorganic.org/organic-university/producer-owned-cooperative/> or inquire to the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.

Discovery Farms Summit is Jan 7-8

Celebrate two decades of Discovery Farms research at the two-day Discovery Farms Summit, co-hosted by the Discovery Farms Programs in Wisconsin and Minnesota Jan. 7-8 at the Hilton Minneapolis St. Paul Airport Hotel.

The first-ever Discovery Farms Summit will bring together participants, partners, sponsors and highlight the successes and experiences from the programs. If you are looking for on-farm water quality data, this summit is the place for you. Discovery Farms Programs in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Arkansas, and Washington have a combined 250+ site years of data to share from edge-of-field surface runoff and tile monitoring on agricultural fields of all varieties. Attendees will come away with practical on-farm management solutions developed from credible research that protect our water resources.

Cost is \$150 for farmers or \$200 for non-farmers. Contact Erica at erica.olson@wisc.edu or 715-983-5668 or visit <https://discovery-farms-summit.constantcontactsites.com/> to learn more.

Family Farm Disaster Funds offered

In these very difficult economic times for farm families, many are experiencing another blow due to weather extremes. Farm Aid is offering small grants to families to help with household expenses in the wake of tough farming conditions.

If you or someone you know has been impacted, please visit farmaid.org/disaster and fill out the application form to be considered for assistance from the Farm Aid Family Farm Disaster Fund or contact Farm Aid at 1-800-FARM-AID. Farmers Union is working to get these funds distributed to farm families in need in our state.

Henderson joins LWIPA board

WFU Facilities Manager Brad Henderson has been elected to the Board of Directors for the Lake Wissota Improvement and Protection Association. The organization works to be an effective voice for Lake Wissota, advocating for the lake community, and representing members' concerns, values, and needs.



Henderson

The LWIPA is working to provide information on legislation affecting the lake and lakeshore, advice on shoreland stabilization, strategies for aquatic plant management, lake use and safety programs, wildlife recommendations, and resources and events to increase awareness and foster participation in the lake community.

"Brad has deep roots in conservation and outdoor recreation, which make this role a great fit for him," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. "In his time with WFU, Brad has helped implement shoreline projects to reduce erosion and has been actively building up partnerships with lake stakeholders. We're pleased that Brad can serve as a voice for those who enjoy the lake in all seasons."

Lloyd named to WEDC committee

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. recently announced names of the business leaders who will make up the state's new Entrepreneurship and Innovation Committee, which was created earlier this year to develop opportunities for startup companies in Wisconsin.

WFU Special Projects Director Sarah Lloyd of Wisconsin Dells is among the appointees. The committee will be co-chaired by Joe Kirgues, co-founder of Milwaukee-based Gener8tor, and Rebecca Cooke, owner of Eau Claire-based Red's Mercantile and founder of the Red Letter Grant.



Lloyd



Spirit of giving

Credit unions volunteer time at Farmers Union's Kamp Kenwood

This fall Wisconsin Farmers Union enjoyed the services and company of staff from WESTconsin Credit Union and Royal Credit Union, as both organized volunteer days out at our WFU Kamp Kenwood facility on Lake Wissota.

WESTconsin Credit Union staff volunteered time to help paint the exterior surfaces of the youth cabins and main lodge at Kamp Kenwood. Recent work to replace rotting window and door frames left raw wood in several locations and the uniform coating of "camp brown" color will help the windows and doors remain healthy for many seasons to come.

Royal Credit Union selected Kamp Kenwood as a project site for its Community Give Back Day. Team members from nearby RCU branches took the day away from their offices and constructed firewood storage structures for camp. The team of 20 volunteers constructed shelters and filled them with wood for burning in campfire pits and indoor fireplaces. The RCU team also helped raised the flag on the new flagpole, which came to fruition thanks to RCU and a number of other donors this summer.



Left: RCU volunteers raised the flag on the new flagpole they donated funds toward. **Below:** WESTconsin volunteers donated time to beautifying camp at a fall volunteer day.



THANKS FOR GIVING!

