

Minnesota Agriculture

Voice of Rural Minnesota



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May 2024

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Disability insurance saves a family – twice

Introduction by Sandy Shapiro

Just over 1 in 4 of today's 20-year-olds will become disabled before they retire. Most working adults in the United States are without disability insurance other than the basic coverage available through Social Security.



Sandy Shapiro

At Farmers Union Agency our agents can explore disability insurance solutions for you. May is Disability Insurance Awareness Month. We can simplify a complicated insurance situation to meet your needs.

The story below is real and is courtesy of Lifehappens.org.

Valerie King was not a believer. When she transitioned from her medical residency to practicing as an emergency room physician, she didn't think she needed disability insurance. "I could never envision a life without working," she says. Her insurance professional convinced the young doctor otherwise.

It was wise advice. Although Valerie never thought she would need it, a condition called ulcerative colitis made the decision for her. The disease and a series of surgeries made it impossible for her to carry out her duties, and she found herself unable to practice the profession she loved. It was her disability insurance coverage that

allowed her to survive financially and care for her three young daughters who she was raising as a single mother.

Life also had a second chapter for Valerie. She met and married Tim, also a divorced parent. They looked forward to raising their blended family together and sought the advice of an insurance professional. In addition to the life insurance he had recommended, the agent made sure Tim understood the importance of disability insurance. Tim didn't believe he'd ever need it, but with Valerie's urging he agreed to get coverage.

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"No one thinks lightning will strike twice," says Larry, the life insurance agent, "but in this case it did." Tim, who had a high-profile position in the printing business, came close to

dying from an undiagnosed aneurism and valve issue with his heart. A risky operation saved his life but ultimately left him unable to return to work. Again, disability insurance made it possible for the family to go on financially.

"Most people think, 'It will never happen to me,'" says Valerie. "But the truth is it can—and does. Everything else goes away if you don't have disability insurance coverage and you can't work."

Shapiro is Director of Sales, Health and Life for Farmers Union Agency

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President's message

GARY WERTISH, PRESIDENT

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More than 30 members of the Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) traveled to Scottsdale, Ariz., for the 122nd anniversary convention of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The convention was a great opportunity to learn and be re-energized for the work of Farmers Union.

Jonathan Kanter, the Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice, was one of those energizing speakers. Kanter, who visited Minnesota last fall, spoke of his visit in his convention remarks.

"Last year, I had the privilege of meeting with Danny and Mary Lundell at their farm near Cannon Falls, Minnesota," Kanter said. "That trip was organized by the Minnesota Farmers Union. I met so many proud and inspiring Farmers Union members during that trip. I talked with the Lundells and other members . . . about how there's less competition for the things they need to buy . . . and less competition when it's time to sell their livestock or crops. Some of these farms have supported families and local communities for generations. Now they're being squeezed on both sides by corporate consolidation.

"Agriculture is one of our top priorities here at the Antitrust Division, because we know that farming as a way of life matters," Kanter said. "We know that farming communities are the backbone of this country. We also know that this is a challenging time for family farmers.

"And it's not just the business of farming," he said. "Consolidation is hurting the small businesses that serve rural communities. It's affecting pharmacies and hospitals in rural areas, leading to higher prices and worse quality for health care and fewer job opportunities. You see it everywhere. The loss of the local bookstore, a local parts supply company, and less funding for that school fundraiser."



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack visited Minnesota State University-Mankato on April 3. As part of the visit, he participated in a panel discussion with commodity group representatives.

Kanter said the Antitrust Division will work to hold corporations accountable when they abuse their market power or collude to exploit workers. They are also focused on Right to Repair.

Another speaker that energized me was Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan who shared her admiration for NFU and the advocacy of Farmers Union members on behalf of family farmers, ranchers and fishers.

"Your work recognizes that to have a safe, secure and resilient food system, we need vibrant competitive agriculture markets where family run farms can thrive," she said. "Our job at the Federal Trade Commission is to protect Americans from unlawful corporate consolidation and illegal abuses of monopoly power."

Khan said she's heard that unchecked corporate consolidation and unfair business practices are threatening family farmers and rural communities.

"An open, fair and competitive economy is critical to ensuring that people can live free and meaningful lives as consumers, workers, farmers, business owners and ultimately as citizens," she said.

Since its founding, NFU has been at the forefront of the anti-monopoly movement and the Fairness for Farmers campaign

continues that movement by promoting fair and competitive agricultural markets and protecting farmers right to repair their own farm equipment.

Khan shared three focus areas. First, the FTC is working to protect farmers' right to repair their own equipment and promote vibrant independent repair markets. Second, the FTC is cracking down on false 'Made in USA' labels that deceive the public about where their food comes from. Third, the FTC is updating its merger policy to better reflect realities that exist in the marketplace.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack delivered a speech that reminds me once again of the many ways the administration is working to promote opportunities for small and mid-sized family farm businesses.

In the U.S., 88 percent of farmers have a second job, Vilsack said, but the administration has put into place a series of strategies and investments designed to create additional income from the farm. Those investments include climate smart and sustainable agriculture, meat processing infrastructure and renewable energy.

So far, two million acres are enrolled in climate-smart projects and that's just the beginning, he said. Vilsack expects

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Women in Agriculture Day celebrates contribution of women to state's agricultural tapestry

ANNE SCHWAGERL, VICE PRESIDENT

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March 25 was an exciting day for me in my role as your Vice President. Gov. Walz and Lt. Gov. Flannagan declared March 25, 2024, the inaugural Women in Agriculture Day in Minnesota. The proclamation, pictured elsewhere on this page, recognizes the vital role women play across the agricultural sector – not just as operators, but also in agricultural education, research and development, advocacy and agribusiness. I especially appreciated the final clause, where the governor and lieutenant governor wrote, "Whereas Minnesota celebrates the old and new ways in which women's energy and determination are helping to keep our agricultural system strong."

I had the privilege of being a part of the proclamation release to a group of women gathered from across the state. They came virtually, due to the late-March snowstorm that canceled the in-person day of advocacy, as well as postponing our MFU Women's Retreat. The women assembled joined together to lift up the voices of women representing all parts of the agricultural sector at the Capitol in St. Paul. MFU helped organize the event with leadership from Sen. Mary Kunesch, DFL-New Brighton, as well as Assistant Agriculture Commissioner Andrea Vaubel, staff at University of Minnesota

Extension and Farm Service Agency State Director Whitney Place.

Today, MFU is led by a growing leadership team of stellar women, many of whom joined me on the call that blustery Monday, but I couldn't have this role without the work of rural women leaders that came before me: from Congresswoman Coya Knutson, who arrived at farms early in the morning to campaign for Congress, to Norma Hanson, who served as the

first female vice president of Minnesota Farmers Union. These names we know, but there are countless women whose name we don't know, but they worked in their communities to create opportunities for you, me and our daughters.

Without people like Irene Paulson, the first woman to serve as state secretary for Farmers Union back in 1942, and Marion Fogarty, a Farmers Union trailblazer from Le Sueur County who advocated for more

leadership roles for women in our organization, there wouldn't be a growing contingent of women serving as county Farmers Union presidents today. In my not-so-humble opinion, Minnesota Farmers Union has always been, and continues to be, a leading organization – supporting the dynamic and varied roles women have always and continue to play in agriculture.

Women are a growing part of the ag workforce. The recent Census of Agriculture said the number of women who are primary farm operators in Minnesota continues to grow and improved methods in the survey helped capture what we already know, which is that women have been and continue to be an important part of our agricultural community. This is especially remarkable at a time when we are seeing fewer farmers across the landscape.

We all had a reason to be proud as we gathered to celebrate Women in Agriculture at the Capitol. I look forward to working with all of you to continue moving agriculture forward and welcoming more women into the agricultural community and agricultural leadership in Minnesota.





Get ready for County Convention Season

CLAUDINE ARNDT, MEMBERSHIP AND MINNESOTA COOKS DIRECTOR

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It's hard to believe it's time to start talking about County Conventions again, but spring is here, the legislative session is nearing its end, and our members are ready to organize. As a grassroots policy organization, annual County Conventions are the building blocks of Minnesota Farmers Union policy. It is our members who attend their local County Conventions and bring forth resolutions who ultimately guide MFU policy and give Minnesota Farmers Union an influential, respected voice in St. Paul and Washington, D.C.

County Convention Season is a dynamic time of building solidarity within our organization. MFU leaders and staff look forward to attending these annual business meetings, gathering with members, listening to their ideas and concerns, and knowing we are working together to build opportunities and address challenges for farmers and citizens across Minnesota.

This democratic process is the heart and soul of our organization through which we create real, positive change.

What are county conventions?

- If you are new to MFU, the words "County Convention" are our lingo for "Annual Business Meeting." Since MFU is organized by county, these annual business meetings take place at the county level and are organized by that county's leadership with support from MFU staff. Once County Convention Season wraps up at the end of September, there will likely have been 50 to 55 County Conventions across Minnesota.
- County Conventions typically take place in July, August or September,

although they can take place earlier. They must be held by Sept. 30 so we – MFU staff - have enough time to organize the information from all the meetings and prepare for MFU's State Convention in November.

- As soon as your County Convention is scheduled, details will be posted on our website at www.mfu.org/events. If you're curious whether your convention has been scheduled, you can check the website or call your county leader or the state office to inquire. Roughly two weeks prior to your convention, current county members will receive a postcard in the mail with convention details.

If you are a county leader and your county does not have its convention scheduled yet, please work with our membership and outreach staff to schedule your county convention ASAP. Send convention details to the state office at countyconventions@mfu.org or (651) 639-1223, or to me at claudine@mfu.org or (612) 202-7872, or contact the Membership and Outreach Organizer in your area. Please include the county, date, time, location (including address), discussion topics and speakers, if there will be food provided or not, cost to attend and anything else you would like on the postcard invitations sent to members.

