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Join the Minnesota Farmers Union celebration of the 2018 MINNESOTA COOKS from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 26 at Dan Patch Park at the Minnesota State Fair.

This fun-filled day will celebrate local farm-fresh foods and honor 12 respected Minnesota farmers, along with 12 accomplished chefs and cooks.

If you’re a farmer currently selling your product to restaurants, you could be a candidate for MINNESOTA COOKS.

To learn more, contact Claudine Arndt: claudine@mfu.org.

Summer Heirloom Tomato Salad and Lemonade with Basil Three Ways

From River Rock Coffee, St. Peter

For basil vinaigrette:

Yields: 1 cup

1/2 T fresh garlic, thinly sliced
1/4 c red wine vinegar
1/8 t Maldon Salt (or kosher salt)
1/2 t local honey
1 c extra virgin olive oil
1 c fresh basil leaves, loosely packed

In a small bowl, combine garlic, salt and red wine vinegar. Let marinate for a few minutes, then add honey and stir until dissolved. Taste. Adjust salt, if needed. Pour mixture into a blender. Blend on low, slowly adding the olive oil until emulsified. Add the basil leaves and pulse briefly. Sieve out basil; reserve for the quinoa grain salad. Refrigerate unused portion for up to 1 week.

For quinoa grain salad:

Yields: 4 servings

3 c cooked quinoa, cooled
1/2 c basil purée (reserved from basil vinaigrette)
2 sprigs fresh tarragon, minced
7 fresh garlic chives, minced
12 fresh chives, minced
salt and pepper, to taste
4 c mixed greens
2-3 heirloom tomatoes, such as Brandywine or Sungold, sliced
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved

In a large bowl, combine quinoa, basil purée, tarragon, chives and 2 tablespoons basil vinaigrette. Gently toss until just combined. Taste. Adjust seasoning, as needed.

To serve, scoop approximately 3/4 cup quinoa grain salad over a bed of mixed greens, thick slices of Heirloom tomato and a handful of halved cherry tomatoes. Dress plate lightly with basil vinaigrette, coarse salt and freshly ground pepper. Garnish with your favorite edible flowers and fresh herbs.*

(*Bachelor buttons, nasturtiums and chive blossoms are some of our favorites!)

For basil lemonade:

Yields: 1/2 gallon

2 c fresh squeezed lemon juice
1 c organic sugar
1 c hot water
1 1/2 c cold water
2 oz fresh basil, with stems

Combine sugar and hot water. Stir until dissolved; set aside. In a blender, combine basil, lemon juice and cold water. Pulse until the basil is pureed into fine pieces and the liquid has turned a bright green. Sieve out basil and discard. Combine lemon basil water with the cooled sugar water. Mix well. Pour over ice, garnish with a fresh sprig of basil.
GRAND RAPIDS – Over the past year and a half, we have been engaged in some much-needed upgrades to the Farmers Union Coffee Shop at the Minnesota State Fair. After a highly successful 2017 fair, we realized we needed to make it even better to keep up with fairgoers’ enthusiasm for the shop. Our renovations will not only improve customer service, but will better educate people about Minnesota agriculture and Farmers Union through engaging video content about our history, our members and our work, as well as food grown by Minnesota family farmers. MFU has been a strong part of the fair since the 1950s, and we look forward to seeing how this upgrade will make it even stronger.

We’re also glad to be named once again to the State Fair’s new food list, which is published in many major publications. Our Blueberry Rhubarb Cobbler, made with Minnesota-grown fruit, cream and corn, was selected.

United States of Care
MFU has long been advocating for better health care policies. I’m taking that advocacy another step further, as I have been named to the United States of Care’s Founders Council. USoC is a national nonpartisan organization that aims to find solutions that will help more people be able to afford the health care they need. In other words, they’re pressing our elected officials to stop playing politics with our health care. USoC is made up of medical professionals, policy leaders, patients, business leaders and more from diverse backgrounds.

I have heard many stories that family farmers are facing high health care costs. I’ll bring those stories to USoC.

WFO General Assembly
At the end of May, I went to Moscow, Russia as a delegate to the World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO) General Assembly, along with MFU General Counsel Dave Velde and North Dakota Farmers Union President Mark Watne. WFO is an international organization made up of family farm organizations, including NFU. According to their website, “WFO’s mission is to represent and advocate on behalf of farmers in global policy forums and create the conditions for the adoption of policies aimed to improve the economic environment and livelihood of producers, their families and rural communities.” In other words, WFO advocates for the needs of family farmers on a global stage, just as Farmers Union does in the U.S.

WFO holds a General Assembly every year in a different location. The focus of this year’s Assembly was climate change. It was interesting to hear from a Cambodian farmer about the extreme weather he has experienced, more extreme than what we see even in Minnesota. I felt lucky to be able to work together with family farmers from across the globe – we all share many of the same struggles.

I was also named the facilitator of a new livestock working group in WFO. I’ll be talking frequently with farmers from Zimbabwe, Cambodia, Ireland, Denmark and Argentina about livestock issues. We look forward to working together on ideas that can make life better for family farmers everywhere.

