MFBF Holds 102nd Annual Meeting December 11, 2020

Nearly 140 Farm Bureau members from across the state attended the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Annual Meeting, December 11 via Zoom.

Voting delegates representing all 78 county and regional Farm Bureaus met via Zoom for the 102nd Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation on December 11 to conduct the annual business meeting.

Farm Bureau Voting Delegates Re-Elect Dan Glossing
County voting delegates re-elected Dan Glossing to a two-year term as MFBF Vice President. Re-elected to a three-year term to represent District III was Carolyn Olson of Cottonwood in Lyon County, Nathan Collins from Murdock in Swift County representing District IV and Shayne Isame of Bagdad in Northwest Regional representing District VII.

Elected to the board of directors serving one-year terms were Promotion & Education (P&E) Committee chair DiDi Edwards from Nobles County and YF&R Committee chair Tyler Nelson from Pine County.

MFBF Honors Agricultural Leaders
The Distinguished Service to Agriculture award was presented to Chris Radatz – retired Minnesota Farm Bureau Executive Director of seven years and served 44 years with the Minnesota Farm Bureau.

Honorary Life awards were bestowed upon Jim and Liz Foss – Goodhue County and Lee and Ginny Anderson – Martin County.

Two $500 Al Christopherson Scholarships were presented to Hannah Neel from Dakota County and Maddie Smith from Fillmore County.

Two $500 Paul Stark Scholarships were presented to Kendra Waldenberger from Houston County and Kate Lorang from Renville County.

The most prestigious county Farm Bureau award, the Counties Activities of Excellence, was presented in five key areas – Public Policy, Public Relations, Promotion & Education, Leadership Development and Membership Activity. Counties that excelled in all five areas receive the Premier Awards: Anoka County, Beltrami County, Cass County, Headwaters Regional, Kandiyohi County, Wabasha County, Washington/Ramsey County, Winona County and Wright County.

YF&R Awards
Madie Weiners from Wright County took first place in the Discussion Meet and Lucas and Alise Sjostrom of Stearns County won the Excellence in Agriculture contest. These members will advance to national competition.

PLUS: LEAP Conference Postponed PAGE 3 YF&R Award Winners PAGE 13 MFBF Sets Priority Issues PAGE 15

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Chris Radatz was awarded the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award at the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation’s (MFBF) 102nd Annual Meeting.

As we look back on Chris’ incredible impact on Minnesota Farm Bureau, an expanded version of the following was included in the April 2020 issue of The Farmer by Paula Mohr.

Radatz, who grew up on a crop and dairy farm outside of Lewiston, has worked for the organization nearly 44 years. His first job started in September 1976 when he was hired as a fieldman to work as liaison between the state Farm Bureau and 11 county Farm Bureaus in southeast Minnesota. Over the years, he worked as Young Farmer & Rancher program coordinator, state annual meeting coordinator, field services division director, and director of marketing and commodity services division.

Prior to becoming executive director in July 2013, Radatz was a well-known individual at the state Capitol, working as Farm Bureau’s state legislative lobbyist and director of governmental relations. Knowing the leaves with a wealth of knowledge, history and experience with state politics and agriculture, Paul believed Radatz to reflect on his tenure at Farm Bureau.

What were a few of your memorable experiences serving as director of government relations?

First and foremost, this is a recurring theme — it is the people you get to know and work with. There are so many dedicated, hardworking legislators and public officials I worked with that I cannot name them all. I learned something from every one of them and thank them for their patience and guidance in working with me.

I have always had an interest in politics and government. As a lobbyist representing Minnesota Farm Bureau, I got to spend most of my days at the state Capitol watching and directly participating in the legislative process. What I found interesting was working with a particular senator or representative on a specific issue or piece of legislation. I would be in daily, sometimes hourly, contact with that person as we tried to move the issue through the legislative process. When we got through that process we would move on to another issue with another set of players. That relationship that was established working closely together remained strong over time.

What did you wish farmers knew about your job as a lobbyist that they did not know?

I think many farmers realize this, that relationships make all the difference. I would tell our members they need to have established a relationship with their elected official so that when they send that official an email, it will get read. The elected official needs to recognize your name. As constituents, they can be a tremendous resource to their representative and senator, but that takes time to get to that point. Don’t wait until the day of a vote to start building that relationship. Also, the legislative process is not always black and white. Sometimes, if you can make baby steps towards your goal, you should take them. I guess the old saying of a half a loaf of bread is better than no bread can apply. There is a lot of strategy that is involved in getting legislation passed or stopped. It is a little bit like an NFL play caller holding the play sheet over his mouth as he relays plays to the quarterback. Hopefully focus is on the results of the play not the play itself.

What differs today, compared to 40-plus years ago, when working with farmers on policy?

Farmers are engaged today in policy issues as much as they were 40 or even 100 years ago when Farm Bureau was formed. How they communicate has changed. There is more direct communication with policy makers today through emails, texts, phone calls and social media, and probably town hall-type meetings. Today, farmers can advocate for their issues from the tractor cab or the combine. They don’t have to go to a meeting to have their voices heard.

Throughout my career, I have always been amazed at farmers’ creativity and willingness to try something new. A great example of this is the growth of the biotechs industry. We still depend from scratch and now is an important part of the agricultural economy and one of many solutions agriculture brings to the table in addressing environmental concerns. Farmers are continuously adopting changes to their farming and management practices to meet the needs of today’s consumers.

As an organization, we can provide resources for our members to make effective contact with elected and appointed officials. We can provide background information, help develop speaking points, and offer tips on successful communication strategies. We still depend on farmers to let public officials know how proposed legislation or policy will impact them directly. That is the message that is needed today as much as ever.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of working as executive director?

Working directly with the MFBF board of directors, county Farm Bureaus and their leadership, and motivational/inspirational keynote speakers. Dick’s inspirational international best-selling autobiography Staying the Course, A Runner’s Toughest Race and the subject of the bestselling book Duel in the Sun: The Story of Alberto Salazar, Dick Beardsley, and America’s Greatest Marathon. Dick is also the subject of a feature film being produced entitled Against the Wind. Dick has spoken to a countless number of groups all over the world, ranging in size from 5 people to 15,000 people. Anywhere motivation, inspiration and hope are needed.

What’s new in 2021?

The 2021 LEAP Conference is complete with multiple breakout sessions, one extended learning session, and tours. Breakout sessions include engaging learning experiences and motivational/inspirational keynote speakers. Dick’s inspirational international best-selling autobiography Staying the Course, A Runner’s Toughest Race and the subject of the bestselling book Duel in the Sun: The Story of Alberto Salazar, Dick Beardsley, and America’s Greatest Marathon. Dick is also the subject of a feature film being produced entitled Against the Wind. Dick has spoken to a countless number of groups all over the world, ranging in size from 5 people to 15,000 people. Anywhere motivation, inspiration and hope are needed.
What We’ve Learned

President’s Voice
KEVIN PAAP • MFBN PRESIDENT

As we begin the new year, I think many of us just want to forget the last nine months of COVID-19. Unfortunately, we cannot completely forget that we must continue to wash our hands often, stay home when we are sick, socially distance the best we can and wear a mask when we need to. We all must continue to do our part.

Every one of us has our list of what we couldn’t do and what went wrong in this current pandemic. I’m kind of tired of hearing about all the negative things and want instead to think about the positives, the good things that have happened the last year and how we can build on them in this new year.

COVID-19 has shown the importance of protecting our food supply, we have worked together to maintain a safe and sustainable food supply for our nation. Thank you to the essential workers across the supply chain, including those on the farm, in processing, packaging, transportation and those at our local grocery stores. More consumers now realize that protecting our domestic food supply is critical to the well-being of all Americans, rural and urban and that is positive news for agriculture that Farm Bureau will continue to build on.

The last year has changed how we live, how we learn, how we work and how we operate in Farm Bureau. It has shown us the importance of access to reliable high-speed broadband and what we can do with it. More Farm Bureau members now realize that virtual meetings can be an efficient and effective method to do our business and to engage elected and appointed officials, consumers, and even those potential Farm Bureau members. This year we will continually improve our current relationships and look for opportunities to engage those that are not familiar with Farm Bureau. We will continue to communicate our commitment to be an advocate for agriculture driven by the beliefs and policies of our members, and that is positive news that Farm Bureau will continue to build on.

Many families have been directly affected by COVID-19 and there are many things that have gone wrong. The loss of loved ones, the postponed family celebrations and many family activities just plain cancelled. We need to concentrate on all the positive things that have happened in our families and how we can build on them this year.

Families spent more time together at the kitchen table, more time in the kitchen together and more time in the house together and that is positive news that Farm Bureau families will continue to build on.

Farm Bureau members understand that we are stronger when we work together, as an organization and as a nation and that is positive news.

