SUMMER 2026

Grassroots

District 4 News

District 4 Discussion Meet Finalists to Compete at WFBF Annual Meeting

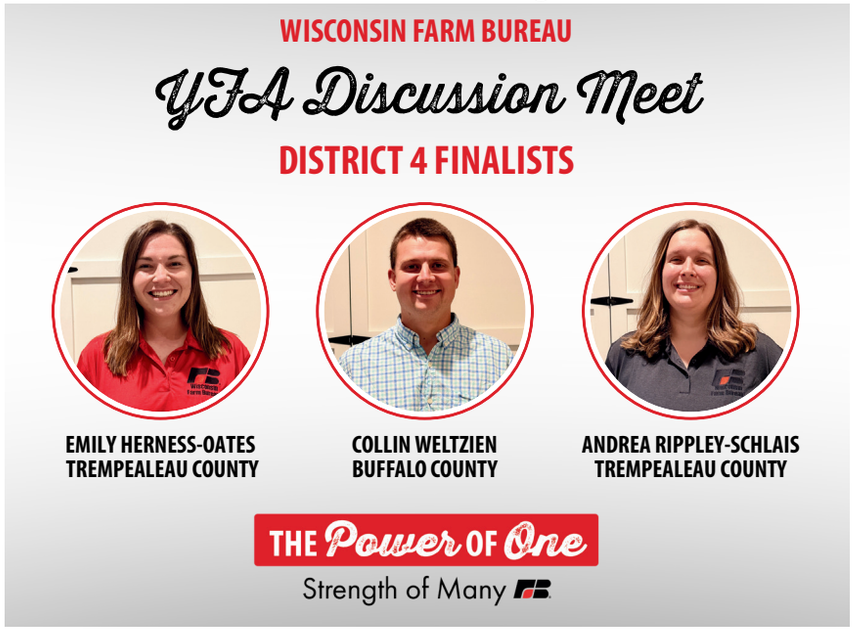
The District 4 Young Farmer and Agriculturist Discussion Meet was held July 7 in Arcadia. The YFA Discussion Meet provides members with an opportunity to demonstrate their speaking skills on agricultural-related topics. A contestant is judged on their problem-solving skills as they discuss timely topics with colleagues.

This year's discussion meet topic was: *Increased public concern over healthy diets and chronic childhood disease has raised questions, as well as criticism, about modern agriculture and the food system. How can Farm Bureau effectively engage in this discussion and advocate for the critical science-based tools and research farmers need to fulfill their commitment to grow healthy, sustainable food, fiber and fuel?*

Congratulations to the District 4 Discussion Meet finalists!

- Emily Herness Oates, Trempealeau County Farm Bureau
- Andrea Rippley-Schlais, Trempealeau County Farm Bureau
- Collin Weltzien, Buffalo County Farm Bureau

Best wishes to these individuals as they prepare to compete in the state discussion meet at the WFBF Annual Meeting and YFA Conference in December!



District 4 County Farm Bureau Annual Meetings

THE Power OF One
Strength of Many

BUFFALO COUNTY FARM BUREAU
August 20, 2026 | Rippley Social Hall (Waumandee) | 5:30 p.m. - Social | 6:00 p.m. - Dinner

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY FARM BUREAU
September 20, 2026 | Messerschmidt Dairy (Fall Creek) | 11:30 a.m. - Social | 12:00 p.m. - Meal

JACKSON COUNTY FARM BUREAU
September 13, 2026 | Homestead County Retreat (Taylor) | 11:30 a.m. - Social | 12:00 p.m. - Meal

LACROSSE COUNTY FARM BUREAU
August 23, 2026 | Veteran's Memorial Park Shelter #2 (West Salem) | 11:30 a.m. - Social | 12:00 p.m. - Meal

MONROE COUNTY FARM BUREAU
August 30, 2026 | Cashton Park (Cashton) | 12:00 p.m. - Meal | 1:00 p.m. - Meeting

TREMPEALEAU COUNTY FARM BUREAU
August 19, 2026 | Arcadia Country Club (Arcadia) | 5:30 p.m. - Social | 6:00 p.m. - Dinner

District 4 News

State Finalists Named in Wisconsin Agriculture in the Classroom Essay Contest

Twenty young writers were named state finalists in the Wisconsin Agriculture in the Classroom Essay Contest. Wisconsin fourth and fifth graders were asked to author an essay with the theme "Dig Into Wisconsin Soil Where Good Things Grow" as part of the annual essay contest that focuses on food and agriculture. The contest is open to all fourth and fifth grade students across the state, with each grade level judged as its own division.

