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76th Annual MFU Convention
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Honoring all who served.
VETERAN’S DAY
Nov. 11

Photo taken at the farm of Bill Binger, Marine Corps veteran and MFU member in Isanti County
FSMA Training

By Bruce Miller, Director of Membership and Outreach

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is set to have broad impacts on the farming community. Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) is partnering with National Farmers Union (NFU) to help ensure produce farmers, growers and processors have the information and training they need to comply with the new law.

NFU received a grant from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to work on resources and training opportunities to enhance FSMA compliance. In particular, NFU and its national partners – National Young Farmers Coalition, Washington and Maryland State Departments of Agriculture, Cornell University, New England Farmers Union, Deep South Food Alliance and others – will deliver outreach and training to diversified, sustainable, organic and identity-preserved farmers and processors. NFU is also working with state Farmers Union chapters, including MFU.

MFU is taking a lead in working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, University of Minnesota Extension, the Minnesota Farmers Market Association, the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers, the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service and the Sustainable Farming Association. Together, these groups will provide specialized training and resources to meet the needs of local food farmers and processors.

Currently, MFU is working with our partners on two different kinds of FSMA Training programs.

The first is in conjunction with the national Produce Safety Alliance (PSA). This is a Train-the-Trainer FSMA course on Nov. 28-29 at the MFU State Office (see details below). This is the FSMA course for those who wish to be trainers.

The two-day course will provide detailed information about:
- Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)
- Co-management of natural resources and food safety
- FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements
- Review of the seven-module PSA Grower Training curriculum

The course will also cover:
- Principles of adult education
- How to incorporate the PSA curriculum into other produce safety trainings
- Developing working partnerships
- Expectations for trainers
- How to register a PSA Grower Training Course with the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)

Upon successful completion of the full train-the-trainer course, attendees will become PSA Trainers. Completing this training allows you to deliver curriculum modules as a trainer in PSA Grower Trainings, under the direction of a PSA Lead Trainer. Anyone presenting at a PSA Grower Training must be, at minimum, a PSA Trainer, and every Grower Training must have a Lead Trainer present.

The second kind of training, which will be more relevant for others who grow and sell produce locally, will be the Farmer and Grower Trainings which will be offered next January and March 2018 in Minnesota. Dates will be announced soon.

For more information, please contact me at bruce@mfu.org.

Produce Safety Alliance Train-the-Trainer Course

Nov. 28-29, 2017

Location: Minnesota Farmers Union – 305 Roselawn Ave. E., St. Paul, MN
Trainers: Don Stoeckel and Gretchen Wall, Produce Safety Alliance (PSA)
Cost: Subsidized to $75 fee per participant
Register online at www.psp.tix.com

For more information about PSA training courses, visit the PSA website at: producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/training

For more information about the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, visit the FDA website at: www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm334114
President Gary Wertish and several members of the National Farmers Union Full Board traveled to Hawai‘i recently for the presentation of a charter to Hawai‘i Farmers Union United.

President Gary Wertish and several members of the National Farmers Union Full Board traveled to Hawai‘i recently for the presentation of a charter to Hawai‘i Farmers Union United.

and the truth that all kinds of farmers and rural residents share many of the same issues. For instance, if you’re out in a rural area with no steady internet access, it doesn’t matter if you milk cows or grow tomatoes in a high tunnel. Rural America needs to come together to work on infrastructure needs like this. That’s why MFU policy is so important.

Along with the policy debate, election of President and Vice President and election of delegates to the NFU convention, we’ll hear reports from MFU staff and a few other speakers. One is NFU Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Communications Rob Larew, who will provide an update on Farm Bill proceedings, along with NFU Biofuels Advisor Anne Steckel on federal-level efforts to increase biofuel standards. We’ll also hear from Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture Dave Frederickson on developments at the Department of Agriculture. Several Minnesota 2018 gubernatorial candidates will speak at a noon luncheon on Nov. 18.

Our keynote speaker for the convention is Paul Douglas, a meteorologist with a 40-year television career who is now the co-founder of two meteorology businesses and co-author of Caring For Creation: The Evangelical’s Guide to Climate Change and a Healthy Environment. He’ll give a speech titled “A Rapidly Changing Climate: Threat – and Opportunity.” It is very timely to have Paul as our keynote speaker, with the recent devastation of hurricanes in the United States and abroad, drought in western states and wildfires in California. After the talk, there will be time for brief discussion, so bring your questions about climate change to the Nov. 18 banquet.

Speaking of meals, once again all food served at the convention will be Minnesota grown. We put great effort into finding local farmers to supply the delicious food we eat while we are gathered.

**Fundraising**

Another major part of the convention is our fundraiser auction. The auction benefits our Political Action Committee (PAC) and the MFU Foundation. We encourage members to donate items to the auction, especially antique Farmers Union items and farm machinery collectibles. Gift baskets are welcome as well. There will be a silent auction during the day on Nov. 18, then the live auction will begin at 8:30 p.m. that evening.

