



# Grassroots

District 9 News

## One Voice Speaking Up for Agriculture



**Brad Olson**

WFBF President and District 9 Director

- One seed planted.
- One farmer makes a decision.
- One voice speaking up for agriculture.

The power of one seed, planted in faith, nurtured with care. This single seed represents optimism, resilience and the future. Every spring, we are reminded that agriculture is an act of trust in the land, weather and work we do each day.

One farmer makes a decision on a new farming practice – whether that is reduced tillage, nutrient management or cover crops. Change comes from farmers trying new things, finding out what works and sharing their experience with other farmers. Change does not come from sweeping mandates; it starts one farmer at a time.

One conversation can make all the difference. Today, agriculture faces more misunderstanding than ever. One farmer, taking the time to explain how our food is grown, how livestock is cared for or how we protect the environment. These conversations, one at a time, can build trust and

understanding.

One farmer going to the Capitol, calling on their legislator, sends a message that we in agriculture are engaged and paying attention. One story can carry tremendous weight. Remember, it only takes a few calls to our elected officials for them to dig deeper into issues.

Finally, one neighbor helping another in a tough season strengthens the entire community. We have a network of relationships built on support, shared experiences and cooperation. When one of us helps another, the impact ripples far beyond that one moment, far into the future.

One person can make all the difference.

With that said, I want to acknowledge the unexpected passing of Rusk County Farm Bureau President Terry Dusell. It is a loss that is felt heavily because he demonstrated the power of what one person could do not only within our district, but across the agricultural community in Wisconsin. His love of farming and his never-ending drive made agriculture and Farm Bureau better. Please keep his children and grandchildren in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

Brad Olson

District 9 Director

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## YOUNG FARMER AND AGRICULTURIST Awards

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

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# District 9 News

## Members Bring 'The Power of One' to Ag Day at the Capitol

On January 21, District 9 members joined fellow farmers from across the state at the Wisconsin State Capitol for Ag Day at the Capitol. The day served as a meaningful reminder of something we often say, but don't always pause to fully appreciate: agriculture's voice is strongest when individuals choose to show up.

Walking up to the Capitol never gets old. There is something powerful about watching farmers step into those halls as storytellers, neighbors and leaders. Conversations unfolded between members and elected officials, conversations about farms, families, challenges and opportunities. These moments weren't loud or dramatic. They were personal, thoughtful and impactful, exactly the kind of interactions that shape understanding and influence decisions.

This year's membership theme, The Power of One, could not have been more fitting. Real change rarely starts with a crowd. It starts with one person willing to make the trip to Madison. One handshake. One shared

story. One honest conversation. Advocacy doesn't require perfection or polished speeches. It simply requires presence. And District 9 members showed exactly what that looks like.

Every member who attended demonstrated a truth worth carrying forward: it only takes one person to make a difference. One connection can change a perspective. One conversation can build understanding. One voice can represent an entire community. Whether it's engaging with policymakers, connecting with neighbors or inviting someone to join the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, small actions matter.

As we continue our membership efforts, Ag Day at the Capitol offers a simple but powerful call to action. Be the one. Be the one who speaks up. The one who shows up. The one who reaches out. Because when individuals act, the collective impact follows.

And that is the true power of one.



## Grassroots Policy Starts with You

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation has a long history rooted in farmers organizing to solve problems together and advocate for agriculture as a grassroots organization. In fact, that's exactly how WFBF began. Back in 1920, farmers in Wisconsin officially created the statewide organization to represent farmers' interest, improve farm profitability and promote rural leadership. By working together, they created an organization built on a simple but powerful idea: farmers should have a voice in the decisions that affect their farms, families and rural communities.

More than a century later, that hasn't changed.

Farm Bureau's policy development process is still built from the ground up. Ideas start with members at the county level, move through the state discussion process and ultimately help shape the policies that guide the organization's advocacy work in Madison and Washington, D.C. It's a process designed to ensure the real experiences of farmers and rural residents are heard where decisions are made.

And it all starts with a simple question: What's grinding your gears in agriculture?

Every season brings new challenges, and no one understands them better than the people living and working in agriculture every day. Members are encouraged to share ideas, concerns and potential policy solutions any time, easily through the policy suggestion form. Submissions help identify emerging issues and ensure the organization remains focused on what matters most to farmers and rural communities.

More than 100 years ago, farmers came together to solve problems through the power of collective voices. That grassroots spirit is still at the heart of Farm Bureau today. And it continues with one simple step: speaking up about what's affecting agriculture in your community.



Scan the QR code to share your thoughts. You can also visit [bit.ly/2026FBPD](https://bit.ly/2026FBPD).

## County Presidents Attend New President Huddle

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 Gabriela Haack from Chippewa County Farm Bureau and Mary Brand from Pierce 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!



New President Huddle participants included (from left) Allen Johnson (Grant County) Sam Skemp (Dane County) Chad Bruss (Green Lake County) Duane Ducat (Kewaunee County) Gabriella Haack (Chippewa County) and Mary Brand (Pierce County).

## "I Don't Have the Time"



**Katie Richartz**  
District 9 Coordinator

I find myself reflecting on the first months of 2026 and a thought I keep coming back to: "I don't have the time."

It's a phrase many people hesitate to say out loud, especially when talking about leadership or service. But in truth, it's often the most honest starting point. The people doing the most meaningful work rarely have time to spare.

They're juggling responsibilities, balancing careers and families, listening to neighbors and working through complex challenges that don't fit neatly into a schedule. They aren't waiting for a clear calendar or the perfect moment to step up. They're already in motion.

