

# Excellence in Ag Sample Application 1

## Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer and Agriculturist Excellence in Agriculture Award

*Note: Remember to use "A1" and "A2" when referring to applicants.*

### I. PERSONAL BACKGROUND (family, education and personal interests)

I grew up on my family's dairy farm. At a very early age, I was expected to pitch-in on the farm by feeding calves and helping my dad milk our cows. When I was eight years old, my family sold our dairy herd. My whole world changed. Though the cows were gone, I still wanted to do chores. So I went to work for neighboring farms by volunteering to pick rocks and to help make hay. As I entered middle and high school, I spread my wings and became extremely involved in extracurricular activities including sports, band, choir and FFA. I almost always had a part-time job too. I worked for a local butcher shop, sold cellphones for our local electric cooperative and I worked for several dairy farms where I milked A LOT of cows.

In high school, I was very involved in my local, state and national FFA programs. I earned my American FFA Degree, as well as represented my state FFA association as a National FFA Officer Candidate. As I finished high school, I had trouble deciding what I wanted to do. I eventually found my career path at our state land-grant university. I combined all of my interests into one degree program and in 2006 I graduated with my Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture Education. I immediately found myself back in high school, only this time I was teaching agriculture and biology. I also found myself engaged, and moving to a new area in my state. In between planning a wedding, buying a house and changing schools, I completed my Master's Degree in Agriculture Education.

It did not take my husband and I long to realize that our careers in education and large animal veterinary medicine were not going to be conducive to raising a family. So in 2011, I left the traditional classroom and moved to dairy nutrition education for the state milk marketing board.

My husband and I have two dogs and a one year old who keeps us on-the-go. I love being a mom! I can safely say that a great deal of my time is spent with our son, but I still find time to enjoy some of my hobbies including playing piano, biking, cross-training, and reading. My faith plays an integral role in my life, and I remain very involved in my church. I teach religious education and chair the Youth Group Fundraising committee. In our "down time", my husband and I enjoy dreaming up and completing projects around our home, spending time with our family and friends, and traveling.

### II. AGRICULTURAL INVOLVEMENT

#### A. Please explain the applicant(s) occupation.

I am a Regional Program Manager for my State Milk Marketing Board/State Dairy Council. In short, my job is to get kids to drink milk. I cover a seventeen county region in which I work with K-12 schools to educate students and school staff on the nutritional benefits of milk.

My visits to schools can range from visiting school nutrition programs to check milk equipment, take milk serving temperatures and present lesson ideas and promotions. I also visit school classrooms to present dairy and dairy nutrition lessons to elementary, middle and high school students. Over the past four years, I have presented to over 10,000 students to teach about the nutritional benefits of milk and how we produce milk and cheese in our state and coordinated presentations that reached an additional 7,000 students. My territory includes a large and diverse population of students and adults with a wide range of diversity and ethnic backgrounds. This challenges me to focus on each classroom's audience and background to use appropriate terminology, accurately explain production agriculture practices and represent our approximately 9,900 dairy farm families.

In addition to teaching dairy lessons, I also get to work with teachers, administrators and staff to help them facilitate and implement a student-driven program called Fuel Up to Play 60. In this program I work with students and staff to promote healthy eating, physical activity and student leadership. We work with the National Football League to promote sixty minutes of physical activity or "play" each day. The Milk Marketing Board promotes the "Fuel Up", or healthy eating, by promoting dairy foods as an important part of balanced nutrition. This school year I have assisted 30 schools and districts facilitate this program and have helped them capture more than \$17,500 in grant funding to maintain and grow their school's Fuel Up to Play 60 program.

Another major part of my position is to promote and educate consumers about our state's dairy products. Each month, I work with three television stations and two radio stations to present on-air interviews about recipe information. I choose recipes from our recipe collection, write-up questions and scripts for interviews, and prepare the recipes to be picture-perfect on television.

## II. AGRICULTURAL INVOLVEMENT (continued)

B. Please explain the applicant's (applicants') personal involvement in agriculture/agribusiness.

I am passionate about the dairy industry, and even though it is not part of my job description, I feel very deeply that it is important to be involved in the promotion of all types of agriculture. I volunteer for my county dairy and commodity promotion board. I have helped organize agriculture education activities at our county fair, volunteered at our county's June Dairy Breakfast and helped to organize our county's annual Farm City Dinner. I have not only met wonderful friends through this organization, but I have truly become a part of my community.

