



Grassroots

District 5 News

Growing as a Leader through Wisconsin Farm Bureau's Leadership Institute



Amy VanderMark

Leadership Institute Participant

From a young age, my personal motto has always been to never stand still and to constantly push myself forward. My name is Amy VanderMark, and I live on my family's farm, Silver Star Farm, located in the small town of Elroy in southcentral Wisconsin, nestled in the Driftless Region.

I've always been fiercely competitive, but early on, I realized my competitive drive wasn't going to be satisfied on the sports field; that talent was clearly my brother David's, who also happens to be my farming partner. For me, the real competition has always been internal: challenging myself to grow, learn and do better.

A few years ago, my siblings, who are also my business partners, and I recognized that we needed to change the way we farm. Our steep hills and small fields just aren't suited for intensive row cropping or the large-scale equipment we had to hire for harvesting and spraying. That realization sparked a shift, not just in how we farm, but in how I got involved in agriculture beyond our fence lines.

As we began exploring new methods and business models, I became more active in Wisconsin Farm Bureau. As a small farm, we understood the value of connecting with organizations that support and advocate for farms of all sizes. I didn't truly grasp the full impact and reach of Farm Bureau, though, until I was accepted into the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Leadership Institute.

Our District Coordinator, Becky Hibicki, encouraged me to apply for the program the first year I joined our county board. At the time, I wasn't particularly excited about the idea of another "leadership" course. I had taken several throughout my career in the professional industry sector. But as our farm evolved, and after I had the opportunity to speak at WFBF's P&E Boot

Camp, Becky nudged me again to apply. I finally decided it was the right time and the right fit. And I'm so glad I did.

This year-long leadership program has far exceeded my expectations. It's thoughtfully designed, incredibly well organized and offers value no matter your background or leadership level. Each session features expert speakers, ample time for interaction and practical tools you can apply immediately, whether on your farm, in your county Farm Bureau or in your personal development.

Two sessions stood out the most for me: media training and agricultural policy. As someone who manages our farm's direct-to-consumer marketing, I found the social media training especially helpful. I learned how to craft clear and consistent messages, identify trends and connect meaningfully with different generations.

The policy training was equally powerful. Sitting inside the Wisconsin Capitol and learning firsthand how government policy is formed gave me a whole new appreciation for advocacy. It challenged me to dig deeper, ask more questions and understand how policies directly affect our farms.

If you're passionate about agriculture, eager to grow as a leader, and excited to make meaningful connections, I highly encourage you to apply, no matter your age or experience level. The friendships and professional relationships you build through this program are truly lifelong. It's inspiring to watch my classmates grow on their farms, in their careers, within their communities and most importantly within themselves.

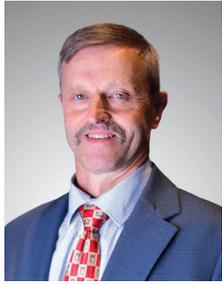
This class has been an incredible experience, and I can't wait for our final session together in Washington, D.C. If you're even thinking about applying, do it. You won't regret it.

Also participating in the 2025 Institute from District 5 are Grant Buwalda (Fond du Lac) and Alana Biermeier (Juneau County). If you are interested in this opportunity, applications for the 2027 class are now available at can be found at <https://bit.ly/fbleader27>



District 5 News

District Director Report



Pete Badtke

District 5 Director

Hello, District 5 Farm Bureau members.
Advocating for Agriculture on Capitol Hill

On September 15, 22 Wisconsin Farm Bureau leaders traveled to Washington, D.C. to visit legislators and advocate for Wisconsin agriculture. Nick Retzlaff (Green Lake County), TJ Beck (Winnebago County) and myself were part of the trip. We met and discussed issues affecting our farms and how they can make a difference.

Allow for year-round sale of E-15 gas

The Clean Air Act prohibits the sale of E-15 during the summer driving season, June 1 to September 15, in most of the country. E-15 is about 25 cents cheaper than the E-10; savings could really add up over the course of the year. This would also create more demand for corn, increasing the prices farmers are currently receiving.

Allow farmers access to a stable workforce

Immigration needs to be modernized to provide ways for law-abiding immigrants to become citizens. Wisconsin's agriculture labor infrastructure has been using the H-2A program for year-round employment, but this has become very expensive and not practical among other programs available. Ag employees should not have to live in fear while contributing so much to Wisconsin's agriculture economy.