Part of a Bigger Story

The Zipline
ZIPPY DUVALL • AFBF PRESIDENT

As farmers and ranchers, we know we are part of a bigger story. We are caretakers of the land for a time, following in the footsteps of generations before us. Our farm didn’t start with me and, God willing, it won’t end with me either. Sustainability is personal for me as a farmer. I’ve got my hands in the dirt that my parents and their parents before them farmed. And that soil, the lifeblood of my farm, is healthier now than ever before because of the care we have taken to farm better each day. Agriculture’s sustainability story is one of progress, and it’s not finished yet.

U.S. agriculture has made great strides, in the last several decades especially, when it comes to leaving a smaller footprint on the land we farm. American farmers 30 years ago would have needed 100 million more acres to match production today. That progress has come thanks to better seeds, technology and climate-smart farming practices that protect the soil, conserve water, retain nutrients, prevent runoff and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, U.S. agriculture contributes less than 10% to overall GHGs by industry, and we’re working to get that number even lower. Farmers are also doing more to recapture carbon and convert waste into clean energy with innovative tools like methane digesters and voluntary conservation programs that preserve grasslands, forests and wetlands.

At the American Farm Bureau, we are proud of agriculture’s sustainability story, and we believe that we can continue to build on that success together.

We need to do a better job of telling this story. Consumers are eager to hear from farmers and have a high level of trust in the people who grow their food. A recent survey by American Farm Bureau shows that trust has increased over this year to 88%; that’s almost 9 in 10 Americans. That same survey also found that while most folks couldn’t accurately identify agriculture’s low impact on GHGs, their support grew when presented with the facts. More than 80% were impressed to learn that farmers have put 140 million acres in conservation programs, more than doubled renewable energy sources used on the farm, and nearly tripled food production in the last 70 years with the same or fewer resources.

The public also agrees that sustainability means keeping family farms in business for generations to come, and that the work of sustainability should not fall solely on the farmer’s shoulders. Farmers and ranchers haven’t made these impressive strides alone, and we can’t move forward alone either. Investments in agricultural research and innovation will continue to be critical in taking us to the next phase of climate-smart farming. At Farm Bureau, we also know the importance of coming together across the industry and reaching outside our fences to partners who share our goals for strengthening sustainable agriculture.

We announced a historic alliance with organizations representing farmers, ranchers, forest owners, the food sector, state governments and environmental advocates, called the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance. The founding members are diverse, but we are united around the goal of developing and promoting voluntary, market- and incentive-based climate solutions. At the American Farm Bureau, we are proud of agriculture’s sustainability story, and we believe that we can continue to build on that success together. This new alliance was formed in February and has...
been working diligently to develop 40 recommendations built around three key principles:
- Support voluntary, market- and incentive-based policies.
- Advance science-based outcomes.
- Promote resilience and help rural economies better adapt to changes in the climate.

As momentum builds around climate action, agriculture can continue to play a positive role in reducing emissions and protecting our natural resources, and we want to lead the way in finding solutions that promote sustainability on and off the farm. Voluntary and market-based conservation efforts have a proven track record of success on and off the farm, and together we will continue to work for policies that respect farmers and support positive change.

There’s still much work to do, not only on climate but on other critical issues facing rural America and the farm economy now and in the coming year. But as I reflect on harvest time, I am reminded that the seeds sown will yield a fruitful harvest. Farmers and ranchers never shy away from hard work. That perseverance has carried us through many a hard time, grown us closer as communities and carried us on in hope of better harvests to come.

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Giving Back

If one thing is for certain, it is the size of Minnesota and South Dakota farmers and ranchers’ hearts. Participants from across the two states have spent time, resources, and money helping others in their communities that have been faced with challenging situations. In the spirit of continuing this generosity, participants are asked to donate school supplies to “The Banquet,” a local non-profit in the Sioux Falls area. Additionally, the state committees will host fundraising events again this year, with the proceeds benefitting “The Banquet.”

To register for the 2021 LEAP Conference, visit fbn.org/lea...conference to register.

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**Behind the Bureau**

**Q&A with new staff members**

### Libby Knoebel
**Office Manager**

Tell us about your agricultural background.

I grew up on my family’s livestock, cash crop and fresh produce farm in Southeastern Wisconsin. Each of my parents has their own business entity on the farm, and my parents and sisters and I work together to keep everything running, along with our summer employees and other full-time and part-time staff. My dad has been crop farming since I was born. His business, Maple Mound Farms, currently runs about 2,500 acres of corn, soybeans, hay and wheat. He also owns 65 head of Angus beef cows and is the main entity for raising dairy heifers for a neighboring dairy farm. We currently have around 300 heifers on three different farms that we care for, ranging in age from days old to 22 months old. My main tasks for my dad in the past have been caring for the calves, vaccination schedule, heat detection, and I have now taken over the billing system.

In 2001, my parents planted two acres of strawberries plants. That next summer, they welcomed many of our neighbors to come get berries and the word spread that we had strawberries. With the success they had, they decided to put in more strawberries, and each year, something has been added to the farm. While both of my parents work together in all they do on the farm, my mom became the head of the produce business, which is named Jelli’s Market. At this point in time, we have 14 acres of strawberries, two acres of raspberries, two acres of blueberries, two acres of asparagus, 5,000 apple trees, 200 peach trees, 25 pear trees, 50 plum trees, and grape vines. Each year, we plant 15 acres of yellow sweet corn, 10 acres of pumpkins/squash, two acres of sunflowers, an acre each of green beans and snap peas, as well as a two-acre garden of various vegetables.

We have two greenhouses where we sell annual flowers and vegetable plants in the spring and we have an on-farm store where we sell our produce and our meat. We sell beef, pork, lamb, chicken and we do a batch of turkeys for Thanksgiving season. We raise all the meat ourselves, using our barns on the farm and as dual purpose way to raise our animals, and provide a “petting zoo” for our customers. Three years ago we put in a commercial kitchen and permanent bathrooms. We use all our own products to make our jams, baked goods, donuts and pies.

I could go on and on about our farm. I am so proud of the businesses that my parents built and continue to pour their heart and soul into. Their passion for agriculture and educating the public about what we do was passed on to me, and led me to their alma-mater University of Wisconsin-River Falls, where I graduated in May 2020 with a double Bachelor’s degree in Animal Science and Dairy Science. While I don’t work on the farm directly anymore, I still involve myself as much as I can and continue to share our farm story.

What is your role and Minnesota Farm Bureau?

I am the office manager. This is a new position. I will be assisting everyone in the office, but my main duties include providing support to both the Executive Director and the President. I started on November 9th.

What drew you to Minnesota Farm Bureau’s mission?

I come from a Farm Bureau family and I love all that Farm Bureau encompasses. The Minnesota Farm Bureau values their members. They value their member’s opinions, thoughts and hard work. I love being a part of an organization that wants to better the agriculture community and the people who dedicate their lives to the land. Farmers work so hard and rarely get the credit they deserve, and with generational farming becoming more removed from agriculture with each passing day, I am excited to be part of an organization that wants to get farmers that credit and promote things to make their lives easier.

Favorite thing to do outside of work?

Outside of working at the Minnesota Farm Bureau I enjoy baking and working back home at my family farm. I love being in the kitchen, experimenting and trying new recipes. It is fun to craft with food and get feedback from my willing taste testers. I also enjoy going back to my home farm to help Jelli’s and be with my family. I love being a part of my family business and helping our customers create great memories at our farm.

What is the best advice you were ever given? Who was it from?

I’m not sure if this is advice or not, but my dad always says, “The only thing constant in life is change.” I think these are words to live by. Life shouldn’t be constant. If things in your life aren’t changing, you aren’t growing and learning. Sometimes, change can be scary and can seem like it’s not a good thing for you, but other times, change is a good thing. Change gets you out of your comfort zone, and you learn and grow as a person when you are outside of your comfort zone. When you can adapt to change, no matter what it is, you can face anything that life throws at you, and your confidence grows. So many people like their lives just the way they are, and they deny change when it happens, but you never know what you are missing until you are forced to see it.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

From the moment that I touched my first animal, I knew that I wanted to be a veterinarian. I have always loved animals and enjoy having animals around. Most kids go through different phases of what they want to be when they grow up, however, being a veterinarian was always my dream. I shadowed our farm vet in high school, took over vaccinations and shot schedules from my mom, and always wanted to be involved when an animal needed my help. When I went to college, it was still my goal to go to vet school. However, after four years of college and many difficult chemistry classes, I decided that another four years of schooling just wasn’t appealing anymore and decided to take my goals in a different direction.

### Robin Kinney
**Director of Membership and Marketing**

Tell us about your agricultural background.

I was fortunate to move to the country with my family as I began my 9th grade year in high school. My parents were three generations removed from the farm and in the early 1970’s mortgaged everything they had to purchase a farm in between St. Michael and Buffalo, Minnesota so my father could commute to his business in downtown Minneapolis. Thanks to the high school FFA advisor, I was invited to the agriculture class and his mentorship made all the difference. My project became dairy cows (Jerseys to be exact) and with the help of my parents and family – the herd grew to a 60-cow registered herd and young stock.

