

# Eau Claire County Farm Bureau

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## Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

## Eau Claire YFA Members Attend YFA Conference By Alex Patten, Eau Claire County YFA Chair

The YFA Conference was held on Friday, December 6 through Sunday, December 8 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. As a relatively new member to Farm Bureau, as well as the Eau Claire County YFA chair, I had the opportunity to go to the YFA Conference. What a great experience! The conference was packed with tons of great things including meeting other YFA members from around the state, great contests, speakers, workshops, and entertainment, just to name a few.

Visiting and mingling with other YFA members was definitely one of the greatest highlights. This included catching up with those individuals I knew from college as well as other organizations. It was great to see what others have been up to, whether it be those next steps of involvement on the family farm or perhaps their current career in the agricultural community. The Conference also gave everyone the chance to spend time socializing and meeting new people on the county, district and state level.

Great speakers are an important part of every great conference and the YFA Conference had just that. Attendees had the opportunity to listen to speak-



Alex Patten (far right) mingled with YFA members from across the state.

ers such as Dr. Jude L. Capper on “Livestock Myths and Misconceptions.” This was a great presentation for the Conference because as more and more people become removed from farming, it becomes more and more important to make sure that we are educating the public about the facts and importance of agriculture. Dr. Capper went over controversial topics such as “Meatless Mondays”, grass-fed versus corn-fed beef, and the impact of buying local foods on our carbon footprint.

Workshops were another highlight of the YFA Conference. No matter what your interests, there was a workshop for you. Workshops included anything from Farm Bureau 101 for newer members, to Financing a Start-up Farm for those wishing to get personally involved in production agriculture, to Farm Bureau 202 for those looking to get even more involved in Farm Bureau.

Last but not least, you can't forget about entertainment!



Jacki Pettis posed for a photo during the YFA Conference.

While mingling Friday night attendees had the chance to see the performance of Bumblefist, a rock band out of Eau Claire. They provided a great show and everyone had their opportunity to show off their dancing skills (or lack thereof) out on the dance floor. On Saturday night there was a performance by James Wedgwood, a talented ventriloquist. The show provided a great performance which included both the use of his puppets as well as interaction with the audience.

The YFA conference was great for everyone who attended. It is definitely a great experience both for experience YFA members, as well as a great event to get new YFA members interested and active on the county, district and state levels.

**To sum the YFA conference up: If you weren't there you really missed out!**



Brandon Boettcher (center right) attended the District 4 YFA meeting.



# COUNTYnews

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY FARM BUREAU EDITION

## Eau Claire Members Attend WFBF Annual Meeting

Members of the Eau Claire County Farm Bureau attended the WFBF Annual Meeting December 7-9 in Wisconsin Dells. Members in attendance were Steve, Leslie and Heidi Strey, Jacki and Lisa Pettis, Brandon Boettcher, Alex Patten and Jane Mueller. Delegates representing Eau Claire County Farm Bureau were Lisa Pettis and Brandon Boettcher.



Eau Claire County Farm Bureau members who attended the WFBF Annual Meeting were (back row) Steve Strey, Brandon Boettcher, (front row) Lisa Pettis and Jane Mueller. Not pictured were Leslie and Heidi Strey, Jacki Pettis and Alex Patten.

During the Annual Meeting members were treated to workshops on topics ranging from learning more about Farm Bureau to learning about state road funding and issues regarding implements of husbandry on the roadways. Those in attendance also heard from Dr. Jude Capper, an adjunct professor at Washington State University and affiliate professor at Montana State University. She is also a consultant for Livestock Sustainability Consulting. Her message talked about how things are not always as they seem when dealing with livestock and the sustainability of producing it. Jude's talk wasn't pro-conventional farming, nor was it pro-organic or pro-grass-fed. What she really wanted us to think about, as farmers, was that there is more to the story than just simple misleading facts. One example she gave was when she talked about how when making comparisons of grass-fed vs. conventional beef. Jude confirms that it is absolutely true that grass-fed beef does have more omega 3 fatty acids (which are good for you) than conventional beef, but what Jude says doesn't get mentioned is that grass-fed beef also takes more water and land to produce the same amount of meat. So her question was, which one is really more

sustainable? These were the types of issues that Jude brought up and it was fascinating to see the science behind her conclusions.

