Happy Holidays from all of us at Minnesota Farmers Union!

Photo taken at the Wolcyn tree farm, MFU members in Isanti County

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The room was full nearly the whole time. It was a fitting way to celebrate 100 years of Farmers Union in Minnesota, remembering the first chapter in Jackson County, Rost Center Local, which formed in 1918.

Our keynote at the convention banquet was the showing of the three videos we worked on with W2 Productions for the Farmers Union Coffee Shop at the Minnesota State Fair, featuring the history of MFU, the importance of local foods and the state of agriculture today. In between, I gave remarks about how MFU has always worked for the benefit of our family farmers and rural communities, especially when it comes to getting a fair price for our labor. There’s much work to be done, with the uncertainty of the Farm Bill, the trade war, the Renewable Fuels Standard and high health care costs placing burdens on farmers. We’re hard at work on all of these things and more.

I’d like to congratulate our four award honorees: Don Wick of Red River Farm Network, Ag Communicator of the Year; Mary Nell Preisler, Director of the UMN Extension Farmer-Lender Mediation Program, Service to Agriculture Award; Dave and Donna Johnson, the first being a longtime Executive Committee Member, Lifetime Achievement Award; and Wayne Boettcher, retired Outreach Representative, Dedicated Service to Farmers Union Award. Thank you for what you do for Farmers Union and family agriculture. There’s more about these people on page 8.

A special thanks to Fladeboe Auctions, represented at our convention by Dale, Grace and Glen Fladeboe, who ran our annual fundraiser live auction and did a spectacular job. We raised a significant amount of funds for the MFU Foundation and the MFUPAC, thanks to the support of MFU friends and members.

We had another successful MFUPAC Reception, where members also contributed generously. Thanks to Speaker of the House-designate Melissa Hortman, State Auditor-elect Julie Blaha, Congressman-elect Dean Phillips and State Representative Jeanne Poppe, who has been named the next Chair of the House Agriculture Committee, for speaking at the reception.

I’d also like to thank our sponsors who made our convention possible. They are listed on page 2 with their logos and sponsorship levels.

(continued on page 4)
MFU members elected ten people as delegates to represent Minnesota at the next NFU convention, which will be held March 3-5, 2019 in Bellevue, Wash. They are Vicki Barnes of St. Paul; Rachel Brann of Milaca; Maria Fatz of Waubun; Linda Larson of Rosemount; Eric Monson of Eagle Bend; Peter Schwagerl of Browns Valley; Mary Sullivan of Franklin; Elaine Torpet of Fertile; Cindy VanDerPol of Kerkhoven; and Tim Velde of Granite Falls.

Congratulations to all, and we look forward to having you join us.

Health care

The issue that was at the forefront of members’ minds at the convention was health care. We addressed it in policy discussion, the special orders and in a breakout session with State Senators Scott Jensen, R-Chaska, and Tony Lourey, DFL-Kerrick, along with United States of Care State Affairs Director Allison O’Toole. It was a well-attended discussion, with members sharing their stories of how high health care costs have affected them. Sen. Jensen, who is a doctor by occupation, told a story at a panel discussion of someone who had gotten in an accident and whom he found in a field. The victim raised his hand up, wanting to decline care because he could not afford it. Another member shared a story of how his doctor waited until he was very sick to start any treatment program, despite reports of illness long before, because of the expense.

We’ve been hearing stories like this for years now, especially from family farmers who purchase their health insurance on the individual market. The cost of premiums plus deductibles has added up to more than $40,000/year for some. In a time when farm income is, on average, below the cost of production, it’s unconscionable that a farmer would have to pay that much for health care, too. Some people take the risk of going without health insurance at all.

Because our elected officials have been stuck in a cycle of partisan arguments over health care reform, no real progress has been made on this issue. As I’ve said before, the MinnesotaCare Buy-In option is one that could make a difference, allowing people to purchase health insurance and pay lower monthly premiums. We encourage the Minnesota Legislature to consider it again.

Gov.-elect Tim Walz has expressed support for the idea, which was first proposed by Gov. Mark Dayton in 2017. Our special order at convention supports implementing that option, as well as extending the provider tax that funds MinnesotaCare and is set to sunset at the end of 2019.

