

JAN/FEB 2026



Wisconsin
Farmers
Union

NEWS

UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

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Editor's Column: A Good Time to Be a Little Stubborn



January and February are funny months in Wisconsin. We're halfway through winter, not quite ready to declare victory, but

stubbornly optimistic that spring will show up eventually. If that mindset feels familiar, it's probably because it's also a pretty good description of Farmers Union members.

The start of a new year doesn't magically erase the challenges facing family farmers and rural communities. Margins are still tight. Uncertainty still hangs in the air. And plenty of folks are carrying real fatigue from a few tough years in a row. But if there's one thing this organization does well, it's refusing to mistake "hard" for "hopeless."

That was on full display at our 95th Annual Convention in December. The conversations were honest. The debates were thoughtful. The energy was real. People showed up not because everything is perfect, but because they believe things get better when we work on them together. That kind of engagement is not accidental. It's built, meeting by meeting, chapter by chapter, and conversation by conversation.

As we head into 2026, there's a lot to feel good about. Members are shaping policy priorities that speak directly to what's happening on farms and in communities right now. Chapters are growing stronger and more connected. New leaders are stepping forward, and longtime members are still rolling up their sleeves. That mix of fresh ideas and steady commitment is one of Farmers Union's greatest strengths.

This issue of WFU News reflects that momentum. You'll find stories about advocacy, local food, good stewardship, and the many ways members are supporting one another across the state. None of it is flashy for the sake of being flashy. It's the steady, practical, people-powered work that actually moves the needle.

So as we turn the page on another year, here's my hope for all of us: that we keep being a little stubborn. Stubborn about fairness. Stubborn about community. Stubborn about the idea that family farming and rural Wisconsin are worth fighting for.

Spring will come. In the meantime, there's good work to do.

Tony Enright

WFU Communications Director

From the President's Desk: Setting Our Sights on 2026

A new year brings a chance to reset, but for many Wisconsin farmers, the challenges didn't disappear when the calendar turned.

Margins remain tight. Markets are still unpredictable. Dairy farms continue to close, and too many farmers are being asked to absorb risks they didn't create. At the same time, we're seeing programs that were helping farmers and communities scaled back or eliminated just when they were proving their value.

Still, I'm entering 2026 with a sense of determination.

This year, Wisconsin Farmers Union will stay focused on the issues that matter most to family farmers and rural communities. That includes pushing back against consolidation in agriculture that limits competition and choice, standing up for immigrant workers who are essential to our food system, advancing real dairy policy reform that supports family farming, and continuing the fight for affordable, quality healthcare for rural Wisconsinites.

Across the state, farmers are finding ways to adapt, strengthen local markets, and care for the land while running productive operations. More importantly, farmers are speaking up. They're sharing what's working, what's not, and what needs to change. That engagement is one of our greatest strengths.



The path forward won't be easy, but it's clear. Farmers need stability, transparency, and a fair shot at making a living. Together, we can keep building the kind of food system that supports farmers, families, and rural communities for the long haul.

Thank you for being part of this work. The year ahead will take persistence, but Farmers Union has never backed down from a challenge.

Darin Von Ruden
WFU President

A Note from the Executive Director

‘GOOD THINGS AHEAD’

By Danielle Endrick

As we turn the calendar to a new year, I've been thinking a lot about gratitude. Since stepping into the role of Executive Director in May, one phrase has guided me: good things ahead. It's not just optimism for optimism's sake. It's a reflection of what I see every day in Wisconsin Farmers Union: members showing up for one another, speaking truthfully about the challenges facing family farms, and rolling up their sleeves to build something better together.

Our 2025 Annual Report tells a powerful story of that collective effort. Across the state, members hosted events, welcomed new faces, testified at the Capitol, mentored emerging leaders, supported youth programs, and strengthened local food systems. From farm tours and leadership retreats to youth camps, policy fly-ins, and chapter meetings, the common thread was clear: members are the heartbeat of this organization.

That belief is personal for me. I came up through Farmers Union as a member and chapter leader. I know firsthand that our strength doesn't start in an office or even in that new shiny draft of the policy book. It starts in kitchens, community halls, pastures, and conversations between neighbors. Everything we accomplished in 2025 was made possible because members leaned in.

This past year was also about building a stronger foundation for the future. Internally, we focused on strengthening systems and processes so WFU can better support chapters, programs, and people. One exciting example is our new chapter funding model, which will begin providing some funding right out of the gate in the new year, an important step as we continue to prioritize chapter growth, leadership development, and grassroots engagement across Wisconsin.

We also saw the impact of long-term investments paying off. Market on River had a breakout year as a hub for farmers, makers, and community connection. Our policy and advocacy work amplified farmer voices on issues ranging from fair markets and health care to conservation, local food, and rural infrastructure. Youth programs reached more young people across the state, grounding the next generation in cooperation, civic engagement, and stewardship.

We capped the year off with the 95th Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention in December in Wisconsin Dells, and a bigger crowd than we've seen in years. It was energizing to be together sharing ideas, debating policy, celebrating wins, and looking ahead. I left feeling deeply hopeful, fueled by the commitment and creativity in that room.

As we step into 2026, there is much to look forward to. The work isn't always easy, but it is meaningful, and it is shared. Thank you for everything you do to make Wisconsin Farmers Union what it is. I truly believe good things are ahead.