Senate marks up Farm Bill, House version passes
In mid-June, the Senate Agriculture Committee marked up its draft of the 2018 Farm Bill. We were very pleased with the solidly bipartisan process throughout, which ended in a 20-1 vote passing the bill onto the Senate floor. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has said he plans to hold the floor debate before the Independence Day recess. I recently joined the NFU Full Board of Directors in calling on the Senate to pass the bill in a unanimous resolution.

Meanwhile, the U.S. House of Representatives reconsidered its version of the Farm Bill on June 21. This time, it passed 213-211. There were no changes made from the previous vote in May, when the bill failed, despite calls for bipartisan changes.

While we maintain our opposition to the House Farm Bill, Farmers Union supports the bill the Senate has put out, as it makes good use of the available funds. The bill retains crop insurance, which helps out many farmers in hard times. It reformed the dairy program and renamed it the Dairy Risk Coverage Program, building on the previous Bipartisan Budget Act that made

(continued on page 4)
changes to the Margin Protection Program. The DRCP provides about $100 million more in support. We also appreciated that the Senate kept the Conservation Stewardship Program, though the House did not, and called for mandatory funding for the Rural Energy for America Program. And, it increased discretionary funding for broadband services to $150 million/year from $25 million/year.

Importantly for gaining bipartisan support, the Senate made no significant changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), despite the divisive changes the House made to it.

MFU thanks Minnesota Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith for voting in favor of the bill and for their efforts gathering insight from farmers around the state during its construction. We also thank U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, for his commitment to working with the Senate in conference committee. All three of these elected officials have shown leadership in working for a bill that gives family farmers and rural residents a strong safety net. We look forward to working alongside the conference committee in constructing a bill that benefits family farmers and rural communities.

Farms Union joins lawsuit against RFS waivers

Despite President Trump’s consistent statements in support of biofuels, his Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, Scott Pruitt, has not moved on policies that increase the use of them. In fact, he has overseen a major increase in the number of oil refineries requesting “hardship waivers” from the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS).

The large amount of RFS waivers slows demand for homegrown biofuels and keeps people from getting lower costs at the pump. That’s why Farmers Union joined a coalition of biofuels advocates in May filing suit to challenge the refinery waivers.

We are challenging three EPA exemption decisions in particular, made under unusually clandestine proceedings to refineries that, by all indications, are profitable. EPA has not informed the public by any means; we learned about the waivers from media sources rather than from the agency itself.

Not only do we deserve to know why EPA is granting these waivers, we need action to offset the losses of ethanol that these waivers have caused. If you’d like to learn more about the lawsuit, don’t hesitate to contact me.

Trade disputes spread to Canada, Mexico, EU

The United States’ standing on world trade issues has not improved. After a breakdown in the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Trump administration announced it would implement tariffs on steel and aluminum from Canada, Mexico and the European Union, which had previously been exempt from the tariffs earlier this year. Canada and Mexico have already responded with tariffs of their own that affect many U.S. agricultural products, including on pork, cheese, fruit, maple syrup and orange juice. Then shortly thereafter, we imposed $50 million worth in tariffs on Chinese products, to which China responded by slapping on $25 million worth in tariffs on 545 American products, including soybeans.

While we continue to support renegotiation of trade agreements, the approach of the Trump administration’s policies have caused uncertainty in the markets and potentially has cost us international demand for our products. We need to have good relations with our international partners to build agreements that benefit everyone. Right now, agricultural producers are facing the brunt of the trade consequences, in an already depressed economy. Family farmers cannot afford a trade war. We encourage the administration to work cooperatively with trade partners.

New look for MFU website

Lastly, I encourage you all to take a look at www.mfu.org. We have completed a significant website redesign and created a more crisp, easy-to-use site. It includes a blog, a photo archive and a streamlined membership purchasing page. It will make sharing information online much simpler, for all of us at MFU.
USDA resumes continuous CRP enrollment

As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) has resumed accepting applications for the voluntary Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Eligible farmers, ranchers and private landowners can sign up at their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office until Aug. 17, 2018.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said, “The Conservation Reserve Program is an important component of the suite of voluntary conservation programs USDA makes available to agricultural producers, benefitting both the land and wildlife. On the road, I often hear firsthand how popular CRP is for our recreational sector; hunters, fisherman, conservationists and bird watchers. “CRP also is a powerful tool to encourage agricultural producers to set aside unproductive, marginal lands that should not be farmed to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and boost soil health.”

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup (excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands). This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short sign up period helps ensure that landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

2018 signup for CRP

For this year’s signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. Interested landowners can contact their local FSA office for a full list of practices available.

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, however, a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

CRP Grasslands

Additionally, FSA established new ranking criteria for CRP Grasslands. To guarantee all CRP grasslands offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Producers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

About CRP

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

Signed into law by President Reagan in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. Thanks to voluntary participation by farmers, ranchers and private landowners, CRP has improved water quality, reduced soil erosion and increased habitat for endangered and threatened species.

The new changes to CRP don’t impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners. Producers wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit www.fas.usda.gov/crp.

FSA county committee nominations launched

USDA encourages America’s farmers and ranchers to nominate candidates to lead, serve and represent their community on their local county committee. FSA is accepting nominations for county committee members.

