

The logo features three blue stars above a stylized brown wave graphic.

WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

March/April 2020

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Dairyland Forum sets out to
elevate rural election issues

Grassroots membership sets
WFU policy priorities

Free grant advising to help
achieve your farm goals



WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

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FROM THE EDITOR

Finding our fire, remembering our roots

Let Us Reason Together. The phrase has inspired the work of Wisconsin Farmers Union for nearly a century. It encapsulates the efforts happening even today across the countryside as farmers, foodies, and rural advocates organize to keep family farms on the land and reform a broken American food system.

WFU believes that family farms and strong local food systems are the foundation for thriving and vibrant communities. These communities, in turn, are vital to the health, security, and economic well-being of our entire state and national economy.

WFU's roots run deep. In November 1929, as the Great Depression and winter tightened their grips on the Midwest, a group of foresighted farmers gathered in Menomonie to convene the first WFU convention. *The Farmers Union Herald* reported that 285 delegates attended, and the event was "a thrilling experience ... with not a moment of relaxation except during hours of scanty slumber."

These determined farmers banded together to face challenges that are strikingly similar to many we still see today: lack of fair prices, corporate greed, land and market access, and the dismantling of cooperative rights.



Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

The organization born out of that gathering has spent the past century advocating for family farmers in Wisconsin through their work in education, legislation, and cooperation. Just as in those days, hundreds of members gathered

in civil discourse at our recent state convention to set our policy priorities and organize around the future of family farm agriculture.

Within the pages of this issue of *Wisconsin Farmers Union News* you'll see that WFU remains true to that work. We're looking forward to elevating critical rural issues at the Dairyland Forum & Rally for Rural Wisconsin coming up in Dunn County March 29th (page 3). We're charging forward on policy priorities set by the grassroots membership (page 10-11). But we're also celebrating our members and the legacy of where we've come from (page 12).

Wishing you all some moments of quiet and time to recharge in this quiet season – but also the fire in your soul to speak up and reason together on behalf of family farmers in 2020.

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.



Dairyland Forum

Presidential Candidate Forum & Rally for Rural Wisconsin

Sunday, March 29, 2020
Dunn County Fairgrounds
Menomonie, WI

12PM Doors Open
1PM Rally for Rural Wisconsin
2PM Candidate Forum
3PM Call to Action on Monopoly Power
4PM Music, dancing, beer & food

Hosted by:



In partnership with:

Citizen Action
Equal Exchange Co-op
Family Farm Action
Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy
Iowa Farmers Union
Pennsylvania Farmers Union
Voces de la Frontera
Wisconsin Conservation Voters

Dairyland Forum to draw presidential candidates to Dunn County *Farm, civic groups plan to spotlight key issues in Rally for Rural Wisconsin*

This spring, the national spotlight will turn to Wisconsin as a pivotal state in the presidential election. A coalition of farm and civic groups plan to use that opportunity to highlight the impacts of monopoly power in agriculture and food sectors and to elevate the issues that matter to rural America.

Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) hopes to draw presidential candidates to Dunn County on Sun., March 29 for the Dairyland Forum and Rally for Rural Wisconsin. The events, which are free and open to the public, will provide an opportunity for presidential candidates to engage with voters and share stances on rural issues.

"Monopolization and lack of enforcement of federal anti-trust laws are having a direct impact on family farms and businesses across Wisconsin, and the Dairyland Forum will offer an opportunity to learn more about that topic while also celebrating and sampling the great local fare America's Dairyland has to offer, with craft beers, cheese, brats and more," said WFU Executive Director Julie Bomar. "We will also have a great line-up of family farmers and rural and civic leaders slated to speak throughout the day on the issues impacting family farms and rural towns."

The event will be held at the Dunn County Fairgrounds, 620 17th St., Menomonie. The doors open at noon, with the Rally for Rural Wisconsin kicking off at 1pm and can-

didate forum at 2pm, followed by a call to action and music, dancing and sampling of local fare. RSVP at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/dairylandforum. Bus routes are being organized from the Appleton, Superior and Madison areas, with more details to follow.

WFU is organizing the event in partnership with Citizen Action, Equal Exchange Co-op, Family Farm Action, and Voces de la Frontera. Candidates will be asked questions about monopolization in agriculture, loss of family farms, decline of rural and tribal food systems, education, roads and transportation, access to health care, growing mental health and addiction issues in rural communities, and a vision for a fair and just economy that helps all people thrive.

WFU does not anticipate final confirmation from candidates until the final days leading up to the event; candidates will be announced as they are confirmed.

"Farmers and rural communities are suffering from the increasingly harmful effects of lack of competition in markets like seed, dairy, livestock processing, grain, and fertilizer," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. "Today 'The Big 4' companies now control the majority of meat processing in the United States. It's time that we address corporate power in food systems and political life and look toward a fair economic democracy that serves all people."



What We Leave Behind

Editor's Note: The following is adapted from Von Ruden's President's Address at the 89th WFU State Convention.

Last fall, I went hunting in Colorado. While we camped out in the mountains, a tremendous snowstorm moved in. The hike out was a struggle in the deep snow.

But thinking back on that, I wonder if it's not similar to the point we're at in this organization's life. We have climbed a mountain, of that I am certain. We have faced challenges. The snow may be deep. And the 'hike' may be tiring and taking longer than we want. But we truly are getting somewhere.

Farmers Union has been on fire. In the past year, our staff and members across the state were all over the place, sharing their stories, elevating the issues with over 500 media mentions, not just in Wisconsin publications but in places like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Huffington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Civil Eats* and more. Between the state organization and local chapters, we hosted over 100 events, and 2000-plus people took part in educational programming.

Dairy Together toured the country, educating hundreds of farmers about the potential of dairy growth management. Months of hard work culminated with well-attended briefings for the Senate and House of Representatives at the National Farmers Union Fly-In in Washington, D.C.

Hundreds more people turned out to speak up at public hearings on topics like ATP 51. At the Heartland Forum in Storm Lake, Iowa in March and the Farm Aid festival in East Troy in September we built bridges with organizations across the country.

It's an exciting time in WFU. Our grassroots have never been more alive and visible

Excitement aside, it's also been a so-

bering year, with farm bankruptcies, farmer mental health struggles, farm loss and even processors falling prey to consolidation. There are clear signs of what a long, weary hike we have ahead as we work on addressing the needed structural change to agriculture if we are to ensure a place for family farms vs. continued monopolization. We've come to a point of recognition that current policy is pushing family farms out. That the one-size-fits-all, last-man-standing approach isn't working.

It's also been sobering in that I've attended a number of funerals in the past months. They've led me to reflect on what we will leave behind and left me thinking about how we can all participate and become leaders in our communities. Leadership isn't one-size-fits-all either. There are different roles, different skills we can all put to use within Farmers Union, for the betterment of family farms and our communities. Some members have found their strength in being a voice on camera, penning their thoughts in opinion pieces, orchestrating meetings, or connecting their rural neighbors. There will be a myriad of opportunities to contribute to WFU's work in the year ahead.

The last year was monumental. But I believe 2020 is going to blow it out of the water. We have some big things planned – and big opportunities as the U.S. turns its eyes to Wisconsin, a pivotal state in the election

We anticipate movement with Dairy Together and have a late February event planned with legislators, in conjunction with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation and National Farmers Organization to keep growth management moving forward, working for fair prices for family dairy farmers.

The national attention and media we anticipate around the presidential election will create opportunities to



carry out our Farmers Union values, host candidates on our farms and call for:

- Stronger democracy with fair maps and citizen rights
- A stronger role for farmers in shaping climate change and water quality policy
- Greater awareness of monopolization in agriculture and the need for enforcement of antitrust laws
- And, last but not least, the need to restructure agriculture with sound policy that ensures fair prices and fair markets

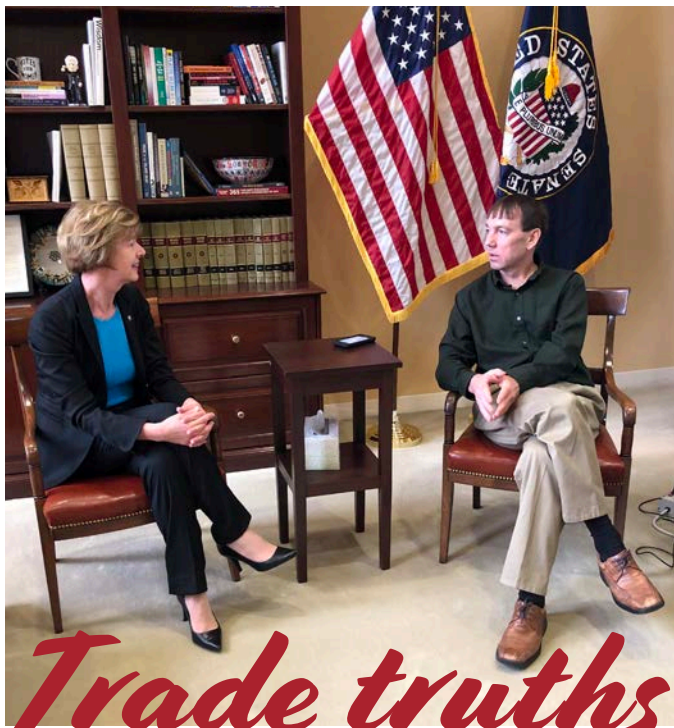
You all, our grassroots members, can play a role in this. There will be opportunities to take part in our Rural Voices organizing with issues-focused trainings to help you become a stronger advocate for family farmers and rural Wisconsin.

The Dairyland Forum and Rally for Rural Wisconsin on March 29 is going to be a kick-start to one hell of a year. See more about that on page 3.

As we move onward, I encourage you to think about what motivates you in being a member of Farmers Union and working toward the vision of a brighter future for family farm agriculture. For me, it's this little gal who arrived in December – our first grandbaby, Evelyn.

Now let's make 2020 a year that goes down in Farmers Union history!





Trade truths

Chippewa County farmer offered opportunity to share views at State of the Union address

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

When the Washington, D.C. phone number flashed across his phone during a co-op meeting, Les Danielson did what most folks would and forwarded to voicemail. What he didn't anticipate? Being greeted after his meeting with a cheery message from Senator Tammy Baldwin herself, offering a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be her plus-one to the Feb. 4 State of the Union Address in Washington, D.C.

Danielson, a dairy and grain farmer from Cadott, operates a grain storage facility and is active in Chippewa County Farmers Union. He had hosted Sen. Baldwin on his farm in 2018 and eagerly accepted the chance to share his views.