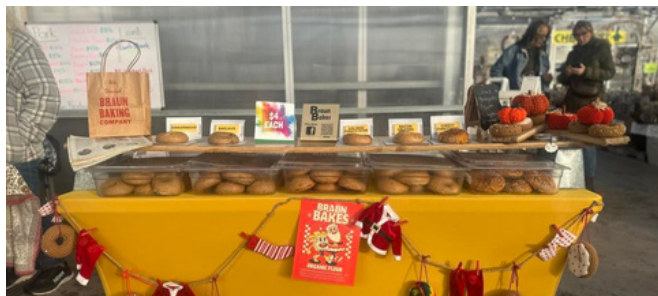
**READ THE 2025
ANNUAL REPORT**



Dates to Remember:

JAN 14 - Farm & Rural Lobby Day, Madison
FEB 15 - WFU Foundation Grant Deadline
MAR 7-9 - NFU Convention, New Orleans
MAR 27-29 - Next Crop Retreat
JULY 17 - Summer Conference, Chippewa Falls
AUG 10 - NFU Women's Conf scholarships due
DEC 11-13 - WFU State Convention, Appleton

Find events and register at
www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events



COTTAGE BAKERY WORKSHOP

January 22 (5:30–6:30 pm) | Market on River

Join Braun Bakes owner Jessie Braun and Peller & Co. Bakery owner Allison Peller for a candid conversation about running home-based bakeries. The session will cover cottage baking laws, pricing and profitability, pop-up markets (including Market on River), and when it might make sense to move into a commissary kitchen. One-on-one conversations will be available after the workshop.



FOOD TRUCK WORKSHOP

January 28 (5:30–7:00 pm) | Market on River

WFU is excited to welcome Live Great Food owner and chef Tony Chavez for a practical look at starting and operating a food truck. Live Great Food is a family-owned, farm-forward business well known for its “Farm to Truck” made-from-scratch, gluten-free, and vegan-friendly menu at the Eau Claire Farmers Market, along with winter service at Wild, A Feral Kitchen by Live Great Food.

Tony will walk through startup and operating costs, licensing and inspections, base kitchen requirements, staffing, and the pros and cons of mobile food businesses, along with stories from the road.

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Email: camp@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Phone: 715-382-0921



LUNCHTIME BOOK CLUB

winter 2026

**JAN
22**

The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World

By Robin Wall Kimmerer

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CST

Register to receive zoom link

**FEB
19**

Holding the Lines

By Maureen Ash

Featuring author Q&A

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CST

Register to receive zoom link

**MARCH
26**

Land Rich Cash Poor

by Brian Reisinger

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CST

Register to receive zoom link

**APRIL
23**

General book discussion - discuss your favorite reads related to WFU mission!

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CST

Register to receive zoom link



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Please register at wisconsinfarmersunion.com and email: eyost@wisconsinfarmersunion.com with any questions.

Wisconsin Farmers Union Charts Course for 2026 at 95th Annual Convention

Wisconsin Farmers Union members, delegates, and guests gathered December 12–14 in Wisconsin Dells for the organization's 95th Annual State Convention. The weekend brought together family farmers and rural advocates for grassroots policymaking, leadership development, member recognition, and a celebration of Wisconsin's farm and food systems.

Convention programming began Friday with Groundswell: Building Community and Making Change, a half-day facilitated workshop led by Kitt Healy and Aaron Reser. Members shared lessons from local campaigns and explored strategies for building capacity within chapters and communities. Friday evening concluded with the annual Farmers Union Camp Fundraiser, which filled the Grand Ballroom and raised funds for structural improvements at Kamp Kenwood, WFU's youth camp on Lake Wissota.

On Saturday morning, Executive Director Danielle Endvick welcomed 150 certified delegates representing 26 chapters. Delegates heard organizational and financial reports, including an update from Farmers Union Industries CEO Dale Bednarek and an address from Executive Director of the Ho-Chunk Department of Agriculture Hinu Smith.

During the State of the Farmers Union address at the awards luncheon, WFU President Darin Von Ruden reflected on agricultural consolidation, shifting federal programs, and organizational transitions within Wisconsin Farmers Union.



Vernon-Crawford Farmers Union Chapter President Matthew Kronschnabel, aka Ranger Danger, kept the energy high after Saturday's banquet with a DJ set and karaoke.



The 2025/2026 Wisconsin Farmers Union Board of Directors includes, from left, (front row) Ed Gorell, Eleva; Kriss Marion, Blanchardville; Darin Von Ruden, Westby; Linda Ceylor, Catawba; (back row) Joshua Mechaelson, Baileys Harbor; Brad Goplin, Osseo; Patty Edelburg, Scandinavia; and Dave Rosen, Glenwood City. Not pictured: Tina Hinchley, Cambridge.

“This past year, Wisconsin Farmers Union has faced change head-on—and we are stronger for it,” Von Ruden said. “Change doesn’t just happen to us; change happens because of us.”

Local food was featured throughout the convention, with meals showcasing 70 ingredients from more than 40 Wisconsin farms and food businesses. Saturday night’s banquet was curated by Chef Luke Zahm, host of Wisconsin Foodie, and highlighted seasonal, farm-forward dishes that reflected Wisconsin’s agricultural diversity and culinary heritage.

Members also participated in workshops focused on farmer wellness, agricultural policy, small grains, agritourism, and workers’ rights. The weekend included a screening of “All of America, Am I,” a Farm Aid-supported short documentary narrated by Wisconsin author Michael Perry, featuring four Wisconsin Farmers Union member farms and examining the impacts of corporate consolidation on rural communities.

Elections and Leadership

Deb Jakubek of New Auburn (Region 1) and LaToya Bates of Mayville (Region 2) were elected to serve as Wisconsin delegates to the National Farmers Union’s 124th Anniversary Convention, scheduled for March 7–9, 2026, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

WFO District Directors elected include Linda Ceylor of Catawba for District 1 (Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas, and Washburn counties); Darin Von Ruden of Westby for District 4 (Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties); Kriss Marion of Blanchardville for District 5 (Grant, Iowa, Rock, Green, Lafayette, and Richland counties); and Brad Goplin of Osseo as At-Large Director.

Following the convention, the Wisconsin Farmers Union Board of Directors re-elected Darin Von Ruden as President, Tina Hinchley as Vice President, Ed Gorell as Treasurer, and Linda Ceylor as Secretary.

Policy Priorities for 2026

Delegates debated and adopted WFO’s policy book and selected Special Orders of Business to guide the organization’s work in 2026. The adopted priorities include:

- Concentration in the Agriculture Industry
- Family Farming and Dairy Policy Reform
- Protection of Immigrant Rights
- Quality Healthcare in Wisconsin

President Darin Von Ruden closed the convention by encouraging members to turn momentum into action in the year ahead.

