Photo taken at the Breitkreutz family farm, MFU members in Redwood County

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Youth Advisory Council
MFU Women’s Conference
Member in Focus: Grant & Dawn Breitkreutz
Minnesota Cooks
National Farmers Union is bringing back its popular photo contest!

NFU members can submit photos in any of the monthly categories for a chance to win a 16” x 20” canvas print of their winning photo! At the end of the year, each monthly winner will be eligible for the grand prize – a $500 prepaid Visa gift card. Information about the contest is available online at nfu.org/photocontest. Photos can be submitted on NFU's Facebook page.

Campaign Term: April 3 – Dec. 31, 2018

New categories will be announced on the first day of each month. Photos are eligible for entry until the last day of each month at 10:59 p.m. Central time.

Who May Enter: Members of National Farmers Union and its state division members.

How to Enter: Visit NFU on Facebook and click on the “NFU Photo Contest” tab. Then upload your photo, write a caption, provide your contact information and click “Submit.” By submitting a photo, you are granting NFU permission to use your photo.

After it has been added to the contest page, be sure to share the photo to get your friends and family to vote! Use the hashtag #NFUPhoto18 on social media.

Don’t have a Facebook account? Send your photo, caption and any applicable releases to NFU Communications Coordinator Hannah Packman at hpackman@nfudc.org.

Prizes: One monthly winner will be selected based on the total number of votes received that month for the submitted photo. Each monthly winner will receive a 16” x 20” canvas print of their winning photo and will then be eligible for the grand prize or a runner-up prize. The grand prize winners will be selected by a panel of Farmers Union judges. The grand prize winner will receive a $500 Visa prepaid gift card, the first runner up will receive a $250 gift card, and the second runner up will receive a $150 gift card.

Limits: Members may only upload one photo each month. Anyone can vote on the pictures, but each profile is limited to one vote every 24 hours.

Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!

Do you like to use Facebook, Twitter or Instagram to keep up with news you care about? You’ll find us there, too. Follow Minnesota Farmers Union on social media to find out about events, policy happenings, photos and more.

Facebook: Minnesota Farmers Union
Twitter: @mnfarmersunion
Instagram: mnfarmersunion

Tag us in posts we should see and we’ll like and share them.

National Farmers Union Photo Contest

April 3 – December 31
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

May is Beef Month

I would like to start by commemorating May as Beef Month. We have many excellent beef producers in our organization who work hard to produce a delicious product, while being good stewards of the land.

This month, I encourage you to enjoy Minnesota-grown beef. Look for more Beef Month features in this issue, including a Member in Focus profile on the Breitkreutz family (page 10) and a Minnesota Cooks recipe of Thousand Hills Cattle Company Grilled Hanger Steak with White Cheddar Gougeres and Heirloom Tomatoes in Chive and Basil Dressing. (page 6).

MFU opposes Farm Bill draft released by House

In mid-April, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Michael Conaway, R-Texas, released the Republican draft of the Farm Bill. The committee's bipartisan negotiations halted after a dispute over the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

We are dismayed by the partisan break and oppose the House's bill. We will not get the safety nets needed for family farmers and hungry people without Congress working together. Committee Ranking Member Collin Peterson, a Democrat representing Minnesota’s seventh district, said that the bill fails to make needed improvements to the farm safety net.

“Between record-low farm incomes, and the escalating threat of a trade war and other market disruptions, farmers have enough to worry about,” Peterson said. “Breaking up the long-standing, bipartisan, urban-rural Farm Bill alliance is a dangerous and unproductive step that will only sow division and jeopardize both this and future Farm Bills.”

Because of this partisan break, it seems less and less likely we will get a good Farm Bill in 2018. Fortunately, the Senate Agriculture Committee has said it will remain committed to working in a bipartisan fashion.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) Board of Directors passed a resolution regarding what needs to change in the House’s Farm Bill for it to adequately support family farmers. Here are a few improvements we want to see:

- Increase PLC reference prices to improve the farm safety net and offset potential trade retaliation
- Provide dairy farmers with enhanced price supports and a mechanism that manages our country’s milk inventories to meet market demand
- Ensure credit availability by increasing the Farm Service Agency (FSA)’s overall loan portfolio
- Maintain funding levels for consumer benefits under nutrition programs
- Provide an incentive-based working lands conservation program that promotes improved land stewardship
- Restore mandatory funding for energy programs that promote development of the bioeconomy in rural areas
- Reinstate mandatory funding for programs that improve access to local, regional and specialty markets

Trade troubles

Farmers Union is troubled by the ongoing trade tensions with China. The commodity markets reacted sharply to China’s announcement of a 25 percent tariff on soybeans in early April, adding to the hurt on soybean producers already burdened by the farm economic crisis.

While we agree with the Trump administration’s desire to re-work our trade agreements, its approach has been detrimental to our relationships with our trade partners. Global trade is a vital part of the agricultural economy. With the current farm economic crisis, farmers can’t afford a trade war.

