



# WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

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## Inspiring a Groundswell

### Event to focus on Revitalizing Our Rural Communities

**S**arah van Gelder, author of *The Revolution Where You Live: Stories from a 12,000 Mile Journey Through a New America* and cofounder of *YES! Magazine*, will headline a



van Gelder

pre-convention conference Feb. 2, leading up to the 87th Wisconsin Farmers Union Convention at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

The Groundswell event will explore the new ideas and challenges that are shaping the future of agriculture and rural life. Van Gelder will share stories from her road trip around the United States about com-

munities building power and making change, especially those who are taking on climate change and protecting the environment, building a locally based economy and overcoming racial divides.

The program will also consist of two general sessions: Do-It-Yourself Economic Development and Engaging in Local Government. The first session will highlight business owners, co-operatives, family farmers and others who are working to bring hope back to Main Street, while the second will be a moderated panel of Farmers Union members who have engaged as leaders in their communities.

All are invited to join in this empowering discussion about what kind of future we want for our rural towns and farm communities. How

can you, your local Farmers Union chapter and others in your community help create change?

The event is open to all members. Scholarships will be available for each local and county Farmers Union unit to send four members to the event, free of charge. Interested in representing your chapter? Contact your local Farmers Union leaders to see if a scholarship is available.

The conference runs from noon to 4:30pm and includes lunch. The cost to attend is \$65 for nonmembers (includes one-year family membership) or \$35 for Farmers Union members.

Throughout the convention week-end, attendees will join in networking, workshops, and the important work of shaping WFU policy.

For more details and to register go to [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention).

## Rising woe in rural America



By Alan  
Guebert

**T**he gap between America's rural poor and non-poor, like

in urban America, continues to widen. The difference in rural America, however, is that the gap is widening faster than in any of the nation's grittiest cities or suburban counties.

That's the conclusion of two recent reports by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the University of New Hampshire's Carsey School of Public Policy. Both point

**See p.3 ► RISING WOE**

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## WFU begins search for new Executive Director

**W**isconsin Farmers Union is beginning a search process to hire a new Executive Director. Tom Quinn, current ED, will be retiring in March and the organization will be accepting applications and reviewing qualifications to fill the position. Quinn has been Executive Director since 2011.

A full position description and application form will be posted on our website and distributed through our organizational networks. The board expects to interview candidates and make a hiring decision in February.

The Executive Director is respon-

sible, in collaboration with board and staff, for providing leadership to assure that key organizational goals are achieved including: developing and implementing a long-term strategy to achieve its mission, providing leadership in developing and managing organizational programs, supervising financial resources, including fund development, investments and business development, maintaining membership relations and governance policies, providing support for communications strategies and organizational partnerships and managing core administra-

tive and employee support systems.

The ED works in close collaboration with the president, and is directly accountable to the elected WFU Board. The organization currently has an annual budget of \$1.7 million, with thirteen employees. The main office is in Chippewa Falls, with a second office in Madison. It is expected that the ED will be based in Chippewa Falls.

Applicants should provide a letter of interest and a full resume. References will be required of final candidates. See the full job description at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

## WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

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# Small and mid-size farms unlikely to benefit from tax reforms



**Darin Von Ruden**  
*WFU President*

Farmers of all types and sizes face no shortage of challenges in today's economic environment. Grain and bean farmers face low prices and high stocks of their products, dairy farmers face price volatility and declining processing infrastructure challenges and local food-oriented producers face low margins and processing and distribution challenges. All are challenged by access to affordable land.

In general, farmers are operating in a system that provides inherent benefits to large farms and often creates significant hurdles for small and medium-sized operations. Getting around inherent biases is hard enough, but the recent tax reform passed by our legislators may make these challenges worse.

Wider public discourse around tax reform has focused around several key components: the cost, the distributional benefits and the effects. There are important parallels on how these changes benefit the average American and average American farmer.

Like the lower and middle classes, small and medium farms would see little benefit from reform. Like the wealthy and corporations, the largest farmers would capture the benefits of the proposed reform. These changes would exacerbate existing trends in agriculture that skew toward large operations.

The estate tax exemption has gone from \$650,000 in 2001 to \$5 million for individuals and \$10 million for couples today. As recently as 2009, important depreciation tools, such as Section 179, were set at \$125,000. Today, that has shot up to \$500,000. That's not to say these were not important updates, but can we realistically contend that doubling the estate tax exemption even further — \$10 million for individuals and \$20 million for couples — or getting rid of it altogether would help anyone but the wealthiest among us? And the same with increasing expensing tools: Is a \$5 million threshold set with an eye toward family farms and small businesses?

Our family farm falls well below the current estate tax limitations, which provides additional deductions and allowances for farms. In fact, USDA finds that only 0.42 percent of farms are subject to the estate tax. Simply put, family farms are not being broken up to pay Uncle Sam. We need to be realistic about who the estate tax targets and who it does not.

Meanwhile, beneficial tax treatment for cooperatives (Sec 199) and their member-owners would

be eliminated or greatly reduced under the current plans. Like-kind exchanges would be limited to real property. Carryback of net operating losses would be limited to two. These changes would amount to kicking farmers while they are down.

Who will really benefit from new pass-through rates with fewer tax brackets and the elimination of the Alternative Minimum Tax? Ninety percent of pass-through businesses (partnerships, LLCs, and sole proprietorships) are already taxed at the 25 percent rate or below. Lowering the top rate to 25 percent does not help the vast majority of these entities, many of which are family farms.

Changes to the tax brackets are also skewed. Currently, a married couple is subject to the top tax rate for income more than \$470,000. Under the new plan the top rate would only apply to income over \$1 million and be reduced to 37 percent.

In dairying, on average, the cost of production is \$26 a hundredweight. But size will cause that figure to change significantly. Cost of production is 55 percent lower for herds of a 1,000 or more than for herds of less than 50. Even compared with herds that have a couple hundred cows, there is a double-digit cost advantage for large operations. Farm operations are very different from other small businesses, but face some of the same systemic disadvantages when compared to the big box retailers.

As Congress moves to make individual tax reform temporary and corporate tax permanent, increase the deficit by between \$1-\$1.45 trillion, and have the vast majority of benefits travel to a concentrated group, we must ask, why? There is nothing wrong with being wealthy: If you want to be a large farm, by all means be one. But the system should not reward that and disadvantage others.

As an American, I am alarmed by our legislators ability to twist entitlement reform out of concern for the deficit. Congress has made the choice to pay for tax reform with cuts to programs like Medicaid, Social Security, and nutrition programs. As a farmer, I'm concerned that it won't stop there.

With a farm bill due for reauthorization in 2018, I have to wonder if farmers will be asked to cut more. The last farm bill cut billions, has had only modest benefits for small and medium-size farms and is a complete failure for dairy farms. We can't shoulder much more.

We need to return to policies that favor small businesses over corporations, the middle class over the rich, and that bring our fiscal house in order without slashing necessary government services.