“The policy we set here is only the starting point,” he said. “Now it’s time to take that energy to Madison. Join us at Farm & Rural Lobby Day on January 14 and help put farmers’ voices front and center where decisions are made.”



Representing Wisconsin at the 2025 NFU Women's Conference were (left to right): LaToya Bates, Beth Pattison, Heather Rothbauer-Wanish, Renee Pattison, and Erin Lenninger.

Cross-country Connections: Wisconsinites Travel to NFU Women's Conference

By Erin Lenninger, Conservation Coordinator

It can be a pretty fun question to ask a member why they joined WFU. What I know is that it can vary greatly, but often comes down to the collective advocacy work, learning opportunities, and pathways to grow in business and personal leadership. This past November, five Wisconsin women enjoyed a trip to Louisville to dive in to it all. Four Wisconsin Farmers Union members received scholarships to attend the National Farmers Union Women's Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. I had the privilege of reading through all the applications, and the words of each woman was inspiring. I felt immense pride in what the women of Wisconsin are currently accomplishing. And excitement in their hope and plans for the future.

Heather Rothbauer-Wanish is from Chippewa County and runs Wanish Sugar Bush with her husband and son. On top of assisting the growth of Wanish Sugar Bush to 20,000 taps in the Northwoods with products in 500 grocery stores throughout the Midwest, Heather holds multiple degrees, owns her own communications business, and teaches at UW-Eau Claire. Heather applied to attend because of her love of connection in the agriculture space, to further develop her leadership skills.

LaToya Bates is the owner of Emerald Farms and Agriculture in Dodge County. She is not new to empowering women and girls, and is looking to more broadly feed her community, dreaming to one day become a community farm and cooperative. She desires to provide families with access to land and quality food at fair prices. LaToya has big dreams for her farm and credits WFU with providing the support,

training, and advocacy she needs to reach them. She applied to attend this conference to continue building on the relationships, encouragement, and connection within the local, state, and national organization.

Beth and Renee Pattison are a mother-daughter duo farming in Buffalo County and deeply tied to Farmers Union. Long time members, Beth attended Kamp Kenwood, was a Kamp Kenwood counselor and met her husband at a WFU conference! Ed and daughter Renee now run their fourth generation, 50-cow dairy farm while Beth assists on the farm, keeps the books, and works off-farm as a medical laboratory scientist. Beth and Renee were interested in listening and learning from other women across the country on a journey to better steward their land. Beth shared she wanted the opportunity to explore and find opportunities to "be the change I want to see in my own farming/rural community."

Renee Pattison is a former State and National Youth Advisory Council member and was interested in learning more about how Farmers Union is advocating for women, migrant workers, and underserved farmers and was excited for a conference run by and for women in agriculture. She says the many opportunities with Farmers Union at a young age have forged her desire to be a part of the organization movement forward.

The trip started with some anxiety as the government shutdown affected flights, however all members were able to participate in Sunday and Monday's events. National Farmers Union provided a social activity on Saturday night at the urban Rabbit Hole Distillery. We were treated to an

amazing tour of the facility, spread from a local woman-owned cheese and charcuterie bar, and a complimentary cocktail. The tour was impressive, we learned about bourbon, and Heather and Todd were excited to look at the bourbon equipment and processing from a maple syrup angle. Many oohs and ahhs!

On Sunday we heard about the thoroughbred racing industry and enjoyed an activity about how much it costs to move an animal through the system. There were many whispers and comparisons from other cattle farmers in the room, but the price tags on these yearlings felt a bit different! We learned about how to take pictures and market products from our farm – and practiced with each other. We heard an update from NFU Governmental Affairs and there was lively discussion on the many pressing policy issues. The afternoon offered breakout sessions where attendees could get emergency best practices and first aid training, or hear from the National Education Association Center for Organizing. We discussed rural spaces, successful organizing campaigns in the past and what is needed for the future. Our last sessions included an option to discuss Farming, Family & Child Care, or a workshop from Braver Angels, a national grassroots organization that works to facilitate better conversations between red-leaning and blue-leaning individuals. In this session, we engaged with each other to identify and break down stereotypes, clarify disagreements, and discover common values.

Monday's speakers were focused on our role as women and the struggle to balance...everything. We heard from Kaycee Bohle, founder of AgriMinds and coach for ag professionals around the country. She moved us through some breathing exercises, and worked us through a process of "decluttering" our mental to-do lists. Our final speaker was Shantae J. Edwards, director of community and training at start.coop and she presented us with exercises to recognize a woman's power, purpose and possibility through cooperation.

The conference was held at the historic Seelbach Hotel, a beautiful building with much lore (a ghost on the 8th floor!) in downtown Louisville. We enjoyed dining in and exploring the gorgeous rooms of this hotel. Its location allowed for easy walking access to area shops, other fun locations, and our ride to the airport, and many of our Wisconsin attendees had fun exploring the city on foot. After the conference concluded, there was an optional excursion to Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby Museum. Over 50 women opted to go on this tour and it didn't disappoint. We were able to see the track, move through the museum, watch a short film, and even make our own mint julep! (Much laughter and varied reactions!)

We were able to engage with FU members from Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, Michigan, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Washington, D.C. Wisconsin's own Beth and Renee represented the only dairy farm in attendance. Heather's sugar bush was of major fascination to others and she fielded many, many questions! This trip offered our members a special time and place to



ABOVE: Scenes from the NFU Saturday night social at Rabbit Hole Distillery in Louisville. Attendees enjoyed a tour of the facility plus networking time.

deepen relationships with their own family members, old friends across the country, as well as make connections with new ones. We heard about women farming in such different places, with different systems and challenges. However, we felt a renewed sense of belonging and strength when hearing that we are still much the same.

Truthfully, it was a selfish trip. I wanted to attend myself, to learn, travel, and expand my Farmers Union experience. But I once again walked away with a favorite feeling. Spending time with our farmers...at a conference, in the field, or on the phone...so often leaves me in awe of the talent, passion, humor, stubbornness, and power of our members. In a world that can be oh-so-negative and where it seems like another problem waits around every corner, I have more than just hope. I have confidence. Collective, gritty confidence. Not that it will all work out perfectly, but that when I look around, these are the exact people for the job. We forge ahead, make mistakes, make progress, lean on each other, and laugh a lot while doing it.