Producers across the country are already serving on committees where they play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of FSA, making important decisions on programs dealing with disaster and conservation, emergencies, commodity price loan support, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

“Our county committees make decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally to best serve the needs of agriculture in their community,” said Acting FSA Administrator Steve Peterson. “We strongly encourage all eligible producers to visit their local FSA office today to find out how to get involved in their county’s election. There’s an increasing need for representation from underserved producers, which includes beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers.”

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated farmers and ranchers serve on FSA county committees, which consist of three to 11 members and meet once a month, or as needed. Members serve three-year terms.

Producers can nominate themselves or others. Check your local USDA service center to see if your local administrative area is up for election this year. Organizations, including those representing beginning, women and minority farmers, may also nominate candidates to better serve their communities. To be eligible to serve on an FSA county committee, producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program and reside in the area where the election is being held.

To be considered, a producer must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at: www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. All nomination forms for the 2018 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2018. Visit www.farmers.gov for more information.

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 5, 2018.
The 2018 Legislature has wrapped up its work for the year after a busy session. Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) testified more than 30 times on various bills before many different committees in both the Senate and the House. In addition, MFU had a very successful Lobby Day Drive-In this past February. MFU also holds bi-weekly calls with MFU county leadership during session and sends out legislative email updates to communicate with members. Here is a look at how some of the issues MFU worked on turned out.

**Section 179**
Gov. Mark Dayton vetoed the omnibus tax bill that contained language that would have conformed Minnesota to the increased federal section 179 federal expensing amounts for income and franchise tax purposes – up to $1 million from Minnesota’s current level of $25,000. MFU supported this legislation that grew in importance due to the federal government’s recent passing of a major overhaul of the tax system.

**Ditch mowing bill signed**
MFU applauded the signature of HF 3569 this session by Gov. Dayton. The bill implements a moratorium on the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) in enforcing permits until April 30, 2019 for mowing and baling in right of way on trunk highways, except for land that adjoins state land.

**RFA Funding**
MFU was pleased that Gov. Dayton signed legislation to fund the Rural Finance Authority (RFA) which helps farmers secure funding for various important loans including restructuring, beginning farmers and farm improvement loans. The RFA would have run out of dollars around June 1 of this year had the Legislature not acted. The RFA partners in lending with local banks on the programs they have.

**Biodiesel**
This year, Minnesota became the first state to blend 20 percent biodiesel in the summer months. The Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, a bill that paved the way for Minnesota to implement the mandate this year. The biodiesel mandate law generally requires that each gallon of Number 2 diesel fuel sold in the state be 10 percent biodiesel (B10). The bill provides that from April 1 to April 14 each year the minimum biodiesel content requirement is temporarily reduced to no less than 10 percent. After that it would be 20 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.

**Buffers**
In the end no action was taken on buffers this year. One bill that MFU supported was a buffer tax credit that would have provided eligible landowners $50 per acre each year for farmland converted to water quality buffers. The proposed tax credit would allow Minnesota landowners who have installed water quality buffers on tillable land to receive the tax credit, even if they installed the buffers before the new water quality law went into effect. Landowners who had been compensated through a redetermination or a government program such as CRP or CREP would not be eligible for the credit. Another piece MFU supported that stalled was a one-year waiver for the buffers required this fall on public drainage systems like the one that was passed last year for buffers on public waters.

**Nitrogen Fertilizer Rule**
After consulting members and seeing an updated proposed rule, MFU’s concerns were alleviated as many areas from a previous proposal were removed. MFU opposed attempts to require legislative approval of MDA’s Nitrogen Fertilizer Rule (also known as the Groundwater Protection Act). MFU also heard from members in affected areas that they generally do not apply nitrogen in the fall, and the rule banning fall application would not go into effect until 2020. The House and Senate Ag Committees, who have jurisdiction over the proposed rule, used a legislative rule to effectively delay the approval of the rule until after the 2019 legislative session.

**COOL**
Although no action was taken on it this year, MFU was pleased to see the introduction of Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for certain meats this session by Sens. Tony Lourey, Kent Eken and Jason Isaacson and Reps. David Bly and Clark Johnson. COOL continues to be a popular issue with MFU members, and we will continue to work on this.

**Forever Green**
MFU supported legislation that stalled for $500,000 which was included in the House Legacy bill H.F. 4167 authored by Rep. Bob Gunther. The bill appropriates money in fiscal year 2018 from the Clean Water Fund to the Commissioner of Agriculture. This money...
would be used for grants to the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota to fund the Forever Green Agriculture Initiative and protect the state's natural resources. It would increase the efficiency, profitability and productivity of Minnesota farmers by incorporating perennial and winter-annual crops into existing agricultural practices. The bonding bill also included $250,000 from the trust fund to go to the Commissioner of Agriculture to establish demonstration plots of Kernza, a new intermediate perennial grain crop, to evaluate the potential to profitably reduce nitrate contamination of groundwater in vulnerable wellhead protection regions of Minnesota.

Ag License Plate
MFU was disappointed that H.F. 3152, authored by Rep. Rod Hamilton and Sen. Gary Dahms, that was intended to create a Minnesota agriculture special license plate, died this session. The legislation would say that as a part of obtaining the plate, a vehicle owner would need to donate $20 annually for Minnesota FFA Foundation and Minnesota 4-H activities. Unfortunately, the bill was held up due to the MNLARS issue. MFU will keep advocating for the bill and urging for it to move forward next session.