More than 1,000 students from 33 counties submitted essays for the contest. County winners in both fourth and fifth grade moved for consideration as a Top Ten Essay Award Winner, and are now vying for the title of state winner.

In support of this contest, 51 county Farm Bureaus donated over 900 books and educational resources to local schools and libraries across Wisconsin.

The top ten finalists in each grade category received a prize package including a medal, certificate and cash prize. District 4 was well represented in the top ten essay finalists (listed below in bold).

This year's state essay contest finalists are:

Fourth-Grade State Finalists

- **Gavin Kaltenberg, St. Boniface, Buffalo County**
- Kalvin Schneider, Chilton Area Catholic School, Calumet County
- Jillian Rentmeester, St. Jerome School, Columbia County
- Clio Johnson, Arboretum Elementary – Waunakee, Dane County
- Maddison Doran, Juda School, Green County
- Shelby Kelley, Wonewoc-Center School, Juneau County
- **Lauren Haun, St. Paul Ev. Lutheran, Monroe County**
- Mark Newborn, Roosevelt Elementary – Janesville, Rock County
- Kensi Hruby Saint Aloysius – Sauk City, Sauk County
- Everly Peissig, Stetsonville Elementary – Medford School District, Taylor County

Fifth-Grade State Finalists

- Adrianne Killion, Pioneer Elementary School– Green Bay, Brown County
- Robynn Lindner, Chilton Area Catholic School, Calumet County
- Isla Steffes, Rio Elementary School, Columbia County
- Natalya Catterson, Waunakee Intermediate School, Dane County
- Mazie Beyrer, Colfax Elementary, Dunn County
- Nellie Erickson, Home School Student, Juneau County
- Jose Garcia Jr, Samuel Clemens School - Milwaukee Public School, Milwaukee County
- Claire Waldner, Rural Virtual Academy – Chequamegon, Price County
- **Brody Smith, Whitehall Elementary School, Trempealeau County**
- Claire Selle, New London Intermediate, Waupaca County

The state winners will be notified later this month and formally announced at an award ceremony at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection in July. State winners will receive a plaque and cash prize provided through the generous support of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation and leading partners Compeer Financial, Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board and AgCountry Financial.

Wisconsin Farm Bureau's Agriculture in the Classroom program is designed to help K-12 students understand the importance of agriculture. The program is coordinated by Wisconsin Farm Bureau in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with funding from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation, other agricultural groups and a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Learn more at wisagclassroom.org.



Lindsay Kurth and Brody Smith from Trempealeau County



J. Wells, Lauren Haun and Kim Pilz from Monroe County



Gavin Kaltenberg and Faith Pronschinske from Buffalo County

District 4 News

"Transparency Breeds Trust"



Joe Bragger
District 4 Director

This is a key rule to live by as an individual and as a farm organization such as Farm Bureau.

We have all heard about data centers and have debated wind and solar farms citing for some time now. Recently the topic of Bitcoin miners hit Buffalo County. A Bitcoin miner is a specialized computer that verifies Bitcoin transactions and helps to secure the transaction network in exchange for the ability to earn Bitcoin. These miners can be from smaller than a desktop computer to many all working together consuming very large amounts of power.

Recently Buffalo County citizens started expressing concerns when they saw two shipping containers stacked up outside of some of the Riverland Energy substations and found out they were miners. Phones started ringing and networks formed to stop the installation of these strange new things. Concerns from foreign companies controlling our substations, power becoming unavailable to residents, potential pollution and if a tornado took them out where would they end up. Residents were planning on going to county land and county board meetings and were quite frankly frustrated at not being informed.