Leadership isn't about free time. It's about priorities.

The leaders who make a real difference are the ones who carve out time intentionally; early mornings, late nights, quick check-ins between meetings, conversations squeezed in where they can fit. They make time because the work matters. Because the people matter. Because progress doesn't pause until life gets less busy.

That kind of leadership doesn't always look polished. It's often quiet. It happens behind the scenes, without fanfare or recognition. It's showing up consistently, even when it's inconvenient. Especially when it's inconvenient.

In communities like ours, the strongest leaders aren't the loudest voices or the ones with the most availability. They're the ones willing to do the work, to listen, to collaborate and to move things forward, even when their plates are already full.

So, when we think about leadership, perhaps the better question isn't, "Who has the time?" It's, "Who is willing to make the time?" Because that's where real leadership lives.



# District 9 News

## The Power of One

Farm Bureau is built on something simple but powerful: individuals who decide to show up, speak up or step forward, sometimes in ways they never expected. Leadership doesn't always start with a title. Often, it begins with one small yes, one conversation or one step outside a comfort zone. That's the spirit behind this year's The Power of One membership campaign.



For Mike Roberts of Sawyer County, that first step was simply saying yes to becoming a Farm Bureau member. What followed was a journey that led to leadership opportunities, community connections and the chance to share agriculture's story with others.

"The first thing I said yes to was to be a Farm Bureau member," Mike said. "Then I said yes to being the Young Farmer

representative on the Kenosha County Farm Bureau board."

That opportunity opened doors he hadn't expected. Through Farm Bureau involvement, Mike gained valuable experience learning to speak publicly and mastering Robert's Rules of Order, skills that would help him confidently participate in meetings and leadership discussions.

Early on, a piece of advice from fellow Farm Bureau member Don Armitage stuck with him.

"Farm Bureau is an organization of farmers, run by farmers, to do for farmers what farmers want to do."

That philosophy has guided Mike's involvement ever since. Over the years, he has seen firsthand how one person stepping up can create something bigger than expected. One example is the community dairy breakfast his group helps organize. What began as a local event has grown into an opportunity to connect with people from outside agriculture and help them better understand the dairy industry.

Mike has also found one of the most meaningful impacts close to home. Each year, his farm hosts tours for two local grade schools and several 4-H groups. During these visits, students get hands-on experiences with calves, cows and farm equipment.

"The kids love it," Mike shared.

"But the biggest impact is often on the teachers. They don't always realize how well we care for our animals or why we do what we do."

These conversations help build trust and understanding between farmers and the broader community, one visit at a time.

Looking ahead, Mike encourages fellow Farm Bureau members to consider their own "yes" in the coming year. One issue he believes deserves strong support is legislation addressing wildlife damage caused by animals like elk and sandhill cranes, which is affecting more farms across the state. "We all need to get behind this and get it over the finish line," he said.

Mike's story is a reminder that Farm Bureau's strength comes from members who are willing to take that first step. Whether it's joining a committee, sharing agriculture's story with neighbors or advocating for policies that impact rural communities, every action matters.

Because sometimes the power of one decision can lead to a lifetime of impact.

through the power of collective voices. That grassroots spirit is still at the heart of Farm Bureau today. And it continues with one simple step: speaking up about what's affecting agriculture in your community.



## Meet Mary Jo Blair



Mary Jo Blair has recently been hired with Rural Mutual Insurance Company to step into the Northwest District role, currently held by Laurie Peterson, who will be retiring in June 2026. Mary Jo will work with Laurie through June to ensure a smooth transition. It's way too early to say goodbye to Laurie, but rest assured, we'll give her a proper send-off when the time comes.

Mary Jo is a graduate of UW-Green Bay with a degree in history. She brings a wealth of insurance experience to the role, having served as a personal and commercial lines underwriter, a senior multi-line claims adjuster and a senior district sales manager.

Mary Jo has served as president of the Fox Valley Insurance Association and is currently on the board for the Northern Wisconsin Chapter of CPCU Association. She has been a member of Professional Insurance Agents (PIA) and Fox Valley Adjusters Association.

Her certifications include CIC, CPCU, API, AIC, AU and AINS.

What drove the decision to join Rural Mutual? Mary Jo (or "MJ") and her husband, Mark, wanted to return to her hometown in northern Wisconsin to raise their youngest son, Collin, with the same small-town farm values they had growing up. They are also blessed to have three adult children and six grandchildren.

When she and Mark aren't shuttling Collin to his various activities, they can be found trying to keep up with their grandchildren or relaxing on their farm with family and friends.

They also have a passion for travel with their most recent adventure being a trip to Jerusalem. Mary Jo and her family are excited to begin their next chapter with Rural Mutual.



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# District 9 News

## Local Students Attend FFA Farm Forum

More than 300 FFA members, advisors and guests from across Wisconsin attended Wisconsin Farm Bureau's FFA Farm Forum in Rothschild on Feb. 11.

"FFA Farm Forum is a place for learning and leadership," said WFBF President Brad Olson. "We appreciate FFA members' vision for the future of agriculture and are proud to present an event that supports their leadership paths."

The keynote speaker was Mark Holley, Chief Meteorologist at WSAW. Holley shared how his passion for science, technology and problem-solving turned into a career that has a real impact on agriculture and everyday life. "I became a meteorologist to communicate with the people who need to know when to bale their hay and plant their crops," shared Holley. "In my career, it is important to be a good science communicator because the weather impacts everyone."