Trucking legislation
Legislation passed and was signed into law 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 also 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.

Farm Advocate funding increased
The Legislature also worked on increasing funding for the MN Farm Advocate program by $30,000 per year. MFU thanks Rep. Jeanne Poppe and Sen. Kent Eken for championing this cause. Farm Advocates provide one-on-one assistance for Minnesota farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems. Farm Advocates understand the needs of our agricultural families and communities. They are trained and experienced in agricultural lending practices, mediation, lender negotiation, farm programs, crisis counseling, disaster programs and recognizing the need for legal and/or social services. In the end, this important legislation was also vetoed as part of a larger bill.

Farmer Mental Health
MFU was pleased to see several bills introduced that would have appropriated dollars from the general fund to the commissioner of agriculture for transfer to the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for additional statewide mental health counseling support to farm families and business operators. Despite having widespread support, the funding for additional dollars was included in a final spending bill that was vetoed by Gov. Dayton.

Farmers Legal Action Group
The Legislature considered legislation authored by Rep. Jeanne Poppe and Sen. Nick Frentz that stated $100,000 in fiscal year 2019 would have been appropriated from the general fund to MDA for a grant to the Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG). This would have provided 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 FLAG 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. In the end, no dollars were allocated.

Palmer Amaranth funding
MFU was pleased to see $431,000 was appropriated from the trust fund to go to the Commissioner of Agriculture to continue to monitor, ground survey and control Palmer Amaranth, primarily in conservation plantings, and to develop and implement aerial-survey methods to prevent infestation and protect prairies, other natural areas and agricultural crops.

Farm permits bill
Another interesting bill that ultimately stalled out was S.F. 1092/H.F. 1126, authored by Sen. Torrey Westrom and Rep. Deb Kiel, that would allow an individual with a restricted farm permit to travel 40 miles, up from the current 20 miles, and allow a restricted license to be obtained no matter how that farm is organized. This is aimed at allowing 15-year-olds to be able to drive a little farther to obtain parts, feed, etc. MFU will continue to work on this next session.

RES
MFU supported legislation authored by Sen. Frentz and Rep. Erin Maye Quade that would increase the state Renewable Energy Standard (RES). The current standards call for 25 percent of Minnesota’s energy to come from renewable power by the year 2025; the legislative proposal ups those goals to 37 percent by that same deadline and 50 percent by 2030. No action was taken on this legislation this session.

Ramsey County SWCD
Legislation also passed this session that would discontinue 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. It allows BWSR to reestablish the district without a referendum. This was a unique situation but MFU has concerns about the precedent it sets.

Transportation
Legislation was considered this year, and ultimately failed, that would have submitted a constitutional amendment proposal to voters. The amendment would have dedicated state general sales tax revenue that is attributable to the sale of motor vehicle repair and replacement parts to go entirely to state and local road systems. Revenue would have been phased in over fiscal years 2021 to 2025. The MFU Full Board of Directors voted not to take a position in support at the spring meeting.

Broadband
This year, MFU joined the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and MFU was pleased to see the Legislature include $15 million dollars for the state’s Border to Border matching grant fund broadband program in their final spending bill. This funding was well below the $51.48 million recommended, and half of what Gov. Dayton requested. The spending was in the 990-page spending bill vetoed by Gov. Dayton.

Health Care
MFU continues to support legislation authored by Rep. Clark Johnson and Sen. Tony Lourey that would allow Minnesotans to have a public health care option by buying into MinnesotaCare. That legislation did not receive a hearing this year. The House did have spirited debate about the proposed MinnesotaCare Buy-In program after language was included in the House omnibus portion that included the Department of Human Services budget that would forbid them from using dollars to promote or work on a MinnesotaCare Buy-in program. Rep. Clark Johnson offered an amendment to H.F. 3138 to remove that language that failed 51-76. Republicans raised concerns about rural hospitals and reimbursement rates. Ultimately the bill that included this language was vetoed by Gov. Dayton. MFU continues to support a MinnesotaCare Buy-In option and will continue to work on this issue.

Right to Repair
In the end, no legislation went forward that would allow farmers to fix electronic parts of their own equipment without going to their dealers. There was a bill introduced, but it removed farm equipment from the “right to repair” and limited application to handheld electronic devices.

Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and MFU important to you? Working with FUIA and MFU has been a great experience for me on many levels. I have really enjoyed learning more about the challenges farmers face and solutions we can provide for them; I have been thrilled with the support I have received. It is an eye-opening experience seeing what kind of an impact issues such as the Farm Bill have not only for farmers but for everyone!

What community organizations are you passionate about?
I like to stay active in my community by participating and volunteering in a variety of community events and organizations. The opportunity I have been given to take over my hometown (Menahga, MN) Agency has allowed me to become active as a volunteer assistant on the High School Baseball team, something I’ve always wanted to do. I have also joined the Gateway Lions as a volunteer, which has been rewarding and a lot of fun. I always like to support local organizations, especially youth-based causes.

Please tell us a little bit about your family life.
I have been married to my wife, Cari (Neisess), for 4 years and together we have a 1½ year old son, Kai. My wife is also a Menahga graduate and we look forward to being involved in our community and school until our kid(s) graduate and beyond. Menahga is a great little town with a lot of wonderful people and families which we are lucky to be a part of.

