

# **Vernon County Farm Bureau**

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### Rural Mutual Agents in Vernon County:

**Kevin Bluske, Clint Bucher**  
(608) 637-2139

Dave Larson - District Manager

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

## Farm Succession and Estate Planning Workshop

Tuesday, March 18

- The Sports Page, Belmont – 9-11 a.m.
- Kickapoo Inn, Readstown – 1-3 p.m.



Join us to discuss viable solutions to business and estate succession issues many Wisconsin farm families face. The presentation will explore: how to be fair to your children in passing the business to your business heir(s), while also providing a fair inheritance to your non-active children; how to surmount common estate-tax traps; making sure you and your spouse are prepared for retirement and the potential need for long-term care; and how to assemble and work with a team of professional advisors.

Presenters: Jared Nelson from Farm Bureau Financial Services  
Attorney Rick Bollenbeck

  
**FARM BUREAU  
FINANCIAL SERVICES**

There is no cost to attend thanks to your local county Farm Bureaus. Light snacks will be provided.

RSVPs by March 11 are appreciated, but not required to District 3 Coordinator Gretchen Kamps at 866.355.7343 or [gkamps@wfbf.com](mailto:gkamps@wfbf.com).

## Maple Syrup Tour and Lunch

Do you enjoy learning? Pancakes? Bacon? Then you won't want to miss the **Vernon County Maple Syrup Tour and Pancake Lunch on Saturday, March 29**. This event is a chance to tour the maple tree grove at Obert Farms and learn more about the process of making syrup, what Farm Bureau does in Vernon County and enjoy some delicious pancakes.

This event is open to members and non-members who want to learn more about syrup and Farm Bureau. Please join us at S2271 Valley Avenue in LaFarge. We'll start the tour at 11 a.m. with lunch to follow. To RSVP to this event, please contact Dan Obert at 608.343.3867 or Gretchen Kamps at 866.355.7343 or [gkamps@wfbf.com](mailto:gkamps@wfbf.com) by March 26.





# COUNTYnews

VERNON COUNTY FARM BUREAU EDITION

## 2013 YFA Conference By Christin Schroeder

Most of you probably do not know me, I am Christin Schroeder. I moved to Vernon County in February of last year. I took a position at Premier Cooperative in Westby, and have hit the ground running. It has been a really fun year getting involved with the community and learning more about Farm Bureau! I am a graduate of the UW-Platteville with a degree in animal science. During my time at UW-Platteville, I was able to be a part of getting collegiate Farm Bureau started there. This experience allowed me to get involved in a different aspect of agriculture, so when I moved to Vernon County, Gretchen Kamps was adamant on getting me signed up as a member of Vernon County Farm Bureau.



The YFA Conference is a good place to connect with old friends; Christin is pictured with some college friends and current Farm Bureau members (L to R) Tina Holst, Taylor Schuetz, Christin Schroeder and Sara Larson.

In December, I was given the opportunity to go to Farm Bureau YFA Conference and Annual Meeting held at the Kalahari Resort in the Wisconsin Dells. I was sponsored through Rural Mutual Insurance Company to attend the conference. As a new member, I took advantage of meeting new people and even seeing a few old, familiar faces. This is a great opportunity for young members to get involved

with their county Farm Bureau. Friday night when we arrived at the conference, all of the YFA members had dinner and social hour, before we headed to our respective districts for meetings. Bumble-fist provided the entertainment for the night and did a great job.



Congratulations to Vernon County YFA chair Alex Bringe for representing Vernon County in the Discussion Meet. Great Job, Alex!

and silent auction. James Wedgwood did a great job of entertaining the audience with his humor and ventriloquism. The trade show and silent auction were a hit. They had a lot of interest in the items that were there.

Overall, it was great experience and opportunity to network with others involved in agriculture and Wisconsin Farm Bureau. I am already looking forward to going next year and continuing being involved in Vernon County Farm Bureau.

Saturday was a full day, so I will highlight just a few things. Dr. Jude Capper did a great presentation of the importance of agriculture and being an ag advocate. What I enjoyed the most about her presentation was that she gave us a few facts and figures we can use to counter the myths and misconceptions that are often presented in agriculture. Farm Bureau Discussion Meets were held on Saturday followed by awards and Excellence in Ag presentations. Saturday night was wrapped up with the incredible performance by James Wedgwood, a trade show

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2** County YFA Update
- Vice President's Message
- 'Our Food Link'
- RMIC Office Moved
- 3** Meet Jackie Miller
- Director's Message
- Photo Contest
- Essay Contest
- AITC Training Session

## WFBF Annual Meeting Highlights

In early December, nearly 1,100 Wisconsin Farm Bureau members gathered at the Wisconsin Dells to hold the WFBF Annual Meeting and YFA Conference. We set new records this year with the number of attendees. The conference was jam-packed with great speakers, fun entertainment, networking opportunities, a silent auction, trade show and awesome YFA contest participants.