What is your role and Minnesota Farm Bureau?

I will return to the Minnesota Farm Bureau as the Director of Membership and Marketing. I am excited to rejoin the Minnesota team and serve and grow the membership after having the opportunity to spend nearly eight years with the American Farm Bureau Federation in Washington, D.C.

What drew you to Minnesota Farm Bureau’s mission?

The grassroots structure of Farm Bureau provides strength and a voice for members. Their engagement is vital to surface and implement policies that will help their families, farms and rural communities.

Favorite thing to do outside of work?

What? Outside of work – really? Relax with good friends or enjoy and explore beautiful Minnesota. I enjoy visiting county fairs, watching the sunset near a lake and reading a book with a good Minnesota wine.

What is the best advice you were ever given? Who was it from?

From my mother, June L. Kinney and it wasn’t one thing it was more like three in the same sentence usually! “Find joy in the little things, be observant of nature and the good in people and never give less than 110%.”

What did you want to be when you grew up?

An attorney.

We are excited to welcome Robin to the team on February 1.

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Alliance Unveils Unprecedented Climate Policy Recommendations

An alliance of groups representing farmers, forest owners, the food sector, state governments and environmental advocates today unveiled an unprecedented set of recommendations to guide the development of federal climate policy.

The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) was formed in February 2020 by four groups that now co-chair the alliance: American Farm Bureau Federation, Environmental Defense Fund, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and National Farmers Union. The alliance has since expanded to include FMI – The Food Industry Association, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, and The Nature Conservancy.

Together, the group developed more than 40 recommendations based on three principles: agricultural and forestry climate policies must be built upon voluntary, incentive-based programs and market-driven opportunities; they must promote resilience and adaptation in rural communities; and they must be science-based. These recommendations share an overarching goal to do no harm. Climate policies will impact farmers, forest owners, ranchers, rural and limited-resources communities, wildlife and natural resources and must be thoughtfully crafted to account for any potential inequities, consequences and tradeoffs.

“We are proud to have broken through historical barriers to form this unique alliance focused on climate policy,” said Zippy Duvall, FACA Co-chair and President of the American Farm Bureau Federation. “We began discussions not knowing whether we would ultimately reach agreement. It was important to me to reject punitive climate policy ideas of the past in favor of policies that respect farmers and support positive change. Our final recommendations do just that.”

Overview of climate policy recommendations:

- Address six areas of focus: soil health, livestock and dairy, forests and wood products, energy, research, and food loss and waste.
- Provide voluntary, incentive-based tools and additional technical assistance for farmers, ranchers and foresters to maximize the sequestration of carbon and the reduction of other greenhouse gas emissions, and increase climate resilience.
- Foster the development of private sector GHG markets. The public sector should ensure that verifiable reductions occur and provide farmers and forest owners with the technical support needed to participate.
- Use an array of public and private sector tools to incentivize agricultural and forestry producers to prioritize and scale climate-smart practices.
- Incentivize farmers to reduce energy consumption and increase on-farm renewable energy production and make continued progress toward reducing the lifecycle GHG emissions of agriculture- and forestry-based renewable energy.
- Reduce the GHG impact of food waste and loss by streamlining confusing consumer-facing packaging and implementing a public-private partnership to achieve a meaningful and workable food date-labeling program.
- Increase federal investment in agriculture, forestry and food-related research substantially and continuously.

Read more about the alliance and see the full recommendations at agclimatealliance.com.
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**January is National Blood Donor Month**

This January, the American Red Cross celebrates

National Blood Donor Month and recognizes the lifesaving contribution of blood and platelet donors. As we begin the New Year, the Red Cross encourages individuals to resolve to roll up a sleeve to give this month and throughout 2021.

National Blood Donor Month has been observed in January since 1970 with the goal of increasing blood and platelet donations during winter — one of the most difficult times of year to collect enough blood products to meet patient needs. During the winter months, inclement weather often results in cancelled blood drives, and seasonal illnesses like the flu may cause some donors to become temporarily ineligible. Blood donation appointments can be made by downloading the American Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting redcrossblood.org or calling 1-800-RIDED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) to make an appointment or to receive more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients.

A blood donor card or driver’s license or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age (16 with parental consent in some states), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

Four health benefits from donating blood:
- Fresh blood for someone in need
- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Reduced risk of cancer
- Reduced risk of abnormal blood clots

**Financial Moves You’ll Be Thankful for Later**

Keep on top of updating your will and your beneficiary information. While you won’t directly benefit from this, you can rest easy knowing your wishes are known and your loved ones are cared for.

**Put pay increases toward your retirement.**

Unless you aren’t able to make ends meet, it’s unlikely that a 2% increase in your salary will make much difference in your day-to-day. However, when you take into account compounding interest, that $1,000 a year pay increase could pay off big later in life.

**Conduct regular maintenance on your home appliances and vehicles to save on costly repairs down the road.**

A $20 filter or $100 repair could extend the lives of your costly machinery and appliances.

**Open a 529 plan to start saving for education expenses.**

The cost of secondary education is increasing every year. To prepare your children for success, start saving now.

**Meet with your financial advisor to review your portfolio.**

This year has been a whirlwind in the market and your portfolio may look very different now than what you intended. Reviewing this regularly with your financial professional ensures that you’re working toward your goals in a way that best fits you.

**Explore free resources, like your local library, and double check benefits of your membership organizations.**

You might be surprised that your insurance company provides discounts to hotel chains or your membership to your local museum also gets you into the historical society for free.

**Pay off your high-interest debt as soon as you can.**

Interest payments take a significant chunk out of your wallet — and that’s money that doesn’t do anything to serve your future interests.

**Institute regular no-spend days.**

Pick one day a week to commit to not spending any money. You’ll be surprised at how easy it is — and how much you can save!

**Finally, ask for help.**

Connecting with a financial advisor may be the best thing you can do for your financial future because they can help you build on your strengths and overcome your weaknesses when it comes to planning for your goals.

Visit fbfs.com for more information.
Farming with Multiple Generations

As young people in agriculture, connecting with different generations is a constant challenge. It’s important to understand generational differences and identify ways to work through them. Millennials seem to catch a bad rap, but we are sandwiched between two very different ideologies, Baby Boomers and Gen Z. Many of us work with multiple Baby Boomer family members, landlords, or others directly tied to our success. Working with the older generation requires patience, lots of data, and a firm respect of their wisdom gained over long career. This generation has lived through multiple great and bad agriculture cycles. When they rein us in on our ideas to change, it’s mostly due to a risk aversion and wanting to see us succeed. This is where data comes into play. When you show them data coupled with your knowledge, it speeds the change process. Don’t get me wrong, they might still be slow to change but forward progress is progress. No patient. Working with an older generation can be a challenge and we need to sit back and practice a little empathy. They’ve been there and done that and changes might be overwhelming.

While Millennials grew up on the cuff of technology, Gen Z has been immersed in tech since the beginning of their life. We need to take this advantage and use it for employee recruitment, production, and most importantly for marketing. Technology allows us to work more efficiently. This is important because our generation and Gen Z highly value our time, family life, and work. Gen Z grew up in a more technologically advanced environment, but that experience doesn’t change their goals, personal growth, and prosperity.

No matter who you’re working with on the farm or in your agribusiness role, practice empathy and patience but be firm in your goals and expectations. People value those who are genuine and honest.

Keck Farms, owned by his dad and uncle, they raise corn, soybeans and hogs. In the past year, we have purchased farmland and started a small Waygu-Angus beef herd. We’re looking forward to growing an abundance of produce on our small acreage to direct market for canning and fresh eating.

Innovative Farming Methods: We have partnered with our local brewery to feed brewers’ grains to our cattle. This is a low-cost protein source for our herd, and a feel-good way for the brewery to get rid of the spent grains. Hobbies: In addition to farming and gardening (mostly Caitlin’s hobby), we enjoy eating local food and drinking local beer and wine.

Why did you get involved with YF&R? Farm Bureau seemed like a natural next step after FFA for us. We enjoy the leadership opportunities, learning and networking that comes from our involvement with the YF&R program.

