




Portage County Farm Bureau

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Dave Meihak, District Manager - (715) 544-6824

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

2016 YFA Conference and WFBF Annual Meeting Highlights



Portage County YFA members enjoyed the Friday night meet and greet.

On December 2-4, more than 500 YFA members from across the state attended the YFA Conference.

This conference is held each year in conjunction with the WFBF Annual Meeting and was another huge success. YFA members were able to take part in breakout sessions covering everything from the social media, financial planning and the opportunities available through Farm Bureau.

YFA members also competed in state-wide contests such as Excellence in Agriculture, Achievement Award and Discussion Meet.



Portage County Members John Eron, John Herman, and Nathan and Lynette Wolosek participated in the states annual trivia contest for the Foundation.

On December 3-5, Farm Bureau members from across the state of Wisconsin gathered at the Kalahari Resorts in Wisconsin Dells to take part in the 97th WFBF Annual Meeting. Members attended breakout sessions that included a panel on water quality, membership and farm succession.

Delegates discussed and voted on hard hitting issues for agriculture.

Jim Holte was re-elected to a fifth, one-year term as the president of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation and Rural Mutual Insurance Company.

Don Radtke of Marathon County was elected vice president and re-elected to a three-year term on the board representing District 8 (Clark, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, Price, Taylor and Wood counties). Adam Kuczer, a heifer raiser and crop farmer from Pulaski in Shawano County, was elected to a three-year term on the board representing District 7 (Langlade, Marinette, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano and Waupaca Counties). He succeeds Wayne Staidl of Peshtigo in Marinette County.



Back row (L-R) Edwin Demask, Dick Roth, John Herman and Nathan Wolosek; front row (L-R) John Eron, Melissa Eron and Lynette Wolosek.



COUNTYnews

PORTAGE COUNTY FARM BUREAU EDITION



Portage County Farm Bureau Members Attend Ag Day at the Capital

“Ag Day at the Capitol is where farmers build relationships with legislators and explain the needs and opportunities for Wisconsin agriculture,” said Jim Holte, Wisconsin Farm Bureau President. “The difference this day makes for agriculture is tremendous.”

The Rural Mutual Insurance Company and GROWMARK, Inc., are major sponsors of the event. Co-sponsors of the event with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation include the Dairy Business Association, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association, Wisconsin Corn Growers Association, Wisconsin Horse Council, Wisconsin Pork Association, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Wisconsin Soybean Association and the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association.



Topics for discussion were the state budget, transportation funding, groundwater legislation, agrichemical fee reductions and other pertinent ag issues.



John Herman and Fran and Bev Cherney, Portage County Members met with Representative Nancy Vandermeer



Ag Day at the Capitol was March 8 at the Monona Terrace in Madison. Ag Day at the Capitol is the largest gathering of farmers from across the state representing a variety of farm groups to learn more about state issues and meet with their state legislators.



John Herman and Fran and Bev Cherney, Portage County Members met with Senator Testin.

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From the Desk of Lauren McCann, District 8 Promotions and Education Chair



Recently, I represented Wisconsin at the 2017 American Farm Bureau Federation FUSION Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Included below are the highlights of the trip.

The message from AFBF President Zippy Duvall: Engage. Engage with your consumers, engage with your peers and engage in the future of agriculture.

Attendees included Young Farmer and Ranchers, Promotion and Education members, Women’s leadership and collegiate members from all states. With a variety of sessions to attend, attendees of the conference learned how to improve their skills and develop an even larger networks or tribes as Vance Crowe of Monsanto discussed about people with similar goals with very different backgrounds and experiences.

Keynote speakers included Chris Koch, Rocky Bleier and Charles Petty. The sessions offered topics including genetics, building trust through transparency, social media, precision agriculture, video marketing, utilizing female leadership and educating the younger generation.

Attendees also were able to tour many Pittsburgh-area businesses and farms or volunteer in the community. In addition, collegiate members who moved on from their respective state competitions battled to the end, discussing topics such as food labeling, immigration rights, ag technology data rights and natural resource management.

This conference was invaluable in building relationships with Farm Bureau members from all around the country with the same passion for agriculture as I have, expanding my Farm Bureau family and developing skills and knowledge to interact with consumers in a positive way. I look forward to bringing the experience and knowledge I gained back to my counties and members.

I chose a few sessions that were right up my alley. The first was ‘Building Trust Through Transparency’ presented by Charlie Arnot from the Center for Food Integrity. Arnot talked about Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug, who was the leader of the Green Revolution.

Then Arnot reviewed the time line of agriculture and pointed to 1968 as the year of a shift in communication and trust in institutions being the downfall of trust in agriculture.

Prior to 1968, consumers trusted agriculture as an institution because they had no reason not to. Now, consumers value relationships and people with shared values more than facts and science-leading to a loss of social licenses and essentially trust.