I have maintained on-farm involvement throughout most of my life. In high school and college I milked cows on local dairies, and in 2006, when my two brothers started their own dairy farm, I jumped at the chance to help out whenever I could. For six years you could almost always find me at their farm cleaning pens, feeding calves and filling in the occasional milking shift. When I moved away from the farm in 2011, I deeply missed the farm. So I became a "recreational" milker for my neighbor's 120 cow dairy farm. I milked weekend shifts and I got my "fix" milking and feeding calves. This part-time job truly helped me stay connected to my dairy roots. When my son was born in 2014, my time became limited. I still help out on neighboring farms when the need arises.

I have been involved in agriculture for almost my entire life, but it wasn't until two years ago that I became "vested" in an agriculture entity. My husband and I purchased our first registered Holstein, Stormy, from my brother. In December of 2013, Stormy blessed us with a heifer calf, Snoopy. Snoopy spent the winter in our backyard and currently makes her home at a dairy farm where she has now joined the milking herd and has tested at ninety-three pounds per day. We plan to flush and sell her embryos. We currently do not live at a property conducive to raising heifers, but we hope to some day be in a position to raise our own dairy heifers.

## III. IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

What does the applicant(s) do to positively promote and impact the agriculture industry?

My passion for agriculture and my strong background in education have given me a unique combination of talents that allow me the opportunity to each and every day make a positive impact on agriculture.

I began my life as a volunteer in my local 4-H club. From the time I was a young Cloverbud, I was serving at June Dairy Breakfasts, creating displays for June Dairy Month and educating fair-goers at my local county fair. My experience culminated in 2001, when I was selected as my county's Fairest of the Fair. Through this role, I visited classrooms, libraries, and civic groups to share the story of agriculture.

In college, I volunteered in multiple agriculture organizations on campus. I chaired events such as Ag Day on Campus, which brought over 5,000 urban elementary students to learn about agriculture, and dedicated myself to our on-campus "Breakfast on the Farm."

As I began my career in agriculture education, I had a multitude of opportunities to positively impact agriculture. I worked with FFA members to help them obtain over \$2500 in grants for their entrepreneurial projects. I worked with the FFA Alumni to improve the greenhouse facilities in our school. And I wrote grants totaling \$8500 to create a school forest management plan, make improvements to our greenhouse and develop a middle school FFA program.

I worked to create rigorous curriculum for my agriculture classes that allowed students to earn science credits and credits through our local technical college. I also collaborated with our Science Department to create an Advanced Placement Environmental Science course.

My greatest impact came in the form of my relationships with students. I coached teams for Career Development Contests, assisted students in applying for awards, and visited students at their places of employment. In my five years of teaching, I worked with over 300 FFA students, and advised one State FFA Officer. In addition to teaching, I also worked for the National FFA Organization as a Leadership Conference Trainer. In my travels, I facilitated leadership conferences in six states, to nearly 1200 FFA members.

As I transitioned into my current position, I began to engage in efforts to raise funds for other agriculture causes. In 2014, I chaired a benefit for the South Dakota Cares Fund for rancher impacted by a devastating winter storm. Over 400 people attended the event that included a steak dinner, silent auction and band. Over \$10,000 was raised from the event.

#### IV. ISSUES FACING AGRICULTURE

##### A. Please list and explain three important issues that agriculture needs to address in the next five years.

In order for our country to maintain our position as a leader in the global agriculture industry we must address these three important issues in the next five years: strengthen relationships with consumers, attract and engage young, diverse people to the profession of farming, and partner with our law makers to develop and implement policies that will allow agriculture to thrive in the United States.

Consumer confidence is important to American farmers. We not only have American consumers to provide for, we are responsible for supplying a global community with food and fiber. We need to continue to be transparent with consumers to share the message that the food we produce is safe to eat, is humanely produced and provides nutrition. This truth has come under attack as organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the Humane Society of the United States have begun to work to undermine conventional American agriculture production methods bringing a cloud of doubt to consumer confidence in agriculture production methods and standards.