During the one-day event, FFA members attended career-based workshops including: 'From Farm to Finance' with Alison Kepner from Compeer Financial, 'A Career in Agricultural Engineering' with Ian

Hansen from MSA Professional Services, Inc., 'Discover Food Science' with Grace Lewis from UW-River Falls, 'Careers in Marketing and Insurance' with Jenny Martin from Rural Mutual Insurance Company, 'Career Paths within Agricultural Coops' with Joe Sikora from Insight FS and 'Understanding Animal Behavior' with Beth McIlquham from UW-Madison Extension.

"FFA Farm Forum is a valuable collaboration between Wisconsin Farm Bureau and Wisconsin FFA, fostering leadership development and career exploration in agriculture," said WFBF Director of Young Leader Programs Melissa Jacobson. "We're proud to support and inspire the next generation of agricultural leaders."

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation sponsors FFA Farm Forum in cooperation with the Wisconsin Association of FFA. The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation was established in 1988 to provide support for agricultural education and leadership programs. Through donations and other contributions, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation invests time and resources to support the next generation of agriculturists.



2026 FFA Farm Forum Group Photo



### Captions:

1. Ashland High School (from left) – Kelly Bond, Samuel Marito, Luke Juoni, Mark Skanse and Kelsey Weber.
2. Bloomer High School (from left) - Addysyn Goldsmith and Eleasha Kuehl
3. Chippewa Falls High School (from left) – Myles Goettl, Adrianna Anderson, Riley Colvin and Wyatt Bowe

4. Clear Lake High School (from left) – Gracie Hornick, Addie Kobernick, Alexis Rondeau and Madelyn Dorsey.
5. Glenwood City High School – Haley Barstad
6. Menomonie High School (from left) – Chloe Scheuffele, [Unknown] Witt, Hunter langman, Iris Eckert
7. St Croix Central High School – Landrey Roseboom

## Farm Stress Relief: One Small Tool That Can Help

Leslie Svacina

St. Croix County Farm Bureau member

Long days can take a toll on the body. Whether it's lifting feed bags, putting in time in the tractor, working livestock, taking care of office tasks, evaluating marketing decisions or juggling personal and family responsibilities, stress can show up as muscle tension, which tends to build up over time.

Most of us don't have time for complicated recovery routines, but that doesn't mean we should ignore the tightness that can build in our bodies. One simple option is to use a tennis ball to release muscle tension on a regular basis.

### Why it works

- Muscle knots or trigger points are common sore spots, especially with repetitive work, long days or stressful situations.
- A tennis ball helps apply focused pressure where your hands can't reach.

### How to do it

1. Find the spot. Lie down or lean against a wall with the ball between you and the surface. Move slowly until you feel a tender or tight area
2. Apply pressure. Use firm, tolerable pressure. If it feels too sharp or uncomfortable, back off
3. Hold and wait. Stay on that spot until the sensation eases by about 20 percent. This may take 10 seconds to a few minutes
4. Finish gently. Avoid overworking the area. Follow up with light movement or stretching

### Where to use it

- Best areas: hips, glutes, lower back, feet
- You can also try shoulders, calves, and upper back

### Tips for more relief

- Focus on one or two spots at a time
- Breathe deeply in and out as you hold the pressure in one spot
- Heat before or after can help muscles relax
- Move or stretch lightly afterward
- Firmer or softer balls can be used if preferred

### Safety notes

- Avoid pressing directly on bones, joints, or recent injuries
- Keep pressure moderate and comfortable

Source: *PainScience.com*, "The Complete Guide to Trigger Points and Muscle Knots" (tennis ball self-massage overview).

## I'm Fine

Paul Hetke

Rusk County Farm Bureau Vice President

It's the middle of March. The year is less than one quarter done, but at times it feels like it's already been a couple of years long.

It started with the price of milk falling back to about what we were paid for the very first tank we sold in 1989. Of course, nothing else has gone down with it. Still, I told my wife, "We'll be fine."

Then on January 26, my dad passed away. Over the next week, and at the funeral, I bet close to a hundred people asked how I was doing. My answer was simple: "I'm fine."

One of those people was my friend, Terry DuSell. After I gave him that same answer, he said something we've all heard and probably all said many times: "If there's anything I can do, just let me know." I had heard it over and over those past couple weeks, but for some reason, this time felt different. I told Terry that, and he looked at me and said, "That's what friends are for."

I didn't know that would be the last conversation we would ever have.

Then on February 28, we heard on the news that Operation Epic Fury had been launched against Iran. Our daughter-in-law has been deployed to Kuwait since October, so we called our son right away. He told us her base had been hit, but her unit had already been moved to a "secure location." I asked him how he was holding up, and like his dad, he said, "I'm fine."

So, I guess that means I am too.

Then, on March 2, came news I still can't fully process: Terry had died unexpectedly and in an extremely tragic way. How does a person deal with that? I'm not sure you do. This one changes you. A few days later, I got a call from our District 9 Coordinator, Katie Richartz. I had been serving as the county Farm Bureau vice president while Terry was president, so we needed to talk through what came next and how to navigate the months ahead. As we wrapped up, she asked, "How are you doing?"

I paused.

It sounded like she really meant it. For a second, I thought about answering honestly, about saying how heavy everything had felt. But instead, I said what I had been saying all along: "I'm fine."

Recently, I got a call that my mom wasn't feeling well. We took her to urgent care, where we spent six hours running tests without many answers. In the end, we decided it would be best for her to stay in the hospital for a few days. We'll get it figured out.