"The president has made some remarks that farmers are doing very well and we need to buy bigger tractors and more land, and that's just not the case," Danielson said. "Farmers are worried about renewing operating loans and how they're going to pay for their inputs this year, so I guess I'd like to see a more concrete plan on what's going to happen, because what [President Trump] is saying and what I'm seeing are very, very different."

Danielson arrived in Washington, D.C. late on Feb. 3 and spent the following day lunching with Senators and being interviewed by media. At a special dinner with the Senators and guests, he was mere feet from Mitch McConnell in the buffet line and was seated at a table with Sen.

"Farmers are worried about renewing operating loans and how they're going to pay for their inputs this year, so I guess I'd like to see a more concrete plan on what's going to happen, because what [President Trump] is saying and what I'm seeing are very, very different."

- Les Danielson, dairy & grain farmer

Baldwin and Senator Jon Tester, a third-generation rancher from Montana. Danielson also chatted food labeling with Sen. Linda Lopez of New Mexico and dairy with Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont. He was seated in the gallery, where he notes there is "not a bad seat in the house," for historic moments like the controversial awarding of the Medal of Freedom to conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh, the interaction when President Trump reportedly snubbed Speaker Pelosi by refusing to shake hands and Pelosi's later retaliatory shredding of a copy of the President's address.

As for the actual address, Danielson said he was glad to hear President Trump address rural America.

"The president talked about farmers and pointed out how many State of the Union addresses historically haven't talked about farmers," Danielson said, noting appreciation. "Ironically, he praised farmers as heroes but hammered health care as socialism – even after a year where we farmers saw \$27 billion in special aid from the trade wars, with a final round of payments scheduled to go out in the very week of his address."

Danielson has felt the impact of tariffs and hopes the U.S. will be able to restore some of its grain markets, but acknowledged there is a long road ahead. "These markets that we've lost in the last few years, you don't just snap your fingers and suddenly they come back and buy from you," he said.

As for his recent adventure, "I still can't believe it," he said. "I'm grateful to Senator Baldwin for inviting me and for her work supporting family farmers."



Submitted photos

Grain and dairy farmer Les Danielson of Cadott and Sen. Baldwin shared their views on ag policy with media.

Danielson notes the opportunity stemmed from his willingness to host legislators on his farm and was also partly thanks to a video project with the Center for American Progress. He encourages other farmers to be open to talking with candidates or media, noting, "It's important for us to share the truth of how policy impacts us at the farm level."

His other token bit of advice: "If you see a call come in from D.C., answer it!"

Wisconsin Farmers Union is looking for farmers interested in hosting media and political candidates leading up to the election. Interested? Contact Tommy at tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com or 715-563-2169.



Under the Big Tent



Julie Bomar
Executive Director

WFU prides itself on tolerance of ideas and grassroots democratic processes which in turn generate and renew collective values and chart a course for our policy direction each year. Not everyone agrees on every policy, but it's rather remarkable how the vast majority of WFU policy develops by keeping our values first and foremost. When conversations grow passionate, it is usually because the issue is close to the speaker's lived experience. The threat of wolves on livestock, dairy prices, and water contamination are just a few that come to the top of my mind from our recent convention.

Can our tent accommodate more? If we want to have a stronger impact – absolutely! What is the gap between what we are and what we could be? First, WFU membership does not reflect the diversity of Wisconsin demographically or agriculturally. A goal for the coming year is to actively recruit more conventional farmers, who have become less proportionately represented in the past decade amid record loss of dairy farms and a surge of members from emerging direct markets. We also recognize WFU is a very white organization and have work to do to be racially inclusive. We will continue to move forward to build authentic partnerships and make necessary shifts. We also know there are consumers who want to see their food system fixed, just like many of our farmers, but we wrestle with our identity – while also recognizing the power of unity.

Given the social divisiveness and overt racism present in the current political atmosphere, WFU collaborated with Land Stewardship Project to bring about a Jan. 31 Groundswell workshop focused on racial justice in the rural landscape. We knew this topic would usher in praise *and* unease, and that's okay. A quick browse of book titles in the WFU archive room suggests Farmers Union has long contemplated how to build unity and by fight against bias and discrimination:

- *A Nation of Nations* (1945) by Louis Adamic pays tribute to the immigrants from non-Anglo Saxon nations and cultures who made major contributions to the American identity
- *What Do Women Really Want?* (1970) by Ellen Graham focuses on the second wave feminist movement and the challenges and conflicting priorities of liberation
- *This Way to Unity: For the promotion of good will and teamwork among racial, religious and national groups* (1945) edited by Arnold Herrick and Herbert Askwith aimed to "... overcome intolerance based on racial, religious, and national prejudices; to develop the obligation to join in the fight against bias and discrimination; to warn against propaganda



Photo by Danielle Endvick

Attendees to Groundswell participated in an activity that explored their family's migrations through generations.

aimed at stirring up hate and group antagonisms."

The 2020 Groundswell workshop challenged traditional ideas about what white supremacy looks like. Beyond the historical and overt demonstrations of white supremacy, like Jim Crow laws, white hoods, and telling someone to "go home," this ideological framework also includes political or social "norms" in which white people enjoy advantage over other people. In addition to talking about our ancestral routes to the United States, we discussed how land was acquired in our families, and how we learned about race. Groundswell participants were asked to reflect and discuss how some dominant cultural norms in rural communities exclude people who don't "fit." Asking questions and listening to perspectives is the foundation of empathy. This workshop took steps to build that empathy within our organization.

In the WFU policy discussion, delegates' perspectives and lived experiences don't get the same game time. People often speak passionately and quickly, without time to explain context or personal experience. While this deliberation is our chosen process to define and focus our policy, it also creates opportunity for tensions to emerge. For some folks, tension isn't a favorite feeling, but I encourage this organization to leverage tension as a source of energy, excitement, growth and potential. We can manage it for good.

F. Scott Fitzgerald is quoted as saying, "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function." It's a mindbender isn't it? One test that comes up weekly in my work, is simultaneously honoring and valuing the history and struggle of WFU with the need to change processes and bring new perspectives into the organization. Sometimes it is agreeing to support a policy that I don't agree with, while understanding that other members do value it and their perspective and lived experience might be closer to the issue than mine.

Sure, it would be easier to be polarized and shut down those tent flaps. But cultivating civility and being comfortable with tension are required of a big tent organization. Our best approach is to exert empathy, intelligence and mindfulness of *what* unites us and *who* divides us.

Finding context for today from the lessons of yesterday



Lauren Langworthy
District 2 Director

Farmers Union has a long history as a progressive organization. A 1904 article about the founder in the *Farmer Advocate* stated that, "It was Mr. Gresham's idea that the farmers should have their own union just the same as the mechanics and laboring people in the cities have their unions. He conceived the idea that there should be friendly relations and later possibly affiliations in some way with union men everywhere. It's an effort to unite the laboring people of the earth."

The organization's progressive qualities are slathered thick across our policy book, but our history of being a progressive organization has both moments to be proud of... and moments to learn from. As I've pondered the future of our organization, I find it helpful to dig into our past and ground myself in our context. As an organization, we can make significant errors and lose valuable ground in our quest to realize our goals if we don't understand our history and use it. This history helps us understand our story arc and can serve as a platform from which we can make well-rounded decisions about our next move.

From the organization's founding in 1902, women were included in the organization's membership and not confined to a separate auxiliary. At that time, most organizations either barred female membership or bound them to limited involvement by classifying them separately. Even more, our organization had its first-known woman chapter president, Miss Amanda Bates of the Pleasant Valley Union in Kansas, in 1908 (more than a decade before women were granted the right to vote by the 19th Amendment). In 1925, the Alabama Farmers Union elected Ida Mathis as the first state president in the organization. In 1952, Wisconsin Farmers Union elected its first female board member: Mrs. Ruth Huntington of Mondovi, Wis.

While the organization's history of inclusion of women is something to be proud of, our history with racial equity shows more bias. We were early-adopters of social justice compared to many other organizations of the time, but we can learn from our history and see that inaction can have the same effect as exclusion. Our early constitutions stated "white or an Indian of industrious nature" among the criteria for membership. Eventually, around 1904, the "of industrious nature" language was removed as more Native American members joined the Indianhomia Chapter (before Oklahoma was a state).

As early as 1905, there were calls for organizers to help coordinate "Black Farmers Unions" such as the Black

Farmers Union of North Carolina which was chartered in 1908. During this time, there were newspaper ads proclaiming the importance of organizing black farmers, "so that they may be in position to work in harmony and co-operation with the [Farmers Union]." It was understood that we needed to unite "all laboring people of the earth" in our shared struggles, as the Hon. Newt Gresham had envisioned. However, Farmers Union membership for African Americans was still not always recognized due to the incompatible membership criteria of "white person or Indian" in our National Farmers Union constitution. This language around racial barriers to membership wouldn't change until the 1920s when Kansas Farmers Union decided to omit that language from their state bylaws. They then ignored the offending language in their charter from National Farmers Union and sent an African American delegate to NFU convention that year. We're still learning about this part of our history. While I don't know this full story yet, I'm in communication with our organization's historian and found that he's trying to uncover this man's name so that his courageous contribution to our organization's story can be recognized. What we do know is that his presence as a delegate initially caused a big stir amongst some members, but that. It took about ten years, but eventually the membership came around and removed the offending language from the National Farmers Union bylaws - creating a new era of inclusion through membership. However, the damage of year of exclusion was already done for many communities who, recognizing the need to band together, organized under their own banners and developed parallel organizations.

I bring up some of our organization's early history – not to applaud our successes nor to dwell in our failures – but to illustrate a few points. Our organization is progressive and has been well ahead of its time in many ways. However, this hasn't happened by accident. It takes coalition-building, dialogue, time, and direct action – in concert – to help our organization realize its goals around "uniting the laboring people of the earth." As we work toward the goals stated in our policy handbook, we have to recognize that our organization is a very "Big Tent." We must continually open our minds to unfamiliar ideas and ground ourselves in our history and context. We must dialogue with each other and recognize that we are ALL working to improve life for farmers and our world. We must share our dreams, our experiences, and an understanding that we stand on common ground, even when we disagree on specific subjects. Only with this strong interpersonal union can we maintain our organizational strength and push for the just and verdant world we imagine.





UNITED TO GROW



FAMILY AGRICULTURE

Acheson honored as 'Changemaker'

The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) will present a new award at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference Feb. 27 in La Crosse to recognize "Changemakers" who break down barriers and empower others to farm in ways that are environmentally responsible, socially just, and economically viable. Among the honorees is WFU member Steve Acheson.