What is your #1 concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance?
I was fortunate to take over a great book of business that was very well organized and well taken care of, so really the biggest challenge for us at the office is to uphold the same standard that our clients have come to expect over the years. For me, everything comes down to communication and listening first. I have great office staff who keep our office together so I can get out of the office and see my clients and their operations. We treat our clients like family.

Jake Lund officially took over the Menahga Agency from Kim Rasmussen January 1, 2018. Visit our website at www.mnfuia.com and click on “Find an Agent” to find a local FUIA agent in your area.
**Williamson Family**

Among the hundreds of kids who attend Farmers Union Leadership Camp each year, you’ll consistently find at least one named Williamson. It’s been that way for decades. Daniel and Darrin Williamson, the sons of Kandiyoji County members Donnel and Christa Williamson, have been attending camp since they were five. Donnel did the same while growing up on his family’s 160-acre century farm, which he operates today. He later became a counselor.

Enter Christa, who grew up on a small hobby farm not too far away. She majored in agricultural education and married Donnel in 1999, then found herself learning more about MFU than she’d ever imagined she would.

“I knew about MFU from dating Donnel but not as much about the camp system,” she said. When the Education Director at that time went on maternity leave, Christa was asked to step in as Acting Director for camp the first summer of her marriage to Donnel. They ran camp together, with him as Head Counselor. So it’s no surprise that their children have embraced it, too.

“The continuum is so cool with the Farmers Union youth program,” Christa said. “It promotes the lifelong membership benefits, especially now that we have the Young Farmers Advocacy Council.”

**Dedicated to ag in their own ways**

The family farm is in Irving Township, near Spicer. It’s a diversified crop and livestock operation, certified organic, with corn, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley, alfalfa, sheep and beef cattle, and up until 1981, dairy cattle. That’s not to mention the boys’ projects: goats, chickens and a llama.

“Daniel buys and sells goats as he wants to,” Donnel said. Both boys are strong members of 4-H and FFA, attending school at Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City. Daniel is a rising senior and Darrin a sophomore.

Donnel’s parents, Donald and Ann, live in the other house on the farm and help as they can. They’ve been longtime members of MFU as well, getting Donnel involved in camp and their local meetings. That inspired him later in life to run for Kandiyohi County President, a title he holds today.

Meanwhile, Christa is involved with an FFA chapter of her own – as the advisor. She’s an agriculture teacher for the Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg schools, a job she’s had for 14 years.

“What drove me into ag education was being able to work with students who are hands-on,” she said. “I liked being able to take English and social studies and science and applying it to agriculture.”

With FFA, Christa sees the model of it similarly to MFU’s triangle model, with education as the base.

“FFA has a three-circle model – classroom ag education, Supervised Agricultural Experience and the FFA chapter. They are all equal,” she said. “The key to being an ag educator is having that balance between all three and making sure that the students are benefiting from both experiential learning and the classroom. I think that if we as an agricultural community can support our teachers more as far as the instructional component, I think that would be very helpful.”

“As a teacher, I reach more students than in my FFA chapter. I have every seventh grader in my classroom and we do science labs with different commodities.”

The work arrangements for the Williamsons have been highly successful, with Christa’s teaching supplementing their income and Donnel being at home farming, plus relatives close by.

“I wouldn’t choose any other way to raise the boys,” Christa said. “They’ve only been watched close by someone who wasn’t related to us.”

**That’s 15 conventions!**

Part of raising the boys was making sure they got involved with MFU, too, just as Donnel’s parents did for him. Donnel and Christa have brought Daniel and Darrin to MFU’s state conventions every year since they were born.

“That’s 15 conventions!” Darrin exclaimed at the mention of that. And 17 for Daniel, who became a delegate for the first time at the 76th annual MFU convention last fall. When Donnel and Christa got engaged in fall 1998, she quickly recognized the importance of Farmers Union involvement for him, even though she hadn’t grown up in the organization.

“It wasn’t a big deal for me to meet his family, it was a bigger deal for him to take me to convention and introduce me to all the MFU people,” she said. Both of the readers at their wedding were MFU staff, and a large number of those in attendance were MFU members. Donnel, who had been planning to run for county president after the wedding, kept a membership slip in his tuxedo during the ceremony, according to Christa.

“When a field representative went through the reception line, Donnel stopped her and held out the membership paper,” Christa said. “He told her, ‘Make Christa a member.’” But he was quickly informed that she already was – thanks to having married him. He’d wanted to make sure she could vote for him at the county convention.

“He did not need my vote,” Christa said. “He got plenty of others.”

It’s not just in MFU that Donnel is a leader – he’s also a township clerk and serves on the county and state boards of townships. He also started an email listserv for other township clerks so they can easily contact him and ask questions.

“He’s very much in a leadership role in our county as far as local government, and he was exposed to that through MFU,” Christa said. Policy-wise, Christa says environmental issues and ag education are most important to her, including bringing MFU and FFA closer together. Meanwhile, Donnel says farm transitioning is an important topic to him. The family makes a point of staying non-partisan, but does vote every year and talk with each other about policy.