NFU Women's Conference is typically held each year in November. If you'd like to attend Women's Conference in the future, look for information on the details and scholarship applications in future WFU communications.

Utility-Scale Solar Energy

Wisconsin Policy & How Rural Communities Can be at the Table

By Tara Greiman

WFU Director of Conservation & Stewardship

In my work, I regularly speak to people who strongly support renewable energy and have concerns about fossil-based energy, but also have concerns about the installation of solar energy projects on thousands of acres of farmland. This article will outline the policy process set by Wisconsin statute as well as how communities can interact with large solar projects.

1 MW of solar energy takes 5 to 8 acres of land

In Wisconsin, projects with a capacity of 100 megawatts or more face a different permitting process than smaller projects. Since those projects are the ones I get the most questions about, that's what I'll focus on here.

Public Service Commission (PSC)

Projects that are over 100 MW (or generally more than 650 acres) require a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) through the Public Service Commission (PSC). Developers submit a lengthy application for the PSC to review. As part of this review, they look at the project plans for signs of adverse impacts on the community including safety, reliability, ecological harm and aesthetics of natural resources. The Department of Natural Resources also reviews projects and weighs in throughout the application process.

It is widely agreed that the Wisconsin PSC has never denied an application. However, there are many instances where the PSC has required developers to change their plan



based on public comment and intervention. Review of an application usually takes at least 6 months but legally can not take the PSC more than a year.

Local Ordinances & Authority

The PSC application process invites public comment over two separate comment periods and requires developers to show investment in community feedback and engagement. However, local governments may not stop projects via local ordinances. They may however bring their ordinance to the PSC as justification for amending a project to meet their requirements. But that is no a guarantee that the project will be stopped.



Photos: Top- sheep are the vegetation managers for several small utility-scale sites in WI.

Left - Power inverters are located centrally within solar fields and generate some noise and require bare ground.

Upper Right - Red clover has been planted under these panels in northern Wisconsin to prevent erosion.

Local Control Conundrums

There is a longstanding discussion about the merits and drawbacks of local control for renewable energy. WFU policy supports local control and community engagement in renewable energy and many other social issues. But I will outline the main rationale I hear for and against:

On the one hand, there is an argument that projects that benefit an entire region should not be hampered by non-lethal concerns of a few. This has been true for coal plants, highways, and many other large infrastructure projects that locals don't all like to see, but are built for the good of the state.

On the other hand, a small town's inability to hold a large utility project to account can be infuriating to neighbors concerned about their views, their safety, and their community development. Because they don't have leverage to stop the project, they feel disenfranchised. This has created social discord in many towns and counties.

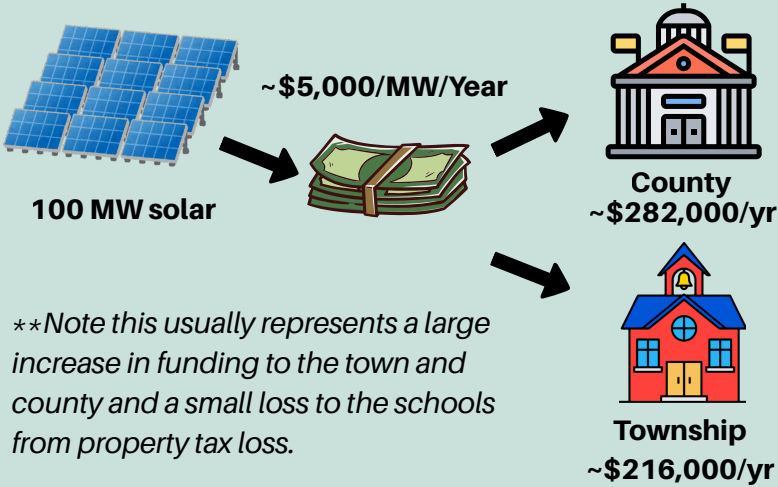
What You Can Do

1. Know Your Demands & Priorities

Developers are generally hoping to work with the community to gain support. If you work with them early, they are more able to adjust project plans to meet community goals like locations to avoid, visual screening, and incorporating farming under the panels (i.e., agrivoltaics).

Squaring Up Local Revenue

Wisconsin recognizes that communities should be reimbursed for bearing the cost of big infrastructure that benefits the region. So host communities receive **Utility Aid Payments** which total \$5,000/MW capacity/year of 50+ MW solar projects split between county and town.



