



Grassroots

District 4 News

District 4 Director's Report



Joe Bragger

District 4 Director

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."

- Seneca

We would like to thank Kevin Whalen, our former district coordinator, for the outstanding service he provided to our district and for the friendship he's shared with us over the years. Kevin helped each of us become better versions of ourselves and strengthened our counties through his guidance and gift of gab. His passion for agriculture, along with his background as a teacher and FFA advisor, made him a natural fit

for working with all our unique personalities.

Thank you, Kevin, and best wishes in your newest and most important role yet — proud grandfather!

Welcome to Jenn Rittenhouse!

Our new district coordinator, Jenn Rittenhouse, jumped right in — from attending her first round of county meetings, to Ag Day at the Capitol and Council of Presidents, to pulling this newsletter together — all in her first full month. Talk about trial by fire! Through it all, Jenn's enthusiasm and drive have been infectious. We had a fantastic experience during Ag Day, with legislative meetings scheduled with the precision of a Swiss watch.

As you get the chance, please give Jenn a warm D4 welcome. We have a great future ahead, even in these uncertain times.

Hello!

Jenn Rittenhouse

District 4 Coordinator

I grew up on a sesquicentennial dairy farm in Mishicot-Northern Manitowoc County, where I developed a deep appreciation for agriculture and hard work. I graduated with a bachelor of science degree in agricultural marketing communications from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls where I gained valuable experience through several internships in sales, marketing, agronomy and nutrition. One of my most memorable experiences was interning at Walt Disney World, where I learned the true essence of guest service.

Since completing college, I have worked closely with farmers, nutritionists and business professionals in the agriculture industry. Along the way, I've learned the importance of working hard, learning from others and practicing kindness—because you never know what challenges others may be facing.

Today, I farm with my husband, Eric, and our son, Colton, on the land my husband was raised on in Elroy. We rotationally graze beef and practice managed forest law along with other conservational practices on our 250-acre farm. I love to hunt, fish, ride horses and enjoy any activity outdoors. I'm excited to serve you and help grow Farm Bureau, continuing to build a brighter future for agriculture in District 4.



District 4 News

March Madness and Bouncing Back in Agriculture

Jenn Rittenhouse

District 4 Coordinator

This time of year brings excitement and anticipation, not only for basketball enthusiasts, but for anyone who understands the true meaning of resilience, determination and the power of bouncing back. As the country geared up for the thrills and unpredictability of March Madness, we see a parallel between the fierce competition on the basketball court and the challenges that farmers face every day in the field. Both require grit, perseverance and the ability to bounce back from setbacks.

In the world of March Madness, teams are tested by tough competition, unexpected outcomes and moments of adversity. Yet, they push through, knowing that every game is an opportunity to prove themselves, to overcome obstacles and to fight for the championship. It's not just about talent, but about mental toughness—about being able to face challenges head-on and keep moving forward.

This is where farmers in agriculture truly shine. Like basketball teams in the tournament, farmers are often faced with setbacks beyond their control. The weather doesn't always cooperate. Market prices fluctuate, sometimes dramatically. Pests and diseases can strike without warning. Despite these unpredictable challenges, farmers continue to show up, day after day, working tirelessly to feed and sustain our communities.

When crops are damaged by drought or a cold snap, when prices plummet or when the machinery breaks down at the worst possible moment, it's easy to feel like a loss is inevitable. But just like the basketball team that rallies after a tough first half, farmers know that it's not the setbacks that define them—it's how they respond.

Farmers, much like basketball teams, possess the resilience to bounce back. They learn from each setback, adapt and find new ways to move forward. Whether it's implementing more sustainable farming practices, diversifying crops or adopting new technology, agriculture is a sector that evolves and grows stronger with each challenge it faces.

It's this resilience that has kept our farming communities strong for generations. Just as a team in March Madness focuses on the next game, farmers focus on the next season, the next crop, the next challenge. They understand that adversity is not the end of the road, but rather, it's an opportunity to come back even

stronger.

So, as we watch the teams in March Madness battle for glory, let us also recognize the hard work, dedication and resilience of (you) the farmers who face their own version of madness every single day. Let us remember that whether it's in sports or agriculture, it's the ability to bounce back, to learn from failure and to keep pushing forward that leads to ultimate success.