The MinnesotaCare Buy-In is just one option we can consider, but inaction is not. Health care is a basic human right, and we need to work cooperatively to make sure everyone has access to it. I’ll be attending a meeting of the United States of Care Founder’s Council, which I am a member of, in early December in Washington, D.C., where we’ll discuss what we need to do to improve health care affordability and accessibility.

Another of our special orders was to pass the Farm Bill before the end of the 2018 lame-duck session, so we don’t need to extend the 2014 bill. Congressman Collin Peterson, D-Minn. and the likely next Chair of the House Agriculture Committee, spoke to us at our convention and said he and current Chair Michael Conaway, R-Texas, had offered a compromise deal to Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Pat Roberts, R-Kan., and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich. Peterson told Chris Clayton of DTN that the bill made compromises on the Supplemental Nutrition Access Program work requirements that have caused partisan holdups on the bill. Also at our convention, Peterson said he is hopeful that the bill can be completed in the lame-duck session. If it isn’t, he said he will bring it back up in January.

At the time of this writing, neither Roberts nor Stabenow has said they’ve agreed to the compromise, and according to Philip Brasher of Agri-Pulse, Stabenow has concerns about it. While we want to see a Farm Bill get done soon, we also must make sure it provides an adequate safety net for farmers during this time of low prices, as well as funding for conservation, rural development, renewable energy, beginning farmer programs and local food programs. It’s the most important piece of legislation for rural America. We do appreciate the House’s willingness to compromise in this instance and hope to see that continue.

U.S. Representative Collin Peterson addresses points in the Farm Bill
There’s never a dull moment in agriculture, and it’s no exception at MFU. 2018 marked 100 years of Farmers Union in Minnesota, since the first local began in Jackson County in 1918. We celebrated that occasion, along with growing our programs and starting new ones.

- Elected Joshua VanDerPol as the newest Executive Committee member.
- Had a presence at a wide variety of trade shows, conferences and conventions, including Farmfest; the Faith, Food and the Environment Conference; the Minnesota Organic Conference; Minnesota Ag Expo; the Minnesota FFA Convention; Minnesota Beef Expo; Minnesota Milk Dairy Conference and Expo; UMN Extension Women in Ag Network Conference; Minnesota Agri-Women Ag Leadership Conference; Clean Energy Resource Teams Conference.
- Sent seven members and two staff to the National Farmers Union Women’s Conference with scholarships from our organization.
- Held a successful Lobby Day Drive-In at the Minnesota Capitol in February.
- Debated policy at the National Farmers Union 116th Anniversary Convention in Kansas City and elected Patty Edelburg of Wisconsin as the new NFU Vice President.
- During the legislative session, advocated for funding for the Rural Finance Authority; expanded rural broadband access; a MinnesotaCare Buy-In option; a moratorium on ditch mowing permits; a tax credit to compensate farmers who added buffers to their land; rural mental health care; and much more.

- Released op-ed articles speaking out against the trade war and Renewable Fuels Standard “hardship waivers.”
- Held seven Rural Voices Discussions covering every region of Minnesota to hear what rural people want to see change, releasing a report at the conclusion and holding a news conference at the Capitol with then-Deputy Agriculture Commissioner Matt Wohlman; Assistant Commissioner of Human Services for Health Care Nathan Moracco; and Executive Director of the Office of Broadband Development Danna McKenzie.
- Held two Rural Dairy Discussions in Stearns and Wabasha counties, a similar format to the Rural Voices Discussions but focused exclusively on dairy price crisis solutions. Guest panelists included Minnesota then-Assistant Agriculture Commissioner Andrea Vaubel and NFU Vice President Patty Edelburg. Congressional staff also attended.
- Enjoyed five weeks of Farmers Union Leadership Camp and nine days of day camps, teaching youth about agriculture, cooperatives and Farmers Union principles, while having tons of fun outside. Senior high campers elected a new Youth Advisory Council. Longtime MFU camper Jade Person was elected to the National Youth Advisory Council.
- Held our annual Women’s Conference in New Ulm.
- Held five Renewable Energy Working Sessions across the state to provide outreach to farmers interested in clean energy and hear feedback about policy related to renewables.