### From p.1 ► **RISING WOE**

to a dramatic downturn in rural America's economic and social outlook over the past decade and neither sees many signs of a quick turnaround.

The USDA report, issued Nov. 7, shows that for the first time in the nation's history rural (or "nonmetro") America lost population. Indeed, between 2010 and 2016 a historically high 1,351 rural counties lost population while only 487 rural counties had positive—albeit very small—population growth.

The losing rural counties lost far more overall: 790,000 lost to only 281,000 gained.

Not all counties gained big or lost little. Nearly 140 rural counties, found USDA, grew by a collective 317,000. Many of those gains, however, were in rural areas that rode the shale oil and crude oil boom after 2010. Some of those people, however, like the boom itself, are now gone.

Another "unanticipated trend" contributing to lower rural population, explains USDA, is the "increased mortality among working-age adults." A terrible contributor to this unforeseen increase is the "Rising rates of prescription medication abuse, especially opioids, and the related rise in heroin-overdose deaths... [Both] are contributing to this unprecedented rise in age-specific mortality rates after a century or more of steady declines."

Perhaps most devastating, the "age specific" groups identified by USDA are the very people rural America needs for a hopeful future. "Between 1999-2001 and 2013-2015, rural mortality increased more than 20 percent for 25- to 29-year-olds... Mortality rates also increased for rural adults between the ages 20-24 and 30-54..."

Even worse, reckons USDA, the rural drug crisis, "... if it continues, will not only lower rural population but will increase what is known as the dependency ratio: the number of people likely to be not working (children and retirees) relative to people likely to be

wage earners (working-age adults)."

If this isn't the rural America you see when you go to town for coffee or take in the local high school basketball game you need to alter your route and broaden your view.

Rural America is both bleeding people and its people are bleeding. Grocery stores, doctor's offices, and churches aren't just going; they're gone. Most, in fact, are long gone. Rural wages aren't just low; they substantially "lag" behind metro wages. And rural median household income isn't just less than in the city; it "has averaged 25 percent below the urban median since 2007."

Moreover, poverty in rural counties is rising rapidly, according to the University of New Hampshire study. Between 2000 and 2013, "the number of nonmetropolitan counties with poverty rates of 20 percent or more increased from 416, or 20.6 percent of all nonmetropolitan counties, to 657, or 32.5 percent of all nonmetropolitan counties..."

And if that isn't bad enough news, "[T]he share of the rural population living in these places nearly doubled from 17.5 to 31.6 percent," notes the research.

That dramatic increase in rural poverty—during a time when average U.S. wages rose nearly 37 percent, from \$32,921 to \$44,888—is both shocking and revealing. Shocking in that poverty, at 16.7 percent of the nation's overall rural population, is nearly 4 percentage points higher than overall urban poverty, and revealing in that no one outside of rural sociologists seemed to even notice its rise.

Not so shocking, however, is that few policymakers are even talking about rural America's dramatic decline. Instead, most are focused on tax cuts and budget cuts, two policy shifts that will bring less money and more woe to our forgotten neighbors.

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# BITS & PIECES

## Ag Outlook Forum set for Jan. 25

Registration is now open for the 2018 Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum Thurs., Jan. 25 on the UW-Madison campus. The forum is scheduled to run from 10am to 4pm in Varsity Hall II at the Union South located at 1308 West Dayton Street in Madison.

This year's program "Navigating the Rural-Urban Divide in Wisconsin," will start in the morning with presentations on the current situation and price outlook for Wisconsin's farm economy including farm income and input costs of dairy, corn and soybeans, livestock, and specialty crops. The afternoon will start with a keynote presentation by UW's own Dr. Katherine Cramer, author of the book *The Politics of Resentment*. This will be followed by presentations on the public and private perspectives of Wisconsin agribusiness and the rural-urban divide. To see the preliminary agenda and register online, visit: <https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/ag-outlook-forum/>

Email [pdmitchell@wisc.edu](mailto:pdmitchell@wisc.edu) or [jpbearch@wisc.edu](mailto:jpbearch@wisc.edu) with any questions. Registration closes January 18. The registration fee of \$20 covers both lunch and the forum.

## Support WFU Convention Feb. 2-4

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

We're also seeking basket or product donations for the WFU Foundation Fundraiser and the silent auction..

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

## OFFICIAL NOTICE OF STATE CONVENTION

### Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America — Wisconsin Division

Notice is hereby given that the regular annual convention of delegates and members of the Wisconsin Farmers Union will be convened at 9 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 3, 2018, at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, 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*



# TOP FARMERS UNION MOMENTS *of 2017*



## 87th WFU State Convention

In January, Wisconsin Farmers Union members met in Wisconsin Dells to celebrate our 86th annual State Convention. Highlights included a Groundswell preconvention workshop, the WFU Foundation fundraiser to benefit Kamp Kenwood, a keynote by National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson, workshops and more! Consider joining us for the 2018 State Convention Feb. 2-4 in Wisconsin Dells — learn more at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention!](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention!)

## Emerging Leaders Retreats

In February and November, members from around the state took part in Farmers Union Emerging Leaders Retreats. Three-day FUEL retreats are geared at up-and-coming members and offer interactive sessions on ways to get involved in Farmers Union. Want to stay in the loop on 2018 Emerging Leaders events? Contact WFU Membership Coordinator Deb Jakubek at 715-590-2130 or [djakubek@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:djakubek@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) for details!



## San Diego sunshine

Wisconsin Farmers Union members soaked in some sunshine and networked with other farmers from across the nation during the National Farmers Union Convention and Women's Conference in San Diego in March. The attendees also took part in the policy discussion to help set the policy National Farmers Union brings back to Washington, D.C.







## Women Caring for the Land

WFU partnered with Pheasants Forever to present several Women Caring for the Land events around the state. These events, created by the Women, Food and Ag Network, teach conservation practices.



## Graze River Country

Wisconsin Farmers Union and River Country RC&D joined forces to present 10 pasture walks around western Wisconsin in 2017. Stay tuned for more details on how we're expanding these efforts in 2018!



## Grassroots Lobbying

Wisconsin Farmers Union members brought rural issues to their legislators in February with the Farm & Rural Lobby Day in Madison and again in September with the National Farmers Union Fly-In to Washington, D.C. Mark your calendar for the 2018 Farm & Rural Lobby Day on February Feb. 21 and join us in speaking up on the issues impacting family farmers.



## Farmers Union Camps!

About 300 campers took part in Farmers Union Camps in the summer of 2017. Campers enjoyed comfy new mattresses in the bunkhouses at WFU Kamp Kenwood on Lake Wissota thanks to generous donors during The Big Share and Friday Night Fundraiser at Convention!

*Wishing you a happy and prosperous 2018!*





## Member Voices

### Suicide rates for farmers rising

DALLAS — Farmers kill themselves at a rate higher than veterans. Actually, higher than any other occupation. Let that sink in.