- There are TWO very important items of business that will happen at your County Convention: First, members will bring forth resolutions (ideas) that they would like to see passed at the State Convention and incorporated into MFU's policy, and second, members will elect delegates to represent their county at the State Convention in November. There will also likely be

a speaker or two, and members will elect or reelect County Officers. Your county leaders will have an agenda for the meeting.

- Your County President will run the meeting using Parliamentary Procedure, which is a set of rules many organizations use to govern and debate to reach group consensus and run effective and efficient meetings with as little friction as possible. Do not worry if you don't know Parliamentary Procedure and don't let it stop you from speaking up. Other members can help you navigate the meeting, and no one expects anyone to know Parliamentary Procedure right away. We use this system to keep meetings on track and productive. There are plenty of YouTube videos and resources online if you want to check out Parliamentary Procedure ahead of time, but again, no one expects you to be an expert.
- County Conventions are an important time to make your voice heard. This is our grassroots democratic process in action, and you will find the most value in MFU if you get involved. Start thinking now about whether you have an idea/resolution to bring forward. We also encourage you to consider volunteering to be a delegate to the State Convention, which will be held Nov. 22-24 in Minneapolis and is a powerful and transformative experience.

Ideas for county leaders

- If you are a county leader who typically plans your County Convention last minute, consider meeting with your leadership team now and picking a date sooner versus later. The earlier a date gets on the calendar, the better your turnout will be. People are busy and need time to plan.
- Are there members you wish would show up to your County Convention

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Governor, legislature agree to joint budget targets

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As of April 9, lawmakers have less than two months to wrap legislative work ahead of their constitutional adjournment on May 20. While much could change in the coming weeks, a final deal for the 2024 session is starting to take shape.

Since the last issue of *Minnesota Agriculture*, committee deadlines passed on March 22. This means that of thousands of bills that have been introduced in each body, those that don't require spending or deal with

percent of the projected \$3.7 billion budget surplus this session. This reflects the reality that the state still faces a structural imbalance in future years.

Important for MFU, the governor recommended a \$4 million infusion into the Agricultural Growth Research and Innovation (AGRI) program, which faced a budget shortfall through the end of this biennium. While this does not maintain current funding levels, it would ensure that MDA can maintain current programs and service delivery through 2027.

"I connect with farmers in other states through my role with MFU and many are envious of the fantastic work happening in

this biennium. This could align with what the governor proposed, but only if the bulk of that new spending goes to backfilling the AGRI program.

Public Option update

In addition to working to influence overall budget targets, MFU members have made time to join lawmakers in St. Paul to advocate for specific pieces of legislation.

The MinnesotaCare Public Option (SF4778/HF4745) earned first hearings in the House and Senate last month. MFU members Luke Sanders, Kandiyohi County, and Tessa Sadae Parks, Rice County, testified in support of the proposal, highlighting the impact high healthcare costs have on young families who are working to build their farm businesses.

"[This is] about people's opportunity to build the life that they want to live," Sanders said, as he addressed lawmakers before a crowded hearing room. "And if we want young families on the land, rural schools full of kids, and thriving communities, we need to figure out healthcare."

"It's also disheartening to think of the many young people who want to do something entrepreneurial in our state. Maybe they want to farm like me. Or start a welding shop to contribute to building new green energy projects, or start a rural veterinary practice, which we so desperately need," Parks said as she addressed lawmakers the next morning in the Senate. "But they that can't take that next step because they can't afford to leave their employer-sponsored insurance. The status quo is a problem for me and it's a big loss for our communities."

The MinnesotaCare Public Option as it is proposed this year would allow farmers and others who are uninsured or purchase coverage on the individual market to 'buy in' to quality, affordable coverage offered

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MFU member Luke Sanders testified on the importance of the MinnesotaCare Public Option.

taxes need to have earned a hearing in both the House and Senate. Of course, as with many rules, there are notable exceptions and workarounds, but much of what was proposed this year will be tabled until future legislative sessions.

Other session-defining news came with two major budget updates. First, the governor released narrow recommendations for a \$226 million supplemental budget. Unlike last year and as the governor promised, the proposal was restrained and included no increases in revenue. For reference, his proposal used just over 6

Minnesota," said MFU Executive Committee member Josh VanDerPol in his testimony on AGRI, highlighting investments in farm to school, biofuels infrastructure, meat processing and other important programs. "So much of that is housed in AGRI!"

Second on budget developments, the governor and legislative leaders agreed to joint budget targets, which total an increased \$512.5 million in new spending—continuing to show fiscal restraint in the face of a long-term structural imbalance. The agreement stipulates a \$4.5 million increase for the Department of Agriculture



It's hard to know what 45Z tax credit will mean for farmers until rules are released

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What's the story with carbon intensity (CI)?

Everywhere I go these days, people are talking about the new tax incentives for clean fuels, also known as 45Z. Enabled through the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, the 45Z tax credit goes into effect in January 2025, and will create significant incentives for fuel producers to reduce the carbon intensity of their product.

There's an opportunity for farmers who produce feedstocks for fuels, primarily corn ethanol and soybean-based biodiesel and renewable diesel, to benefit from the program, especially if you can reduce the carbon emissions associated with your bushels. But there's still a lot of questions about exactly how the program will work.

What is 45Z?

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the largest investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation in history. This expansive bill includes everything from tax rebates for household energy upgrades to major investments in solar and industrial decarbonization.

The part of the U.S. tax code that relates to renewable energy is Section 45. A series of new tax credits, authorized through the IRA, are driving investments across the energy sector – including hydrogen (45V), carbon sequestration (45Q), and clean fuel production (45Z).

Transportation fuel is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions – in Minnesota, transportation is our highest emitting sector. Reducing emissions is a meaningful strategy for addressing climate change. To do this, 45Z creates a two cent per gallon



tax credit for every point reduced in carbon intensity – that is the amount of carbon emitted per unit of energy. The tax credit kicks in for fuels produced with a carbon intensity of less than 50 kg CO₂e/mmBTU. For reference, Minnesota ethanol has an average CI of around 60.

How do you measure carbon intensity?

A biofuels producer can reduce carbon intensity in a variety of ways. This includes improving efficiencies at the production facility, capturing and storing the carbon emitted during production, and by reducing the carbon emissions related to the feedstock used to make the fuel.

The standard model to calculate the carbon intensity of feedstocks for fuels is called Greenhouse Gasses, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Technologies, or GREET. The model was developed and continues to be managed by the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory. You'll sometimes hear people refer to it as Argonne GREET.

GREET's feedstock calculator includes variables like yield, diesel and fertilizer use, cover crops, manure use and tillage practices. An updated feedstock model was expected on March 1 of this year but as of April 1, it has not been released. The updated model will likely be what is used for 45Z.

It's possible that each farm will be able to measure and verify their own carbon intensity, but it's also possible that the

approach is more regional; looking at the average carbon intensity of feedstocks in the area that delivers to the ethanol plant. If it ends up being at the farm level, then farmers who want to participate will need to talk to their ethanol plant about the data needs, monitoring and verification requirements.

What's the takeaway?

My message is that it's too early to know exactly what the 45Z tax credit is going to mean for farmers. Rulemaking from Treasury is delayed, and until we know the rules, we just don't know where things are going.

Here are a few key questions that I hope will be answered in the coming months:

- Will farmers receive a premium for their 'low-carbon' corn from the ethanol plant?
- What value will climate-smart farming practices have in the 45Z program?
- What level of monitoring and verification will be required for feedstocks?
- How will these low-carbon fuel markets interact with other climate-smart markets like carbon credits and supply chain programs regarding double-counting and environmental claims?

There's a lot to figure out and I'll keep working to find answers to these and other questions so that you have the best information to make decisions on your operation. Have thoughts or questions? Reach out to me at ariel@mfu.org.



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Under the direction of Keith Ellison, the Minnesota Attorney General’s office has pursued several antitrust efforts, joining lawsuits against organizations such as Apple, Amazon and the NCAA. Another effort is focused on curtailing monopolistic activity within the meat industry.

On Nov. 6, Minnesota and three other states joined with the U.S. Department of Justice in a civil antitrust lawsuit against Agri Stats, Inc. A financial services company, Agri Stats is alleged to have enabled price-fixing among the largest processing companies in the chicken, pork and turkey markets. Agri Stats gathers detailed financial information and other data from these companies, then distributes reports with aggregated information back to these companies.

Although the reports issued by Agri Stats list the information of each processor anonymously, the DOJ filing presents evidence that identifying the companies based on the information provided is straightforward. This allows each company to obtain detailed reports on supply, costs, factory operations and more for each of their biggest competitors. These reports are not made available to the public nor to producers negotiating contracts with the companies.

Legal battles are not new for Agri Stats. In 2016, a class action lawsuit was filed against dominant food integrators in the broiler chicken market, as well as Agri Stats, alleging a conspiracy amongst the companies to control supply and fix prices. In 2019, a similar investigation was initiated by the DOJ. One company, Pilgrim’s Pride, has pleaded guilty and acknowledged that a conspiracy existed that aimed to reduce competition through price fixing. Other companies agreed to

Efforts to thwart antitrust activity in the meat industry advance

financial settlements and paid out hundreds of millions of dollars, though they did not admit any violations of law.

Despite this legal pressure, Agri Stats has continued to generate reports for large meat and poultry processors, and possibly advanced their methods. In the November filing joined by Minnesota, the states describe an environment in which Agri Stats provides weekly reports to its clients, puts pressure on the largest processors to participate, and even connects directly to their clients’ systems, allowing for quicker data retrieval.