Having grown up in agriculture, I am lucky to know better and I can correct and lead people to accurate and credible information. But millions of people are not so lucky to know and understand agriculture's story first-hand. That is why I work to tell agriculture's story in classrooms and with local television and radio. As Farm Bureau members, it is imperative that we continue to build relationships with consumers to educate about our production methods. We have an opportunity to personalize our agriculture stories by utilizing social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. My county Farm Bureau has created a Public Relations Committee to work on connecting farmers and consumers. We are collaborating with other commodity groups to hold a training for our members in developing their social media skills so that our members can share their story directly with consumers.

A second issue that agriculture needs to address in the next five years is the challenge of attracting and retaining young people to the profession of farming. In 2012, the United States Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture reported that the average age of the American farmer was fifty-eight years old and the number of new farmers who had been on their operations less than ten years, was down twenty percent. But most alarming in the report is that over one third of principal operators are over sixty-five years old, meaning land and assets will need to change hands smoothly and in a timely manner to keep American agriculture output strong.

Many young people looking to enter the profession of farming are overwhelmed by the cost of land and equipment that is needed to get started. I witnessed the tremendous risk and emotional toll that my brothers endured when they started their dairy operation in 2006. Their solid business plan and superior work ethic could not make commodity prices stable or make the weather cooperate. In 2013, they were forced to sell their cattle and seek other employment.

Their story is not unique. There are many excellent mentor programs and transition programs that are available to young people who want to enter the agriculture industry, and we need to expand and promote these programs so that the dream to be a farmer is attainable for those who are not born into a farming family. I believe that it is possible to build a network of support for beginning farmers. My county Farm Bureau sponsors a farm transition workshop each winter to help those entering into production engage with those who would like to get out. This is a small step in creating a larger network with high school agriculture programs, technical colleges, community colleges and universities to help pair our aging agriculturists with eager, educated young people who want to farm.

The final issue, and most critical in my opinion, is for agriculture to continue to engage with policy makers to create and implement local, state and federal policies that will allow agriculture to continue to grow and thrive.

Agriculture has a rich tradition in the United States, and over the past 250 years, our nation has gone from ninety percent of our population earning a living in production agriculture to less than one percent earning a living by farming today.

As we look to the next five years, our population will continue to grow and consumers and agriculture will begin to vie for rights for land development and critical water supplies - two commodities that we cannot reproduce. It is going to be crucial that all parties with a vested interest in production agriculture engage with elected government leaders to develop policies that ensure that agriculture will be given priority and access to land and water supplies. Agriculture MUST be engaged in this process. If we do not give our voices for agriculture, someone else, no matter their agenda, will.

As Farm Bureau members, we can help build these relationships by inviting elected officials to educational events and on-farm programming. We must also provide more training in parliamentary procedure, public speaking and leadership so that our farmers have the tools to run for elected positions. As a graduate of my state's Farm Bureau Leadership Institute, I encourage members to enroll in training to become more aware of their own leadership abilities and opportunities.

These three issues facing agriculture - strengthening relationships with consumers, attracting and retaining young people to production agriculture and partnering with our law makers to develop and implement policies favorable to agriculture are three most important issues that I believe are facing agriculture in the next five years.

#### IV. ISSUES FACING AGRICULTURE (continued)

- B. Choose one of the issues in your response to IV (A) and discuss how you personally have addressed, or can address, that issue and work towards a resolution.

American Agriculture has had a long standing, positive relationship with consumers. In recent years, production agriculture has come under fire. The growing disconnect between consumers and their food has left many people pondering how their food is raised and why certain production practices are utilized in American Agriculture. As an industry we have been providing answers, but we have not provided the "loudest" answers to educate consumers. That is why I believe that the agriculture industry needs to take a three-prong approach to building stronger relationships with consumers. We need to strengthen our presence in the media, we need to physically connect consumers to the farm and we need to, as an entire industry, come together to provide a strong, unified voice for agriculture. I have begun to follow my own good advice and am working with my career, county Farm Bureau and other organizations to achieve these recommendations in our county and state.