We hear about veteran suicides on nearly a daily basis, as we should, and it's horrible. I mean, these people sacrificed everything to protect our freedoms and when they come home, the war continues to rage on in their minds. However, why has it taken this long for farmer suicides to finally get some sort of media attention outside of the vacuous bubble that the agriculture industry lives in? Are we finally realizing that as farmers, it's okay to admit that there are problems we cannot solve ourselves and that we're even more of an endangered species than we were in the deepest abyss of the 1980s farm crisis? Or is it just a brave few that feel emboldened enough to be the voice for those who won't or can't admit that they are struggling?

We collectively blather on and on among ourselves and in farm organizations to do something about mental health and illness in the countryside, but where is the real action going to come from? When are we going to actually start advocating for mental health specialists in rural areas, shine some kind of light on a pricing system that's pretty well broken and leaves those that feed others barely able to feed themselves, or for God's sake, help our fellow farmers with issues that aren't as outwardly obvious as a terminal illness or injury?

Pretty soon, between people leaving farming for other professions - or by means of taking their lives - we may not have any farmers left to draw attention to this travesty.

*Brittany Olson, Dallas, WI*

### Net Neutrality repeal compounds rural internet woes

AMHERST — On Dec. 14, the Federal Communications Commission voted on a rule change that rolled back net neutrality, the principle that internet service providers must treat all data on the internet the same — not speeding up, slowing down or blocking any content, applications or websites you want to use. In the absence of net neutrality, internet service providers (like AT&T, Comcast, or Verizon) could block, slow down or charge users money for specific websites and online content. An example of this would be Verizon charging users more to use the Google search engine, since Verizon owns Yahoo and would likely prefer consumers to use it instead.

The repeal of net neutrality is a can of worms (wires?) that threatens our society in general. Until now, people have been able to communicate

freely online. They get their news, share ideas and connect with each other in a way that has become integral to our modern way of life. Should large corporations begin to moderate the internet, there will be fast and slow lanes. In an age where high speed internet is essential to education, lower-income citizens won't be able to afford access to the same information as upper class citizens. Marginalized groups, who depend on the internet to get their message out or connect with each other may be silenced or blocked. Essentially, the privatization of the internet is a civil rights issue.

For farmers and rural residents, the net neutrality repeal could compound an already glaring issue — rural broadband access and provider monopolies. According to the FCC, roughly 710,000 people in rural Wisconsin lack access to higher download speeds. In areas that do have access to high speed internet, the costs of service are often escalated.

I recently spoke to a friend in San Francisco who pays \$70 a month for 200 mbps (megabits per second). Meanwhile, in Amherst, WI, I pay \$113.40 a month for 30 mbps. Our previous internet plan was \$90/month without the ability to stream content reliably, so we upgraded. Twenty miles away in Stevens Point, a friend pays \$60/mo for 60 mbps — double the speed for almost half the cost.

Why the discrepancy? A major factor is choice. In Amherst and the surrounding area, Amherst Telephone Company runs a monopoly over internet service and they can charge more for less. While service providers in urban areas compete for customers, residents in rural areas often have to take what they can get. If net neutrality is repealed, rural residents may pay even more.

Net neutrality provided a level playing field for everyone (who has internet access). Freedom of information is what makes our society thrive as well as provides the opportunity for people to fix problems. If we are to continue to evolve as a civilization, we need to stand up to greed and corporate control.

Despite the passage of the repeal by a 3-2 vote, there is still hope. Congress can overturn agency actions by invoking the Congressional Review Act (CRA), and last week Sen. Markey announced a plan to file such a resolution. The next step for consumers and citizens is to contact your legislators and urge them to block the repeal of net neutrality. Remind them that net neutrality has overwhelming bipartisan support among voters. We still have a chance if we're vocal, and the fight isn't over.

*Tommy Enright, Amherst, WI*

### Thunder Valley offers convention rooms

Columbia County Farmers Union member Anita Nelson invites you to experience Norwegian farm family hospitality at Thunder Valley Inn, where rooms are available during the WFU State Convention Feb. 2-4. The 130-year-old farmstead and bed-and-breakfast is located just one mile from the historic Dells River district and isn't far from Chula Vista Resort, the convention site.

Expect breakfast served with Scandinavian flair! For more details and room rates, contact Anita at [info@thundervalleyinn.com](mailto:info@thundervalleyinn.com) or 608-254-4145.

### Farm & Rural Lobby Day is Feb. 21

Wisconsin Farmers Union invites you to join us in Madison on Wed., Feb. 21 for the Farm & Rural Lobby Day. Join other farmers and rural residents from around the state in speaking up on the issues that matter to our small towns and family farms.

The pre-Capitol meeting will be held at Bethel Lutheran Church, 312 Wisconsin Ave., Madison.

Check-in will be at 10:30am, followed by issues briefings and lunch before we depart for the Capitol. The day will wrap up around 4:15pm.

Register online at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or by calling 715-723-5561 by Feb. 7.



**WFU Convention**  
**Early Bird Registration**  
**ends Jan. 18th**

**Learn more and register at**  
**[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention)**  
**/convention**



**Wisconsin Farmers Union**  
**KAMP KENWOOD**

**REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!**  
**[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)**  
More details on page 15.





Photo by Tommy Enright

*Candidates for Wisconsin Governor crowded onto a stage during a Candidate Forum in Eau Claire Dec. 11. The event was co-organized by Wisconsin Farmers Union.*

## Gubernatorial candidates touch on anti-corporate farming at forum

**E**EAU CLAIRE — On Dec. 11, candidates for Wisconsin governor shared their stances during a 2018 gubernatorial candidate forum hosted by Wisconsin Farmers Union, AFSCME Subchapter 63, Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, Wisconsin AFL-CIO, and One Wisconsin Now at the VFW Post 305 banquet hall in Eau Claire. The event was moderated by Analiese Eicher of One Wisconsin Now.

One of the three questions candidates responded to addressed a chief Farmers Union concern: farmers' access to land. Wisconsin's anti-corporate farming law prohibits publicly traded corporations from owning farmland in the state, but the statute contains a loophole that allows investment funds to own farmland. Candidates were asked whether they would support closing that loophole so farmers do not have to compete against investment funds when purchasing land.

The following were responses from the candidates:

Mike McCabe expressed support for closing the investment fund loophole in the anti-corporate farming law. He also noted that he supports a statewide moratorium on new Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and stated that we need to incentivize smaller-scale sustainable agriculture.

"I come from a farm, and it breaks my heart to see how agriculture is evolving," McCabe said. "Our family decided to forgo health insurance ... [and] didn't eat the cheese that our milk went to make – we ate Velveeta instead – to remain profitable. One thing we would not do to remain profitable was poison the neighbors [or] dry up local streams or lakes by sinking high-capacity wells. We have to put our government squarely on the side of sustainable smaller-scale agriculture, and today our government has been put on the side of massive industrialization of agriculture. That's the wrong side."