Additionally, Farm Bureau delegates adopted the policies that will guide the legislative agenda for the state's largest general farm organization over the next year. Resolutions were submitted by farmers from across the state through Farm Bureau's grassroots policy development process. As a pair of state lawmakers prepare legislation to update Wisconsin's rules and definitions related to implements of husbandry (farm machinery), Farm Bureau members approved a variety of transportation-related resolutions which can be found online at [www.wfbf.com](http://www.wfbf.com) by searching *policy*.



The delegates elected to represent Vernon County for the 2013 WFBF Annual Meeting were (L to R) Robert Nigh, Scott Sherry, Steve Wagemester, Rod Ofte, Alex Bringe and Dave McClurg.

## YFA Update

Greetings to all Vernon County Farm Bureau and YFA members. I hope by the time this newsletter reaches you there has been a change in the weather to more moderate temperatures. (It was -16°F this morning).

For those of you who don't know what YFA stands for, it is Young Farmer and Agriculturist (YFA). The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation's YFA program is for members between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. The YFA program offers opportunities for leadership and skills development, along with the chance for YFA members to meet and network with other young farmers from around the state.

We have a euchre night planned for March 15 at Norwegian Hollow (E4533 Norwegian Hollow Road in Viroqua) starting at 7:30 p.m., but come when you can! This is an opportunity

to get off the farm and visit with some other younger farmers, even if they are not Farm Bureau members. Hope to see most of you there and remember to bring a friend.

Perhaps evenings aren't a great time for you. If so, please join us on Saturday, March 29 at the Obert Farm as we learn a little more about how maple syrup is made in our area and enjoy some pancakes and bacon! Kids are more than welcome. The fun starts at 11 a.m. If you know someone who wants to learn a little more about Farm Bureau, please invite them to come along!

Lastly, we are looking for ideas on how to promote agriculture in Vernon County, so if you have an idea, speak up and step up!

As summer approaches, it's not too early to think about applying for Wisconsin Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Agriculturist contests. This is an opportunity to meet other members from around the area and maybe even have a chance to compete at the state level. The three contests are: Excellence in Agriculture, Achievement Award and the Discussion Meet. For more information, visit [wfbf.com](http://wfbf.com) and search YFA contests.

Good times to you all and hope to see many of you this spring!

**Alex Bringe**  
Vernon County YFA Chair

## Vice President's Message

Greetings from the frigid Purdy Valley. It's a pleasure to serve on your Vernon County Farm Bureau board. We have a great mix of experience and enthusiasm. Attend some of the events in 2014 and I am sure you'll agree.

We have activities planned for families, younger members, school children and ladies along with the traditional fair. Our group is very active and becoming even more engaged in promoting agriculture locally.

There are many benefits to Farm Bureau membership. My wife and I saved almost a third of the dues cost with one night's stay at a participating hotel. Savings at Grainger, hotels and GM vehicles could really save you dollars on items you're going to purchase anyway.

These benefits pale in comparison to the work Farm Bureau has done and will continue to do on the legislative and rule making front with our legislators. We are a trusted source of information and advocacy for issues that are important to rural Wisconsin. Use value assessment, implements of husbandry, right to farm and environmental issues are some of the many issues that Farm Bureau has had a big part in drafting legislation. Sign up your friends and neighbors so they can enjoy these benefits and strengthen our voice in Madison for common sense government that addresses the issues important to all of us.

### Robert Nigh

Vernon County Farm Bureau Vice President

*For those of you who don't know me, my wife, Betty, and our four children farm in the Purdy-West Prairie area with my brother Randy. We have an 80-cow dairy herd focusing on Registered Holstein elite polled genetics, Ryan has a 70 cow-calf herd that carries some embryos from our dairy herd. We farm 900 acres of tillable land, with pasture and woodlands making up another 700. I've served on the National Holstein Board and have been on the Viroqua School Board for many years.*



As a voting delegate at the 2013 WFBF Annual Meeting, Robert Nigh shared the Vernon County voice during the delegate session.

## Our Food Link

Many of you might be familiar with a program called 'Food Check-Out Week'. Historically, this week has been used to celebrate the week that many families have earned enough income to buy their groceries for the year. As our Farm Bureaus are able to get more active and engaged and there are more opportunities to meet with consumers throughout the year, the American Farm Bureau Women's Committee worked hard to design a program that could meet the needs of Farm Bureau's that work tirelessly promoting agriculture all year at various events.