This shift caused a huge disconnect because farmers and producers lead with facts, we know our food is safe because we have the science to prove it; however, to the average consumer that no longer matters, because they believe farmers and agriculturists do not share their values or concerns.

It is our job as advocates for agriculture to value consumers

concerns and understand that we want safe and healthy food, and that as farmers we are doing our best to produce the best food possible.

The second session that I attended was about Ag in the Classroom visits with Lauren Arbogast of Vivayic. As the Wood County Ag in the Classroom coordinator, I had a few concerns about getting a better response from my teachers. I realized part way through the session that every state does Ag in the Classroom differently and that our essay contest is unique.

A few key points I got from the session was to focus on being the teachers ‘easy button,’ by making more frequent stops rather than just once a year and to develop a working relationship so that you are a trusted agriculture resource.

Vance Crowe with Monsanto, who spoke at the YFA Conference in December, discussed ‘Leaving the Ag Tribe, Building Networks that Out-Compete Fear of Modern Ag,’ Vance provided names of people who specialize in different areas such as science, history and just being a consumer; however, that engage in great conversations over social media platforms.

My Twitter became a completely different platform in a about an hour. I was impressed at how much networking with people outside of the agricultural world can really impact my thoughts on how agriculture is viewed. Building a tribe of people who respect your opinion but not necessarily agree with it can benefit how you have conversations with consumers about food and force you to have a concise message.

Vance also reiterated the idea that all people value group loyalty and beliefs over science, really hitting it home how having a tribe of people in your corner that support your ideas is critical, so you are not the ‘man on the box’ shouting at the crowd with your ideas.

Sunday was an additional day of valuable sessions. The first one that I attended was ‘Educating the Confused Consumer: Using Words We All Understand’ by Paige Pratt from the Kansas Farm Bureau. This session was awesome. Pratt broke down the meaning and definitions of words that I use every day, such as insecticide, GMO, organic, etc. She did a fantastic job of illustrating the differences in agriculture practices and the whys.

Pratt also broke down the science of GMOs so that we were able to leave the session capable of explaining them to consumers of all ages and backgrounds.

The second session was ‘The Untapped Talent Pool: Female Leaders.’ Now, I know what my gentlemen readers are probably thinking: “Here we go, the female agenda.” For the record, there were men who attended this session. AFBF staff Lindsay Calvert focused on a few main points with the first being the amount of female heads of companies in the Fortune 500 as compared with

men--22 in total.

This is due to a few reasons. The first being the likability gap: women are hard on women and especially assertive women. Assertive women are not liked, assertive men are highly respected. I can resonate with this on so many levels, if anyone has met me personally, you will know why. Secondly, men are more willing to take risks, whether this be with their life or their career. A man may not be qualified for a job, but he will still apply, women are much less likely to do so because she does not believe she would be a good risk.

The last main point, strengthen your language. I am guilty of this on a daily basis and am making a strong effort to stop.

Women need to stop apologizing in communication: “I just,” “I feel like” or “I’m sorry to bother you.” Ladies, if you haven’t noticed, men do NOT do this.

Calvert also talked about mentors, and who have influenced us the most. For me that has been mostly men, but it should be a balance. Women should make it a point to mentor younger women trying to follow in their tracks.

Round 5 of sessions that I attended: “The Social Media Advocate: What works at Capitol Hill” by Randy Dwyer. There was a smaller crowd at this session so we were able to have some good discussion about how to interact with state legislators via email and even Twitter. Yes, I sent a Tweet to Representative Ron Kind, no I did not get a response.

The last session was with Kristin Reese at CommonGround. I hold a special place in my heart for this organization and I have a lot of respect for Kim Bremmer and all she does for agriculture.

Reese gave a lot of insight to the organization. CommonGround works to be inclusive, positive and always credible. We learned how to have conversations that connect, using consumer language and really working on being that agriculture resource for questions. Reese also provided a list of resources and blogs.

All in all, I pulled a ton of great information from this weekend in Pittsburgh and would gladly go again.

Lauren McCann

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Wood County Ag in the Classroom coordinator
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There are Benefits to Your Farm Bureau Membership:

Auto	Communication	Financial
• General Motors Discount	• AgriVisor	• AgriPlan Medical
Health	• The Country Today	Reimbursement Program
• ScriptSave® Prescription Drug Savings Card	Insurance	• Farm Bureau Bank
• Life Line (NEW)	• Rural Mutual Insurance Company	Protection
Supplies and Products	• Farm Bureau Financial Services	• \$500 Reward Protection
• Case IH	Travel	Program
• Caterpillar	• AAA	• Accidental Death Policy
• FS-GROWMARK Patronage	• AVIS Car Rental Discount Program	
• Grainger	• Budget (NEW)	
• Office Depot	• Choice Hotels International, Inc.	
	• Wyndham Hotel Group	

For complete details visit wfbf.com/benefits-membership.