Legislative efforts to thwart antitrust activity in the meat industry are moving forward. On March 5, the USDA issued a final rule under a key antitrust law known as the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) intended to promote competition and fair markets within the livestock and poultry industries. Titled “Inclusive Competition and Market Integrity Under the Packers and Stockyards Act,” the rule would address concerns over discrimination, retaliation and deception being perpetrated against farmers and ranchers.

Such rules, meant to clarify vague language within the P&S Act, have been in development for more than 15 years. Congress amended the P&S Act with the 2008 Farm Bill and instructed the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to create guidelines for the enforcement of antitrust measures within the livestock and poultry industries. Although rules were created in 2010, their implementation was delayed for more than a decade. Efforts resumed after President Biden issued a sweeping Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy in July of 2021, which included a call for new P&S Act rules to be adopted, culminating in the current action from the USDA.

Under the new rule, regulated entities are explicitly forbidden from limiting market access to individuals based on their race,

color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, marital status or age. Discrimination against cooperatives is also forbidden. The new rule creates a list of actions that producers can take that are protected from retaliation, such as contacting a government entity regarding violations of the law. Lastly, the new rule would prohibit false or misleading statements or omissions of material information in the development of a contract between a producer and a buyer.

Implementation of these antitrust rules will have long-lasting impacts on producers in Minnesota and throughout the country.

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HPAI detected in several states, spreads to ruminants

As of April 5, seven states have reported confirmed cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in livestock in 2024, according to the Minnesota Board of Animal Health (MBAH) and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

In Minnesota, the first case of HPAI was reported in backyard poultry on Jan. 10. Since then, two more backyard flocks have been infected. In addition, a Stevens County goat kid residing on a farm with an HPAI positive poultry flock tested positive for the same virus on March 20.

This was the first U.S. detection of HPAI in a domestic ruminant (cattle, sheep, goats, and their relatives).

"This finding is significant because, while the spring migration is definitely a higher risk transmission period for poultry, it highlights the possibility of the virus infecting other animals on farms with multiple species," said Minnesota State Veterinarian Dr. Brian Hoefs.

Since the Minnesota detection, HPAI has been found in dairy cattle and one human. This person had exposure to dairy cattle in Texas that were presumed to be infected with HPAI. The patient reported eye redness as their only symptom and was recovering as of April 5, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC considers the human health risk from HPAI to be low, however, people with close or prolonged, unprotected exposures to infected birds or other animals (including livestock), or to environments contaminated by infected birds or other animals, are at greater risk of infection.

According to CDC's interim recommendations, people should avoid unprotected exposures to sick or dead animals as well as with animal carcasses, raw milk, feces, litter, or materials contaminated by birds or other animals with confirmed or suspected HPAI infections. People should not prepare or eat uncooked or undercooked food or related uncooked food products,

Learn more about the HPAI situation at the following links:

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) detections in livestock: <https://bit.ly/4cluH6p>

Current H5N1 bird flu situation in mammals: <https://bit.ly/3PRaoKf>

Minnesota Board of Animal Health: <https://www.bah.state.mn.us/hpai/>

Minnesota Department of Agriculture: <https://bit.ly/3PQfre0>

such as unpasteurized milk, or products made from raw milk, from animals with confirmed or suspected HPAI.

People exposed to birds or other animals with confirmed or suspected HPAI should be monitored for any signs and symptoms of illness for 10 days after the last known exposure, including people wearing recommended personal protective equipment (PPE).

Back to the goat kid

In March, the owner of the goat kid notified the MBAH of unusual deaths of newly kidded goats on the property where a backyard poultry flock was depopulated in February due to HPAI. The goats and poultry had access to the same space, including a shared water source. One of the goat carcasses was taken to the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL), where it tested positive for influenza A. The National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) later confirmed H5N1 HPAI, which is the same virus circulating in the national outbreak that began in 2022. Samples from the adult goats were negative for HPAI and all appear healthy; no more sick goat kids have been reported since March 11.

HPAI has been previously diagnosed in other mammalian species such as skunks, dogs and cats. Animals with weakened or immature immune systems, like the goat kids in this case, are at higher risk of contracting disease. There has been limited experimental data on HPAI infection in ruminants, and there are no prior reports of natural HPAI infection in goats.

Biosecurity is the first line of defense for anyone to protect their animals from disease and includes simple measures like cleaning equipment and housing regularly, separating livestock from wild animals, and calling your veterinarian when animals appear sick.

Peters family works together on farm and in insurance business

By Janet Kubat Willette

This month, Peters Insurance opens its new office a block south of its former rented space in Goodhue.

Farmers Union Agency Insurance Adviser Ali Peters, who owns Peters Insurance, purchased the building at 200 Second Street and is looking forward to owning her own building and having more space to grow her business.

"I love it, but it was not a career I ever thought I would do," Peters said.

She earned a degree in communications and public relations from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. Peters worked in radio and print media and was selling advertising to former FUA Insurance Agent Dan Hedeem when he asked a question that changed her career path.

Hedeem asked Peters if she was interested in selling insurance. She considered the opportunity and in 2017 switched from selling advertising to selling insurance. She worked with Hedeem and his wife, Shirley, the agency's customer service representative, for 30 months before the offices merged, allowing Dan and Shirley to retire.

"I learned a ton from them," Peters said. "They had a lot of wisdom."

Hedeem was an insurance agent in Goodhue for 42 years before he retired in 2019.

Peters sells life, health, business, home and auto insurance. A year ago, her husband, Matt, joined the agency as the crop insurance adviser. He formerly worked in highway maintenance for Goodhue County. Sherie Majerus is their customer service representative.

It's a volatile time in the insurance industry, Peters said. Inflation, coupled with an increase in claims, is increasing premiums. There are deductible changes and companies refusing to take new clients because of all the claims they have paid recently.

All of these changes make for a lot of conversations with clients. Peters said that's the best part of her job. She enjoys



Ali and Matt Peters and their three children, Garrett, 8, Blake, 6, and Adeline, 3, on their Goodhue County farm. The couple run Peters Insurance and a hog and crop farm.

working with people and getting to know them. Insurance is a relationship business, she said.

Peters is able to write for several different insurance companies, giving clients more options for purchasing insurance.

Her clients are not automatically members of Farmers Union, but they can choose to join the organization.

Ali and Matt joined Farmers Union in 2017 and they attend events to connect with and learn from other farmers. The social events, in particular, are "a good way to connect with other farmers," Ali said.

They also enjoyed the end-of-session legislative tour held in several locations in southeast Minnesota last year. It's good to hear what actually went through, Matt said.

As agents, it's good to be aware of what the advocacy organization is working on, Ali said, as they do get people who come in and want to buy insurance from them to support the work of Farmers Union.

Farmers Union Agency supports several initiatives of Farmers Union, including co-sponsoring the Friday evening reception at the state convention and contributing to the purchase of livestock and poultry at the Minnesota State Fair 4-H Purple Ribbon Auction.

While Ali is in charge of Peters Insurance, Matt is in charge of their farming operation. The couple run 300 acres and raise breeding gilts for another grower. The hogs come to their barn at 50 to 60 pounds and leave at 150 to 250 pounds, depending on what is needed in the sow barns.

Not only do they work together in the insurance business, but they also work together on the farm. They and their three children, Garrett, 8, Blake, 6, and Adeline, 3, are in the barns together and in the field together.

"I like that we get to expose our kids to the lifestyle and teach them about where their food comes from," Ali said.

Matt, who earned a heavy equipment and maintenance diploma from Central Lakes College in Brainerd, is the sixth generation to operate his family's Goodhue County farm. He started farming in 2007. He's been mentored by his father, Brian, and Ali's father, Gary Hinrichs, a corn, soybean and beef cattle farmer.

Their family farm was settled by Olaf in 1859. Olaf's son, Steven, took over and farmed until he died of a heart attack and Oscar took over. He died of a heart attack too, according to the family history written on a sturdy piece of white cardstock. Oscar's daughter, Lucille, and her husband, Richard, were the fourth generation. Their son and Matt's dad, Brian, was the fifth generation.

The farm was a longtime dairy farm, with the cows leaving in 2004. Richard started a milk route that Brian continued to operate until 2011.

Matt and Ali have added grain bins and made other changes to the farm. They don't know what's next, but they continue to stay abreast of changes in agriculture.

"We're at the point where we've farmed long enough that we are farming for the next generation," Matt said.

In addition to being Farmers Union members, the couple belong to the Goodhue Chamber. Ali is a member of the Goodhue County Breakfast on the Farm committee, serves on the Riverland Farm Business Management board of directors and is on the Goodhue School District Advisory Committee. The advisory committee meets with district leaders to talk about a variety of topics, from curriculum to lunch.

USDA Rural Development aims create and sustain economic prosperity in rural areas

By Colleen Landkamer

As we enter the spring season, we thought it would be appropriate to pay tribute to our state's farmers, a group who play an essential role in Minnesota's economy.

While traveling to rural parts of the state, I've seen how USDA Rural Development's partnerships with local agricultural producers have successfully played out. Our partnerships have fostered economic growth by supporting farmers through clean affordable energy as well as expanding job and marketing opportunities.

We've empowered producers through programs and activities like the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), Value-Added Producer Grants and the Intermediary Relending Program.

REAP Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Loans and Grants provide guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Agricultural producers can also apply for new energy-efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing. For example, Mark and Karen Golberg of Stewartville received a \$77,759 REAP grant to purchase and install a wind turbine on their farm. The investment is expected to save their farm \$11,520 per year and will replace 102,650 kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, which is enough electricity to power nine homes.

The Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program helps agricultural producers enter value-added activities related to the processing and marketing of bio-based, value-added products. The programs aim to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities and increase producer income. Country Blossom Farm, an apple orchard in Alexandria, received a nearly \$250,000 VAPG grant to help the farm produce and sell gourmet fruit pies, crisps and caramel apples using fruit from the farm.