You can also donate to the PAC at a reception at 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 18. A $25 donation is suggested if you attend. Local political candidates have been invited to speak at the reception; however, gubernatorial candidates will speak only at the luncheon earlier that day.

There’s still time to register for the convention. Delegates should have received invitations in the mail by now. All members may register online as well. Information is found on pages 8-10 of this issue.

**Renewable Energy Director Medina honored**

I would like to acknowledge our Renewable Energy Director, Michelle Medina, who was recently named to the 40 Under 40 list at Midwest Energy News for making a difference in clean energy development. Michelle has been working with MFU since 2015 and has brought a new focus to our efforts to increase renewable energy in Minnesota. She has organized two Renewable Energy Working Sessions and advises members on renewable energy programs. She is a Forest Lake native and a graduate of the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Sciences. Look for a Renewable Energy Survey from her in your convention binder.

Read more about Michelle at https://midwestenergynews.com/2017under40/. Contact her about renewable energy at michelle@mfu.org. Congratulations Michelle!
MFU and FUIA support new health care cooperative

A longtime legacy of Minnesota Farmers Union is our support for cooperatives. Our heritage lies in investing in them and helping them get started.

When the Minnesota Legislature debated legislation about health care this past session, MFU was on the forefront in getting a bill passed that included language to allow agricultural cooperative health plans for farmers and agribusinesses. 40 Square Cooperative Solutions was made possible by this accomplishment.

The new health plan cooperative is working to bring sustainable health plan options to Minnesota's farm families and their employees. MFU is taking the lead on getting this option into the hands of farmers. Since it's a co-op, farmers should know they can trust 40 Square's mission.

It's another example of farmers joining together in a co-op to address a need.

Farmers Union Insurance Agency is making 40 Square even easier to be a part of. As of now, 18 of our agents have signed on to write policies with 40 Square. We've included a list of those agents to the right, and their phone numbers are on the back of this issue. You must be an active farmer to be eligible for a 40 Square policy. Our agents are excited about this development, and so are many of the farmers they've talked to about it. The application is easy – you can complete it within a day.

This is one of countless ways MFU and FUIA work together to improve the lives of Minnesota's family farmers. We are hopeful this will be a viable option today and well into the future. To learn more about 40 Square, come to their presentation at the 76th Annual MFU Convention.

Sincerely,

Gary Wertish
President
Minnesota Farmers Union

Rodney Allebach
President & General Manager
Farmers Union Insurance Agency
There has been a large number of resolutions submitted by county organizations for the state policy to be considered at the convention. These resolutions will be considered and refined by the policy committee, consisting of MFU members and staff, prior to the convention where the final resolutions will be brought for the delegates to consider.

Here are a handful of the resolutions that will be discussed at the convention:

- Support of limiting crop insurance premium subsidies.
- Support increasing the Conservation Reserve Program cap to between 32 million and 45 million acres with increased flexibility for haying and grazing.
- Support extended days of deer hunting for the gun seasons.
- Support a tax break for farmers who sell land for wind or solar.
- Support the increase of ethanol in the fuel supply to E-30.
- Support strong funding for the Forever Green Initiative.
- Support for expanding the Sandhill Crane hunting season to statewide.
- Support to provide safe and clean habitats for pollinators.

If you have an opinion on one of these issues, come to the convention and join the debate! If you are unable to attend, be sure to speak with your county delegates prior to the convention so they can share your input. Minnesota Farmers Union is a grassroots organization that relies on involvement and activity from its members. Your input matters.

## Fall Greens Salad with Curry Roasted Squash, Blue Cheese, Walnuts, and Apples with an Apple Cider Vinaigrette – submitted by Chef Craig Sharp

Yield: 4 large salads

1 oz Smude’s sunflower oil
1 t curry powder
1 Red Kuri squash, diced into 1/2-inch cubes (Buttercup is another delicious variety, which may be easier to find)
1 lb hardy fall greens, cut or torn into 1-inch squares (see Chef Craig’s note)
1 Honeycrisp apple, sliced
4 oz Northern Lights blue cheese, crumbled
1/2 c toasted walnuts
1/4 c apple cider vinaigrette (recipe follows)
salt, to taste

In a warm to hot skillet heat sunflower oil and curry powder together. When curry powder becomes aromatic and starts to toast – but before it begins to smoke – add diced squash and salt (and a little butter, if you’re feeling it). Sauté squash until surfaces start to turn a sexy caramelly color, then transfer to a lined baking sheet and cook at 350°F for roughly 20 minutes. Squash should come out toasty on the outside and soft with a little bite. Depending on your mood, you can serve the squash warm or cold; it’s delicious either way.

To build the salad, cut or rip greens into roughly 1-inch square pieces, leaving arugula and mustard greens whole. Toss with apple slices and apple cider vinaigrette. Add squash. Top with Northern Lights blue cheese and toasted walnuts.