We'll be fine.

After writing this, I'll be heading to Terry's funeral. That will be tough, but I think I'll be fine. Somewhere in between, I'll visit Mom and talk with the doctor about next steps. We had our niece's wedding in Eau Claire. At home, we have four cows due to calve any time. And Janet and I were scheduled to lead hymns at church with a snowstorm coming.

It's a full plate. It's a heavy season.

But I'll be fine... I think.

The truth is, "I'm fine" is often the easiest answer to give and the hardest one to question. We say it out of habit. We say it to move the conversation along. Sometimes we say it because we don't have the words for anything else.

But "fine" doesn't always mean okay.

Sometimes it means we're carrying more than we know how to share. Sometimes it means we're doing our best just to keep moving forward. And sometimes, it's a quiet signal that we might need someone to sit with us a little longer, ask one more question, or simply remind us that we don't have to have it all together.

If this year has taught me anything so far, it's this: it's okay to not be okay.

And it's just as important to mean it when we ask someone else how they're doing and to be ready to listen if their answer is more than "fine."



# District 9 News

## 62nd Annual Eau Claire Farm Show

The 62nd annual Eau Claire Farm Show was held March 3–4 at the Chippewa Valley Expo Center, bringing together farmers, agribusiness professionals and community members from across the region.

Wisconsin Farm Bureau had a strong presence at the show, connecting with members and visitors throughout the two-day event. The booth provided a great opportunity to visit with longtime members, welcome new faces and have meaningful conversations about the issues impacting agriculture today. From policy questions to membership conversations, the Farm Bureau booth served as a hub for discussion, networking and relationship building.

Events like the Eau Claire Farm Show highlight the strength of agriculture in northwest Wisconsin and the importance of staying connected. Thank you to everyone who stopped by the Farm Bureau booth to share ideas, ask questions and visit. These conversations help keep the grassroots spirit of Farm Bureau strong.



Get the **MOST** out of **EVERY DOLLAR** with your **FARM BUREAU MEMBER BENEFITS**

Wisconsin Farm Bureau members qualify for a variety of membership benefits and discounts that serve the needs of farmers, families and businesses in Wisconsin.




\*WFBF member benefits may be changed or discontinued at any time without notice.\*



# LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Grow your voice.  
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### ABOUT THE PROGRAM :

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Leadership Institute is a year-long, hands-on agricultural leadership experience that equips Farm Bureau members with the skills, confidence, and connections to lead boldly in their farms, businesses, and communities.

### WHAT YOU'LL GAIN:

- ✔ Expanded professional network
- ✔ Deeper understanding of ag issues
- ✔ Stronger leadership and communication skills
- ✔ Personal growth

### LAST CALL FOR APPLICATIONS!

- 📍 Application deadline is June 15
- 🌐 Apply at <https://bit.ly/fbleader27>



## Farm Bureau's New Value Statement is Your Answer to 'Why Join?'



**Sarah Hetke**

Sauk County Farm Bureau Member

“Why should I join Farm Bureau?”

Have you ever received that question? It usually leaves me wondering, “Where do I even begin?” There’s something for everyone, but what I find value in may not be the same as my neighbor.

I had the opportunity to serve on Wisconsin Farm Bureau’s strategic planning task force. Alongside fellow members from across the state, representing a wide range of commodities, farm sizes and experiences, we spent many hours talking about where Farm Bureau has been, where it needs to go and how the organization can best serve members now and into the future. Outside of developing the current strategic plan, we were asked to develop a membership value statement.

At its core, the value statement answers a simple but important question: “Why should I join Farm Bureau?” With more than 53,000 members across the state, it is difficult to define membership value in a sentence or two. We wanted language that reflects the full breadth of what this organization delivers for Wisconsin agriculture yet knew we needed to keep it concise.

After several hours of conversation, we landed on, “A unified voice for agriculture shaping policy, developing members and engaging consumers.”

“A unified voice for agriculture,” resonated deeply with our task force. Agriculture in Wisconsin is incredibly diverse, yet we are strongest when we come together to advocate for policies that allow farms, agribusinesses and rural communities to thrive. Farm Bureau provides the structure, relationships and credibility needed to ensure farmers’ voices are heard at

every level of government.

Personal and professional development is another important aspect of Farm Bureau membership. Countless members have found value from participating in programs like the Leadership Institute, Campaign School and the WisGO Team to name a few. I have met members of all ages who have developed lifelong friendships from participating in the Leadership Institute, Young Farmers and Agriculturist Committee and so much more.

Farm Bureau value doesn’t stop within the agriculture community. Equally important is our role in engaging consumers. As agriculture evolves, the gap between farmers and the public continues to grow. Farm Bureau helps bridge that gap through outreach, education and storytelling that builds trust and understanding. That work is essential, not only for the future of our farms, but for the future of food itself.

What I appreciate most about this value statement is how, after many rounds of brainstorming, we were able to concisely package major areas that show value to a diverse membership. It is not focused on one type of farm or one segment of agriculture. It reflects the diversity of Wisconsin Farm Bureau members and the wide range of services and support the organization provides every day.

Now, the value statement belongs to all of us. It is more than words on paper. We can use it to explain why we are members, to invite others to join and to remind ourselves of the collective impact we have when we work together. I encourage you to reference it often as you attend community events where you connect with potential new members. It is a tool that our taskforce hopes you find easy to use when recruiting new members and answering the question, “Why should I join Farm Bureau?”