The administration has suggested it will make moves to support farmers losing money in a trade war, possibly through the Commodity Credit Corporation. President Donald Trump has also suggested he may be open to re-joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which China is not part of. We would like to see more action to negotiate fair trade agreements that reduce the federal trade deficit, as well as benefiting family farmers.

It is disappointing that it has taken a trade controversy of this scale to receive direct acknowledgement from the administration that farmers are in crisis. Farm income has been

(continued on page 4)
dropping swiftly for the past five years. Yet the administration’s budget proposals have called for cuts in rural funding and made no new money available for the Farm Bill, despite having enough to enact sweeping tax cuts. Agriculture is in a major time of need right now, and it should be made a priority for federal funding, as it’s a significant part of the U.S. economy.

**Unacceptable RFS waivers**

Another big piece of news is that, according to news reports, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has handed out several “hardship waivers” under the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS) to major oil refining companies. One of the nation’s largest refiners, Andeavor, was exempted from the RFS in 2016. Since the corporation’s profits were about $1.5 billion last year, it’s ridiculous that they could claim a hardship for complying with the RFS.

Other major refining companies, such as Exxon Mobil and Chevron Corp., have requested these waivers. According to Reuters, the EPA has issued 25 waivers in recent months, an unusually high number. The waivers are designed for small refineries in economic distress. It’s hard to see how Andeavor, Exxon Mobil and Chevron could be considered small and to be in financial distress.

“Granting waivers to large refiners directly undercuts the effectiveness of the RFS law, which was designed to increase demand for American-grown biofuels,” National Farmers Union (NFU) President Roger Johnson said in response to this news. “Farmers Union requests EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt cease granting these waivers.”

President Trump recently announced that he supported selling E15 blends year-round. Currently it cannot be sold during the summer. Farmers Union supports this move and calls on the administration to move towards higher blends, such as E30. Unfortunately, unless the EPA ceases undercutting the RFS with waivers to large oil companies, moves such as selling E15 year-round mean less and less. A strong RFS not only provides another market option for corn growers, it reduces the cost of fuel to consumers and burns cleaner than petroleum. President Trump promised farmers he would uphold the RFS. He must ensure that Administrator Pruitt does as well.

**Dairy options**

Recently, the United States Department of Agriculture announced a new enrollment period for a revised Margin Protection Program (MPP) for dairy producers. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which provided funding for dairy and cotton programs, allowed USDA to make a few changes to MPP, including lower premium rates for the Tier 1 premium schedule. This month’s FSA update provides more details on the program, on page 8. The enrollment period runs through June 1.

In April, I spoke on a panel with Rep. Peterson and other farmers and dairy industry professionals, hosted by KASM Radio Farm Director Joe Gill. Rep. Peterson said he thought this dairy plan would benefit a good number of small dairy farmers.

We were disappointed that the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program was removed from the present Farm Bill. That provision, which was in the previous Farm Bill, may have helped keep some small and medium-sized dairy farmers in business who have since had to close. The next Farm Bill must include a stronger dairy safety net for family farmers.

**Rural Voices Discussions** *(more on pg. 7)*

We recently concluded our 2018 series of Rural Voices Discussions. I would like to thank each of you who attended and spoke up about the issues affecting you. Our staff took diligent notes and we are compiling them into a report, which will be distributed to legislators and media. Some of the biggest issues we talked about were Farm Bill programs, health care, the RFS, the dairy crisis and infrastructure needs such as rural broadband access and funding for improvements to roads and bridges. For the first time, we livestreamed all seven sessions on Facebook and got great outreach that way.
financing and terms and conditions not offered by other traditional lenders. Without this urgently-needed investment, the RFA is expected to exhaust its available capital for loans to Minnesota farmers before the 2018 Legislative session concludes in May.

The RFA is currently experiencing more demand from Minnesota farmers than in past years. RFA assistance to Minnesota farmers has increased 93 percent over last year. The state also expects to see more demand for the program in the coming weeks, as producers finalize their financial plans before planting and barn construction begins later. At the current rate, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) anticipates that funding will be exhausted before the end of the 2018 Legislative Session.

**House passes bill preventing MDA from adopting rules on nitrogen fertilizer**

H.F. 2887 authored by Rep. Jeff Backer was passed on April 16 by the House of Representatives. This bill would prevent MDA from adopting mandatory rules, or “water resource protection requirements,” for nitrogen fertilizer under authority of the Groundwater Protection Act unless the proposed requirements are specifically approved by law. MDA is currently proposing the first water resource protection requirements—also known as the nitrogen fertilizer rule—to be issued under authority of the 1989 Groundwater Protection Act. This bill would prohibit adoption of the nitrogen fertilizer rule or any other water resource protection requirements promulgated under the Groundwater Protection Act and pertaining to nitrogen fertilizer unless MDA’s proposed requirements are specifically approved in law.

MDA has released the text of the proposed rule online. It is available at [www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr), along with a factsheet about the rule, a map of vulnerable groundwater areas and instructions on how to submit comments. You may also contact me with any thoughts you have about the rule.