Congress must support a pro-agriculture trade agenda by reducing trade barriers

Farmers have been thrown in the middle of the trade wars. Grain farmers have been hit the hardest with low corn and soybean prices, making it hard to be profitable. Some grain elevators out west still have crops still in the bins, creating problems for this year's harvest. China was our biggest buyer of U.S. soybeans; they have been buying from Brazil and Argentina this year, causing no real opportunity for U.S. farmers to sell last year's crop or even this fall's harvest. As a matter of fact, for several years, Brazil really didn't have a very good infrastructure to get its crops to the ports. China has been helping to build the roads and bridges necessary and is now reaping the benefits. Many of our trade deals need long-term fixes, not short-term patches! We need trade policy that sets agriculture up for stable, predictable and fair access to global markets.

Someone asked if our group made a difference out in Washington. If you are not at the table, you are on the table! Our legislators need to remember that while they represent us, they also need to work for us too!

The importance of the local level

Now is the time to get involved in your local town and county boards, either a board seat or by attending meetings. Operational ordinances are being proposed in several townships around the state. While some of these ordinances may seem harmless, some are more restrictive, like hours a farm can operate, where and how manure could be applied or requiring tires of farm equipment to be cleaned before entering the roadway.

Lastly, please plan on attending Ag Day at the Capitol on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. This is your chance to meet your legislators and tell them what is important for you and your farm. Thanks again for your continued membership.



District Coordinator Report



Becky Hibicki

District 5 Coordinator

As a district coordinator, a major part of my job is to assist the county in reaching their membership goals for the year. Our membership year runs from October 1–September 30.

From October 1 until April 30 this year, counties were focusing on reaching their new voting goal. Their voting goal is determined by the voting members in the county. This year, District 5 had four counties reach their voting goal. Congratulations to Marquette, Waushara, Green Lake and Fond du Lac Counties. From May 1 until September 30, counties switched their focus to picking up past due and renewal memberships.

The WFBF had a phenomenal membership year. The state ended with total 53,235 members, which is an increase of 2,056 members. In our district, all seven counties have made a voting gain in membership. What an amazing accomplishment. We have some amazing membership volunteers who worked hard to make it happen. Thank you to all the volunteers who took the time to sign new members this year. We had 25 volunteers in the district sign members this year.

A special thank you to those who signed a minimum of five members and are qualified to be part of the Farm Bureau Proud Club. They are:

- Chris Retzlaff – Green Lake County – 19 members – The top membership worker in the state!
- Steve Sabel – Fond du Lac County – 17 members – A Top 10 Membership Worker!
- Trayton Greenfield – Fond du Lac County – 10 members – A Top 10 Membership Worker
- Dillon Schwochert – Marquette County – 6 members
- Miranda Ewald – Waushara County – 6 members
- Reuben Hopp – Fond du Lac County – 5 members



**Ag Day at the Capitol will take place on
Wednesday, January 21, 2026**

Registration information and full details will be released in fall 2025.



District 5 Counties Pass Resolutions at County Annual Meetings

2025 District 5 Resolutions

Adams/Marquette

1. (Addition to existing policy (Page 22, line 44) We support the use of consistent standards and interpretations between all government agencies with respect to environmental issues and permitting. Any regulations should consider practical methods of maintaining environmental quality consistent with efficient and economical farming operations.

2. We oppose any, and all proposed ballot initiatives. We support citizens in working with elected officials to propose changes to or introduce new initiatives, referendums, or legislation, provided they follow the proper legislative process.

3. (Addition to existing policy (Page 5, line 17) We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial solar, wind and data center projects on agricultural land.

4. We support an April-June Sandhill Crane hunting season limited to crop fields. Farmers will be issued one tag per acre to be used by themselves and/or licensed hunters.

5. We support active farms to be exempt from state campground licensing for 1-3 sites.

6. Pg 28 Line50-51 strike “or the use of herbicides” in the current policy: We support more frequent mowing including the full right of way **or use of herbicides** along state and county roads to control the spread of noxious weeds, invasive species and improve highway safety.

Fond du Lac County

1. (Addition to existing policy (22) 44) We support the use of consistent standards and interpretations between all government agencies with respect to environmental issues and permitting. Any regulations should consider practical methods of maintaining environmental quality consistent with efficient and economical farming operations.

2. We oppose any and all proposed ballot initiatives. We support citizens in working with elected officials to propose changes to or introduce new initiatives, referendums, or legislation, provided they follow the proper legislative process.

3. (Addition to existing policy (5) 17) We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial solar, wind and data center projects on agricultural land.

Federal

1. We support requiring enrollment in a risk management program to qualify for federal disaster payments, (should such coverage be available for the affected commodity).

Green Lake

1. Add the words “and datacenter” to page 5, lines 17-18: We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial solar, wind, **and datacenter** projects on agricultural land.

2. We support an April-June Sandhill Crane hunting season limited to crop fields. Farmers will be issued one tag per acre to be used by themselves and/or licensed hunters.

3. We support active farms to be exempt from state campground licensing for 1-3 sites.

4. Add the phrase “and related permitting” to page 5, line 44: We support the use of consistent standards and interpretations between all government agencies with respect to environmental issues **and related permitting**.