### A Unified Voice for Agriculture

As the leading voice for Wisconsin agriculture, WFBF ensures that farmers’ concerns are heard and addressed, allowing you to focus on what you do best—feeding, clothing and fueling our communities.

### Shaping Policy

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation champions policies that protect farmers’ rights, making sure that agriculture remains a thriving industry through proactive engagement at all levels of government.

### Developing Members

Members gain access to leadership development, business resources and networking opportunities designed to help farmers expand their businesses and influence.

### Engaging Consumers

Through outreach education, WFBF bridges the gap between farmers and consumers, promoting a deeper understanding of modern agriculture and its role in everyday life.

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Join WFBF Today  
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# District 9 News

## Nitrates and Groundwater

Todd Prill

Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist, UW-Madison Division of Extension

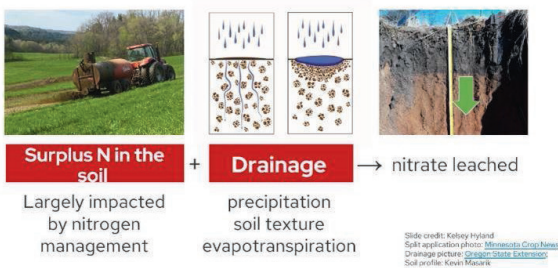
The current average U.S. corn yield is around 180 bushels/acre, approximately three times greater than just 50 years ago! This dramatic increase is not possible without significant nitrogen applications to corn. In 2023, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection conducted an evaluation of groundwater nitrate levels from approximately 400 private wells across the state. Their report found that areas where nitrate concentrations exceeded the safe drinking water standard (10 milligrams/liter) were frequently associated with a high percentage of cultivated land. Minimizing future nitrogen loss to groundwater from agricultural practices is important for human health, the environment, and long-term farm profitability.

Most nitrogen applied to soils is quickly changed into nitrate-nitrogen (NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>) by soil bacteria. Nitrate-nitrogen can be readily used by plants but is not held by soil particles and freely moves through the soil profile with percolating water. Fall and spring are particularly vulnerable times for nitrate leaching because this is typically when most groundwater recharge occurs. This timeframe is also when most row crop fields are void of vegetation that would use the abundant supply of water and nitrates in the soil.

University of Wisconsin research is looking to find more information about how ag management practices influence nitrate leaching risk to groundwater. Ideally, research will be able to identify management practices during and after the growing season that reduce nitrate leaching risk. Initial research results have provided some interesting information:

- As nitrogen application rates increase, nitrate leachate risk increases exponentially.
- Nitrogen supplied from manure and fertilizers had similar susceptibility to leaching.
- Cropping systems with living covers (pastures, perennial crops) generally had lower nitrate leaching risk.
- Winter rye used as a cover crop can uptake more than 50 pounds of N per acre in the time between crop harvest and planting.
- In typical crop rotations, corn generally has the highest nitrate leaching risk.

### Nitrate leaching happens when:



### The majority of nitrate leaching happens between growing seasons



Wisconsin research in Arlington showed 73-75% of nitrate leaching happened April 1 - June 30.

## Water Quality Training

Chris Murphy

Wisconsin Nutrient Loss Reduction Clearinghouse Manager

A process called Water Quality Trading allows municipal wastewater facilities, private industries (point sources) to pay landowners and agricultural producers (nonpoint sources) to install conservation practices for the purpose of reducing streambank erosion, converting to a rotational grazing system, soil erosion and storm water runoff from cropland and barnyards. The Wisconsin Water Quality Trading Clearinghouse is a state-contracted marketplace created by the Wisconsin Legislature to facilitate water quality trading between municipal wastewater facilities, private industries (buyers) and landowners/agricultural producers (sellers). Landowners and agricultural producers can generate revenue for their operations while maintaining all land use management rights during the process.

The Clearinghouse has a need for landowners who may want to participate in the following areas:

- Village of Roberts
- City of New Richmond
- Village of Superior
- Village of Siren
- Village of Dallas
- Village of Almena
- Village of Elk Mound

If you are a landowner in one of the areas previously listed, please contact Chris Murphy at 608.844.3691 or [cmurphy@res.org](mailto:cmurphy@res.org), for a more detailed explanation on how you can participate in water quality trading with minimal effort and maximum revenue gain.



LISTEN ON:



## Join the Barron County Farm Bureau Promotion and Education Committee

Are you passionate about sharing the story of agriculture and connecting with your community? Barron County Farm Bureau is looking for a member to join our Promotion and Education Committee for 2026.

The Promotion and Education program empowers members to engage with consumers, build awareness, and foster understanding of agriculture through outreach, education, and advocacy. At the local level, the committee creates opportunities for farmers and agriculturists to cultivate meaningful connections that build consumer trust and confidence in agriculture.

If you are interested in serving on the Promotion and Education Committee, please reach out to President Sam Olson at 715.977.1060 or barroncountyfarmbureau@gmail.com

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QR code linking to social media profiles.

## Barron County Farm Bureau Hosts Annual Farm/City Banquet with Focus on Mental Wellness

On March 16, the Barron County Farm Bureau proudly hosted the Farm/City Banquet at the Moose Club in Rice Lake, bringing together farmers, agri-business professionals and community members for an evening of connection, education and celebration.

This year's banquet was partially supported by a Farm Neighbors Care grant from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation. These grants fund county-level projects focused on mental wellness in agriculture, and the Barron County Farm Bureau used the funding to help bring in speakers who shared important insights on mental health in rural communities.