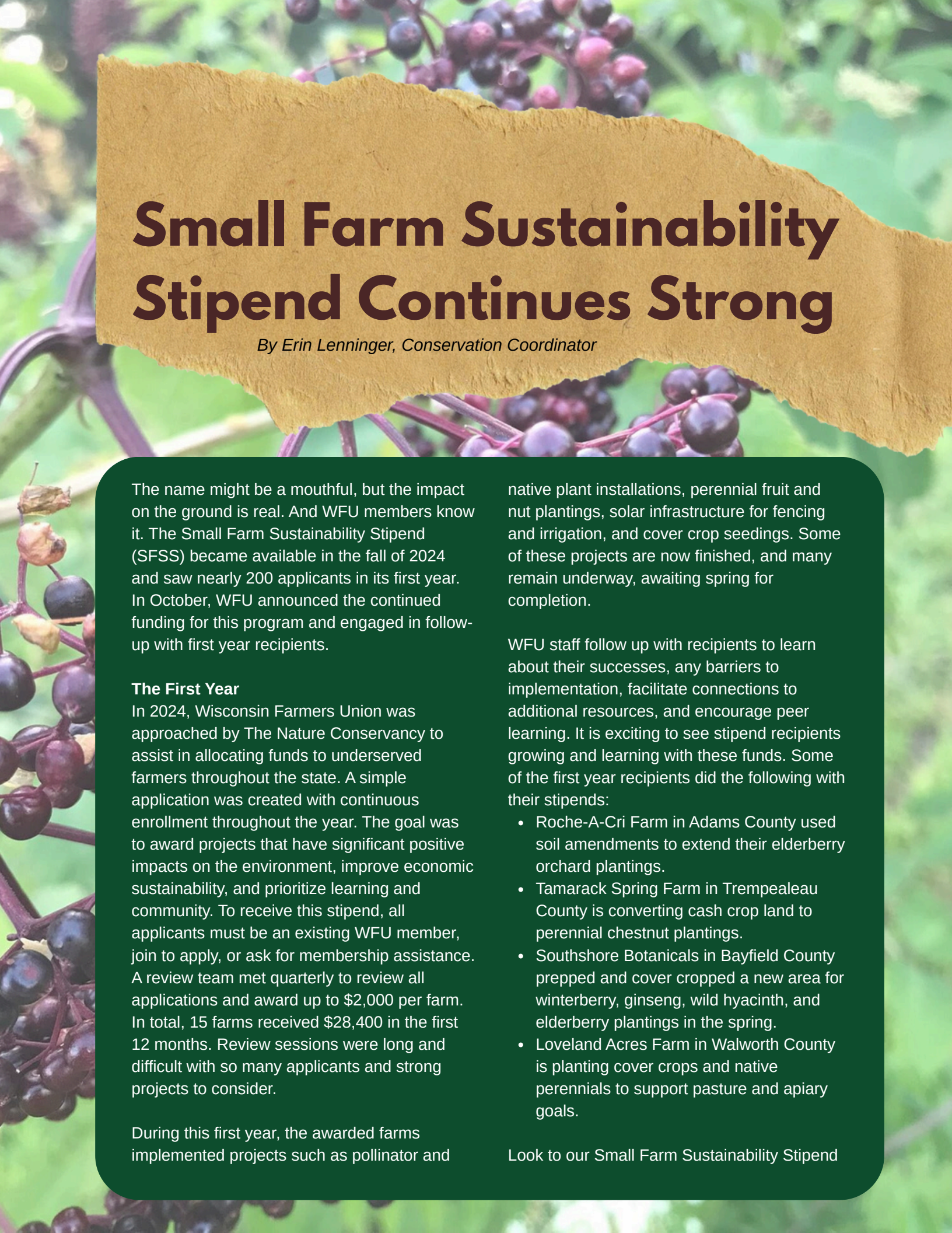
2. Negotiate an Agreement

This is VERY important! Local organizations can enter a legal agreement with the utility/developer for projects to set expectations for setbacks, road use, soil management, project decommissioning and even financial support for schools or community programs.

3. Participate in the PSC Process

The PSC website allows you to track specific projects. Then you can go to public info meetings and PSC scoping meetings, submit comments to the PSC, review and comment on environmental reports, and speak at PSC public hearings. If you give public testimony, be clear about who you are, how you're connected to the case, your concern and why you feel that way, and suggest a reasonable alternative if possible.

Interest	Outreach	Negotiations	PSC Process	Scoping Period	Project Build	Project Maintenance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developer interest, scouts landPublic hears unofficial whispersLease agreements signed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developer shares info via mailings and info sessionsTime to start community engagement planOpposition gets organized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review early planning/siting documents<u>Opportunity to create a legal agreement</u> with the developer for standards & expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developer applies to PSCCase/docket open - onlineThe community now has less leverage to change the project via legal agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two public comment periodsProject hearings <div> Decision Must be made within 12 months of initial application</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Once approved and have federal, state & local permits, construction begins.Construction takes approx. 1-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Energy generationVegetation managementProject repairsUtility aid paymentsCommunity agreement standards monitored



Small Farm Sustainability Stipend Continues Strong

By Erin Lenninger, Conservation Coordinator

The name might be a mouthful, but the impact on the ground is real. And WFU members know it. The Small Farm Sustainability Stipend (SFSS) became available in the fall of 2024 and saw nearly 200 applicants in its first year. In October, WFU announced the continued funding for this program and engaged in follow-up with first year recipients.

The First Year

In 2024, Wisconsin Farmers Union was approached by The Nature Conservancy to assist in allocating funds to underserved farmers throughout the state. A simple application was created with continuous enrollment throughout the year. The goal was to award projects that have significant positive impacts on the environment, improve economic sustainability, and prioritize learning and community. To receive this stipend, all applicants must be an existing WFU member, join to apply, or ask for membership assistance. A review team met quarterly to review all applications and award up to \$2,000 per farm. In total, 15 farms received \$28,400 in the first 12 months. Review sessions were long and difficult with so many applicants and strong projects to consider.

During this first year, the awarded farms implemented projects such as pollinator and

native plant installations, perennial fruit and nut plantings, solar infrastructure for fencing and irrigation, and cover crop seedings. Some of these projects are now finished, and many remain underway, awaiting spring for completion.

WFU staff follow up with recipients to learn about their successes, any barriers to implementation, facilitate connections to additional resources, and encourage peer learning. It is exciting to see stipend recipients growing and learning with these funds. Some of the first year recipients did the following with their stipends:

- Roche-A-Cri Farm in Adams County used soil amendments to extend their elderberry orchard plantings.
- Tamarack Spring Farm in Trempealeau County is converting cash crop land to perennial chestnut plantings.
- Southshore Botanicals in Bayfield County prepped and cover cropped a new area for winterberry, ginseng, wild hyacinth, and elderberry plantings in the spring.
- Loveland Acres Farm in Walworth County is planting cover crops and native perennials to support pasture and apiary goals.

Look to our Small Farm Sustainability Stipend

website and future articles to read more about these exciting on-farm projects!

Moving Forward

Due to the high volume of applicants and strong project ideas, funding was secured for an additional two years. Similar to the first year, farms may apply for up to \$2,000 for projects that improve their farm's sustainability. High numbers of applications are expected to continue in the second year and farms may apply each quarter. The next deadline is February 1, 2026.

Apply any time on our Conservation & Stewardship webpage or by scanning the QR code below. We encourage you to think about and quantify project impacts and provide as much detail as you can. If you would like to discuss your project ideas or learn more about this program, please contact Conservation Coordinator Erin Lenninger at elenninger@wisconsinfarmersunion.com or 715-382-0341.



