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WFU members attend National Farmers Union Convention

Hundreds gather in Pacific Northwest to set policy around family farming values

BELLEVUE, Washington – Thirty Wisconsin Farmers Union members are among the nearly 500 farmers from across the country who have gathered in the Pacific Northwest this week for the National Farmers Union 117th Anniversary Convention. The March 3-5 gathering celebrates American farm families and sets the organization’s policy for the coming year.

“NFU is a grassroots, family farmer-led organization, and this structure is best embodied at our annual convention,” said National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson. “The convention is an opportunity to celebrate what makes Farmers Union truly unique – and that is family farmers of all types, sizes, and backgrounds banding together to make sure they all can enjoy the American dream.”

“Farmers Union has a rich history dating back to 1902, when its founding farmers saw the need to strengthen the voice of rural America,” said WFU President Darin Von Ruden, who dairy farms with his family near Westby. “We’re proud to take up that torch yet today and work together to ensure the future of the next generation of family farmers.”

Throughout the convention, attendees engage with industry experts, policymakers, thought leaders and fellow farmers on topics of importance to modern family farm agriculture. Top of mind for most attendees and speakers are the state of the farm economy, international trade disruptions, extreme consolidation in the agricultural sector, climate change and sustainability, and the success of the next generation of family farmers.

Serving as Wisconsin delegates during the policy discussion are Tina Hinchley, Cambridge; Caleb Langworthy, Wheeler; Mark Liebaert, South Range; and Kriss Marion, Blanchardville. Representing WFU on the NFU Policy Committee is Oren Jakobson of Custer.

Camryn Billen of Chippewa Falls has been a voice for youth across the country in her role on the NFU National Youth Advisory Council, which assisted with the convention. Also attending in a council advisory role is Jessica Jurcek of Jefferson.

During the convention, Evan Flom of Ashland and John Adams of Washburn are taking part in the Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership Program. On March 3, Jesse and Danielle Endvick of Holcombe were among 18 graduates of the year-long NFU Beginning Farmer Institute.

Mary Dougherty of Bayfield received the Silver Star Award for her membership recruitment efforts with the newly formed Ashland-Bayfield Farmers Union. Several WFU chapters were also recognized for excelling in membership growth, including Chippewa, St. Croix and Wood-Portage-Waupaca.

Others representing WFU at the convention are Rick Adamski, Seymour; Linda Ceylor, Catawba; Patty Edelburg, Scandinavia; Tommy Enright, Amherst; Chris Holman and Maria and Eleanora Davis, Custer; Deb Jakubek, Amherst Junction; Julie Keown-Bomar, Menomonie; Craig Myhre, Osseo; Dennis Rosen, Emerald; Michael and Nancy Slattery, Maribel; Cathy Statz, Chippewa Falls; WFU President Darin Von Ruden, Westby; Thea and Dale Von Ruden, Westby; and Bobbi Wilson, Madison.

“This year’s policy deliberation is especially important, as family farmers and ranchers face a difficult farm economy, an increasingly volatile climate, and extreme consolidation in agricultural marketplaces, among the normal unpredictability that they deal with on a day-to-day basis,” Johnson added. “The policies they adopt will carry significant weight in the nation’s capital, as they represent the collective will of America’s farm and ranch families.”

Photo cutline: *Representing Wisconsin Farmers Union at the National Farmers Union Convention in Bellevue, Washington March 3-5 are, left to right (front row) Deb Jakubek, Amherst Junction; Camryn Billen, Chippewa Falls; Nancy Slattery, Maribel; Maria Davis and daughter Eleanora, Custer; Thea, Dale and Darin Von Ruden, Westby; Tommy Enright, Amherst; Julie Bomar, Menomonie; Jesse and Danielle Endvick, Holcombe; Kriss Marion, Blanchardville; Cathy Statz, Chippewa Falls; and Linda Ceylor, Catawba; (back row) John Adams, Washburn; Jessica Jurcek, Jefferson; Michael Slattery, Maribel; Chris Holman, Custer; Mark Liebaert, South Range; Craig Myhre, Osseo; Dennis Rosen, Emerald; Oren Jakobson, Custer; Evan Flom, Ashland; Caleb Langworthy, Wheeler; Bobbi Wilson, Madison; Tina Hinchley, Cambridge; Rick Adamski, Seymour; and Nick Levendofsky, Elizabeth, Colo. Not pictured are Patty Edelburg of Scandinavia and Mary Dougherty of Bayfield.*