The featured speakers were Jeff "Ditz" Ditzenberger and Brittany Olson, who shared compelling stories and practical advice for supporting mental health in the farming community. Retired Barron Agriculture Instructor Keith Kolpack served as the evening's MC, keeping the event engaging and informative.

The Farm Neighbors Care campaign was started to address challenges highlighted in a 2019 American Farm Bureau survey, which found that financial pressures, farm business problems and fear of losing the farm are major stressors for farmers and farmworkers. Additional stress factors include weather, the economy, isolation and social stigma, which can prevent individuals from seeking help. The campaign encourages rural residents to check in on friends, neighbors and family in agriculture, offering support and a listening ear. Even a simple face-to-face conversation can provide positivity and reassurance during difficult times.

Originally started by the Rice Lake Holstein Club over 87 years ago, the Farm/City Banquet continues to be a treasured local tradition. The evening proved both educational and entertaining, reinforcing the importance of community support for mental wellness in agriculture. Barron County Farm Bureau encourages anyone who works with farmers, has a farmer for a neighbor or is a farmer themselves, to stay engaged in supporting the local ag community.



**Captions:**  
1. Jeff Ditzenberger joined the event virtually to share his story and how the tough conversation of talking about suicide and mental wellness isn't really that hard.  
2. Brittany Olson, a local dairy farmer from Dallas, also joined the conversation about mental wellness. She provided a local perspective to the meeting.  
3. Over 100 farmers and community members attended the 2026 Barron County Farm/City Banquet.

## Finding Your Home in Agriculture

Anna Dalka

Dunn County Farm Bureau Board Member

Many of the farmers I know grew up in agriculture. They were born on the farm and were in the barn helping or riding in the tractor from the time they could walk. They knew from an early age where they belonged.

For those of us who weren't born into ag, it can be harder to figure out where you fit. You feel like you're wandering between the crop people, the ag-business folks, the dairy people and the beef people, wondering where exactly you belong.

I've always been curious about the dairy world. Growing up, I heard stories about my great-grandpa on the farm in Hastings—milking every morning and singing hymns in German. Even when he was in his 90s and had lost most of his vision, he could still drive the tractor down the cow lane because he knew the route so well. After he passed, we'd still visit the farm every year for a family reunion and take rides up and down the highway on his old Farmall. My cousins and I loved playing in the old barn and trying to climb up into the haymow. I remember the old calendar hanging in the barn from the late '80s and the stack of milk-hauler receipts my great-grandpa had kept.



Every year we'd go to the Minnesota State Fair, get our all-you-can-drink milk for \$0.25, and stop at the dairy barn for malts.

Dairy had always been a part of my life, but I never imagined I'd end up this close to it.

Getting involved with Farm Bureau helped me find my way home to the barn—where I now spend a (mostly) quiet morning before work caring for calves, cleaning, bedding and pushing cows through the robot. Whenever I've had a long day at my office job, gotten bad news or am just having an off day, I want to go hide in the barn. There's something calming about the hum of the fans, the clinking of headlocks as cows eat and the steady pulse of the

milkers on the robot. Sitting next to my favorite cow as she relaxes in her stall brings my blood pressure down tenfold.

The barn is my home in the middle of all the chaos in the world. There can be storms of horrible news, money worries and uncertainty outside those brick walls and metal roof—but inside the barn there is peace, routine and the comfort of knowing exactly what needs to be done.

Home looks different for everyone. For some, it's the quiet of a tractor cab during planting season, collecting eggs each morning or weeding in the garden.

Whatever your home looks like, take

time to be grateful for it—and share it with others so they can find their way home too.



## Got Big Ideas? Love Dairy? Dunn County Needs YOU!

We're looking for fresh thinkers and community-minded doers to join the Dunn County Dairy Promotion Committee and help shape one of our favorite local traditions, the Dunn County Dairy Breakfast.

We meet about once a month to plan community events, support local organizations, and keep dairy pride strong. No experience needed, just enthusiasm and a willingness to pitch in. For more info call or text 715.482.0985.



## Connecting Farms and Community: Help Us Build Dunn County's Local Farm Guide

The Dunn County Farm Bureau is excited to announce a new initiative designed to strengthen connections between local farms and our community.

We are in the early planning stages of developing a Local Farm Guide and are currently seeking farms that would like to be included. This guide will serve as a valuable resource for consumers who are looking to support local agriculture, learn more about area farms and discover the products and services available right here in Dunn County.

While we are still working with local partners to determine the structure, format and distribution of the guide, we are beginning the important step of compiling farm information. Farms interested in participating are encouraged to submit their information using the link provided or by scanning the QR code.

This project represents a unique opportunity to showcase the diversity, dedication and impact of our local agricultural community and will be a benefit to our membership. By helping connect consumers directly with farmers, we can continue to build understanding, support and pride in Dunn County agriculture.

If your farm would like to be considered for inclusion, please take a moment to submit your information. We look forward to growing this resource together and sharing the stories of our local farms with the broader community.



Scan the QR code to get involved.  
You can also visit  
[bit.ly/DunnCountyLocalFarm](http://bit.ly/DunnCountyLocalFarm)



## Join Us in *Breaking the Stigma!*


The Farmer Angel Network is dedicated to raising awareness and taking action on mental health care in our agricultural communities.

