



# Grassroots

District 4 News

## District Director Report



**Joe Bragger**

WFBF District 4 Director

With our WFBF Annual Meeting having come to a close, I cannot thank the members and delegates of District 4 enough for your work in creating great policy recommendations and for being so open-minded to the changes a virtual annual meeting provided.

It might not have been the annual meeting we are used to or had hoped for, but our members continued to lead the charge on the delegate floor.

Several policies drafted in the district by our members at county meetings have been adopted by our delegates in whole or part.

Resolutions proposed by our district that ultimately found their way to the policy book include:

- We support the proper training of FSA structure staff regarding new programs prior to the programs start date.
- We oppose penalties and receivables put on hold by FSA or NRCS being enacted until the case has gone through the entire process, review and possible mitigation.
- We support in increased availability of natural gas in rural Wisconsin.
- We support considering broadband a necessity and making it available to everyone.

One of the most striking parts of the delegate session was in the dairy section, when the current language, “We support the research and development of a dairy growth management and other systems that provide increased dairy industry stability and producer profitability” was voted on to be stricken and replaced with, “We oppose supply management in any other way than at the processor level.”

The delegates voted it down, keeping our current language for supply management in

place that our district, as well as others, have fought so hard for.

At the federal level, the language, “We support a dairy growth management plan that improves the welfare of farmers, processors and consumers” was again challenged and also was voted to remain the policy book by a considerable margin.

Beyond our policies, I want to call out a few folks and thank them:

First, I want to thank Darby Sampson for her six years on the Promotions and Education Committee and the past year serving as the chairperson and representative on the WFBF Board. Darby has always put those around her first and I have clearly seen her passion for agriculture and the members of District 4. I am pleased to share that Brenda Dowiasch of Eau Claire County has been selected to follow in Darby’s footsteps, bringing the same passion for agriculture and our district as her predecessor.

Next, Rosli Bragger (yeah, that’s right, she is my wonderful daughter) has served on the YFA Committee for the last three years. Savannah and Keith Henke will represent us as District YFA chairs for the next three years and also began their term during the WFBF Annual Meeting.

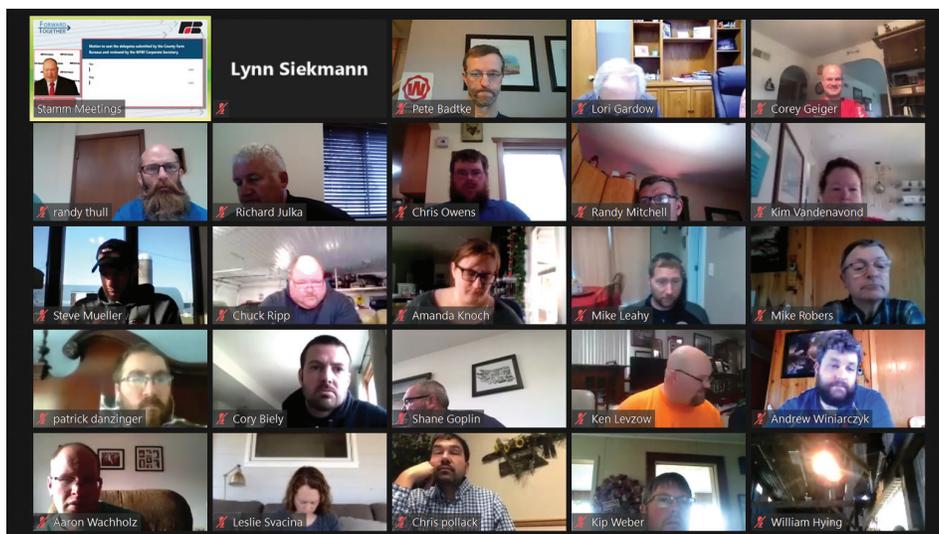
Finally, I want to thank Monroe County Farm Bureau President Jack Herricks, who has done an outstanding job representing us on the WFBF Policy Development Committee. He brings common sense, wit and a dose of reality with him wherever he goes and represented our district so well on the committee this year.

With the added headaches of meeting from home via technology, Jack handled the added pressure very well and our district should be proud to have Jack batting for us on the state committee.

As the year draws to a close, I certainly am good with that as it has been a bugger, that’s for sure.

I wish to thank everyone for making a difference this entire year; from virtual meetings to conference calls, I miss the comradery of meeting with you face-to-face, but am so proud to represent a district of such resilience, grit and fortitude.

As always: Enough is too much.



## Farm Bureau Selects Book of the Year and Youth Essay Contest Topic

Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom kicked off the 2020-2021 school year by announcing the Book of the Year, "Full of Beans: Henry Ford Grows a Car" written by Peggy Thomas and illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham. Each year, the Ag in the Classroom program holds an essay contest in conjunction with the Book of the Year for fourth- and fifth-grade students throughout the state. This year's essay contest topic is, 'How have Wisconsin soybean farmers fueled Wisconsin's economy?'

Thomas' book also is the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's Book of the Year and has an educator's guide developed for it. Accompanying lessons aligned to educational standards and Wisconsin educational resources are available online for teachers, students and volunteers to use in promoting and preparing essays. This topic will enable teachers and students to use the soybean science kits to learn how soybeans grow and connect to science.

There is so much behind the Henry Ford story and his connection to agriculture. The book looks at how Henry Ford grew up on a farm and searched for ways to use soybeans in the car plant, in his diet and in other ways. The essay contest focuses on how soybeans continue to be used and how they impact Wisconsin's economy.

Essay submissions must be 100- to 300-words in length and will be judged on content, grammar, spelling and neatness. The essay contest rules, lesson plans and sample classroom activities are located at [wisagclassroom.org/events-activities/essay-contest](http://wisagclassroom.org/events-activities/essay-contest). Essays are due **Apr. 1, 2021**. The contest is sponsored by Wisconsin Soybean Association, We Energies, Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation.

Nine district winners will be selected with one being chosen as the state winner in May. Each district winner will receive a classroom presentation for his or her class.

Last year, more than 1,500 students participated in the contest. Questions about the book or essay contest can be directed to Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom Coordinator Darlene Arneson at [darneson@wfbf.com](mailto:darneson@wfbf.com).