WFU THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD A NEW FLAGPOLE AT WFU KAMP KENWOOD:

Chippewa County 4-H
Royal Credit Union, Eau Claire, WI
Tom & Renee Cramer, Watertown, WI
Carol Peck, Chippewa Falls, WI
Joan Litscher and Family, Baraboo, WI
Jeanene Holton, Mount Pleasant, WI
Ben & Kimberly Jenkins, Dalton, WI
ProVition Partners Cooperative, Marshfield, WI
Farmers Union Juniors - Taylor-Price Co., Medford, WI

Regenerating our Grass ROOTS

For a brochure, volunteer opportunities or to exhibit, please contact
Heather Flashinski at
grassworksheather@gmail.com
or call:
715-289-4896



GRAZING CONFERENCE 2020 January 23 - 25

The GrassWorks Grazing Conference includes sessions on dairy, beef, small ruminants, poultry and more.

Keynote Speakers:

Fred Provenza, Utah State University
Peter Ballerstedt, Barenbrug USA
Jasmine Dillon, Colorado State University

Major Sponsors:

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship
Byron Seeds
National Grazing Lands Coalition

Remembering Our Roots



FARMERS UNION
THROUGH THE YEARS



Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society



Photo by Danielle Endvick

Time stands still on Spring Street. At least that's how this photo comparison of the WFU State Headquarters makes it feel. From the onset, Chippewa Falls was selected as the headquarters of the Wisconsin Farmers Union. The first meeting of the organization's board of directors occurred on November 29, 1930, at the Hotel Northern in Chippewa Falls. The present office building, which was formerly apartments, was purchased in December of 1945 and occupied in early 1946.

Farmers Union History – Did you know about this work on behalf of family farms?

- 1902 - National Farmers Union founded by farmers concerned with sustainability and farm income
- 1903 - Farmers Union formed first marketing cooperative
- 1911 - Began pushing for direct election of U.S. Senators
- 1916 - Advocated for womens' voting rights and Federal Farm Loan Act
- 1917 - Established first livestock commissions in Omaha, Nebraska and St. Joseph, Missouri
- 1921 - Successfully lobbied for Packers and Stockyards Act
- 1922 - Supported Capper-Volstead Act, an integral part of agricultural U.S. co-op development
- 1927 - Launched Farmers Union Central Exchange (CHS) as subsidiary of Farmers Union Terminal Association
- 1930 - Established the Farmers Union youth education program
- 1933 - Advocated incorporation of farmer-elected committees to administer farm programs
- 1935 - Played a key role in operation of Rural Electric Associations via co-ops
- 1944 - Began urging establishment of rural telephone service
- 1954 - Succeeded in Congress passing school milk act
- 1966 - Devised & promoted Green Thumb work program for rural seniors
- 1974 - Included in newly formed World Hunger Action Council
- 1976 - Won authorization for Small Business Administration to make loans to farmers
- 1978 - Achieved adoption of legislation requiring foreign owners to disclose U.S. farmland holdings
- 1984 - Achieved ruling requiring the Farmers Home Administration to disclose options to troubled borrowers
- 1993 - Raised awareness of problems associated with international trade agreements
- 1995 - Fought for price-oriented farm bill and against disassociating farm programs and price
- 1996 - Led the fight against ag concentration, resulting in legislation and formation of a USDA advisory committee. Also opposed "Freedom to Farm" and its provisions to dismantle the existing price support/supply management programs
- 2000 - Organized the largest farm rally on the U.S. Capitol Mall in two decades to raise attention to how the nation's farm programs failed to provide economic stability
- 2005 - Led effort to push passage of a Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS)
- 2007 - Served as lead negotiator for deal to include Country of Origin Labeling in the 2008 Farm Bill
- 2016 - Advocated for greater scrutiny of agribusiness mergers that negatively impact family farmers
- 2018 - Fought for improvements to the farm safety net in the farm bill
- 2019 - Successfully advocated for Farm Workforce Modernization Act, a bipartisan bill to reform the agricultural labor system in the United States



What's On Your Table?

Venison



Diane Tiry

Administrative Assistant

It is the time of year when the freezer is almost full with the meat from the big hunt and time to begin canning, cutting into steaks, and grinding meat for hamburger or slicing for jerky.

Venison is truly versatile. The work to process it may seem like a lot, but the rewards are in the preparation and time spent enjoying with family.