Bob Harlow did not speak directly to the loophole, instead addressing that farmland is finite. "Because arable land is so precious, we must look long term to protect the productive capability of Wisconsin's farmland."

Kelda Roys supported closing the loophole, noting that farming is a cornerstone of the state's economy and part of our cultural heritage. "When we sell off farmland to the highest bidder ... it increases food costs for everyone in our state. It also robs us of the multiplier effect that keeping money local has." She added that keeping farmland in the hands of farmers "also makes environmental common sense. A farmer who lives on the land and works it is going to be thinking about the long-term health of the soil and water, and you just can't replace that with a multi-national corporation or an investment fund that's going to be working on the whims of Wall Street and trying to maximize profitability."

Tony Evers stated, "There's no way that farmers can compete and afford to buy the land that's owned by a well-funded investment company. As we think about who owns those lands – those investment companies – they go out of their way to buy tillable land without buildings on it... and they only want one tenant. So what is happening is that we have larger and larger farms because of the investment companies that are buying up land all across the state of Wisconsin."

"Fixing this loophole is a no-brainer – I think this will have bipartisan support" Evers said.

Evers also noted that he supports an independent Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Secretary, rather than the current process of the DNR secretary being appointed by the governor.

"I was glad to see this question on the agenda, because it rarely comes up," said candidate Matt Flynn. "What's described as one loophole is not one loophole;

it's like Swiss cheese – there's nothing but loopholes in that statute. We have to go back to the drawing board and redraft that statute to keep corporations out of owning farmland."

Andy Gronik did not specifically voice support for closing the investment fund loophole in state statute. Instead he spoke in general terms about supporting for small, medium, and large farms, and mentioned regional manure digesters, renewable fuels, nitrogen management technologies, making it easier to transition to organic by changing the three-year transition period, and supporting farm-to-table efforts.

Candidate Dana Wachs used the question as an opportunity to attack Governor Walker, stating "Walker is happy to let the family farms fail, as long as there is massive corporate wealth that comes into the political system." Wachs did support closing the investment fund loophole, and also mentioned digesters and farm-based renewable fuels, as well as support for shifting to an independent DNR secretary.

Jeff Rumbaugh of Madison is also in favor of closing the loophole. "The family farm is becoming a rarity in Wisconsin. That is because the corporate farms are moving in." He also noted that "the family farms generally treat the environment better" and create more jobs per acre than corporate farms.

Ryan Cason, the only Republican to participate in the forum, was also in favor of closing the loophole and claimed he would have the power to end it the moment he was in office. "I am in support of closing the loophole, and here's the difference. While some have said during this forum that they would work as quickly as possible to close the loophole ... I know, because I read the Wisconsin Constitution and the Wisconsin statutes, that I have all the power, if I'm elected as governor, to end it the moment I get into office. That's the difference – I'll get up there and get it done."

Mahlon Mitchell voiced support for closing the investment fund loophole, citing UBSAgriVest's 2012 purchase of 9,800 acres in Grant County for \$7,000/acre, and noting, "We're seeing a trend not just here in Wisconsin, but around the country where investment firms come in, buy land ... so they can turn around and rent the land to the farmer, and that is pricing people out. When I started in 1997 with the Fire Service we had 22,000 dairy farms. Now we're looking at less than 10,000 dairy farmers. We need to re-invest in farms, and re-invest in what makes Wisconsin great." Mitchell also mentioned the importance of protecting Wisconsin's natural resources and the need for better high-speed internet in rural areas.

Michele Doolan stated it simply: "I support closing the loophole because it undermines the intent of the law, doesn't it?"

"Absolutely close the loophole," said Dave Heaster. "The spirit of that law to begin with was to protect the farmer."

*The full debate can be viewed via Wisconsin Eye at [www.wiseye.org](http://www.wiseye.org). Opening statements start at 8 minutes, 45 seconds; the question about closing the farmland ownership investment fund loophole at 31:20; education funding at 54:30; retirement security at 1:20:00; and closing statements at 1:44:45.*



## For Rosen, years of working on tough family farming issues forged a **FARMERS UNION FAMILY**



By Danielle Endvick  
Communications Director

**EMERALD**—When Dennis Rosen counts his blessings, family is at the top of the list.

"I have truly been blessed in life," Rosen said. "First, by parents, who taught me some very important lessons in life and made it possible for me to get into farming. Second, by this sweet young lady I met at a 4-H dairy judging competition and would later build a life and family with. And last but not least, by getting involved in another wonderful family — that of Farmers Union."

And what an extended family that has become for Rosen, who has been active in Wisconsin Farmers Union most of his adult life, is a past president of the farm organization and has served in many roles, most notably representing Dunn, Pepin, Pierce and St. Croix Counties on the board for decades.

In February, Rosen will step down from a 41-year run on the WFU Board of Directors, where colleagues say he's made a tremendous difference for farmers throughout his time there.

Current WFU President Darin Von Ruden first got to know Rosen in the late 1980s.

"Dennis has always been the guy that will ask the tough questions," Von Ruden said. "He has been the man who through the years has challenged the agricultural industry to do more for the

**Above:** The Rosens, from left, Dan, Dennis, Deb and Dave, on their Century Farm near Emerald in St. Croix County. **Right:** Rosen addresses members at the lodge at WFU Kamp Kenwood during his Farmers Union presidency.

family farmer."

Though Rosen is known by many to be a quiet man, his has been a strong voice for family farmers.

Rosen credits his parents for setting him on a path toward civic engagement and for teaching him the importance of listening to others, noting, "They taught me to always respect others, even if you don't agree — so through your actions you gain respect."

His parents also instilled in him a respect for laws but also freedoms.

"They taught me that it is a responsibility of being a citizen to use those freedoms, to change laws that you believe are not right, that are not fair — that it is a responsibility you have to yourself," he said.

Rosen says his avenue to do just that came through Farmers Union. His earliest memories of Farmers Union are of attending Forest Farmers Union Local meetings with his parents. He also took part in Farmers Union Camps at WFU Kamp Kenwood near Chippewa Falls — at least until he was old enough to be needed on the farm to rake hay and help with other summer chores.

The St. Croix County dairy farm where Dennis spent his childhood has

been in his family since 1883. It's where he and Deb raised their four children. Today the farm is run by their sons, Dave and Dan. (Dale and Dana went on to be teachers.) The Rosens milk 125 cows, raise feeder steers and run 650 acres of crops, mostly corn, soybeans, alfalfa and some oats. The Rosen's celebrated reaching Century Farm status in 1993 by welcoming over 600 people to the farm for a celebration.

Such fanfare doesn't come by nature for Rosen. He recalls, "As a kid, and even as a young adult, I wasn't the one talking; I was the one listening."

That changed to an extent at the Forest Local Farmers Union annual meeting in December 1970 when longtime leader Harold Wienke nominated Rosen for president of the unit. The quiet young farmer won by a vote of 18-16.