Leadership Institute

Casey Weltzien

WFBF Leadership Institute Participant

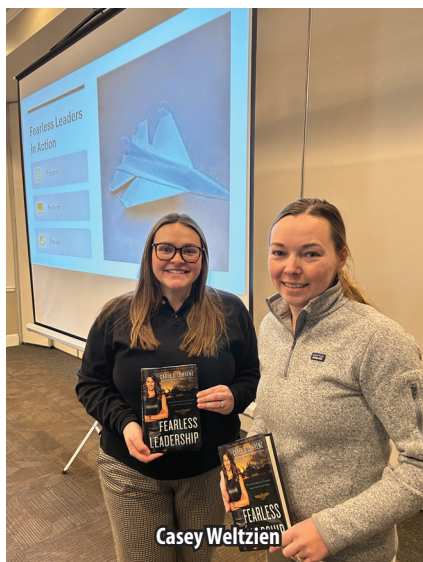
The WFBF Leadership Institute is well underway, and as participants, we have already gained valuable skills that will enhance our ability to lead in agriculture and our communities. The first three sessions of the year-long program have focused on personal growth, effective communication and advocacy—critical skills for today's agricultural leaders.

The journey began with self-discovery, as we explored our personal leadership styles and strengths. Through interactive activities, we learned how to leverage our unique abilities to become more confident and effective leaders.

Next, the focus shifted to communication skills, equipping us with the tools to articulate our messages clearly and persuasively. From public speaking techniques to active listening strategies, these sessions empowered us to engage with diverse audiences, whether in a boardroom or at the farm gate.

The third session focused on advocacy, teaching us how to effectively share our agricultural stories with policymakers, media and consumers. By understanding trends in advocacy and practicing message delivery, we are becoming better prepared to champion agriculture's role in Wisconsin.

With these foundational skills in place, we are poised to make an even greater impact in the months ahead. Stay tuned to the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation Facebook page to watch our leadership journey unfold, helping us grow as advocates for Wisconsin agriculture. We've had a blast so far and are looking forward to the rest of the program with our fellow Farm Bureau classmates!



SHARE A MEMBER BENEFIT TESTIMONIAL



<https://bit.ly/WFBFtestimonial>



Recently used a member benefit? Tell us about it!
Testimonials selected for WFBF's Rural Route Magazine
or other WFBF publications will receive a \$20 gift card!



NEW LOGIN PROCESS

Member Information and Benefits

We are excited to share that we now have a member interactive database. At the top of wbf.com, you'll see three buttons: Login, Join, Renew. To create your account and access your member information, you will want to click the login button.

SCAN THE QR CODES BELOW



User Login



Member Benefits

District 4 News

YOUNG FARMER AND AGRICULTURIST AWARDS

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE AT [BIT.LY/WIYFACONTESTS](https://bit.ly/wiyfacontests)

**DUE
JULY 1**

FARMING FOR THE FUTURE AWARD

For YFA members who earn a majority of their income from on-farm production.

APPLY NOW AT:
[BIT.LY/FARMINGFUTURE25](https://bit.ly/farmingfuture25)

OUTSTANDING AG PROFESSIONAL AWARD

For YFA members who earn a majority of their income from off-farm careers.

APPLY NOW AT:
[BIT.LY/AGPROFESSIONAL25](https://bit.ly/agprofessional25)

35 UNDER 35 AWARD

For YFA members preserving agriculture through leadership in environmental, social and economic practices.

APPLY NOW AT:
[BIT.LY/WFBF35UNDER35](https://bit.ly/wfbf35under35)



Heroes of Hope

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

NOMINATE A NEIGHBOR

Do you know a story of farm neighbors helping each other? Perhaps you helped out a neighbor or were helped by a neighbor during a difficult time. Nominate them today as a Hero of Hope!

Each month, one person, couple or organization will be recognized for the help they provide in their community.

Nominations are open and can be found at
<https://bit.ly/FNCHeroHope>




#FarmNeighborsCare



2025 WISCONSIN LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD

NOMINATIONS OPEN

NOMINATION DEADLINE: AUGUST 1, 2025

APPLICATION CAN BE FOUND AT
[SANDCOUNTYFOUNDATION.ORG](https://sandcountyfoundation.org)



How to Support Wisconsin Agriculture in the Grocery Store

Rachel Klinker

Contributor to Gather Wisconsin

The push to “buy local” is greater now than ever. How can you support Wisconsin agriculture locally? By purchasing Wisconsin-raised products from your local grocery store!

You may not see them, but they are there sitting in the shelves, fridge, freezers and even the check-out lines. Here’s what to look for next time you get groceries.