Finally, Riverland Energy did the right thing and held a listening session to explain that the purpose of the miners was to benefit the cooperative and energy users when they could operate their distribution system at maximum efficiency. They honestly answered questions and reassured folks that the miners would be turned off first. They spoke of the miners being cited next to the substations to minimize the amount of line loss to the miners. Perhaps most importantly explained that an error was made in their applications requiring rezoning and what they were doing to correct this. This transparency changed things from adversarial to, while not partnering, to a level of cooperative understanding of mutual benefits. Subsequently all the rezoning requests were granted with very little opposition.

I share this with you as we can all reflect on how much better things can go when we are transparent, are you thinking of changing your farm operation that may involve an agency or rezoning. How about Farm Bureau policy?

Attend a county Farm Bureau annual meeting to hear the policy discussions and be willing to share your own comments and policy ideas. There are so many examples of policy impacts by our farmer members impacting state and national legislation that it brings a sense of pride in being a member. If your policy passes at the county level, I will guarantee you that the WFBF Policy Development Committee will discuss it and provide transparency so that all delegates to the WFBF Annual meeting will be able to engage effectively from an informed position.

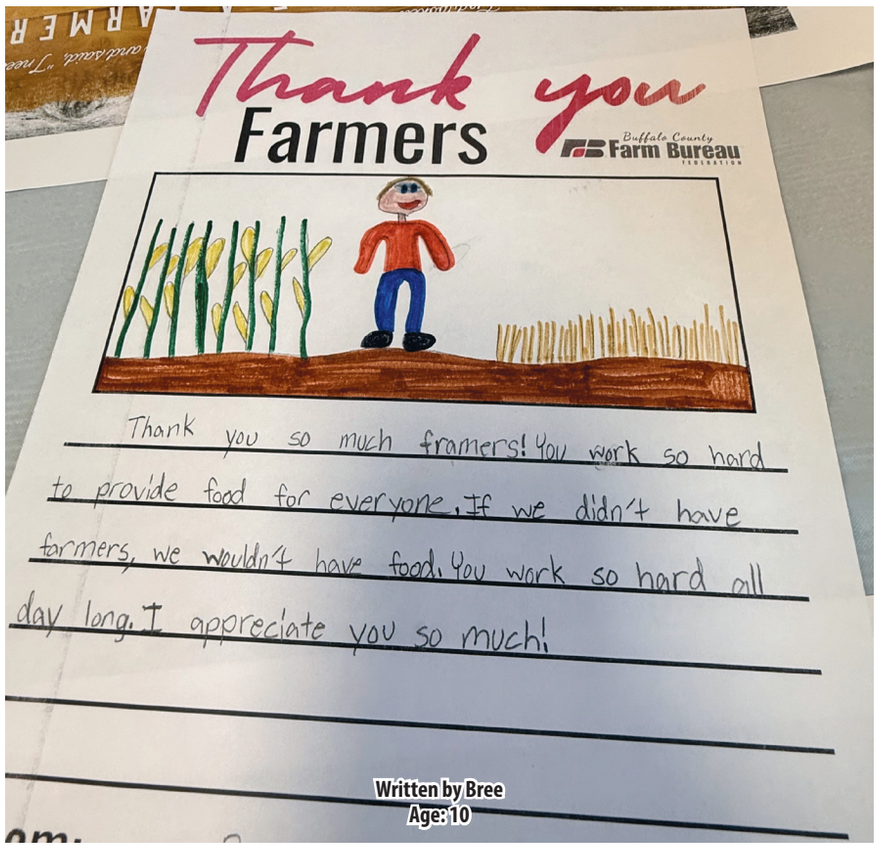
I look forward to seeing you at the annual meetings as you bring your ideas forward!