“That comes from reading the MFU paper and going to convention,” Christa says. “That’s vital because if we don’t figure out farm policy, there won’t be any farms.”

**Goats are a project of the Williamson boys**

Standing for Agriculture, Fighting for Farmers
**RURAL DAIRY DISCUSSIONS**

**BRIANNA OPDAHL, MFU INTERN**  
intern@mfu.org

Family dairy farms are in crisis across the country due to persistently low milk prices. Too many long-running farms have sold their cows and left the industry after generations. Farmers Union has been advocating for family farmers throughout this difficult time and wanted to know what they thought could help.

Last month, MFU hosted two Rural Dairy Discussions with the goal of hearing some solutions from farmers struggling through this crisis. Taking place in Stearns and Wabasha counties, MFU provided farmers with the opportunity to speak their thoughts about what they are experiencing and how to address the current milk crisis.

Discussion participants consisted of local farmers and community members, with three listening panelists: Gary Wertish, MFU President; Andrea Vaubel, Assistant Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture; and Patty Edelburg, Vice President of National Farmers Union. The panelists were invited to hear the concerns of farmers and take any ideas or solutions back to legislators and advocate for what farmers need.

Many opinions, thoughts and possible solutions were shared throughout the events. Supply management and the prices at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange were just a couple of the ideas mentioned.

Overall, farmers said they are worried about younger generations continuing to farm after they retire.

“My goal is I get to be replaced,” said Dan Perkins, Paynesville participant, “replace myself and my commitment to my community.”

Participants shared a collective head nod at this comment, for that is what many farmers want to see.

Multiple other organizations were in attendance, as well as Minnesota State Legislators and Congressional staff members, who pledged that they would bring back what they heard for policy consideration. MFU staff took extensive notes on the discussions, which are being compiled into a report that will be distributed to elected officials and media. It will also be available on the MFU website.

Events like these support MFU’s goals to provide a space for our members to be heard and to advocate for their needs. We support all family farmers and assist them with whatever their needs may be. ▲

**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. ▲

**BRIANNA OPDAHL, MFU INTERN**  
Intern@mfu.org

**Membership and Outreach Director Bruce Miller speaking at a rural dairy discussion.**
have paid membership dues, as well as spouses of paid members. Members’ unmarried children between the ages of 16 and 21 are also eligible to vote at any Farmers Union meeting.

Each year, Farmers Union counties hold their annual county conventions, which are gatherings of Farmers Union members in respective counties. At the conventions, there are often speakers from the MFU State Office who address critical issues for family farming. Some conventions are during the day, some at night. Some conventions include meals, either on your own or paid for by the county, and last about an hour and a half.

Before the conventions, members should take the time and think of ideas they’d like to present as resolutions. Members in attendance discuss and vote on these resolutions that could become Farmers Union policy. All MFU policy starts at the local level with the county conventions; moves to the state level for debate at the state convention in November; and then to the national level at the National Farmers Union Convention in March. Farmers Union leaders advocate for this policy in the United States Congress and the Minnesota Legislature.

County conventions are also the times to elect delegates who are interested in representing the county at the MFU 77th Annual Convention, elect or re-elect a county president who serves on the MFU Full Board of Directors and elect any other officers, such as county Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer or any position available in your county. We encourage you to consider running to become a county leader if you have strong interest in rural issues.

Farmers Union conventions are fairly informal, usually held at farms or small restaurants. You can catch up with your neighbors, meet new people and talk about issues in your area. These are family-friendly events and provide interesting opportunities to hear what others are thinking about agriculture.

MFU members receive postcard notifications with information about when and where conventions will be held. If it’s been a while since you attended a Farmers Union county convention, why not give it a try in 2018? Bring your family, friends and neighbors, and make the most of your MFU membership.

In answer to the most unasked question: If I go, will I get elected as a delegate or officer? The answer is pretty simple: No, unless you want to get elected.

Farmers Union county conventions continue to be the heart of Minnesota Farmers Union. Take a couple of hours, and come join us at yours. If you have questions about county conventions, don’t hesitate to contact me.
MEET THE 2018 CAMP STAFF

Minnesota Farmers Union Leadership Camp is affordable and open to everyone! It's all about helping young people become good citizens by planting the seeds of responsibility, leadership and cooperation in an environment where those qualities can grow and flourish.

Hannah Ulrich is returning for her ninth year at camp, third as a counselor. Hannah is very excited to be back at camp for her second year as Head Counselor and is looking forward to seeing many familiar faces as well as meeting new campers! Hannah is 21 and a senior at Metropolitan State University. She is majoring in Business Administration and Human Resource Management with minors in Marketing and Entrepreneurship. After graduation, she will pursue a career in music business. When not at camp, Hannah enjoys going to concerts, working at Varsity Theatre and skating for the Leather and Laces Adult Synchronized Skating Team. At camp, Hannah enjoys telling stories in cabin 8, fetching kickballs from the tall grass and taking long walks in the dark. Hannah cannot wait to make friendship bracelets with campers this year. See you all soon!