Colleen Landkamer

The Intermediary Relending Program provides low-interest loans to local lenders who relend to businesses to help improve economic conditions and create jobs in rural communities. Examples of the ways in which funds are used include promoting community development, establishing new businesses and creating and retaining jobs. Midwest Minnesota Community Development Corporation (MMCDC) will use a \$750,000 loan to finance a revolving loan fund and administer financing for new and existing businesses in 17 Minnesota counties.

In Minnesota, we work hard to empower rural people and organizations with the information they need to take full advantage of USDA Rural Development programs specifically designed to support agricultural producers. In doing so, we help create and sustain economic prosperity in our rural communities.

These investments are critical to improving economic opportunity and advancing equity in America. USDA supports these important goals through partnering with rural electric cooperatives to install smart grid technologies, working with telecommunications cooperatives to connect people to high-speed internet, working through credit unions to provide access to capital for business development and many other projects.

You can learn more about our programs by visiting www.rd.usda.gov/mn, following @RD_Minnesota on X (formerly known as Twitter), or by calling 651-602-7800.



National Youth Advisory Council members share their convention speeches

Members of the National Youth Advisory Council deliver remarks to the NFU convention body. Below are the remarks, as prepared for delivery, from Minnesota's NYAC members.

What Farmers Union means to me

I'm Mariah Peterson from Red Lake County, Minnesota, and I will be telling you what Farmers Union means to me. My journey with Farmers Union didn't start until I came to camp at 14-years-old, terrified that I would break a camp rule or fail to make friends. In fact, when one of the counselors said that we had to wear our shoes to bed, I believed her. There I was that night, getting ready for bed and putting my shoes on, only to realize that no one else was wearing their shoes. Within that first week and after also believing that we had to wear our name tags while swimming, I found that Farmers Union camp isn't as much a place as it is a feeling where you are with the right people, exactly where you need to be.

What Farmers Union means to me has represented several forms over the years. Starting out as a camper, Farmers Union camp meant an escape from everyday life to a place where everything felt at ease. When I served on Minnesota YAC a few years ago, the meaning of camp and Farmers Union escalated to an entire new level. As a YAC, Farmers Union meant working with a team of people to create plans for a place we all held closely in our hearts.



Mariah Peterson

As a NYAC now, Farmers Union has yet again surfaced an entirely new meaning for me. It represents not only the love I have for the people and the organization, but also the passion that this organization carries and the way its people support one another. I am often left speechless when I think of the way Farmers Union has stuck by my side, some even through an ambulance ride during Fly-In in D.C. Shoutout to my pancreas for ceasing to produce insulin. And shoutout to Jackie for staying in the hospital with me that first night, even though I honestly don't remember any of it.

Jokes aside, it has always been evident to me that the people involved in this organization care about it very deeply. From being a young camper and watching the counselors and YAC lead camp with intense dedication to then being on YAC myself where I had the opportunity to plan and lead camp with the same sense of enthusiasm.

I saw passion when watching MFU members speak about their experiences at Fly-In and now the camp excitement builds yet again as a NYAC while planning for All-States Camp takes form. Most of all, Farmers Union represents a sense of belonging.

After returning to Farmers Union for All-States this past summer, I forgot how much camp feels like a place where you can truly be yourself. Especially after my experiences as a NYAC over the past few months, I am left with an overwhelming sense of gratitude, and I can't thank this organization enough for the opportunities it has given me. I may not remember all seven principles of a co-op, but I will always remember the love and friendships this organization brought me.



Tim Velde and NFU President Rob Larew.

Tim Velde receives National Farmers Union award

Yellow Medicine County farmer Tim Velde received the Bruce Miller Award at the 122nd anniversary convention of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The award, named for a former Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) staff member, recognizes people who "display a passion

for family farming and rural America, while promoting the work of Farmers Union."

Velde won the award for his long-time work as a county leader, for supporting rural electric cooperatives and for being an advocate for legislation.

Velde is the president of the Yellow Medicine County Farmers Union, a post he's held for several years. He's also represented Minnesota as a delegate at the NFU convention. He serves on the board of Minnesota Valley Cooperative Light and Power, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and the National Rural Electric

Farmers Union gives a feeling of belonging

Hi, my name is Jacqueline Zaviska. I am from Pennington County in northwest Minnesota, and I am not a farmer. I am the granddaughter of a cattle farmer and a grain farmer. I am the neighbor of crop farmers. I am the friend of a dairy farmer. Even the best friend of a rabbit farmer. But I am not a farmer. I am here today for them, and because of them.

I have been a part of Farmers Union since I was 10 years old. And for the first 10 years of my membership, I didn't even really know about... any of this. I had no idea what Farmers Union did in the grand scheme of things. I knew they put on a heckuva camp. I knew that my favorite week of the year was thanks to the people who sent me a magazine every month that, if I'm being honest, I never read.

But I went to camp. I went every year. And every year, I showed up at the door, a little bit nervous. Would I know anyone? Would any of my old friends be there? But it didn't matter. It didn't matter because the moment you walk in, it's like you never left. I feel that same feeling here. Many of you—most of you, I have never met, but here we all are. In the same room because we believe in what National Farmers Union does for us, our communities and our country.

I love this feeling. This feeling of belonging to something larger than myself.

And so every year, there I was back at Lake Sarah. And this was before they put in the new showers. For those that don't know, good. And then when I was old enough,



Jacqueline Zaviska

I was at Camp Sibley, every year, Zoom camp in 2020 and all.

I found out about the Youth Advisory Council, and that I would get to help plan the camp that I have loved for so long. Of course, I ran. And I wasn't elected. So, I ran again. Over Zoom this time. And I was elected. I got to plan what I thought was my last week of camp ever. And it was wonderful.

Two years later, I get an invitation to All States Camp. I felt so incredibly blessed to have another week at camp.

Then I learned about NYAC. And how, if I got on, I would get to go to Washington D.C, and Arizona, and again I'd get to plan another camp. Then I found out I'd have to give a speech...

But I ran anyway. And I got on.

Then I attended Fly-in, and finally Farmers Union was more than just camp to me.

To be able to hear your stories and see how you advocate for yourselves and others. To get to share my own stories,

and speak up for my neighbors, and my family, and every other farmer the farm bill would set out to help. It was incredible. Awe inspiring.

I love the organization that shaped me into the woman I am today, the kind of woman who smiles every time she sees a sign outside of a business that says co-op. I love the camp that I told President Obama about when we wrote letters to him in the third grade. The camp that introduced me to so many incredible people.

I am who I am today, in part, because of all of you.

I am a firm believer that, as a woman of the people, I will speak for the people whenever I am given the chance. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the poem 'First they came' by Martin Niemöller.

"First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."

When I was 14 years old I printed out that poem and taped it to my wall. It became my mantra, as it remains today.

So no, I am not a farmer. But so long as I have a voice, I will use it.

Cooperative Association. Last year, Velde championed a piece of legislation that extended the definition of who qualified for a farm driver's license. The legislation was signed into law. He's also testified on Right to Repair legislation, establishing a grain indemnity fund and expanding the use of biofuels. He serves on the Farm Service Agency state committee, working to ensure that federal Farm Bill programs support family farmers. He represents Minnesota Farmers Union on the boards of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center and the Center for Rural Policy and Development. Velde is also a lay minister.

"Tim's actions exemplify the three core principles of Farmers Union: Legislation, cooperation and education," said MFU President Gary Wertish. "Tim is a longtime leader in our organization who others look to for sage advice. He has hosted legislators on his farm and opened his books to them to share how their actions impact farmers. He was a featured speaker on a cooperative month webinar. Tim is a great role model for others and I thank him for his many hours of service to MFU and his community."

"I want to thank MFU for nominating me for this award," Velde said. "By speaking up for and advocating for farmers and rural Minnesota, I hope I can make a positive difference in the lives of people. With the challenges facing us today and into the future, anything we can do together to move the needle in our favor is what MFU and our co-ops have always done and will continue to do. Working together we can all make a difference."



1 Little Hill Berry Farm

Little Hill Berry Farm offers the Curiosity and Wonder Kids Summer Camp. The camp is for ages 5 to 9 and runs Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon. This year's sessions will be offered June 17-20, June 24-27 and Aug. 12-15.

The goal of the camp is to build on the unique nature around the farm with a focus on play, creativity, observation, nature journaling, engineering and fun.

Aaron Wills and Molly McGovern Wills own and operate Little Hill Berry Farm in Northfield along with their two children, Ben and LuElla. They take pride in being the only organic pick-your-own berry farm in Minnesota.



4339 320th St. W., Northfield
(507) 301-7183
littlehillberryfarm.com
aaron@littlehillberryfarm.com



2 Wee Farm

WEE Farm stands for Wellness and Education for Everyone. Dr. Bonnie Laabs and her partner, Jason Biwer, founded WEE Farm with the goal of providing an inclusive and educational experience that leaves a rewarding and lasting impression on people of all ages and backgrounds. Their summer camps are the bread and butter of their farm and are for children ages 5 to 12. Camps include Farm Olympics, Lil Vet Camp, Fairy Tails on the Farm, Vet Camp, Space Farm Camp and FBI Camp.

WEE Farm also offers "Sunday Strolls," which include a one-hour guided tour, farm animal encounters and farm history.

There is also a Fall Festival with music, dancing, dining, local vendors, a haunted house and a costume contest.



4562 McColl Drive, Savage
(612) 388-2136
weefarm.org
weefarm@weefarm.org



3 MFU Camps

Minnesota Farmers Union offers a summer leadership camp that focuses on helping young people become good citizens by planting the seeds of responsibility, leadership and cooperation in an environment where those qualities can grow and flourish. Activities may include campfires, swimming, games and nature hikes.