District 4 Contacts

Joe Bragger, District 4 Director
715-530-0466 | jhbragger@gmail.com
Elected: 12/1/2010 – current term until 12/2026 (may seek re-election)
James Herricks, WFBF Dairy Committee
608-386-8936
First appointed: 12/16/2023 – eligible until 12/2027
Drew Ellis, WFBF Dairy Committee
608-863-1829 | ellisdr@yahoo.com
First appointed: 12/16/2023 – eligible until 12/2027
January Schaffner, WFBF Policy Development Committee
608-863-1528 | jan@schaffnertaxsolutions.com
First appointed: 12/16/2023 – term concludes 12/2026
Derek Trescher, WFBF Volunteers for Agriculture Committee
608-487-4269 | dtrescher@hotmail.com
First appointed: 12/16/2025 – eligible until 12/2029
Steve Boe, WFBF Volunteers for Agriculture Committee
608-896-1072 | steve.r.boe@gmail.com
First appointed: 12/16/2025 – eligible until 12/2029
Brenda Dowiasch, WFBF Promotion and Engagement Committee
715-579-7007 | brendadowiasch@hotmail.com
First appointed: 12/1/2020 – term concludes 12/2026
Heather Erdman, WFBF Young Farmer and Agriculturist Committee
715-577-5366 | hleigherdman@yahoo.com
First appointed: 12/1/2023 – term concludes 12/2026
Allison Doenier, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation Board of Trustees
715-530-3120 | allisonbragger@gmail.com
First appointed: 12/1/2024 – current term until 12/2027 (eligible for reappointment)

Thank You Farmers

As a part of a Farm Neighbors Care event, local elementary students also wrote thank-you letters for the farmers.



Written by Bree
Age: 10

District 4 News

District 4 YFA Tour

The District 4 Young Farmers and Agriculturists recently hosted a tour of Kwik Trip, LaCrosse Distillery, Bush's Beans, Dells Mill and Landsinger Farms in June. These tours provided a firsthand look into local businesses, how they were established and what they produce.













Simple Daily Practices to Ease Stress on the Farm and in Life

Leslie Svacina
St. Croix County Farm Bureau member

Fall can bring a lot in a short time: harvest, kids going back to school and preparing for winter. While we can anticipate challenges, there's a lot that is out of our control, not just on the farm, but in our personal lives, too.

This past year brought me extra challenges. My dad's health declined last fall, and for six months I was driving across the state to help my parents, while my husband Scott kept everything moving on the farm and with our family, including his own off-farm job.

Soon after my dad passed, my own health took an unexpected turn. It felt like life was spinning, so I decided to lean into what has worked for me in the past: meditation, yoga, journaling and counseling.

Along the way, I realized I could shift my mindset and adjust how my body and mind react to life through simple breathing exercises. This breathwork has helped in all aspects of my life, including navigating grief and health challenges. I've focused on what I can control, which has helped me feel calmer and more present.

While this isn't a substitute for counseling or a way to erase stress, breathwork can be a preventative tool or work alongside other mental health approaches. It has helped me immensely, and if it can help another farmer, that's still a big deal.

Creating an Intentional Mindset

Mindset is simply how we interpret what happens and how we respond when life doesn't look the way we hoped. Breathwork is one approach that can help shift mindset.

Yes, it sounds simple, just breathing, and maybe a bit "woo-woo," but there's research behind it. Studies have shown that even a few minutes of breathwork daily can lower stress, improve sleep and help us feel more resilient, even during serious illness or times of anxiety.

Getting started with Breathwork

Breathwork can be done as part of a daily routine or in stressful times. I've found the more time I make for it daily, the more it helps. Research suggests just 2–3 minutes can help, while 6–10 minutes can be more impactful.

Here are a few ideas for when to incorporate breathwork:

- **First thing in the morning:** Helps set the tone for the day.
- **During transitions:** A few intentional breaths between tasks can reset your mindset.
- **Before or after meals**
- **When stress hits:** It can make a big difference in handling what's next.
- **Before bed:** It can help settle your mind to get better sleep.

It can be done almost anywhere: in the cab of the tractor (idling or off), leaning against the barn or even on the porch while your morning coffee is brewing.

Techniques and Tips

The most basic version of breathwork is deep breathing. Take a deep breath, filling the base of your belly up to your lungs. Hold it for a second or two, then slowly exhale from the top of your lungs down to the bottom of your belly. Repeat.

Below are some additional ways to practice breathwork. Try different approaches and see what works best for you. It gets easier the more you do it.