**Property taxes**

MFU continues to work with Rep. Steve Dratzkowski and Rep. Paul Marquart on H.F. 2495 which would build upon last year’s success of a 40 percent credit for school building referenda to move to where farmers would pay on their house, garage and 1 acre for building referenda beginning in 2022. The bill is currently awaiting a hearing in the Education Finance Committee. In the Senate, Sen. Mark Johnson is the chief author.

**Ditch mowing**

This past month the House moved H.F. 4008 authored by Rep. Chris Swedzinski through two committees and to the House floor. The bill extends a moratorium until April 30, 2019, on Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) authority to issue or require permits to mow and hay in trunk highway ditches. The moratorium does not apply to right-of-way that is adjacent to public lands. An equivalent moratorium enacted by the 2017 Legislature expired April 30. MFU supports this approach.

If passed, farmers would still be encouraged to get permits for mowing on state highways. This would help MNDOT be able to identify who is mowing where. In the Senate, Sen. Gary Dahms is the chief author. MFU has met with MNDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle and other administration officials, staff and stakeholders to discuss continuing to work on the issue with the Aug. 1 date after session.

**Section 179**

Gov. Dayton has included Section 179 conformity in his budget recommendations. The 2017 Federal Tax Law allows businesses – especially small businesses and farmers – to more quickly deduct their expenses on the equipment they need to run and grow their operations, saving them more money up front. For Minnesota small businesses and farmers to benefit from this Section 179 Expensing tax benefit, the State of Minnesota needs to conform this part of our state tax code to federal law. Gov. Dayton’s proposal would conform this part of Minnesota’s tax code to the new federal law, allowing full Section 179 expensing and providing Minnesota small businesses and farmers over $100 million in up-front tax cuts.

**Disbanding Ramsey SWCD**

This past month, H.F. 3819 by Rep. Kelly Fenton and S.F. 3596 (Rep. Paul Anderson) and S.F. 3411 by Sen. Carolyn Laine were heard and moved. These bills would discontinues the Ramsey Soil and Water Conservation District, effective July 1, and transfer all its duties and authorities to the Ramsey County Board. It would allow the Ramsey County Board to petition the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to reestablish the district or allow BWSR to reestablish the district under certain conditions and without a referendum.

Under current law, a soil and water conservation district may be discontinued by following a process, including a referendum and determination by BWSR that continued operation of the district is not administratively feasible. BWSR may only make this determination if a majority of the voters oppose continuing the district and a plan to continue the duties and authorities of the district is completed. MFU is concerned about this legislation and welcomes feedback from members.

**Biodiesel**

H.F. 3523 (Rep. Paul Anderson) and S.F. 3596 (Sen. Bill Weber) biodiesel legislation have advanced to the floor in both bodies. This bill would modify the state’s

(continued on page 9)
Thousand Hills Cattle Company Grilled Hanger Steak with White Cheddar Gougeres and Heirloom Tomatoes in Chive and Basil Dressing

From The Strip Club Meat & Fish

Yields: 4 servings

- 4 grassfed beef hanger steaks
- 1 qt heirloom cherry or blondkopchen tomatoes, rinsed
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
- 2 T chives, minced
- 1 t garlic, minced
- 1 lemon – juice and zest (zest minced)
- 1 T parmigiano reggiano, ground
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

For gougeres:
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 t salt
- 6 T butter, cut in pieces
- 3/4 cup + 2 T flour
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup cheddar or gruyere, grated
- 1/2 cup parmesan, grated
- black pepper
- 1 egg, beaten (optional egg wash for deeper color and shine)

Fire up the grill and season the hanger steaks with sea salt and fresh cracked black pepper.

To begin the gougeres, bring the water, salt and butter to a boil in a small saucepan over high heat until the butter is completely melted. Remove from heat, add the flour and beat vigorously with a wooden spoon. Return to the heat and continue beating until the dough forms a solid, smooth mass and pulls away from the sides of the saucepan. Continue cooking and stirring for 1 minute more to steam out some moisture. Remove from heat and empty the dough into a clean mixing bowl. Little by little, add the beaten eggs, beating vigorously in between each addition, until the dough forms a smooth, supple mass. Mix in the grated cheeses and plenty of freshly cracked black pepper.

Preheat oven to 400° F. Drop rounded tablespoons of dough onto a parchment or baking silicon lined sheet pan, spacing them 1 inch apart. Or, for a more uniform finished look, use a rubber spatula to scoop the dough into a pastry bag and pipe out approximately 25 (1-inch) balls. Brush lightly with beaten egg wash, if using, and place in the oven. Cook until golden and puffed, about 25 minutes. Remove from oven and cool briefly on a baking rack. Serve hot, at room temperature, or cool and freeze.

Slice tomatoes in half and place in stainless steel mixing bowl. Add basil, chives, garlic, lemon juice, lemon zest, parmigiano and extra virgin olive oil. Season to taste with sea salt and fresh cracked black pepper. Toss well and set aside at room temperature.