### For apple cider vinaigrette:

1/4 c avocado oil
2 T apple cider vinegar
1 T honey
1 T grainy mustard
salt and pepper, to taste

Combine ingredients and shake well.

**Chef Craig’s note:** I really love hearty greens in the fall, especially when I can get them from Red at Fox and Fawn Farm; there is something special about the intensity he achieves. I especially like spinach, arugula, mustard greens and kale for this salad. I tend to lean heavier on arugula and mustard greens, but feel free to blend them to your preference.

You will find the mildly sweet and tangy creaminess of Northern Lights Blue Cheese plays against the spice notes of the curry and arugula. The addition of the toasted walnuts and apples provides a great crunch and a sweetness to this very satisfying salad, but the star is definitely the squash! You can use any variety you like that lends well to baking. There are many good squash growers in the state and the ones you grow yourself always taste great, but if you are lucky enough to have Jennifer Thull from the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum pick one of hers out for you, you are having a good day. She recommended three varieties for this salad and I choose the Red Kuri.
Bill Binger III, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

Today, as he has for most of his life, MFU member Bill Binger III is farming near Cambridge, Isanti County.

He’s also experienced -65 degree temperatures in Alaska, a month in Death Valley, submarine training in Hawai’i, guerilla warfare training in the Philippines and a staredown in Korea. All of this was part of his time serving with the United States Marine Corps during the era of the Vietnam War. He was deployed to Vietnam for 33 months in the early part of the war and later to the 38th parallel in Korea with the Minnesota National Guard.

“I was (in Vietnam) in 1961-63,” Binger said. “Our main role was reconnaissance, getting prisoners of war, downed pilots. We brought the last Americans out of Laos.”

The son of family farmers, Binger joined the Marines soon after graduating from high school. “I checked the drafting, and my number was pretty close, so I went in to get it over with so I could come back and farm,” he said.

His plan worked out. After his deployment, he returned to the family farm and worked with his dad, while also doing work in construction. His leaving had prompted the family to make some tough changes on the farm.

“The first letter I got from my mother in boot camp was that Dad got a milking machine the day I was gone,” Binger said with a laugh. “I didn’t even know how to use a milk machine.”

Binger said he would milk 10 cows morning and night, and his football coach would help them out unloading corn and doing chores so Binger could make it to football games. The family also had a year-round hog farrowing operation and about 400 chickens.

Now Binger farms on 40 acres a few miles from where he grew up, growing corn, soybeans and hay and raising sheep and a few steers and heifers. His son Bill IV farms with him.

Farming connections

Another part of Binger’s cold weather training was on Mt. Fuji in Japan. On his days off, he got to check out their agricultural operations.

“In Japan, years ago they bought some of our very best bulls, and those dairy herds were phenomenal,” he said. “In Hawai’i, Ron (Hauglie, the late former MFU Field Services Director) happened to be stationed there… We spent [two days just looking at girls. That was all Holstein cows].”

Though he said he’s lost track of those he served with, Binger recalled a couple other farmers he met.

“There was a guy from Kentucky who had registered Jerseys and raised tobacco,” he said. “And there was another one from Willmar who… had to plow with two tractors, 24 hours a day.”

Swift changes

When asked about what he would say to veterans today who want to begin farming, Binger said it would be “pretty tough going because everything costs so much.”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re in livestock or cash crops,” he said. “It’s all tough. It’s too bad we don’t have as many family farms. In 1990, on our census, Isanti County had 126 dairy farms. Now we’re down to four.”

That’s not to say that those who want to farm should give up on the goal. The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers several resources for veterans looking to farm, including the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and the Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program. And the GI Bill allows for registered apprenticeships for veterans through the U.S. Department of Labor.

For more information, go to www.nal.usda.gov/veteran-programs-and-resources.

Committed to veterans and farmers

Binger has been part of MFU as long as he can remember. He lives near former MFU Vice Pres. Dennis Sjodin, who encouraged him to get involved. He was also close with Hauglie, having shown cattle against him when they were young and served in the military at the same time.

Supporting veterans is another big part of his life. Binger flies an American flag and a POW-MIA flag in front of his house. He’s been the commander of the Cambridge American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter, all-state commander twice, POW-MIA chairman of the 7th District VFW, and is part of a disabled veterans group. For 50 years, he has been part of the color guard for veteran funerals.

We thank Bill Binger and all veterans for their service and sacrifice.

Send us your photos!

Do you have photos you’d like to share with us? Send them our way! We’ll display our favorites at the Minnesota Farmers Union 76th Annual Convention, Nov. 17-19.

Send photos to MFU Public Relations Director Brita Moore at brita@mfu.org.