- **Counting Breaths**
  Box Breathing:
  Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4.
- **4-7-8 Breathing:**
  Inhale for 4, hold for 7, exhale slowly for 8.

Other Approaches

- Repeat a phrase while breathing, such as "Breathe in, breathe out," "Here and now," or "I am calm."
- Use calming music as a timer, 2–3 songs, so you don't have to watch the clock.
- Listen to guided meditations. I use this often, especially when my mind is too busy. I like the Calm app.
- Do it outdoors. Sit on the porch or around the farm and let nature's sounds help you stay present.
- Walk slowly while focusing on your breath. Keep your eyes open and take in the world around you.
- If your mind wanders, and it will, just return your attention to your breathing. The goal isn't to clear your mind completely; it's to come back when you drift away.

Advanced Approaches

Once you're comfortable with the basics, you could try the following with your breathwork:

- **Meditation:** Guided or silent.
- **Restorative or yin yoga:** This approach focuses on relaxation and stretching, rather than complicated poses. You can find classes locally or on YouTube.
- **Gentle stretching:** Simple moves you might remember from sports growing up.

Next Steps

Make changes in your Mental Health by visiting https://bit.ly/fbmindfulpractice.



District 4 News

What is the Farm Bureau Policy Development Process?

Wisconsin Farm Bureau's policy development process is a true example of grassroots in action. It is a multiple month, member-led effort that starts locally and can make an influence all the way to the national level during American Farm Bureau Federation's annual meeting.

How does Farm Bureau policy start?

WFBF membership is comprised of members representing farms of all sizes, commodities and operating styles. Policy resolutions are not only developed by the members of our grassroots organization, but are shaped by them. Members take an active role in initiating, debating, refining and voting on policy proposals. This process ensures that member priorities are being advocated for in Madison and Washington D.C.



Lawmakers and regulatory agencies view the organization as a key stakeholder, and its policy positions carry significant influence when important legislative or regulatory decisions are being made. This trust and recognition exemplify the strength of WFBF's grassroots model and the power of member-led policy development.

Any Farm Bureau members may submit a policy resolution to their county Farm Bureau. These resolutions are voted on by the county and approved resolutions are submitted to the state policy development committee and voted upon by the voting delegates at WFBF's Annual Meeting annually in December.

Farm Bureau policy is comprised of member approved guidelines that direct WFBF's advocacy. These policies are not laws but are the guiding principles the government relations staff team uses to drive legislation and regulations for our organization.

Types of Farm Bureau Policy

There are four types of policy that are submitted and voted on in Farm Bureau's policy development process.

- County Policy is the local perspective of an issue. A county policy could be the objection of a local ordinance that causes infringement on agricultural production in the area.
- State Policy is statewide relevance of an issue. For example, this could be funding for things like the Agricultural Road Improvement Program or the support of preservation of land for agricultural production.
- Federal Policy includes national issues and must get approval of the delegate body at the AFBF annual meeting. This is what guides our advocacy efforts at the federal level. Issues like the Farm Bill and Commodity Exchange Act are under this bucket.
- Internal Policy addresses internal operations of WFBF. These are resolutions submitted to the WFBF Board of Directors but not debated by the delegate body at the WFBF Annual Meeting.

WFBF's State Policy Development Committee

The policy development committee is comprised of 14 members:

- One representative from the nine board districts of WFBF
- The WFBF Vice President (Committee Chair)
- Chairs of the Young Farmers and Agriculturists, Promotion & Education, Dairy and Volunteers for Agriculture committees

This committee reviews every submitted policy that comes from the counties and determines which ones move forward for delegate approval at the WFBF Annual Meeting. How many delegates a county receives is determined by how many voting members there are in the county.

The WFBF bylaws allow delegates to bring forward resolutions from the floor at the Annual Meeting. These do not need the approval of the policy development committee, if they were approved at the county level.

Federal Resolution Process

Federal resolutions that pass at the WFBF Annual Meeting go to the national level, where an AFBF committee comprised of all 50 state presidents and Puerto Rico evaluates them. The resolutions that are passed through the committee are then voted on at AFBF annual meeting. If they are adopted, they then are added into the national policy book. These then become a guide for Farm Bureaus federal advocacy efforts.