Rub steaks in olive oil and grill to desired temperature over indirect heat. Allow steaks to rest for at least five minutes before slicing them for service. If desired, finish each steak with a kiss of aged balsamic vinegar. Slice gougeres open and stuff with tomato salad. Serve to good company with copious chilled flagons of the beverage of your choice.
For the second year, Minnesota Farmers Union organized Rural Voices Discussions to hear what is on the minds of family farmers and rural residents.

In April, MFU conducted seven Rural Voices Discussions around the state, holding them in Mankato, Oronoco, Willmar, Cloquet, Detroit Lakes, Crookston and Ada. Nearly 350 people attended to listen and speak up.

A special report has been written to present to the governor, the media and the Legislature outlining the major topics and highlighting MFU’s positions on those issues. A copy is available to anyone who requests it, and it will also be available on our website once it is released.

Attendees raised many major topics for consideration. They included the high cost of health insurance; disparities in rural ambulance service; the need for high-speed broadband internet throughout the state; concerns about regulations; the need for funding for roads and bridges infrastructure; and concerns about the farm economy, including low commodity prices, high input costs and tight credit margins.

Additionally, we heard about problems for elk farmers with proposed regulations; the problem with road infrastructure; the need to pass a Farm Bill that includes a strong nutrition title; and the need to support beginning farmers and farmers who grow local foods. The crisis for Minnesota’s dairy farmers was also highlighted for the listening panel in each of the seven sessions. We served milk produced in Minnesota at every discussion to show our support for dairy farmers.

How the Rural Voices Discussions work are that MFU recruits a listening panel at each of the gatherings who listened to the participants who spoke, and then reflected on what they heard. Our listening panels consisted of Dayton administration officials and National Farmers Union elected leadership. Staff from federal elected officials also attended each session and reflected on what they would bring back to those officials.

Each listening panel was led by MFU President Gary Wertish. We were fortunate to have excellent participants on the listening panel. They included Acting Minnesota Commissioner of Human Services Chuck Johnson; Minnesota Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture Matt Wohlman; Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Transportation Nancy Daubenberger; Assistant Commissioner for Human Services for Health Care Nathan Moracco; National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson; and NFU Vice President Patty Edelburg.

I moderated each discussion, and additional staff were on hand at each session to record the testimony, work with the media and to livestream the events on Facebook. It was the first time we have livestreamed these events, and we got excellent outreach from that. Thank you to all who tuned in online, as well as everyone who attended.

For additional information about the Rural Voices Report, please contact me at bruce@mfu.org.

MFU President Gary Wertish, Minnesota Assistant Commissioner of Human Services for Health Care Nathan Moracco, and National Farmers Union Vice President Patty Edelburg serve on listening panel.

For the second year, Minnesota Farmers Union organized Rural Voices Discussions to hear what is on the minds of family farmers and rural residents.
FSA reopens enrollment for improved dairy safety net tool

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue is encouraging dairy producers to consider enrolling in the new and improved Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy), which will provide better protections for dairy producers from shifting milk and feed prices.

With changes authorized under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has set the enrollment period to run from April 9 to June 1, 2018.

“We recognize the financial hardships many of our nation’s dairy producers are experiencing right now. Folks are losing their contracts and they are getting anxious about getting their bills paid while they watch their milk check come in lower and lower each month. The Bipartisan Budget Act provided some much-needed incentives for dairy producers to make cost-effective decisions to strengthen their farms, mitigate risk and conserve their natural resources,” said Secretary Perdue.

“This includes our support of America’s dairy farms. We encourage dairy producers to review the provisions of the updated program, which Congress shaped with their feedback. Those changes are now in effect, and I'd ask any producers who are interested to contact their local USDA service centers.”

Changes include:

• Calculations of the margin period is monthly rather than bi-monthly.

• Covered production is increased to 5 million pounds on the Tier 1 premium schedule, and premium rates for Tier 1 are substantially lowered.

• An exemption from paying an administrative fee for limited resource, beginning, veteran and disadvantaged producers. Dairy operators enrolled in the previous 2018 enrollment period that qualify for this exemption under the new provisions may request a refund.

Dairy operations must make a new coverage election for 2018, even if you enrolled during the previous 2018 signup period. Coverage elections made for 2018 will be retroactive to Jan. 1. All dairy operations desiring coverage must sign up during the enrollment period and submit an appropriate form (CCC-782) and dairy operations may still “opt out” by not submitting a form. All outstanding balances for 2017 and prior years must be paid in full before 2018 coverage is approved.

Dairy producers can participate in FSA's MPP-Dairy or the Risk Management Agency’s Livestock Gross Margin Insurance Plan for Dairy Cattle (LGM-Dairy), but not both. During the 2018 enrollment period, only producers with an active LGM-Dairy policy who have targeted marketings insured in 2018 months will be allowed to enroll in MPP-Dairy by June 1; however, their coverage will start only after active target marketings conclude under LGM-Dairy.