Wisconsin Brands

Wisconsin has some very recognizable food and beverage brands. Most of these brands can be found in grocery stores, and they are all tasty products of Wisconsin agriculture.

Palermo Pizza – Milwaukee
Johnsonville Brats – Johnsonville
Usinger’s Brats – Milwaukee
Sargento Cheese – Plymouth
Ocean Spray – Tomah
Cranberries – Northern & Central Wisconsin

Birds Eye Foods – Darien
Kringle – Racine

Cedar Crest Ice Cream – Cedarburg
Sprecher Brewing – Milwaukee

This is a list of just a few Wisconsin brands. There are so many more that you can find in grocery stores. But how do you know which products are made in Wisconsin?

Identifying Wisconsin Products

Wisconsin products earn the honor of being labeled “Made in Wisconsin.” Wisconsin agriculture has a lot to offer, and it is important to know where our food comes from.

Numerous Wisconsin-made products are labeled with a “Something Special from Wisconsin,” “Proudly Wisconsin,” or will have the state of Wisconsin on the packaging. These are indicators of Wisconsin products.

Since 1983, the Something Special from Wisconsin program has helped Wisconsin-made products and businesses stand out above the rest. The program logo provides a quick and reliable way to identify genuine

Wisconsin products and services at grocery stores, retail outlets, farmers’ markets and restaurants throughout the state, and beyond. Any business may participate if at least 50 percent of the value of the product or service is attributable to Wisconsin ingredients, production or processing activities.

Source Codes on Packaging

Where is my food coming from? Many products that have codes and numbers to tell you where that product came from. Milk, for example, has the sell-by date and a series of numbers after it. That series of numbers is a source code. The first two numbers in that series, range

from 01-56, which correspond with an alphabetical list of states, followed by a dash and the last set of numbers tell you which dairy plant it came from. The number “55” means it came from Wisconsin!

Look for the number “55” on your chocolate milk, yogurt, coffee creamer, cottage cheese, ice cream and more to support Wisconsin’s hard-working farmers! Next time you head to the grocery store, look at the dairy product’s packaging, that way you will know if the product is local.

Find out where your milk is from at whereismymilkfrom.com/

Next time you go to the grocery store, look at the product’s packaging. Does it have a source code? Does it have a “Something Special From Wisconsin” or “Proudly Wisconsin” badge on it? Shop local and support Wisconsin agriculture!



Scan Here
to visit Gather Wisconsin



www.gatherwisconsin.com



gather
WISCONSIN

District 4 News

Rural Voices Have Real Impact at Ag Day at the Capitol

On March 26, approximately 400 farmers and agriculturists gathered at the Monona Terrace in Madison for Ag Day at the Capitol.

Ag Day at the Capitol is the largest advocacy day for Wisconsin farmers and agriculturists, bringing together a variety of farm groups to learn more about state issues affecting agriculture and meet with their state legislators.

Attendees were welcomed by Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Brad Olson and listened to remarks from Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary Randy Romanski. Sec. Romanski shared why it's important to head to the Capitol with ideas on what can be done to positively impact the future of agriculture.

"There is a whole lot more that we agree on than we disagree on, here in this room and at the Capitol," said Sec. Romanski. "Identify what your priorities are and tell them what you need and then it's up to the folks in that building to get to 'yes'."

Following the Sec. Romanski's remarks, Brian Reisinger, author of *Land Rich, Cash Poor: My Family's Hope and Untold History of the Disappearing American Farmer*, delivered his keynote speech. Complimentary copies of Reisinger's book were distributed to 200 attendees. Reisinger shared his family's personal farm stories and his thoughts on the persistence and dedication of rural communities, themes that are central to his book.

"That resilience of farm families is what gives me hope. There are a lot of challenges out there but there are also a lot of opportunities," said Reisinger. "Imagine what we can do if we can make farming work for farm families again."

The afternoon program featured a state budget overview by Sen. Howard Marklein and an in-depth discussion of legislative priorities led by WFBF's Executive Director of Government Relations Jason Mugnaini.

Green County Farm Bureau president and farmer Eric Wuthrich gave

tips to first time attendees and shared why taking time for advocacy matters.

"No matter your role in agriculture, whether you farm, work in agribusiness or simply care about the future of our industry, your voice matters," shared Wuthrich. "Today is your opportunity to make an impact. Be confident, be passionate and share your story with those who shape the policies that affect us all. Because when we speak up together, we ensure a strong future for agriculture."