BACON WRAPPED TENDERLOIN & GARLIC CREAM SAUCE

Source: *Huntmom*, www.allrecipes.com/recipe/231345/bacon-wrapped-venison-tenderloin-with-garlic-cream-sauce/

Ingredients:

- 6 thick slices bacon
- 2 venison tenderloins
- 2 tsp olive oil, divided
- 1/4 tsp onion powder
- kosher salt & ground black pepper to taste
- 1 (8oz) package sliced cremini mushrooms
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tbsp chopped green onion, or more to taste
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream, or more to taste



Photo Credit: K Gora

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).
2. Place bacon on a slotted baking pan.
3. Bake bacon until partially cooked but flexible, 6 to 8 min.
4. Brush tenderloins with olive oil. Season with onion powder, salt, and black pepper. Wrap in partially cooked bacon.
5. Roast until bacon is browned and a thermometer inserted into the thickest part reads 145 degrees F, about 1 hour.
6. Heat butter in a saucepan over medium heat; cook and stir mushrooms and garlic in hot butter until mushrooms are soft, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir green onion into mushroom mixture; pour in cream. Cook, stirring often, until sauce is heated through. Serve sauce with tenderloins.

We also pressure can a good portion of our venison. I have added onion and a salt-free seasoning to the meat prior to canning, but I found this easy recipe with green bell pepper, onion and garlic added. Fat accumulates at the top of the jar. This can be removed easily before adding the meat to a recipe, if desired.

EASY CANNED VENISON

Source: www.allrecipes.com/recipe/117537/easy-canned-venison/

"Make easy and quick meals with canned venison in stews, soups, sandwiches, or heat and serve with rice, potatoes, or noodles and vegetable. The meat can be warmed and eaten as is or used in stews, chili or hotdish or in sandwiches."

Ingredients:

- 1 lb cubed lean venison
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 4 slices onion
- 1 tbsp minced green bell pepper (optional)

Preparation: 1 hour (depending on how much meat you want to can) **Pressure Can:** 1 Hour + 15 Minutes
Ready after cool down and sealing: 5 hours 30 minutes

Directions:

1. Follow the directions of your pressure canner in the amount of water needed and make sure canner ring is clean. Have equipment inspected once a year. Check with your county extension office to see if they can test your pressure canner.



Photo Credit: Wally Schurr

2. Place the venison into a large bowl. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, and garlic; toss to combine. Place venison into clean, hot canning jar with onion and bell pepper. Jars should be filled to 1/2 inch of the top. Push meat, veggies into jar to make sure air spaces are minimum. Wipe rim with clean, damp cloth, and seal with lid and ring that have been heated in a saucepan of water. Make sure ring is tight.
3. Place jar into a pressure canner filled with water. Affix lid and bring to a boil with pressure valve open. Boil for 5 minutes before closing the pressure valve. Bring to a pressure of 10 psi, then reduce heat to maintain pressure. Process for 75 minutes, watching gauge closely so the pressure stays at 10 psi. After 75 minutes, turn off heat and allow the canner to cool until the gauge reads 0 psi.
4. Once the pressure has subsided and the canner is safe to open, remove the jar to cool on a rack. The jar will seal with a pop as it cools; refrigerate the jar if it does not seal. Properly sealed jars may be stored in a cool, dark area.

Milk shake-up just beginning with Dean's downfall



Alan Guebert
Farm & Food File

While many in the U.S. dairy sector focus on why the nation's largest milk bottler, Dean Foods, filed for bankruptcy Nov. 12, the smart money – if there is any smart money left after four years of crushingly low milk prices – is focused on what's next.

What's next is what's always next when your business is built on shrinking markets, declining margins, and a relentless rise in production: more tough times.

Dean Foods' crack-up, though, is so big and its market presence is so broad that what happens next to it will impact dairy farmers, processors, bankers, and co-op members alike from Boston to Minneapolis. Maybe worse is that this sour mess was predictable, if not avoidable.

And, in fact, it was predicted by Peter Hardin, the publisher and editor of *The Milkweed*, a monthly dairy newspaper based in Brooklyn, WI. On the front page of its Jan. 2019 edition, Hardin asked in blaring red ink, "Dean Foods: Preparing for Bankruptcy???"