The Farm Bureau policy development process is a structured, democratic process grounded in local input and potential national influence. The process is a strong testament to grassroots advocacy in action. It empowers members to lead discussions and vote on priorities, ensuring that Farm Bureau's policy positions reflect the needs and voices of its membership. This policy development plays a direct role in influencing agriculture not only in Wisconsin but beyond the state borders.



District 4 News











District 4 News

How to Access Your Member Benefits

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation member benefits are now located within a private member portal and through a mobile app. This helps protect the integrity of WFBF member benefits so we can be sure only Farm Bureau members are accessing these exclusive offers.

Access Your Member Benefits Online

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation member benefits are now located within a private member portal and through a mobile app. This helps protect the integrity of WFBF member benefits so we can be sure only Farm Bureau members are accessing these exclusive offers.

Access Your Member Benefits Online

To login to the system on a computer or phone browser, visit wfbf.com/membership/member-benefits.

A few things to note:

- You will see a prompt to login to access member benefit details.
- First time users seeking to access the member benefits portal will need to create an account. Follow these instructions to create an account.
  You will need your membership number to do this.
- If you don't know your membership number, you can find it by emailing info@wfbf.com.
- Returning users should login with their username (email) and password to view members-only content.

Download the WFBF Member Benefits App

You can now access Farm Bureau member benefits any time, anywhere with the FB Benefits app. Available for both Apple and Android, simply search 'FB Benefits' in your app store to download. Login to your account and have access to your benefits right at your fingertips! If you need more assistance accessing your member benefits, call 1.800.261.FARM (3276).



What Are My WFBF Communication Member Benefits?

Our public relations team at Wisconsin Farm Bureau helps promote our organization's member benefits. Ironically, one benefit that we don't always showcase is the communications efforts WFBF works on behind the scenes.

Social media, 24-7 news and mobile devices have changed how our society communicates. As your public relations team, it's our job to make sure Farm Bureau is keeping up with those communication changes.

What is WFBF's Public Relations team?

As communication has adapted, so has WFBF's public relations and communications efforts. Five people carry out the work on the public relations team. While each person has niches, the team works together to keep members, media and others informed of what Farm Bureau is doing. Even though our team is small and resources are limited, we effectively set goals and follow through with the organization's initiatives.

What is the Rural Route magazine?

One of our biggest projects, and most visible, is the Rural Route. This membership magazine is published six times per year and sent to voting members. The summer issue is sent to the full membership and includes more member highlights than any other issue. A large focus is on Farm Bureau members because that is what makes us a unique organization. The goal is to have a member front and center on the cover. As a team, we do our best to find interesting stories while making sure we are showcasing different types of agriculture from around the state.

What are WFBF's other publications?

Another membership publication you receive is your district newsletter. In 2018, we s transitioned from black-and-white to full-color and made the newsletters multiple-county focused. Voting members receive newsletters three times per year that include local news to their district. Associate members also received newsletters twice a year under WFBF's consumer brand, Gather Wisconsin. These full-color pieces include recipes, farmer features and more.

The WFBF Website

In 2018, the public relations team redesigned wfbf.com. The organization's website was in dire need of an upgrade for functionality and navigation. Now, the site is mobile-friendly, includes an online membership form and includes access to your WFBF member portal. The website also showcases the voices of members in the blog section.

What are WFBF's e-newsletters?

Ag Newswire is WFBF's weekly e-newsletter sent to over 5,000 people every Friday. Anyone can subscribe to this publication and it's emailed to members, legislators and media representatives.

Stewards is WFBF's monthly e-newsletter focused on sustainability success stories and opportunities for our members. This publication is also open to any one to subscribe.