Acheson is an Iraq war veteran from Blanchardville. After his honorable discharge from the military due to an injury, he started Peacefully Organic Produce, a certified organic produce farm with the mission to grow healthy food for his community and to employ and train veterans to farm organically. In 2016, his war injuries made it impossible to continue vegetable farming, but he continues to advocate for veterans and farmers, and recently co-founded the South Central WI Hemp Producers Cooperative, helping growers in his economically depressed area of the state to leverage group power for buying seed and marketing crops.

Also being recognized are Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, Loretta Livingston, and Joy Schelble.

The Changemakers will receive their awards at the kickoff to the MOSES Conference, Thurs., Feb. 27 at 7pm. Learn more at mosesorganic.org/conference.



Acheson

Pepin-Pierce chapter to host Inga

Inga Witscher of Around the Farm Table will be visiting Ellsworth for a special event from 10:30am to noon on April 18 at Zion Covenant Church, 210 N. Beulah St. Wisconsin Farmers Union is a proud host of Around the Farm Table, which connects consumers to family farmers through storytelling, forgotten recipes and entertainment. The Pepin-Pierce Farmers Union and Ellsworth Public Library are co-hosting the event, which will include a cooking demonstration by Inga. For more information, contact Faye Jones at faye02@wwt.net or 715-495-2064.

Regenerative soil event March 11

The Barron and Polk-Burnett Farmers Union chapters invite you to an engaging evening at the Farm Table Foundation, 110 Keller Avenue North in Amery, on March 11 for a special event with nationally recognized soil scientist Kris Nichols. Regenerating Soil for Environmental & Human Health will begin at 7pm and focus on practices that build soil health to address climate change and promote human health. The presentation will discuss crop diversity, reduced soil disturbance, and managed grazing, to increase profitability by maximizing nutrient and water use.

RSVPs required. The cost is on a pay-what-you-can sliding scale of \$0-20 and each ticket includes a pint of Hop and Barrel beer or Deane's Kombucha. The event is co-sponsored by Big River Farms, Land Stewardship Project, St. Croix River Association, Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network, and Renewing the Countryside.

Grazing Conference in Shell Lake March 7

The Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network, UW-River Falls and UW-Extension invite you to attend the Winter Grazing Conference in Shell Lake on March 7. The conference will be at the Shell Lake Community Center, 200 West Lake Drive next to US Hwy 63, in Washburn County. The Community Center is only a block east of highway 63 in center of town.

The program runs 9am to 3:30pm. The noon meal will feature local lamb and pork grown by our members. This conference continues a strong tradition of an informative and friendly networking with topics covering pasture diversity; raising sheep, goats and hogs; Internet marketing; cattle finishing on grass and soil health. The conference should be of interest to new farmers, part-time or full-time operators, low-income startups, graziers or non-graziers.

To register contact Lorraine Toman 715-635-3735. For more information about grazing, contact UW-Extension Ag Agent, Kevin Schoessow, in Spooner at 715-635-3945, or NW Graziers members, Lynn Johnson 715-225-9882.

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



Members gather for Farm & Rural Lobby Day

Farmland preservation, clean water, fair maps among topics

MADISON – Over 80 family farmers and rural advocates gathered in Madison Jan. 15 for Wisconsin Farmers Union's Farm & Rural Lobby Day. Among the issues discussed were preserving 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 chance to speak one-on-one with our representatives and put a face to the issues is empowering and why I come back year after year," said beef farmer Rachel Bouressa of New London. "I enjoy it more and more each year as I develop a relationship with my representatives." Bouressa said WFU's support for clean water and farmland preservation spoke strongly to her, noting, "I live in a community where our wells are very high in nitrates, so I was glad to come voice support for the power of cover crops, grazing, and farmer-led efforts to address clean water."

This was Blanchardville farmer April Prusia's third time attending the Farm & Rural Lobby Day. "When we bring our voices together, it's stronger. It's a beautiful thing."

"It was a little intimidating to be in the state Capitol and speaking with the individuals who have so much sway over the daily lives of farmers," said first-time attendee and Dane County Farmers Union member Ryan Hellenbrand. "The issues we covered today, like clean water and farmland preservation, are extremely important for farmers to be able to maintain their livelihoods, and non-partisan redistricting is important for preserving the ability to come to consensus, a process which is critical to a vibrant and thriving democracy."

WFU members will have the opportunity to lobby again this fall, when hundreds of farmers from throughout the country will gather in Washington, D.C. for the National Farmers Union Fly-In in September. A limited number of scholarships will be available for first-time attendees.

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.

GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

WFU members set grassroots policy priorities at 89th State Convention



Photos by Danielle Endvick

Delegates of the Polk-Burnett Farmers Union pause for a moment amid the bustle of the policy room break time. Pictured are, clockwise, from bottom left, Dan Guenthner, Osceola; Barb Kass, Luck; Mike Miles, Luck; Kim Rosen, Clear Lake; Klaus Zimmerman and Emily Hanson, Amery; and Kristy Allen, Grantsburg.

ROTHSCHILD – At the 89th annual Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention Jan. 31-Feb. 2 in Rothschild, delegates adopted policy that will guide the family farm organization's work at the Capitol, in Congress, and across the countryside. Wisconsin delegates will have the opportunity to bring these stances to the National Farmers Union Convention in Savannah, Georgia March 1-3.

"The policy discussion at the annual State Convention is the democratic process in its purest form," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. "Farmers from a variety of backgrounds come together to respectfully discuss and come to a consensus on the issues impacting their farms and rural Wisconsin."

The following were among the Special Orders of Business that reflect WFU's top policy priorities for the coming year:

DAIRY POLICY REFORM: WFU calls on Congress to establish a mandatory program for managed growth based on market demand and price stability. Such a program should increase farmer profitability by elevating milk prices, preventing overproduction, and reducing milk price volatility. Such a program should also allow for beginning farmer entry, reduce government expenditures, and have meaningful farmer input in development, implementation, and governance.

OVERSIGHT OF LARGE LIVESTOCK FACILITIES & CAFOS: State standards under ATPC 51 regarding acceptance, regulation, and enforcement of CAFOs have failed to enable towns and counties to protect their people, land, water, and health. WFU urges the legislature to amend the statute to require that the findings of the Technical Committee be presented in writing to the Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and that the Board of DATCP must present a scope statement to the Wisconsin Secretary of Agriculture within 90 days. WFU also supports lifting the preemption of local control of siting of large livestock operations and also approves removing the fee cap in ATPC 51, relying instead on the existing statutory requirement that any fee imposed by a town or county must be reasonable.



St. Croix County Farmers Union delegate and biologist Becky Brathal, Woodville, shared background on wolf management in the state.



Delegates await their turn at the mic as Ed Gorell of Eleva speaks.



Marathon County delegates Stacey and Tenzin Botsford enjoying policy.



Among this year's Chippewa County Farmers Union delegates were, from left, Larry Buttker, Ron Nelson, and Don Schesel.

CONCENTRATION IN THE AG INDUSTRY: WFU demands that state and federal Departments of Justice follow through on the antitrust investigation and aggressively prosecute violators of antitrust laws. WFU urges the federal government to increase oversight of consolidation and vertical integration in agriculture. WFU opposes investment in arable lands in all countries by institutional investors, and urges DATCP to vigorously enforce the law limiting ownership by foreign entities to 640 acres.

HEMP: In light of the new realm we find ourselves in with regard to hemp production, WFU supports:

- Formulating an open-source hemp seed-saving program, as well as legislative initiatives to protect farmers' rights to develop new strains, plant hemp seed, and sell hemp seed.
- Lowering the DATCP testing fees for hemp.
- Removing the background check requirement for permitting and licensing applications.
- Raising the allowable THC content of hemp, as defined by state and federal law, from 0.3 percent to 1.0 percent.
- Removing ban for hemp licenses for individuals who completed sentencing for a non-violent cannabis related felony.
- Adding hemp to the list of prohibited crops in Wisconsin's anti-corporate farming law.
- State appropriated funding for a grant program for building hemp fiber processing facilities.

BADGERCARE & BADGERCARE PUBLIC OPTION: WFU supports legislation to create a public option to buy into BadgerCare, available to any Wisconsin resident no matter of income and inclusion of the BadgerCare public option on the Healthcare.gov marketplace. WFU opposes cuts to funding and restrictive eligibility requirements for Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus. WFU urges the governor, state legislature and Department of Health Services to pursue a strategy that:

- Prioritizes maintaining eligibility for the largest number of residents, opting for modest premium and copay increases rather than wholesale exclusion of participants.
- Maintains service delivery centers throughout the state, and not just online, recognizing that many rural residents lack access to high-speed internet.
- Leverages all available federal dollars to support Medicaid, including immediate acceptance of the federal Medicaid expansion funding provided through the Affordable Care Act.
- Recognizes the fluctuating annual income levels characteristic of farming and self-employment.

FAMILY FARMERS SHAPING CLIMATE CHANGE: Food security, a healthy landscape, climate mitigation, and a prosperous rural America can only be attained through a strong family farm system. Farmers and rural communities are uniquely positioned to meet the climate goals set forth in any climate change legislation. Farmers have the available land base for alternative energy and the opportunity to transform farming practices to sequester excess carbon and improve the health of the environment. We need to have a seat at the table as climate change legislation is being developed.

MEAT PROCESSING INFRASTRUCTURE: WFU advocates

for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to offer financial support to increase the capacity of and start new state and USDA-inspected meat processors; increased support from County Economic Development agencies and streamlined regulation from DATCP to help facilitate small-scale processors and those that offer USDA, organic, Halal, and Kosher certification; as well as mobile and on-farm processing facilities and use of animal by-products and waste; and allowing meat and poultry products sales across state lines if they have been inspected through state Meat and Poultry Inspection programs. WFU supports formation of co-ops and business structures to address processing needs.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED SUPPORT FOR:

- Designation that "meat" and products bearing species-specific designations such as beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb, fish, etc., must come from the carcass of an animal. Products derived from culturing or reproducing animal proteins or tissues must be clearly labeled as "lab-grown," "produced in a factory," "not derived from harvested livestock," or similar.
- Country-of-Origin-Labeling (COOL) for all meat and dairy products; expansion to labeling of all food sold in the U.S.
- Discontinuation by Congress, the US Trade Representative, and the Administration of injudiciously applied tariffs, and a shift to negotiating trade more collaboratively.
- A program to provide aid to maintain barns, silos, and other traditional farm buildings.
- Creation of a limited purpose driver's license, permit, or identification card for a Wisconsin resident who has not been assigned a Social Security number or cannot establish legal presence in the United States, to make transportation safer.
- Efforts to empower Medicare and Medicaid to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for lower drug prices for patients and also make those lower drug prices available to Americans with private health insurance.
- Support for use of Ranked Choice Voting.
- Implementation of a "Labor Gains Exemption" for family farm agriculture.
- An acreage cap on use value assessment for those who are using it as a tax shelter.
- Legalization and substantial taxation of cannabis, provided growers are required to a permit and limited to a specific number of plants or acres; the addition of cannabis to the crop list for Wisconsin's anti-corporate farming law; and retroactive expungement of nonviolent convictions related to cannabis.
- Changes to NR 151 that restrict manure and other waste application rates and the spreading of these materials on frozen soils in areas of the state deemed to be sensitive areas.
- Trading of phosphorous nutrient credits to reduce the amount of phosphorous reaching various bodies of water.
- Agronomy research exploring the benefits of composting, compared to other forms of manure storage.
- Changes to the eligibility criteria of the Lake Protection Grant: Lake Management Plan Implementation program to include farmer-led watershed councils and the agricultural organizations that support those councils.