As the three question marks attest, Hardin doesn't do nuance. He does, however, do his homework.

In late 2018, Hardin came across a note in a Dean Foods' quarterly Securities and Exchange Commission filing that reported the company had created something called the "Dean Foods Receivables Securitization Facility." That "facility" allowed Dean to place "\$450 million... beyond the reaches of the bankruptcy process."

Why, Hardin wrote, would Dean Foods "cook up an Ivy League MBA scam to shaft suppliers and lenders by hiding up to \$450 million in liquid assets" from "the bankruptcy process?"

The answer – 94-year-old Dean Foods was headed into the tank – also pointed to the dairy sector's overall failing health. After decades of rising competition, increased corporate consolidation, and growing integration between dairy cooperatives and corporate processors, hardly anyone in the fluid milk business is able to make any money nowadays.

In fact, the market is bleeding itself white. From 1979 to 2017, U.S. fluid milk consumption dropped

from 247 lbs. per person to 149 lbs. Worse, sales of non-dairy "milks" like soy, almond, palm, and oat ballooned 61 percent from 2013 to 2017.

Compounding those struggles are major food sellers like Walmart. In 2019, Walmart began to buy, bottle, and sell its own milk. In the process, it began to eliminate regional milk bottlers and fluid milk-selling farmers from its supply chain.

That trend will continue. It won't be long before American farmers become as commoditized as milk and chicken, since the food they'll grow will be for specific farm-gate-to-dinner-plate giants like Walmart and Costco.

That streamlining already means fewer, freestanding processors like Dean and, in turn, even fewer milk marketing cooperatives and dairy farmers. In a way, Dean Foods is just the first, hulking victim.

Volunteering to be the second might be Dean's largest fluid milk supplier, Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), who is now in "advanced discussions" to buy Dean. On the surface, DFA's move makes sense. After all, Dean is the biggest milk buyer from DFA's 14,000 farmer-members and still owes DFA \$172.9 million for milk it bottled but never paid for.

But DFA and Dean have a checkered past. In 2007, both (and others) were sued by farmers who alleged antitrust violations between the co-ops and the processors. "Neither company admitted wrongdoing," notes Food Dive, a website that tracks food news, "but Dean Foods settled for \$140 million in 2011. DFA settled for \$168 million in 2013."

As such, dairy farmers from the East Coast to the Midwest should ask themselves two questions.

First, if Dean and DFA already have a failed past and a rocky current relationship, how will DFA make any money bottling and selling milk without lowering the price it pays for members' milk it hopes to bottle?

Secondly, who exactly is DFA going to sell its members' now-cheap milk to? Dean's Foods' biggest customer was Walmart. So, who's left?

The answers aren't pretty. Then again, spilled milk never is.

The Farm and Food File is published weekly through the U.S. and Canada. Past columns, events and more are posted at www.farmandfoodfile.com. © 2019 ag comm



Farm groups partner to help farmers manage stress

WASHINGTON – Recognizing the high levels of stress affecting America's farmers, Farm Credit, American Farm Bureau Federation and National Farmers Union have partnered on a program to train individuals who interact with farmers and ranchers to recognize signs of stress and offer help.

Based on the farm stress program Michigan State University Extension developed for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency, this combination of online and in-person trainings is designed specifically for individuals who interact with farmers and ranchers. It provides participants the skills to understand sources of stress, learn warning signs of stress and suicide, identify effective communication strategies, reduce stigma related to mental health and connect farmers and ranchers with appropriate mental health and other resources.

"Farm Credit loan officers are on farms working with producers every day, and they see firsthand how this difficult farm economy is causing emotional stress for farmers and their families. We hope this training initiative will help our lenders recognize

the signs of severe stress and get farm families the support they need," said Farm Credit Council CEO Todd Van Hoose.

AFBF President Zippy Duvall said, "This training program will help our members recognize the warning signs and empower them to get help for their friends, family, neighbors or even themselves."

In a national Morning Consult poll commissioned by AFBF in April 2019, a majority of farmers and farmworkers said financial issues (91%), farm or business problems (88%) and fear of losing the farm (87%) impact the mental health of farmers, and nearly half of rural adults (48%) said they are personally experiencing more mental health challenges than a year ago.