Tender & Juicy Pork Chops

Ingredients
- For the brine:
  - 3 cups cold water, divided
  - 3 tablespoons kosher salt
  - 2 smashed garlic cloves
  - 1 1/2 teaspoons black peppercorns
  - 1 bay leaf
- For the pork chops:
  - 2 to 4 center cut, bone-in pork chops (3/4-inch to 1-inch thick, about 1 pound each)
- Olive oil
- Salt
- Pepper

Instructions
1. Brine the pork chops. Brining the pork for a brief period adds flavor and ensures juiciness in the finished chop. Bring 1 cup of the water to a boil, add the salt, garlic, peppercorns and bay leaf, and stir to dissolve the salt. Add 2 more cups of cold water to bring the temperature of the brine down to room temperature. Place the pork chops in a shallow dish and pour the brine over top. The brine should cover the chops — if not, add additional water and salt (1 cup water to 1 tablespoon salt) until the chops are submerged. Cover the dish and refrigerate for 30 minutes or up to 4 hours.
2. Heat the oven and skillet. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat to 400°F. Place a large cast iron skillet in the oven to heat as well. While the oven heats, prepare the pork. Chop the onions, keep the bell peppers whole. Set the chops aside while the oven finishes heating.
3. Remove the skillet from the oven. Using oven mitts, carefully remove the hot skillet from the oven and set it over medium-high heat on the stove top. Turn on a vent fan or open a window.
4. Sear the pork chops. Place the pork chops in the hot skillet. You should hear them immediately begin to sizzle. Sear until the bottom of the chops are golden-brown, about 3 minutes. The chops may start to smoke a little — that’s ok. Turn the heat down if it becomes excessive.
5. Flip the chops and transfer to the oven. Use tongs to flip the pork chops. Using oven mitts, immediately place the skillet in the oven. Roast the chops until until cooked through. Roast until the pork chops are cooked through and register 140°F to 145°F in the thickest part of the meat with an instant-read thermometer. Cooking time will be 6 to 10 minutes depending on the thickness of the chops and how cool they were at the start of cooking. Start checking the chops at 6 minutes and continue checking every minute or two until the chops are ready.
6. Rest the chops. Transfer the pork chops to a plate and pour any pan juices over the top (or reserve for making a pan sauce or gravy). Tent loosely with foil and let the chops rest for at least 5 minutes before serving.

Fireplace Safety Tips for Families

When it’s cold outside, nothing sounds better than curling up on the couch in front of the warm fireplace with a good book or your favorite TV show. But before you use your fireplace this season, be sure to take these necessary fireplace safety steps to help ensure you’ll be enjoying it all winter long.

1. Keep It Clean
A fireplace offers warmth and creates a welcoming ambiance, but if it’s not well-cared for, it can present fire safety concerns. These cleaning tips can prevent fireplace hazards:
- Have the chimney cleaned annually, as buildup in the flue can be dangerous.
- Clean the fireplace between fires. It’s a good idea to remove ashes once they have cooled.
- Check the chimney regularly to ensure nests haven’t been built in it and that it is clean and free from blockages.

2. Use a Screen
A fireplace safety screen can prevent debris and embers from escaping the fireplace. A fireplace safety gate can also help keep kids at a safe distance. The safety gate can be used for both woodburning fireplaces and gas fireplaces.

3. Reduce the Smoke
A smoky house isn’t ideal. You want the warm, inviting fire but not a smoke-filled house this winter and holiday season. To help prevent a smoky house:
- Select the right type of wood to burn. It’s recommended to use dry and well-aged wood. Using wet or green wood could cause smoke. Dried wood burns with less smoke and more evenly.
- Use smaller pieces of wood versus large chunks. The smaller pieces will burn faster and reduce smoke.
More Than Soybeans

“Many people only think food when it comes to agriculture, when in fact, agriculture is responsible for most aspects of daily life.”

He recently asked me, “Why do you raise soybeans?” How would YOU answer Lucas’ question about soybeans? Yes, some soybeans are raised for human consumption, but much is raised to feed livestock. Did you know that soybeans are also utilized for crayons, ink, biodiesel, paint—and the list goes on.

Many people only think food when it comes to agriculture, when in fact, agriculture is responsible for most aspects of daily life. Not just nutrition. As far as why I grow soybeans, every climate and soil type has its own crop that does well in it. For Minnesota, it’s sugar beets, wheat, barley, corn, and of course, soybeans.

The above paragraphs are how I answered Lucas. “What a fantastic and thoughtful answer,” which is easily the kindest critique to an answer I’ve ever received. But to me, it didn’t feel “thoughtful.” I hardly put any thought into it.

After four years of serving on the Promotion and Education Committee of Minnesota Farm Bureau, answering questions like Lucas’ feels easy. Minnesota Farm Bureau conferences, Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum and advocating opportunities such as Day on the Hill, have given me the education and confidence to serve as a face and advocate for agriculture. In a world where so many are tucked away safely in their homes until the threat of coronavirus is snuffed out, snapshots from your daily life in agriculture serve as a welcome retreat.

In a world where store shelves are haphazardly emptied in the span of a few hours, people have the attention and desire to know (more than ever) where their food and toilet paper comes from.

If you’re not a Farm Bureau member, join! Take advantage of the resources and opportunities it provides. Share your “silly, mundane” photos on social media and in your Christmas cards. When you put yourself out there, people will know who to ask!

To learn more about soybeans, visit: mnsoybean.org/msrpc/about-soy/

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Let’s Look at How We’ve Grown

T
there are many things to look at 2020. Like the old saying goes, when it rains it pours and it has definitely poured this year! What if we look for the good? In a drought year, we pray for heavy rain. It has been tough to stay positive but look at all the ways we’ve grown through the year and all we’ve learned. It shouldn’t be too hard, since farmers are supposed to be the eternal optimist.

We can be disappointed the Annual Meeting isn’t happening in person this year. The faces we see each year. The new friends we meet. The great food we enjoy. Instead of dwelling about the virtual meeting not being what it usually is – be grateful for what Farm Bureau has brought you and look to the future.

The friends I’ve made over the years have lasted long after the meetings and conferences were over. Some of the best friendships I’ve gained through the years have been because of the Minnesota Farm Bureau. Through COVID I’ve learned the importance of having a circle of friends that understand farming and care about me.

As the new chair of the Promotion and Education Committee, I look forward to the opportunity to expand my circle of friends.

The disappointment of staying home and isolating has been a real struggle this year. As we sheltered in place, it gave us time to evaluate what is important – and that’s family. We have spent quality time as a family, with both our immediate family and extended family to include my parents and mother-in-law. As social distancing continues, I’ve come to see how important it is to make sure that every generation is cared for. We’ve strengthened the bond of our extended family. We know that family can drive us crazy at times, but they are also there for us. They have given us reason to keep going, someone to talk with in person and most importantly love and support. Sometimes it takes a challenge to see the blessings we have.

I think we’ve all come to understand the importance of laughter during this time. There are times when 2020 has become a burden, but we need to find laughter to keep going and to keep positivity going. They say laughter is the best medicine. It truly is when we think we can’t find anything good. Social Media has its downsides (all the political posts of 2020), but there are so many comical moments. Maybe it is a morning program for you on the radio, or even sitting down and finding a television program that allows you to laugh. It could even be someone that you know who brightens your spirits.

No matter what the year, it is always going to be some mountain we need to climb. The good thing about 2020 is you aren’t climbing this mountain alone. Everyone gets to enjoy this mountain. We just need to make sure we aren’t always dwelling on the negative, and instead focus to stay positive, 2021 is just around the corner. There is good out there, we just need to find it. I hope our consumers can look to us farmers, not only as their source of food, fiber and fuel, but also, our optimism for the future and positivity in the world.

“I hope our consumers can look to us farmers, not only as their source of food, fiber and fuel, but also, our optimism for the future and positivity in the world.”
The Ranch Woman’s Cookbook
With over 18 years of cooking for four to 15 people on her cattle ranch, Rachel has combined her years of recipes, experience and knowledge. With over 150 family recipes, this book will be a staple in your kitchen. Whether you’re cooking for a crowd or a family meal, this book is a must-have for anyone who loves delicious, home-cooked meals.

Available on Amazon & Barnes & Noble

For more information on legislative issues, contact the MFBA Public Policy Team at 651-768-2100 or visit the Action Alert Center at www.mfba.org
Hang in There

YF&R Young Farmers & Ranchers

Recently a couple at my church was celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary and was asked if they had any advice to give. They both chuckled and responded, “Hang in there!” I feel like 2020 has been one of those, hang in there, years. With many events getting canceled, postponed or moved to virtual, COVID has caused a major disruption in our social lives.

I’m remaining hopeful and optimistic that the country will be opening back up soon and we can start returning to somewhat normal lives. Please be patient with our Minnesota Farm Bureau committees and staff as we work to reschedule events and be flexible when things must change last minute. We’re as eager as you are to socialize, network, and reconnect. In the meantime, share different ag-related photos and content through social media and engage with consumers’ when given the opportunity.

I am excited to serve as chair of the YF&R committee, as I have a great group of people to serve alongside with. We will do our best to hold district and state-wide events, if safe to do so. Please, make it a priority attend, if possible, and enjoy the comradeship of those who are also passionate about agriculture. Hang in there, stay safe and I look forward to seeing you at our next event!

About the Nelsons

Hometown: Hinckley

Educational Background: Tyler graduated from Ridgewater College with an AAS in Farm business Management with a Dairy Emphasis in 2011. Cailyn received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Bemidji State University in 2015.

Farm Description: Tyler farms with his dad on their family dairy farm. They milk 60 cows, raise their own heifers and steers, and grow 400 acres of organic crops. Cailyn works at a local hospital in the Emergency Room and Medical Surgical unit.