Some examples of what to send:
- Breakfasts on the farm
- County picnics, fairs and other events
- Highlights from your farm
- Children’s FFA/4-H events

Guidelines for sending photos:
- Send a high-resolution digital photo file (1.5MB or larger, not to exceed 10MB)
- Most smartphones have cameras that take high-enough quality photos
- Include your name, address and a brief caption of the photo

- All submitted photos become property of MFU. The information received with your email will serve as permission that MFU can use your photo(s) in printed materials and/or for advertising purposes. No images will be returned.
Considering the current state of crop prices and input costs showing little sign of decline, many USDA Service Centers are getting more questions about commodity loans than ever. Marketing Assistance Loans provide producers interim financing at harvest time to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. These loans allow producers to pay off bills for the past and upcoming crop year, as well as make annual rental payments. The flexibility of Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) provides producers the opportunity to strategically market commodities throughout the year. Allowing farmers to store production at harvest also facilitates more orderly marketing of commodities.

A wide variety of crops are potentially eligible for Marketing Assistance Loans, including wheat, corn, grain sorghum, barley, oats, soybeans, graded and non-graded wool, mohair, unshorn pelts, honey and peanuts.

The stored commodity serves as security for the loan itself. Commodity loan rates tend to be significantly lower than the market price for a commodity except in times of Loan Deficiency Payments. Marketing assistance loans for covered commodities are non-recourse because the commodity is pledged as loan collateral and producers have the option of delivering the pledged collateral to the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) in satisfaction of the repayment of the outstanding loan at maturity. A settlement value is determined and applied to the outstanding loan principal and interest.

For a commodity to be eligible for a Marketing Assistance Loan or a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP), the producer must have beneficial interest in the commodity in addition to other eligibility requirements.

That means a farmer must have current control of the commodity and the ability to make all decisions regarding the crop. The producer must have current title to the commodity put up for loan. To be eligible, the commodity must have been produced and harvested and be marketable for food, feed or other use as determined by CCC.

It also must meet minimum grade and quality standards for nonrecourse MALs.

Loan rates are based on each commodities national loan rate. The local rates vary by county or region and are based on the average prices and production of the county where the commodity is stored. The interest rate charged on commodity loans is set at one percentage point above CCC’s cost of borrowing from the U.S. Treasury at the time the loan is made.

For the current loan rates for 2017 crops, producers can find additional information on the FSA website or contact their local office.

If you think that a commodity loan may be advantageous for your farming operation, please contact your local Farm Service Agency for more information.

To find the contact information for the closest FSA office, you can visit https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).
76th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 76th Annual MFU Convention on Friday, Nov. 17 through Sunday, Nov. 19 at the Ramada Plaza Minneapolis, at 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, in Minneapolis.

Our annual convention offers an opportunity for members to network with other members and participate in lively discussions. Highlights include the annual policy debate, current issues breakouts, gubernatorial candidate lunch and fundraiser live auction.

For the full convention agenda, see page 10.

There is no cost to attend daily programming, but meals are ticketed events.

Minnesota Grown Meals: MFU works with members and local growers to showcase local foods in all of our convention meals.

$15 per Saturday or Sunday lunch ticket
$30 per banquet ticket
$50 for full meal package
(Saturday lunch, Saturday banquet and Sunday lunch)

Open to delegates, members and the public. RSVP required.

To Register: call (651) 639-1223, info@mfu.org, or Eventbrite at tiny.cc/mfu76.

Accommodations at the Ramada Plaza

To reserve a hotel room, contact the Ramada Plaza directly at (612) 331-1900, ext. 3 (the front desk).

A credit card is required to book your reservation.

The Ramada Plaza is located at 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413.

Committees

The credentials committee will meet Fri., Nov. 17 at 6 p.m.

The policy committee will meet on Saturday, Nov. 4 and Sunday, Nov. 5 to review county resolutions. After those meetings, a proposed policy document will be mailed to all state delegates.

On Monday, Nov. 13, the committee will meet by teleconference at 7 p.m. for a final review of additional county resolutions received during the last two weeks before convention. Delegates may also present concerns about the policy document at that time by calling in to the teleconference.

To prevent delays in preparing the final policy document for review by convention delegates, no resolutions will be accepted for committee review after the Nov. 13 meeting.

Late resolutions brought to the convention Nov. 18 and 19 will have to be addressed as amendments on the convention floor. Delegates submitting these resolutions or other documents of similar length as amendments on the convention floor will be responsible for providing 250 copies of the proposed amendment for distribution to all delegates.

Members who wish to join the conference call or delegates who have questions about this procedure should contact Thom Petersen at (651) 288-4067 or thom@mfu.org.

Volunteers Needed!

If you are interested in volunteering on a committee at the convention, call the MFU main office at (651) 639-1223 or email info@mfu.org.

ELECTION NOTICE

The State Secretary shall, on a date not less than 10 days prior to the first day of the convention, publish in the official publication of Minnesota Farmers Union a list of persons nominated by petition for the particular offices.