'Our Food Link' is a year-round program that county and state Farm Bureau volunteers can use to effectively reach consumers of all ages and backgrounds with information about today's agriculture. The AFBF has designed a planning toolkit to help counties get started thinking about projects that will engage people in their community. It includes sample activity ideas, media outreach sample text, program graphics and plenty of room to customize Our Food Link to your area. You can find more information about this program online go to [www.fb.org](http://www.fb.org) and search 'Food Link'.

If you have an idea to help promote one of the many agricultural commodities in Vernon County, please let us know. Maybe you're willing to host a farm tour for consumers, or maybe it is to write an article for the county newsletter to share more about what you do. Maybe you are not a farmer and you've got questions about how things on farms work or perhaps you are an agri-business owner willing to open up your doors and play host to some of our Young Farmer and Agriculturist members. Whatever your idea is, we'd like to hear it. The board meetings take place on the third Tuesday of each month rotating between the Rural Insurance Office in Viroqua and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve in Lafarge at 7:30 p.m. If you can't make it to the meeting, please feel free to email your comments to Gretchen Kamps at [gkamps@wfbf.com](mailto:gkamps@wfbf.com). Our Food Link is full of opportunities and we're looking forward to using them to make agriculture stronger in Vernon County!

## Rural Mutual Insurance Company Moved!

We just want to take a moment to remind people that in August we moved our office to 520 N Main Suite B in Viroqua across the street from Walgreens and extended our office hours on Friday to 4 p.m. Clint, Kevin and Pandora invite you to stop in and take a look if you have not done so already.

Kevin also has the ability to offer you multi-peril crop insurance through RCIS. With the new farm bill it may be a form of risk management that you may want to take another look at. We do handle multi-lines of insurance including home, auto, business, farm and life. Farm Bureau Financial offers many types of life insurance and annuity products. Term policies continue to be a very affordable way to protect what is important to you. Term periods for 10, 20, 30 years and to age 65. One important feature is the convertibility of the term policy to a permanent policy the full term without proving insurability. They also offer a return of premium term that has been very popular.

Additionally, Rural Mutual Insurance now offers e-statements to our customers. If you would prefer to receive your statements through email or if you prefer to communicate with us through email we would be happy to accommodate you. If you have any questions, please stop in or call Kevin, Clint or Pandora. They are happy to help you.

Our emails:

Pandora Wyman: [assistviroqua@ruralins.com](mailto:assistviroqua@ruralins.com)

Kevin Bluske: [kbluske@ruralins.com](mailto:kbluske@ruralins.com)

Clint Bucher: [cbucher@ruralins.com](mailto:cbucher@ruralins.com)

Lastly, it has also come to our attention that some of you have an old phone number in your speed dial that we no longer use with our new phone system. Please update our number to 608.637.2139 and our fax is 608.637.2140.

We look forward to working with you!

Thank you,

**Kevin Bluske, Clint Bucher and Pandora Wyman**



## Women Rooted in Agriculture - Meet Jackie Miller

As a way to highlight the amazing things our Farm Bureau women do, we're beginning a feature in our newsletters to highlight 'Women Rooted in Agriculture.' This month we're going to introduce you to Jackie Miller, a dairy farmer from Cuba City and member of the Lafayette County Farm Bureau.

Jackie got her start in Farm Bureau when she and her husband attended a district YFA event. At first, she was hesitant to head to the restaurant because she wasn't sure what to expect and she didn't think she would know anyone there. All of those concerns were wiped away as soon as they walked through the door. The district YFA representative gave them a warm welcome and made them feel comfortable. Jackie's advice to anyone who is considering an event for the first time is to go and trust that when you get there you'll meet people with similar interests and backgrounds. They'll even understand if you're an hour late because the silo unloader broke!

Jackie serves at the Lafayette County Ag in the Classroom chair and essay contest coordinator. In this role, she works to promote agriculture to the schools in our county and helps out at the booth at the county fair. She recruits volunteers to help read essays and took time out of her day to visit the classroom of the essay contest winner and celebrate with an ice cream party. She also earned the distinct honor of becoming a member of the Producer Club. When asked how she found her success, she said that she

simply started with family and friends, shared the membership benefits and found that many of them wanted to support an agricultural organization.

Farm Bureau has helped Jackie connect with other women in agriculture through attending county, district and state events. "The Farm Bureau is an amazing organization. I have met many amazing women in agriculture by attending events. I have made some awesome friends who are very supportive and definitely share my love for agriculture," she said. It is these friends and contacts that Jackie has built part of her support network through.