"[Harold] saw something in me that I had never seen," Dennis recalls, steady and quiet even in his retelling of the tale. "It was because of his support, his faith in me that I won."



That day started Rosen down a long path of leadership in Farmers Union — one that he credits several other mentors for nudging him down. In 1974 fellow Farmers Union member John Hawsford nominated Rosen to a director position on the New Richmond Farmers Union Cooperative Supply. Three years later, Wes Thompson, nominated the young dairyman to the WFU Board.

Leland Mulder, who was then the WFU president, had faith in Rosen as well. He sent Rosen to Washington, D.C., to testify at an IRS Administrative rule hearing.

"That was an interesting hearing, because if one of these rules would have been allowed to go into effect, it would have made my parents have to sell the farm at a higher interest rate to me than to a complete stranger," Rosen said.

The young Rosen was also urged to testify on the structure of American agriculture at a hearing in Indiana with the Secretary of Agriculture. While there,



he stressed the values family farm agriculture provides to rural communities and local economies.

Rosen was appointed to National Farmers Union study committees on tax and trade policies in the 1980s, a decade he says dealt a heavy blow to American agriculture with tradeoffs made in trade policy during the Reagan administration having long-lasting repercussions.

"The tax policies of that era gave a great advantage to the corporate structure of agriculture at the expense of family farmers," Rosen said. "Family farms just could not compete economically with the corporate structure."

If there is a lesson that he took away from that time, Rosen said it was that public policy debates always have winners and losers — and you must be involved in the process.

#### Farmers facing similar challenges

Looking forward, Rosen sees farmers facing many of the same challenges he fought against during his years leading Farmers Union. Increasing consolidation and outside investment in agriculture, unbalanced tax reforms and volatile dairy markets are among top issues he foresees.

"I am very concerned that this new tax policy being implemented by President Trump will likely be even worse because of the increased national debt,"

Rosen said. "The lack of public debate or meaningful hearings should be very alarming to people."

Rosen said he believes all Americans should be paying attention to what's happening in Washington, D.C.

"I'm very concerned with President Trump's actions during his term," he said, "and it shouldn't be an issue of Republican or Democratic. In my lifetime I have voted and supported both Democrats and Republicans."

Under Rosen's watch in 1990, WFU successfully lobbied for targeted, direct property tax relief to farmers.

One regret he carries was being unable to accomplish implementation of a meaningful supply management.

"The money of the large processor sector and corporate ag businesses wouldn't allow meaningful supply management to work to the benefit of family farm agriculture," he said. "Instead a lot of farm policy was used to lower farm prices in the market through government payments that would allow processors to buy at below the cost of production. This concept allows big ag business and processors to have power over family farmers in the so-called free market with government payments allowing processors to make even larger



*Photo by Danielle Endvick*  
Dave Rosen bottle feeds a Holstein calf on the family's dairy farm. He and his brother, Dan, run the dairy farm that has been in the family for over 100 years.

margin profits from the consumers and the government."

Under Rosen's leadership in the late 1980s, WFU won the fight against the introduction of Bovine Growth Hormone (bGH), a protein hormone that increased production in dairy cows but concerned consumers.

"The WFU membership felt very strongly about what bGH labeling could do to preserve the wholesome value that consumers had for milk," he said. "Family farmers' dairy promotion dollars had been used to support milk's reputation, and WFU worked very

hard to uphold that reputation of milk for consumers — 86 percent of whom wanted BGH labeling."

#### Not always an easy road

"There have been some very good times in Farmers Union, but also some very challenging and very difficult times," Rosen said.

One of Rosen's chief successes during his tenure as president came at a low point for the organization, during a period of financial instability induced by growing pains as the cooperatives that were established and built by Farmers Union shifted and underwent financial changes.

"When I was first elected president in 1988, my first order of business was to make big changes to budget, which we'd realized had been overstated," Rosen said. In his first few months, he was faced with needing to cut one-third of the organization's spending.

"Thankfully, we had a staff, county presidents, board and membership that were very dedicated to the organization

**See p.12 ► ROSEN**



*Clockwise, from left:* A Farmers Union sign is proudly displayed at the end of the Rosen's driveway at their home, which was rebuilt after a 2016 fire; Under Rosen's leadership, WFU engaged in a successful fight against the introduction of Bovine Growth Hormone (bGH) in the late 1980s — also pictured are former Senator Russ Feingold (front right) and previous WFU Director of Government Affairs Glenn Stoddard; Rosen has attended many National Farmers Union fly-ins to Washington D.C. through his years of service to WFU. This picture from the late 1990s shows Rosen (back row, second from right) standing next to his wife, Deb, and current WFU president Darin Von Ruden.





# Chapter Chatter

*Share it here!*

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



## Chapter formation starting in Northeast Wisconsin

A core group of Farmers Union members met Dec. 11 to begin organizing a Farmers Union chapter in northeast Wisconsin. This chapter will bring together members from Marinette, Oconto, Menominee, Shawano, Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Calumet, Manitowoc and Outagamie counties and the Oneida Nation. Pictured are (front row, left to right) Lynn Utesch, Amber Clark, Amber Chu (and daughter Luna Belle), Heather Toman and Jodi Parins; (back row) Val Dantoin Adamski, Aaron Pape, Rick Adamski, Andrew Adamski and Kevin Kiehnau.

## FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

JAN 13, Farmers Union County Presidents Meeting, Cranberry Country Lodge, Tomah.

JAN 14-18, National Farmers Union Women's Conference, Catamaran Resort, San Diego, CA, [www.nfu.org](http://www.nfu.org)

JAN 19, Deadline for Board Candidate Bios (Districts 2, 6, 7) for inclusion in delegate packets. (Bios can be 200 words maximum, plus photo, and send to [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com))

FEB 2, Groundswell Conference, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, register at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention)

FEB 2-4, 87th Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention, Chula Vista, Wisconsin Dells, [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

FEB 21, Wisconsin Farmers Union Farm & Rural Lobby Day, Madison. Register at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

FEB 22-24, MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse Center, La Crosse. Come see WFU at our booth!

MARCH 3-6, National Farmers Union 116th Anniversary Convention, Kansas City, Missouri, [www.nfu.org](http://www.nfu.org)

MARCH 6, The Big Share fundraiser for Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood, [www.thebigshare.org](http://www.thebigshare.org)

AUG. 16, Wisconsin Farmers Union Summer Conference, Kamp Kenwood, 19161 79th Ave., Chippewa Falls, stay tuned for more details!

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

## Farmers Union members to gather in Kansas City March 4-6



**R**egister today for National Farmers Union's 116th Anniversary Convention at the Westin Kansas City at Crown Center in Kansas City, Missouri on March 4-6.

The convention provides Farmers Union members the opportunity to learn, collaborate, and grow through policy discussion, breakout sessions, and farm tours. We will be honoring those who have devoted their lives to promoting family farmers and American agriculture, and celebrating Farmers Union successes from the past year. Farmers Union delegates will also set the organization's policy for the coming year, our most important annual process that dictates the work NFU does in Washington, D.C. Learn more and register at <https://nfu.org/convention/>.