Federal

1. (Federal) We support there being no fee for a Migratory Bird Treaty Act depredation permit for sandhill crane from US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Juneau

State

1. We support right to install all conservation/land improvement measures on agricultural lands that have cropping history including but

not limited to drain tile, grassed waterways, erosion control structures, and terraces without regulatory permitting

2. We oppose any and all proposed ballot initiatives. We support citizens in working with elected officials to propose changes to or introduce new initiatives, referendums, or legislation, provided they follow the proper legislative process.

3. (Addition of the word datacenter to existing policy page 5, line 17) We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial solar, wind and datacenter projects on agricultural land.

Federal

4. We support changing the name of the Farm Bill to the Food Bill.

Waushara

1. Add the word “datacenter” to page 5, lines 17-18. We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial solar, wind and datacenter projects on agricultural land.

2. We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial solar projects on Agricultural land. (Page 5, Lines 17-18)

3. We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial wind projects on agricultural land. (Page 5, Lines 17-18)

4. We support Wisconsin law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct datacenter projects on agricultural land. (Page 5, Lines 17-18)

Winnebago

1. We support Wisconsin Law requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) to construct commercial solar, wind, and datacenter projects on agricultural land.

2. We support DATCAP creating an electronic filing system or form to improve the efficiency of filing for the Farmland Preservation Tax Credit.

3. We support a federal income tax exemption for payments from state level program incentives for preserving farmland.



District 5 News

District 5 County Annual Meetings a Success!

All seven counties in the district recently held their county annual meetings. During the business meeting, members elected their county Farm Bureau board of directors, WFBF annual meeting delegates and approved county resolutions.



Adams



Adams



Fond du Lac



Fond du Lac



Green Lake



Green Lake



Juneau



Juneau



Marquette



Waushara



Winnebago



Winnebago



DISTRICT 5 YFA SOY CANDLE

FUNDRAISER

Candles: \$18
Wax Melts: \$5
Fidget Sniffers: \$3.50



www.countrylights.net/shop-fundraisers


Sale runs until December 15. Orders will be shipped in time for Christmas. Proceeds from the sale will support Young Farmer and Agriculturists programs in the district.

Order online at:
<https://www.countrylights.net/shop-fundraisers>

Contact Becky Hibicki at 920.517.2445 or bhibicki@wbf.com with questions.

District 5 News

WFBF Promotion & Education Event

CULTIVATE & Connect

February 21st, 2026 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Bridgewood Resort & Conference Center, Neenah

Cultivate & Connect is the Promotion and Education Committee's initiative to inspire, educate and empower Farm Bureau members and agriculture leaders by providing innovative learning experiences, networking opportunities and actionable insights for advancing Wisconsin's agriculture industry.



Schedule of events

Friday, February 20th | Cost: \$20

5 - 8 p.m. - Optional: Experience a behind-the-scenes look at the culinary program at FVTC with a cooking demonstration and facility tour.
Dinner will be provided and opportunity to network with other attendees.

8 - 9:30 p.m. - Optional: Join us for a pre-conference social with light, guided activities designed to spark conversations and help you connect with fellow attendees.
Pre-conference Social at Bailey's Bar and Grill (inside hotel)

Saturday, February 21st | Cost: \$80

8:30 a.m. - Registration Opens
9 a.m. - Welcome & Opening Keynote
10:30 a.m. - Learning Labs
11:30 a.m. - Lunch
12:45 p.m. - Keynote & Activity
2:45 p.m. - Closing Comments



Annaliese Wegner
Modern Day Farm Chick



Marlene Eick
Ohio Farm Bureau

Hotel Information:

A block of rooms is available at the Best Western for a reduced rate of \$139+tax

Rooms must be reserved by January 20
Call 920-720-8000 and ask for the Farm Bureau block

Scan to learn more and register!



Registration closes February 6

Promotion and Education Update



Jenny Leahy
District 5 Promotion and Education Chair

The Promotion and Education Committee is hosting its second annual Cultivate & Connect conference on February 21 in Neenah. The purpose of Cultivate & Connect is to provide Farm Bureau members with a day-long training to develop members' skills, so they feel more confident sharing their story with consumers. This year's Cultivate & Connect will feature two keynote speakers. Marlene Eick from Ohio Farm Bureau, who will be discussing how to expand your relationships and become an authentic leader, and Annaliese Wegner, who will be discussing how she built her social media presence as the Modern Day Farm Chick. This event is open to all Farm Bureau members, so encourage anyone who might be interested in attending.

District 5 is still looking for a new P&E Chair to represent us on the WFBF P&E Committee. It is a great opportunity to grow your skills and influence the programming provided for members. Take the chance because it will be worth the time you put into it.