• Redesigned the Farmers Union Coffee Shop at the Minnesota State Fair to better showcase our work and our commitment to family agriculture; the locally grown Heirloom Tomato + Sweet Corn BLT was one of the fair’s top-selling items.
• Held another successful Minnesota Cooks Day at the State Fair, with celebrity tasters such as Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Gov.-elect Tim Walz, and a diverse array of Minnesota farmers and restaurants, who appear in the 2019 Minnesota Cooks Calendar.
• Brought 32 members and staff to the NFU Legislative Fly-In in Washington, D.C., talking to elected officials about trade policy, the Farm Bill and renewable fuels.
• Gathered for our 77th Annual MFU Convention and set our policy for the next year; we also viewed the series of films created for the Farmers Union Coffee Shop and celebrated 100 years of Farmers Union in Minnesota.
• Chose the first class of the MFU New Leader Academy, a program designed to grow the next generation of leaders in our organization.
Delegates to the 77th Annual MFU Convention, Nov. 16-18 in Minneapolis, debated and adopted many new provisions to our organization’s policy statement. The provisions begin as ideas and resolutions at county level meetings and are then forwarded to the policy committee for their consideration.

The Policy Committee this year was chaired by Eric Sannerud from Benton County. Also serving on the committee were Kirsten VanDerPol, Chippewa Co.; Laurie Driessen, Yellow Medicine Co.; Frank Grimm, Sibley Co.; Bob Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co.; Krista Osendorf, Stearns Co.; Erik Hatlestad, Kandiyohi Co.; Dale Ritter, Stevens Co.; and Nancy Dahlin-Teich, Chisago Co. The committee prepared nearly 60 changes for the convention to consider. In all, members went to the microphone nearly 130 times to speak on issues with over 60 different members speaking! That is great grassroots involvement!

Here is a look at some of the more interesting changes:

- Support for set-aside or other programs to manage oversupply of agricultural commodities.
- Support for allowing dairy farmers, retailers, promotional organizations and others to advertise the percentage of a dairy product that is fat-free.
- Support for Congress having the ability to override Executive Branch trade tariffs and further support for congressional approval or rejection of trade tariffs within 6 months from when they are imposed.
- Support for rewarding more diverse crop rotations and the use of proven conservation practices with increased premium subsidy support.
- Support that lab-grown artificial protein not be labeled as “meat”. Further support for MFU to be involved in hearings and policy development of regulations, labeling and sales.
- Support for the MN Beginning Farmer Tax Credit, and further support for allowing the tax credit to be used by family members and that a percentage of the credit be set aside for others not related closely to owners.
- Support for increased funding to support increased and simplified inspection at USDA and state equal-to meat processing facilities.
- Support for increased funding for mental health, especially in rural areas.
- Support for the extension of the MinnesotaCare provider tax will sunset Jan. 1, 2020.
- Opposition to the use of J-turns (Reduced Conflict Intersections) on state highways in farming areas.
- Support for working to increase the use of biodiesel nationally to 5 percent.
- Support for the elimination of the use of Federal “Hardship Waiver” from the RFS by the EPA.
- Support for the Minnesota Legislature to follow the single subject mandate in constitution when passing bills especially at the end of a legislative session.

These are just some of the pages in our 70-page policy document. If you would like to receive a copy of the policy, please contact me at (651) 288-4067 or thom@mfu.org. We will be glad to mail or email you a copy.
Farm Bill
Whereas, the Agricultural Act of 2014, also known as the 2014 Farm Bill, expired on Sept. 30, 2018; and
Whereas, the House and Senate passed versions of a new Farm Bill during summer 2018; and
Whereas, Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) has supported that the Farm Bill provide an adequate safety net for farmers, strong funding for conservation, rural development, beginning farmers, energy and other important items; and
Whereas, many sectors of agriculture, including dairy, are struggling financially;
Now therefore be it resolved that MFU strongly supports that Congress enter conference committee discussions with the purpose of working out differences between the House and Senate versions and passing a new Farm Bill in the 2018 lame-duck session, and
Further be it resolved this conference committee report should include these key elements:
1. Significant financial relief for all family farmers.
2. Maintain the integrity of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) as well as significant funding.
3. Dedicated funding for the beginning farmer and rancher program and local foods.

Trade
Whereas, the Trump administration has imposed tariffs on China and other nations, and in many cases, retaliatory tariffs from those nations are having a disproportionately negative and targeted impact on the farm economy; and
Whereas, as farm income is low and surplus commodities are piling up; and
Whereas, MFU policy recognizes that international trade agreements, when properly constructed, are useful vehicles that lessen world trade tensions and increase development opportunities and economic growth; and
Whereas, the current tariffs run the risk of inflicting long-term damage to our relationship with our trading partners the longer the conflict continues, making it harder to re-establish markets that we have spent years establishing;
Now therefore be it resolved that MFU supports our members of Congress taking leadership to work with the administration to bring stability back to our nation’s role as a reliable and trustworthy international agricultural trading partner.