For the Farm Bureau Extravaganza, members were treated to ventriloquist James Wedgwood and an evening of laughs and funny skits. Members were then able to attend a reception for the Distinguished Service to Agriculture recipient Dennis Frame (Trempealeau County) who worked for Discovery Farms, Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau recipient Yvonne Shepherd (Trempealeau County) and retiring Chief Administrative Officer Roger Cliff.

We also had the great pleasure of having American Farm Bureau Federation's President Bob Stallman come to address us. It was both intriguing and exciting to hear his message. His message was one that was both realistic of the extraordinary chal-

lenges that agriculture has in front of it, but also the opportunities that will be in store for us. He talked about the lack of a farm bill and immigration policy as some of the biggest let downs of this congress. He reiterated AFBF's commitment to seeing the introduction and passage of legislation that will help agriculture and farmers grow into the future.

The most important job of members attending the WFBF Annual Meeting is to discuss policy resolutions that have been submitted from the county level. One of the resolutions that were approved by the delegate body started by Eau Claire Farm Bureau president Steve Strey. It's a true testament that our organization relies on its members to set our policy, not only on a state level, but submitting resolutions that go all the way to the American Farm Bureau.

We make a difference and we have a voice!

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## Wisconsin Ag Women's Summit

The Wisconsin Ag Women's Summit is a time to connect with other women in the state. There are breakout sessions and opportunities for us to learn and network with other women from the same farming backgrounds we might also come from.

This year's Wisconsin Ag Women's Summit will be at the Madison Marriott West on March 14-15. The keynote speaker will be Chariti Gent Founder of Chariti Gent Life Coaching, Inc. The cost is \$115 per person by February 14 and \$140 per person after February 14. Final registration deadline is March 7. There is a block of rooms reserved at the Madison Marriott West for (up to 4 people per room) at a cost of \$116 per night plus tax.

To register for the Wisconsin Ag Women's Summit visit [wfbf.com/programsevents/event-registration](http://wfbf.com/programsevents/event-registration).

## President's Perspective



Hello everyone, my name is Steve Strey. My wife Leslie, 11-year-old daughter, Heidi and I own an 80-acre farm in the Town of Clear Creek, near Foster and raise Angus/Simmental commercial beef cattle. Our 70 cows produce feeder calves that we market in the fall, as well as club calves for fair projects. Along with the cattle, we rent and crop an additional 400 acres and sell corn, soybeans, oats, hay and straw. There is never a dull moment on the Strey Farm. Heidi raises hogs for 4-H, sells eggs from her hens (for her college fund), and cares for many barn cats. Leslie is the Town Clerk for Clear Creek and works part time as the warranty writer for Value Implement in Osseo. I am the local auctioneer, working with Northern Investment

Co. out of Independence. Being a true family farm, my dad Allen Strey who has retired after 30 years in the construction trade, enjoys coming back to the farm to help with field work, working cattle, and maple syrup production in the spring.

I am honored to address you as the newly-elected Eau Claire County Farm Bureau president. Having served on the board for several years, I was provided with the opportunity to lead the board. I am excited to represent agriculture in a positive manner in the community, state and nation. It is definitely an important time in agriculture with much turmoil and uncertainty; with the lack of a farm bill, immigration reform, global trade, bad weather, transportation, animal rights activists, and many other topics at the forefront of agriculture, there has never been a more critical time to get involved. Farmers make up less than 2% of the U.S. population. Therefore, it's extremely important we stand up for what we believe in, so

our businesses and way of life can be preserved. If we don't fight for our right to farm, surely no one else will. The WFBF clearly gives a grassroots approach for our voices to be heard in Madison and Washington, D.C. as well as in our local towns and counties. I would like to thank everyone for their years of membership in the WFBF at whatever level of your involvement. I would also like to challenge everyone, including myself to step up the pace and represent our community in a professional, united-front, so the next generation has the opportunity to feed and clothe the world like we do.