Research also shows that while farmers experience higher levels of psychological distress and depression than the general population, they are less likely to seek help for mental health issues. Even for those who do seek help, resources may not be readily available, as 60% of rural Americans live in areas with mental health professional shortages.

"Things have been really tough for farmers for several years now, and it's taking a significant toll on their mental well-being," said NFU President Roger Johnson. "But between stigma, a lack of mental health care in rural communities and poor broadband access, there are so many barriers to getting help. By training trusted neighbors and friends to recognize and address stress, this program will bring help closer and make it more accessible when farmers really need it."

In response to the many economic and environmental challenges confronting farmers, NFU compiled financial, legal and mental health resources at <https://farmcrisis.nfu.org/>. The organization's partnership with Farm Bureau and Farm Credit will build on that project by increasing farmers' access to services they need to get through financial and personal emergencies. Resources may also be accessed on MSU Extension's "Managing Farm Stress" website, https://www.canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress/.

The trainings, which will begin in the coming weeks, are funded by a grant from Farm Credit.



Gathering the Grassroots

*Rural Issue Roundtables & Networking Breakfast
for WFU State Convention attendees*

Sunday, February 2 | 7:30-8:30

Grand Ballroom | Central WI Expo Center

Come network with other members and
connect on the issues that matter to you!

Climate Change | Dairy Together | Hemp
Farmer-Led Watersheds | Consolidation in Ag

Have a topic you'd like to see featured? Contact Kirsten at
608-514-2031 or kslaughter@wisconsinfarmersunion.com



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THURSDAY
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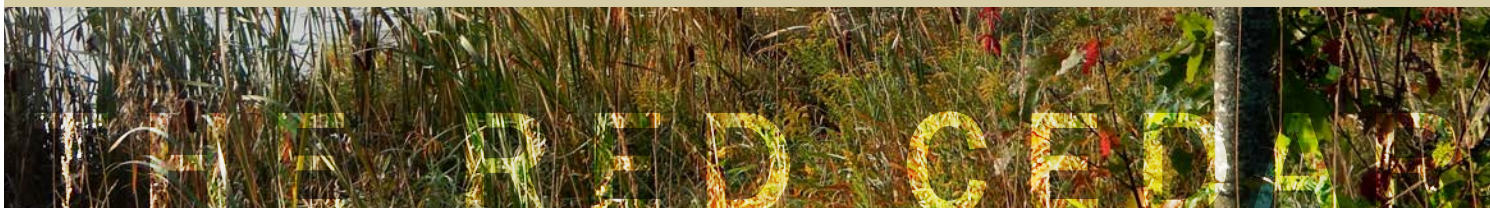
How does the economic and environmental health of the Red Cedar watershed affect you?

Economic Development – Sustainable Farming – Water Quality
Recreational Activities – Tourism – Property Values

Whether you farm, live along the water or live in town, this impacts all of us. Join us for a day of exploring how we can all be part of the solution.

Learn more at www.RedCedarConference.TMLIA.org

Registration is free for Wisconsin Farmers Union members! Use code UNION when registering.



Wisconsin Farmers Union

YOUTH CO-OP CONVENTION

JAN 31-FEB 2 | ROTHSCILD, WI

FEATURED SPEAKER:

**Lacey Chyz, Pembina West Co-op
Alberta, Canada**

Youth registration covers meals and youth program participation. Child care is offered for our youngest attendees, infant to early elementary. Options available for all ages.

**Contact Cathy at 715-723-5561
or cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com**

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Youth Co-op Convention keynote hails from Canadian cooperative

Youth attending the Youth Co-op Convention Jan. 31- Feb. 2 in Rothschild will hear from Lacey Chyz of Pembina West Co-op in Alberta, Canada.

Chyz creates stronger communities and member-owned organizations by empowering leaders to live their values and embrace opportunities. She not only helps co-operative members tell their stories, she fosters collaboration and connects change-makers.