Interested in serving on the WFBF P&E Committee? Complete the interest form at bit.ly/wfbfcommitteeinterest. and a WFBF staff person will reach out to you with additional information.



Ask A FARMER



Activity resources are available at:
wfbf.com/programs/promotion-and-education

District 5 YFA Discussion Meet

The Young Farmer and Agriculturalist Discussion Meet gives young members a chance to demonstrate their speaking skills on agricultural-related topics. Contestants are judged on their problem-solving skills as they discuss timely topics with their colleagues. The District 5 Discussion Meet was held on September 4 at Ripon High School. Alana Biermeier (Juneau County), Alex Klapoetke (Marquette County) and Sam Pinchart (Winnebago County) will represent the district at the WFBF Young Farmers and Agriculturalists Discussion Meet that will be held during the WFBF YFA Conference on December 5-7.



President's Message



Kay Olson

Adams County Farm Bureau President

Instead of a message from me, I am sharing something I read on Facebook.

Things That Make You Think

Every Tuesday, I found a boy's crumpled homework in my trash. One night, he told me farmers were worthless—like me.

I've lived seventy-two years on this patch of dirt.

My name's Ray. Folks around here call me "the old farmer with the broken barn," and that's fair enough. My wife's gone, my kids grown, and most days it's just me, the cows, and this stubborn land that refuses to quit.

What people don't know is that, for months, I've been finding someone else's life tossed into my feed sacks and trash barrel. Crumpled notebooks. Torn math worksheets. English essays with red F's bleeding across the page. At first, I thought it was just wind carrying scraps from the school down the road. Then I noticed the same handwriting, always scrawled in anger:

"I'm dumb."

"Nobody cares."

"School is useless."

It punched a hole in my chest every time. Because once upon a time, I was that kid. Teachers said my hands were good for milking cows, not holding pencils. My father said, "Brains don't grow corn." And I believed him, until it was too late.

One night, I caught him. The boy. Standing by my shed under the security light, clutching another ripped page. His name was Tommy, the neighbor kid, twelve years old, freckles and too-big sneakers.

"What are you doing with my trash?" I barked, trying not to scare him.

He flinched but snapped back: "It's not trash, it's my homework. Dad says I'll end up like you anyway—digging dirt, nothing to show for it."

I froze. Like me. Worthless. Dirt.

I didn't yell. I didn't chase him off. I just let him run, his voice echoing long after he was gone.

That night I sat at the table with an old seed bag beside me. Pulled out a Sharpie. Wrote on the back:

"This seed looks useless. But give it sun, water, time—it feeds the world. Don't throw yourself away."

I tucked the note and a handful of kernels into the barrel where he always left his papers. Felt foolish, like a farmer writing fairy tales to the night.

Next day, it was gone.

The following week, there was another sheet in the barrel. Math problems, half-wrong. At the bottom, written in shaky pencil: "How can a seed be smart?"

I grinned. Wrote back: "Fractions are seeds too. Slice a pie into 4. Eat 1, that's 1/4. Even a farmer knows that."

And so, it began. A secret exchange. Him throwing broken pieces of himself into my trash. Me sending them back stitched with hope.

He confessed he couldn't spell "because." I circled it and wrote: "You spelled it right this time. Keep going." He said his dad called farmers dumb. I

scribbled: "My dirt puts food on his table. Dumb don't do that."

Week by week, his words softened. He started signing them: "Tommy." And one day, tucked beside the page, was a candy wrapper folded into the shape of a star.

But secrets don't stay buried long in small towns.

His father stormed over one Saturday, red-faced, fists like hammers. "You stay the hell out of my boy's head! He don't need farmer nonsense. School's already enough of a joke without you filling him with lies."

I didn't raise my voice. Just said: "Your boy's not broken. He just needs someone to believe it."

That was enough. He spat at the dirt and left.

It should've ended there. But the next week, another note showed up in the barrel. Shakier handwriting, but determined: "He says you're wrong. But I think seeds are smart. Because they don't give up, even in bad soil."

My throat burned. The boy was fighting for himself now.

Months passed. Then, in spring, the school held a parent night. I wasn't planning to go—farmers don't belong in classrooms—but one of the teachers, Mrs. Carter, stopped by my gate.

"You should come," she said gently. "There's something you'll want to hear."

So, I went. Sat in the back with dirt still under my nails, trying to disappear into the folding chair.

They had the kids read essays aloud. When Tommy's turn came, he walked to the front, clutching a paper. His voice shook, but carried him across the gym:

"My hero is Farmer Ray. He taught me that seeds look small, but they feed the world. He taught me that being smart isn't just about grades, it's about not giving up. He taught me farmers aren't dumb. They're the reason we eat. When I grow up, I want to be both: a student, and a man who works the land."