The first area in which the agriculture industry can create a better reach to consumers is by utilizing mass media to promote the agriculture industry. I am fortunate to have built strong relationships with radio and television media in my area through my job. I have been able to not only promote my state's dairy products through these outlets as part of my job, but I have been able to connect the agriculture organizations that I volunteer for with media too. I have worked to publicize events, such as our county Little Britches Kiddie Showmanship, through television interviews with fellow Farm Bureau members. To help prepare our members to work with the media, I coordinated a media training with our state's Farm Bureau Media Coordinator. For one entire board meeting, our directors learned key messaging and how to prepare to promote our cause with local media.

I am proud to say that with my help, our county Farm Bureau has reached out to our local television station to create opportunities for our Farm Bureau members to share important agriculture issues with reporters as well as share a positive agricultural message with consumers. Building relationships with our local television station has also gotten our messages on-line through the station's website and Facebook pages. And most importantly, now, when there is an agriculture related news story, our media contacts our media trained members to get their insight. These are small steps, but if continue to develop relationships with the media, our message will continue to reach larger and larger audiences.

The next recommendation that I have in meeting the challenge of building relationships with consumers is to physically connect consumers to their food and fiber; bring the people to the farm and bring the farm to the people!

Many agriculture organizations already have taken this step. June Dairy Breakfasts, county fairs and farm tours are very popular avenues for the agriculture industry to reach out to consumers. These events bring hundreds of thousands of people to farms each year, but are we really reaching our target audience? That is why I propose we bring more agriculture education opportunities to urban areas.

Through my job, I visit thousands of students each year to share how cows are milked, fed and cared for by dairy farmers. Our program is not unique. Agriculture in the Classroom is another great opportunity to educate future consumers of the importance of agriculture. The classroom is also a great place to dispel myths and engage teachers in conversations about agriculture production methods.

As an industry, we need to provide better training to classroom volunteers. We need to incorporate technology as well as basic teaching strategies into our classroom presentations. . This past year, I was fortunate enough to help coordinate a workshop at our state's Women's Summit on training volunteers who visit classrooms to teach about agriculture. I created the workshop, "Tips and Tricks for Presenting in the Classroom." I used my experiences in the classroom to develop an outline for other volunteers to utilize when they reach out and present to schools. The workshop included information on how to build relationships with teachers, utilize the Common Core Standards in creating their lessons, and how to create learning objectives for their presentation. The workshop was well attended and I hope to be able to provide more trainings on this topic in the future because if we do not do a good job engaging and teaching students, we will not be asked back into classrooms and another voice claiming to teach about agriculture will take our place.

The final way in which I have begun to help bring a unified voice for agriculture is to become involved in other agriculture organizations. I have been a member of our county dairy and agriculture promotion group for several years. I have helped with our agriculture education tent at our local fair, and helped plan our annual farm/city dinner. I am currently working with our local technical college, agriculture commodity group and Farm Bureau to develop a social media workshop for farmers and agriculturalists. I have gained a tremendous amount of insight through this project and hope to continue working on future projects that will bridge our organizations to help tell our agriculture story.

## V. GOALS

What goals does the applicant(s) have for the next five years related to his/her career, Farm Bureau involvement and involvement with other organizations?

In the next five years I have some very specific leadership goals that I would like to achieve in my career, Farm Bureau involvement and involvement in other organizations.

I am very passionate about my career and the organization that I work for. Over the next five years I would like to continue working in my current position, and play a larger role in developing partnerships with outside vendors to develop relevant marketing materials and classroom lessons. I have already begun to connect our organization with several agricultural education and marketing companies that will help us do a better job of sharing the importance of dairy in healthy diet, and developing life-long dairy consumers.

A second goal that I have for my career is to develop a closer relationship between our the Milk Marketing Board and the School Nutrition Association. I feel a stronger relationship between our organizations will help enable me to train school food service how food is grown and raised in our state, and why it is important to use these locally produced foods. I also plan to strengthen our dairy partnerships with food service professionals by developing continuing education curriculum that focuses on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points for serving safe, cold milk. These continuing education credits would be free to professionals, and would be an excellent way to build rapport with school food service professionals while helping them achieve their continuing education requirements. These two goals are very important to my current work and will continue to ensure that the education materials, training and relevance of the dairy nutrition message will remain an important priority for nutrition professionals in our schools.