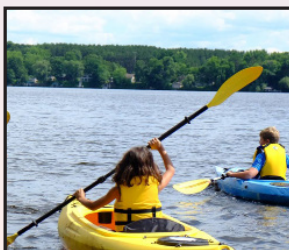
Whether walking cassava and sorghum fields with Ugandan farmers or visiting the vast tundra of the Arctic Circle with traditional Inuit hunters, Lacey's career is one that is certainly unique. She has helped co-operatives relate to their stakeholders and increase community impact. She encourages organizations to shift leadership culture, improve employee engagement and re-engineer their value propositions to prepare for the future.

Lacey has been the national Chair of Canada's Emerging Co-operators, has facilitated numerous Co-operative Youth Leadership Programs in the Rocky Mountains, and spoken to hundreds of high school students about the power of co-operatives at home and abroad.



Wisconsin
Farmers Union
KAMP KENWOOD
CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI

CABIN ON WISSOTA



The 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 easy access to the hiking and cross-country trails at nearby Lake Wissota State Park.



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

WFU Kamp Kenwood

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www.kampkenwood.com

www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com

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

WELCOME FARMERS UNION MEMBERS!

New Member

John & Megan Boyle, Bayfield
Spirit Creek Farm, Bayfield
Jamie & Kevin Zak Family, Washburn
Sally Padgett & Donna Martinson, Dresser
Andy Donovan, Amery
Sharyl & Cliff Manwiller, Turtle Lake
Dee Johnson, Bayfield
Darrell & Carolyn Schaefer, Franksville
Gary Voss, Spring Green
Roger & Dawn Kaminski, Columbus
Calvin & Judith Hageman, Belleville
Gordon Cunningham, Mosinee
Jim & Anita Martin, Lake Mills
Heidi Hoff, Mt Horeb
Laura Peterson/Travis Farmer, Cambridge
Angela Rivers, Milwaukee
Barrett Corneille, Mineral Point
Bruce Drinkman, Ridgeland
Megan Dretske, Chaseburg
Mark & Lisa Prausa-Smith, Oconto Falls
Theron & Carol Prindle, Alma Center
Mary & David Falk, Grantsburg
Mary Curran & Dan Winterhalter, Cushing
Dan & Angie Rieder, Monroe

Recruiter

Mary Dougherty
John Adams
Ellie Braddock
Danielle Endvick
Ayla Graden-Dodge
Mike Miles
Jim Bryan
Mangold Insurance, Inc.
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SUBMIT YOUR BEST RURAL LIFE PHOTOS!

DO YOU HAVE OUR NEXT COVER PHOTO?

Send your photo(s) to dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com
The cover photo winner will receive a free Farmers Union hat!



Farm Aid distributes more than \$1 million in 2019 grants

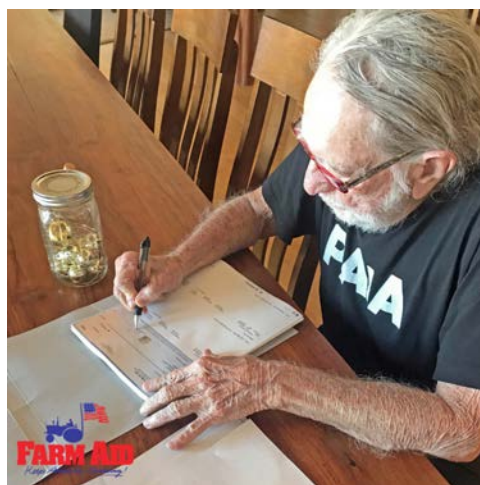
In the midst of the worst farm crisis since the 1980s, Farm Aid announced that it distributed more than \$1 million in grant funding in 2019. Farm Aid prioritized organizations working to address challenges created by the dominant industrial agricultural system, which has pushed family farmers to the brink of extinction.

"Thanks to generous supporters from across the country, Farm Aid's grants to grassroots farm and rural service groups will keep family farmers on the land," said Farm Aid President Willie Nelson. "Our goal is to create real change in our farm and food system, from the ground up. Farm Aid grantees strengthen family farmers, they build communities that can support each other in hard times, and they organize people to stand up and challenge corporate power in our food system. These are essential activities that benefit everyone – eaters and farmers."

