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WFU names Barrett a Friend of the Family Farmer

APPLETON – Wisconsin Farmers Union recognized *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* reporter Rick Barrett with the Friend of the Family Farmer award Jan. 26 at the 88th annual WFU State Convention in Appleton. First given in 2013, the Friend of the Family Farmer award recognizes individuals who have gone above and beyond in efforts on behalf of family farmers and rural communities.

Barrett has been a business reporter with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* for more than 18 years, and before that was the agricultural reporter for the *Wisconsin State Journal*. In recent years he has returned to his rural roots, covering Wisconsin agriculture.

“Rick has been an ally to family farmers,” said WFU Communications Director Danielle Endvick. “His ethical, balanced coverage of agricultural issues has shed a light on the impact of the dairy crisis, trade disputes, growing consolidation in agriculture and more. In a year when journalists have been subjected to immense and unfounded criticism, we are proud to recognize the very important role journalists like Rick play in being guardians of the truth, raising awareness, and providing insight into the issues impacting our family farms.”

Endvick credited Barrett for immersing himself in his journalism, spending time in the field with farmers and sharing their first-hand stories of the struggles and triumphs of farm life.

About the recipient

Originally from southeast Michigan, near Port Huron, Barrett grew up in farm country. His father worked at a grain mill, then managed a stockyard, and Barrett spent his summers and weekends traveling along from farm to farm, buying and selling cattle.

Through the years, Barrett has also worked as a journalist in Michigan, Texas and Arkansas and Florida. In Milwaukee, much of his reporting has also covered manufacturing companies including Harley-Davidson, Oshkosh Corp. and Mercury Marine.

Barrett and his wife Amber have an old farmhouse near Appleton, where they raise a few critters and are grateful to be surrounded by farms and the good, hard-working people who earn their living farming.

Barrett thanked the farmers in the room for their willingness to allow him to share their stories.

"Rick has played a key role in making sure the voices of Wisconsin farmers and rural residents are heard, and we are pleased to recognize his efforts," added WFU President Darin Von Ruden.

Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement. For more information visit www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

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