The room went silent. His father stared at the floor. The teacher wiped her eyes. And me? I sat in the back, fists pressed to my knees, trying not to break apart.

Afterward, Tommy slipped me a folded page. Inside was a drawing: a stalk of corn with roots tangled deep, and next to it a boy holding a book. Underneath, one line: "Thank you for seeing me."

I walked home under the stars, his words heavier than any sack of feed I'd ever carried.

People think changing the world takes money, degrees or power. Truth is, sometimes it takes nothing more than a stubborn farmer and a few scribbled notes in the trash.

Tommy doesn't know everything yet. Neither do I. But we both know this: seeds grow when someone bothers to plant them.

And kids? They're the most important crop we'll ever tend.

So, before you dismiss a farmer, or a janitor, or anyone who works with their hands, remember without us, the world starves. And before you dismiss a kid struggling with fractions—remember, they just need one person to believe.

I believed it. And now he believes. That's how you grow a future. One seed. One boy. One note at a time.



President's Message



Reuben Hopp

Fond du Lac County Farm Bureau President

I am excited to report that the Fond du Lac County Farm Bureau had another great year, and we continue to be the leading agricultural organization in the county.

The committee purchased over 50 copies of the AITC Book of the Year and mailed a free copy to every elementary school in the county.

The committee also again gave prizes and educational books to the first girl and boy born in the month of June at the Waupun and Fond du Lac hospitals in honor of June Dairy month. The county also participated in the AITC essay contest. The county received 35 entries. The fourth-grade winner was Payton Loehr from St Paul's Lutheran School in Mt. Calvary, and the fifth-grade winner was Henry Schaefer from Brandon Elementary. Henry was also the District 5 fifth-grade winner. I would like to thank Kelly Pollack for serving the last few years. Due to other commitments, Kelly has decided to step down as the Agriculture in the Classroom chair. If you, or someone you know, is interested in volunteering to help our AITC program, please let me know.

Jenny Leahy heads up our Promotion and Education committee. This year the committee once again had a booth at the annual Envision Fond du Lac Ag Showcase event in March. This year, the hands-on activity included making playdough. Jenny also had a display at the June Dairy Day event in downtown Fond du Lac in June. Jenny also had a booth at the Alto Fair.

Grant Buwalda continues to serve as our YFA chair and has already begun working on organizing activities for our members ages 18-35. Grant partnered with State FFA Officer Abel Kooima in doing presentations to the Waupun and Ripon FFA chapters about the opportunities in Farm Bureau. Once again, he did the scavenger hunt game at the county fair. If you are interested in getting involved, I encourage you to reach out to Grant.

This year, we awarded seven scholarships totaling \$7,500. This year's scholarship recipients were Hannah Aalsma, Ashlan Bruins, Rylan Bruins,

Jacob Gruenawold, Anna Hibicki and Faith Hull.

In August the WFB Foundation held its annual Foundation online giving day. Fond du lac County FB donated \$3500. Our foundation supports our YFA, P&E, the Leadership Institute, and 4-H and FFA sponsorships.

Our largest fundraiser of the year is our fair food stand. I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone who serves on the food stand committee. The committee continues to work extremely hard, making improvements to the building. Our building is really beautiful. We now have a commercial-grade kitchen. It's a great facility to work and volunteer in. A huge thank you to committee members Roger Grade and Steve Sabel. Along with Steve's sons, Michael and Johnathan, for the countless hours they spent providing all the labor to make those improvements. Also, a special thank you to Sarah Breuer, who does all the ordering for the stand and makes sure things run smoothly.

In addition to our food stand, we also do the Brandon Brat sale every year in August. Again, it was a great fundraiser for our organization. Thank you to everyone who helped.

We had successful fundraisers, and those profits will continue to fund our Agriculture in the Classroom, Promotion and Education and YFA programs as well as contributions we make to 4-H, FFA and our scholarship program.

We also continue to work hard on membership. If we don't continue to maintain and grow our membership numbers, we will not be able to continue all our programs and activities. Our county made both a voting and total gain in membership! A special thank you to Steve Sabel for leading our membership committee. Steve signed 17 new voting members. Trayton Greenfield signed ten and I signed five new voting members. All three of us will be recognized as part of the Farm Bureau Proud Club.

I want to thank the entire board. We have a great group of directors who make my job as president easy and enjoyable, so thank you! I also want to thank each of you for your membership and for taking the time to attend our annual meeting. It's truly appreciated. I also want to make sure to thank Becky, our District Coordinator for everything. Thank you again and God Bless.

Reuben and Betty Hopp Receive County Service to Farm Bureau Award

Reuben and Betty Hopp received the County Service to Farm Bureau Award at the recent Fond du Lac County Farm Bureau annual meeting.