--Compiled by Elle Penzenstadler

There is a camp for all ages including the Northern camp for ages 9 to 12 from June 17-June 21, the Southern Elementary Camp for ages 8 to 11 from July 14-July 17, the Southern Junior Camp for ages 11 to 14 from July 21-July 25, and the Senior High Camp for ages 14 to 18 from July 28-Aug. 2. The Northern Camp is held at MFU Lake Sarah Campground near Erskine. All other camps are held at Sibley State Park near New London.



(651)639-1223 or
MFU toll-free (800)969-3380
mfu.org/camp
will@mfu.org



4 Locally Laid – Farm Lola

Locally Laid is a pasture-raised egg and berry farm located in the Wrenshall area. The farm is owned and operated by Lucie and Jason Amundsen with the goal of creating real food for neighbors, while treating their livestock and the planet well in the process.

Aside from their egg and berry business, they wanted to provide experience to mentor people in agriculture. They came up with the AirB-n-BAWK for farm curious travelers. They offer four different housing options that are all located directly on or overlooking the pasture. The “Choose Your Own Adventure” stay includes feeding and watering poultry, letting the chickens out at daybreak, gathering eggs, packing eggs into cartons, putting the chickens to bed and biking nearby trails.



798 Cemetery Road, Wrenshall
(218) 349-9013
farmlola.com
jason@locallylaid.com



5 Medicine Creek Farm

Hannah Bernhardt and her husband, Jason Misik, established Medicine Creek Farm in spring of 2016 after purchasing 160 acres of rolling hay fields and wildlife filled wetlands in Finlayson. Their farm is focused on sustainable, regenerative agriculture that offers pastured pork and 100 percent grass fed and finished lamb and beef.

They offer two farm stay getaways for those interested in experiencing life on the farm. With summer and fall being the best time to visit to see regenerative grazing in action, you can also anticipate getting to move sheep and cows to fresh grass, collect eggs, feed pigs, have a bonfire, grill burgers, listen to the crickets and even find some wild berries. This September they are also excited to be hosting a Butcher’s Dinner and Barn Dance including a farmers’ market and farm tour to promote agritourism throughout Minnesota.



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Headwaters Beef Cooperative aims to connect producers, consumers in Pine River area

By Lisa Holm

Editor's Note: This is the first article in a series highlighting the projects of Co-ops for Climate grant recipients and capturing the processes of cooperative development.

As climate change continues to impact agriculture across the state, there's opportunity for cooperatives to meet the need for meaningful, farmer-centered solutions. Farmer-owned cooperatives reduce costs of production, maintain a reliable source of inputs, effectively market and process farm products, improve livelihoods and help strengthen rural communities.

Co-ops for Climate is a Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation grant program that funds farmer cooperatives in developing solutions for climate resilience. These grants support Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) members who have, or are in the process of, organizing themselves into cooperatives that respond to climate-related challenges and opportunities.

The grants provide support for technical assistance and business development services. This support includes a wide range of services, including feasibility studies, business plans, market assessments, establishing governance documents and carbon and greenhouse gas inventory or assessment.



Headwaters Beef Cooperative has held a series of producer meetings to build relationships and share information.

FINDINGS

"Of the many qualifying features available to consumers of ground beef (organic, grassfed, humanely raised, etc.), 'local' appears to be most important to consumers in Minnesota."

"Significant investments have been made in advancing the availability, affordability and accessibility of local foods though this effort to date has been largely produce-centric."

Source: True North Strategy analysis

Headwaters Beef Cooperative, based in Pine River, is a part of the first cohort of Co-ops for Climate grant recipients awarded in summer 2023.

Headwaters Beef Cooperative (HBC) aims to aggregate and process cull beef into branded ground beef products that would add value and stabilize cull cow prices. The cooperative's goal is to bring conservation to the marketplace and a healthy affordable protein to consumers, while protecting water quality, improving wildlife habitat and addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation. Technical

patties not specific to grassfed within the Lakes Area."

Since 2013, Jim Chamberlin, Outreach Conservation Specialist with Happy Dancing Turtle (HDT), and others have been working to build relationships with producers and businesses in the Cass and Crow Wing County areas. Supporting conservation in the agricultural community has been a focus for HDT, helping lead the development of HBC.

HBC has held producer meetings, attracting around 20 farmers and ranchers at

service projects include a market sector analysis of on-farm standard of production, leadership development and cooperative incorporation.

Technical service consultants include Kevin Edberg of Co-op Development Services (CDS), True North Strategy and Julie Anderholm with Anderholm Consulting.

HBC's focus has been on the development of a market assessment analysis and financial strategy based on climate-smart protocols. In February 2024, a market assessment on local ground beef was completed by True North Strategy. The study focused on a "broader assessment of interest in and demand for local ground beef and pre-formed burger

each. These meetings have also garnered press attention. Chamberlin has been interviewed by the Red River Farm Network, AgWeek and other newspapers about the development of this co-op and its implications. One of the successes so far is that this work has started a conversation in the community, Chamberlin said.

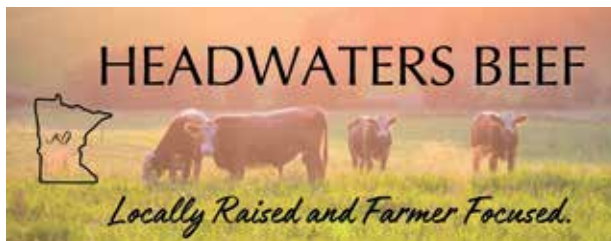
"Locally, I think we've brought farmers together around this idea and drawn interest in it. We're starting a dialogue," he said.

Wisconsin Grassfed Beef Cooperative (WGBC) has served as a great inspiration, resource and example of a strong and successful cooperative, Chamberlin said. The WGBC has more than 200 farm member-owners that service local wholesale and direct-to-consumer markets nationwide. HBC consulted with WGBC's Laura Paine, agriculture educator and producer, who led the development of WGBC in 2009.

HBC's next steps include identifying leadership roles (board members), developing co-op mission and vision statements, and cooperative incorporation. HBC has been working with Edberg from CDS on development pathways. HBC leaders are optimistic that completing these steps will

position the fledging cooperative to leverage upcoming grant opportunities.

A meeting will be held with farmers and ranchers to present information found in the study and options for different climate-smart protocols that will determine their market. Once producers decide, HBC will work with technical service providers to draft production protocols, conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan.



Chamberlin said there's been three main challenges so far:

1. Farmers are independent people that are hard to bring together, and they don't have a lot of time to sit in meetings.
2. The markets. The whole meat industry is so tight, so competitive and so complicated.
3. It's hard to have climate discussions with farmers. When he brings it up, he

does it in conjunction with clean water. He's been trying to encourage producers that through good adaptive grazing and well-managed pastures they're helping to protect water quality and sequester carbon.

He wants to keep the project local to maximize community impact.

"I've had producers walk up to me after meetings and express their skepticism," he said. "One rancher came up to me and said, 'this is good work that you're doing but it's not going to make that much of a difference. It's such a big ship to change, you can't expect too much.' I said, 'I'm not trying to change the world, I'm trying to change our community.' I think that really hit home with him."

HBC's goal is to have their product on the shelf within the next year or so. Long term, they envision a robust local beef market where local consumers and producers are connected.

"With our proximity to lakes and all the work we've done, we can hopefully get more political support to get producers to stay in our area and grow food while protecting our resources," Chamberlin said.

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The 122nd anniversary convention of the National Farmers Union



The 122nd anniversary convention of National Farmers Union was held March 10-12 at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort; Scottsdale, Ariz. The agenda included topics ranging from fair and competitive

markets to cooperatives, engaging the next generation, biofuels, and defending democracy. There was a visit from a comedian Charlie Berens and, of course, lively policy debate.



Minnesota Farmers Union members Linda Larson, second from left, and Kelsey Love Zaavedra, second from right, received the NFU Membership Award. They are pictured with MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl, left, and NFU President Rob Larew, right.



MFU Executive Committee member Linda Larson confers with Michael Slattery from Wisconsin Farmers Union during policy debate.



NFU President Rob Larew claps as Dave Velde accepts a gift for his many years of service to Farmers Union. Velde, of Alexandria, is general counsel for National Farmers Union and co-owner of Velde Moore, LTD.



Jim Falk of Swift County represented Minnesota Farmers Union as a delegate at the national convention.



Ten Minnesota counties earned the NFU Leadership Award. MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl, left, and NFU President Rob Larew, center back, stand with the Minnesota group. Accepting the awards on behalf of the winning counties were Carol Anderson, Pine County; Ted Winter, Redwood County; Josh VanDerPol, Kandiyohi County; Lisa Holm, Hennepin/Ramsey County; Ariel Kagan, Fillmore County; Lindsey Zemanek, Dodge County; Missy Bakker Roach, St. Louis County; Linda Larson, Dakota County; Kelsey Love Zaavedra, Chisago County, and Claudine Arndt, Scott County.



MFU member Paul Benson was interviewed by Whitney Pittman from the Red River Farm Network during the national convention.



Rodney Allebach, center, former president of the Farmers Union Agency, received the National Farmers Union Meritorious Service Award. He is pictured with MFU President Gary Wertish, left, and NFU President Rob Larew, right.



MFU Executive Committee member Josh VanDerPol makes a comment during policy debate.

President's Message

continued from page 3

25 million acres will be enrolled in climate-smart projects by some 60,000 farmers. USDA is using those projects to learn, investing nearly \$3 billion to monitor, measure and verify the results of those projects. With that data, farmers will be able to participate in ecosystem market opportunities, a new income stream.

The Biden administration has also issued more than 5,000 Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants to help farmers reduce their energy costs and increase the amount of energy produced on farms, another new income stream.

Thirdly, the administration has invested in meat processing, creating opportunities for farmers to market directly to consumers, which enhances their income.

The goals of these efforts are not only to expand and diversify income sources, but also to produce more jobs, give consumers more choices and to increase competition and resilience in the food system, Vilsack said.