Farm Aid, members recognized for commitment to family farms

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

WFU honored several individuals for their dedication to family farmers at the 89th annual Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention Jan. 31-Feb. 2. The event drew 300 farmers and rural allies to Rothschild for a weekend of networking, workshops and grassroots policymaking.

WFU recognized Farm Aid with the Friend of the Family Farmer award. First given in 2013, the award recognizes those who have gone above and beyond in efforts on behalf of family farmers.

"We are so happy to celebrate Farm Aid's warm-hearted and energetic



Photo by Danielle Endvick

From left, dairy farmers Jerry Volenec and Sarah Lloyd and WFU President Darin Von Ruden (right) presented a Friend of the Family Farmer Award to Farm Aid for their work on behalf of family farmers. Accepting the award are Farm Aid Executive Director Carolyn Mugar and Associate Director Glenda Yoder.

ic staff and their innumerable contributions to family farms," said WFU Director of Special Projects Sarah

Lloyd. "Farm Aid is working to create real change in our farm and food system, from the ground up."

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

Farm Aid grants strengthen family farmers, build communities that can support each other in hard times, and organize people to stand up and challenge corporate power in our food system. WFU was among Farm Aid's 2019 grantees and took part in the annual music festival in East Troy, WI in September.

See page 20 ► AWARDS



From left, Calli Roers and Mark Brugger were honored as Torchbearers. They are pictured with Education Director Cathy Statz. Not pictured are Avery Apfelbeck, Nick Gebert, and Ethan Peterson.

Torchbearers recognized at convention

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

Five Wisconsin youth received the Torchbearer Award at the 89th annual Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention in Rothschild on Feb. 1.

The award is the highest honor bestowed upon Farmers Union youth, marking completion of five years of community and organizational service, and education in the topics of cooperation, leadership and civic engagement. Receiving the honor were Avery Apfelbeck, Medford; Mark Brugger, Rib Lake; Nick Gebert, Medford; Ethan Peterson, Medford; and Calli Roers, Reedsburg.

Since 1936, over 1,600 WFU youth have earned the Torchbearer Award.

"Farmers Union youth build leadership skills and cooperative awareness through participation in our youth program and summer camps," said WFU Education Director Cathy Statz. "Most began participating as elementary students, and have developed a strong sense of the importance of the role of family farming, cooperative business and rural communities for our economy, our culture and our planet."

Torchbearers have the option of attending the National Farmers Union All-States Leadership Camp, which will be in Wisconsin in 2020. Learn more about the Farmers Union Youth Program by contacting Cathy Statz at 715-723-5561 or cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

Von Ruden re-elected, new faces join WFU board of directors

Danielle Endvick

Communications Director

Westby dairy farmer Darin Von Ruden was re-elected president of the Wisconsin Farmers Union at the family farm organization's 89th State Convention Jan. 31-Feb. 2, where 300 farmers and rural advocates gathered.

Von Ruden is a lifelong Farmers Union member, and since 2008 has served as the organization's District 5 director, representing Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, and Vernon counties. He also leads the WFU Foundation board of directors, serves on the National Farmers Union board and is chairman of the NFU Membership Committee. Darin and his wife, Joann, live in Westby. The Von Rudens recently transitioned their 50-cow dairy farm to the fourth generation and welcomed their first grandchild.

WFU board members & delegates

Craig Dunnum of Westby and Bryce Luchterhand of Unity were elected to serve as delegates to the National Farmers Union Convention March 1-3 in Savannah, Georgia.

Several district director seats were up for election this year. Linda Ceylor, who dairy farms in Catawba, was re-elected to represent District 1, which comprises Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas and Washburn counties. Newly elected to the board were Sarah Korte and Jen Schmitz.

Schmitz replaces outgoing director Craig Myhre, who was elected to the board in 1996 and represented Buffalo, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe and Trempealeau counties. Schmitz, who resides in Cashton, grew up on a Monroe County dairy farm, was active in 4-H and FFA, and earned undergraduate degrees in Dairy Science and Agricultural and Applied Economics. She is an avid volunteer, has 17 years of experience working for CROPP/Organic Valley, and is the chair of River 2 Ridge Disaster Resilience, a group created to meet unmet resident needs after a disaster or community crisis. Schmitz has recently returned to farming, and in 2019 harvested her first hemp crop. She plans to plant a couple of acres of hemp in 2020, starting seeds and clones indoors, and harvesting with others. She looks forward to continuing to realize the potential for hemp fiber.

Schmitz noted she appreciates the diversity of people in Wisconsin Farmers Union and the active participation and conversation that addresses complex issues in agriculture. "The emphasis on using governance and conversation further ignites my realization of the value of uniting our sweat equity as farmers/growers and supply chains to deliver farm goods to consumers," she said.



Photo by Danielle Endvick

The 2020 WFU Board of Directors includes, front row, from left, Tina Hinchley, Cambridge; Ed Gorell, Eleva; Treasurer Chris Holman, Custer; Secretary Lauren Langworthy, Wheeler; Jen Schmitz, Cashton; back row, Linda Ceylor, Catawba; Vice President Rick Adamski, Seymour; Sarah Korte, Chaseburg; and President Darin Von Ruden, Westby.

Korte takes on the seat previously held by Mark Liebaert of South Range, who served as the At-Large director since 2010. Korte has been a longtime Farmers Union member. In high school and college, she 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, she returned to rural life and WFU two years ago and was elected president of the Chaseburg Local Farmers Union.

Korte grew up on an organic dairy farm. Today, she and her husband, Nicholas, raise chickens, beef, and Gloucestershire Old Spot hogs on their Chaseburg farm. They are transitioning 19 acres of tillable land from conventional corn and soybeans into organic pasture and are restoring overgrazed ridge pastures by planting hazelnut, apple, and hickory trees. As an attorney licensed to practice law in Wisconsin and Minnesota, Korte assists with farm transition planning, helps entrepreneurs form new businesses, and defends local control.

"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," Korte said. "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."





Wisconsin
Farmers Union
KAMP KENWOOD



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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

2020 Farmers Union Camps to focus on mindfulness

Registration is open for 2020 Farmers Union Camps. Each summer, hundreds youth from across the Midwest participate in youth camps at Wisconsin Farmers Union's Kamp Kenwood on the shores of Lake Wissota near Chippewa Falls. A special focus this year will be on Connecting People and the Land: Mindfulness of the Earth and Each Other. Topics will include mindfulness as it relates to care of our communities and the environment, care for each other, and self care.

"We have young adults and Farmers Union members who are prepared to take the youth on nature walks, teach yoga outdoors and develop enriching activities with mindfulness of self, others and the Earth as central themes," said WFU Executive Director Julie Bomar. "This will be in addition to the legacy topic taught each summer at camp – the value of cooperatives."

The new programming was funded in collaboration with generous donor Christin Cleaver of Milwaukee, the Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation and Forestry Management, and the Lake Wissota Stewardship Project.

For over 80 years Farmers Union Camps have focused on leadership development with a cooperative approach," said WFU Education Director Cathy Statz. Youth learn about the Cooperative Principles and the benefits of cooperatives to Wisconsin's family farmers and communities. Campers create their own Camp Co-op Store, elect a board of directors, buy shares and receive patronage dividends. They also enjoy traditional summer camp activities like swimming, sports, arts and crafts, hiking and campfires.

"Campers especially love the evening programs at camp, because they get to be really imaginative," Statz said. "They develop skits, write songs and paint a stage backdrop for our special theme nights. We also play a lot of fun camp games where kids can apply the teamwork skills they learn throughout the week."

Campers come from across the Midwest and a handful of other states. Illinois native and second-generation camper Ali Slaughter notes that "Through Farmers Union Camp you gain a sense of community and family, knowledge on a wide range of important issues, leadership skills, and countless memories."

Camp sessions are open to ages 8-18 and available June through August. There will also be an Acorn Day Camp for ages 7 and up from 9am to 2pm on Aug. 13, coinciding with WFU's Summer Conference. Family camps, open for families with children of all ages, will be July 31-Aug 1 or Aug 14-15.

Co-sponsored by a grant from the CHS Foundation, the four- to five-day camps are affordably priced at \$100 to \$110 per camper for WFU members. (Non-members add \$30 for a one-year Farmers Union family membership.) To register or see camp dates, visit www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com. For questions, contact Cathy at 715-214-7887 or cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

WOMEN CARING FOR THE LAND

Learn about practices to improve soil and water quality and see innovative landowners in action!
All are welcome, please RSVP at 715-723-5561 or www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events

Potluck - Please bring a dish to pass

WEIGANDT FARM | RICHLAND CENTER | JUNE 6 | 10-3

Susan and David Weigandt purchased their 160-acre farm in 1978 for recreational use but conservation became a priority. They have completed timber stand improvement projects, harvests, tree and shrub plantings and invasive species control. Eighty acres are enrolled in Managed Forest Law (MFL) and another 80 acres in grass and pasture where they've done erosion control projects and rent out for a small herd of beef cows. Other projects that keep them busy are oak savannah restoration, additional tree and shrub plantings, and they are currently working on placing a conservation easement on the property.

Location: D22880 Fancy Creek Ln., Richland Center, WI

WALLNER FARM | CALEDONIA | JUNE 17 | 11AM-3PM

Amy's Acre launched in 2014 with \$1500, a quarter acre of leased land, and a lot of favors from friends and family. In 2017 the farm found a permanent home and now includes two acres of mixed vegetables and a flock of pastured laying hens. Amy Wallner is dedicated to soil health improvement and is working on transitioning long-time conventionally farmed land into organic production. She sells produce at a local farmers market, restaurants in Milwaukee, and on-farm in a custom built roadside stand.