Scarlett Salamone of Loveland Acres Farm in Walworth County utilized the SFSS for cover crop and native perennial plantings.

Introducing...

THE POLICY NOTE

By Wisconsin Farmers Union

The Policy Note is a corral for all things state Capitol where you'll find updates on WFU's policy work, key action alerts, and a digest of need-to-know news.

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WFU Celebrates the Movers & the Shakers: 2025 Convention Awardees

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognized outstanding members, chapters, and youth during its 95th Annual State Convention in December, celebrating the grassroots leadership and community commitment that strengthen family farming and rural communities across Wisconsin.

“Every county has people whose work deserves recognition,” said WFU Executive Director Danielle Endvick. “These awards help us lift up the leaders shaping the future of Wisconsin agriculture.”

Builder’s Award: Jim Streveler

WFU presented its Builder’s Award to Jim Streveler of the Amnicon-Douglas Farmers Union, honoring his longtime dedication to chapter leadership, member recruitment, and community involvement.

A lifelong educator and farmer, Streveler spent more than three decades teaching agriculture while operating Streveler Farm and Streveler Livestock. He has been deeply involved in local leadership, youth education, and WFU member engagement.

Live Oak Legacy Award: Julie Keown-Bomar

WFU introduced a new honor this year, the Live Oak Legacy Award, recognizing leadership that leaves a lasting impact on the organization.

The inaugural recipient, Julie Keown-Bomar, served as WFU Executive Director for seven years, guiding major strategic planning efforts, expanding staff capacity, strengthening statewide influence, and advancing the vision behind Market on River—now WFU’s headquarters and a community hub in Chippewa Falls.



Emerging Leader Award: Melissa Mahon-Stein

Melissa runs BearStone Acres, a small market garden farm in Richland County, with her husband Mike. She brings extensive experience in vegetable farming and produce distribution to her leadership work.

Within the last few years, she has helped energize the Vernon-Crawford Chapter through expanded communications, increased fundraising, youth engagement, and stronger community partnerships. Melissa currently serves as the secretary-treasurer for the chapter.

Emerging Leader Award: Ryan Sullivan

President of the Lake to Bay Chapter, Ryan is a first-generation farmer whose leadership is shaped by military service and a strong focus on soil health. He has become an active policy advocate, representing WFU in state and national advocacy efforts.

Ryan and his wife Jackie bought their farm in 2014 and started building their dream one step at a time. The Sullivans treasure diversity on their farm, raising laying hens, meat birds, grass-fed lamb, grass-fed beef and produce throughout the year.

Friend of the Family Farmer Award: Tom Mosgaller

The Friend of the Family Farmer Award was presented to Tom Mosgaller, a grass-fed beef producer and nationally recognized leader in organizational development and community change.

Mosgaller has mentored WFU members through leadership programs including the Next Crop Leadership Retreat and Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership Program. His work spans decades of rural advocacy, from the 1980s farm crisis to modern-day coalition building. He is also a co-author of "Pulling Together: A Handbook for Community Change."

Nominations Open Year-Round

Award nominations are submitted by WFU members and selected by the Board of Directors. Nominations are accepted year-round at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com under the "Chapters" tab. The nomination form can also be found by scanning the QR code to the right.





Youth Awards and Torchbearer Recognition

WFU recognized members of the Senior Youth Advisory Council (pictured at left with Education Director Elizabeth Yost)—Calvin Breitenmoser, Ted Schultze-Becker, Katie McGuire, and Dene Zuleger—for helping guide youth education programming throughout the year.

Ruby Sheaffer of the South Central Chapter (pictured lower left) was also recognized for her election to the National Farmers Union National Youth Advisory Council following her participation in the All-States Leadership Summit.

WFU's highest youth honor, the Torchbearer Award, was presented to Laura Wegerer (pictured lower right) and Austin Tischendorf (unable to be at Convention), both of the Taylor-Price Chapter, in recognition of their leadership, service, and long-term involvement in the Farmers Union youth program.



Chapter Leadership Awards

The following WFU chapters earned National Farmers Union Leadership Awards for excellence in organizational activity, membership growth, and community engagement. Honorees will be recognized at the NFU Convention in March 2026:

Amnicon-Douglas
Ashland-Bayfield
Barron
Chippewa
Columbia
Dane
Eau Claire
Jackson-Trempealeau

Lake to Bay
Marathon
Milwaukee-Waukesha
Pepin-Pierce
St. Croix
Sauk
South Central
Vernon-Crawford



Liz Lyon of Milwaukee-Waukesha accepts the chapter's leadership award.



St. Croix Valley Food Alliance Receives Farmer to Food Bank Grant

By Jamie DeSmit,
Local Food Coordinator with SCVFA



St. Croix Valley Food Alliance (SCVFA), a special project of Wisconsin Farmers Union, is the proud recipient of the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation Grant. The SCVFA Farmer to Food Bank program distributes high quality vegetables from SCVFA Farmer Members to the St. Croix Valley Food Bank. The program began in June of 2025 as a response to the loss of the federal funding of the WI LFPA program. This funding will support the SCVFA Farmer to Food Bank program to grow from providing 4,000 pounds of produce to up to 40,000 pounds of produce to the St. Croix Valley Food Bank. Farmer to Food Bank provides fair wholesale pricing and in turn more entry points for small local farmers to scale into wholesale markets. With this grant, the SCVFA will grow the impact of this program with partners: The Good Acre, Whole Farm Strategies and the St. Croix Valley Food Bank.

In 2026, nearly 10,000 households are projected to be food insecure in western Wisconsin. This number continues to grow due to current economic conditions; meaning we need to increase food distribution to meet the growing need in our communities. Andy Donovan, of First Acre Farm, participated in the pilot year of the program, and said, “The Farmer to Food Bank program generates valuable revenue for our small farm while providing food to our local community. Win-win.”