Health Care
Whereas, MFU policy calls for the state and federal government to develop and operate a comprehensive single-payer health plan that enables all people to have health care; and
Whereas, MFU policy supports the right for states to establish public health care options; and
Whereas, MinnesotaCare was created in 1992 by Republican Gov. Arne Carlson and a bipartisan group of legislators to provide health care for Minnesotans to purchase for themselves and family; and
Whereas, a recent Minnesota Public Radio/Star Tribune public opinion poll shows that 70 percent of Minnesotans want the option to buy into public health insurance programs like MinnesotaCare, compared to 11 percent who oppose it;
Now therefore be it resolved that while continuing to advocate for single-payer, MFU supports the efforts of Gov.-Elect Tim Walz, State Sen. Tony Lourey and others to give everyone who buys health insurance on the individual market the choice to buy into MinnesotaCare at its current value; and
Furthermore, when Gov. Arne Carlson signed MinnesotaCare into law in 1992, a 2 percent provider tax funded nearly the entire program; and
Whereas, under legislation enacted in 2011, the provider tax will expire on Jan. 1, 2020;
Now therefore be it resolved that MFU supports an extension of the MinnesotaCare provider tax that funds a substantial part of the program.
CONVENTION AWARD WINNERS

MFU 2018 Award Winners

These individuals were honored at the 77th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention for their accomplishments.

Don Wick, Ag Communicator of the Year

Don Wick is a farm broadcaster and owner of the Red River Farm Network. In fall 2018, he was inducted into the National Association of Farm Broadcasting Hall of Fame. In 2005, Don was recognized as the National Farm Broadcaster of the Year. He is a two-time recipient of the Oscar in Agriculture for Excellence in Agricultural Journalism and is a past president of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters. Don is on the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council board and is a member of the Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame. Don and his wife Kolleen have two adult children and five grandchildren.

Mary Nell Preisler, Service to Agriculture Award

Mary Nell and Franklyn Preisler raised their family on a century old livestock and grain farm by Bejou, Minn. Mary Nell has worked in the field of mediation as a mediator, in community settings and in farmer-lender mediation, for 32 years. Her education is supplemented with a breadth of training about mediation in farm, financial, family, crisis intervention and educational settings. Mary Nell was instrumental in bringing the Farmer-Lender Mediation program to Minnesota in 1986; she is the program’s director.

Wayne Boettcher, Dedicated Service to Farmers Union Award

Wayne and Lois Boettcher live on the land that Wayne has called home nearly his entire life, just outside Isanti. His family members were part of Farmers Union and other local agricultural cooperatives, which Wayne has carried on throughout his life. He was Isanti County Farmers Union President in the 1980s and served as an MFU Field Representative from 2002-2018, and he is president of the Isanti County Fair Board. He was also named Volunteer of the Year by the Lakes and Pines Community Action Council, for which he served on the board of directors. Currently he and Lois board horses at BMW Stables and have a few beef cattle, and their children live nearby.

Dave & Donna Johnson, Lifetime Achievement Award

Dave and Donna Johnson have been active in Farmers Union for as long as they can remember. Dave attended his first MFU event in the 1950s. He and Donna, married since 1961, have dedicated their time between themselves to teaching school, farming grains and raising three sons. Dave has been the county president for West Otter Tail County for 30 years and concluded a 20-year tenure on the Executive Committee in 2018. The couple lives in Fergus Falls, while their son Darren farms the family land. Dave is also on his local township board, the YMCA board and church council.
This October, I had to chance to once again attend the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Ind. This was my eighth convention and as always, I had a blast. Throughout high school, I had the opportunity to attend as a chapter and region officer to better develop my leadership skills and expand my horizon. For the past four years, I have attended with the University of Minnesota’s Agricultural Education, Communication and Marketing Club and competed at the Alpha Tau Alpha Conclave (ATA), an event similar to the National FFA Convention for agriculture education leaders. The ATA Conclave is held at the same location and during the same time in order to give college students a chance to work their college career booth at the FFA convention. I was joined by MFU camp counselors Katie Brown and Winona Johnson, who are also students at UMN.