In addition to these e-newsletters, WFBF also offers member-only e-newsletters that you are able to subscribe to through your WFBF member portal. These e-newsletters include:

Policy Pulse – WFBF's policy-focused e-newsletter with legislative updates and topics covered by the government relations team

*Member Benefit*s – An e-newsletter providing key updates and reminders about important money-saving member benefits

County Leader Connection – An e-newsletter delivered straight from the WFBF President's desk to County Farm Bureau board members

WFBF's Social Media Presence

Because social media is continuously changing it takes considerable time and a lot of attention. While Facebook is where WFBF has the most prominent presence, the organization also is active on X, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Snapchat. You can also follow along with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation and its programs on Facebook.

Media Inquiries and Member Training

An extensive portion of daily work includes taking media inquiries from reporters. WFBF gets hundreds of media calls a year. The public relations team provides media training for members so they feel comfortable when talking with reporters. We also send media releases and monitor news stories.

The things listed above are only some of the things your public relations team covers. The best thing you can do is connect with members of the public relations team if you have questions or need help. Don't forget about this member benefit, because it's one that is working for you while you are busy farming.

Buffalo County

wfbf.com/about/counties/buffalo
BuffaloCountyFarmBureau

Buffalo County Dairy Breakfast with Ask a Farm

The Buffalo County Dairy Breakfast brought people of all ages and backgrounds to the Buffalo Ridge Organic Dairy farm, a fifth-generation farm owned and operated by Nathan and Jenny Brandt (and their four kids). The beautiful views and large crowd made the morning perfect!



Michelle Bork answers questions at the "Ask a Farmer" booth during the breakfast.


Buffalo County Farm Bureau members helped serve pancakes.

Eau Claire County

wfbf.com/about/counties/eauclaire
EauClaireCountyFarmBureau

Karow Farms Host Breakfast on the Farm

Karow Farms opened their farm to welcome the community and share their 125-year story. Their dedication to agriculture, the animals and educating others about where their food comes from made the event truly special. Over 2,200 guests attended and enjoyed the day on Karow Farms.





Eau Claire County

wfbf.com/about/counties/eauclaire
EauClaireCountyFarmBureau

3rd Annual Beef Night Out

The Eau Claire County Farm Bureau along with Off the Rail Meats in Augusta hosted nearly 300 guests to see how meat is prepared and packaged from local beef farmers. The event allowed guests to ask questions, sample and buy meat from local beef farmers, and even speak with the farmers about their farms. May is beef month, but we need quality protein everyday…what better way to get it than from local farmers!











Eau Claire County

wfbf.com/about/counties/eauclaire
EauClaireCountyFarmBureau

Volunteers for Agriculture® Gubernatorial Endorsement Announced at Local Farm

Felicia Erickson and Dave Messerschmidt of The Messerschmidt Dairy hosted the endorsement press conference for Gubernatorial candidate Tom Tiffany.

The Volunteers for Agriculture Committee surveyed candidates, the political action arm of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau.

The Messerschmidt's proudly dairy farm on their multi-generational family farm. It was the perfect setting for the event.



Eau Claire Farm Bureau Member Represented in Presidential Roundtable

Matt Krenz was chosen to represent dairy farmers and District 4 at the presidential roundtable in Chippewa Falls in early June. The topic of Whole milk in schools was a highlight and the President spoke on several other topics. Thank you Matt for your time and dedication to our industry!



Jackson County

wfbf.com/about/counties/jackson
JacksonCountyFarmBureau

Scholarship Winners Announced

Jake Kling and Kelsey Lein were selected as our 2026 scholarship winners. Congratulations and best wishes!

Supplied Photos





Monroe County

wfbf.com/about/counties/monroe
MonroeCountyFarmBureau

Monroe County Farm Bureau Awards Scholarships

Congratulations to Drew Butzler and Brady Wells on receiving our Monroe Country Farm Bureau scholarships. We appreciate your dedication to agriculture and community. We wish you the best in your futures!



From left: Drew Butzler; President, J. Wells; and Brady Wells.

Monroe County Dairy Breakfast

The Trescher Family opened their farm and shared their story for the 2026 Monroe County Dairy Breakfast in early June. A record number of attendees enjoyed the morning at the Cashton farm.





County Farm Bureaus
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This Issue Contains Highlights for:

Buffalo County

Eau Claire County

Jackson County

Monroe County

Trempealeau County