Don't Forget to Submit Your Essay!

This year's topic: "How have Wisconsin

soybean farmers fueled Wisconsin's economy?"

Submit your essay to your county's coordinator:

Buffalo

Eau Claire

Jackson

Emily Kaltenberg  
S2213 Ct Rd E  
Cochrane, WI 54622

Lisa Pettis  
S14575 Cty Rd R  
Osseo, WI 54758

Erica Gentry  
W11798 Spring Creek Rd  
Black River Falls, WI  
54615

Monroe

Peggy Wright  
605 W. Wisconsin St.  
Sparta, WI 54656



Trempealeau

Kendra Goplin  
N42880 US Hwy 53  
Osseo, WI 54758

Word Count: 100-300

Deadline: April 1, 2021

## Meet: Keith and Savannah Henke New Young Farmer and Agriculturist Chairs



Keith and Savannah Henke, Jackson County Farm Bureau members from Black River Falls were selected to serve as the District 4 Representatives on the WFBF Young Farmer and Agriculturist Committee. The Henkes proceed Rosli Bragger, a Buffalo County Farm Bureau member from Independence, who

has been a member of the YFA Committee since 2017. The Henkes began their three-year term on the YFA Committee following the conclusion of the WFBF Annual Meeting on Dec. 5.

**Tell us about yourself and your roles or background in agriculture?**

Keith grew up on a dairy farm in Stanley and went to Chippewa Valley Technical College for industrial mechanics. He worked for a custom harvester until he moved to Black River Falls. Keith works for Jim Hershey Trucking LLC in Sparta, as a semi-truck driver. Savannah did not grow up on a dairy farm but got there as soon as she could. Her grandfather lived down the road from a Brown Swiss farm; he took her there once and could never get her to leave. She grew up showing Brown Swiss at the county, state and national shows. Moreover, she was actively involved in 4-H and FFA. For her love of dairy cattle, she decided to attend UW-River Falls to major in dairy science and agricultural business. She was active in UW-River Falls Dairy Club and UW-River Falls Collegiate Farm Bureau. She works at Land O' Lakes Animal Milk Solutions in Black River Falls as the operations manager. She oversees continuous improvements, capital projects and manages the office and

maintenance teams.

**Explain your involvement in Farm Bureau:** Savannah has been active in Farm Bureau since she was a freshman and has been on the Jackson County Farm Bureau board since 2016. In 2018, she graduated from the WFBF Leadership Institute. She has been a top membership recruiter for the last two years and recognized at the state level. Keith joined Farm Bureau in 2017 with Savannah's persuasion and has since attended the YFA Conference and district YFA activities.

**What prompted you to apply for the chairperson position?** We both want to become more involved with Farm Bureau at the state level and meet other young farmers across the state.

**What are you most looking forward to about your new role?** We are looking forward to meeting more members in our District as well as bringing new ideas back to our county.

**What has been your favorite Farm Bureau memory or experience as a member thus far?** Savannah's favorite memories with Farm Bureau are with her institute classmates when they went to Washington, D.C., to talk to legislators about agriculture issues. Keith's favorite memory with Farm Bureau is when District 4 went to the John Deere Museum, Voegeli Brown Swiss Farm and toured New Glarus Brewery.

**What are some goals that you have as the chairperson?** Our top goal is to host a successful YFA event for District 4.

**What makes you Farm Bureau Proud?** We are Farm Bureau proud because we love meeting new people and teaching others about agriculture.

**Fun facts:** Keith and Savannah prefer John Deere tractors more than anything else. Savannah loves to play euchre, but no one her age knows how to play.

## Cranberry Harvest Through the Years

By Amber Bristow, fifth-generation cranberry grower

Cranberry harvest is one of the most iconic harvest images in Wisconsin, but do you know the history behind the harvest?

I am Amber Bristow and I am a fifth generation Wisconsin cranberry grower. I'm going to walk you through our harvest process from the 1900s to today.

Our family started our marsh back in 1918 with just a few acres of cranberries. When harvest came around, men would walk into the cranberry bed with a hand rake and would spend their day raking every berry by hand. As you can imagine, this was back breaking work and it didn't take long to modernize the hand rake.

In the 1930s and 1940s, we updated the hand rake by adding a motor and wheels. The rake is mounted at the bottom of the machine and the motor turns the rake creating a combing action as it is pushed through the vines.

Once picked, the berries go up a belt and fall behind the machine and into a crate that is hauled up and out of the bed where the berries travel to the shop to be hand sorted. We still use this machine today if we want to harvest fresh fruit.

In the 1950s and 1960s we made another upgrade and added a seat. Think the same concept, just on a larger scale. No water was involved with harvest up until this point.

Once the 1980s and 1990s rolled around, we began to introduce water. We created the beater tractor. This tractor had large tires and a large beater wheel on the front. We would put about six to eight inches of water in the bed and this tractor would drive into the bed and the beater would spin, knocking the berries off the vine.

Because the berries have four chambers that create air pockets, the berries float in water. Once the fruit is off the vine, we would add another 18 inches of water to a 'harvest flood' level that allowed the berries to float above the vines.

The fruit was then corralled by hand and pushed towards an elevator where the fruit would get picked up and transported to a sorting machine before getting sent to Ocean Spray for processing.

In mid 2000s, growers created our latest harvest machine: the harrow. This tractor is quite a glow up from the beater. The tractor consists of tracks and rows of bent metal fingers on the front and back of the machine. This tractor drives down and back the bed while the combs are placed near the ground and they gently comb the berries off the vine.

Overall, this tractor is much more gentle on the fruit and vines. Once the fruit is off the vine, we corral the fruit using tractors and cranberry boom. Once the fruit is corralled, we come in with a berry pump that sucks the fruit out of the water and sorts out leaves and sticks while keeping the fruit and pushing them into the back of a semi-truck.

The berry pump takes out the extra step of sorting the fruit at a separate location before sending it out to be processed.

Wisconsin produces more than one-half of the world's supply of cranberries and is a billion-dollar industry for our state. There is so much that goes into this unique crop that only gets recognition around the holidays.

Next time you grab a can of cranberries, make sure you tell people, "Hey! I know how these are harvested."