Innovative Farming Methods: This past year we transitioned our crop land to organic and received our certification. This next year we will be growing some heritage grains for milling.

Hobbies: Tyler enjoys waterfowl hunting and researching soil health. Cailyn likes to spend her free time at the gym, riding horse and reading. We both enjoy traveling as much as the farm allows.

YF&R Committee Chair

Tyler Nelson

Why did you get Involved with YF&R: Farming as we know it is changing rapidly and the gap between consumer and producer is ever widening. It is imperative that farmers get involved with farm organizations that help bridge that gap and provide connections with our elected officials. Getting involved with YF&R provides us with many opportunities to do so.

Homemade Coconut Cream Pudding

Ingredients:
- ½ cup sugar
- 4 cups raw milk
- 6 tbsp. cornstarch
- 6 tbsp. butter
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups coconut
- 2 eggs slightly beaten.

Directions:
Mix Sugar, Cornstarch, Milk and Egg in Saucepan.
Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture becomes thick and bubbly at 185 degrees. Remove from heat, add butter, vanilla, coconut and stir well. Refridgerate. (You can substitute the sugar for brown sugar and leave out the coconut for a more “butterscotch” type pudding).

Minnesota Farm Bureau YF&R Contest Winners

• Excellence in Agriculture
  Winners
  Lucas and Alise Sjostrom

Lucas and Alise Sjostrom of Stearns County took first place in the Young Farmers & Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture. The Excellence in Agriculture finalists presented virtually on Monday, November 23. The Excellence in Agriculture spotlights young Farm Bureau members who are agricultural enthusiasts but have not earned a majority of their income from an owned production agriculture enterprise in the past three years. Competitors are evaluated on their understanding of agricultural issues, leadership experiences and achievement, and their ability to communicate their agricultural story. Participants were judged on their involvement in agriculture, leadership ability, involvement and participation in Farm Bureau and other organizations.

Alise and Lucas Sjostrom are the primary managers of their family’s on-farm creamery business, while also aiding their family’s dairy farm. Lucas also works off the farm for Minnesota’s dairy farmers on behalf of their regional checkoff and state trade association. The Sjostroms are involved in several hunger-relief organizations, agricultural boards and promoting modern agriculture through 8,000 farm tours per year.

The Sjostroms will advance to the national competition where they will represent Minnesota in the national contest at the American Farm Bureau Federation’s (AFBF) Annual Meeting held January 9-13, 2021. They also received a recognition plaque from MFBF, $500 prize, a trip to the MFBF LEAP Conference to be held in Sioux Falls, SD in 2021 and a leadership development trip to Washington, D.C.

Excellence in Agriculture runner-up was Corey Ramsden Scott, of Washington-Ramsy County. The runner-up will receive a $250 cash prize. Other top finalists in Excellence in Agriculture were Mark and Sara Hewitt of Le Sueur County.

• Discussion Meet Winner
  Maddie Weninger

Maddie Weninger of Wright County took first place in the Young Farmers & Ranchers Discussion Meet. The Discussion Meet finalists competed virtually in two semi-final rounds on Monday, November 16. The final competition round was held virtually on Tuesday, November 17. Contestants were judged on their basic knowledge of critical farm issues and their ability to exchange ideas and information in a setting aimed at cooperative problem-solving.

Weninger is a senior at South Dakota State University studying agricultural economics and Spanish. She also is involved in the Collegiate Farm Bureau, Collegiate Farm Food, and Environmental Sciences (CACES) Ambassadors, the Agricultural Education/FFA Alumni club, SDSU Teach Ag Ambassadors, and is finishing off her year serving as a Student Advisory Team member with the Agriculture Future of America organization. Weninger is originally from Maple Lake, Minnesota but attended Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted High School where her dad has taught agriculture for 35 years. Although she didn’t grow up in agriculture, she has fond memories of attending FFA events with her dad as a little girl, which sparked her interest in the agriculture community.

Weninger will advance to national competition where they will represent Minnesota in the national contest at the American Farm Bureau Federation’s (AFBF) Annual Meeting held January 9-13, 2021. They also received a recognition plaque from MFBF, $500 prize, a trip to the MFBF LEAP Conference to be held in Sioux Falls, SD in 2021 and a leadership development trip to Washington, D.C.

Other top finalists in the Discussion Meet were Amanda Cook of Chisago County and Elizabeth Nass of Headwaters Regional, Clearwater County.

Four award winners will be chosen for each of the three 2021 AFBF YF&R Contests: Achievement Award, Excellence in Agriculture and Discussion Meet. The winner will receive a new Ford vehicle up to a value of $35,000. Second place will receive a Case IH Farmall 50A tractor. Third place will receive a Case IH 40” Combination Roll Cabinet and Top Chest and a $500 Case IH parts card courtesy of Case IH, a $2,500 Investing in Your Future cash prize courtesy of American Farm Bureau Insurance Services, as well as, $1,850 of Stanley Black & Decker merchandise. Fourth place finalists will receive a Case IH 40” Combination Roll Cabinet and Top Chest and a $500 Case IH parts card courtesy of Case IH. Special thanks to our sponsors, Ford, Case IH and Stanley Black & Decker, for their continued support of the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers contests.
2020 Management Report to the Voting Delegates

What a privilege and honor it is to sit in this role as the Executive Director of the Minnesota Farm Bureau. Since starting in this role in June, the COVID Pandemic has put up numerous roadblocks in the path to connecting with our members in person. Though virtual meetings and a few outdoor county annual meetings have temporarily helped to connect with our members, however, it isn’t the Farm Bureau we are familiar with. Luckily, many faces and names are familiar to me from my previous work at the Minnesota Farm Bureau in years past. The past months have felt like connecting with the biggest extension family, where I feel the warm greetings, even if from afar.

One of the organization’s greatest assets is its amazing staff. I would like to recognize and acknowledge the efforts, dedication, hard work and passion for Farm Bureau and all of Minnesota agriculture of the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) staff.

- **Administration Team**
  - Madison Muir, Communications Specialist
  - Libby Knoobel, Office Manager

- **Operations Team**
  - Dave Johnson, Director of Operations, Treasurer
  - Lori Wiegand, Accounting Associate

- **Membership & Voting Team**
  - Robin Kinney, Director
  - Virginia Magyar, Southeast
  - James Dodds, North
  - Amanda Revier, Southwest
  - Dennis Sabel, East Central

- **Public Policy Team**
  - Amber Hanson Glaeser, Director
  - Josie Lonetti, Associate Director

- **Foundation, YF&R and P&E Programs**
  - Ruth Mietlick, Foundation Director
  - Rachel Peterson, Leadership Coordinator

This past year has pushed the staff to new levels of expectation. From dealing with a ‘new way’ of conducting Farm Bureau business, to adjusting to a new Executive Director, to transitioning through a staff re-organization. I applaud the team for their ability to meet the needs of our members, and to be supportive of their teammates in effort to accomplish our organization’s mission. Thank you, staff, for your continued hard work on behalf of Farm Bureau members across the state.

Membership

There is power in numbers. The 2020 membership year ended with a total statewide membership of 28,821 and a statewide voting membership of 12,384. While we lost members statewide again this year, there were many membership bright spots in 2020.

- 32 county/regional Farm Bureaus attained a total membership growth
- 21 county/regional Farm Bureaus attained a voting membership growth
- 17 county/regional Farm Bureaus attained both a voting and total member growth
- 16 county/regional Farm Bureaus met or exceeded a +5 gain in voting members
- 14 county/regional Farm Bureaus attained a total membership growth of 4% or more
- 33 members of the 2020 Producers Club – down 7 from last year – all MFBF Board of Directors made the 2020 Producers Club
- Volunteers signed a total of 246 new members
- Staff signed a total of 39 new members

Despite our best efforts, some losses of membership were experienced, but through the commitment and hard work you devote to Farm Bureau, we pulled through.

Thank you to all Farm Bureau leaders, Farm Bureau Financial Services (FBFS) agents and everyone who

signed a Farm Bureau member in Minnesota. Early membership recruitment and retention work pays off. This is in large part due to roll out a March Madness Membership Campaign. This contest will equip county Farm Bureaus with new tools to assist in their membership recruitment efforts. Throughout the month of March, counties will have the chance to encourage their county Farm Bureaus to gain the most ‘new voting’ members. We know the value of a Farm Bureau membership is strong, we just need to share that value with others. Watch for more on this in the coming weeks.

The county Farm Bureau membership incentive for 2021 remains the same as last year: Counties will receive $500 if your county attains a growth of five or more voting members and $500 for an increase of four percent or more in total membership. Counties can qualify for both incentive payments.

2020 was a very successful year for the programming and activities of Farm Bureau in Minnesota. These successes are highlighted in the 2020 Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation annual reports which are included in your delegate packet.

Minnesota Farm Bureau will be recognized at the American Farm Bureau (AFBF) annual meeting for outstanding programs and activities in all four AFBF Awards of Excellence categories for the sixth consecutive year. Our success in this peer-judged program would not be possible without all the hard work and great programs and activities conducted by the county and regional Farm Bureaus.