Reuben and Betty Hopp purchased their farm in 1970 and lived there for 37 years, where they dairy farmed and raised their three children, Doug, Deb and Shelia. Shortly after they began farming, they partnered with Betty's sister and her husband, Phil and Lynette Loomans. Each couple maintained their own milking herd, but they worked together with the field work and at times, farming over 600 acres. In the fall of 1997, he started working at Farmers Elevator in Waupun and she began waitressing in Fon du Lac. In 1998, they sold the dairy cows. He started selling seed with Dairyland Seed through the local coop. In 2023, the couple started their own seed sales business by renting space at Daane Dairy.

They have both been an instrumental part of the Fond du Lac County Farm Bureau for over the last 25 years, volunteering at many county events, the fair stand and brat fry over the years. Reuben has been recognized numerous times for signing members and being part of the Farm Bureau club. He also has served on the board for over 20 years and is currently the county president. The couple has been very active in the local community through different organizations. They were in charge of the food tent at the Alto Farm Bureau Fair for 30 years. In addition, they are both active members of the Alto Reformed Church, both serving in different roles and ministry areas throughout the years.



President's Message



Chad Bruss

Green Lake County Farm Bureau President

With the leaves falling and the days getting shorter, no doubt change is in the air. Likewise, here at Green Lake County Farm Bureau, change is happening as Pete Badtke was elected to the state board for the district. He has since decided to step back at the county level. While he's still on

the board, he decided to have someone else take the president position and I was elected in September at our county annual meeting.

Here is a little about myself. I grew up on my family's farm outside Markesan. I farm with my mom, dad and brother, where we milk about 180 cows.

As far as my Farm Bureau involvement, I got involved at UW-Platteville with the collegiate chapter. When I returned home, I was asked to serve on the board here in Green Lake County and have been on the board for about six years now. I have been the YFA chair for the past couple of years and was vice president last year. I have participated in the discussion meet the past couple of years as well. I was a member of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Leadership Institute Class XIV, which was an awesome opportunity to strengthen my leadership skills, and I urge anyone that has never participated in this program to reach out with any questions about it because it is something that many can benefit from.

As summer rolled on and the heat got turned up, the county hosted our annual member picnic on July 27. We had a great turnout and always find it to be a great way to kick off fair week and interact with other members that we might not see all that often.

The heat mellowed out and the rain stayed away, which led to an awesome week for the fair food stand. One of the best weeks we have ever had for the food stand. It wouldn't have been possible without the countless hours put in by our fair food stand chair, Steve Kutz, heading things up, as well as all the volunteers who put so much time and effort into making it such a success. Thank you!

In early September, we held our annual meeting once again at the beautiful Farmview Event Barn near Berlin. We elected board positions, voted on policy that the county is so devoted and committed to always doing year after year and heard from the two county essay contest winners who were both recognized, as well as their teacher, who put in the time and effort to have the kids write these and submit them.

In mid-September, Green Lake County members Nick Retzlaff and Pete Badtke had the opportunity to head to Washington, D.C. to advocate for Wisconsin agriculture. They met with elected officials from Wisconsin and had a couple of days filled with great meetings. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules and representing us at the national level.

October started with some beautiful weather, making the Focus on the Farm event a great success, hosted on our family farm, serving 1000+ people and teaching the community what agriculture is all about. P&E members Natasha and Emily did an activity with the kids to showcase the unique popcorn industry.

On October 9, the P&E committee hosted their annual farm tour, where kids from across the county participated. Normally, this occurs in the spring, but this year it came early as they showcased vegetable production here in Wisconsin. It was a very insightful tour of Boerson Farms, near Green Lake, on how they grow their produce, harvest and sell the vegetables and meat they raise.

As harvest season continues, I hope you are blessed with a bountiful and safe harvest season.



Green Lake County Farm Bureau officers. From left: Emily Strahota (secretary/treasurer), Chad Bruss (president), Natasha Paris (vice president).



Abbie Swanke Receives Woman of the Year Award



Abbie Swanke (right) was presented with the Green Lake County Farm Bureau Women of the Year award at the county's annual meeting held on September 9.

Juneau County

wfbf.com/about/counties/juneau
JuneauCountyFarmBureau

President's Message



Kip Weber
Juneau County Farm Bureau President

Greetings Juneau County Farm Bureau members. First, I want to thank each one of you for being a Farm Bureau member. Your support of the Juneau County Farm Bureau is greatly appreciated.

This year, the county made both a voting and total gain in membership.

The county also had another successful pie and ice cream stand at the Juneau County Fair. Thank you to everyone who stopped by for pie and ice cream. This is the county's main fundraiser and primarily supports our Agriculture in the Classroom program. I would like to thank Tonra Degner for all the years she has chaired the pie sale. Tonra decided to step down from this role this year. Special thanks to Alana Beirmeier for stepping up to help organize our fair pie sale. Be safe for the remainder of the harvest season and have a great holiday.