**THE EVOLUTION OF Cranberry Harvest**  
WITH AMBER BRISTOW

*Early 1900s*  
**HAND RAKE**

*30s & 40s*  
**MOTORIZED HAND RAKE**

*50s & 60s*  
**MOTORIZED HAND RAKE WITH SEAT**

**HAND SORTING**

*80s & 90s*  
**BEATER TRACTOR**

**HARROW**

*2000s*  
**BERRY PUMP**

Follow Amber on Instagram!  
  
**@CRANBERRYCHATS**

## Meet: Brenda Dowiasch, New Promotion and Education Chair



Brenda Dowiasch was recently selected to serve as the District 4 Representative on the WFBF Promotion and Education Committee.

Dowiasch is a member of the Eau Claire County Farm Bureau from Augusta, and proceeds Darby Sampson, a Jackson County Farm Bureau member from Melrose, who has served in the role since 2014.

Sampson recently concluded her second, three-year term on the committee, serving as the WFBF Promotion and Education Committee chairperson

and as a Representative on the WFBF Board of Directors.

Dowiasch began her three-year term on the committee following the conclusion of the WFBF Annual Meeting on Dec. 5.

**Tell us a little about yourself and your role(s) and/or background in agriculture?** I grew up in western Wisconsin on my family's dairy farm. My passion for agriculture has turned into a career. I work for USDA Farm Service Agency, serving north central Wisconsin as a member of the farm loan team. Every day I get to work with customers who own and operate family farms. Days off from work are for traveling around the state to attend farm shows, fairs, dairy breakfasts or Farm Bureau events. Spending time with friends and family is my favorite thing to do. I love cheese and my dog, Gavin.

**Explain your involvement in Farm Bureau:** Serving on the Eau Claire County Farm Bureau board for the past few years has been great. The best part about Farm Bureau is getting to spend time with others who love agriculture. I have attended Ag Day at the Capitol, YFA events and policy meetings. I am a graduate of the WFBF Leadership Institute-Class XIII. My favorite thing so far has been educating our local youth during Ag in the Classroom.

**What prompted you to apply for the chairperson position?** Farmers make up less than two percent of the U.S. population. Farmers do some remarkable things; it is up to us to share our stories. I want to challenge our local Farm Bureau members to see how many people we can reach. As farmers we might be small in numbers, but we can do big things together in our local communities.

**What are you most looking forward to about your new role?** Helping others is on the top of my list and I cannot wait to be involved. Let us all share ideas and make plans for a great year ahead. I am looking forward to representing District 4 in my Promotion and Education role.



Eau Claire County Farm Bureau members (from left): Brenda Dowiasch and Heather Erdman attended the Ag in the Classroom back-to-school kick-off event on Aug. 22.



30  
April

### BUFFALO

This \$500 scholarship is open to high school seniors and first-year post-secondary students that are the child of a member of the Buffalo County Farm Bureau.

Applications are available at [wfbf.com/about/counties/buffalo/](http://wfbf.com/about/counties/buffalo/).

1  
April

### EAU CLAIRE

Eau Claire County Farm Bureau is pleased to offer two \$500 scholarships to high school seniors, first-year post secondary students and graduate students who are or are children of Eau Claire Farm Bureau members.

Applications are available at [wfbf.com/about/counties/eau-claire](http://wfbf.com/about/counties/eau-claire).

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April

### JACKSON

This \$500 scholarship is open to high school seniors and first-year post-secondary students that are the child of a member of the Jackson County Farm Bureau.

Applications are available at [wfbf.com/about/counties/jackson/](http://wfbf.com/about/counties/jackson/)

15  
March

### MONROE

Two \$250 scholarships are being offered to graduating high school seniors who have a family member that is a Monroe County Farm Bureau member and pursuing a degree in agriculture.

Applications are available at [wfbf.com/about/counties/monroe](http://wfbf.com/about/counties/monroe).

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April

### TREMPEALEAU

This \$500 scholarship is open to high school seniors and first-year post-secondary students that are the child of a member of the Trempealeau County Farm Bureau.

Applications are available at [wfbf.com/about/counties/trempealeau](http://wfbf.com/about/counties/trempealeau)



Please contact District 4 Coordinator, Cassie Sonnentag at 715.896.4526 if you have any questions.

## WFBF Annual Meeting Takes on Virtual Format

More than 200 delegates at the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation's virtual 101<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting established new policy directives for the organization on Dec. 5.

Farm Bureau delegates adopted the policies that will be included in the organization's policy book in 2021. Resolutions were submitted by delegates as part of a grassroots policy development process.

Changes to the 2021 dairy policy include support for elimination of size and calorie restrictions for milk/dairy products in milk vending machines in schools. There also was support for overhauling the dairy pricing system that would benefit the farmer by aligning farm gate prices with retail and wholesale prices. Delegates reaffirmed existing policy for dairy farmer profitability including research and development for growth management, Grade A dairy farm equipment transitions and opportunities to remedy high plate counts.

Changes were made to WFBF policy regarding meat processing including support for the creation of a meat processing facility tax credit to increase the capacity and availability of local processors and retailers. There also was support for creation of incentive programs to encourage students to pursue careers in meat processing. Delegates supported developing a grant program to help local butcher shops upgrade to federal inspection standards and to also help new start up processing plants including on-farm processing.

On the delegate floor, members supported a state program to provide technical resources, funding assistance and low interest loans for the development of new, or the upgrade of existing local, smaller-scale slaughter plants, meat processing plants and other small, local food processing facilities. They also supported the state adding more meat inspectors to allow for increased local meat packing and slaughter plant capacity.

With the pandemic bringing to light the need for rural internet connectivity, delegates supported additional appropriations and accelerated implementation of expanded high quality cellular, broadband, fiber optic and telecommunications coverage in rural areas to enhance rural education and agribusiness needs. Additionally, delegates voted to support federal policy to provide broadband availability to everyone.

Delegates from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau's 61 county Farm Bureaus also supported:

- Increased availability of natural gas in rural Wisconsin.
- Requiring individuals and entities digging in road right of ways or easements to notify

property owners before digging.

- Farm to School programs to promote buying local foods and education of food production, nutrition and the environment.
- Increased education efforts of modern agriculture and food production at the elementary and secondary levels.