The SCVFA supports over 30 small farms that focus on sustainable farming practices in Polk and Burnett counties. The SCVFA is driven by three on-going strategic ends: Make local food more accessible to local residents, bring more business and profit to the region, and to build local food connections. The SCVFA looks forward to coordinating this mission-driven program in 2026. To learn more visit: scvfoodalliance.org



Double Dollars 2025 Pilot Snapshot

In October 2025, the Vernon Crawford Farmers Union ran a four-week pilot, matching government food assistance dollars at the Viroqua Farmers Market. The goal was to increase food insecure shoppers' purchasing power so they could buy from local food producers -- as simply as possible.

The pilot program, called Double Dollars, matched Foodshare/SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) dollars, WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) checks, and Senior Vouchers used at the farmers market. Matching funds were made available by a grant from the Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation and a donation from the Vernon Crawford Farmers Union chapter.

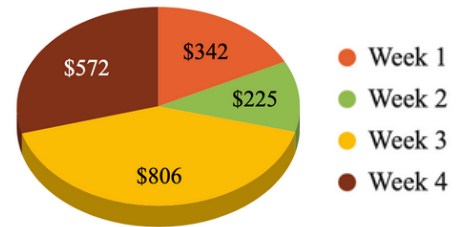
At the end of the month, twenty-six vendors received and were reimbursed for Double Dollars coupons. All Foodshare/SNAP eligible vendors could receive Double Dollars coupons during the October pilot. In total, the Vernon Crawford Farmers Union reimbursed vendors \$1,900.

The program had overwhelmingly positive reviews from vendors and Viroqua Farmers Market coordinators.

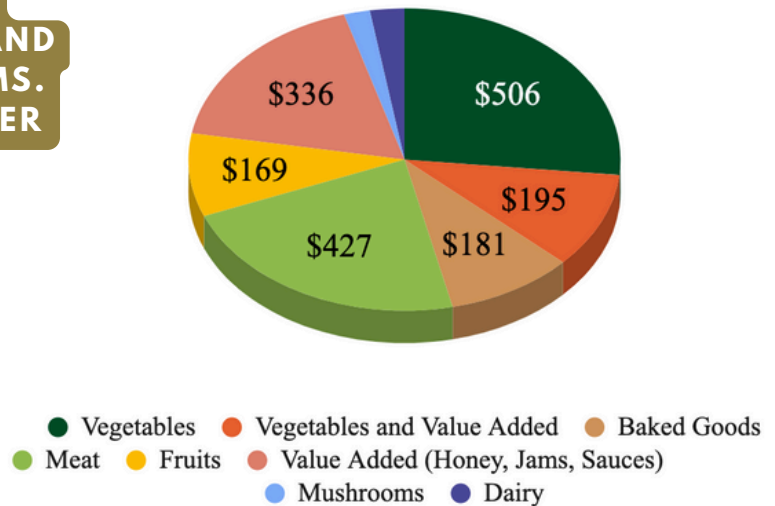


Pilot Results

Double Dollars Distributed by Week



Tokens Received by Product



“VERY SMOOTH. GRATEFUL FOR THE DOUBLE DOLLARS TO FEED MY FAMILY AND HELPING SUPPORT SMALL FAMILY FARMS. A WIN-WIN” -DOUBLE DOLLARS SHOPPER

Double Dollar Reimbursement Amounts for Vendors	
Average reimbursed per vendor	\$73
Median Reimbursement	\$51
Min. Reimbursement	\$2
Max. Reimbursement	\$361

Lobby Day Priorities

Two New Bills related to EBT and Nutrition Incentives were introduced in December: LRB-5637/1 and LRB-5786/1



WFU MEMBERS!

Join the 2026 Farm Fresh Atlas of WI

SCAN HERE



What is the Atlas?

An online and print collection of local food champions (farms, businesses, organizations, etc) across Wisconsin. The Atlas connects listees with eaters that enjoy locally grown food and the community of support that makes it possible.

Why should I join?

The people behind the Atlas, from listees to organizers to consumers, are committed to promoting local food! We have created a network of connection in our local communities and beyond.

REAP and WFU want the Farm Fresh Atlas to be the local food resource that ties us all together!

What's the cost?

Annual listings start at \$75 for farms and food businesses, and \$25 for farmers markets.

NEW! WFU members get \$15 off their annual listing!



Over \$25,000 Raised for Kamp Kenwood Improvements

Thank you for supporting the Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood facility. Through your generous item donations and bids at the live and silent auctions at our 95th Annual Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention in December, we raised a record-setting amount of funds for much needed structural repairs to Kamp Kenwood. Your contribution will help make some of these repairs this winter. Thank you for investing in our beautiful camp property so we can host youth programs for years to come!

Sincerely,

The Wisconsin Farmers Union Staff & Board



Kamp Kenwood senior campers Charles Breitenmoser and Dene Zuleger share their love of camp with bidders.



WFU board member Rachel Bouressa shows off her cycling skills around the ballroom thanks to winning bidder Dale Dednark with a whopping \$3,500 bid.



Kamp Kenwood icon Bruce the Penguin visited the fundraiser. I guess he is judging the maintenance of the cabin exteriors, too, now!

*Special thanks to the
WFU Convention
Fundraising Committee:*

*Jackie Boos
Brad Henderson
Michelle Bachand
Camryn Billen
Sarah Boos-Walter
Michelle Thiede
Elizabeth Yost*

Thank You

to all who made this fundraiser a success!