THANK YOU TO OUR PIE BAKERS

- Tonra Degner
- Heidi Weber
- Hana Benish
- Lori Weber
- Sally Turpin
- Kristie Hansen
- Jenny Barreau
- Pat Stanek
- Amy Vandermark
- Kelly Green
- Al & Lisa Voss
- Charlene Olson
- Alana Biermeier



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



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Slowey Farms Host Marquette County June Dairy Breakfast



A huge thank you to the Slowey family for hosting the 2025 Marquette County Dairy Breakfast on June 8.



FARM FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

GET OFF THE FARM AND HAVE SOME FUN WITH YOUR FAMILY! MARQUETTE COUNTY FARM BUREAU IS INVITING YOU TO A FREE FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT.

DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2025
LOCATION: MONTELLO MOVIE THEATER
TIME: 7PM

MOVIE BEING SHOWN: THE LAST RODEO

PLEASE RSVP BY NOVEMBER 15TH TO VICTORIA WACHHOLZ
608-369-2644

President's Message



Mike Leahy

Waushara County Farm Bureau President

We're thrilled to gather and reflect on a truly impactful year. It's an honor to share the remarkable accomplishments made possible by your dedication and the generosity of our community. During this busy harvest season, we often find ourselves working long hours in the fields to ensure a successful year. We frequently sacrifice personal time and sleep to tend to our crops. I am thankful to reflect on a truly impactful year. It's an honor to share the remarkable accomplishments made possible by your dedication and the generosity of our community. Please take a few moments to learn about the ways the Waushara County Farm Bureau has been supporting you and our agricultural community.

You may have noticed this year's ice cream at the county fair was always the perfect temperature. This was made possible by Adams Columbia Electric Cooperative Operation Round Up program. We received \$2,500 to upgrade the fair food stand freezer!

This year also saw incredible generosity flow into our organization. We received over \$2,000 from the estate of the late Thomas Plier and a \$500 gift from the Berlin FFA Alumni. We are deeply grateful for these substantial contributions that empower our initiatives.

These donations were put to excellent use, specifically in supporting the future of agriculture in Waushara County. We were thrilled to receive an unprecedented five applications for the Bleskley Scholarship this year! The scholarship committee unanimously agreed that all five applicants—Larissa Piechowski, Hazil Luttrupp, Bailey Walejko, Christopher Gunst and Maria Lauer—were exceptionally deserving. Each demonstrated outstanding academic achievement, actively participated in 4-H, FFA, and the Junior Holstein Association and is pursuing a career in an agriculture-related field. With the board's enthusiastic approval, we proudly awarded five \$500 scholarships, investing directly in these promising young individuals.

The Waushara County Farm Bureau was also named the Waushara Area Chamber of Commerce's Non-Profit Organization of the Year for 2024. The award was presented at the Chamber's annual banquet in October 2024, where the Farm Bureau was recognized for its work in the community, including supporting agriculture, supporting Tractor Safety courses, offering scholarships and funding leadership training for young farmers.

YFA chair Miranda Ewald held a bowling social in late December. They also had a joint event with Green Lake County YFA for Trivia Night at Knuth's Brewing in Ripon. The YFA program is for Farm Bureau members between the ages of 18 and 35. It provides members with an opportunity to enhance their leadership skills while networking with their peers. Many of the young members who have participated in the program have gone on to become active county, state and national Farm Bureau leaders, as well as respected leaders in their communities.

We had a booth at the most recent Blue Ribbons Kids Day held at Parkside Elementary in Wautoma. Blue Ribbon Kids Day attracts more than 1,000 parents, grandparents and children who learn and practice safety skills, discover area resources and enjoy a morning of free family-focused fun. It is the largest free family event offered in Waushara County. This year, P&E chair Lynn Leahy showed the kids about the different soil types that make up Waushara County.

We once again sponsored four members of the Tri-County FFA to attend the FFA Farm Forum. FFA Farm Forum is a learning and leadership conference open to high school juniors in Wisconsin. Nearly 200 students attend this annual conference. This year's conference was held in Rothschild. For over 50 years, Wisconsin Farm Bureau has sponsored an in-person FFA Farm Forum for Wisconsin youth. During the one-day event, FFA members attended career-based workshops where they learned about marketing and communications, defining and celebrating sustainability and about agricultural lending.

The new fair food stand has given us the ability to be more involved in the community. This past year we participated in the Waushara Lights up the Fair Grounds, The Wautoma Father's Day Car Show and Freedom Feast. Handing out hot chocolate and selling burgers, brats and refreshments in conjunction with Wautoma Chamber of Commerce has been a great way to put our organization out in the community.