On the federal level, delegates supported:

- Increasing the butter fat content from 80% to 82% for the federal order butter standard.
- Clarification and standardization of food expiration terms, by the FDA, to reduce needless food waste.

The federal resolutions will be forwarded to the American Farm Bureau Federation for consideration at its annual convention next month.

In addition to the policy session, members were recognized as award recipients through out the meeting. Green Lake County Farm Bureau

YFA chair and vice president, Natasha Paris, was selected as the Wisconsin Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Agriculturist Excellence in Agriculture Award. Paris is an agri-science teacher and FFA advisor at Ripon High School. She and her husband, Jordan, own Parkelm Farm, a pasture-based livestock operation.

Julie Sweney of Dodge County was selected as the 2020 Discussion Meet winner. Sweney is the director of marketing and communications at FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is a 2011 graduate of the WFBF Leadership Institute. She serves on the Dodge County Farm Bureau board of directors as the membership chair.

Richard (Dick) Cates Jr. was presented the 'Distinguished Service to Wisconsin Agriculture' award for his outstanding, long-term contributions to Wisconsin's agricultural industry. Dick and his wife, Kim, co-own Cates

Family Farm LLC in Iowa County with son Eric, his wife, Kiley, and their daughter Shannon and her husband, Dan. In 1995, Dick helped create

the Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers, which is a program within UW-Madison's Farm and Industry Short Course and Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems that teaches young farmers what they need to know when starting their farming businesses.

This program has assisted more than 600 young and not-so-young individuals to start, or move towards, their dream to farm.

Dick retired from this work in 2018, but during the 23 years he also developed and taught courses in grassland ecology, pasture management, managed grazing and agroecology within the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at UW-Madison.

Finally, Waukesha County's Robert (Bob) and Carol Bartholomew received the highest award that Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

bestows upon its members. Carol Bartholomew was presented the 'Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau' award during the organization's virtual 101<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting on Dec. 4. Bob and Carol were actively involved in Farm Bureau for many years. During his time as Waukesha County Farm Bureau president, Bob invited guest speakers to several board meetings and the county annual meeting.

The tradition has continued and UW-Extension and county sheriff personnel; local, state and national legislators continue to attend meetings to keep Farm Bureau members informed. Bob also helped start the county Ag in the Classroom program and enjoyed visiting fourth-grade classrooms to teach students about agriculture. Bob and Carol also served as general leaders for their local 4-H club.



**Richard (Dick) Cates**



**Natasha Paris**



**Julie Sweney**



**Carol Bartholomew**

## County Farm Bureau Hosts Modified Annual Meeting

The Buffalo County Farm Bureau held its annual meeting on Oct. 8. The meeting was held at Danzinger Vineyard in Alma, with 36 people in attendance.

In addition to the in-person event, members also could tune in virtually via a livestream on Microsoft Teams.

Buffalo County Farm Bureau member and former Wisconsin FFA President Collin Weltzien served as the guest speaker. His message focused on lessons learned during the coronavirus pandemic.

He encouraged Farm Bureau members to continue to be active and involved within the

community and commended them on their community involvement.

Chris and Karen Ellis were presented with the 2020 Buffalo County Farm Bureau Farm Family of the Year award. The Ellis family has a multi-generational dairy and crop farm in Montana (Wisconsin). Additionally they operate a custom farming business that includes: planting, combining, chopping and baling.

Three members were elected to join the Buffalo County Farm Bureau board of directors: Gary Brenner, Celsey Weiss and Collin Weltzien. Taliah Danzinger, Chris Ellis and Mark Denk were re-elected to the board. Dustin

and Ashley Ellis were re-elected to serve as the county Young Farmer and Agriculturist chairs. Emily Kaltenberg was re-elected to serve as the Promotion and Education chair.

Elected to serve as delegates to the virtual WFBF Annual Meeting were Chris Ellis, Pat Danzinger and Derek Leiffing. The evening concluded with a riveting policy development session during which 31 resolutions were approved and submitted for consideration to the WFBF Policy Development Committee.

Thank you to those who attended virtually and in-person. Board members look forward to seeing everyone in 2021.



Former FFA President Collin Weltzien served as the guest speaker.



The Ellis family was selected as the Buffalo County Farm Bureau Farm Family of the Year. The Ellis' run a multi-generational dairy and crop farm along with a custom farming business near Montana (Wisconsin).

## Cochrane Fountain City FFA hosts Find and Feed A Farmer Project

By Lauren Abramson, Cochrane Fountain City FFA Reporter



Joe Bork stopped Dave Baker to give him a lunch.

Local FFA members took to the ridges, valleys and prairies in search of combines, semis and grain carts bringing in the harvest.

On Oct. 16, the Cochrane-Fountain City FFA delivered 200 sack lunches to area farmers working in the fields to recognize their mega hours of tireless labor to provide food for America.

Many FFA members volunteered for baking cookies, assembling 400 ham and cheese sandwiches and delivering meals to farmers on a cold afternoon. The lunches contained sandwiches, chips, string cheese, a banana, cookies, candy bars and a

bottle of water.

The Find and Feed a Farmer Project idea came about when the officer team was brainstorming for a COVID-19 friendly community service project to recognize our essential working farmers. FFA leaders realized that during harvest time many farmers get too caught up with combining and push themselves to keep going, often forgetting to eat or to stay hydrated.

It is a safety issue. So FFA members wrote a message to put in the meal reminding farmers that they are loved and to come home safely to their families. The note included the following safety tips: stay hydrated,

have snacks in the combine, take short breaks if you are experiencing exhaustion, teach and train inexperienced workers like our FFA members and maintain your machinery and equipment.

Kaleb Ellis, a sophomore, summed it up with his quote, "Take a break so you don't have a breakdown."

CFC second graders, under the direction of their teachers, Mrs. Mary Bolhinger and Mrs. Theresa McCamley, wrote each farmer a beautiful letter and drew them a picture.

Due to COVID-19, the second graders couldn't visit the Schaffner Dairy and Secrist Vegetable Farms this year with the FFA, so they used their talents to create heartfelt, handwritten messages as they studied an agriculture unit in the classroom.