The partnership we have with Farm Bureau Financial Services is strong. The FBFS Insurance Agency Force is growing and additional resources are available to support the activities of that Agency Force. FBFS continues to be a market leader in insuring agriculture property in Minnesota.

Resources for the Future

Our leaders have seen the financial forecast numbers and heard from our leadership of the upcoming financial hurdles we need to face. The MFBF Board of Directors, recommended that the delegates look at a dues increase during the MFBF Annual Meeting. When the decision was made to switch the format of the annual meeting to a virtual meeting, the board realized that this was an issue too important to address in this manner. It deserves a healthy debate by our membership. The format of a virtual meeting just doesn’t allow for a robust discussion of this magnitude.

However, the challenge has not gone away. Our leadership team feels strongly that it will take a three-pronged approach to overcome.

- **First**, we need to start with cutting expenses. Over the past two years, the leadership of the organization has cut expenses by nearly $450,000. We have determined more efficient ways to conduct business, while still achieving our mission. Additional cuts would have a direct impact on our programming efforts.
- **Second**, with a renewed emphasis on membership growth. This will be a primary focus for the organization in 2021. To achieve this, we have hired a dedicated Membership & Retention Coordinator to help achieve our goals.
- **Third**, strategies for county Farm Bureau membership efforts, strengthened collaboration with FBFS and are building out an exciting membership campaign – March Membership Madness.

Finally, we will still be asking our delegates to consider a dues increase. A virtual meeting may not be the time or place to host the robust discussion. We hope to call together a Special Meeting of the delegates in 2021, when it is safe to do so.

Leadership

Farm Bureau at the county, state and national level was formed by visionary, dedicated and passionate volunteer leaders. The strength of Farm Bureau today is your county, in Minnesota and the nation continues to depend on volunteer leaders. The future of Farm Bureau and its effectiveness remains in the hands of farmer and rancher leaders.

As I look at the screen today, I see leaders from every corner of our state who very much would’ve wanted to connect, in person, to conduct the business of the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation. But I also see leaders who have continued to prioritize the work of Farm Bureau, and fulfillment of our mission, when it wasn’t easy. Some of our leaders have adopted new technologies and have had a willingness to try new things.

Farm Bureau’s relevancy is stronger than ever. In March, as the pandemic hit the U.S., there was a need for a strong leader to articulate with elected officials the need for farms, ranchers, processing plants and distribution to be classified as essential workers. That leader was Farm Bureau. With our broad membership, we heard from members and stakeholders about the obstacles and challenges. We brought forth solutions that were able to alleviate those challenges and pivot to a new strategy. Our leadership team, both board and staff, were in constant communication with elected officials (both state and federal), agency leaders, commodity organizations and the supply chain partners.

We relied heavily on our previously developed relationships, friendships and allies to bring the agricultural community together to rise above the rising waters. Having the ear of decision makers when a crisis hits is invaluable.

The ability to attract, engage and develop the next generation of leaders in Farm Bureau is the key to the future. There are several avenues available to learn more about the organization and get involved, such as Young Farmer & Rancher and Promotion & Education programs and activities, the LEAP Conference and the State Annual Meeting. This is in addition to all the effective programming and activities each of your county Farm Bureaus conduct.

A Quick Look Ahead

As the pandemic took hold in the United States, consumers felt the urge to stock up on supplies, with food being one of the most critical. For some, it was the first-time shoppers experienced store shelves being empty and grocery stores putting limits on food purchases. This phenomenon put farmers, ranchers and the food supply system in the forefront of the public’s minds more than ever, consumers want to know where their food is coming from. They want to know that the food supply is safe and available to them when they need it most.

As families hunkered down at home, they grew closer as a family through distance learning, cooking meals at home together and being one another’s only source of entertainment. In some ways, the pandemic has placed a higher emphasis on what’s most important: faith, family, food and farmers. These are things our organization stands for, heck, three of the four are called out in our logo.

There has no doubt been some very dark days in the past year, but as we turn the page to 2021, I see the light shining ahead, I see the need to be done, by an eager staff and dedicated volunteers of this organization. There will continue to be a need for Farm Bureau to advocate for agriculture driven by the beliefs and policies of our members locally, in our state and across the nation.
Minnesota Farm Bureau Outlines Focus Areas for 2021

Minnesota Farm Bureau members will engage with elected and appointed officials, stakeholders, and consumers to connect and collaborate in new ways. The Minnesota Farm Bureau Board of Directors set priority issues for the 2021 legislative session:

- **Broadband:** Expand investment to increase access to reliable broadband, especially through infrastructure.
- **Climate Change and the Environment:** Reduce greenhouse gas through increased use of renewable fuels and by building upon the strong foundation of voluntary stewardship investments and practices to guide policies and partnerships to continue to improve the sustainable practices carried out on farms and ranches of all sizes.

FG

**Minnesota Farm Bureau**

**Farmers • Families • Food**

- **Food Supply:** Support those involved in growing food, processing, packaging, transportation, and retail to ensure access to markets and a safe and secure food supply for everyone.
- **Healthcare:** Work towards increased affordability and availability of health insurance and healthcare— including mental health resources.
- **Research and Investment:** Continued investment into research programs, facilities and faculty through Agricultural Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer program (AGREET) and support for the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Program.
- **Tax Policy:** Support the Ag2School tax credit, the Beginning Farmer tax credit and federal Section 179 conformity.
- **Transportation Infrastructure:** Invest in Minnesota’s transportation needs, especially rural roads and bridges, to move products reliably and efficiently by roads, river, rail and pipeline.
- **Workforce:** Build a strong work force through educational opportunities through career and technical programs and access to affordable childcare.

About Karin Costa: My name is Karin Costa. I grew up on a farm in Peosta, Iowa, just outside of Dubuque. We had a cattle and hog farm as well as field crops such as corn, hay and oats. I was involved in 4-H for nine years, showing cattle and hogs at our county fair and surrounding counties.

I left the farm to go to college, I became a dental hygienist. I moved to Minnesota in 1989 and met my husband, Ron, and married in 1991. Ron has been farming since a teen with his father, and has never held another job but farming. We have two daughters, they are now 24 and 20 years old. After having our children, I began working the farm full time as well. Ron and I took over Costa Produce Farm as the third generation about 15 years ago. Costa Produce Farm is 101 years old.

Our farm is solely vegetables and greenhouse production. We grow everything from lettuce, fennel, kale, sweet corn, collard greens, tomatoes, peppers, to zucchini and much more. We grow our produce on 125 acres. We sell our flowers, plants and veggies on site at our farm, we wholesale to produce distributors like UNFI, Asian Foods, Pro*Arc/Bix Produce, Lunds, etc which then ends up in restaurants in the Twin Cities and grocery store chains like Festival Foods, Cub Foods, and Lunds & Byerlys. We also attend five farmer’s markets in the summer. Additionally, we have a CSA program, Community Supported Agriculture, which has been very popular for the last six years.

Tell us about your book, Growing French Fries: My children’s book is a fun story about how potatoes are grown by a farmer and how these potatoes are disguised and transformed into french fries. The story brings into the child’s mind how their food comes from the earth and who makes that possible.

It asks the questions of how do french fries grow? On a bush or in a tree? And then sets up the reader to understand how their french fries come from something a farmer grows.

The main character, Farmer Billie, is based on my father, a lifelong farmer and a Farm Bureau member. There is a “cliff hanger” at the end that brings in a second question to the reader; Where is the ketchup? And a picture of Farmer Pete and his tomato plant, hinting to the imagination of the reader that a farmer is involved again. Farmer Pete is based off my father-in-law and could be the follow up second book in the future.

What was your inspiration for this book? My life is the inspiration for this book. I live the farm life. Hard work, long days, an appreciation for Mother Nature, seeing firsthand what comes from the nurturing of seeds and the land.

My children were able to see firsthand how food comes to the table and I thought it was a worthy story to be told to other children who don’t have that opportunity.

What do you feel is the biggest misconception that the general public has about agriculture? I think the biggest misconception the general public has about agriculture is that all farms are alike. Very large, hundreds of acres of corn or soybeans, and animal production.

Our farm is small compared to most, vegetable and flower/plant production only, no farm animals, strict food safety regulations/permits, no overproduction of our vegetables, small footprint.

The other misconception is that the produce at the grocery store is shipped in from out of state. Which for a better part of the year is true, but not in the heart of the summer and into fall. Buying local has also become an important and essential action owners of grocery stores have embraced in the last 10 years. People still seem surprised to find our sweet corn and peppers in local stores.

To you, what is the importance of being a Farm Bureau member? We are members of many of our peer organizations. The connections you make with others in the same industry are important. Networking and finding resources available in the membership is an added bonus. Publications available are very helpful. Local interaction is also a benefit especially for new farmers. Ron and I were up for the Young Farmer and Rancher award many, many, years ago and we found that opportunity rewarding.