Andrew VanDerPol is returning for his third year as a counselor and 11th year of camp. Andrew will be joining Hannah as Head Counselor this year. Andrew is 20 years old and graduated from Ridgewater College this year with a degree in Farm Operations and Management with an emphasis in livestock. After this summer, Andrew will be returning to the family farm to raise cattle and hogs with the rest of his family. During his free time, he likes to play with his dogs and work on his truck. While at camp, Andrew enjoys busting out sick dance moves that campers love, cracking dad jokes and protecting campers from Dougars (half deer and half cougar) at night. Andrew has been waiting since last summer to see all the campers again.

Winona Johnson is excited for her first year at MFU camp! She has done a few other summer camps before. Winona is from Shoreview in the metro area, but still loves all things agriculture. Winona is going to the University of Minnesota and is studying Agricultural Education and Political Science. After graduation she will be teaching high school agriculture. Outside of camp, Winona enjoys reading, singing, hanging out with her cat and playing volleyball. Winona loves trivia as well, especially if it's related to Parks and Rec or Harry Potter. Winona looks forward to making memories at camp this year!

Hunter Cardinal will be joining the MFU camp crew for his first year as a counselor, but 12th year at camp overall. Hunter is studying criminal justice at MSU Moorhead in hopes to be a technical negotiator on a SWAT team. Hunter is from Crookston, where his family has a small hobby farm with chickens and goats. Hunter is most excited for camp to be able to meet the kids that make camp as great as it can be.

Sarah Burch is from Center City. This is her first year working at MFU camp. Sarah is a junior at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities studying Applied Economics with minors in political science and business management. Sarah is hoping to work in economics and policy, in some capacity, after college. Sarah is interested in working for a nonprofit or a governmental agency. Outside of camp, she enjoys kayaking, playing hockey, watching That 70s Show, hanging out with friends and visiting national parks with her family. Sarah is looking forward to getting to know the other counselors better and learning along with the campers.

Mitchell Walsh is from North Saint Paul, and this is his first experience at a camp! Some things that Mitchell enjoys doing are playing outside with his dog Charlie, hanging out with friends, listening to music and playing video games. Mitchell is currently completing his generals at Century College in White Bear Lake. He can’t wait to have a blast at camp this summer!

Katie Brown is from Corcoran. Katie has been to other summer camps in 4-H when she was younger, but has never been to MFU camp. She is a senior at the University of Minnesota studying Agricultural Education with plans to become a high school agriculture teacher. Katie loves sharing the story of agriculture and showing her love of chickens. Outside of school, Katie teaches at Foss Swim School where she has been working for the past three years. Katie also loves orange, enjoys hanging out with her cat Romeo and spending time with friends and family. Katie is excited to meet all the campers, perform skits, sing songs at the top of her lungs and have an amazing time at camp.

We invite you to join us this summer for a week of fun! For more information see page 15 or go to www.mfu.org/camp!
Minnesota Farmers Union is dedicated to providing resources and educational opportunities to members. In this tradition, I am pleased to announce a new program available to MFU members: the MFU New Leadership Academy. This program seeks to identify leaders within MFU and give them the resources and training needed to become active leaders in their community and in MFU. We want to ensure that rural and urban communities, farmers and consumers have leaders who understand the agricultural landscape.

The New Leadership Academy will kick off at the 77th Annual MFU Convention in November and end September 2019 with a trip to Washington D.C. for the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-in. Between those two events, the program will include three other sessions over the course of the year. Most sessions will take place over a weekend and cover the three sides of Farmers Union triangle: Education, Cooperation and Legislation. These sessions will be held at different locations, urban and rural, so that participants can experience the diversity of our state.

We’ve created this program to help individuals develop and polish the skills they need to effectively create and sustain vibrant communities. It offers opportunities to compare and address local urban and rural issues, and lessons in advocacy that will help participants understand how the various levels of government form a community.

MFU will cover participants’ costs for lodging, materials, most meals and airfare to Washington. We believe the investment we make in our emerging leaders will pay back tenfold in the future, with participants engaging in food issues, leading their communities and helping sustain our local economies.

The inaugural leadership class will include approximately a dozen selected individuals from Minnesota. MFU is looking for participants that come from various backgrounds and ages. Participants can be farmers, Farmers Union Insurance Agents, cooperative leaders, local food and urban food advocates, entrepreneurs and anyone looking to get more involved in MFU. The program does emphasize the history and role of Farmers Union in the topics addressed, and participants must become MFU members before the start of the kickoff session in November, if they aren’t already members at the time of application.

For more information, to recommend a participant for the program or to request an application, please contact me at glen@mfu.org or (651) 288-4066. Participants in the New Leadership Academy must be 21 years of age or older by the start of the November kickoff session.

Minnesotans Brann, Chi selected for NFU Beginning Farmer Institute

National Farmers Union (NFU) recently announced 20 beginning farmers and ranchers from across the United States to take part in the 2018-19 Beginning Farmer Institute (BFI) program. The Institute empowers the success of America’s next generation of farmers by providing mentorship, technical training and leadership development to its participants.

The participants come from all different regions of the country. Minnesota is represented by Rachel Brann, a flower farmer in Milaca, and Jill Chi, a beef farmer in Annandale.

“We are happy to welcome another large, diverse class of Beginning Farmer Institute participants to the Farmers Union family,” said NFU President Roger Johnson. “Ensuring American agriculture lies in the hands of a well-equipped next generation of farmers and ranchers is a top priority for Farmers Union. NFU is proud to offer an educational program that continues to represent the geographical and production diversity in agriculture.”