In 2019, Farm Aid distributed a total of \$1,005,898, making grants to farm families and 95 family farm, rural service and urban agriculture organizations and giving scholarships to college students studying agriculture. Farm Aid grantees provide crisis support to farmers, build power in rural communities, develop resilient systems of farming, advance farmer-led solutions to climate change and fight establishment of factory farms.

Earlier this year, Farm Aid granted \$224,100 to assist farm and ranch families who suffered devastation after historic flooding in the Midwest and Texas. Farm Aid continues to work with partners in those regions to assess the long-term needs of impacted farmers. Grants of \$46,386 enabled farmers to participate in trainings, policy advocacy and other gatherings where farmers' perspectives are essential.

Emergency grants totaling \$32,000 were made to farm families to cover



Above: Willie Nelson signs grant checks.

essential household expenses. These emergency grants are recommended on a case-by-case basis by Farm Aid hotline managers who operate the 1-800-FARM-AID hotline and connect farmers with helpful resources.

In Wisconsin, where Farm Aid held its annual music and food festival at Alpine Valley Music Theatre in East Troy this past September, Farm Aid invested \$68,500 in 10 programs that met this year's priorities. Awardees include:

- **Alice's Garden Urban Farm** in Milwaukee to support both urban and rural agriculture by training young adults from the urban context who are seeking a vocation in the farming traditions of their ancestors.
- **Family Farm Defenders** to advance food sovereignty through parity pricing, anti-trust action and dairy supply management, as well as promotion of agroecology for climate justice.
- **Fondy Farm Project**, which supports 26 primarily refugee farmers through access to land, resources and technical support, and implements sustainable agricultural to help farmers, land and water thrive.
- **Hunger Task Force** to support beginning farmer education and mentorship at its urban farm, growing nearly 500,000 pounds of fresh fruits and

vegetables each year solely for the purpose of feeding those facing hunger.

- **Michael Fields Ag Institute** to help farmers, especially underserved farmers, access federal and state resources for their farms and communities.
- **Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service** to promote organic and sustainable agriculture by providing the education, resources and expertise that farmers need to succeed.
- **Oneida Nation** to support the Center for Experiential Learning in Agriculture that will train Native American farmers to succeed.

• **Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa** in Bayfield to support free or reduced-cost Community Supported Agriculture shares from Mino Bimadiziwin, Red Cliff's tribal farm, to increase accessibility for low-income community members.

• **Wisconsin Farmers Union** to raise the voices of Wisconsin farmers to rebuild a viable economy for family farmers and rural communities, including support for their Dairy Together campaign to organize dairy farmers impacted by unfair markets.

• **Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council** to support the Tribal Agriculture Apprentice Program, which educates apprentices in farm management and indigenous agriculture stewardship methods and provides outreach to tribal beginning farmers.

Farm Aid's grant-making is one aspect of its work to keep family farmers on the land, growing good food for all.

Learn more or donate today at www.farmaid.org. Farm Aid's mission is to build a vibrant, family farm-centered system of agriculture in America. Farm Aid artists and board members Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews host an annual festival to raise funds to support Farm Aid's work with family farmers and to inspire people to choose family farm food.





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Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

Legislative Office: 108 S. Webster St., Ste. 201
Madison, WI 53703

(715) 723-5561

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Wisconsin Farmers Union

89TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

January 31- February 2, 2020

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**NETWORKING • GRASSROOTS POLICY
YOUTH PROGRAM & CHILDCARE**

Registration is a
\$500 value for only \$80
Early bird rates end Jan 9th!

JAN 31

Noon-4:30pm | Groundswell

How do we encourage racial justice and diversity in our rural communities? Nick Olson of Land Stewardship Project joins us to help foster an inclusive rural landscape.

6:00pm-8:30pm | Candidate Meet & Greet

Network with Farmers Union members & local, state, and national candidates

FEB 1

Workshops | Our Lakes, Our Lands • Navigating Tough Conversations
Competition in Ag • Supply Management: Dirty Word or Powerful Tool?

Grassroots Policy Discussion & Board Election

Keynote: Monopoly Power in U.S. Agriculture | Barry Lynn of the Open Markets Institute will share how rising monopoly power in the food system fits into the larger picture of the economy.

FEB 2

Breakfast Roundtables

Connect with others on the rural issues that matter to you!

Policy Discussion Wrap-Up