USDA has a web tool to help producers determine the level of coverage under the MPP-Dairy that will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The online resource, which you can find at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on price projections. Producers can also review historical data or estimate future coverage based on data projections. The secure site can be accessed via computer, smartphone, tablet or any other platform.

USDA is mailing postcards advising dairy producers of the changes. For more information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy or contact your local USDA service center.
If you would like to share your contract with FLAG please email it to Lindsay Kuehn at lkuehn@flaginc.org. Additionally, we are still looking for member input on what you think this guide needs to meet your needs and questions you may have regarding distributed generation. Please feel free to send any questions or suggestions on what the guide should include to Lindsay or me.

**Renewable Energy Working Sessions**

Once again this year, we will be hosting Renewable Energy Working Sessions. Instead of one two-day session, we will be hosting five one-day sessions throughout the state to get broader participation and decrease the time commitment. Plans are still tentative, but we are looking at holding the meetings in mid-July from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The focus of the meetings will be primarily on wind and solar with industry experts presenting on different topics as well as tours of local wind and solar installations.

**Farmer’s Guide to Wind & Solar**

Did you install wind or solar on your farm? Do you lease land for wind turbines or solar panels? If so, Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG) wants to hear from you! Minnesota Farmers Union has partnered with FLAG to create *A Farmer’s Guide to Wind & Solar* for farmers, and FLAG is still in need of example contracts to use in the creation of the guide.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (continued from page 5)**

**biodiesel use mandate.** The biodiesel mandate law generally requires that each gallon of Number 2 diesel fuel sold in the state be 10 percent biodiesel (B10). On May 1 this requirement will double to 20 percent, or B20. However, until state agencies certify that certain conditions have been met and declare that the B10 (or soon, B20) mandate applies year-round. From October through March each year, the mandate reverts to 5 percent (B5) due to concerns about the cold-weather performance of B10/B20. The bill provides that from April 1 to April 14 each year, the minimum biodiesel content requirement is temporarily reduced to no less than ten percent. Under current law, the B10/B20 requirement begins April 1 each year. The bill also extends the biodiesel mandate exemption for Number 1 diesel indefinitely. MFU supports this legislation.

**Ag trucking bill**

Another bill that awaits both bodies on the floor for votes is H.F. 3548 (Rep. Miller) and S.F. 3405 (Sen. Andrew Lang) that broadens the harvest season to be year-round for an hours of service exemption in intrastate transportation of agricultural commodities and farm supplies within a 150-air mile radius. The bill clarifies that the exemption covers all hours of service regulations, including electronic logging device rules. There are multiple statutory exemptions from federal motor carrier regulation for agricultural transportation; this provision applies to all agricultural transportation including for-hire carriers.

**FLAG**

The House Ag Finance Committee has heard H.F. 3515 authored by Rep. Jeanne Poppe, that says $100,000 in fiscal year 2019 will be appropriated from the general fund to MDA for a grant to the Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG) to provide legal services to the Minnesota Farm Advocates program, legal aid organizations serving farmers, the Farm Business Management program, farmers participating in farmer-lender mediations and farmers who contact Farmers’ Legal Action Group directly, and to otherwise work to keep Minnesota farmers on the land. MFU supports this legislation that was a recommendation from our recent full board meeting to help assist farmers who are struggling. Sen. Nick Frentz is the Senate author.
Breitkreutz Family, Redwood County
For a few miles along a gravel road north of Redwood Falls, you’ll find a lot of people named Breitkreutz. And about 180 head of Red Angus cattle grazing on pasture and cover crops, born and raised on the farm. The ones primarily in charge of those cattle are Grant, Dawn and Karlie Breitkreutz of Stoney Creek Farm.
“We are the third generation here, and Karlie is the fourth,” Grant said. “We started more than 20 years ago. My dad is retired but still lives here on the farm.”
Grant and Dawn are the first generation of their family to join Minnesota Farmers Union. Ever since they took over, they’ve put a massive effort into Stoney Creek’s soil health – and it’s paid off. They won awards from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association and Beef Magazine in 2016 for environmental stewardship.

Regenerating soil and fun
The Breitkreutzes no-till all 400 acres of their tillable land and plant cover crops on every acre. Additionally, they run the cattle across everything they can, strip grazing the cover crops.
“Our goal is to regenerate our soils,” Grant said. “We’ve just about doubled our organic matter on all of the land we farm.”
The cattle, some of whom calve in spring and some in fall, wear their calves onto the cover crop species. That’s enough to feed the cattle into the winter months.
“Then the next year, it’s set up perfectly for corn with basically no fertility needed,” Grant said.
Cover crops are touted for their ability to hold soil and prevent erosion; reduce weeds and pests; and provide pollinator and wildlife habitat.
“At minimum, we’re at six inches per hour of infiltration on our farmed fields,” Grant said.
“So we can take in six inches of rainfall in an hour… In Minnesota we’re dealing with the buffer law and the nitrogen rule. All that stuff isn’t a concern for us because we know everything’s going in the soil where it needs to go.”
Plus, they have saved money on input costs with less need to buy fertilizer and tillage equipment. It’s to the point where Grant said they can make money with $3.25 corn. While the April blizzards did cause some panic, they have flexibility in what they can do with their plans.
“Now that we’ve figured out how to regenerate soil, farming is fun and exciting again,” he said.