Location: 8318 6 mile Rd., Caledonia, WI

BLACK BROOK FARM | AMERY | JUNE 19 | 10-3

Ayla Graden-Dodge and her family grow Certified Organic vegetables, pastured heritage-bred pork, grass-fed beef and chickens for an 80-member CSA, local restaurants and a farmer's cooperative on their 140-acre farm. On their farm, they seek to increase the soil health and biodiversity of their land through rotational grazing, cover cropping, oak savannah restoration, pollinator habitat and reducing tillage.

Location: 1150 35th Ave., Amery, WI

FULL CIRCLE FARM | PULASKI | JUNE 25 | 4-8PM

Full Circle Community Farm is a multi-generational organic farm using conservation practices and rotational grazing to raise cattle, pigs, chickens, and produce. Come see a hoop house, chicken tractors, wind turbine, wildlife corridors, waterway buffers, and existing pollinator habitat. Attendees will also have the hands-on opportunity to help this 120-year old farm plant new pollinator habitat on the day of the event!

Location: W2407 Hofa Park Rd., Pulaski, WI

MULROY'S IRISH ACRES | NEW LONDON | JUNE 28 | 2-8PM

Jane and Dave Mulroy's family farm was established around 1848. Irish Acres is a working, teaching, awakening family farm. The Mulroys host AirBNB guests in a tiny house on their property and offer their barn as a gathering space. They welcome visitors on the farm, and offer tours, classes and crafts. Their farm practices are organic and biodynamic. The farm is also home to greenhouses and an heirloom orchard.

Location: N2841 US Hwy 45 New London, WI



Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend should contact Rob Lawson at 608-662-4422 one week prior to the event.
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WFU applauds passage of water quality bills

Wisconsin Farmers Union applauds the Assembly's Feb. 18 passage of a number of the Speaker's Water Quality Task Force bills. "The farming practices promoted by these bills, including cover crops and managed rotational grazing, point us in the right direction when it comes to protecting soil and water," said Wisconsin Farmers Union president Darin Von Ruden. Wisconsin Farmers Union also applauded the Assembly's investments in County Conservation staff and Farmer-Led Watershed projects, noting that their critical role in disseminating best farming practices throughout Wisconsin. "We really encourage the Senate to follow the Assembly's lead, and pass the following Senate bills:

- SB 715 (Grazing, Cover Crops, and Farmer-Led Watershed grants)
- SB 718 (Nitrate Reduction Pilot Project)
- SB 722 (Center for Watershed Science and Education and WGNHS)
- SB 723 (County Conservation staffing)
- SB 724 (Well Compensation Program)
- SB 575 (Farmland Preservation)
- SB 632 (Well Pollution Notification).

"These bills are a good start," Von Ruden continued. He noted that more work remains to be done, including making sure that even more families with contaminated wells have access to the well compensation program, and securing a permanent funding source for clean water initiatives. "Here in rural Wisconsin, we should not have to be afraid of the water coming out of our faucets. We applaud the bipartisan approach of Representative Novak and Representative Shankland in leading the Water Quality Task Force, and we look forward to continuing to work with the legislature, state agencies, Governor Evers, and County Conservationists to ensure both successful farms and clean water."



Submitted photo

Over 100 turn out in Mt. Horeb for 'Right to Harm' film viewing

About 130 Farmers Union members and local residents packed Brix Cider in Mount Horeb for a Feb. 16 viewing of "Right to Harm." The event was hosted by the South Central and Iowa-Grant chapters of Wisconsin Farmers Union. The documentary, which is being shown by several WFU chapters in the coming months, shows the impact of factory farming on communities throughout the United States. Right to Harm exposes the devastating public health impact that factory farming has on many disadvantaged citizens across the country. Filmed across the U.S., the documentary chronicles issues arising around industrial animal agriculture.

"Clearly this is an issue that resonates with the community here in Southern Wisconsin," said Matt Sheaffer from the South Central chapter of the WFU. "A Dodgeville dairy farmer mentioned to me that he had been nervous about the tone of the movie but after seeing it was reassured that the real threat to rural communities and farms like his lies in the proliferation of large-scale industrial operations."

The film features WFU members Mary Dougherty and Lynn Utesch, who share their experiences as champions of conservation and family farms. Also featured is economist John Ikerd, who abandoned industry beliefs after a 14-year career as a livestock marketing specialist. After the farm crisis of the 1980s he realized, "The farmers who were in the biggest trouble, were the ones doing the things we so-called experts were telling them to do."

At the 2020 WFU State Convention in Rothschild, members of the grassroots family farm organization set Oversight of Large Livestock Facilities and Concentration in the Agriculture Industry as special orders of business.

"State standards under ATCP 51 regarding acceptance, regulation, and enforcement of CAFOs have failed to enable towns and counties to protect their people, land, water, and health," said WFU Executive Director Julie Keown-Bomar. "Our members have shown a clear desire to educate other farmers and citizens around this issue and to restore local control to communities. We recognize that there are CAFOs that are family-scale farms, and they are not a target of this film. Instead it looks at the extremely industrial scale model that is threatening our natural resources and family farms."

Other upcoming viewings are being planned: March 24 - Westby and Balsam Lake; April 8 - Colfax; and June 14 - Oconomowoc. Find event details at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events.

WFU members voice support for grazing, cover crops, watersheds

Wisconsin Farmers Union members showed up in full force to present impressive testimony at the Capitol on Feb. 4 in support of funding for County Conservation staff, creating a Grazing Specialist position at DATCP, a pilot program to encourage cover crops, and additional funds to Farmer-Led Watershed Initiatives. Hats off to Scott Mericka, Dodgeville; Caleb Langworthy, Wheeler; Rachel Bouressa New London; Mariann, Doran, and John Holm, Elk Mound; and Kevin Mahalko, Gilman; for sharing their supportive testimonies.

"My farm has been well supported by grazer education and it is our hope that others can have the same opportunity well into the future," Langworthy said.

Bouressa, a fifth generation farmer in Waupaca county, rotationally grazes beef cattle, noted in her testimony that "It is from my education, experience, passion and pride for what I do and where I'm from that I base my statement of support. Managed grazing is the most economically viable and environmentally beneficial agricultural system to produce quality meat and dairy products in our state."

Bouressa encourages others to not shy away from testifying when future opportunities arise. She notes, "If there's ever a public hearing about legislation that is meaningful to you, I encourage everyone to partake in the experience. It was empowering to have an opportunity to address the committee."



*Submitted photos
Shown testifying
are, from top,
Caleb Langworthy,
Doran and John
Holm, and Rachel
Bouressa.*



RED CEDAR WATERSHED CONFERENCE

LAND, WATER AND PEOPLE COMING TOGETHER

**THURSDAY
MARCH 12, 2020**

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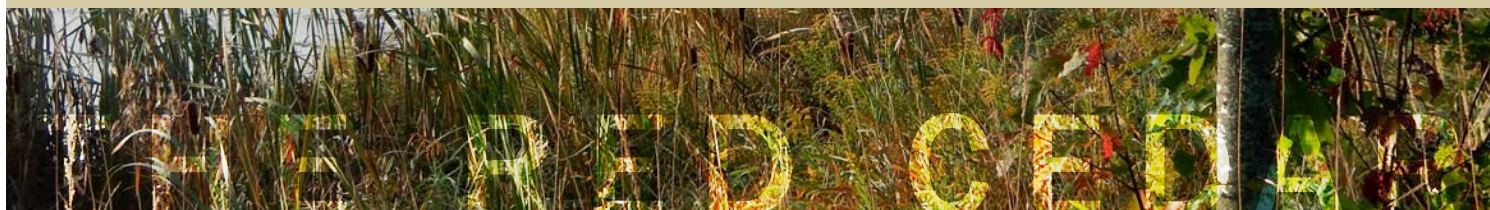
**How does the economic and environmental health
of the Red Cedar watershed affect you?**

Economic Development – Sustainable Farming – Water Quality
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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.





Pete Curran signed on as WFU Membership Director in January. Take a few minutes to meet this friendly new face!

Please share a bit of your background.

I was born in Neenah, Wisconsin. My mom grew up on a small potato farm in Antigo and Dad was the son of a train engineer. I gained a sense of work ethic from 'expected' chores like painting the house in the summers. I grew up in New London, a small town of 5,000 at the time. My first job was delivering a weekly shopper, then cutting lawns and later working at Bucky's Restaurant, saving up money for college. I attended UW-Madison to go to a big school to change my perspective. Since high school I had a goal to move to New York City to work in advertising. I ended up in Chicago two years after college working in an advertising agency as an assistant account executive and had a passion to work on food accounts.

Share how you came to care about family farms/agriculture.

I was offered the chance to be a seed rep despite having no ag background. To gain perspective and credibility, I interviewed 7 farmers before my first interview with Pioneer Seeds. While I had no ag experience, the positioning of 'listening' showed that I don't make assumptions. My interviews became a storytelling platform on Facebook: 'When I listened to a farmer.' I've always had an interest in taking photos and began to take photos of the 'Faces of a Farmer.' Along with stories of 'what I saw' when I listened, I create credibility and connections with farmers.

My belief that farmers are 'the original American entrepreneur' got me excited to tell their stories of perseverance and daily dedication, especially during a time of crisis where the challenges of farming seem impacted by so many things that a farmer has little control of. I became a FARMER(servant). See above a picture of me and my friend, Steven, a dairy farmer in Columbus, where I worked a shift milking on his farm for three days. My storytelling has grown to sharing stories of farmers, who may appear to be mere 'dirtkeepers,' yet to me tend to be the 'value keepers' of a life that could be a case study for all of us.

What drew you to Farmers Union?

While networking online for a new job in ag, I noticed press statements by WFU and Darin Von Ruden. The language used in responding to situations in ag as very authentic. The voice of the farmer reflected in statements was consistent with the language I heard on my daily farm visits. As a storyteller and life-long marketing guy, I believe WFU is on the right track in their authentic representation of farmers compared to other groups. That's something I want to be a part of.

What excites you about taking on membership for WFU?

Beyond my three years in agriculture, I'm a marketing guy. So, I sought out this role as the membership director knowing that it comes with a big challenge. In a time of crisis for an industry, where the number of farmers is declining, and where many other voices are leading the conversation on the 'pros and cons' of production agriculture, I see an opportunity to assess where WFU has been and where it is going. Today, about half our members have dairy roots, but I've also met many young farmers who are farming on a different scale. It's a time where we need to listen to gain insight and hindsight.

What initial takeaways do you have about what makes WFU, our members, and our values stand out?