The ATA Conclave hosts multiple competitions for students to compete in, including parliamentary procedure, individual and group essay, quiz bowl, debate and the Program of Excellence, a presentation of the club’s accomplishments throughout the year. I competed in the group essay, writing on how agricultural education college prep programs can help shape the agriculture teaching profession in ways to help alleviate burnout and loss of teachers to other careers. Together, my group discussed how there needs to be more transparency for students before they enter the career field and earlier time in the classroom. With the way things are currently set up, students don’t get to spend any time in the classroom for hands-on experience until their senior year when it’s too late to switch career paths.

When I wasn’t busy with the ATA Conclave, I spent time at the University of Minnesota booth at the college and career expo center. Here, I staffed the booth and spoke with students interested in attending the University of Minnesota. I had some great discussions with high school students about what the U of M has to offer and why I believe it is such a great school and state to live in.

I also got to cheer on fellow University of Minnesota students that were receiving their American Degree, the National FFA’s highest honor. I received mine in 2016 and am always so excited to watch fellow peers hard work pay off as it’s no small feat to accomplish.

As a senior in college, this was my last convention and I sadly closed the chapter of my life of being an active FFA member. But I will certainly be continuing my involvement by being an FFA alumni member and encouraging FFA members to take every opportunity available. Without the strong support I received, I never would have been an active member and got to experience everything I did. I wouldn’t have made friends across the state and nation, nor would I have gained half the skills I have today. Quite simply wouldn’t be the person I am today without the National FFA Organization. I want to ensure that students receive that same support for generations to come so they too, can develop into the bright and skilled individuals they’re meant to be.

Receiving my American FFA Degree

by Emily Pliscott, MFU intern

At October’s National FFA Convention, I attended the Alpha Tau Alpha Conclave with the University of Minnesota’s parliamentary procedure team. To demonstrate our knowledge of Robert’s Rules of Order and the proper method of running a meeting, the U of M’s five-person team completed a mixture of main and subsidiary motions during a mock business meeting with five other colleges from around the county and completed a written test. We placed second in the national contest, and a University of Minnesota student was selected for both the Outstanding Chair and Outstanding Secretary Awards. The Robert’s Rules of Order are the same rules that govern MFU meetings and conventions, for reference.

I also received my American FFA Degree, highlighting the end of my FFA career with the highest degree the National FFA Organization can bestow upon a member. This cumulated seven years of a supervised agricultural experience program where I raised goats and learned about both corn and soybean breeding. Less than one percent of FFA members receive this award, as it requires at least three years of agricultural education classes and service hours combined with a gross $10,000-worth combination of income and unpaid hours. Others involved with MFU received their American FFA Degrees as well, including camp counselors Nick Aarsvold and Andrew VanDerPol.

Overall, the National FFA Convention was a great experience and a chance to successfully promote both the University of Minnesota and opportunities for FFA members to continue in agriculture. This year’s trip to Indianapolis left me with a lot of hope for the ever-expanding opportunities in our industry and in the ability of Minnesota students to successfully bring agriculture forward.

BRIANNA OPDAHL, MFU INTERN
intern@mfu.org
Producers can submit Market Facilitation Program applications until the deadline on Jan. 15, 2019. The application is one page, front and back, and shouldn't take too much of your time. You’ll provide some basic contact information and specifics about commodities that have already been harvested to date for 2018. In the future, we can work with you to add more commodities to your application as the information becomes available.

There are several ways to submit the application form to meet your needs. If you choose, you can print a copy of the CCC-910 from www.farmers.gov/manage/mfp. Once you’ve completed the form, you can send it to your local USDA service center via fax, mail or email.

As always, you can apply in person at your local USDA service center. Stop by and see us, we can complete the Market Facilitation Program application form together.

You can also apply for MFP online by completing your MFP application using your level 2 USDA e-Authentication account. For more information on the e-Authentication process, please read the information included below.

Sign in/Sign up!
Farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers have new online options to access U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. Through USDA’s new streamlined process, producers doing business as an individual can now register, track and manage their applications for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) and 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP) on the secure and convenient www.farmers.gov.

USDA e-Authentication does not have the mechanism to issue login accounts to businesses, corporations, other entities, or for anyone acting on behalf of another individual or entity. Producers doing business as an individual first need to sign up for Level 2 e-Authentication access.