Thank you to Kwik Trip for donating the bananas, and Midtown Foods in Winona, Minnesota, for giving our chapter a price break on the ham and cheese. Also, thank you to our Principal, Mr. Stoppelmoo, and Assistant Principal, Mrs. McKay, for believing in us so that we could keep our project COVID-19 friendly, and lastly to Donna Baerstch for helping us with our graphics.

The FFA was excited to feed those who feed us because they measure their work in acres, not hours. Thank you, FARMERS.



Cody Schams was delighted with a surprise lunch from Abby and Emma Mann.

## Pepin County Dairy Promoters Fill a Void Despite the Pandemic

By Randy Koller, Pepin County dairy promotion committee chair



**Kyle Danzinger delivered milk to drive-by participants throughout the summer.**

Beginning in mid-March, as COVID-19 turned people's lives upside down, the Pepin County Dairy Promotion Committee decided there was a need to step up in the community.

Knowing there were people in need of dairy products, a milk drive-by was coordinated with the Durand Area Food Pantry for April 9. First, we planned for 100 gallons, then increased it to 140 and we still scrambled to local stores and provide more than 160 gallons in about an hour. Following that success, we continued to plan and coordinate milk distribution for our community.

Our sixth drive-by was on Oct. 12, National Farmers Day, when we partnered to provide more than 400 gallons of milk and 200 bags of Eau Galle Cheese curds. We have been a key organizer in providing more than 2,400 gallons of milk along with more than 1,000 pounds of cheese since the start of the milk drive-by distributions.

We'd like to think we had a hand in encouraging more than 500 gallons of milk and many other dairy products to be distributed by others in the community after seeing how well-received our drive-by events were.

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**The Pepin County Dairy Promotion committee hosted multiple dairy product drive-bys during the summer, distributing more than 2,400 gallons of milk and 1,000 pounds of cheese.**

Another thing we did was wager a friendly contest between the waitresses at the Panther Drive In to see who would serve the most glasses of milk during June. The waitresses handed out 260 gallons of milk during the month.

We also hosted a drive-by dairy breakfast on June 20, planning for 600 bags packed for a family of four and ended up seeing more than 1,100 cars come through. This event saw more than 1,000 pounds of cheese, 600 pounds of butter and lots of yogurt distributed in addition to the milk. Another event provided a few hundred ice cream sandwiches on National Ice Cream Day.

I cannot begin to put into words how proud I am to be chair of this group. Our committee members have creative minds and a desire to find ways to continue to promote dairy, along with helping many people in need during these times. The support of our local business sponsors has been absolutely incredible.

# Eau Claire County

## Farm Bureau Annual Meeting Results in New Leadership

The Eau Claire County Farm Bureau held their annual meeting on Sept. 26. The meeting was held at the Augusta Lions Club Hall in Augusta with 22 members in attendance.

Julie Tesch, President and CEO at the Center for Rural Policy and Development, provided the membership with a keynote address virtually from Minnesota.

Tesch spoke on the development of rural and urban communities. She shared the values of rural communities and the push for rural development by communities nationwide.

Brenda Dowiasch and Lisa Pettis were elected to represent Eau Claire County during the virtual WFBF Annual Meeting as voting delegates. Heather Erdman was re-elected to serve as the Young Farmer and Agriculturist chair and Lisa Pettis was re-elected to serve as the Promotion and Education chair. Alvin Kohlhepp, Aaron Wilhelm and Wendy Strauch were re-elected to serve as directors on the board.

The evening concluded with a policy discussion that resulted in 32 resolutions that were approved and submitted for consideration by the WFBF Policy Development Committee.

Following the Eau Claire County Farm Bureau annual meeting, Brenda Dowiasch was elected by the board to serve as the next Eau Claire County Farm Bureau president.

Brandon Boettcher was elected as vice president and Wendy Strauch will remain the secretary/treasurer.

The Eau Claire County Farm Bureau want to recognize retiring president, Steve Strey, for his six years of service as the Eau Claire County Farm Bureau president.

Strey says he will remain on the board and plans to remain active during events and on committees.

Thank you to those who participated in the 2020 Eau Claire County Farm Bureau annual meeting.



**Steve Strey!**

The Eau Claire County Farm Bureau would like to thank Steve Strey for his six years of service as the Eau Claire County Farm Bureau President. We appreciate all you have done for Farm Bureau and our county!



## President's Perspective



By Steve Strey, outgoing Eau Claire Farm Bureau president

Hopefully, this letter finds you on the downhill side of a safe and bountiful harvest season. Time in the field is a welcome part of my fall. It gives me time to think about many things going on in my life. This fall it was hard not to think about politics, with the hoopla surrounding the Nov. 3 election.

I have thought about my time serving as Eau Claire County Farm Bureau president. Overall,

it has been a positive, enjoyable experience jam packed with many opportunities and long-lasting friendships. I really enjoyed interviews with the media and closed-door discussions at Council of Presidents. I have been truly blessed to exercise my passion to advocate for agriculture.

Then I got to thinking it is time to start practicing what I preach. The older I get, the easier and more often I find myself expressing my opinions to whoever will listen. I am a believer in term limits for elected officials, so I figured it was time to pass the torch, which led me to step down as county president. I am excited to share that Brenda Dowiasch of Augusta has been elected as the new Eau Claire County Farm Bureau president.

Someone else should have the opportunities that I was given. Some say change is good, while others struggle with anything different. I am confident the Eau Claire County Farm Bureau will embrace this change head on and move forward to more exciting and productive years. I'm excited to have some new, young blood with new ideas holding the reins. I still plan on staying involved on the board and hope to have more time for other committee work. I enjoy the chance to write newsletter articles when something is on my mind, so you will hear from me soon. I know I have said it before, but everyone should step up and serve in some capacity at some time. We have God-given talents that we can use to tell agriculture's story. Get involved, help out and be active.

Lately, this is what is bothering me: The weak-minded, blind, uninformed complacency of the American people sweeping this nation. The willingness to give up freedom for security. The lack of ambition to

seek the truth. The denial that God, our creator, and the devil are real and are at work here on earth. Let me explain:

I cannot believe there are people in this country who do not exercise their right to vote. They must think that our government leaders do not affect their lives. They do not pay attention to what goes on around them, and let others determine their future. They are blinded by the fact that things have been too good, too long in the USA.