At convention we did a member survey asking about WFU's greatest asset. One noted was passionate representation, or the ability to discuss policy in a local chapter and then engage in the democratic process at the state level to create priorities to help family ag. A second asset noted was Community. The ability of WFU to bring farmers and friends of farmers together locally - around potlucks, documentary screenings and public testimony - was seen as very valuable.

What advice would you give to the members working toward increased chapter membership and energy?

As an organization with local chapter representation in more than two-thirds of state counties, I'm hearing from members and collaborators that engagement at the local level is extremely important. Enthusiasm can be an amazing motivator to gain action. I plan to talk about action in 2020. Members have likely noticed the WFU policy team's 'Action Alerts' asking for them to travel to Madison for public testimony. I hope to find local enthusiasts by chapter that can help us ignite the action we need to demonstrate our strength in numbers.

Looking ahead, what are you most excited about for WFU?

The opportunity to show proof of our positioning tagline: "United to Grow Family Agriculture," which is our number one priority. WFU members share common values that give us power. With a united front from a values standpoint, and recognizing the importance of family agriculture to the economic prosperity of our rural communities, I suspect we'll make major strides to show farmers and friends of farmers that WFU is an organization worth checking out!

"Please accept my Pie.O.U."

- Pete



Mike Racette & Patty Wright, Prairie Farm, WI



Dan Wegmueller, Monroe, WI



FL Morris, Monroe, WI



Ben Olson & Maggie Sheehan, Prairie Farm, WI

Time is a valuable asset for anyone today. Especially for a farmer who tends to have to plan their day by what they see the sunrise has brought them. So, it is with that in mind, that I offer a Pie.O.U. – "give me 15 minutes to listen, and I'll give you a pie!" So, starting on day one with Farmers Union, when I met members, I offered my Pie.O.U. In this case where there are hundreds of members to meet, I'm offering a farmer favorite in exchange for your time: 2 mini Cow Pies from the Baraboo Candy Co.

Listening and seeing member farmers on their place of business is context that gives a better sense of farming's challenges and possibilities. In my first couple of weeks on the job, I found myself traveling northwest from the Chippewa Falls office. I ventured to Prairie Farm, Wisconsin. What a great name. I drove past many a beautiful landscape as well as a phone booth, seemingly in the middle of "nowhere."

That chance though, to sit at the kitchen table offices of the flower farmers, or with an original pair of CSA farmers who now wield a wealth of best practices for younger farmers. Where I had the chance to have coffee with maple syrup for the very first time in my life. Or, to sit at the kitchen table and share lunch of tomato/basil soup in chunky white ceramic bowls, next to a plate of sliced, bright yellow cheddar and crackers. With the worn and sturdy table simply adorned with one red apple sliced in a tiny bowl.

I got to sit in the buddy seat with a young dairy farmer who suggested his enthusiasm to help Wisconsin ag may have him over-scheduled. Yet a half hour of time listening to why he and his wife created a farmstay on their farm was the perfect demonstration of a strategy I've heard many farmers use – invite folks to your farm, let them see what you do, let them ask questions, and answer them in a way that celebrates ag, rather than defends it.

Then it was further south, where I stood at the top of a hilly plateau overlooking another young farmer's land, barn, hoop house and shed. I heard her vision for using the valley of this Driftless farm to explore hemp and share lessons through the establishment of a hemp co-op she and others created.

I contributed pie to the potluck menu at a chapter meeting screening of Searching for Sustainability and saw an enthusiastic group of young and old farmers meeting in the community space of a nursing home, sharing observations after the meeting and discussing how they can share new insights with others to encourage membership in the chapter.

From my initial Pie.O.U. acceptances, I've seen a membership of an organization that appears to be firmly united to support a rural life that allows access to new farmers and opportunities for existing farmers to explore new practices to diversify their income sources. And an equally firm understanding that WFU needs to continue to expand its membership to create the local action that collectively brings power to individual grassroots chapter efforts so that we may help give rural communities the control over their local assets and way of life, to maintain an economic opportunity that offers folks the choice of a way of life that can be obtained in a healthy, safe and enjoyable manner for generations to come.

I hope you'll accept my Pie.O.U. Shoot me a note so I can get a schedule going!

Pete is WFU's new Membership Director. Want to schedule a visit? You can reach him at 608-630-6484 or pcurran@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.



Builders Awards

Hans and Katie Breitenmoser of Merrill and Dennis and Deb Rosen of Emerald received the Builders Award, which recognizes outstanding commitment to building Farmers Union through county involvement, leadership development and member recruitment.

"A Builders Award is long overdue for this couple, who have contributed much of their life to Farmers Union," WFU President Darin Von Ruden said as he presented the award to the Rosens. "Deb and Dennis have worked tirelessly for the mission and values of Farmers Union."

Deb and Dennis grew up on dairy farms in St. Croix County and raised four children on the farm that has been in Dennis' family since 1883. Their sons, Dave and Dan, continue to farm there, milking 125 cows and raising crops.

Though known as a quiet man, Dennis has been a strong voice for family farmers. He has served the family farm organization in many roles, first as president of the Forest Local Farmers Union starting in 1970, then joining the WFU board in 1977 and representing Dunn, Pepin, Pierce and St. Croix Counties for 41 years. He served as the board president from 1988 to 1994. Through the years he spoke up for fair tax and trade policies and was a strong advocate on dairy issues. He also has served on the board of the WFU Foundation and Farmers Union Industries.

Dennis is first to note that much of the credit for his Farmers Union efforts should fall on his wife, Deb, who was home raising the kids and milking cows when he traveled. Deb has also been active in the local chapter, organizing meetings and serving many years as a Farmers Union youth leader.

Hans and Katie Breitenmoser own a 430-cow dairy and crop farm in Lincoln County. They took over the farm from Hans' parents, Hans, Sr. and Margrit, who started farming near Merrill in 1968 upon emigrating from Switzerland. The Breitenmosers raise most of the feed for their cattle on 1,300



owned and rented acres. The milk cows are housed in a naturally-ventilated free stall barn and managed pasture is used for dry cows and heifers during the grazing season. In 2017, the Breitenmosers partnered with WFU, NorthWind Solar, and Legacy Solar Co-op on a solar project on the farm.

Hans has served on the Lincoln County Board since 2012, a role that inspired him to get involved in the fight to end political gerrymandering in Wisconsin. He has been a vital leader in the effort to pass county resolutions throughout the state in support of nonpartisan redistricting.

Katie is a certified professional midwife and owns Windy Hill Midwifery, providing care for families across north central Wisconsin. The Breitenmosers have five children: Maggie, Abby, Charlie, Calvin and Lilah, who all help on the farm and enjoy attending Farmers Union Camp each summer.

WFU Government Relations Director Kara O'Connor recognized the Breitenmosers' dedication to rural Wisconsin, noting, "Hans and Katie have these deep ties with their community, and those ties are built on not only celebrating together, but also helping each other out when times are tough."

She also credited Hans with being pivotal in the move for fair maps in Wisconsin. "Hans is steadfast in his convictions, while also being able to articulate the opposite point of view. This quality - this ability to understand the other side of the coin - makes Hans very effective in finding common ground and advancing the causes in

Photos by Danielle Endvick

Left: WFU President Darin Von Ruden (right) presents Deb and Dennis Rosen with a Builders Award.

Below: Hans Breitenmoser (pictured) accepts the Builders Award he and his wife, Katie, received in recognition of contributions to WFU and advocacy efforts on behalf of rural Wisconsin.



which he believes so deeply. We need more people like the Breitenmosers in public life - people who embody both conviction and civility in generous measure."

Membership Awards

The Dunn County Farmers Union chapter was celebrated for excelling in membership growth in 2019. The chapter will be recognized at the National Farmers Union Convention March 1-3 in Savannah, Georgia. WFU Programs & Membership Organizer Kirsten Slaughter noted that in the past year the chapter hosted numerous events, organized a book club, collaborated with neighboring chapters, brought people together over local food and "has truly been an example in building community not just among their farm neighbors but also in connecting with all stakeholders in our food system."

Outgoing District 4 Director Craig Myhre from Osseo was also recognized for his years of service on the board. Myhre attended Farmers Union Camps as a youth, became active in the family farm organization and was elected to the board in 1996. He served on the Farmers Union Industries board and as a member of the WFU grain and investment committees.

Funds raised for doors, preserving WFU history

Brad Henderson & Sean Evjen
Silent Auction Organizers

Silent auction: Wisconsin Farmers Union defines it as a "display of overwhelming support for projects that improve the organization." Taking place at our annual convention in mid-winter, the silent auction embodies an amazing variety of goods being made throughout Wisconsin.

This year, in Rothschild, WFU hosted the silent auction to fund the efforts to improve the doors at camp and archive our WFU history. Our project to improve the safety and security of the doors at camp will firstly target the sticky bottoms, loose handles, and free slamming doors and continue until all 50+ doors are operating optimally. We expect this will occur over two years and will cost around \$10,000. The archiving effort will transfer our fading photos and yellowed newsprint to a digital format. We have materials dating back nearly 100 years and a history worth preserving. The total cost of converting this history to an accessible, digital format has not been finalized.

Thanks to your involvement, the silent auction raised \$4,500 – an excellent boost to the doors and archive projects! If you still want to donate money towards the efforts, you can via the slip below or log on to www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/donate.

Not able to give monetarily? We can always use helpers in-person at the Kamp Kenwood Volunteer Day, which will be Saturday May 2.



Thank you to those who donated items for the silent auction!

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Amnicon Chapter | Lauren Langworthy |
| Badgerland Printing | Mary Marin |
| Barron County Chapter | Menomonie Market Food Co-op |
| Big River Woodworks, John Calabrese | Milwaukee Brewers |
| Bryce and Max Luchterhand | Nami Moon Farms |
| Cathy Statz | New Americana Hemp |
| Chippewa County Farmers Union | Nick Levendofsky |
| Dane County Farmers Union | O'Connor Family |
| Dawn and Kevin Joachim | Pasture Pride |
| Tony & Dela Ends | Pete Curran |
| Dunn County MOSA | Polk/Burnett Farmers Union |
| Dunn County Chapter | RCU Bank |
| Eau Claire County Farmers Union | Ronald Nelson, Milwaukee Brewers |
| EB Ranch, Erin Link | Sauk County Farmers Union |
| Farm Aid | Simply Dunn Pottery |
| Farmer to Farmer | South Central Chapter |
| Farmers Union Industries | St. Croix Co Chapter |
| Grassroots Farm, FL Morris | Sterling-Crawford Local |
| Friends of Menomonie Library | Sylvia Kriegh |
| Green Bay Packers | Taylor-Price Farmers Union |
| Jim and Jan Erdman | Tractor Central |
| Kallstrom Flowers | Vernon Community Co-op |
| Ken and Laura Schmitt | Vernon Electric Cooperative |
| Kristen Yeager | Westby Local Farmers Union |
| Dan and Lori Kvalheim | Westby Coop Credit Union |
| La Crosse Technology | Westby Cooperative Creamery |
| Larry Buttke | Wood-Portage-Waupaca Farmers Union |

Your gift to the Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation is tax deductible. Please submit your gift in this envelope or call the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561 to inquire about making a donation.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Check all that apply:

- ___ I'd like to learn about volunteering at WFU Kamp Kenwood. *Optional: I can contribute ___ hours/year.*
___ I am interested in more information about Wisconsin Farmers Union's work.
___ I would like to be contacted by a local Farmers Union leader in my area.