Educating farmers
Stoney Creek’s success hasn’t gone unnoticed by agencies and fellow farmers. Grant is frequently called upon to speak about the family’s soil health practices and to host field days with groups such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Last fall, the family put on their own field day called “Back to the Future, Back to Soil Health.” About 90 people attended, despite it being harvest season.
Learning soil health tactics was no easy task for Grant and Dawn themselves.
“When we started doing this, Grant learned about it through reading,” Dawn said. “There was nobody around here who was doing it. We had to travel quite a bit to see the people who were focusing on this, mostly in North Dakota.”
The couple got to know Gabe Brown, a North Dakota farmer known for soil health expertise. Grant said they’d bring back pieces of soil from their trips and test out conservation practices they learned. They turned to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for financial assistance and were happy with how those programs worked for them.
In fact, it worked so well that they no longer need those programs. They work hard to spread their message to area farmers, and even their family.

Educating consumers
The next ambition for the Breitkreutz family is Karlie’s. She will be running a direct-market beef business off the farm, called Ten Creek Grange. Karlie’s been working on the farm her whole life and is devoted to staying.
“I was always told that if you don’t bring something new to the table, you’re not an asset,” she said.
Grant and Dawn direct-marketed their beef when they started out, but drifted away from it over time. Now they want to move towards selling all of their beef that way. They’re already raising most of their calves towards finishing them on their farm.
Now that they’re going back to that market, Karlie hopes she can educate consumers about agriculture through her work.
“My hope is that my trailer and direct-marketing will bring a lot of people out to our farm to see how it works and the difference in what they’re buying here vs. what they’re buying at a store,” Karlie said.
With the general population getting further removed from the farm, it’s a noble goal.

Why MFU?
Like many MFU members, the Breitkreutz family appreciates the opportunity to make their voices heard as farmers.
“We can’t all be in St. Paul or Washington, D.C., but if we’re a member of farm organizations, hopefully what we’re thinking on the farm gets translated to the people who are going to regulate us,” Grant said.
They are also members of the Minnesota State Cattlemen’s Association, in addition to MFU. Grant is the Vice President of that group.
Policy-wise, the Breitkreutzes want to increase education about soil health to farmers, without threats of penalties.
“It would be nice to see more incentives than regulations and negatives,” Dawn said. They do appreciate any connection they can get with legislators – a connection that MFU provides.
“It’s cool to meet with them and see their genuine interest in what’s going on out here,” Dawn said. “If we don’t say anything, they don’t know there’s a problem.”

Dawn, Karlie and Grant Breitkreutz
The annual Youth Advisory Council (YAC) spring meeting was recently held on April 7-8 in Alexandria. The Youth Advisory Council consists of eight campers, elected by their peers at MFU Senior High camp to help plan camp, and represent MFU youth at events throughout the year. The YAC participates in the state convention. You may have seen them helping during the convention by escorting people to their tables during the banquet.

The theme nights for camp were also decided, and will be: Retro Night, Vowel Night, County vs. Country Club and Beach Night. Check www.mfu.org for more details about the 2018 camp theme nights.

The weekend wasn’t only work – the YAC also got a chance to have fun by going out to eat at Minnesota Cooks restaurant “La Ferme” and capping the night off with bowling.

The current Youth Advisory Council members represent communities from all over Minnesota. The 2018 YAC members are: Adam Revoir of Maplewood; Evan Schumacher of Waconia; Eric Trogen of Apple Valley; Kiefer Servin of Waconia; Kirsten VanDerPol of Kerkhoven; Jade Person of Oklee; Haley Rohwer of Arlington; and Issie Brockhouse of Middle River.

Registration for 2018 MFU Leadership Camps

There’s still time to sign up for our 2018 MFU Leadership Camps!
Go to www.mfu.org/camp to register.

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<th>Camp</th>
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<td>Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground near Erskine, MN</td>
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<td>Northern Junior Camp</td>
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<td>Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground near Erskine, MN</td>
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<td>Southern Elementary Camp</td>
<td>8 - 11</td>
<td>July 17 - 21</td>
<td>Sibley State Park near New London, MN</td>
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UPCOMING EVENTS

May 21 • Crow Wing County Farmers Union meeting
12 noon at the Saw Mill Inn, 601 Washington St., Brainerd.
FFI: Crow Wing County President Steven Koering, (218) 251-8650

June 23 • Breakfast on the Farm
Laveau’s Farm, 508 Cemetery Road, Wrenshall, MN • 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
For information, contact: Carlton County Farmers Union President Mark Thell, (218) 851-7718; Terri Thell (218)384-3878 or 4quartersholding@gmail.com

June 30 • MFU Women’s Conference
New Ulm Country Club, 1 Golf Dr., New Ulm, MN • 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
FFI: Contact MFU Renewable Energy Director Michelle Medina at: michelle@mfu.org or Public Relations Director Brita Moore at brita@mfu.org