Through sessions hosted in Washington, D.C., California and Washington, the program’s hands-on training will emphasize many of the challenges beginning farmers may face in their careers, such as business planning, access to capital, land acquisition, marketing and more.

Agriculture diversity continues to be a focus of the BFI program. Participants in this year’s class come from a variety of operation types, from 2-acre farms to large grain operations. Additionally, women and veterans have been some of the most active participants in the program’s history, representing more than 60 percent of the 96 beginning farmers who have completed the program and 14 of the 20 participants announced for this year.

NFU Foundation has continued to grow the BFI program through the generous support of CHS Foundation, Farm Aid, Farm Credit and Farmers Union Industries Foundation. More information about BFI is available at https://nfu.org/education/beginning-farmer-institute/.
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 Elliason  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 Bossselman  Fosston  (218) 200-9432
Steve Zenk  Danube  (320) 894-2517

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

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 Intern Brianna Opdahl at intern@mfu.org. The order form will be available on the MFU website. Please allow 2 weeks to receive your items.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Minnesota Farmers Union
Standing for Agriculture, Fighting for Farmers

Thurs., July 12 • 6:30 p.m. • Kandiyohi/Swift County Farmers Union Picnic • Diamond Lake County Park Hilltop Shelter, Kandiyohi. Potluck, pork chops and beverages provided • FFI: Kandiyohi County President Donnel Williamson, (320) 220-3100 or williamsonorganicfarm@gmail.com

Sun., July 15 • 1 p.m. • Aitkin County Farmers Union Picnic • Berglund Park, Palisade • FFI: Aitkin County President Markell Vogt, (218) 927-2215 or vogtfarm@gmail.com

Wed., July 18 • 3-6 p.m. • Pine County Farmers Union Meeting, tour of sheep operation • Medicine Creek Farms, 68393 Scotch Pine Road, Finlayson • Bring your neighbors, kids or grandkids for an educational afternoon. Refreshments provided. FFI: Pine County President Kay Hills, (715) 635-9521

Sat., July 21 • 11 a.m.-4 p.m. • Minnesota Solar Congress • UMN West Central Research and Outreach Center, Morris • FFI: MFU Renewable Energy Director Michelle Medina, (651) 288-4096 or michelle@mfu.org

Sun., Aug. 5 • 11:30 a.m. • Todd County Farmers Union Picnic • Clarissa Park, Clarissa • FFI: Al Perish, (320) 760-2516

Aug. 7-9 • Minnesota Farmfest • Gilfillan Estate, Morgan • Look for MFU in a blue and white hoop barn along with Farmers Union Insurance Agency

Sat., Aug. 18 • 9 a.m. • MFU Full Board of Directors Meeting • MFU State Office, St. Paul

Sun., Aug. 19 • 1 p.m. • COACT Farm Picnic co-sponsored by Morrison County Farmers Union. Speakers: MFU Government Relations Director Thom Petersen, HCA-MN Chair Ron Jankowski

Thurs., Aug. 23-Sept. 3 • Minnesota State Fair • Falcon Heights

Sun., Aug. 26 • Minnesota Cooks Day at the Minnesota State Fair • Falcon Heights

Day Camps

July 9 • 10 a.m.–2 p.m. • Morrison County Day Camp • Lions Park, Fourth St. SE and Ninth Ave. SE, Little Falls RSVP to Carol Schmidt, (320) 632-9432

July 10 • 9 a.m.–12 p.m. • Morton Day Camp • Charles Eastman Canoe Landing Park (south of Morton on First St.), Morton RSVP to Glen Schmidt, (651) 288-4066

July 12 • 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. • Lac Qui Parle County Day Camp • Dawson Swimming Pool (off Hwy. 212), Dawson RSVP to Deb Breberg, (320) 769-2088

July 13 • 9 a.m.–1 p.m. • Klabunde Farm Day Camp • Bryan Klabunde’s Farm, 2843 140th Ave., Waubun RSVP to Glen Schmidt, (651) 288-4066

Renewable Energy Working Sessions

It’s almost time again for Renewable Energy Working Sessions! MFU will host five regional sessions in July. These events are to provide more information for our members about wind and solar and talk about the issues in renewable energy. Sessions are free and open to the public, but RSVP is required to MFU Renewable Energy Director Michelle Medina at michelle@mfu.org or (651) 288-4096.

Sessions begin with registration at 8:30 a.m., followed by programming in the morning, lunch and tours in the afternoon.

Mon., July 16 • Common Sense Development, 412 W Broadway St., Plainview

Tue., July 17 • Falk’s Seed Farm, Inc., 1170 Hwy. 9 NE, Murdock

Wed., July 18 • River City Eatery, 344 10th St., Windom

Tentative dates:
Mon., July 23 • NE Minnesota
Tue., July 24 • NW Minnesota
Farmers Union Insurance Agency is wholly owned by Minnesota Farmers Union.

A portion of your premium dollars go right back to supporting Minnesota Farmers Union, protecting family farms, ranches and cooperatives, enhancing the quality of life of family farmers and ranchers, and supporting the hardworking men and women in Minnesota’s agricultural communities.

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