Best wishes to all,  
**Steve Strey**  
Eau Claire County Farm Bureau President

## Fall Washington, D.C. Trip By Steve Strey, Eau Claire County Farm Bureau President

From September 17-19 I had the honor of being in Washington, D.C with about 30 people consisting of my fellow farmers and WFBF members, staff and the state board. We flew in to D.C. in small groups from several locations in Wisconsin, and with the help of our guides Karen Gefvert and Casey Langan rendezvoused at Regan National Airport. The purpose of our visit was three-fold. We were to lobby our representatives in Congress and the Senate on topics important to Wisconsin agriculture, visit foreign embassies to discuss trade policies, and meet with officials at USDA to discuss problems with current rule implementations.

WFBF arranged meetings with our respective legislators to discuss our concerns, but first we were briefed at the nearby AFBF. At AFBF, every topic we needed to talk to the law makers about had its own expert. They did an excellent job bringing us up to speed on all the information, right up to the bill that would hit the floor that day with an expected vote. Our District 4 group had appointments with Congressman Kind and Senators Johnson and Baldwin to discuss immigration, trade, the Water Resource Development Act, Dairy Policy, and most importantly the farm bill. Unfortunately, all our elected officials were double booked and we didn't see any of them, but we did relay our information to the appropriate staffers. Our WFBF staff informed us that this was okay because most of the time the staffers know just as much if not more than the legislators themselves do.

During our trip we visited the New Zealand and Netherlands foreign embassies. The nice young ladies made us feel at home while they taught us about agriculture in their home countries. They compared their economy to the U.S. as we discussed trade policies and tariffs of imports and exports. It was interesting and unbelievable to hear that according to New Zealand, their dairy imports to the U.S. didn't affect our market or policies.

Another opportunity to learn and discuss happened at the USDA. We met with officials from NRCS, FSA, DNR and Federal Crop Insurance. I was surprised that these people wanted to listen more than talk. After introducing themselves they asked if anyone had any concerns or questions. Every farmer in the room had their hand up. I was glad to learn about positive up-coming changes in crop insurance and conservation compliance. The only thing bad about our visit to the USDA was that it wasn't long enough.

We kept a busy schedule working hard, but did have some time to enjoy the sights and sounds of Washington, D.C. On



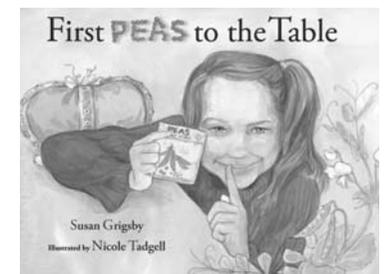
Eau Claire County Farm Bureau president Steve Strey went with Todd Quarne and Joe Bragger to represent District 4 to the Washington, D.C. trip.

one evening several of us took a night tour of the monuments. The tour ended late and we hadn't eaten supper yet, so we ventured into downtown D.C. for some fine cuisine only to learn that all the restaurants close their kitchens at 11 p.m. After wandering the streets and getting lost, we settled for Dominoes carry out pizza and beer at midnight. Navigating D.C. subways and taxi cabs proved to be exciting and a source of entertainment for us. We learned that even with GPS, cab drivers get lost. It didn't help even though we kept telling the cabbie the name and address of the building because he didn't understand much English. I became a renegade when I put my subway pass in the wrong slot in the toll gate and it didn't come out. The rest of the day two of us would sneak through at the same time when the guard wasn't looking. We also spent much time walking between appointments, which proved to be much safer for me, and allowed us to view the amazing Capitol and beautiful buildings on the Mall and Hill. I managed to get into the Library of Congress for a few minutes. It made me feel like Nicholas Cage in the National Treasure movie, although I didn't steal the Declaration of Independence or find the President's secret book. It was easy to have a good time and laugh when we were with our fun-loving District 4 Board member Joe Bragger.