Nominated for President: Gary Wertish
Nominated for Vice President: Bryan Klabunde
Anne Schwagerl State Secretary
Notice is hereby given that the 76th annual convention of the Minnesota Farmers Union will begin on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2017 and continue through Sunday, Nov. 19, or until all business has been concluded. Business to be conducted at the state convention will include election of delegates to the national convention, election of MFU President and Vice President and discussion and passage of resolutions into MFU policy.

The basis of representation at the Minnesota Farmers Union state convention, as provided by the constitution and bylaws, shall be one delegate from each local union who will represent as many as ten regular dues-paying members and one additional delegate who will represent each additional ten dues-paying members or a major fraction thereof. Credentials blanks should be returned prior to the convention to: Minnesota Farmers Union, 305 Roselawn Ave. E, Ste. 200, St. Paul, MN 55117. If county or local units are unable to submit credentials in advance, they must be brought to the convention by the delegate and submitted at the time of registration.

Members of unchartered, at-large membership within a county are eligible to become delegates to the state convention provided they are elected at a special meeting conducted for the specific purpose of delegate election. At-large delegates will represent their counties by the same manner and terms as regular local delegates. To qualify, the delegate must be in good standing with Farmers Union.

Gary Wertish  Anne Schwagerl
President  Secretary

Child Care
Child care at the convention is open to all members of Minnesota Farmers Union.
Ages for child care are 4 years of age and older.
You must register in advance by Friday, Nov. 10.
Contact Education Director Glen Schmidt at glen@mfu.org or (651) 288-4066.

OFFICIAL CONVENTION CALL
76th Annual MFU Convention
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MFUPAC Reception
Saturday, Nov. 18 • 4:30 p.m.
Ramada Plaza • Suggested donation: $25
For more information please contact MFU Government Relations Director Thom Petersen at (651) 288-4067 or thom@mfu.org.
**Friday, Nov. 17**

6:30 p.m.  Minnesota Farmers Union & Farmers Union Insurance Agency Joint Reception

**Saturday, Nov. 18**

6:30 a.m.  Free farm-fresh breakfast for MFU members (ends at 8 a.m.)
8:30 a.m.  Parliamentary procedure refresher course
8:45 a.m.  Door prizes
         Convention convenes
         Prayer
         Pledge of Allegiance
         Present and adopt proposed convention rules and bylaws
         Adopt minutes of 2016 convention
9:15 a.m.  Gary Wertish, MFU President – welcome
          Brita Moore, MFU Public Relations Director – social media
          Thom Petersen, MFU Government Relations Director – policy
          Rodney Allebach, Minnesota Farmers Union Insurance Agency President
10 a.m.   Rob Larew, National Farmers Union Senior Vice President for Public Policy and Communications
          Anne Steckel, NFU Biofuels Advisor
10:30 a.m. Policy discussion
11:30 a.m. Lunch break with Minnesota grown food
12 p.m.   Gubernatorial candidates
1 p.m.    Reconvene
          Remarks from Gov. Mark Dayton and Lt. Gov. Tina Smith
          Bryan Klabunde, MFU Vice President
1:30 p.m.  Policy discussion
2:30 p.m.  Presentation on health care co-ops by Char Vrieze, 40 Square Cooperative Solutions
2:40 p.m.  Jim Ennis, Vocation of the Agricultural Leader
2:50 p.m.  Policy discussion
3:25 p.m.  Credentials report
3:30 p.m.  President and Vice President nominations
3:30 p.m.  Registration closes; opens Sunday 8:30-9:30 a.m.
3:45 p.m.  Torchbearer’s ceremony
4 p.m.    NFU Convention delegate election caucusing (time certain)
4:30 p.m.  MNFARMPAC reception
6 p.m.    Banquet
8:30 p.m.  MFU fundraiser auction

**Sunday, Nov. 19**

6:30 a.m.  Free omelet breakfast for MFU members (ends at 8 a.m.)
7:30 a.m.  Informational breakout sessions (Food Safety and Modernization Act, Energy, Dairy, Health care)
8:30 a.m.  Registration
          Door prizes
          Interactive survey – Young Farmers Advocacy Council
          Call to order
8:45 a.m.  Don Knutson, Green View
          Membership & Education Committee report
          Kirsten VanDerPol and Hunter Cardinal – National Youth Advisory Council report
          Aaron and Jill Chervestad – FUE Leadership Couple report
          Bruce Miller, MFU Membership and Outreach Director – membership and outreach report
          Dave Frederickson, Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner
9:30 a.m.  Registration closes – time certain
9:55 a.m.  President and Vice President elections
10 a.m.   Policy discussion
11:10 a.m. Credentials report (final count of registered delegates)
11:15 a.m. Introduction of NFU Convention delegate nominees
11:45 a.m. Election of delegates to NFU Convention (time certain)
12 p.m.   Lunch
12:30 p.m. Reconvene
          Ron Hennen – 2016 audit and financial report
12:45 p.m. Policy discussion
          Special orders
          Election results
          Old business
          New business
          Announcements
          Door prizes
          Grand door prize drawing for a drone
          Adjournment

For further information, contact us at (651) 639-1223 or visit: www.mfu.org
Interested in learning more about agriculture and agricultural policy?