- Step 1: Create an online account at www.eauth.usda.gov
- Step 2: Complete identity verification by either using the online self-service identity verification method or by completing the identity verification in-person at your USDA Service Center
- Step 3: Contact your local USDA Service Center to have your new Level 2 account linked with your USDA customer record
- Step 4: You’re enrolled and ready to log in

Users with a secure Level 2 e-Authentication ID, linked to their USDA customer record, can apply for select USDA programs, view and print farm maps and farm records data. Enrolling is easy! Visit www.farmers.gov/sign-in to learn more.

To locate a service center near you or use online services not requiring e-Authentication access, visit www.farmers.gov. For technical assistance, call the e-Authentication help desk at 1-800-457-3642.
Behind the evergreen trees that adorn our homes during the holiday season are hardworking family farmers — and years of planning.

One of those farm families is the Wolcyn family, MFU members operating a Christmas tree farm and nursery between Cambridge and Princeton on Minnesota Highway 95. Adie Wolcyn, the matriarch of Wolcyn Tree Farms and Nursery, said they have to plan for a market that’s 8-12 years away when they plant their trees. And, like most farmers, they have to optimize growing conditions for the trees.

“People just think we plant them and they grow,” Adie said. “We have to go in and mow or spray weeds, we have to fertilize the trees and we have to shear them. We water them if there’s a drought, and we don’t know when the drought’s going to be.”

The farm has been a labor of love for nearly 50 years now for Adie’s husband Tom Wolcyn, whose parents began the business as a hobby. Tom grew up in St. Paul, and his parents purchased 80 acres of the Isanti County land.

“I started shearing the trees when I was 14,” Tom said. “I sold my first trees when I was 16. I’m 65 now.”

The decades Tom, Adie and their family have spent in the Christmas tree and nursery business have rewarded them with strong relationships with customers and industry friends. Folks visiting the farm can choose and cut their own Balsam Fir or Fraser Fir trees, an experience that earned the Wolcyns a Viewer’s Choice award from WCCO-TV in 2014 as “Best Place to Cut Down Your Own Tree.”

Why Christmas trees?

That was the question Adie asked Tom when they first met on a blind date. Growing up in Wisconsin around friends who were dairy farmers, she had never considered the idea of growing trees.

“The nice thing about trees is that you don’t have to be there all the time, and they stay where they were put,” Adie said. “Plus, when you go inside after working, you smell good.”

Invested early in trees, Tom studied forestry at the University of Minnesota, alongside an athletic career.

“I played baseball for the Gophers in the 1970s,” Tom said. “I was also the head baseball coach at Bethel College for awhile. I had planned to join the staff of the UMN campus Crusade for Christ. I coached at UMN for awhile and led the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, but as I got older and had kids, we had to ratchet up the tree business. So we bought more land. We own 1,200 acres now, which we’ve bought within the last 30 years.”

The athletics interest was passed down to their four sons, Nick, Ben, Clint and Bobby, who all played football at the University of Northwestern.

Nick, Ben and Bobby all work on the farm now, while Clint, who lives in Savage, helps out when needed and runs a retail tree lot in Northfield. Tom and Adie also have four daughters-in-law and eight grandchildren.

The regional reach of the Wolcyn business has multiplied as well. Tom sold trees just in St. Paul. Now the family has retail lots at the St. Paul Farmers Market, Northfield and Fargo. They also sell trees for retail at the main farm, in addition to the choose-and-cut. But those are far from the only places you can find their trees.

“The retail is the part of the business that most people know us by, but it’s definitely not the part of the business that consumes most of our time and energy. Most of it is consumed by the wholesale side of the business,” said Nick.

The Wolcyns have developed longtime customer relationships in their wholesale business, with groups such as the UMN Forestry Club, which has bought their trees for 50 years and sell them on campus. Tom said 80 percent of trees go to customers they’ve worked with for more than 25 years.

Harvesting and shipping the trees mostly takes place during October and November, after nursery season winds down. Tom said they ship about 20,000 trees in ten days during that period.

“The biggest problem is getting good workers,” Tom said. “We’re fortunate we got some really good ones, but we could always use more during the peak season. We’ve mechanized more too.”

Mechanization is especially useful when it comes to dealing with big, heavy trees. The Wolcyns grow their biggest trees, which are used in buildings such as churches and those with vaulted ceilings, at their flagship location. Most of their acres are within three miles of the main farm in Cambridge.