It truly was an honor to represent Wisconsin farmers in our nation's Capitol. I will never again have to wonder if being a Farm Bureau member is important or worth the dues. It definitely is. It's hard to comprehend how hard our WFBF and AFBF work to protect our right to farm. I urge all of you to become more involved with the your county Farm Bureau. It does make a difference, even in Washington, D.C.

## Ag in the Classroom Essay Contest

"Wisconsin gardens provide many food choices for us" is the topic of the essay contest from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau's Ag in the Classroom program.



Our 2014 Book of the Year is "First Peas to the Table" by Susan Grigsby. The book and essay topic will allow us to educate students about where food comes from, learn about Thomas Jefferson and his gardening research, understand how plants grow and how to make healthy food choices," said Darlene Arneson, Ag in the Classroom Coordinator. "We will again link the book, the accompanying lessons that we write for our Book of the Year, various Wisconsin educational resources, and other Ag in the Classroom lessons into resources for teachers, students and volunteers to use in promoting and preparing essays."

Essay submissions must be between 100 to 300 words in length and will be judged on content, grammar, spelling and neatness. All contest rules, lesson plans and sample classroom activities are located at [wisagclassroom.org](http://wisagclassroom.org) or by contacting Arneson at 608.828.5719 or [darneson@wfbf.com](mailto:darneson@wfbf.com). Participating students and schools need to submit essays by April 1 to their county Farm Bureau essay coordinator. A list of coordinators is available at [wisagclassroom.org](http://wisagclassroom.org).

## Welcome New Members

Richard Anderson	Jo Ellen Johnson
Elizabeth Baribeau	Gregory Jungerberg
Rodney Berger	Diane Kerkhof
Kristopher Bergstrom	Brett Kohnke
Laura Bernard	Shannon Lindquist
Kelly Bowe	Michelle Madison
Lucas Brown	Brandy Nellessen
Nickolas Butler	Mark Smith
Blake Doud	Steven Wicklund
Jacob Fron	Fiona Williams
Jason Griepentrog	Adam Zich
Lisa Harris- Gore	Augusta FFA
Justin Hoffman	
Ryan Homan	

## There are Benefits to Your Farm Bureau Membership:

### Auto

- General Motors Discount

### Communication

- AgriVisor (NEW)
- The Country Today

### Financial

- AgriPlan Medical Reimbursement Program
- Farm Bureau Bank

### Health

- ScriptSave® Prescription Drug Savings Card
- Stroke Detection Plus

### Insurance

- Rural Mutual Insurance Company
- Farm Bureau Financial Services

### Protection

- \$500 Reward Protection Program
- Accidental Death Policy

### Supplies and Products

- Case IH
- FS-GROWMARK Patronage
- Grainger
- Office Depot

### Travel

- AAA
- AVIS Car Rental Discount Program
- Choice Hotels International, Inc.
- Wyndham Hotel Group

For complete details visit [wbf.com/benefits-membership](http://wbf.com/benefits-membership).

## Director's Message



Greetings,

I recently got a call from Todd Quarne, Trempealeau County Farm Bureau president and Policy Development (PD) Committee member, thanking me for the opportunity to serve on the PD Committee. He had just completed 4-5 hours discussing policies on sustainability for agriculture. I feel he was truly sincere in his thanks but a little exasperation in his voice left me wondering?