The Next Step program is back for its seventh year, held in conjunction with the 76th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention, Nov. 18 and 19.

The program is for young people ages 18-25, who have an interest in Minnesota Farmers Union, agriculture, agriculture policy and rural life.

The program will include speakers, Q & A sessions, networking opportunities and the chance to hear several other convention speakers throughout the day. Participants will see first-hand how a statewide general farm organization self-governs, develops, debates and adopts policy positions on issues impacting family farmers, agriculture and rural life.

The Next Step program is a great way for students to learn about and discuss current issues within agriculture from leaders in the field.

Benefits of attending include:
• The opportunity to learn and discuss Minnesota Farmers Union, agriculture and agriculture policy
• FREE admission to convention banquet Saturday night
• FREE Minnesota Grown lunch
• FREE one-year membership to Minnesota Farmers Union
• FREE hotel room Saturday night at the Ramada Plaza, Minneapolis, MN

Next Step program agenda:

Saturday, Nov. 18
2 p.m.  Arrive at the Ramada Plaza
Welcome by MFU President Gary Wertish
Hand out binders/review agenda/contact form/meal tickets and name badges
Brief synopsis of program by MFU staff
2:15 p.m.  Speaker
2:30 p.m.  Observe policy debate and convention proceedings
3:15 p.m.  Break
3:30 p.m.  Speaker: Thom Petersen, MFU Legislative Director
4 p.m.  Speaker
4:30 p.m.  Break/check into hotel
4:30 p.m.  MNFARMPAC reception
6 p.m.  Banquet
8:30 p.m.  Banquet ends, MFU fundraiser auction begins

Sunday, Nov. 19
8 a.m.  Breakfast (ends at 8:30 a.m.)
8:30 a.m.  Observe policy debate and convention proceedings
9:30 a.m.  Speaker: Bruce Miller, MFU Membership and Outreach Director – What is Minnesota Farmers Union? MFU History
10 a.m.  Speaker
11:30 a.m.  Wrap up and evaluations
Noon  Lunch

Times and events subject to change.

To RSVP for this event please send an email to glen@mfu.org with:
• Name
• Age
• Phone number
• Email address
• College attending (if applicable)
Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Fact Sheet

On May 30, 2017, Governor Mark Dayton signed into law a Tax Credit for Minnesota beginning farmers. The new law will provide tax credits for the rent or sale of farm land or a variety of farm assets to beginning farmers. While similar to tax credits in Iowa or Nebraska, Minnesota will become the first state to provide incentives for the sale of farm land.

A Beginning Farmer is defined as:

- A Minnesota resident who is seeking entry, or has entered into farming within the last 10 years
- A farmer who will provide the majority of the labor and management of the farm that is located in Minnesota
- Has adequate experience and knowledge of the type of farming for which they seek assistance from the Rural Finance Authority
- Can provide positive projected earnings statements
- Is not directly related to the owner of the agricultural asset
- Has a net worth that does not exceed the limit provided under section 41B.03, subdivision 3, paragraph (a), clause (2). Currently this limit is $800,000.

The beginning farmer will need to participate in an approved financial management program. Costs of financial management programs up to a maximum of $1,500 per year (for up to 3 years) may also be eligible for a tax credit. The financial management credit need not be tied to any agricultural asset sale or rental.

Definition of “Agricultural Asset”:

- Agricultural land, livestock, facilities, buildings and machinery used for farming in Minnesota

The credit to the agricultural asset owner is as follows:

- 5% of the lesser of the sale price or fair market value of the agricultural asset up to a maximum of $32,000;
- 10% of the gross rental income in each of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of the rental agreement, up to a maximum of $7,000 per year, or
- 15% of the cash equivalent of the gross rental income in each of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of a share rent agreement, up to a maximum of $10,000 per year.

The agricultural asset owner can claim credits in one of the above categories in a given tax year up to the maximums stated.

Role of the Rural Finance Authority (RFA)

The RFA will administer the tax credits by:

- Certifying beginning farmers
- Assisting beginning farmers with locating eligible financial management program options in their area
- Certifying that owners of agricultural assets are eligible for the tax credit. This is a first come, first served initiative. The maximum amount available in 2018 is $5 million. This increases to $6 million per year in 2019 thru tax year 2023. The asset owner may be an individual, trust, a qualified pass-through entity.
MDA funding available for sustainable agriculture projects

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) Sustainable Agriculture and Demonstration Grants. Approximately $250,000 is available to fund projects that explore new ways of conserving natural resources, enhancing farm profitability, increasing energy efficiency and improving life in rural communities.