I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to Victor Magnus and Molly Dahlke from Rural Mutual Insurance. Their invaluable support enabled our county to achieve a membership increase again this year. In fact, Victor and Molly successfully enrolled 62 new members in the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation over the past 11 months, ranking 12th statewide. Please watch for Victor and Molly this fall as they distribute harvest snack bags again to thank all the dedicated farmers who work tirelessly during this demanding harvest season.

The Wautoma School Board approved transferring Alexandra Klapoetke to the 7-12 Agriculture/Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) teacher during their regular meeting on July 14. Klapoetke will be transferring from her position as the Parkside Grade 8 Science Teacher to this new position and will start offering a variety of courses to students this fall.

With Klapoetke in this new role at Parkside and WHS, her hope is to work with administration to implement an FFA Program over the next few years. The program is committed to providing experiences for students in leadership, personal growth and career success through agriculture education.

Courses surrounding agriculture and technology will cover topics like plant science, farming practices, environmental sustainability and technology, including woodworking, small engines, light electrical and plumbing. Agriculture is a staple of our area, and many students have shown interest in courses that will help them excel in the agricultural field. The county Farm Bureau looks forward to helping Ms. Klapoetke in any way possible in this exciting development!

Thank you for attending the annual meeting and we look forward to another successful year!



President's Message



Amanda Volp

Winnebago County Farm Bureau President

Wishing a happy fall to all my fellow Winnebago County Farm Bureau members! It is one of my favorite times of the year with the leaves turning, cooler sweatshirt weather, and of course, harvest. We have had good harvesting weather so far, and everywhere I look, someone is out in the field combining, trucks are hauling grain and farming equipment is taking up the roads. I love it!

It has been a busy summer. Updates from the county:

- On May 10, we hosted our 6th annual and capstone, Drive by Steak Fry for May Beef Month at Beck's Meats in Ring! The Beck family is one of our biggest supporters, so being able to bring this event full circle was important to us. Guests were able to purchase premium-quality meats at their store, along with being able to tour the plant. We sold 150 steak plates and cheeseburger bags. As always, the feedback we received was spectacular, and people appreciated the reason for the event.
- June Dairy Month was a success with the promotional events, both at June Dairy Days held at the Leach Amphitheatre in Oshkosh on June 14 and our drive-thru grilled cheese event held at Silver-Shea Holsteins in Omro on June 21. We have since been supporting our "Refuel with Chocolate Milk" campaign and donating milk to local schools for players during sports events.

- The Winnebago County Fair was the last week in July/first week in August in Oshkosh. Our Farm Bureau food stand had another great year, and the committee did an outstanding job raising funds used for activities throughout the year. We brought back the daily menu special item that corresponded with what animals were being exhibited during the day. For dairy day, we had homemade farmer's mac and cheese, the cheese curd cheeseburger for beef day and for swine day, we had a slow roasted pulled pork sandwich or bacon cheddar brat. For a kid-friendly menu item, we again had popcorn chicken on the main daily menu, and they were a hit! Hot menu items that will always make their comeback were hot ham and cheese sandwiches, roast beef sandwiches and deep-fried cheese curds. Another Friday Fish Fry was a hot menu item, where we were able to showcase Winneconne FFA's tilapia project. People LOVED getting a Friday fish fry meal at the fair! A huge thank you to Beck's Meats and Festival Foods for their support! And to the many FFA students, members and non-members who volunteered their time to help make it run smoothly, we couldn't do it without you!

- Our county annual meeting was held on September 6 at the Fin 'N Feather restaurant in Winneconne. With around 50 people in attendance, we updated members on events happening on the county and state levels. I am excited for another year with an amazing group of people serving on the board of directors!

- National Pork Month is October, so of course we have to celebrate! On October 4 we had our 2nd annual "Porktober Shoot Out" hosted at the Fox Valley Trap Club in Omro. The day consisted of multiple meat shoots for all things pork, including an Annie Oakley round the Grand HAM! We roasted a pig for the event and served pulled pork sandwiches, tater tots and loaded tater tots with pulled pork and cheese. The event was a hit with over 24 different shoots. We had people from all over, local members, kids and people from counties away competing. A few raffle baskets were up for play as well. We received some support from the Wisconsin Pork Association and truly, everyone enjoyed the creative ideas the Promotion and Education Committee has had this year!

Looking ahead, the WFBF Annual Meeting and YFA Conference will be held in Wisconsin Dells at the Kalahari Resorts and Convention Center on Dec 5-8.

I pray that the harvest season has been safe and bountiful for all and continues to be as we finish out the year. God bless.



Steak Fry



Dairy Host Family



Grilled Cheese



Annual Meeting



Porktober

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Highlights for:

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Juneau County

Marquette County

Waushara County

Winnebago County



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