The program concluded with closing remarks from Sen. Pat Testin and Rep. Clint Moses and a citation awarded from the state agriculture committees for WFBF's recent Pinnacle Award and New Horizon Award from American Farm Bureau.

Following the remarks, attendees walked to the Capitol to meet with their legislators and explore the new Agriculture Showcase on the Capitol Square. The showcase was a public educational exhibit with farm equipment, dairy calves, free cheese samples and more. Inside the Capitol Rotunda, attendees explored Farm Bureau spotlight booths, connected with Wisconsin Ag Coalition partners and tested their skills with a hydraulic sprayer simulator, an interactive video game-like experience.

Rural Mutual Insurance Company and GROWMARK Inc. are major sponsors of the event. Co-sponsors of the event, with Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, include the AgCountry Farm Credit Services, Compeer Financial, Dairy Business Association, GreenStone Farm Credit Services, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, Syngenta, Wisconsin Biofuels Association, Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Wisconsin Corn Growers, Wisconsin Horse Council, Wisconsin Pork Association, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers, Wisconsin Soybean Association, Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers and Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association.



Ag Day at the Capitol and Council of Presidents Recap



Ed Rippley
Buffalo County Farm Bureau President

I recently attended the 25th annual Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation Council of Presidents at the Sheraton Hotel in Madison. Presidents and vice presidents from all nine Farm Bureau districts are encouraged to attend. We had great representation from District 4 with five out of the six presidents attending. We were also joined by WFBF staff from the state office and fellow presidents from all around the state. The welcome address from WFBF President Brad Olson and WFBF CAO Bradley Uken was encouraging. In attendance was DATCP Farm Wellness Program Coordinator Karen Endres to talk about the Farm Neighbors Cares program. She spoke about Mental Health stickers that share resources for farmers who may feel stressed during planting and harvest time. John Hromyak informed us about the Foundation and its annual Giving Day in August. There was also a round table discussion about county Farm Bureau engagement in local affairs, YFA and Promotion and Education success in our counties and member recruitment ideas just to name a few. For the first time at Council of Presidents we had Ag Olympics. Each of the nine districts had to compete in three events: a rubber chicken toss, herding balloon animals into a pen and a potato roll.



District 8 walked away as the winner of the trophy.

The next day was Ag Day at the Capitol at the Monona Terrace Convention Center. A delicious lunch was served with all the products grown and raised in Wisconsin. The keynote speaker was Brian

Reisinger, author of the of Land Rich, Cash Poor. My Family's Hope and Untold History of the Disappearing American Farmer. New this year was the Agriculture Showcase which featured agricultural equipment, livestock, free cheese samples and more on the Capitol Square. Inside the Capitol Rotunda, there were booths that featured Ag Coalition partners. There was even an interactive hydraulic sprayer simulator.

The highlight of Ag Day at the Capitol is the ability to visit with the state assembly and senate representatives. It's important to be an advocate for agriculture and to tell your story because lawmakers are looking for voices they can use from their district. It is crucial that we share our thoughts and stories from our farms and this can build a bond that can help. Some of the budget and state priorities to talk about from the Farm Bureau government relations team were agriculture market development of the biofuels incentive program, dairy and meat processing grants and the Wisconsin initiative for ag exports. We also spoke about the Veterinary Loan Repayment Pilot Program to help with the shortage of veterinary care.

Next year, I encourage farmers of Buffalo County to attend Ag Day at the Capitol to visit with your representatives, Rep. Treig Pronschinske and Sen. Rob Stafsholt so they can hear your story.

BUFFALO COUNTY FAIR PHOTO CONTEST

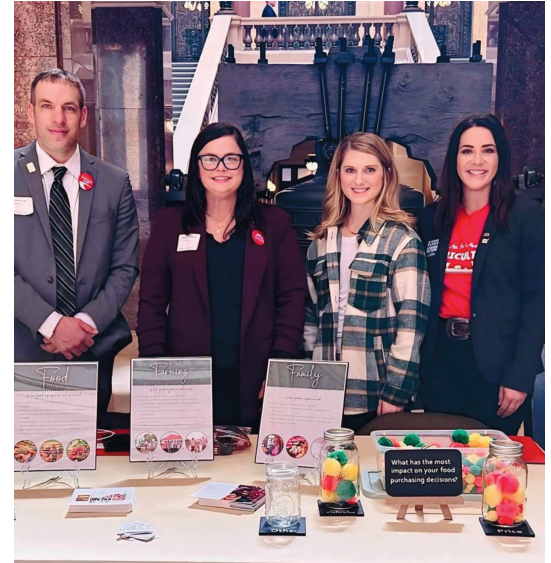
Buffalo County Farm Bureau is holding a fair photo contest leading up to the 2025 Buffalo County Fair. Selected photos will be displayed at the fair.