“No one cares more about Minnesota’s rural landscape than farmers and their families,” said Lt. Governor Tina Smith. “The Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Sustainable Agriculture and Demonstration Grant program is available to help farmers improve the sustainability and profitability of their operations. I encourage all farmers interested in making changes to their operations to apply for a grant worth up to $25,000.”

Farmer David Abazs hopes his grant funds will help demonstrate a cost-effective way to increase soil health on the Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center School’s organic farm. Abazs is testing a variety of materials, including lime, wood ash and biochar for their ability to affect soil chemistry and increase pH levels of the acidic soils in Lake County.

“These fields have never been farmed before and are providing a great template to help us and other farmers,” said Abazs. “We’re trying to find soil amendments that will help simultaneously meet pH goals and enhance soil health.”

Previous grant rounds have funded projects exploring farm diversification, cover crops and crop rotation, conservation tillage, input reduction strategies and alternative energies like wind, methane and biomass. AGRI Sustainable Agriculture and Demonstration grantees must share their findings. These are published annually in the MDA’s Greenbook, which provides a summary of each project along with results, management tips and other resources.

Applications from farmers receive priority, but the program also funds Minnesota nonprofit and educational organizations as long as Minnesota farmers are meaningfully involved in the project. Projects may last two to three years.

AGRI Sustainable Agriculture and Demonstration Grant applications are due by 4 p.m. on Dec. 13.

For more information and to apply, visit www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/demogrant.aspx.

State Grants fund on-farm livestock improvements

$2 million available for construction, physical improvements

Livestock producers may apply for a portion of $1.9 million in Livestock Investment Grants. Funds are provided by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s (MDA) Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) Program and may be used for on-farm improvements.

“Livestock Investment Grants help farmers stay competitive and reinvest in their industry,” said MDA Commissioner Dave Frederickson. “Last year, 105 livestock farmers received grants to improve their operations.”

With Livestock Investment funds awarded during the 2017 fiscal year, Jordan Daugherty of Raymond purchased feeding and fencing equipment, which will enable him to raise more sheep.

In Hartland, Brady Jensen used grant funds to construct a 2,400 head swine facility to increase profitability and allow a young farmer to start farming full time.

In Paynesville, Joseph Hemmesch used the grant funds to update a manure pit and feeding equipment and add more stalls to his barn. These improvements will help grow his dairy herd and protect the environment.

Qualifying producers are reimbursed 10 percent of the first $500,000 of investment, with a minimum investment of $4,000. Qualifying expenditures include the purchase, construction or improvement of livestock buildings or facilities. Fencing, feeding and waste management equipment are also eligible. Producers who suffered a loss due to natural disaster may also apply. The grant will not pay for livestock, land purchases or debt refinancing. Projects must begin after Jan. 1, 2018.

Past applicants who did not receive an award must reapply for the 2018 program. Applications for beginning farmers, farmers transitioning into livestock and those with a positive environmental impact receive priority. Details and grant guidelines are available at www.mda.state.mn.us/livestockinvestmentgrant.

The application deadline is Dec. 15. Please apply online: www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/ media/Files/grants/ag03150ligx.pdf.
**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Mowing in State Right-of-Way Informational Listening Sessions**

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has announced the dates for a series of listening sessions about mowing and haying in state rights-of-way. Anyone concerned with this issue is encouraged to attend the session nearest you and bring comments, questions and suggestions. MnDOT staff will take notes at the sessions.

Here are the dates and locations for the sessions:

- **Marshall:** Nov. 8 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
  **Location:** Marshall Middle School  
  401 South Saratoga Street  
  Marshall, MN 56258

- **St. Cloud:** Nov. 9 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.  
  **Location:** St. Cloud MnDOT Conference Center (MnDOT facility)  
  Room: Sinclair Lewis Grand  
  3725 12th Street North  
  St. Cloud, MN 56303

- **Mankato:** Nov. 14 • 6-8 p.m.  
  **Location:** South Central College  
  1920 Lee Boulevard  
  North Mankato, MN 56003

- **Morris:** Nov. 15 • 6-8 p.m.  
  **Location:** U of MN Morris Conference Room  
  Science Auditorium  
  600 East 4th Street  
  Morris, MN 56267

- **Metro:** Nov. 16 • 6-8 p.m.  
  **Location:** Arden Hills Training Center (MnDOT facility)  
  1900 County Road I West  
  Shoreview, MN 55126

- **Morristown:** Nov. 15 • 6-8 p.m.  
  **Location:** Mankato Community Center  
  1920 Lee Boulevard  
  North Mankato, MN 56003

- **Brainerd/Baxter:** Nov. 20 • 6-8 p.m.  
  **Location:** MnDOT Baxter (MnDOT facility)  
  East & West Lunchroom  
  7694 Industrial Park Road  
  Baxter, MN 56425-8096

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**FUIA Agent Highlight: MIKE PANKA**

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**Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and MFU important to you?**

As someone who recently had the opportunity to participate in the NFU Legislative Fly-In in Washington, D.C., I got to see first-hand how the two organizations work together to help our farmers. Being able to use my knowledge of the insurance industry to help with positive change for our farmers at the legislative level was an honor, and being able to use that knowledge with my clients every day is one of the most rewarding parts of being an agent with FUIA.