### We're Seeking Volunteers & Board Members Across Western Wisconsin!

- Help at Events & Outreach
- Coordinate Opportunities
- Lead & Support Our Mission




Inquiries: Jennifer Webster  
jennifer@farmerangelnetwork.com




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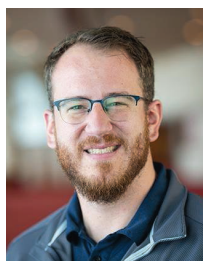
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DUE AUGUST 1, 2026

## Won't You Be My Neighbor?



**Travis Senn**  
Polk Burnett Farm Bureau President

Many of us grew up hearing that familiar question at the beginning of an iconic children's television show: "Won't you be my neighbor?"

It was the gentle invitation that opened every episode of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. Simple as it sounded, it carried a lesson that feels just as relevant today as it did back then.

Being a neighbor isn't just about where you live. It's about how you choose to show up for the people around you.

There's another phrase I heard recently that speaks to that same idea: If you want to live in a village, you need to be a villager.

Strong communities don't simply exist on their own. They're built by people who invest in them — people who bring a casserole when someone is sick, volunteer for local events, serve on community boards, and lend a hand when a neighbor needs help. These small acts may seem ordinary, but they create the kind of places we're proud to call home.

In rural communities, agriculture has always provided some of the best examples of this spirit.

Every so often, a story makes national headlines about farmers coming together to help a neighbor during harvest. A farmer falls ill or gets hit by a natural disaster, and suddenly a parade of combines, grain carts and trucks line the road, offering to help. In no time at all, work that might have taken weeks is finished.

To people outside of agriculture, those stories can seem remarkable. But for those of us who grew up around farming, they feel pretty normal. Helping a neighbor isn't extraordinary — it's simply what neighbors do.

Agriculture has always operated with the understanding that none of us can do it alone. Whether it's sharing equipment, offering advice, helping during harvest or supporting each other through difficult seasons, rural communities have long depended on people working together.

That same spirit extends well beyond the farm gate. Our schools, fairs, churches and local organizations all rely on people willing to step forward and take part. Communities remain strong because people care enough to invest their time and energy into the places where they live. They are good neighbors.

Organizations like Farm Bureau are built on that same principle. At its core, Farm Bureau is simply neighbors coming together to support agriculture, strengthen their communities, and make sure rural voices continue to be heard. The work we do — at the local, state and national levels — only happens because people choose to step up and be involved.

If we want strong communities — the kind where neighbors help neighbors and the next generation feels connected to the place they call home — we all have a part to play.

After all, if you want to live in a village, you must be willing to be a villager.

And sometimes it starts with a simple question: Won't you be my neighbor?

## Wisconsin Farm Bureau® Foundation *Giving Day* AUGUST 5, 2026

Join us for Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation's 5th Annual Giving Day! Throughout the day, we'll celebrate our Foundation-supported programs and YOU, our valued donors and sponsors. Giving Day is an important fundraiser for the Foundation, raising over \$180,000 since 2022.

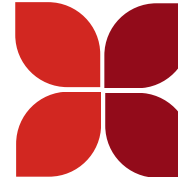
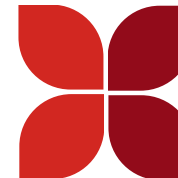
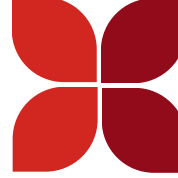
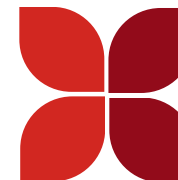
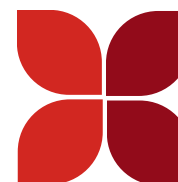
Follow along and join in on Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation's website, Facebook and Instagram pages.

All proceeds from Giving Day provide critical funding for education and leadership programs supported by the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation, including:

- Agriculture in the Classroom
- Young Farmer and Agriculturist Program
- Promotion and Engagement Program
- Leadership Institute
- Gather Wisconsin
- Collegiate Farm Bureaus
- Farm Neighbors Care



The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation focuses on agricultural literacy, leadership development and supporting farmers. Through donations and other contributions, the Foundation fuels opportunities for Wisconsin Farm Bureau members, Wisconsin classrooms and consumers and the agricultural community. As a 501(c)3 organization, donations are tax-deductible.



## FFA Back in Ladysmith

Ladysmith is a small rural district of approximately 700 students nestled in Rusk County, where farming, forestry and natural resource management aren't just industries, they're a way of life. Like many rural Wisconsin communities, Ladysmith has deep agricultural roots and tight school budgets that depend heavily on the generosity of local supporters.

That's what makes outside partnerships, like those with county Farm Bureaus, so critical to sustaining programs that would otherwise struggle to get off the ground.

For the past several years, interest had been growing in the community to bring back the agriculture program, which had been dormant since 1996. Last year, with an increasing number of students expressing interest in agriculture and natural resources career pathways, the school decided it was time to act. A position was posted last spring, and Reid Bakeberg was hired to build the program from the ground up during the 2025–2026 school year, starting essentially from scratch, with limited equipment, no existing curriculum and no prior FFA chapter infrastructure.

Despite those challenges, the program has taken off quickly. New courses added this year include exploratory agriculture, animal science, plant science, agriculture mechanics, and an 8th-grade introductory course that brings every eighth grader in the district into the agriculture classroom. That last course is particularly significant: it serves as a pipeline, ensuring that each incoming high school class will have students already familiar with FFA and interested in pursuing it further. Enrollment is expected to grow meaningfully in the years ahead as those students move up.