Entries are due July 17. All entries will receive a free milkshake at the fair. Winners will be announced at the fair.

The fair will take place from July 31 to August 3. To submit your photos to the contest, please scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/2025BuffaloCountyFairPhotoContest



Ag Day at the Capitol with Eau Claire County Farm Bureau Attendees



Members of the Promotion and Education Committee Steven Mueller, Brenda Dowiasch, Brittney Muenster and Tammy Wiedenbeck at the Agriculture Showcase in the Capitol Rotunda.

SAVE THE DATE

BEEF NIGHT OUT	BREAKFAST ON THE FARM	BEES, TREES & CHEESE
<p>MAY 22 OFF THE RAIL MEATS AUGUSTA, WI</p> <p>MORE DETAILS WILL BE POSTED ON FACEBOOK PAGE</p>	<p>JUNE 7 MESSERSCHMIDT FARM 336 E HOOVER AVE, FALL CREEK, WI</p>	<p>JUNE 11 4:00 PM TO 7:00 PM BEAVER CREEK RESERVE</p>

Ag Day at the Capitol Highlights and Will Elk Reduce Property Value?

Nathan Kling

Jackson County Farm Bureau President

Greetings from Taylor!

I recently had the opportunity to attend Ag Day at the Capitol in Madison where we were briefed on current proposed legislation affecting the ag community and also got to meet with our elected officials to discuss how this legislation might affect our farms and communities in the future. Our local group was able to meet with Sen. Patrick Tustin and Rep. Nancy Vandermeer to discuss several topics including the Elk Management and Wildlife Damage program, Veterinary Loan Repayment Pilot program, Dairy and Meat processing grant program and the Agricultural Road Improvement Plan (ARIP), among other issues.

ARIP funded \$150 million to support 92 projects for local road improvements in 2024, but the DOT received applications for over \$500 million in projects, so the need is huge in rural Wisconsin. Without a solid infrastructure to get ag products from the field to the processor, we limit our farms' potential success.

We also discussed the growing need for the Veterinary Loan Repayment program to help encourage new veterinarians to practice in rural Wisconsin to fill the large void of veterinarians within our state. With the ever-changing disease threats to our dairy and livestock industries, we need to have the staff to address the issues as they arise to prevent catastrophic losses and minimize the impacts of any disease that may present itself.

I also serve on the Jackson County Land Conservation and Agriculture Committee which deals with the elk damage claims on a monthly basis and gives me insight into the the final topic we discussed at length which was the growing elk issues we have in Jackson county and soon to be surrounding counties after the reintroduction of an elk herd in Jackson



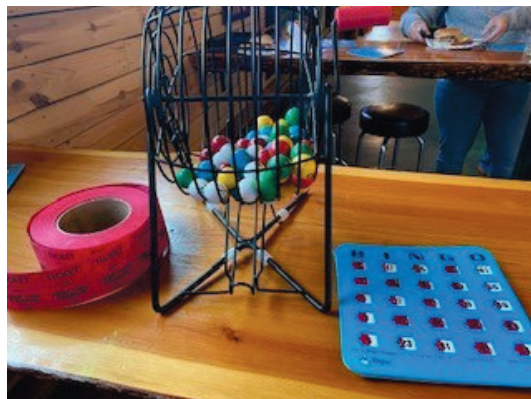
county. Elk have been causing crop damage since the reintroduction in 2015, as the herd grows so will the damage to crops and other property. The DNR has a wildlife damage claim program to address these issues

but there are limits of only \$10,000 per producer currently with a \$500 deductible, which is not covering the damage amounts on some farms over the past couple years. Without profitability, agriculture doesn't last long, and some land owners in our county are finding this out when the tenant farming their land terminates rental contracts because the elk are causing too much crop damage and the damage program doesn't make up for the losses. Not only is the landowner out of rental income when there are no tenants to farm the land, they are also in jeopardy of a change in tax classification away from agriculture if no longer used for ag production, therefore increasing

property tax values as well!