Knowing others are facing common struggles or finding solutions in your industry is something that is beneficial on many levels. Farm Bureau is that source. We found this especially true this spring with Covid and our greenhouse business. We were able to use resources from the Farm Bureau to connect with local governments to help open private greenhouse businesses to the public and deem them "essential".

How can members purchase your book? Check out my book at Valley Bookseller bookstore in Stillwater (buying local is awesome!), valleybookseller.com. It is also available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

Interview conducted by Dennis Sabel, East Central Membership & Marketing Specialist

**GROWING FRENCH FRIES**

A Children’s Book

KARIN COSTA

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RADATZ FROM PAGE 3
annual review

Dear Farm Bureau Member,

We hope you and your families are well in this changing world. Times have been challenging and agriculture has not been spared. Like so many other segments of our economy, agriculture has stepped up to provide essential products and services. Minnesota farmers are #StillFarming, and Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) continues to be there for you, especially during these incredible financially and emotionally challenging times.

In Minnesota, we are blessed with a diversity of agriculture from what we grow to how we grow it to what size farm we have. This diversity also means that various agriculture sectors are being hit hard at different times and in different ways. From a decline in gasoline impacting ethanol to trade uncertainties hitting pork and soybeans to major disruptions in key markets for meat, milk, produce and eggs, very few aspects of agriculture have gone untouched. Just as work on the farm and every aspect of food production has continued, Farm Bureau has been hard at work throughout this crisis. We wanted to take this opportunity to report to members some of the most important actions your organization has worked on during this time frame.

Amplifying Your Voice

Farm Bureau’s greatest strength is our members. Since the pandemic began, MFBF leaders and staff have worked collaboratively with our partners in agriculture and directly with elected and appointed officials to make sure that the challenges you are facing on your farms and the issues that your family and community were dealing with were shared with the appropriate decision makers.

As MFBF President, I continue to participate in calls with the Farm Bureau Presidents from all 50 states and Puerto Rico to discuss issues impacting agriculture across the country, identifying actionable items that we could implement to find meaningful solutions for the consistently changing challenges and hear from high level members of the administration and members of Congress for timely updates on the work that was happening at the Federal level. We have had the opportunity to work directly with USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue and his leadership team, leadership at the Small Business Administration (SBA) and members of Congress like House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson to share Farm Bureau members’ stories that are happening on the farms and ranches and in the communities all across the state.

Your Farm Bureau staff are also participating in frequent meetings to discuss what is needed to ensure action is taken to support farmers and rural communities and to stay in front of issues and find solutions to continue the important work of Farm Bureau.

Each sector of Minnesota agriculture has been hit hard and need solutions as issues continue to arise each day. We continue to participate in meetings with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to learn directly from Commissioner Thom Petersen about actions being taken at the state level to address ongoing issues as a result of the global pandemic. These calls also provided an opportunity to hear from Governor Tim Walz and from other state agency Commissioners including Department of Revenue and Department of Employment and Economic Development on issues outside of MDA’s purview. In addition, MFBF led weekly calls with various Minnesota commodity groups, Minnesota Farmers Union and AgriGrowth to ensure that we were working together to address the most pressing issues and working collaboratively to find solutions needed for all of agriculture.

Even though our meetings are not currently taking place in the halls of the state Capitol or in offices in Washington D.C., Farm Bureau has stayed in constant communication with our state and federal elected and appointed officials.

Whether it is through text, over the phone or “face-to-face” via Zoom or WebEx, we continue to communicate frequently with elected officials and their staff to identify specific actions that need to be taken as well as updating them on what’s happening from the “boots on the ground” perspective from our membership.

As a Farm Bureau member, your voice is stronger when we join together. We will continue to amplify your voice and share your stories to find solutions to ensure that agriculture not only weather this storm but comes out stronger. We know that issues will continue to arise as we navigate these unprecedented times. We want to hear from you.

Working Together

From the very beginning of the pandemic, our top priority has been to protect public health. Getting Minnesotans back to work and rebuilding the state’s economy is also an important step for our state. As Minnesota begins to reopen, we will continue to promote a responsible approach. We always asked for an open, transparent, science-based approach to solutions, and this is no different.

Be assured, we will continue to work closely with our partners, including Farm Bureau Financial Services, to communicate about issue updates and seek solutions for members. We’ve appreciated all the staff at MFBF for their dedication to their work and commitment to member services, as they transitioned to remote work. They found new ways of working with and for our members that proved beneficial.

We also want to thank our county Farm Bureau leaders for the flexibility they have shown to make sure that the work that Farm Bureau does every day continued even if things looked a little different. Whether it was checking in on your neighbors through social distancing, discussing important issues over Zoom, or thinking creatively on how to reimagine programming, Farm Bureau leaders stepped up to the plate and continued to serve their local members and communities through challenging times.

All of this work gets done because you make it happen. Thank you for being a member. Thank you for the tireless hours you put in all year long to supply healthy, affordable food to be processed and packaged so stores can restock shelves, produce bins, and meat and dairy cases. We know working together works. We will get through this together. Stay safe.

Sincerely,

Kevin Paap
President

Karin Schaefers
Executive Director

“Minnesota Farm Bureau is an advocate for agriculture driven by the beliefs and policies of our members.”
For over 100 years, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation has been the trusted voice for Minnesota farm and ranch families. Farm Bureau’s dynamic strength stems from our members at the grassroots level. Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation brings resources together to work with elected officials, government agencies and others as needed, to find solutions to problems and address key issues in agriculture.

When it comes to advocacy, your voice is louder when you’re a part of Farm Bureau. Even though things looked very different in 2020, we have continued to give our members an effective voice in the political arena. Through greater emphasis on enhanced member education and engagement, increased contact with elected and appointed officials, improved communication strategies and policy development, our Public Policy program serves and protects our member’s interests.

To best advocate the policies developed by our members, MFBF set goals to engage members by surfacing ideas and identifying actionable policy proposals for policy development, involving members to accomplish issue focus areas through policy implementation, and to successfully build relationships with elected and appointed officials.

Identifying Priority Issues

Following the voting delegate session during our MFBF Annual Meeting, the MFBF Board of Directors sets policy focus areas for the past year. For 2020, MFBF highlighted issues impacting rural communities, healthcare, transportation, environment, energy, trade, taxes, and food as our areas of focus. Agriculture has been facing financial and emotional challenges. MFBF has led in addressing these challenges by identifying opportunities to support our farmers, ranchers and rural communities through these focus areas identified by the MFBF Board of Directors.

Policy Implementation

At the state legislature, MFBF had a successful session implementing our priority issues.

Even though 2020 looked different than normal, MFBF advocated on behalf of Farm Bureau member families to advance MFBF policy priorities, address immediate impacts to agriculture as a result of the global pandemic, and connect with elected officials during uncertain times.

Coronavirus Relief

- MFBF worked closely with the Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture and the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security to make sure that those in Minnesota’s food supply system were deemed essential, allowing anyone from farmers to truckers to processors to grocers to farm markets and greenhouses to continue the important work of keeping food available. We provided a template for essential workers traveling to and from work during the Stay at Home orders. On the federal level, we pushed hard to make sure H2A workers were deemed critical, and the consulates expanded the pool of applicants eligible for interview waivers. This ensured employees could still get into the country. This work continues as we work to ensure that we have access to a stable workforce and the ability to keep workers safe.

- MFBF advocated for support for farmers and ranchers impacted by COVID-19 through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, with $16 billion in funding; inclusion of agriculture in the Small Business Administration’s Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loan program; and a critical infrastructure designation for meat processing plants to ensure a market for livestock producers and a stable meat supply for U.S. consumers. MFBF worked with our livestock commodity organizations and with the MDA as farmers face livestock market challenges and depopulation. These asks included logistical and financial support as farmers made difficult decisions to depopulate as well as proactive steps such as opening up CRP and DNR state lands for emergency haying and grazing.
Advocacy

• MFBF worked at the state and federal level to ensure waivers for hours of service and weight limits for trucks delivering critical supplies, including food and groceries, were granted. This alignment with the existing agricultural hours of service exemption and weight limit variance relieved one less barrier to the already stressed food supply system.

Farm Safety
• Safety on the farm is a top priority for all farm families. The Minnesota Legislature passed legislation to increase funding for farm safety grants and outreach efforts, as well as requiring the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Farm Safety Advisory group to develop recommendations regarding how to best provide financial and technical assistance to Minnesota farmers.
• MFBF worked closely with authors of the legislation and testified before the Legislature in support of safety efforts to reduce farm injuries and deaths through engineering, education, and voluntary practices.

Rural Finance Authority
• The RFA received $10 million in critical funding from the Legislature to ensure it maintains important resources to continue to offer eligible farmers affordable financing options through a wide variety of loan programs. MFBF supported funding for this important entity.

Full Conformity of Section 179
• Included in the 2020 Bonding bill was conformity to Section 179 expensing effective for tax year 2020. The bill also provides for Section 179 expensing retroactively for tax years in which the like-kind exchange changes under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act were effective for federal purposes. The bonding portion of the bill included many local bonding projects that are important for local communities.