In October, students received their first exposure to FFA when Section 1 State Officer Harley Prill of Bloomer visited to introduce them to the organization and the career opportunities it opens. Hands-on learning has been a hallmark of the program so far, with students having taken part in labs ranging from milk tasting and candling eggs to practicing intramuscular injections. This spring, they'll be working in the greenhouse and building a chicken coop.

A Ladysmith FFA chapter was officially chartered this fall. In just its first year, the chapter has 12 high school members, a strong start for any new program, and especially impressive for a small rural district rebuilding from a 30-year gap. Eight of those members will be competing at regionals

at UW–River Falls this month, with two four-person teams entered in livestock judging and the horse contest, respectively. Competing at regionals in year one is a genuine testament to how seriously these students have taken the opportunity.

Beyond competition, members have been active throughout the community. They've worked concession stands at football games and wrestling meets, decorated the school entrance for Halloween and FFA Week, gone on a chapter fishing trip at the local dam, and painted and displayed donated pumpkins at the school entrance. In January, the chapter traveled across central Wisconsin visiting creameries, including Marieke Gouda and La Grander Hillside Dairy. In February, they opened clothing orders to the public, selling FFA shirts, crewnecks and sweatshirts.

Fundraising is always one of the hardest parts of launching a new chapter, and Ladysmith is no exception. In a district

like Ladysmith, local donors, businesses, families and booster clubs are generous, but they are also asked often. The community has already rallied around this program in meaningful ways, and the FFA members themselves have shown real

dedication, willingly giving up Friday nights and Saturday mornings to staff concession stands and bring in every dollar they can.

One significant need remains, however: official FFA jackets. With the program having been dormant for nearly 30 years, there are no jackets for members to wear to formal events or state conventions. For these students, many of whom come from farming families and see agriculture as their future, the blue jacket represents belonging, pride and professional identity within a national organization. It is one of the most visible symbols of what this program means to Ladysmith.

A donation toward FFA jackets is an investment in the next generation of Wisconsin's agricultural workforce, students in a rural community who are just beginning to discover what careers in agriculture, natural resources, and food systems can look like for them. Any county Farm Bureau interested in supporting the Ladysmith FFA chapter is encouraged to contact FFA Advisor Reid Bakeberg at [rbakeberg@sdliwi.org](mailto:rbakeberg@sdliwi.org).



## Save the Date for the Sawyer County Dairy Breakfast

SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2026  
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## New Hands-On Workshops for Home Gardeners and Food Producers

We just lived through some bitter cold weeks of Old Man Winter's tantrums, so the dreams of spring's abundant food crops and gardens are just around the corner for many gardeners.

A local farmer and the UW-Madison Division of Extension-Ashland County office have collaborated to host a series of hands-on workshops to help increase harvests and share knowledge.

Organizer Brian Clements, owner and farmer of Northcroft Farm, scheduled the five-part series to reach anyone who is or wants to be growing more food in backyards or on farms.

"For people who are looking forward to the spring planting season, we have a great selection of workshops for beginners and experienced growers," he said.

"Some crops that we enjoy later in the year need to be maintained in the middle of winter, such as apples, so these workshops are useful to make sure future harvests are successful," said Lissa Radke, community development educator, Ashland County UW Extension.

Some of the workshops are free; others cost under \$20.00. The series began on February 22.

### Fruit Tree Grafting on Sunday, April 4 from 10:00 AM to Noon at 86760 Valley Road, Bayfield

Learn the art and science of grafting fruit trees. Long-time farmers Tom Galazen and Ann Rosenquist, owners of Northwind Organic Farm, will teach how to combine rootstock and scion wood to get a new tree. Participants will leave with up to three grafted apple trees. Class size is limited to ten participants so pre-registration is required; a course fee of \$15 can be paid at the beginning of the class. Participants should bring a non-serrated knife. Email Brian Clements at northcrofffarm@gmail.com to reserve your spot.

### Raising Raspberries on Sunday, May 3 from 3:00-5:00 PM on 86760 Valley Road, Bayfield

Have you ever wanted to grow raspberries or have some plants you don't know how to care for? Join Ann Rosenquist and Tom Galazen, owners of North Wind Organic Farm, to learn the ins and outs of raspberry care including variety selection, planting, pruning, propagation, nutrient and water management, pests and more. Special emphasis will include dealing with spotted wing drosophila. Select varieties will be available for purchase or order. A course fee of \$10 per person can be paid at the beginning of class.

In 2025, farmers at five locally owned farms opened their fields and greenhouses on public tours for the public as an opportunity to meet the local people who grow our food. More free tours are being planned in Ashland and Bayfield counties for this year, starting in May and ending in October.

To register for a Spring class/workshop, email Brian Clements at northcrofffarm@gmail.com. For questions and more information, contact the Ashland County Extension office at 682.7017.

## Dairy Day to Celebrate Farming and Community in Maple

Jon and Tracy Tepoel are inviting the community to experience a day on the farm during their upcoming Dairy Day Cookout on Saturday, June 20 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at their farm in Maple, Wisconsin.

The Tepoels are proud third-generation dairy farmers, continuing a long family tradition in agriculture. Jon's family roots in dairy farming stretch back 10 to 11 generations, with family farms not only in Wisconsin but also in Nebraska and Holland. Today, Jon and Tracy operate an organic dairy farm, milking around 100 cows.

Their Dairy Day event is an opportunity to open their farm to neighbors and community members while celebrating the role dairy farming plays in Wisconsin. Everyone is welcome to stop by, enjoy a meal, and spend some time on the farm while celebrating Wisconsin's strong dairy heritage.



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