This country is the best on the earth because people stood up for what they believed and fought to make it that way. Being complacent is giving up and letting others have control over your life. This is extremely dangerous. This is how freedoms are slowly whittled away.

Too many people have forgotten the men and women in our history that fought and died to give us freedom. Freedom is not free. It comes with a price. To keep freedom, there is risk, loss, suffering and pain. Freedom is not everlasting security. If we choose security over freedom, this great republic called the United States of America is dead.

On the other hand, I saw too many people go to the polls this November and vote the way that dad or grandpa did without even thinking. Too many people vote Democrat or Republican and don't even know what that means. Honest Abe, FDR and JFK were not on the ballot. The letters R and D behind a candidate's name do not mean what they used to mean.

Things change. Some embrace change, others reject change and some are ignorant to see that things did change. Government is corrupt on both sides at all levels. The media is corrupt because money talks. People must sift through the garbage to get to the truth. They must get educated and understand the motives behind a candidate's actions. The truth does not come easy to politicians, you must seek it.

Lastly, too many people have too little faith. The President is not in control of the world. God is, and the devil is fighting to take that power.

Our job, task, goal or purpose here on earth is simple: it is a battle between good and evil. It is your choice, so choose wisely.

Always remember, only the chosen few are truly blessed with the opportunity to feed, clothe and fuel the rest of the world.

# Jackson County

## Members Attend Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

The Jackson County Farm Bureau held its annual meeting on Sept. 27th at Pat and Steve Kling's barn in Taylor with more than 20 members in attendance.

To kick off the day's event, WFBF President and District 4 Director, Joe Bragger, welcomed members and provided an update on behalf of the WFBF Board of Directors. Rural Mutual Insurance agent, Matt Rhodes, provided an update on behalf of Rural Mutual Insurance Company.

Erica (Olson) Gentry was elected as the Promotion and Education chair; Savannah (Brown) Henke was elected as the Young Farmer and Agriculturist chair. Steve Kling and Leonard Olson were re-elected to serve as directors and Matt Rhodes was elected as a new director. Nate Kling and Ryan Sawyer were elected to serve as voting delegates during the virtual WFBF Annual Meeting. Finally, the membership approved 32 resolutions during the policy development session.

Following the business meeting, Erica Gentry led the membership a moment of silence and brief memorial presentation in memory of Will Prindle who died on Sept. 13. Prindle served on the board of directors since 2014 and was active in numerous local and state Farm Bureau

events. The board will miss Prindle's humor, friendship, knowledge and expertise within the community.

Following the annual meeting, the board voted to elect Ryan Sawyer to the role of county Farm Bureau President. Sawyer proceeds Steve Kling who served in the role for more than 20 years. Kling was elected to serve as the vice president and Nate Kling was elected to serve as secretary/treasurer.

The board wants to thank Steve Kling for his service during the years and thank the membership for another great year of Farm Bureau in the county.



The Jackson County Farm Bureau would like to thank Steve Kling for over 20 years of service as the Jackson County Farm Bureau President. We appreciate all you have done for Farm Bureau and our county!

**Jackson County Farm Bureau**

## UW-Extension Jackson County Welcomes Steve Okonek



Steve Okonek took on a new role starting Sept. 1. He is serving as the Jackson and Trempealeau County Agriculture educator.

Extension has been going through many changes during the

last few years. One of those changes is limited money at the state level to co-fund educator positions in counties. Leadership at the state level has a commitment to making strategic decisions that allow it to continue to provide agricultural education that focuses on critical

areas. At the local level, that means we will see more shared positions. The oversight committee members in both counties value agriculture education, but also are committed to using local tax dollars wisely. The committee members agreed to a shared position in order to continue to provide local agriculture Extension education.

“It isn’t our desired solution, but it is a workable solution,” noted Pat Malone, area Extension director.

“Steve is an ideal educator to take on this dual role,” said Malone. He lives in Jackson County with his wife, Julie, and their son, David. They raise pigs and sweet corn. He has worked as the Trempealeau County agriculture educator since

2012. His focus is on soils, crops and livestock. In addition to working with swine, Okonek also ran a dairy operation.

“His experience is well-rounded and based in both research and practical application,” said Malone.

After serving in the U.S. Army, Okonek attended UW-River Falls and earned a bachelor’s degree in farm management. Then he worked as a crop consultant. He earned his master’s degree in agronomy from Iowa State after he began working for Extension.

Steve can be reached at 715.538.5097 or [steven.okonek@wisc.edu](mailto:steven.okonek@wisc.edu). He is looking forward to meeting people when circumstances allow.

## Farm Bureau Annual Meeting Goes Virtual

The Monroe County Farm Bureau hosted its annual meeting on Aug. 24. Due to the pandemic, the board voted to host the meeting virtually for members to participate via Microsoft Teams.

Scholarship recipients Brianna Wanek and Jordan and Whitney Kuehl thanked the Monroe County Farm Bureau and shared future plans with the membership via a virtual presentation. Political candidates Brad Pfaff, Dan Kapanke and Loren Oldenberg also provided virtual presentations about their respective campaigns.

Karen Leis, Al Ferries and Dawn Powell were re-elected to the board of directors. Matt Kortbein was re-elected as the county YFA chair and Kathy Schmitz was re-elected as the county Promotion and Education chair. Elected to represent Monroe County Farm Bureau as delegates during the WFBF Annual Meeting were Jack Herricks, Al Ferries, Jim Herricks, Derek Trescher and J. Wells.

The evening concluded with the approval of 31 resolutions following a lengthy policy development discussion.

While it looked much different than many years, the board thanks the membership for a successful year in Farm Bureau. They hope to be able to host and see many members in-person for the 2021 county annual meeting.