After the speech, he answered questions for NFU President Rob Larew. In total, Vilsack spent nearly an hour with Farmers Union members.



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, left, answered questions from NFU President Rob Larew during the National Farmers Union convention.

Vilsack visit

On April 3, Secretary Vilsack spoke at Minnesota State University-Mankato where he announced the availability of \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2024 to invest in partner-driven conservation and climate solutions through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

USDA is accepting project proposals that will help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners adopt and expand conservation strategies to enhance natural resources while tackling the climate crisis. These projects can save farmers money, create new revenue streams and increase productivity.

Vilsack then sat down for a panel discussion with leaders from several Minnesota commodity organizations and Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen.

Topics talked about during the discussion included renewable energy, the difficulty of bringing in younger farmers, regulatory challenges, faster line speeds at hog slaughter plants, NRCS programs, soil health, agricultural research, avian influenza, labor challenges and trade.



Gov. Tim Walz

State of the State

On March 26, Gov. Tim Walz delivered his State of the State speech from Owatonna High School, which opened this fall on a new campus on the southeastern edge of town.

He talked about investments made to bring competitive, high-paying jobs to Minnesota and expanding the state's economy towards the green energy jobs of the future. He talked about providing free school breakfast and lunch for every child in Minnesota, which MFU hopes to leverage as a market for family farmers to serve with their locally grown, fresh food.

He pledged to continue building communities and opportunities in Minnesota.

Farmers Union has worked for more than a hundred years to build strong communities and this year is launching an effort

to raise awareness of the importance of community by screening the documentary, *Join or Die*.

The documentary follows the story of America's civic unraveling through the journey of social scientist Robert Putnam, whose "Bowling Alone" research into America's decades-long decline in community connections could hold the answers to democracy's present crisis.

Putnam explores three civic questions: What makes democracy work? Why is American democracy in crisis? And, most importantly... What can we do about it?

The first screening happened April 8 in Morris and more events are planned. MFU partnered with the University of Minnesota-Morris and West Central Initiative Foundation for the first screening and is seeking other partners to bring the screening to other parts of the state. Contact Membership and Minnesota Cooks Director Claudine Arndt at claudine@mfu.org to learn more about the documentary and hosting a screening in your area.

Congratulations

The members of Minnesota Farmers Union continue to amaze me. Their dedication and thoughtfulness inspires me as the President of the organization. This year, 10 Minnesota counties and four individuals were recognized upon the stage at the national convention.

I extend my congratulations to Rodney Allebach, who received NFU's Meritorious Service to Agriculture Award, Tim Velde, who received the Bruce Miller Award, and Linda Larson and Kelsey Love Zaavedra, who received national Membership Awards.

In addition, for the first time in recent years, MFU had 10 counties earn the NFU Leadership Award. It truly takes a community working together to achieve this award and my congratulations go out to the leaders and members of Chisago, Dakota, Dodge, Fillmore, Hennepin/Ramsey, Kandiyohi, Pine, Redwood, St. Louis and Scott counties. Thank you for all you do.

Nearly 500 people attend 122nd anniversary NFU convention



From March 10-12, NFU hosted its 122nd anniversary convention. Nearly 500 Farmers Union delegates, members and guests from across the country gathered in sunny Scottsdale, Ariz., to set NFU's policy priorities for the year and hear from agricultural experts and political leaders on various issues facing American family farm agriculture.

This year's programming focused on the importance of democratic institutions, both within Farmers Union and throughout the nation. In an era where public trust in institutions is waning, it is crucial for Farmers Union to reinforce our governance principles and the thoughtful processes that guide our grassroots advocacy.

Featured speakers included Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack; Sarah Suggs, President and CEO of the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute for American Democracy, and Kari Jo Lawrence, CEO of the Intertribal Agriculture Council. Convention attendees also heard from a panel on the future of farmer-owned cooperatives, featuring Chuck Conner, President and CEO of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives; Keri Jacobs, Associate Professor of Agricultural and Applied Economics and Partridge Chair in Cooperative Leadership at the University of Missouri, and Doug O'Brien, President and CEO of NCBA CLUSA.

In his remarks, Secretary Vilsack announced finalization of USDA's "Product of USA" labeling rule, which requires meat, poultry or egg products bearing the voluntary 'Product of USA' or 'Made in the USA' label be exclusively derived from animals born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States. Vilsack announced the proposed rule at NFU's convention last year in San Francisco.

President Joe Biden provided pre-recorded remarks on promoting competition in agricultural markets and the need for Fairness for Farmers, as did U.S. Assistant

Attorney General Jonathan Kanter. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chair Lina Khan provided remarks on the Biden administration's efforts to promote competition and ramp up antitrust enforcement.

Following a series of breakout sessions covering topics on right to farm laws,

managing farm stress, food safety, the future of sustainable aviation fuel, and protecting landowner rights, Farmers Union delegates re-elected NFU President Rob Larew and Vice President Jeff Kippley, to their third and second terms, respectively. Their terms will run through 2026.

Right to Repair update

On Feb. 2, NFU submitted comments to the FTC in support of the Public Interest Research Group's (PIRG) and iFixit's petition to pursue rule making that will protect farmers' and consumers' Right to Repair.

PIRG and iFixit submitted this petition in late 2023. The petition "Petition for Section 5 Rulemaking Addressing Consumers' Right to Repair" lays out the case for the rulemaking and the necessary components to adequately address consumer expectations. In support of the petition, NFU's comments urge FTC to establish rules that are consistent with consumer exceptions of product repair and limit the power of consolidated farm equipment manufacturers.

NFU believes it is essential that such rules address the consumer expectations, including (but not limited to):

- Consumable components be replaceable and readily available throughout a product's lifespan.
- Components that commonly break be replaceable and readily available as repair parts.
- Consumers be able to take damaged products to a repair shop of their choice or perform a repair themselves.

- When a manufacturer discontinues support for a product, its key functions remain intact, and an independent repair shop be able to continue to perform repairs.
- Identical components from two identical devices be interchangeable without intervention from the manufacturer.
- Independent repair shops be not required to report customers' personally identifiable information to the manufacturer.

Furthermore, NFU's comments highlight consolidation in the industry as a concern, with just three manufacturers controlling the majority of farm equipment production, sales and repairs.

NFU's comments also cite and reject false and misleading claims by manufacturers and dealers that independent repair undermines emissions compliance laws under the Clean Air Act (CAA). NFU wrote U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael Regan last June requesting clarification. In his response to NFU, Administrator Regan sharply rebuked these claims and expressed EPA's support for independent repair.

NFU remains involved in a separate FTC complaint against John Deere for their illegal restrictions in the repair market.

Government relations

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to lower income people through the state's longstanding MinnesotaCare program.

Coverage would remain the same as in MinnesotaCare. For example, the plan would cover trips to the emergency room, doctor and clinic visits, hearing aids, dental, eyeglasses and a long list of other services all with limited cost sharing. Mental health or substance abuse visits, for example, don't come with any copay, emergency room visits carry a \$100 copay, and prescription drug costs to the patient are capped at \$70 per month. Premiums would be graduated based on income as are limited deductibles, the latter of which are capped at \$1,500 annually.

Minnesotans will also be able to continue relying on their existing insurance broker who will be compensated under the proposal for helping enroll people in quality coverage.

Unfortunately, the governor and legislative leaders did not agree to new funding for a MinnesotaCare Public Option, making securing ongoing support for this priority unlikely this session. That said, the governor did signal his support for this long term by recommending funding for planning and development of a Public Option.

While this is a setback, there are low or no-cost items the legislature can pursue this session—beginning work on the necessary federal waiver, for example—that will keep the state on a path toward allowing farmers and other small business owners to buy-in to MinnesotaCare.

Policy bill passes

Senate Ag Chair Aric Putnam's, DFL-St. Cloud, policy bill (SF4225) was passed by the Agriculture Committee and approved by the full Senate with a broad bipartisan vote of 58 to 9.

While the proposal is largely noncontroversial, it includes some important items for MFU.

First, the agricultural policy bill requires the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to "establish and maintain an accessible and anonymous means for a person

to report potential violations of the corporate farm law" and Minnesota's ban on foreign ownership. As MFU's Melany Thomas of Clay County described in testimony, this simple change will help streamline enforcement of these longstanding laws.

Second, the ag policy bill clarifies language barring confidentiality clauses in ag processing and marketing contracts. This will help ensure that farmers can share contract terms, prices and other data with neighbors, advisers and others without fearing repercussions due to violating these contracts.

Third, the bill carries recommendations from MDA for updating reporting requirements for small grain buyers. Under the proposal, buyers purchasing less than \$7.5 million in grain annually would be required to provide a financial statement prepared by a third-party independent accountant, but not a full-blown annual audit.

MFU President Gary Wertish and Swift County President Jim Falk both served on MDA's advisory group that helped shape these changes.

The policy bill also includes requirements that people finding strays must either notify the owner, file a public notice or surrender the animal to a local animal control agency.

Homestead tax extension

Also from Putnam, the Senate tax committee heard his bill to expand the ag homestead tax credit to farms of less than 10 acres (SF4828). This is an issue MFU has worked on for years.

Chisago County President Kelsey Love Zaavedra testified in support of the bill, saying "keeping farmland taxes affordable helps farmers stay on the land. Today I am speaking in support of this bill so that all farmers – no matter the size of their farm – can enjoy the benefits they deserve."

MFU members Hannah Bernhardt of Pine County, Emily and John Beaton of St. Louis County, and Nikki Warner of Hennepin/Ramsey County, also submitted written testimony to the committee in support of the proposal. This expansion builds on the committee's work to expand the ag homestead first tier valuation limit.

House ag policy

On the House side, Ag Chair Samantha Vang, DFL-Brooklyn Center, plans to do one omnibus policy and supplemental spending proposal.