**What community organizations are you passionate about?**

I have previously served on the Ivanhoe Economic Development Authority and have served on the Board of Directors for the Marshall Girls Basketball Association. I also coach my son’s basketball and baseball teams, and my wife and I stay busy in our church and with our children’s school, helping with various events and fundraisers.

**Please tell us a little bit about your family life.**

My wonderful wife, Becky, and I have been married for 14 years, and we have four active children: Abby (12), Nate (11), Maddi (8) and Ben (5). We are constantly running to practices, concerts, sporting events or recitals with them, and we love it! Family has always been at the core of everything we do. That has carried over to our agency, where one of my brothers and my sister work alongside me. Becky also recently joined our agency on a part-time basis, so I am blessed to spend every day with my family.

**What is your number one concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance?**

My number one concern is making sure that I know as much as possible about my clients and their operation, because I can’t help protect what matters most if I don’t know what those things are. So we get in depth with details about their operation, their potential risks, and what they want protected so we can put together the right package of coverages for them at a price they can afford. That has been especially important recently with the struggles in the farm economy and is one of the biggest benefits of working with a Farmers Union Insurance Agent. Being an independent agent allows us to fit the right coverages with the right company because when it comes to farm insurance, one size does not fit all.

Mike has been an active MFU member since 2005 and now runs the insurance agency that his grandfather, Mervin Eischens, established in 1950. His agency serves insureds in MN, SD, WI, IA & MO. Mike was FUIA’s Agent of the Year in 2016 for his agency’s outstanding performance and consistently high level of exceptional service he and his staff provide to his customers. Visit our website at www.mnfuia.com and “Find an Agent” to find a local FUJA agent in your area. Follow us at MNFUIA on Twitter and Facebook.
Growing for the Future

Join us Dec. 4-7 for our second annual Growing for the Future, a FREE online, interactive virtual conference for beginning farmers and ranchers.

**Featuring speakers from:**
- Farmer Veteran Coalition
- National Young Farmers Coalition
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- Female Farmer Project
- and more!

**Topics include:**
- Mentorship
- Business Planning
- USDA Programs
- Women and Veterans in Farming
- Conservation

The four-day event includes farmer-to-farmer webinars, live Q&A sessions, a discussion board, a resource center and giveaways and prizes!

For more information, visit [nfu.org/growing-for-the-future](https://nfu.org/growing-for-the-future).

**Registration open for National Farmers Union Women’s Conference**

The National Farmers Union (NFU) Women’s Conference will be held Jan. 14-18, 2018 in San Diego, Calif. The theme will be “Women in Leadership.” Women have been leading in agriculture for many years, and NFU hopes to build on this idea throughout the conference.

The conference will prepare attendees and their operations for their own future in many areas, including: business planning, succession planning, running for local office, networking, telling their own stories, innovative marketing and much, much more. NFU hopes to provide attendees with a network of female producers that they can reach out to throughout the year, as well as provide attendees with important tools that will help set their operations up for a future of success.

**Speakers will include:**
- Lisa Kivirist of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
- Kriss Marion of Wisconsin Farmers Union
- Liz Johnson, co-founder and board member at VoteRunLead
- Madeline Schultz of Iowa State University Extension
- Poppy Davis, agriculture policy advisor
- Sarah Lloyd of Wisconsin Farmers Union

Check out last year’s agenda at [https://nfu.org/wc-agenda/](https://nfu.org/wc-agenda/).

**Speaker Madeline Schultz, Women in Agriculture program manager at Iowa State University Extension**

Register at [https://nfu.org/education/womensconference/](https://nfu.org/education/womensconference/).

Minnesota Farmers Union will offer up to five $1,000 scholarships to members who want to attend the conference. To apply, please contact Education Director Glen Schmidt at glen@mfu.org. Applications are due by Dec. 1 and recipients will be chosen by Dec. 5.
Open Enrollment has begun for Medicare, Part D and Individual and Family Health Plans!

MEDICARE Open Enrollment is October 15 through December 7, 2017 for supplemental Medicare plans and Part D prescription drug plans.

Open Enrollment for Individual and Family Health plans is November 1 through December 15, 2017 for plans that are in effect on January 1, 2018.

Dates for MNSure plans are different. For a January 1, 2018 effective date, Open Enrollment is online from November 1 through December 20, 2017. For a February 1, 2018 effective date, Open Enrollment is online from December 21 through January 14, 2018.

Confused? Understandable! Talk to one of our local FUIA Agents to discuss your options and find the best fit for you.

Please join Farmers Union Insurance Agency at the 76th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention Reception on Friday, November 17 from 6:30–9 p.m. at the Ramada Plaza Ballroom, Minneapolis!