## Monroe County Coloring Contest

### Age Groups:

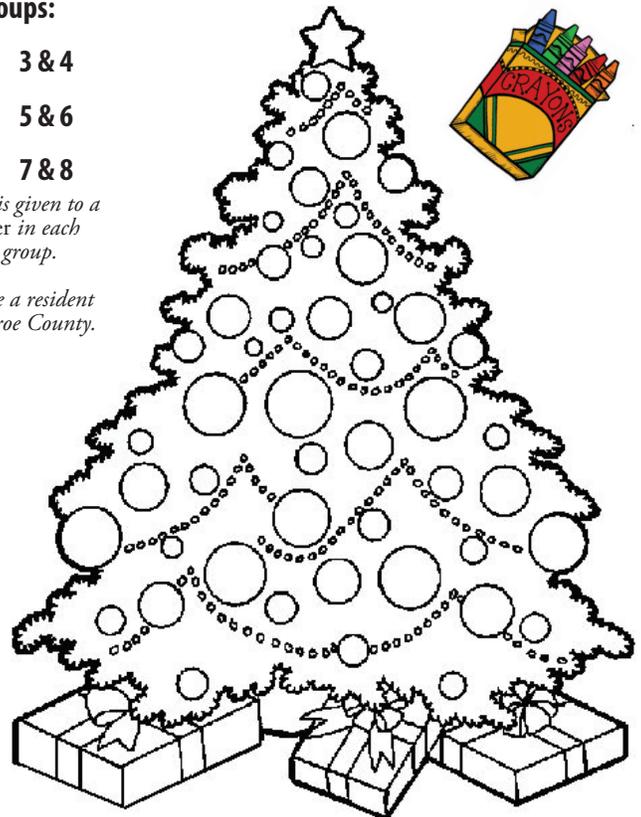
3 & 4

5 & 6

7 & 8

*A prize is given to a winner in each age group.*

*Must be a resident of Monroe County.*



Mail entries by Jan. 18, 2021 to:

Peggy Wright  
605 W. Wisconsin Street  
Sparta, WI 54656

Name:

Age:

Address:

Phone:

## SITTING DOWN WITH MONROE COUNTY AGRICULTURE INSTRUCTORS

### TOMAH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT



EMMA HUBER

The Tomah Middle School and High School Agriscience Department enrolls over 500 students a year in classes offered from 7-12th grade. These students have the opportunity to take courses that focus on animals, agribusiness, biotechnology, natural resources, power and energy, food science and plant science. The Tomah facilities include two classrooms, a food science lab, greenhouse, agriscience lab area, five school forests (one with a learning center building) and one peat bog. As agricultural teachers we try to prepare our students for careers in agriculture through hands-on experience.

Our activities are selected by the students to encourage members to be an activity part of the agricultural program. One activity that FFA members love to participate in is the FFA Community Pancake Supper. This event is held during National FFA Week and is an opportunity for FFA members and community members to enjoy good food and conversation. The Tomah FFA chapter does many other activities including Sectional Leadership Workshops, Farm Forum, Leadership Development Events, Career Development Events, Wisconsin FFA State Convention, National FFA Convention and Expo and FIRE Conference. This year has been a little different with the new virtual world we are currently in. One virtual event we are proud of is hosting cranberry presentations for the 4th grade students in our elementary schools. We also conducted a project called WisconsinAg Strong this summer where we raised donations through selling yard signs and collecting food product donations to donate at least one local agricultural product to our school lunch program each week.



NELIDA BAILEY

Mrs. Bailey has been teaching for 21 years. Her favorite part of being an agricultural teacher is seeing students grow in our ag program. She loves to see a shy freshman turn into a senior who is ready to take on the world. Students will never cease to amaze you if you give them a chance. Mrs. Huber has been teaching for 5 years, and her favorite part of being an agricultural teacher is seeing students set goals and reach them. She loves seeing a freshman set the goal of becoming a State FFA Officer, teacher or a Proficiency winner and seeing it come true.

Mrs. Bailey's favorite memory as a teacher is sharing the love of agriculture with her students and seeing their eyes light up when they get a new concept. It is the connections you make with your students that last a lifetime. It is neat to see former students around town and hear what they are doing now. Mrs. Huber's favorite memory as a FFA advisor is taking students to the National Convention. She loves to see the connection they make with other FFA members from around the country and experience the world outside of Monroe County. This trip allows her to connect with students and see their real personality.

The past several months have been hard, but we are so proud of our students and FFA members for really making the best out of the situation they're in. Many of our events look different this school year and we are limited to what we are able to do, but our students are excited to be together - both in person and virtually - and we're fortunate to keep helping them reach their goals.

### SPARTA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT



ERIC FOLLENDORF

Sparta continues to undergo significant changes. Ms. Schmidt is new to our school and has been tackling virtual learning with great resilience. Ms. Schmidt teaches grades 5, 7, and 8. Mr. Follendorf is lead of all high school classes. Both middle school and high school have a great variety of agriculture courses. Both teachers have plant, animals, natural resource, and food-related courses.

The FFA program has several events that continue to excite the members. Our FFA members love to host an Ag Day for our 4th grade students. High and middle school members teach about an agriculture topic. Additionally, members get involved and attend FIRE, SLW, 212/360, EDGE, State Convention, and National FFA Convention. Community service opportunities include: ice cream sales during FFA Week to benefit a local charity, Sparta Community Lights, Sparta Butterfest, cookies for the nursing home, and many more. Lately, our FFA members have been putting in efforts to reduce our food insecurity.

Mr. Follendorf has been teaching for eight years. His favorite part of teaching agriculture are the relationships and partnerships that are formed. He has many past students that he can ask to help out with whatever is needed. In the classroom, he really enjoys being part of the educational journey. Whether students take one class or all classes, each class taken is part of a grander plan and helps form the student into their future goals as they enter into adulthood. Ms. Schmidt is in her first year of teaching. Her favorite part of being an agricultural educator is the variety. There is an abundance of topics to teach and learn about and there are new innovations in the agricultural world every day. Besides all the different things we get to teach about we also have a multitude of ways to teach them from lab to research projects to virtual as we are experiencing now.



DESTINY SCHMIDT

Mr. Follendorf says that, hands down, his favorite memories are never in the classroom. The opportunities that FFA offers to students also allow him to get to know his students better. His favorite memories are always in the van. Near or far, each trip taken creates new memories. Ms. Schmidt's favorite memory as a teacher and FFA advisor would be when students have those "Aha!" moments. When they start making connections to their real lives and start applying what they learn it is really worthwhile and exciting.