One important conversation that her committee has spent time on is a discussion around the definition of "emerging farmer" and more specifically which farmers receive preference under the Down Payment Assistance Program, the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit and the Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grants. Vang's proposal would create new qualifications and give preference to farmers experiencing limited access to land and markets.

The committee heard testimony from several emerging farmers concerned about the new definition. MFU has stayed in touch with MDA, Vang and Putnam on this issue and is working to ensure that a final definition continues to serve emerging farmers well. Vang and Putnam have made clear their commitment to make these programs sustainable so that they can continue to build a more equitable and vibrant farm economy.

"We want to thank Chair Vang for continuing to work on this," said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen in his testimony. "The bottom line is, [because of these programs] almost 100 new farmers will own a farm in Minnesota. That's a pretty neat thing."

Vang's proposal does not change the definition of "emerging farmer" for the purposes of the state's Emerging Farmers Working Group or MDA's Emerging Farmers Office.

Meat processing

Finally, the Senate workforce committee heard a bill reauthorizing meat processing technical training grants for high schools (SF4816/HF4930).

"We support this bill not only because of our longstanding support for ag education," said MFU's Government Relations Director Stu Lourey, "but also because this helps address a key workforce challenge experienced by our members."

If you have questions, concerns, thoughts or need more information please reach out at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-3047.

Membership

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who never seem to make it? Consider personally calling them and letting them know you would really like them to attend this year. Ask why they haven't attended in the past. Perhaps the timing hasn't worked, or they don't understand the importance of a County Convention.

- Is there a friend or community member you wish were a member of MFU but isn't? Invite them to your County Convention. While they can't vote, non-members can certainly attend meetings, learn more about MFU and experience our grassroots democratic process in action.
- Be thoughtful about the date/time/place of your meeting. Do you always hold your County Convention over lunch? That may not work well for farmers who work off the farm. On a Saturday? That may not work well for farmers who sell at farmers' markets. You may want to consider changing it up this year. If you are someone who hasn't been able to attend your County Convention in the past due to timing, please let your county leader know.
- Does your County Convention have a history of being boring or falling off track? People don't want to attend boring and unproductive meetings. Be respectful of attendees and stick to the agenda.
- If you have any questions about planning or participating in a County Convention, call your Membership Outreach Organizer or Claudine or Jeff for help.

Whether you are a new MFU member or a seasoned member, please prioritize attending your county convention. Not only do we accomplish important business at these meetings, but they also are great places to network and build relationships.

It doesn't matter if five people attend a county convention or 50 people attend: do not underestimate the power of our

democratic process. County Conventions can be small but mighty. One of the primary reasons people join MFU is because they believe in our mission to protect and enhance the livelihoods of farmers, ranchers and rural communities and they have an idea for how to do that. Show up, speak up and make your voice heard at your county convention this year.



New Member Welcome Happy Hour (virtual)

7 p.m. on Monday, May 20

Are you new to Minnesota Farmers Union? Our team extends a warm welcome and invites you to join us for a casual virtual happy hour with MFU staff. Being a new member of an organization can be intimidating, but everyone here is friendly, eager to get to know you and help you settle in. The New Member Welcome Happy Hour will provide a brief introduction to Minnesota Farmers Union while giving us an opportunity to put a face with a name and learn more about what drew you to our organization. Please bring any questions you may have. We look forward to meeting you.

Can't make it? We'll be changing the timing of our new member gatherings from month-to-month to help make them accessible to all who want to join. Dates and times will be listed in the Minnesota Agriculture magazine and at mfu.org/events. Members are also welcome to reach out directly to MFU staff with questions.

New Member Welcome Happy Hour (virtual)

Time: 7 p.m. May 20

Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://bit.ly/MayNewMemberZoom>

Meeting ID: 848 6958 8951

Passcode: 706881

New members from March 2024

Welcome to the new members who joined MFU in March. We look forward to getting to know you and thank you for your membership. We encourage experienced members to invite new members to events in your area. Working together we make a stronger Farmers Union.

Amanda and Justin Anderson, Colfax Farms LLC, Kandiyohi County

Mark Anema and Kate Ritger, Prime Avenue Farm LLC, Meeker County

Britta Dornfeld, Environmental Initiative, Hennepin County

Erik Gusa, Putratz Farm, Wabasha County

Kimberly Klees, RedC Farms, Winona County

Liz Lucente and Kyle Schwarting, Dakota County

Ron and Carla Monson, Jagare Bondgard, Todd County

Teresa Opheim, Climate Land Leaders, Hennepin County

Lisa Otten, Isanti County

Donald Mark Ritchie, Hennepin County

Tina Schoenfeld, Schoenfeld Farms, Waseca County

Kimberly and Denise Slipy, Crow Wing County

Bjorn Solberg, Hugh's Gardens LLC, Norman County

Preston Tolstad, Hubbard County

Working for Green View reflects commitment to serve community, travelers

By Natalie Beckendorf

Henry Rydland serves as the Green View Crew Leader at Hansel Lake Rest Area on Interstate 94 West by Fergus Falls.



Henry Rydland

Rydland brings a wealth of experience and dedication to his role.

His journey with Green View reflects a commitment to serving both the community and travelers.

At Hansel Lake Rest Area, Rydland oversees a team responsible for maintaining the facility's cleanliness and functionality. His role encompasses training new hires, crafting schedules and ensuring the smooth operation of the rest area.

Rydland recalls the initial steps that led him to his current position with Green View. After discovering this opportunity in a newspaper advertisement, he had an interview with the field supervisor. The

formal interview took place at Rydland's cabin and marked the beginning of his journey with Green View, which has spanned several years.

Rydland had a diverse career path, from working in photo finishing for more than three decades in Minneapolis to eventually finding his way back to his hometown of Battle Lake.

"My journey with Green View has taught me the importance of embracing change and seeking opportunities that resonate with my passions and values," Rydland said.

Interacting with travelers is an integral part of his role at the rest area, providing him with opportunities to engage with the public and make meaningful connections. His dedication to serving both the local community and passing travelers highlights the vital role that facilities like Hansel Lake Rest Area play in enhancing the travel experience.

Green View employs people throughout the state of Minnesota. If you, or anybody you know, is interested in working for Green View, call Mike McShane at (651) 639-1913.

Despite the demands of his role, Rydland finds moments of solace and connection with nature at Hansel Lake Rest Area. Fond memories of picnics by the lake and observing the natural wonders around him remind him of the beauty in his surroundings.

Rydland is committed to his role and expresses gratitude for the support of his field supervisor and coworkers. His experience with Green View goes beyond just a job; it's about answering a call to serve the community and positively impact the lives of those he meets.

"I really encourage others to think about joining our team."

YOU MATTER. TALK TO US.

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Membership application

Name: _____ Spouse's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

County: _____ Zip code: _____

Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Type of farm: *Check all that apply*

- Crops
- Beef
- Dairy
- Hogs
- Horses
- Other please list: _____
- Organic
- Poultry
- Sheep
- Vegetable or fruit

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

- New member
- Renewing member
- 1 year - \$75
- 3 years - \$200
- Student - \$20

JOIN TODAY!

Mail this card to:
Minnesota Farmers Union
305 Roselawn Ave. E. #200
St. Paul, MN 55117

Or sign up online: <https://www.mfu.org/join-renew-membership>



MAY 2004

Retired Farmers Union staff member and long-time state convention parliamentarian F.B. Daniel was one of 75 Minnesotans inducted as charter members of the Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame. He joined FFA in 1938 and was a member all four years of high school. He worked for Farmers Union as a co-op development specialist from 1975 to 1988.

MFU President Doug Peterson received the 40-year donor award on behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union during the



F.B. Daniel, co-parliamentarian of the 2003 Minnesota Farmers Union State Convention, was inducted into the Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame.

Minnesota FFA Foundation's Annual Honors Banquet in St. Paul.

Jacob Yost of St. Peter and Candace Oerter of Tyler will represent MFU at the National Farmers Union Collegiate Conference in Washington, D.C. Both have received the Torchbearer Award.

MAY 1934

Members of the Leenthrop, Tunsberg and Havelock Locals of the Farmers Union held a joint meeting on Friday evening, March 23rd at the creamery hall in Montevideo. The meeting was held in celebration of the winning of three awards offered by the Farmers Union Livestock Commission Company for having the largest number of paid-up members at the beginning of January 1934.

At a meeting held in Roseau in October 1933, Roseau local was organized. The first directors were M.R. Olson, G.T. Nelson, Carl Brandt, P.G. Pederson and E.E. Boen.

The dairy program proposed by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration has been presented at regional meetings throughout the United States. The study of the record from these meetings has convinced the A.A.A. officials that there is too much opposition to the plan to justify putting the program into operation.

MAY 1984

The 1984 session of the Minnesota Legislature yielded positive results for family farmers. Progress was made on property tax reductions, dairy policy, highway funding, agriculture processing, soil conservation and school funding.

All Minnesota Farmers Union members and friends are invited to participate in a special appreciation day for Cy and Fran Carpenter to be held at the Lyle Heaton farm, Clearwater. The event is planned as a membership celebration upon Cy's election as National Farmers Union president.

Members of the 1984 MFU camp staff are Terry Lauer, Staples; Lori Klose, Atwater; Sheila Pederson, Mahanomen; Patricia Mischke, Pierz; Keith Kuhns, Waseca, and John Roe, Gary.



North Pine County Farmers Union President Lyle Naylor, second from right, and other members recently organized a North Pine County Ag Day program. Included in the day's events was the presentation of a plaque to Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Jim Nichols, right, for his promotion of the state's farm heritage. Other members are, from left, Arden Buxton, Irene Jensen, Mary Buxton, Gloria Naylor, Elmer Thomson and Irene Thomson, along with the Naylor's grandchildren.