Political Action

MFBF has a state and a federal Political Action Committee. Our endorsement process includes face to face candidate interviews with local Farm Bureau members, with the final endorsement decisions made by the State PAC Committee. In 2020, MFBF field staff led the coordination of Farm Bureau volunteers to complete nearly 250 candidate evaluation interviews. The State PAC meeting resulted in final endorsement of 81% of interviewed candidates sitting strong support of agriculture and Farm Bureau policy.

Policy Communication

Over the past year, the number of subscribers to Impact, MFBF Public Policy has grown in an increased effort to share Farm Bureau activities with associate members and others who may be interested in taking a more active role in our organization. Not only is this information being sent to an increased number of people, but an increasing number of people are reading the information with an open rate of 22%.

Due to many events being cancelled this year, MFBF rolled out a new weekly webinar series called Shop Talk that features experts from a different issue area and elected or appointed official special guest. This hour-long webinar dove deeper into issues impacting rural Minnesota via Zoom. Even though we couldn’t be together in person, it was critical that we continued to have conversations about these important topics.

In a special edition of Shop Talk, Minnesota Farm Bureau members were able to participate in a town hall with USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue.

An October edition of Shop talk focused on engaging Farm Bureau members while they are in the middle of harvest to keep public policy top of mind. The first guest in this series was EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler.

The Shop Talk weekly webinar provided an opportunity to increase the organization’s effectiveness and visibility as an advocate for farmers and ranchers by engaging elected and appointed officials, public policy experts and our members on important topics.

Advocacy by the Numbers

The numbers below highlight actions taken by the nearly 30,000 Minnesota farm families that make up our organization.
- 180 Farm Bureau members from 59 counties attended three Day on the Hill visits in St. Paul.
- 67 county Farm Bureau participated in the Adopt-a-Legislator program reaching 67 urban state legislators.
- 13,693 people received weekly Impact e-newsletters.
- Nearly 170 Farm Bureau leaders, elected and appointed officials attended the Council of County Presidents.
- An Action Alert was issued via the Minnesota Farm Bureau Action Alert Center with 674 messages sent to more than 80 state legislators.
- Multiple state and federal legislators visited local farms, attended County “Breakfast on the Farms” and county annual meetings.
- During Farmfest, candidates for federal office in Minnesota participated in multiple forums that included questions from Farm Bureau leadership.
- 23 elected officials, including Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, attended the Minnesota Farm Bureau 101st Annual Meeting.
- 45 county and multi-county policy development meetings were held throughout the state.
- Conducted in-person legislative updates in more than 35 counties.
- MFBF staff testified more than 10 times at the state legislature on priority issues.
- MFBF has a seat on 20 state boards and task forces to provide a voice for our members on a variety of topics from pollinators to noxious weeds to organics to deer management to water quality and everything in between.
The Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) strives daily to effectively communicate with our members, to effectively engage in meaningful conversations with consumers and influence food system stakeholders. Our goal is to provide consistent, effective, timely, intriguing information to members and media regarding MFBF and at the same time share the food to farm story with consumers.

Promotion and Education Committee

MFBF worked closely with our local Promotion & Education (P&E) Committees and with the state P&E Committee “to assist in developing agriculture literacy programming, engaging consumers and promoting a positive image of agriculture. The MFBF P&E Committee met to determine their goals and activities for the year and reviewed them quarterly at their meetings. The education program goal is to surface and engage new and current members by providing leadership, educational and networking opportunities to enhance involvement within the Farm Bureau organization and to create videos that tell their personal farm and Farm Bureau stories to post on social media.

Food Awareness

It is estimated that over 18,000 people were reached by Food Awareness messages in Minnesota. All County Farm Bureaus held events, donating 13,100 pounds of food, 47,000 meals and $37,200 in cash.

Ag Promotion Grant Program

The grant program was very successful and allowed Farm Bureau members to engage with nonmembers. Approximately $40,000 was distributed to 49 county Farm Bureaus. The final reports submitted by the counties, indicated more than $28,178 in additional funds was leveraged from outside partnerships such as FFA, 4-H, local agriculture businesses, and other organizations. Over 56,000 people were directly impacted by the programs.

Ag in the Classroom Events

Volunteers reached approximately 34,250 students in the past year through AITC type programs. With approximately 24 schools being reached by volunteer. By reaching students, volunteers are improving consumer awareness and creating an opportunity to inform parents in the community. The MFBF P&E Committee itself worked with 12 classrooms. We had 18 county Farm Bureaus with approximately 69 volunteers that have reached hundreds of students in the past year through Agriculture in the Classroom programs. While this number was down significantly due to COVID-19, our members did work closely with MN Department of Agriculture on virtual farms tours for teachers and students.

Ag Safety and Awareness Week (ASAP Week)

To date, over 280 volunteers have taught valuable safety messages at 18 events. We estimate these volunteers have reached over 2,400 youth and 470 adults were reached with safety education this year. Our committee engaged in ASAP week messaging that was used on social media and on radio stations across our state significantly increasing our outreach.

Minnesota State Fair

Even though the state fair was cancelled this year but that did not stop Minnesota Farm Bureau from providing some fair-like experiences virtually. We created fun videos that allowed our farmers and ranchers to share their story of how the things we consume at our dinner table traces back to the farm. We also created a video that promoted our volunteer engagement with consumers that included a MN Farmers Care t-shirt toss video. We created a video that announce our 2020 Sesquicentennial Farms, along with infographics that provide more detail on each farm that was awarded this designation. Each day of the fair, we promote an agriculture book and give one away to a lucky winner.
The Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MNFB) strives to create new leaders stronger than themselves and works to develop strong leaders that will effectively serve our organization, their communities and their families. There are a wide range of programs offered through the state and counties.

**County Chairs**

There are 65 Farm Bureau YF&R chairs and 63 county Farm Bureaus’ F&R chairs, many of which participated in the LEAP Conference held in January. They had the opportunity to gain hands-on experience to increase their effectiveness as agriculture ambassadors and network with other farmers and ranchers.

**Council of County Presidents**

Sixty-eight Farm Bureau leaders learned more about buffers, water quality and other hot policy issues impacting rural Minnesota. Approximately 66 legislators joined the participants at the event for networking and dinner.

**Competitive Leadership Contests**

At the state level, 14 members competed in the Discussion Meet contest for a chance to be selected as one of the Top 8 at the MFBF Annual meeting. Minnesota had three national YF&R contest participants (Excellence in Agriculture, Achievement Award and Discussion Meet). However, our Discussion Meet contest was unable to participate due to illness. The Collegiate Discussion Meet winner participated in the national contest at the AFBF Fusion Conference and placed in the Sweet Sixteen. We continued to host six competitions at college campuses and the finals will occur this year through a virtual experience.

**Speak for Yourself**

The “Speak for Yourself” program funded and lead by the Minnesota Farm Bureau in cooperation with other organizations trains farmer leaders to present their farming story to consumers. Each farmer participant attends a training session where they learn the latest about connecting with consumers, creating and preparing their farm story and how to present it to their audiences. The farmer speakers are then scheduled to present their stories to civic organizations, church groups, schools, colleges and districts. An evaluation form is completed by the audience members to ensure the program is meeting the objectives of connecting with consumers. To date, 75 farmers have been trained. These farmers have presented to over 730 different key influencer groups across the state. They have reached over 5.9 million consumers through presentations and media outreach.

**Sesquicentennial Farms**

This project was started in 2008 by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. They transitioned the long-term program into Farm Bureau’s hands. To date over 410 farms have reached the 150-year milestone and received recognition. In 2020, 40 recipients were recognized. Since our state fair was cancelled where the recognition was traditionally held, we created a Sesquicentennial recognition video and detailed infographics on each farm that were posted during what should have been our state fair week.

**Century Farms**

This project is managed jointly with the Minnesota State Fair. We coordinate with the county fairs (agricultural societies) and the county Farm Bureaus to recognize Century Farm families. Since the program’s inception more than 10,600 family farms have been recognized. One hundred and fifty-four farmers were recognized in 2020.

**LEAP Conference**

We have improved the quality of speakers and increased networking with nearly 230 attending this year. The state committees decide the dates and location as well as chooses speaker topics and tour ideas. The ag literacy “Make and Take” session provides a hands-on training. During this event, more than $3,500 was raised as a service project along with 789 Food Shelf donations. We also raised $19,500 in sponsorship for this event.
FROM PLOTS IN OUR AREA
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2020 REGIONAL F.I.R.S.T. WINNERS

HEFTY BRAND SOYBEANS
H18X1 #1 in MN South Central
H18X1 #2 in MN South

HEFTY BRAND CORN
H4612 #1 in MN South
H3442 #1 in Red River South
H3322 #2 in Red River Central

PLOT PERFORMANCE

F.I.R.S.T. SOYBEAN PLOTS

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