### CASHTON SCHOOL DISTRICT



KORI BLANK

We offer a number of agriculture classes at Cashton including, Dairy Science, Food Science, Introduction to Agriculture, Ag Business, Vet Science, Horticulture, Ag Mechanics, and Fish and Wildlife. We also have a 6th grade exploratory class. We enjoy working with Western Technical College to offer transcribed credits to our students. Those who chose, are able to earn college credit through our horticulture class. We are also very fortunate to have multiple partners with local businesses and our FFA Alumni and Supporters to provide students with real world experiences. These include anything from job shadowing to guest speakers to local tours. In the classroom we are able to provide hands on experiences with the use of our greenhouse, animals lab, Ag mechanics shop, and foods lab. Some of our favorite projects include brat making, hydroponics, and anything involving our classroom guinea pigs.

Annually, our FFA chapter hosts an FFA Extravaganza, Halloween Safety, Ag Day, June Dairy Month giveaway, P.A.L.S. Program, brat and burger sales, plant sale and a fruit sale. Our members also participate in the county and State Fair, Leadership Development Events, Career Development Events and Leadership Workshops.

I am in my sixth year of teaching, and I love watching students grow and reach their goals. There is no better feeling than knowing you have helped a student grow. I also enjoy helping students prepare for LDE's and CDE's. My favorite FFA memory was watching my first soils team learn they had qualified for the National Soils contest. They had been practicing for years and had finally accomplished their goal. I will never forget the look of disbelief on their faces when their name was called.

## Where Do We Go From Here?



### Shane Goplin

Trempealeau County Farm Bureau president

There are so many things in life that in the past I have taken for granted. If this past year has taught me anything, it has taught me that everything that we are able to do in life is an opportunity, and one that should be cherished.

COVID-19 has affected each and every one of us. For some, it has brought opportunities. For others, it has brought hardship. Some have experienced the devastating loss of a loved one. For everyone, it has brought change. For those who are experiencing a hardship or the loss of a loved one, each of you have my deepest condolences.

For Trempealeau County Farm Bureau, it has definitely brought change. Last year, I wrote that your board was discussing new changes to the shake stand at our county fair. I promise you

that not having a fair and not being able to serve milkshakes at the fair certainly was not the plan. Having said that, I had discussions with the fair board. None of us liked the decision to cancel, but in the end, I respected their decision.

For our county annual meeting, we made the choice to hold it virtually, which was a hard choice to make. We believed it was the right decision at the time, and given the turn of events throughout our area, I am certainly confident we made the correct choice. The WFBF Annual Meeting also was held in a virtual format. Finally, our monthly board meetings also have been affected, even though we have met, most being in front of a computer screen. It has not been the same.

The aforementioned events are ones that I have not missed in years. I always knew I liked attending them. What I did not realize is how much I would miss the event if I wasn't able to attend in person. A year ago, it seemed like we were on offense, we were discussing things that we wanted to do. How could we be the grassroots organization that we wanted

to be? What could we do to be a part of our community and our schools to promote agriculture? We still have those ideas and goals, but now we must be more creative on how we are able to implement them.

With that, we also have been more efficient in how we do things. We may not have had the ability to meet in person, but we have learned or possibly accepted, new ways to meet. Learning to be a part of meetings in front of a computer screen does carry value. Over the course of the growing season, a couple opportunities come to mind. This spring, I planted acres of corn while I was fully engaged in a church council meeting. Another, while I was working in the field, I was on a phone conference call with Congressman Ron Kind (D-WI) discussing how the Payment Protection Program affected farmers in our area.

None of us know what the future is going to bring. But I think we can agree that it will be different. Change is not always a bad thing. Learning and evolving each and every day is how we are able to keep our voices heard and our needs met.

## County Farm Bureau Hosts Virtual Annual Meeting

The Trempealeau County Farm Bureau hosted its annual meeting on Aug. 11. The board gathered at the Newcomb Valley Inn outdoor shelter to present the annual meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams for the membership.

WFBF President and District 4 Director, Joe Bragger, welcomed everyone and shared an update on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Rural Mutual Insurance Company District Manager, Laurie Peterson, was unable to attend the meeting, but provided a district manager report from David Meihak.

Kendra Goplin was re-elected as the county Ag Promotions chair. Mandy Tjoflat was re-elected as the county YFA chair. Shane Goplin, Derek Husmoen, Kyle Nilsestuen and Brian Malizewski were elected to serve as Trempealeau County's delegates during the WFBF Annual Meeting.

Following a lengthy discussion, the county voted to approve 24 resolutions during the policy development session. The resolutions were submitted to the WFBF Policy Development Committee for consideration for 2021 policy.

Although it was a challenging one, the Trempealeau County Farm Bureau want to thank the members for a successful year.



## Goplin Appointed to Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary-Designee Randy Romanski announced the 15 members of the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council. These members will serve a one-year term, receiving a certificate of completion at the end of their service.

Among the students selected is Whitehall High School senior and Trempealeau County Farm Bureau Ag Promotions chair, Kendra Goplin.

"Congratulations to the first members of the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council. These students are outstanding representatives of the future of Wisconsin agriculture, and their insights will be incredibly valuable to our department and the entire industry," said Secretary-Designee Romanski. "We are excited to engage with these young people to promote agricultural career opportunities, share resources available for farmers, and discuss agricultural policy development."

Members include: Chad Achenbach, Eastman; Haley Beukema, New Richmond; Hannah Dahl, Columbus; Charles Fahey, Sussex; Kendra Goplin, Osseo; Samantha Hammiller, Burlington; Abigail Helbach, Amherst; Sophia Larson, Reedsburg; Adaire MacSwain, Hudson; Jamison Meier, Windsor; Natalie Ott, Berlin; Natalie Roe, Monticello; Lauren Thompson, Woodville; Drew Tuttle, Drummond; and Randy Winch, Fennimore.

The purpose of the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council is to encourage young people to engage with state government and increase their awareness of DATCP's interactions with Wisconsin's agriculture industry. Council members will attend monthly virtual sessions, hearing presentations and engaging in discussion.

For more information about the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council, visit [AgYouthCouncil.wi.gov](http://AgYouthCouncil.wi.gov). Follow the hashtag #WIAgYouthCouncil on social media for updates throughout the year.





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