I had the opportunity to serve on the PD Committee as well several years ago and can say that it was one of the most rewarding and challenging opportunities of my time with Farm Bureau. It was rewarding in the way I learned about all of the topics that faced farmers through-out Wisconsin. Topics included taxation, education, environment, production, natural resources and hunting and high on the priority list this year, transportation. The development of policy can at times be very challenging when you consider that Wisconsin Farm Bureau represents all types of agriculture in Wisconsin and is the largest general farm organization in the state. Getting a cash grain farmer from Dane County to understand the intricacies of dairy policy and how this affects a dairy farmer from Buffalo County can lead to an interesting discussion. From tree farming to aquaculture, the PD Committee goes through every policy that has been formulated and voted in at county annual meetings.

I am very proud of the efforts of District 4 members and their accomplishments this year. Counties attaining member-

ship growth include: Eau Claire, Buffalo, Jackson, La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties. Paul Wehrs and the gang from La Crosse County worked throughout the last few years to change their county's animal unit regulations to better reflect current farming practices. These efforts not only prompted change in county zoning, it earned them a County of Excellence Award. I would also like to recognize Steve Strey (Eau Claire) and Brady Laufenberg (Jackson) for drafting resolutions that have been accepted into the PD process for approval by our WFBF Annual Meeting delegates. This year's graduate from the leadership institute was Ray Liska (Buffalo County). Finally, many congratulations to Jack and Pat Herricks (Monroe) on being finalists in the Leopold Conservation Award.

This year is somewhat of a big deal for District 4 in that two of the major recognitions that Wisconsin Farm Bureau hands out each year have gone to members of Trempealeau County. The Distinguish Service to Agriculture Award, which recognizes individuals that have made outstanding dedication and service to farmers and agriculture in Wisconsin, was given to Dennis Frame. The Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau Award for outstanding service and support of agriculture through Farm Bureau has been received by Yvonne Shepherd.

Thank you Todd for your efforts on the PD Committee, and to all members of Farm Bureau for your support of agriculture.

### Joe Bragger

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District 4 Coordinator, Steve Boe 866.355.7344  
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Back Row: Devin Schlewitz; Alex Patten (YFA chair), Steve Strey (president), Pat Schaffer, Brandon Boettcher and Chad Dobberstein. Front Row: Al Kohlhepp, Matt Krenz, Jacki Pettis (secretary and treasurer), Tami Geske, Lisa Pettis (vice president and Women's chair) and Jane Mueller.

## District 4 Women's Fall Rally

On Saturday, October 26 seven Eau Claire County gals joined ranks with some of the other District 4 women at the Foster Cheese Haus to hear from Brandie Frees, enjoy the delicious food at the Haus and tour the Castle Rock Organic dairy processing plant in addition to the cheese caves just outside Foster. Brandie talked with the women about the sisterhood that exists between ladies in agriculture, and how in today's society it is often overlooked. She encouraged us to keep that sisterhood alive by helping each other as we are able.

At the processing plant we learned how Castle Rock processes their milk into pasteurized (but not homogenized) milk, many different flavors



Eau Claire County Farm Bureau Women who attended the District 4 Women's Fall Summit were (L to R) Mandi Pettis, Jacki Pettis, Lisa Pettis and Jane Mueller. Not pictured was Marge Pettis.

of cheese, and ice cream. At the caves we viewed the cheese aging storage area, and we tasted the cranberry orange, blue and cheddar varieties of their cheese. Lisa Pettis, Jacki Pettis, Jane Mueller, Marge Pettis and Mandi Pettis were in attendance for the event. Buffalo county will be hosting next year's Women's Fall Summit and we look forward to more women joining us for the fun!



Jacki Pettis, Mandi Pettis and Lisa Pettis talked with Brandie Frees prior to her presentation at the Foster Cheese Haus.



Mandi Pettis, Marge Pettis, Lisa Pettis and Jacki Pettis listened to Wayne Kostka talk about how Castle Rock Organic Farms got started and how it got to where it is today.