The final goal that I have for my career in the next five years is to begin exploring the opportunity to potentially transition into the role of Director of my State Milk Marketing Board Dairy Council. My current supervisor is nearing retirement, and I am interested in potentially applying for this position when it becomes vacant. A new position will mean a move for my family and potentially earning credits that are heavily focused on dietetics and nutrition. I am not sure if this is the right move for me, so that is why I am beginning to explore the educational requirements along with the pros and cons of the job.

My involvement in Farm Bureau has afforded me some amazing training in advocacy, leadership and program development. Over the next five years I would like to employ these skills in several areas on the local, state and national level. I am currently in my first term as an elected board member to my county Farm Bureau Board of Directors, if it is possible, I hope to be elected to a second term next year and continue to serve on the Executive Committee as either treasurer or vice president. A major goal for me as a county board member is to help activate and engage our current membership by recruiting our membership to serve on our working committees. I believe that the best way to retain members is to help them engage in committees such as Public Relations, Policy Development and Ag in the Classroom. On the state level, I am currently serving my first of three years as a district representative to our state Young Farmer and Agriculturist committee. I would like our state to create a better membership recruitment plan for students who are technical college or two-year campus students. My county is currently piloting a membership program with our local technical college, and I hope to use this as a model for our entire state. I plan to run for chair of our state's Young Farmer and Agriculturist committee, and would be honored to be elected to serve our state's members. And finally, on the national level, I would like to apply for and be accepted to the American Farm Bureau Partners in Agriculture Leadership program. I would love to participate in this program to learn more about agriculture, "ag"vocacy and policy development and utilize the information at the local and state level.

Over the next five years, I know that I will have some great opportunity to become more engaged in other organizations. One organization that I currently serve is my church. I plan to continue teaching religious education and continue serving on the Youth Ministry Funding committee. As my son begins to grow, I look forward to volunteering in some capacity at his school. I plan to evaluate where my time and talents will best serve him and his school. I am not certain what opportunities there will be, but I do know that I want to be an active stake holder in his education. And finally, I plan to continue to serve on my county's local agriculture promotion committee. My goal is to help continue our great educational events and create new opportunities to engage consumers. A pet project that I have is to develop some type of promotional opportunities at our local municipality's summer concert series.

Five years will come and go by very quickly. That is why I have set these goals for my career, involvement in Farm Bureau and involvement in other organizations so that I can fully engage myself in making a difference in the causes that are most important to me and my family.

## VI. LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

*Note: This applies to both applicants, if applying together. Please indicate A1 and A2 when applicable.*

- A. List Farm Bureau leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers.

County Farm Bureau	Years
Ice Cream Stand Fundraising Volunteer	2012-2015
Young Farmer and Agriculturist Committee Member	2012-2015
Board of Directors - District Director	2012-2015
Holiday Donation Coordinator	2012-2015
Policy Development Committee Member	2012-2015
Newsletter Contributor	2012-2015
Award Application and Public Relations Committee Chair	2013-2015
Ag in the Classroom Committee Member	2013-2015
Little Britches Kiddie Showmanship Committee Member	2013-2015
County Board of Directors Treasurer	2013-2015
Dairy Promotion Event Coordinator	2014-2015
Committee on Working Committees Member	2014-2015
Annual Meeting Attendee	2010-2015
Young Farmer and Agriculturist "Dairy Christmas" Story Hour	2015
Young Farmer and Agriculturist Technical College Membership Promotion Coordinator	2015
Young Farmer and Agriculturist Spring Farm Tour Co-Chair	2015
Annual Meeting Emcee	2014
District South Dakota Benefit Co-Chair	2013-2014
District Summer Baseball Outing Coordinator	2013-2014
Young Farmer and Agriculturist Committee Chair	2012-2013 & 2008-2010