This is a growing concern as the elk herd started with 50 head, is currently estimated at 185 head and has a current herd goal of 350. As the herd grows so does the territory needed to support this growth and this will cause more crop and property damage, which must be addressed. Can we cohabitate with the elk going forward? If so, how will we compensate those whose livelihoods are affected by this animal brought into the area by the DNR with support from other organizations? How are we going to compensate those affected by the elk? These changes need to be done through a legislative change at the state level with input from the local level by everyone who is being affected and everyone living in the area where the DNR plans to grow the herd. Contacting your state legislature representatives and working with your county Farm Bureau to develop policy on these issues which can be passed at the state level to get support from other areas of the state is important to getting state legislature changes. Always remember the squeaky wheel gets the grease!

Jackson County Farm Bureau Hosts Bingo and BBQ Night



Over 60 young farmers and agriculturists were present for a night of Bingo fun and BBQ. Many great donations were given from local sponsoring businesses.

Cashton FFA & Monroe County Farm Bureau Farm Safety Day

Saturday, May 10th 10:00am-2:00pm

Registration will begin at 9:30

Located at the Cashton Elementary

Lunch will be provided

Open to the surrounding community kids ages 4-12

RSVP by April 23rd to Brooke Brueggen or Kori Blank at

brueggen.brooke@mail.cashton.k12.wi.us
blank.kori@cashton.k12.wi.us

Learn how to stay safe on the farm



5 QUICK TIPS

FOR ROAD SAFETY NEAR FARM EQUIPMENT

- Don't Assume
- Watch Out
- Leave Space
- Always Be Alert
- Be Smart

2025 Monroe County Farm Bureau Youth Fair Grant

Kori Blank

Criteria:

1. Exhibitors parent(s)/legal guardian must be paid members of the Monroe County Farm Bureau before July 1, 2025. a. To join, go to www.wfbf.com, click "membership," then "sign up today." or b. Contact a Monroe County Farm Bureau board member
2. Exhibitor must fill out the application attached and submit it to Monroe County Farm Bureau President, J. Wells, by July 1, 2025. (22765 Kasota Road, Sparta, WI 54656)
3. Exhibitors must attend the Monroe County Farm Bureau annual meeting in August to share with the group what they did for a project

and how the money will be spent.

4. Checks will be mailed to recipients within one month of the Monroe County Farm Bureau Annual meeting.
5. Exhibitors must exhibit their project at the Monroe County Fair in 2025.
6. All projects connected to Agriculture will be considered, the top 100 applications will be chosen to receive a \$50 grant.
7. Each exhibitor may only submit one application.

Any questions, contact a Monroe County Farm Bureau board member.

To download the application, visit:

<https://wfbf.com/about/counties/monroe/>



Kyle Nilsestuen Attends New President Huddle



Kyle Nilsestuen
Trempealeau County Farm Bureau President

Wisconsin Farm Bureau recently welcomed new Farm Bureau presidents from across the state to its

New President Huddle, an event designed to equip leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in their roles. Attending was Kyle Nilsestuen from Trempealeau County Farm Bureau.

During the gathering, participants explored their vital responsibilities within the organization, gained insights into member engagement and sharpened

their understanding of parliamentary procedure and effective meeting management. The session also provided opportunities for networking and idea-sharing among peers.

“We are excited to see these leaders step into their roles with confidence,” said Wendy Volkert, Senior Director of Member Relations at WFBF. “Their commitment and enthusiasm will strengthen our county Farm Bureaus and the impact we have on agriculture in Wisconsin.”

Congratulations to all attendees for their dedication to leadership and advocacy!



Stay up to date!

AG NEWSWIRE, POLICY PULSE, STEWARDS AND MORE!

Ag Newswire

Ag Newswire is a weekly email newsletter that includes political, Farm Bureau and general agriculture news. Each Friday, the latest and most relevant farm news will be delivered to your inbox.

Policy Pulse

Policy Pulse is an e-newsletter to keep Wisconsin Farm Bureau members up to date on the latest policy and legislative news and other happenings in the governmental relations division.

Stewards

Stewards is WFBF's sustainability e-newsletter for conservation-related news, trending topics and upcoming events and deadlines.



VIEW ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN STAY UP TO DATE ON WISCONSIN FARM BUREAU NEWS AT WFBF.COM.

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**This Issue Contains
Highlights for:**

Buffalo County

Eau Claire County

Jackson County

Monroe County

Trempealeau County



Your trust is the reason

Wisconsin farmers trust Rural Mutual Insurance to protect what matters most. Your trust has made us a top 50 U.S. insurance company 16 years in a row, earned us an A.M. Best A+ rating 7 years straight, and established us as Wisconsin's #1 farm insurer.

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