Leadership Camps
June 18-22 • Northern Elementary Camp (ages 8-11), Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground near Erskine
June 25-29 • Northern Junior Camp (ages 11-14), Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground
FFI: Contact MFU Education Director Glen Schmidt at glocn@mfu.org

MFU Offers FREE Agritourism Sign to Members

WARNING
Inherent Risks of Agritourism

Under Minnesota law, a provider of agritourism activities is not liable for injury, damage, or death of a participant resulting from an inherent risk of agritourism. Inherent risks include natural hazards and conditions of land, water and vegetation; behavior of wild, domestic, and farm animals; ordinary dangers of farm, ranch, processing, and other machinery, equipment and infrastructure; and other dangers or conditions inherent to an agritourism activity. Participants assume the inherent risks of agritourism activities.

MINN. STAT. 60A.40 (2016)

Thinking of inviting the public onto your farm this summer for a farm tour, breakfast, U-pick, etc.? MFU worked to pass the state agritourism bill in 2015. To be protected, the provider of the agritourism activity must post signs warning attendees of the inherent risks of visiting a farm. These signs should be posted at the entrance to the property and be clearly visible to all visitors.

Upon request, Minnesota Farmers Union will provide interested members one FREE sign that meets the specific guidelines in accordance to the Limited Liability Law. With the sign, you’ll also receive a two-page guide to the law that was put together by Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG). Additional signs for members can be purchased for $7. Signs for non-members cost $10.

To get your sign, contact MFU Operations Director Laura Sherar at laura@mfu.org or 651-639-1223.
Minnesota Farmers Union
Women’s Conference June 30

Women have made invaluable contributions towards the success of Minnesota agriculture. Yet, historically they haven’t been recognized for it. That’s why Farmers Union continues to hold Women’s Conferences, both at the national and state levels. We want to bring together our women members to inspire and connect them.

Come to the New Ulm Country Club on June 30 for a day of conversation, education and networking. We have three talented speakers:

Meg Moynihan, Minnesota Department of Agriculture State Programs Administrator Principal. Meg will speak on overcoming crises, as she did on her Le Sueur County dairy farm two years ago.

Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Farmers Union Special Projects Coordinator and previous candidate for Congress. Sarah will speak about how women can find more leadership opportunities within Farmers Union and the agriculture community.

Barbara Heen, Attorney at Law and MFU member. Barb will speak about estate planning basics… and make it fun!

Attendees will have plenty of time to get to know one another in between these insightful talks, with a hearty local foods lunch and snacks available. You’ll enjoy the stunning summer scenery of the club as well.

After the main sessions, you’ll want to stick around at the club for social time if you can.

You’ll conclude your day feeling empowered and ready to make a difference for women in Farmers Union and all of agriculture.

The cost for the Women’s Conference is $20; however, if you bring a friend, they can register for free. Register at mfuwomensconference.eventbrite.com. There is also a Facebook event for you to save it to your calendars.

If you have any questions, please contact me at brita@mfu.org or (651) 288-4068; or MFU Renewable Energy Director Michelle Medina at michelle@mfu.org or (651) 288-4096.

What: MFU Women’s Conference
Where: New Ulm Country Club, 1 Golf Drive, New Ulm, MN 56073
When: Saturday, June 30 from 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m., followed by optional social time
Who: All are welcome!

Order MFU County Fair Kits!

Want to share the message of Minnesota Farmers Union at your county fair this year? We can help you!

Each year, MFU compiles county fair kits consisting of MFU logo items you can easily distribute at the fair, at no cost to you. You can either order a full kit, or individual items.

Some examples of items included in the kits:

- Chip clips
- Jar openers
- Carpenter pencils
- Pens
- MFU Brochures
- Copies of Minnesota Agriculture

County fairs bring together rural Minnesotans each year. Make it an opportunity to help people in your county learn more about MFU!

For more about county fair kits, contact MFU Renewable Energy Director Michelle Medina at michelle@mfu.org. The order form will be available on the MFU website.

Please allow 2 weeks to receive your items.

Minnesota Farmers Union
Standing for Agriculture, Fighting for Farmers
Farm & Rural Helpline

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has extended its “Crisis Connection” telephone hotline service for another year. The program has renamed the service Farm & Rural Helpline, with the toll-free number (833) 600-2670. You are encouraged to call this line if you need any kind of assistance. It’s available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you or any farmers you know would like to speak with Ted Matthews, the state rural mental health specialist based out of MnSCU, his number is (320) 266-2390. He meets with farmers one-on-one and free of charge. No insurance card, paperwork or referral is necessary. You are encouraged to call this line if you need any kind of assistance. It’s available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Farm Advocates

Farm Advocates provide one-on-one assistance for Minnesota farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems. They understand the needs of agricultural families and communities. They are trained and experienced in agricultural lending practices, mediation, lender negotiation, farm programs, crisis counseling, disaster programs and recognize the need for legal and/or social services. Plus, most of the Farm Advocates are MFU members.