Tractor Rollbar Rebates Available

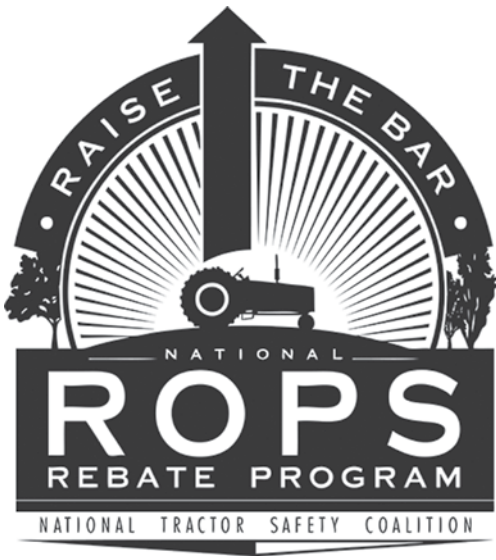
Tractor overturns are the leading cause of farm-related deaths. That’s why it’s so important that each tractor have a rollover protective structure (ROPS).

The Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program reimburses owners up to 70 percent (maximum of \$865) toward the total cost of purchasing, shipping and installing individual ROPS. Wisconsin tractor owners can apply for a ROPS via the hotline, 877.767.7748 or www.ropsr4u.com.

A ROPS, when used with a seatbelt, is 99 percent effective in preventing injury or death in the event of an overturn. More than one-half of the tractors in Wisconsin do not have this protection.

The program is run by the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation, and is made possible through philanthropic support from the Auction of Champions. More than 180 ROPS have been installed since 2013.

For more information, call Barbara Marlenga at the National Farm Medicine Center, 715.389.1519.



YFA Report By Beth Schaefer



Are you between the ages of 18-35? Did you know there is a whole set of programs, events and opportunities just for YOU? The Young Farmer and Agriculturist (YFA) Committee is JUST for younger members and caters to YOUR unique situation in the agriculture industry.

Hi! I am Beth Schaefer, and I have the absolute privilege of representing District 8 on the Young

Farmer and Agriculturist (YFA) Committee.

Each county has a YFA county chair. District 8 is proud to have a full slate of enthusiastic faces to serve YFA members: Clark: Max Malm; Lincoln: Kyle Kudick; Marathon: Katie Zoromski; Portage: John Kosmalski; Price: Dan Berg; Taylor: MJ Zenner; and Wood: Jason Behrend.

These folks are here to help you make the most out of your Farm Bureau membership, so please reach out to them. They have planned some great social and educational events for your county. Watch for postcard invites or visit wfbf.com/programsevents/young-farmer-and-agriculturist-program to learn about upcoming YFA opportunities and see all the latest events happening in your county and District 8.

You may have heard the old adage, “You get what you give.” This is true for almost all situations in life; except for Farm

Bureau. The many opportunities to travel, network and promote the agriculture industry that I have been afforded during my nine years of Farm Bureau membership has far surpassed what I have paid in membership dues.

How can you capitalize on your membership you ask? Choose to attend an upcoming YFA event, volunteer for a committee in your county or attend a county board meeting to learn what your county Farm Bureau is doing with YOUR dues and to serve YOU.

Mark your calendars for this upcoming YFA event.

7 p.m., Sunday, May 21, District 8 YFA Contest Prep Night
Do you want to learn more about Farm Bureau contests for YFA members? Bring your laptop and questions to the YFA Contest Prep Night. We will have past participants and winners share their secrets to competing in the Excellence in Agriculture, Achievement in Agriculture and Discussion Meet. This workshop also will be available to join via Zoom, an online meeting forum.

I am looking forward to meeting YOU soon at one of the many upcoming YFA events.

For more information, please contact me at ecaprior.schaefer@gmail.com.

Don’t forget to enjoy National Agriculture Week, **March 19-25**. Be proud of all YOU do for American agriculture.

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Director, Mark Schaffner	715.370.2904
Director, Nathan Wolosek	715.421.5342

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RMIC District Manager, Dave Meihak	715.344.6220

Ag Plastic Recycling Available

Revolution Plastics, an agricultural plastics recycling company will be providing dumpsters for plastic silo bags, bale bags and bunker covers (no covers with nylon scrim).

They provide the dumpsters along with plastic pickup service at no cost to you. All you need to do is call Revolution Plastics or visit www.revolutionplastics.com/index.php.



Farm Women’s Luncheon, April 22

The next Farm Women’s Luncheon is on **April 22**.

UW Extension agent Heather Schlessler will demonstrate straw bale gardening.

Where: 212 River Drive, Wausau
When: April, 22, 1-2 p.m.

The luncheon is sponsored by Marathon County HCE and Marathon County Farm Bureau Federation.

Register online at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfx64u4HNcOuXHU2SQayLbVLlhEt4jkVVlvWGT_WiUbYO1JSw/viewform?c=0&w=1.



DID YOU KNOW?

In Portage County, agriculture accounts for \$1.1 billion in economic activity.