Perfect Chocolate Chip Cookies 2.0 Recipe from Molly Wilson, MFU intern.



Servings: 18 cookies

Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 9 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- ¾ teaspoon fine salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 5 ounces Ghirardelli 52% Cacao Dark Chocolate Chips
- 2 ounces Ghirardelli 72% Cacao Dark Chocolate Chips, chopped
- Flaky salt for sprinkling, if desired

Sandra Day O'Connor Institute works to further nation's civics literacy

By Janet Kubat Willette

The U.S. spends a nickel a year on civics education for the country's 50 million K-12 students, compared to \$54 a year for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

Sarah Suggs, President and CEO of the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute for American Democracy, said she doesn't begrudge the STEM funding. She is working, however, to increase civics education among not only students, but also adults through the Institute named for the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Suggs spoke to Farmers Union members gathered in Arizona for the 122nd Anniversary National Farmers Union Convention held in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The Sandra Day O'Connor Institute for American Democracy is based at Arizona State University in Phoenix. O'Connor founded the Institute in 2009, three years after she retired from the Supreme Court, to advance American democracy through multigenerational civil discourse, civic engagement and civics education. Those three pillars are similar to the Farmers Union pillars of education, cooperation and legislation, Suggs said, and are crucial for shaping the future of the United States.

According to a Gallup poll taken in 2021, 5 percent of Americans have a great deal of confidence in Congress, 13 percent have a great deal of confidence in the Supreme Court and 16 percent have a great deal of confidence in the president. Nearly 20 percent of Americans can't identify the three branches of government, according to the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

The Sandra Day O'Connor Institute has a vision to change that by creating "a nation where important policy decisions affecting our future are made through a critical analysis of facts and informed participation of all citizens."

To do that, the Institute has a debate club for high-school students, an online civics challenge for students in grades 6 through 12, a free constitution series webcast library, a summer civics camp and an online civics learning platform.

Civic education and engagement, Suggs said, has trickle-down and trickle-up effects. The trickle-up effects are found most often in non-white students and students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, while the trickle-down effect is shown in white students.



Sarah Suggs, President and CEO of the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute, spoke at the NFU Convention.

Studies have shown that when parents have strong civic habits, like following the news, voting and talking about politics at home, their children are also likely to prioritize civic engagement – thus the trickle-down effect.

On the other hand, students are also leaders for their parents, the trickle-up effect. For example, studies have found an increase in voter registration among single mothers when children participate in civics education.

To learn more about the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute, go to <https://oconnorinstitute.org>.

To learn more about the online civics program affiliated with the Institute, go to <https://civicsforlife.org>.

Instructions

Adjust an oven rack to the middle of the oven. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line two sheet pans with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and baking soda.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, beat the butter on medium speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Add the granulated and brown sugars and salt and beat on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, add the egg, yolk and vanilla, and mix until smooth. Add the

flour mixture and beat on low speed until just combined. Add the chocolate and mix into the batter on low speed. Use a rubber spatula to give the dough a final mix and make sure it is completely combined.

Form the dough into balls, about 2 tablespoons each, and place 8 cookies on each sheet pan. Sprinkle each cookie with a little flaky salt, if desired.

Bake one pan at a time, rotating halfway through baking. Bake the cookies until the tops are golden brown and the cookies are slightly puffed and starting to crinkle, 10 to 11 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from

the oven and use the back of a spatula to gently press the top of each cookie to flatten it. Let the cookies rest on the sheet pan for 5 minutes, then transfer them to a wire rack to finish cooling. Cookies are best slightly warm but can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to three days.

Source: Sarah Kieffer via www.thevanillabeanblog.com

Email your favorite recipe to janet@mfu.org for publication in a future issue.



Remember to file your crop acreage reports with FSA by July 15

DAN MAHONEY
EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MN FSA
daniel.mahoney@mn.usda.gov

Agricultural producers are reminded to file crop acreage reports with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) after planting is complete. Deadline for annual certification of beans, grass seed, perennial forage and all other spring-seeded crop acreage in Minnesota is July 15. An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of USDA program benefits.

While July 15 is a common acreage reporting deadline, the acreage reporting dates do vary by crop and by county. Your local FSA office can provide acreage reporting deadlines by crop. To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide the crop and crop type or variety, intended use of the crop, number of acres of the crop, planting date(s), planting pattern if applicable, producer shares and irrigation practice(s). Producers will provide the information on a map that is provided by FSA with approximate boundaries for the crop. When applicable, the customer will need to provide the amount of acreage prevented from planting, and other information as required. Prevented planting acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA).

There are exceptions that apply to acreage reporting deadline dates. If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed. If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days



after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office. If crops are covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), acreage reports should be submitted by the applicable state, county or crop-specific reporting deadline or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

FSA does offer continuous certification for perennial forage. This means after perennial forage is reported once and the producer elects continuous certification, the certification remains in effect until a change is made.

Additionally, eligibility for many USDA programs requires compliance with Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions, known broadly as "conservation compliance." HELC and WC provisions apply to all land that is considered highly erodible or a wetland, and that is owned or farmed by persons voluntarily participating in USDA programs, unless USDA determines an exemption applies.

Before producers clear or prepare areas not presently under production for crops that require annual tillage, it is a requirement to file Form AD-1026 "Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification," with FSA indicating the area

to be brought into production. In addition, prior to removing trees or conducting any other land manipulations that may affect wetlands, remember to update form AD-1026, to remain in compliance with the wetland conservation provisions.

Prior to purchasing or renting new cropland acres, it is recommended that farmers and ranchers check with the local USDA Service Center to ensure that activities will follow the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.

Producers with an eAuth account linked to their USDA customer record can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units by logging into farmers.gov. Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via form FSA-211 Power of Attorney, Business Partner Signature Authority, along with other signature types, or as a member of a business can now access information in the farmers.gov portal.

Producers should contact or make an appointment with their local USDA FSA Service Center before the applicable crop reporting deadline. For additional information on acreage reporting, highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation compliance, contact your USDA Service Center.

Join May 8 Zoom to plan women's events

By Lisa Holm

For the safety of everyone, we made the difficult decision to postpone the Women's Retreat that was scheduled for the end of March to a later date to be determined. As much as we were looking forward to our time together, we couldn't in good conscience ask folks to travel home under a winter weather advisory.

While we are disappointed in having to postpone the retreat, we are excited about the opportunity to host everyone at a later date. The support and enthusiasm we received for the retreat was incredibly heartening. We look forward to convening the women of MFU in the future under better circumstances.

Please stay tuned for updates via e-mail, social media and MFU's website.

Join us for our quarterly check-in via Zoom at 11 a.m. May 8 to brainstorm and plan women's events. Contact program coordinator Lisa Holm for more information at lisa@mfu.org. We would love to see you there.

Calendar of events

May 8

Women's event planning Zoom.
Email lisa@mfu.org for more info.

May 20

New Member Happy Hour (virtual).
Email claudine@mfu.org for more info.

May 24-27

MFU office closed for Memorial Day

June 6

Dairy Cow Quadracentennial,
Dodge County Fairgrounds, Kasson.

For an up-to-date listing of events, visit our website: mfu.org/events



ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Is your contact info up to date with MFU?

Email changes to claudine@mfu.org.



Applications open for NFU Beginning Farmer Institute

The National Farmers Union Beginning Farmer Institute is a free, online, 10-week intensive program intended to improve the health of your farm or ranch business. The program is open to producers ages 18 and up and is inclusive of all operation types and scales of production.

Each cohort is selected through a competitive application process, and applications are now open at www.nfu.org/bfi. The application deadline is July 1.

If accepted, you will attend online seminars, network with peers, pursue independent learning activities, and receive one-on-one technical assistance. Participants

who complete all the necessary requirements will be considered for an additional in-person session, which will include additional trainings, farm tours and networking with Farmers Union leadership.

The program is structured around weekly online trainings led by experts in business management. Over the course of 10 weeks, participants will be expected to watch 30 to 60 minutes of video trainings each week, followed by participation in weekly, 2-hour Q&As with subject-matter experts.

For more information, contact Lisa Buckner, NFU's Education Coordinator, at lbuckner@nfudc.org.



Member photos

Above, Goodhue County members gathered at Mandy's Coffee & Café in Red Wing for a Brainstorming Event. Pictured, from left, Gail Donkers, Mark Vieths, Bill Emery, Mary Lundell, Ali Peters, Rachel Bohman and Danny Lundell. At right, Kathy Hupf, one of the owners of CannonBelles, shows a wheel of Gouda during a tour hosted by the Goodhue and Dakota County Farmers Unions.

Send your images to janet@mfu.org for publication in a future issue of *Minnesota Agriculture*.





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Maple Grove	Brandon Hummel	(651) 288-4076
Marshall	Dennis Klocow, Jr.	(507) 532-0418
Menahga	Kristine Hendrickson	(218) 564-5300
Montevideo	Ivan Anderson	(320) 269-9463
Moorhead	Mari Berggren	(218) 512-0536
Moorhead	Aaron Schenck	(218) 236-1966
Moorhead	Robin Swanson & Jenna Crabtree	(218) 512-3003
Morris	Debbie Anderson	(320) 589-3245
New York Mills	Lisa Preuss	(218) 385-3344
Norwood YA	Lisa Valiant	(952) 467-2922
Olivia	Paul Johannes	(320) 523-1150
Owatonna	Ben Flemke	(507) 413-6116
Rochester	Chris Sanders	(507) 282-4411
Roseau	Emily Baugher	(218) 463-2369
Thief River Falls	Jay & Brady Swanson	(218) 681-6443
Warren	Jay & Brady Swanson	(218) 745-5313
White Bear Lake	Abby Moffitt	(651) 217-3638
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Windom	Jessica Krick	(507) 831-3541

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