During the 87th annual Wisconsin Farmers Union Convention Feb. 2-4 in Wisconsin Dells, members will elect two delegates to represent Wisconsin in Kansas City.





Photo courtesy of Kathryn Deaton

Linda-Ann Akanvou, NCBA CLUSA Program Associate, left, and Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteer of the Year Award Winner Erin Schneider.

## WFU member Erin Schneider honored for volunteer efforts

At Capitol Hill on International Volunteer Day on Dec. 5, a broad spectrum of skilled volunteers, congressional champions, USAID leadership and volunteer organizations gathered to celebrate the contributions of global development volunteers and to discuss a new initiative to leverage pro-bono private sector expertise to reduce poverty and promote prosperity worldwide.

The heart of the day was an awards ceremony for remarkable volunteers with powerful stories of impact around the globe. Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) awarded six outstanding VEGA and Farmer-to-Farmer volunteers for their service. Among the six winners, half of the awards went to volunteers working with cooperative development organizations, two from NCBA CLUSA and a volunteer with Land O' Lakes International Development.

Sauk County Farmers Union member Erin Schneider was among the honorees, earning recognition for her work with the Farmer to Farmer program.

"I'm definitely humbled, grateful and honored by this recognition," Schneider said. "It was my participation with the Wisconsin Farmers Union and the National Farmers Union Beginning Farmer Institute which led me to finding and linking with Farmer to Farmer in Senegal."

Back in August 2012, Schneider hung up her farm tools for two weeks and traded the currant harvest for cassava, bur oaks for baobabs, and landed in 2 feet of water at the airport in Dakar.

"Little did I know how much this place would saturate not only my feet but my heart," Schneider said. "Breathing in the scent of ocean, fish and diesel, scents and sights that seemed so foreign to my Midwest. Little did I know how connected I would come to feel with the people and the farm-apes that was so far away in my mind."

Since then, Schneider has had more opportunities to experience Senegal's sun, soil and people. She has volunteered over six times in Senegal with NCBA CLUSA in the past five years.

"What I love about the Farmer to Farmer program is its ground-up, peer-to-peer approach to learning and skill sharing," Schneider said. "The work is based on the needs, skills, and interests of the farmers .... Through these humble collaborations with the humusphere and the humans, we learn techniques that help us improve not just what to do on our farms, but how to be in the world. And ultimately, I think it's safe to say that people want to be happy, make an honest living, doing what they love, with dignity."

**Give a Stronger Voice to Rural America**  
**Join Wisconsin Farmers Union and**  
**help preserve the economic health and**  
**sustainability of our rural communities.**



### Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# of Children under 21: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Household Type:

☐ Farm ☐ Rural ☐ Small Town ☐ Urban

#### Type of Farm: Check all that apply.

☐ Dairy ☐ Poultry ☐ Vegetables or Fruit

☐ Beef ☐ Crops ☐ Organic

☐ Hogs ☐ Horses ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership:** Fee includes family unless student or organization is checked.

☐ New Member ☐ Renewing Member

☐ 1 Year (\$30) ☐ 2 Years (\$55)

☐ 4 Years (\$100) ☐ Lifetime (\$2000)

☐ Student (\$15) ☐ Organization (\$50)

### Join us today!

#### Mail this card to:

Wisconsin Farmers Union  
117 W. Spring St. • Chippewa Falls, WI • 54729

#### Or sign up online:

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

**For more information, call 800-272-5531**





*Above: Dennis Rosen addresses a past WFU Convention. Pictured at left is long-time board member Janet Nelson and, at right, Dorothea Von Ruden and Ralph Anderson from Chippewa County.*

#### **From p.9 ► ROSEN**

and kept it alive during a very difficult time in our history," Rosen said.

Some wise insurance stock investments made during that time helped set WFU on a path toward financial stability.

"During those lean years, Dennis stepped up and organized things — it's hard to think of what kind of shape we'd be in today without his forward-thinking," Von Ruden said.

Dennis also has served on the Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation Board and as a member on the Farmers Union Industries Board of Directors.

"We now have built financial stability within WFU and have our own dollars to be more active — and with that growing activity and involvement comes growing membership," Rosen said.

That growth has led to a surge in the membership and diversity of farmers in Farmers Union in recent years.

"I believe WFU's strength comes from a good cross-section of diversity of family farmers," Rosen said. "We have the traditional dairy and crop farmers and emerging markets like the CSA and organic areas. It's important that we have a good understanding of all family farmers in this process."

While at times there has been strife between organic vs. conventional farming, he encourages his fellow farmers to keep an eye toward the real enemy facing family farm agriculture: outside investment in corporate, non-family, industrial-scale ag.

#### **Together**

Rosen said much of the credit for his Farmers Union efforts should fall on his wife, Deb, who was home raising their four children and milking the cows when he was out at meetings — even during one particularly memorable trip when he re-

turned home to find that a promising first-calf heifer had kicked one fed-up wife one too many times and had been shipped to the sales barn in his absence.

"Truly, though, whatever we've accomplished in life, we've done it together," Rosen said.

He added that he was also blessed by an incredible, supportive group of farming friends in his region.

"In the 1970s our neighborhood had so many wonderful farmers, we all got started farming and raised our families around the same time," Rosen said. "That close bunch of neighbors cared about each other deeply and made the community vibrant and strong. We had numbers, we had a lot of young people who thought they had a future in farming, and unfortunately a lot of them are gone."

That, he said, is a stark reminder to him of the importance of WFU's efforts and the work yet to do.

As he steps down from the board, Rosen said he's looking forward to spending more time traveling to sporting events for his eight grandchildren and watching them develop their personalities and values.

"I would like to thank the Farmers Union membership for the privilege to serve on the board for 41 years, and a special thank you for the trust in allowing me to serve as president for six years and to the great staff I had in 1988 to 1994," Rosen said. "In Farmers Union, the issues we take on, we take on with passion because we know they affect our livelihood. I'm proud to have been a part of this through the years."

Though he won't be serving in a formal capacity for Farmers Union, we expect that this quiet, humble man will continue to be a strong voice for Wisconsin's farmers for years to come.

## Election for directors held at Convention

**D**elegates at the 87th annual WFU State Convention Feb. 2-4 at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells will carry out the important task of electing directors to the WFU Board of Directors.

The election will be on Sun., Feb. 4. Up for re-election this year are District 2 Director Dennis Rosen (Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, and St. Croix counties), District 6 Director Chris Holman (Adams, Columbia, Green Lake, Juneau, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Waupaca, Waushara, and Wood counties) and District 7 Director Tina Hinchley (Dane, Jefferson, Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth counties). Rosen has announced he will not seek re-election.