Jackie and her husband, John, are dairy farmers. In her free-time she enjoys sewing, reading and spending time with family and friends. They also have three children who are active on the farm being kids and spending time outside. Additionally, Jackie is a Sunday School teacher at her church and is a participant and board member in the local Mom2Mom group that helps stay-at-home moms connect. Still on her bucket list is to take her family to Door County. Having been there in high school she wants to share the beauty, scenery, various aspects of agriculture and the state's largest island with her children.



## District Director's Message



Not everything is always as it appears. We've all heard that expression. The sun today is shining brightly and all appears to be good, but when you step outside you're quickly reminded it's below zero and the wind chill takes your breath away.

Agriculture over the last five to six years appears to be doing great. And we have been doing great with respect to prices paid, record receipts and record exports. But as Paul Harvey would say... "And now the rest of the story."

Agriculture has its challenges, always has and always will. Some of those challenges are of our own making, like the high land and land rent prices. Some are the creations of others like the long overdue farm bill, immigration and chronic budget shortages.

We like certainty... we like to know what all of the pieces of the puzzle are before we invest our time, money and energy.

Needless to say, Congress has neglected their responsibility and after nearly three years of discussion, the farm bill was just passed by Congress.

It will months before we understand all of the programs and

changes to new and exciting programs.

Farm Bureau will be engaged to help with the deciphering the context of the new programs and how they may impact your farm.

New trade pacts are in discussions and will play an important role in our conversations when we go to Washington, D.C. and visit with our representatives this year.

Trade today is the greatest driver of our growth; agriculture exports are projected to be close to 140 billion dollars. It is critical we have fair trade policies that allow for tariff free access to the countries involved.

Further, we continue to challenge the Environmental Protection Agency and its unwarranted consideration of reducing the Renewable Fuels Standard production goals. Few programs have had a greater impact on meeting this country's energy independence, job growth and farmers' balance sheets.

There will always be more issues and you can be assured Farm Bureau will be part of extending your voice when agriculture needs to be heard.

Awaiting the warm spring rains...

Be safe.

**Richard Gorder**  
District 3 Board Director

## Vernon County Farm Bureau Contacts:

President, Steve Wagemester	608.675.3187
Vice President, Robert Nigh	608.689.2633
Secretary/Treasurer, Scott Sherry	608.637.7440
Women's Chair, Jacqui Davison	608.604.8619
YFA Chair, Alex Bringe	608.606.9182

Director, David McClurg	608.637.2398
Director, Dan Obert	608.489.3867
Director, Bill Putze	608.629.5455
Director, Phil Solverson	608.637.3587

Vernon County Farm Bureau	888.830.2572
District 3 Coordinator, Gretchen Kamps	866.355.7343
WFBF Board Director, Richard Gorder	608.987.3424
RMIC District Manager, Dave Larson	608.935.9500

## Like to Take Photos?



Do you have a great photo that you've taken on your farm or in your yard? Submit it to the Vernon County Farm Bureau for our photo contest! The winning photo will be featured in the next Farm Bureau newsletter. Entries can be submitted to District 3 Coordinator Gretchen Kamps at [gkamps@wfbf.com](mailto:gkamps@wfbf.com).

## Ag in the Classroom Essay Contest



Do you have a fourth or a fifth grader in your house? Perhaps you have a grandchild, niece or nephew who fits this description? If so, please encourage them to participate in the Ag in the Classroom Essay Contest. Essays should

be 100-300 words and focus on the topic of, 'Wisconsin Gardens Provide Many Food Choices for Us.' Essays can be sent to Vernon County Essay Coordinator: Jacqui Davison, E15427 Burr Salem Road, Hillsboro, WI 54634.

Essays are due on April 1. They will be judged and the county winner will receive a prize. Their essay will also be forwarded to compete for top essay in the state. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Jacqui Davison or visit the Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom website at [www.wisagclassroom.org](http://www.wisagclassroom.org).

## Save the Date! Ag in the Classroom Training Session



Are you looking to learn more about the Ag in the Classroom Program? If you answered yes, please join us on **March 22, at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve in LaFarge**. We'll give you some tips and activities that you can take back and use in your classroom or the next time you have a chance to advocate for agriculture. Children are welcome and there will be activities for them during the workshop. The workshop will begin at 10:30 a.m. and conclude at 1 p.m. Lunch will be sponsored by the Vernon County Farm Bureau. For more information, or to register, please contact Gretchen Kamps ([gkamps@wfbf.com](mailto:gkamps@wfbf.com) | 866.355.7343) or Jacqui Davison (608.604.8619). **RSVPs are requested by March 19.**