The Farm Advocate Program has been supported by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture since 1984. There is no charge or fee for Farm Advocate assistance.

Farm Advocates:

- Jan Boll, Trail (218) 268-4472
- Bruce Lubitz, Perham (218) 346-4866
- Connie Dykes, Lake City (651) 345-5149
- David Ellason, Isle (320) 676-3559
- David Hesse, Comfrey (507) 877-3012
- Dean Hetland, Eagle Bend (218) 639-9302
- Dan Hunz, Monticello (320) 743-5660
- Ruth Ann Karty, Clarkfield (320) 669-7135
- George Bosselman, Fosston (218) 200-9432
- Steve Zenk, Danube (320) 894-2517

www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates

Please tell us a little bit about your family life. My wife, Bridget, who is a Nurse Practitioner, is the brains of the family unit and is one of Mayo Clinic’s finest for going on 21 years. We enjoy traveling together. I also have two step-daughters: Addie (13) is a vocalist at Pure Rock Studios, a school that lets kids perform live as a band and at venues as part of the learning process. She’s also very into dance. Brie (15) is a Century High School cheerleader and honor student. Both girls are A+ students and take after their Mom.

What is your number one concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance? I treat my clients like they are part of my family. I pride myself in finding coverage for where there are holes in exposure. I work very hard to strike that balance where coverage, individual risk tolerance and budget all intersect for my clients.

Chris has been a consistently successful agent in Rochester since 2006 and recently participated in the 2018 IMT Gem Trip to Miami Beach, Florida in late February and early March due to his production with the company. Chris has also been part of regional and international trips as part of Agency-wide production contests. Chris’s clients appreciate his insurance knowledge, personality, and dedication of service. Follow the Chris Sanders Agency on Facebook at @MNFIU.

Visit our website at www.mnfuia.com and click on “Find an Agent” to find a local FUIA agent in your area.

FUIA Agent Highlight: Christopher Sanders

(507) 282-4411
chris@mnfuia.com
1903 S Broadway, Rochester 55904

Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and MFU important to you? It’s so important to support local family agriculture. We want to educate people on the value of from where and how our high-quality food products originate. The reason I am a Farmers Union Insurance Agent is simple: We are a family, and support each other as any family should. I believe in our purpose, which is to be there for our insureds and colleagues when life gets tough.

What community organizations are you passionate about? In addition to being involved with MFU, I have been an active board member of the Olmsted County Breakfast on the Farm since 2012.
Farmers Union Insurance Agency announces Premier Partnership with SECURA

Farmers Union Insurance Agency has announced its 2018 Premier Partnership with SECURA Insurance, whose Financial Strength Rating of A (Excellent) was reaffirmed with A.M. Best with a stable financial outlook for 2018.

SECURA is also a Ward Group’s Top 50 Performer. SECURA Insurance, a property & casualty insurer based in Appleton, Wisc., generated $615 million in premium in 2017 and has more than 1,000 agency locations throughout the country. Only 54 of these agencies are designated Premier Partners. In Minnesota, FUIA is one of only five.

FUIA was also named 2018 Premier Partner with EMC (Employers Mutual Casualty) Insurance Companies of Iowa, which ranks in the top 50 insurance organizations in the country based on net written premium, and who celebrated 100 years in business in 2011. EMC Insurance Group Inc. (EMCI) is listed on the 2017 50 Most Trustworthy Financial Companies list, announced by Forbes. In addition, EMC Insurance Companies and its subsidiaries were reaffirmed with an A.M. Best financial strength rating of A (Excellent) with a stable financial outlook.

The IMT Group of Iowa has designated FUIA a 2018 Gem Agency, one of 84 of the top performing insurance agencies (out of 980 independent agencies) within their six-state Midwestern territory. The Gem distinction is awarded to agencies that demonstrate outstanding performance in the areas of rank, growth, loss ratio and profitability for both personal and commercial insurance. IMT celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2009 and has been reaffirmed with A.M. Best with an A (Excellent) rating and stable financial outlook.

Farmers Union Insurance Agency is proud to represent these fine companies, continuing the tradition of superior performance and unwavering commitment to our insureds. For more information about the companies we represent and to find our agency locations, please visit www.mnfuia.com.

USDA enrollment period for safety net coverage in 2018

Farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period will end on Aug. 1, 2018. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to enroll now to reduce longer wait times later this summer.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers must enroll by signing a contract each program year. The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.
Sink your teeth into this: We’ve been Minnesota’s trusted insurance advisor for more than 70 years, providing better options and more comprehensive coverage for your farm, your machinery, your livestock... and so much more!

We’re proud that fully half of our business originates with the fine folks of Minnesota’s Agricultural community. We truly are local because our Agents are your neighbors. We advocate for you, not for the insurance companies.

Celebrating the hardworking men, women and families of Minnesota during May Beef Month and every day.

(800) 229-1064 toll-free or (651) 639-1064 locally
www.mnfuia.com