AUCTION ITEM DONATIONS

Acoustic Cafe
Autumn Larch
Beez Kneez
Blue Roof Orchard
Brewers
Chippewa River Distillery
Chippewa Valley Companies
CJ Craft Creations
Doudlah Farms
Driftless Seed Supply
Eau Claire Children's Museum
Eau Claire Express Baseball
Eleven After Seven
Farm WI Discovery Center
FUI (Farmers Union Industries)
Good Ass Foods (GAF)
Hiker Coffee
Insight FS Cooperative
Kaiserson Bee Co
Kamp Kenwood
Leinenkugel's
Lusa Organics
Main Grain Bakery
Meadowlark
Menomonie Market Food Co-op
Michael Fields Agriculture Institute
National Farmers Organization
Northern WI State Fair
Peller and Co
Revail Bank
Sacred Blossom Farms
Silver Spring Foods
Simpli Handcrafted
Siren Shrub Co.
SolarShare Cooperative
Swearingen Candle Co
Tangled Up in Hue
The Juggery
The Local Store
Tractor Central Westby
Valley Burger
Vernon Communications
Vernon Electric Cooperative
VES Arctic
Viroqua Food Co-op
WECU
Westby Cooperative Creamery
Wheatfield Organics
Willy Street Co-op
Wissota Candles
Wonders of Nature (WON)
Xcel Energy

CONT. AUCTION ITEM DONATIONS

Aaron Chervestad
Cindy VenDerPol
Dale Bednarek
Darin Von Ruden
Dave & Jane Mulroy
David Rosen
Deb Jakubek and Tom Moos Family
Dorothea Von Ruden
Elizabeth Yost
Jeanne Styczinski
Kirsten Slaughter
Kriss Marion
Layne Cozzolino
Lorelei Swanepoel
Michelle Bachand
Michelle Thiede
Nick Levendofsky
Rachel Bouressa
Rita Hindin
Tim and Dixie Stechshulte
Walter Family

CHAPTER BASKETS

Amnicon-Douglas
Ashland-Bayfield
Barron County
Chippewa County
Eau Claire County
Pepin-Pierce
Polk-Burnett
South Central
St. Croix
Taylor Price
Trempealeau-Jackson
Vernon-Crawford

CASH DONATIONS

Northwestern Bank

SILENT & LIVE AUCTION BUYERS

Anne Schwagerl	Krist Kvalheim
Becky Brathal	Kriss Marion
Bethany Storm	Leah Forseth
Betty Mallek	Linda Ceylor
Chad Gunderson	Lori Kvalheim
Cindy VanDerPol	Lori Oettinger
Curt Gosser	Madonna Timm
Dale Bednarek	Mary Segerstrom
Dan Burns	Matthew Holub
Dan Kvalheim	Melissa Mahon Stein
Danielle Endvick	Michelle Bachand
Darin Von Ruden	Michelle Miller
David Mickelson	Michelle Ramirez-White
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Dennis Berke	Mike Stranz
Diane Posner	Nancy Slattery
Emmalynn Kayser	Nels Nelson
Erica Roth	Nick Padesky
Erin Lenninger	Patty Edelburg
Erin Thompson	Paulina Baker
Gary Wertish	Penny Molina
Hannah Alden	Quinn Rowe
Hans Breitenmoser	Rachel Bouressa
Helen Sullinger	Ralph Rounsville
Jackie Goplin	Rebecca Zuleger
Jake Cramer	Rob Larew
James Timm	Sarah Boos-Walter
Jane Hansen	Sarah Lloyd
Jeanne Lyndon	Sheila Everhart
Jeff Kippley	Steve Hansberry
Jesse Endvick	Sue Nelson
Jess D'Souza	Tara Greiman
Jill Gaskell	Wayne Soren
Jim Streveler	
John Skoug	
Jon Lightner	
Jonas Moench	
Josh Stolzenburg	
Joshua Mechaelsen	
Julia Keegan	
Kevin Fermanich	



SAVE THE DATE: 96th Annual WFU Convention
Dec 11-13, 2026 | Appleton

Donate to support WFU's work or the camp anytime at wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Camp registration is open!
www.kampkenwood.com

Welcome New Members!

New Member

Blase & Cami Strobl
Beth and Ross White
Nicholas Leete
Rob Larew & Michael Lentz
Leeza Gavronsky
Tracy & Adam Travis Family
Jenelle & Ed Ludwig Krause
Michael Rust & Kimberly Hrbek
Troy & Maegan Bryant
Sophie Roth
Carrie Kehoe & Chris Flaten
Jason Mills & Julia Chybowski
Valerie & David Boyarski Family
Zabrina & Jeremy Smith Family
Kathy & David Mueller
Wil & Anne-Marie Fryer
Jason Doudlah
Carrie & Bill Sanda Family
Julia Lazarski
Lisa & Tor Anderson
Jared Sendelbach

Location

Albany
Viroqua
Madison
Ballard
Madison
Deerfield
Baldwin
Turtle Lake
Menomonie
Albany
Eleva
Oshkosh
Sturgeon Bay
Stoughton
Luck
De Soto
Evansville
Foxboro
Oak Creek
Nelsonville
Cochrane

New Member

Dave & Deb Scheller
Morgan Hansberry
Matthew Holub
Ralph & Linda Myhre
Hailey & Everett Schwer Family
Stuart Walter
Lisa & Michael Stoffel
Jaime DeSmit
Ritual Holistic LLC
Jenny Yang & Stephen Vang Family
Andrew Johnson
Katelyn Winski & Charles Jurgens
Jeff Myszka
Duane & Deanna Klindworth
Debra Weiss
Jeremy & Aimee McAdams
Bruce Drinkman
Natalie LaMonto & Anthony Pues
Shady Hill Farms
Josh Juarez
Chris Kearns
Eric & Nicki Scott

Location

Ogema
Sun Prairie
Boyd
Osseo
Fennimore
Scandinavia
Bloomer
St Croix Falls
Green Bay
Milwaukee
Gilman
Abrams
Athens
Augusta
Wausau
Clayton
Glenwood City
Marion
Randolph
Madison
West Bend
Fremont

SHOP LOCAL AT MOR



Eat, Shop, And Connect With Local Makers At Chippewa's Hub By The River



Gather With Friends And Neighbors Where Local Flavors Come Alive Every Day



Experience Chippewa Falls at Market on River — where local businesses, producers, and community connect in a beautifully restored venue.

Plan your visit at MarketOnRiver.com

128 W RIVER ST., CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI 54729



UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

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Interested in working for Wisconsin Farmers Union?

To view open positions, visit:

WisconsinFarmersUnion.com/Employment



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SUBMIT YOUR BEST RURAL LIFE PHOTOS!

WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

PHOTO CONTEST

The winning photo earns a Farmers Union hat! High-resolution vertical photos preferred. Send your photo entries and a brief description to Tommy at tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

ON THE COVER:

Our cover photo this month was submitted by Hannah Alden of Sugar Camp, WI.