If you would like this donation to apply to a certain initiative, please indicate:

- ☐ WFU Historical Archive
☐ Kamp Kenwood Facilities (Doors)

Suggested donation:

- ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75
☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500
☐ Other: _____

- ☐ In honor of: ☐ In memory of: _____

If you missed the opportunity to donate to the doors & archival efforts but would like to do so, theres' still time! You may still give using the form at left. Thank you!

Please make checks payable to the Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation.



What's On Your Table?

Mid Winter Blues - Pack It Away



Diane Tiry

Administrative Assistant

We haven't had much sun throughout January and that can lead to what has been called the mid-winter blues. A meal planning pick-me-up can shed new light on the same old meals.

I encourage you to please try the two recipes from *The Co-op Cookbook* by Rosemary Fifeld.

MAPLE SEASON STIR-FRY

Source: The Co-op Cookbook

Maple syrup time is just around the corner so this should be a great recipe to try and share the rich taste of the season.

Ingredients

- 1 cup long-grain white rice or other grain, cooked
- 1 Tablespoon canola oil
- ¾ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1 medium onion, sliced vertically
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced into thin strips
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 oz. mushrooms, sliced
- ½ cup pure maple syrup
- 1/3 cup tamari
- ¼ cup sherry, apple juice, or water
- 2 Tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger or 1 teaspoon grated fresh gingerroot
- Dash of cayenne pepper
- ½ cup unsalted, roasted cashews (optional)

Directions

1. Prepare vegetables and measure out other ingredients.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine rice and 2 cups of water; bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Keep pan covered until ready to serve. I cook my rice in a double boiler and it prevents scorching, but check water quantity during cooking.
3. While rice cooks, heat oil in a large wok or nonstick skillet on high. Add chicken strips, and sauté about 5 minutes. Add onion, pepper, garlic and mushrooms; continue stir-frying until crisp-tender, about another 5 minutes.
4. Combine maple syrup, tamari, sherry, cornstarch, ginger and cayenne in a small bowl. Add to chicken and vegetables. Continue cooking and stirring until mixture thickens and develops a glaze, about 3 minutes. Stir in cashews, if

desired and serve over the rice or grain chosen.

SPICE SESAME STIR-FRY

Source: The Co-op Cookbook

Use favorite veggies like cabbage, broccoli, carrots, and peppers with edible pea pods or snap peas.



Photo Credit: Sweet Peas and Saffron

Ingredients

- ½ lb. Asian noodles or Linguine
- ¼ cup tamari (Can be found near Soy Sauce or in the international area of most grocery stores)
- 2 Tablespoons minced fresh gingerroot
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp. hot red pepper flakes
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- ¾ cup water
- ¾ lb. lean boneless beef, such as sirloin or top round
- 3 Tablespoons sesame seeds
- 2 Tablespoons peanut or canola oil, divided
- 1 small onion, sliced vertically
- 3 to 4 cups bite-sized pieces of broccoli, carrots, cabbage, and bell peppers
- Handful of edible pea pods or snap peas

Directions

1. Prepare your vegetables and measure out the other ingredients to have ready for the stir fry. Cut the beef across the grain into very thin strips and sprinkle with sesame seeds, tossing to coat evenly.
2. Prepare noodles or linguine.
3. While noodles cook, whisk together tamari, gingerroot, garlic, hot red pepper flakes, cornstarch, and water.
4. Heat 1 Tablespoon of the oil in a wok or large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add beef and stir-fry until brown, about 2 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon to a platter.
5. Heat remaining tablespoon of oil in same skillet. Add onion, vegetable mix, and peas, and stir-fry until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Reduce heat to medium. Stir tamari mixture to blend, then add to pan along with cooked beef and accumulated juices. Cook, stirring until sauce thickens and becomes translucent, about 2 minutes.
6. Serve over hot noodles or linguine.

Enjoy these stir-fry recipes. I hope they help lighten up this mid-winter season. Happy and healthy eating to all!

Conference empowers farm women



Photo by National Farmers Union

The 2020 National Farmers Union Women's Conference attendees in San Diego.

Women from across the country gathered at the National Farmers Union Women's Conference in San Diego in January. The annual conference prepares attendees for success in agriculture and provide a network of women farmers and ranchers they can reach out to throughout the year. Farmers, policy makers, educators, and specialists will present on a number of subjects, including financial management, farm labor, leadership, and more.

Several WFU members received scholarships to attend, Molly Waisman, Ursula Hymes-Fecht, Bethany Storm and Danielle Kmiecik. Other WFU members in attendance were Mariann Holm and Kriss Marion.

Kmiecik, a first-time attendee to the conference, noted "I learned a lot about my fellow Farmers Union members. We all have different dreams and success looks a little different to all of us. But, my biggest take away was this; We have to stop looking at things as either men's work or women's work, and just start doing the work that we see needs to be done. Maybe that's passion for passing a clean water bill, starting a community garden for people who would not have access to fresh food, leading an FFA group, or going out every day to milk your cows. Women need to get out there with confidence and find themselves a seat at the table to make the changes they want to see."

FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

Find more details at
www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events

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 for WFU members - code 'UNION'
www.redcedarconference.tmlia.org

Deadline for FUE Leadership Program

March 23 - Application details on page 9

Right to Harm Film Screening by Chaseburg Local Farmers Union

March 24, 7:30pm, Bekkum Memorial
Library, 206 N. Main St., Westby.
Info: Sarah Korte, 715-829-3491.

Dairyland Forum & Rally for Rural WI

March 29, Noon to 6pm
Dunn County Fairground, Menomonie
See more details on page 3
RSVP: wisconsinfarmersunion.com/dairylandforum

Spring Fling Clean-up Day at WFU Kamp Kenwood

May 2
19161 79th Ave., Chippewa Falls, WI
Food served. Volunteers needed.
Info: Brad, 715-214-7244



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.



United to Grow Family Agriculture

Giving Grants a Go

Free grants advising program helps farmers accomplish goals

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

Farmers bear a broad skill-set. From animal caretaker to agronomist, marketer to veterinarian – we wear our fair share of hats. One role that rarely comes to mind for most, though, is grant writer.

I was working as an intern at a statewide agricultural newspaper in 2008 when I first stumbled upon the alphabet soup of grant opportunities available to farmers – EQIP, REAP, FMPP, VAPG, etc. At that time the idea of writing a grant seemed daunting and beyond my reach, certainly something to be left to the professionals. It ended up being over a decade later before I finally set foot into my local NRCS office and set the ball in motion on some conservation-focused grant opportunities for my farm.

That hesitant mindset is something the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) has set out to change.

The nonprofit, based in East Troy, WI, offers a Grants Advising service that is working to empower farmers by linking them with grant and cost-share resources that can help them attain their farming or ag-related business goals.

"We don't write the grants for people but do help review proposals and navigate the world of resources available to help grow their farm or business," said Margaret Krome, MFAI policy program director.

The free service, available to farmers, farm organizations and institutions in the Upper Midwest, is supported by Farm Aid, Wisconsin Farmers Union, and North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NC-SARE).

Grant advisor Martin Bailkey said a key aspect of the program is educating about what grants can – and cannot – do.

"There are a lot of grants out there that cover a lot of ground," said Bailkey, a

seasoned grant writer and proposal reviewer. "But they don't necessarily represent easy money for someone who wants to renovate their barn, buy farmland or equipment, or cover the costs of daily operation for a farm." While he sympathizes with folks seeking such resources, especially given the current economy, Bailkey often points such inquiries toward USDA low-interest loans.

Instead, the service helps potential applicants craft proposals around a bigger picture. "The intention behind most grants is not to make one lone farmer more profitable but rather to leverage outside funds for the benefit of a larger group," Bailkey said. "A lot of the bigger USDA grants are really community-focused. Some are also targeted at the larger causes of community food systems, conservation, or sustainable agriculture practice."

Framing your ask

Common mistakes in grant proposals are applicants not fully following application instructions or a failure to align

a proposal with the intended outcomes of that particular grant program.

"Once we help identify which grants might fit a project, a key step is helping people think about how to frame what they're asking for," Bailkey said.

Bailkey helps applicants identify appropriate programs, assists in refining the objectives behind a proposal, and reviews proposal drafts. He also manages a listserve that informs recipients of upcoming application periods and deadlines.

Prior to serving on MFAI's staff, Krome worked on appropriations for the Sustainable Ag Coalition and Midwest Sustainable Ag Working Group (which later merged into the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition). In those roles, she saw a need for grant writing training and educational resources for farmers and other rural stakeholders.

"It was clear to me that especially immigrant farmers and historically underserved farmers needed more than just 'here's how to write grants,'" Krome said. "We realized we needed to offer help navigating resources and to help them think through how to develop a good project, stakeholder partners, and assets so the project stands the best chance of being successful."

Among the grants MFAI frequently recommends to clients are opportunities offered through the U.S. De-



Photo by Danielle Endvick

The Endvicks are working with their local Natural Resources Conservation Service office to apply for funding for fencing and a watering system for their beef herd.

partment of Agriculture, State Departments of Agriculture, State Extension Offices, and foundations.

"There are many opportunities out there," Krome notes. "Especially for farmers interested in conservation, we encourage folks to connect with their local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office to learn more about things like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which are intended to support working farmers who are using good conservation practices."

Given recent climate challenges and difficult market conditions for many agricultural commodities, now may be the ideal time to think about how a grant or low-interest loan could help you rethink certain aspects of your farm business.

"We want people in this period of tough finances to not despair that they can't get a conventional loan but instead go meet with the Farm Service Agency staff and also explore what other kinds of funding are available," Krome said.

Best-kept secret

Farmer, author, and entrepreneur Lisa Kivist is of Browntown is one of many farmers who has taken advantage of the MFAI Grants Advising program. She calls it a best-kept secret.

"It's a great free resource that helps farmers stop grant chasing and instead take a strategic look at funding opportunities that meet the needs of their farm and business vision," Kivist said.