State/American Farm Bureau	Years
State Young Farmer and Agriculturist Annual Meeting Attendee	2008-2015
State Young Farmer and Agriculturist Committee	2015
State Excellence in Agriculture Award Winner	2015
State Annual Meeting Voting Delegate	2008-2009; 2012-2014
State Excellence in Agriculture Award Finalist	2012-2014
American Farm Bureau Legislative Policy Proposal Co-Author	2014
State Agriculture in the Classroom Summer Workshop- Presenter	2014
American Farm Bureau County Activities of Excellence Award Author	2014
State Women's Committee Women's Summit Workshop Co-Presenter	2014
State Farm Bureau Magazine Contributor	2014
National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference Participant	2013
State Agriculture in the Classroom Awards Judge	2013
State Young Farmer and Agriculturist Discussion Meet Judge	2010-2012
State Counties Activities of Excellence Award Author	2012
State Annual Meeting Workshop Presenter	2011
State Farm Bureau Leadership Institute	2010
State Young Farmer and Agriculturist Washington D.C. Fly-In	2010
American Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher Discussion Meet "Sweet 16"	2010
State Young Farmer and Agriculturist Discussion Meet Winner	2009
State Young Farmer and Agriculturist Discussion Meet Contestant	2008-2009

## VI. LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- B. List other agricultural leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers. (For example, Farm Credit, Soil Conservation, Farm Service Agency, farm cooperatives, 4-H, etc.)

Organization	Description	Years
State FFA Association	Member, Officer Candidate, Judge, Coach	1995-2015
County Fairest of the Fair Program	Fairest of the Fair, Judge, Coach	2001-2015
County Dairy Breakfast	Executive Planning Committee	2006-2015
County Agriculture Professionals Organization	Monthly Networking Meetings/Presenter	2011-2015
County Dairy and Commodity Promotion Group	Education Committee	2011-2015
State Jaycees Outstanding Young Farmer Program	Award Weekend Workshop Presenter	2015
World Dairy Expo	Volunteer Room Host	2006-2014
Local FFA Alumni Chapter	Member, Fundraising Committee	2006-2014
Food For America Program	Presenter	2014
Local FFA Chapter	Agricultural Education Award Recipient	2012
State Association of Agriculture Educators	Career Development Committee	2007-2011
County Agriculture Educators Organization	Presenter, Mentor	2007-2011
County Youth Fair	Dairy & Beef Superintendent	2007-2011
National Association of Agriculture Educators	"Turn the Key" Award Recipient, Member	2007-2011
Local FFA Alumni	Tornado Relief Fundraiser PR Chair	2011
Collegiate FFA Chapter	President, Student Leadership Outreach	2001-2006
State University All College Council	College of Agriculture Representative	2004-2006
College Dairy Club	Contest Judge	2001-2006
Association of Women in Agriculture	House Manager, Education Chair	2001-2006
State College of Agriculture Alumni Association	Outstanding Senior	2006

- C. List other community and non-agricultural leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers (For example, civic/service clubs, church, school, volunteer leadership, etc.)

Organization	Description	Years
Church Choir	Cantor, Member	1995-2015
Church Picnic	Volunteer	2012-2015
Taste of the County Event	Presenter	2012-2015
National School Nutrition Association	Member	2012-2015
State School Nutrition Association	Workshop Presenter	2012-2015
Women Celebrate Spiritual Retreat	Local Church Coordinator	2012-2015
Church Religious Education Committee	Instructor, Director of Religious Education	2013-2015
Church Youth Group	Fundraising Chair	2013-2015
Church Evangelization Group	Guest Speaker	2013-2014
Parish Education Committee	Instructor, Religious Education Director	2013-2014
County Engaging & Sustaining Leadership	Summit Volunteer	2013-2014
State Education Association	Member	2008-2011
Local High School Girl's Golf	Golf Outing Fundraiser Co-Chair	2008-2011
School Forest Committee	Grant Writer, Chair	2008-2011
Local Friends of the Arts	Volunteer	2008-2011
Local Cancer Benefit	Planning Committee	2010-2011
Local Teachers Association	Member, Parliamentarian	2010-2011
Local Education Association	Member, Event Volunteer	2007-2010
Parish Liturgy Team	Lector	1998-2010
Local Christmas Gathering for Families	Volunteer Set-Up	2009