In order to provide members with more information about candidates, WFU offered members intending to run the opportunity to submit a biography for inclusion in this edition. Those submitted are featured on page 13. Anyone intending to run for a board position may still send a biography (max. 200 words) and photo to Communications Director Danielle Endvick at [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) by Jan. 19 for inclusion in delegates' info packets and an email that will go out to the WFU membership. Candidates who have declared their intent by the **Jan. 13** County Presidents' Meeting will also be announced to county leaders in attendance. Bios may include information about candidates' background, accomplishments, and/or reasons for wanting to run for the WFU board.

During the State Convention, two delegates will also be elected to represent WFU at the National Farmers Union Convention in Kansas City, Missouri March 3-6. Board candidates and anyone running for the National Convention delegate positions will be allowed to place a double-sided 8.5x11-inch letter-sized sheet about themselves on a designated table in the convention exhibit area (Room I). Convention details can be found at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention).

#### **The election process**

The nominating caucus for board candidates and NFU Convention delegates will be at 4:15 p.m. on Sat., Feb. 3 in the main convention hall (Room A-D). Any current paid member may be nominated for a director position by a delegate from the district with the available seat.

All nominees will be placed on the ballot and should be prepared to introduce themselves to the caucus and explain their qualifications and reasons for wanting to become a director. Each nominee will be allowed five minutes. Voting by delegates will be by secret ballot from 7 to 8:30 a.m. on Sun., Feb. 4 in the main convention hall A-D.

A special reception will be held on the evening of Sat., Feb. 3 in the Exhibit Hall (Room I) to allow candidates the chance to network with fellow members. Candidates may bring snack items if they wish.

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#### **Board member duties**

Please see the WFU Articles and Bylaws pages 9-11 for the full listing of roles and expectations of directors. Key duties include:

- Quarterly board meetings and occasional teleconferences
- Ad-hoc committees (assigned by President)
- Represent WFU at events not limited to State Convention/appropriate committees, National Farmers Union Convention, NFU Fly-ins, local meetings in your district, County presidents meetings, testimonies, Farm & Rural Lobby Day
- Voluntary representation outside of WFU: Represent WFU at other organizational meetings or functions possibly including but not limited to Wisconsin Citizen Action, Producers Security Council, or Foundation for the Future forums. Presentations (asked by President).



# WFU Board Candidate Statements

## DISTRICT 2

Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, and St. Croix Counties



### **Candidate Bill Krueger**

I will be a candidate this year to fill the board seat that is opening with Dennis Rosen's retirement. I want to share some of my background and thoughts with you, and ask for your support. My roots in Farmers Union are deep and proud. I grew up in a family atmosphere where participation in Farmers Union was part of our community life. My parents helped organize and lead their county chapter and I grew up experiencing first hand our shared values of fairness, cooperation and civic engagement. And those values have stayed with me. I have demonstrated a strong commitment to the ongoing work of our organization; serving as elected delegate to state and national conventions, on Policy, Bylaws and Districting Committees, as county President. I've join other WFU members in Madison and Washington, and I currently serve on the WFU Grain Committee and Investment Committee. Our farm is about 400 acres in western Dunn County. Crops and beef cattle have been the primary income. I am encouraged to see growth in WFU from members with diverse farming operations. I will work to support this diversity while also maintaining a sense of trust and connection with our traditional farming base.



### **Candidate Lauren Langworthy**

My husband, Caleb, and I own Blue Ox Farm, a 153-acre grazing farm in Wheeler, where we produce lamb, beef, and hay. Selected as Wisconsin's FUE Leadership Couple this past year, we've attended trainings with Farmers Union leaders from five states while revitalizing the Dunn County local chapter. We've developed a large community network and have a mission for understanding and improving the issues facing family farms.

I'm always listening to and learning from other farmers, whether it's at Farm Technology Days, the MOSES Conference, pasture walks, women farmer events, or county meetings. I've had ample opportunities to advocate for farmers by being active in many organizations, attending fly-ins, and sitting on Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy Steering Committee. When I'm not farming, I'm Program Director for the non-profit MOSES. There, I network and collaborate with numerous national and regional organizations supporting farmers. I develop education to manage farm businesses for profit, produce quality goods, share innovative techniques, and strengthen communities. Education, advocacy, and cooperation are not abstract ideals for me; they are a daily reality and a personal passion. I want to put my energy into WFU's state board to work for you.

## DISTRICT 6

Adams, Columbia, Green Lake, Juneau, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Waupaca, Waushara, and Wood Counties



### **Incumbent Chris Holman**

Maria and I are lifetime Farmers Union members, and we own and operate Nami Moon Farms in Custer. I am WFU's Secretary, and I have served as the District 6 Director since 2015. In that time, I have been the Chair of the Bylaws Committee, Chair of the Redistricting Committee, co-Chair of the Policy Committee, a member of the Salary Committee, and a national delegate. I've led several efforts on the board including creating a job description and evaluation process for the office of President, reinvigorating the strategic planning process, and refining the duties and responsibilities of WFU board members.

I have also served on the NFU board for the last three years. In that capacity I have been a strong voice for all farmers, and my work has focused on the important and challenging issues that will take Farmers Union into the future. I serve on NFU's Membership and Education/Co-op Committees, and I am a member of the NFU Foundation Board.

This year, I was invited to the Global Forum of Food and Agriculture in Germany, my op-ed writing about the Dairy Crisis and other issues highlighted our organization, and I spoke at Canada's National Farmers Union convention.

## DISTRICT 7

Dane, Jefferson, Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth Counties



### **Incumbent Tina Hinchley**

I own and operate a dairy and cash crop farm in Cambridge with my husband, Duane. Our 130-cow farm is an average Wisconsin dairy farm. I focus on the milking and calves, and my husband enjoys crop farming and running 2,500 acres where we grow feed for our cows along with winter wheat, soybeans, pumpkins and dent corn to market to local ethanol plants.

Farming is my life's blood, but my passion is farm tours. In 1997, we opened our farm to thousands of school groups, families and tourists from all over the world. I have taken a "pro-active" step to educate others in an "up close" environment. I have been able to explain why we do what we do as farmers, and in turn have seen a growing attitude of appreciation towards farming.

The future of agriculture is a challenging one. Farmers are only 2% of the population that feeds 100%. We need to work together to support each other and the diversity of the Wisconsin Farmers Union. Continuing to unite, support and grow family agriculture.

I am also on the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, represent WFU on the Wisconsin Beef Council, and am Club leader of Cambridge 4-H.



# The Big Share 2018: Help us light the way

**Danielle Endvick**  
Communications Director

Nothing says summer camp fun like s'mores, hiking, swimming and proper lighting.

Wait, proper lighting? While not the most exciting element of what we do at Farmers Union Camps at Kamp Kenwood, security lighting is on the minds of the WFU staff as we gear up for the 2018 season.

Raising funds to update old lighting fixtures and add security lighting to routes from the lodge to bunkhouses will be the main goals for WFU during this year's The Big Share on March 6.