Kivist's advice for other farmers is to start the grant writing process early, building in enough time to review and improve upon the initial draft with feedback from the MFAI advisor.

"We can all cooperatively tap into these resources to help our farming community," Kivist said. "These programs are not just about funding one specific thing on your farm; they're about bigger solutions for everyone. Talking to someone like Martin can help put that lens on it."

Do yourself a favor, and don't wait a decade to take advantage of MFAI's grant resources or to walk into your local NRCS office. Make 2020 the year that you set your farm up for success.

Learn more at <https://michaelfields.org/grant-advising-resources/>. For more information and to be on the MFAI e-list for program announcements, contact Martin Bailkey at 608-698-9478 or martinbailkey@gmail.com.

Grant Resources

North Central SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education)

<https://www.northcentralsare.org>
Farmer/Rancher Grant
Partnership Grant
Professional Development Grant
Youth Educator Grant

USDA-AMS (U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service)

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/>
Farmers Market Promotion Program
Local Food Promotion Program
Specialty Crop Block Grant (distributed through individual states)
Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives
Sheep Production and Marketing Grant

USDA Rural Development

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/>
Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP)
Value Added-Producer Grants

USDA- NIFA* (National Institute of Food and Agriculture)

<https://nifa.usda.gov/grants>
Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program
Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program
Food Safety Outreach Program
* NIFA has a variety of specialized agricultural research and innovation grants available: <https://nifa.usda.gov/rfa-list>

USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement

Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (2501) Program
<https://www.outreach.usda.gov/grants/>

USDA- NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service)

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>
Conservation Innovation Grants
Conservation Stewardship Program
Environmental Quality Incentives Program

USDA - Farm Service Agency

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/>
Farm Loan Programs
Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Loans
Minority and Women Farmers and Ranchers Loans
Native American Tribal Loans

USDA Risk Management

<https://www.rma.usda.gov/Topics/Education-and-Training/Partnership-Program>
Education Partnerships (State by State)

USDA General Support for New Farmers - including Women and Veterans

<https://newfarmers.usda.gov>

State Departments of Agriculture

State Departments of Agriculture often offer grants for local food marketing, specialty crops, value-added production, urban agriculture, ag education, etc. Please reach out to your State Department of Agriculture for more information.

State Extension Offices

While not sources of funding in themselves, local extension agents provide assistance in various areas of farm planning that can help identify specific areas for which to seek funding, such as pasture improvement or new infrastructure.

US Small Business Administration - Office of Veterans Business Development

<https://www.sba.gov/offices/headquarters/ovbd/resources/1548576>

Find more options at: <https://michaelfields.org/grant-advising-resources/>

Bylaw voting results announced

The remainder of the delegate ballots were counted in the WFU State Office Feb. 4 by WFU Staff members, Sean Evjen, Lynn Bowe, Diane Tiry and elections committee member, Sara Bahgat-Eggert. WFU President Darin Von Ruden was also present to oversee the counting. Two-thirds majority vote is required to pass bylaw changes.

ARTICLE VIII

The Wisconsin Farmers Union prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, family/parental status, age disability, socio-economic or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These include employment, youth and adult programs, membership, selection of vendors, appointment of board members and selection of grantees, volunteers and representatives. **PASSED**

Section A. Regular Membership. Any person sixteen (16) years of age or over, of good moral character and habits, having allegiance to the government of the United States of America, and who derives income from the production of agricultural, horticultural, livestock, poultry or forestry products, a retired person if they qualified to be a member in good standing when retired, or from employment by any cooperative affiliated or any person whom the board of directors determines to be in sympathy with the program and objectives of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, may be admitted to regular membership upon payment of membership fees or dues as provided in the bylaws and shall be granted voting rights **PASSED**

BYLAWS

ARTICLE 1 - MEMBERSHIP

SECTION A. Regular Membership. Any person sixteen (16) years of age or over, of good moral character and habits, having allegiance to the government of the United States of America, and who derives income from the production of agricultural, horticultural, livestock, poultry, or forestry products, a retired person if they qualified to be a member in good standing when retired, or from employment by any cooperative affiliated with this cooperative, or from employment by this cooperative or any division or subdivision, or any person whom the board of directors determines to be in sympathy with the program and objectives of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, may be admitted to regular membership upon payment of membership dues, and shall be granted voting rights. Annual dues or membership fee(s) shall be determined by the board of directors. **PASSED**

Section G. Voting Membership.

All unmarried children of a dues-paying member, at least 16 and not yet 21 years of age, are voting members without paying additional dues.

Each individual dues-paying student member in good standing shall be entitled to vote. **PASSED**

BYLAWS, ARTICLE V- MEMBER MEETINGS

Section A. The annual meeting of this cooperative shall be held during the month of January or February each year. The state board of directors shall set the time and place determined by the Wisconsin Farmers Union Board of Directors. **PASSED**

ARTICLE VI - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Term Limits. Directors may serve no more than three (3) consecutive terms. (Board terms are three (3) years.) After being off the board for one year, individuals are eligible to run for the board again. **FAILED**

'Making More From Milk' heads to Madison in March

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages members to consider attending a special two-day course, Making More From Milk, on March 24-25 in Madison. Organized by Global Cow and Global Dairy Outreach, the event's speakers and hands-on experiences will offer dairy producers an opportunity to explore various diversification options and a chance to think about the future of their businesses and their families.

"The course comes out of a desire to provide real, solid information that leads towards some definite action for dairy producers," says Jill Stahl Tyler from Global Cow. "The speakers who talk to our group don't sugar coat their experiences. They are very specific and blunt about the work they've put in – and they are relentlessly passionate about their commitment to dairying."

On March 24, the course offers behind-the-scenes visits to a retail specialty cheese store and a restaurant specializing in local foods. "We want the farmers to be able to see their potential products through the eyes of those who work directly with the consumer," notes Karen Nielsen of Global Dairy Outreach.

The second day takes participants off-site, traveling to three locations where farmers have successfully found ways to add value to dairy, including an ice cream parlor next to a family farm; a farm with its own fluid milk and ice-cream processing and agritourism; and a farm that specializes in tours. The day concludes by looking at next steps and business planning.

"In these tough economic times for dairy farmers, it's important for them to be able to explore value-added options," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. "We're pleased to support this in-depth course and help farmers consider alternate paths for their farm's future."

An optional add-on includes a full day of hands-on cheese making on March 26. Learn more: <http://globalcow.com/making-more-from-milk/>.

Making nonpartisan redistricting a priority for Wisconsin farmers



Carlene Bechen
Fair Maps Organizer
Wisconsin Voices

My husband and I have spent the last 20 years living in an old farmhouse bounded on all sides by farmland. Our careers in education and business have insulated us from the firsthand struggles of our neighbors, but it's clear to us that it's a tough time to be a farmer. From flooded fields and climate disruption to tariff traumatized markets and cash flow issues, Wisconsin farmers have never been more challenged. CAFO oversight, rural broadband and the mental health of farmers are just a few examples of issues affecting farm families that have been ignored in recent years by the Wisconsin State Legislature.

For generations, Wisconsin was a purple state with Republican and Democratic strongholds in both rural and urban areas and other parts of the state that shifted between the two parties. There was even a time when the Progressive Party was dominant in state politics. The State Legislature once respected the decisions of local town and county officials to do what is best in their communities.

Every 10 years, new electoral maps are drawn following the national census. The political party in power usually creates maps that favor their party – Democrats and Republicans have both done it. When the chambers of the legislature are held by different parties and they aren't able to agree, the courts end up creating the maps. That happened in Wisconsin after the census in 1990 and 2000. And the elections that followed resulted in more balanced legislatures.

In 2011, when Republicans con-

trolled both chambers of the legislature and the governorship, they created maps with the help of demographic experts and statisticians in lawyers' offices and without public input. This enabled them to pack like-minded voters together and break up other communities to dilute their influence, ignoring local redistricting lines, and creating safe districts. This packing and cracking resulted in some of the most highly partisan electoral maps in the country and allows legislators to ignore constituents. As an educator, I know what it's like to testify before the Joint Finance Committee every budget cycle since 2011, asking for increased support for public education, only to have your pleas dismissed.

Wisconsin is still a purple state. The results of the last statewide elections made that clear when Democrats narrowly won all statewide offices. Yet the Wisconsin State Assembly remained dramatically skewed to favor Republicans. And farm issues, like public education, continue to be disregarded by the state legislative leadership.

As an educator, I experienced the impacts of hyper-partisan divided government brought on by heavily gerrymandered electoral maps. As statewide Fair Maps Organizer for Wisconsin Voices, a pro-democracy non-profit working to give voice to all Wisconsinites, I stand in alliance with the Wisconsin Farmers Union. The fact is that our current gerrymandered electoral maps have stripped political influence from family farmers and other constituencies. When politicians can pick their voters instead of voters picking their representatives, there's no reason for them to pay attention.

My job is to help farmers and others constituencies to understand that a responsive and functioning state government can be a powerful ally in their

struggles. The road to nonpartisan redistricting in Wisconsin will be long with lots of potholes and roadblocks along the way. Because new electoral maps are likely to end up being challenged in the State Supreme Court in 2021, make sure you know who you are voting for Supreme Court Justice in April.

Next, we must pressure legislators and candidates for the legislature to publicly support nonpartisan redistricting legislation, continue to get advisory referenda (such as the one proposed by Farmers Union member Hans Breitenmoser and passed in Lincoln County) onto ballots at the county and municipal levels for November, and educate our friends and neighbors about the negative impacts of gerrymandered electoral maps.

And, most importantly, we must support candidates who pledge support for a nonpartisan redistricting process with our time, dollars and vote!

Fair electoral maps mean fair, inclusive, representative government. Iowa has had a nonpartisan redistricting process for more than 40 years. And Iowa farmers benefit from a more responsive state government as a result. Nonpartisan redistricting should be a top priority for every Wisconsin farmer.

To join in this campaign for fair maps, contact WFU organizer Bill Hogseth 715-215-2298 or bhogseth@wisconsinfarmersunion.com or Carlene Bechen, Fair Maps Organizer at Wisconsin Voices, 608-513-7655, carlene@wisconsinvoices.org.

Carlene Bechen is the Fair Maps Organizer with Wisconsin Voices. She is a retired educator who has been an activist in her community for decades and was one of the volunteers who organized and convened the Fair Maps for Wisconsin Summit in Marshfield last November.





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On the cover: The Blue Ox Farm flock produce pastured lamb on Dunn County Farmers Union members Caleb and Lauren Langworthy's Wheeler farm. (Photo submitted by Lauren Langworthy)