The WFU Foundation, along with about 70 other nonprofit organizations, has taken part in Community Shares of Wisconsin's annual online day of giving since it began in 2015. The Big Share is a day in which nonprofit supporters can share the love by donating toward and promoting their favorite participating nonprofit's goal.

"When the WFU staff began brainstorming possible fundraising causes for The Big Share 2018, better lighting around the camper cabins was a clear need," said WFU Education Director Cathy Statz. "We hope to raise funding to update fixtures around the camp to energy-saving LED lights and also add security lighting poles along walkways and near the lodge and cabins."

Fundraising efforts will kick off during the WFU Foundation Fundraiser Fri., Feb. 2 at Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells during convention weekend. Consider joining us for this fun evening of networking with Farmers Union friends.

Camp supporters are also invited to take part in The Big Share on Tues., March 6. In an incredible 24-hour outpouring of support during last year's The Big Share campaign, camp program alumni and



**Above:** Funds raised during The Big Share 2018 will provide security lighting to ensure stumble-free travel for campers around the cabins.

aficionados raised funds to upgrade bunk mattresses for campers.

"We hope Farmers Union campers, counselors, parents and other friends will again consider giving back to a camp that for generations has given so much," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. "For many, the camp has been a place of lasting memories, lifelong friendships and lessons on the values of cooperation, civic engagement and leadership."

Watch for more information on The Big Share in the next issue of *WFU News*.

Wondering how can you be a part of this special day?

- Be an early pledger! WFU's donation platform page will go live in January, allowing you to pledge early. Keep in mind, though, donations made on the actual day of The Big Share, March 6, count toward prizes from Community Shares. Stay tuned for details on how your day-of giving could help us win 'Power Hour' prizes!

- Share a testimonial! What do you love about WFU Kamp Kenwood? Consider sharing a testimonial on your Facebook page and/or share it with WFU so we can

let others know why the camp is such a special place!

- Host your own fundraising page. GiveGab, the platform being used for The Big Share campaign this year, allows individuals to link their fundraising into a nonprofit's overall goal.

- Attend the WFU Foundation Fundraiser from 6-9pm on Fri., Feb. 2 during convention. The evening will include a buffet, live auction, raffle and networking with Farmers Union friends. To register visit [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or call 715-723-5561. (See details on page 15.)

- Take part in the basket challenge! A couple of WFU county chapters have committed to making baskets to donate to the WFU Foundation Fundraiser and/or silent auction at Convention Feb. 2-4 in Wisconsin Dells. Will your chapter join the challenge? Baskets may be brought the County Presidents' Meeting Jan. 13 in Tomah or to convention.

For more about how you can support the youth camps during The Big Share, contact Danielle at [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or 715-471-0398.

## Canadian speaker to headline Youth Co-op Convention

Lisa Furfaro of the Ontario Co-operative Association will headline the Youth Co-op Con-



vention Feb. 3-4 in conjunction with the WFU State Convention.

Furfaro will speak in place of previously announced headliner Lacey Chyz, due to a travel complication.

As Co-operative Young Leaders Coordinator for the Ontario Co-operative Association, Furfaro coordinates and oversees the youth leadership programming. The Ontario Co-operative Association believes that co-operatives build a better world. They are a trade association and capacity-building organization that develops, engages, educates and advocates for Ontario's 1,300 co-operatives.

The Youth Co-op Convention is generously sponsored by the CHS Foundation. Youth from across the state gather to learn about WFU's cooperative roots.

Convention is family-friendly! For a \$30 youth fee (includes meals), children can take part in the child care program (infant to kindergarten), Co-op Youth Zone (elementary ages) or Youth Co-op Convention (7th-12th grade).

For more details, contact the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.



**Want to help make this fundraiser a success? Consider donating today!**

☐ We'd like to contribute to the WFU Foundation's efforts to raise money for improved security lighting at WFU Kamp Kenwood.  
Enclosed please find: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Contributions to the WFU Foundation are tax-deductible. A receipt will be mailed to you.**

Optional: ☐ In honor of / ☐ In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_ To be used for: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO: Wisconsin Farmers Union, 117 W. Spring St, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729  
Questions, contact Cathy at: 715-723-5561 or [cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)



COMMUNITY SHARES OF WISCONSIN



## Registration now open for Farmers Union Camps

**R**egistration is now open for 2018 Farmers Union Camps at Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood near Chippewa Falls. Learn more and register today at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/youth-camps](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/youth-camps). Be sure to get the youth in your life signed up soon for the camp session of their choice.

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

Camp sessions for the 2018 season include:

<b>Junior/JH 1 (Ages 8-14)</b> June 11-14	<b>Junior High 2 (Ages 12-14)</b> July 29-Aug. 2
<b>Junior Camps (Ages 8-12)</b> Aug. 5-8 Aug. 8-11 Aug. 12-15 Aug. 19-22	<b>Senior Camp (Ages 14-18)</b> June 18-22 <b>Family Camps (All Ages)</b> July 27-28 Aug 3-4

## Make A Difference This Summer!

**Do you love the outdoors?  
Love spending time with kids?**

**Seeking Summer Staff Applicants!**

*Employment available*

*May 14-Aug 23, 2018*

Each summer, Wisconsin Farmers Union hires motivated, energetic and co-op minded individuals to fill staff positions at our educational and recreational summer camp and for outreach

at special events around the state. WFU Kamp Kenwood is located near Chippewa Falls. Work and live in an outdoor setting at a beautiful lakeside camp facility.

Develop and facilitate educational classes and recreational programs with youth ages 7-18. Summer staff training is in May; overnight camp sessions are in June, July & August.

***We're now accepting applications! Contact Cathy Statz at 715-723-5561 or [cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) for details.***



## A Night in the Pines

**Fundraiser for Wisconsin Farmers Union's  
Kamp Kenwood on Lake Wissota**

**Friday, February 2nd, 2018**

6-9pm, Grand Ballroom

Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells

Buffet, networking, raffles & live auction

Register at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or by calling the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561!

**\$50 per  
person**

(\$10/person  
entry fee  
after 7:30pm  
for auction  
& activities  
- includes  
dessert)



Presented by:

**Wisconsin  
Farmers Union  
FOUNDATION**





## Midwest CSA Conference draws a crowd to the Dells

About 150 farmers and community supported agriculture advocates gathered in Wisconsin Dells Dec. 7-8 for the Midwest CSA Conference. Attendees enjoyed farmer-led workshops, local food and deliberative discussion about the future of the movement. Clockwise from left: attendees enjoy local food during the conference; a panel of CSA farmers and members shared experiences and challenges; Lauren Langworthy of Blue Ox Organics and MOSES visited with WFU Government Relations Associate Nick Levendofsky; Columbia County Farmers Union member Anita Nelson charmed the kiddos in the child care room with songs and games.

*Photos by Danielle Endvick*



# Show your Farmers Union pride!

Fun new swag available! Also jackets, polos and more.

**Order online & pick up at Convention!**

**Place your order today at <http://www.madacustom.com/q/school-stores>**