Diversifying markets

If a tree is too big to sell, not all is lost – its boughs can be used for wreaths and other decorations. “We ship more than 150,000 pounds of boughs each year,” Tom said. “It gives us a secondary market.”

Some of those boughs end up at big stores like Fleet Farm and Costco, or get made into wreaths on the farm.

The nursery business side has expanded quite a bit as well, with consumer demand for deciduous ornamental trees, shade trees and fruit trees. It keeps them active beyond the season of Christmas trees.

“Christmas trees are actually only 30 percent of our gross sales now,” Tom said.

The Wolcyns keep about 30-40 employees during the spring through the fall, until Christmas tree harvest and shipping are complete, and about five through the winter.

Why MFU?

As the Wolcyns have developed long-term relationships with customers, they’ve also developed relationships with others in agriculture. That’s why being a part of MFU and other advocacy groups is important to them.

“It’s so important to know everyone in the business, and even in other businesses, because you don’t know when they’re going to need you or you’re going to need them,” Adie said.

Adie said she heard about our organization because of the agritourism liability signs we distribute, which explain to people touring farms of the inherent risks of being on a farm. The family realized they should be part of the group, too.

They’re also members of Minnesota Grown, the Minnesota Christmas Tree Association and the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association. They’ve found that in their industry, the relationships between producers are cooperative, not cutthroat competitive.

“We don’t think of other Christmas tree growers as competitors,” Adie said. “We think of them as friends.”

MEMBERS IN FOCUS: WOLCYN FAMILY, ISANTI COUNTY

Minnesota Farmers Union  Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers

11
Farm & Rural Helpline

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

If you or any farmers you know would like to speak with Ted Matthews, the state rural mental health specialist based out of MnSCU, his number is (320) 266-2390. He meets with farmers one-on-one and free of charge. No insurance card, paperwork or referral is necessary.

Farm Advocates

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

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

**Farm Advocates:**

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

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

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**Honey & Rye Bakehouse & York Farm**

**Cherry Madeleines with Cherry Glaze**

Yield: 24 cookies

Special equipment: madeleine pan

For cookies:

- 1 c butter
- 2 c pastry flour
- 2 t baking powder
- pinch of salt
- 1 c granulated sugar
- 2 T brown sugar
- 2 T honey
- 5 eggs
- 1 c chopped cherries, patted dry

Pre-heat oven to 375°F.

Melt butter; reserve. Sift dry ingredients (flour, baking powder, salt); reserve. Chop cherries into small pieces; reserve.

Whisk sugars, honey, and eggs in a bowl, just to incorporate.

Fold dry ingredients into wet ingredients in 2-3 batches, until just incorporated. Add melted, slightly cooled butter (not hot!); fold in just to incorporate. Gently fold in chopped cherries, just to incorporate.

Chill before baking (30 minutes or overnight). Spoon or scoop batter into buttered madeleine pan, filling each cup about 3/4 full.

Bake approximately 10-12 minutes, rotating pan halfway through. Cookies are done when there is browning around edges and a signature “bump” in center. They should spring back when gently pressed. Remove from pan.

For cherry glaze:

- 2 c powdered (confectioners) sugar
- 1/4 c mashed cherries
- 2-4 T hot water, use as needed to thin glaze to consistency
- juice of 1/2 lemon

Sift powdered sugar. Mash cherries in sugar and allow juices to release. Add water as needed to achieve pourable consistency – if too thin, add more sugar; if too thick, add more water.

While cookies are still warm (but not piping hot!), dip half in cherry glaze to coat the top.
**DID YOU KNOW** that farmers and ranchers receive only 14.8* cents of every dollar that consumers spend on food at home and away from home? According to USDA, off-farm costs, including marketing, processing, wholesaling, distribution and retailing, account for more than 80 cents of every food dollar spent in the United States. Visit [nfu.org](http://nfu.org) to learn more.

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*Figure according to U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service

Retail prices based on Safeway (SE) brand except where noted

Farmer’s share derived from USDA, NASS “Agricultural Prices,” 2018 | Prices based on September 2018 data.
UPCOMING EVENTS

National Farmers Union Women’s Conference

The National Farmers Union (NFU) Women’s Conference will be held Jan. 13-17, 2019 in San Diego, Calif.

The theme is “Farming in Community.”

Farming is never a one-woman job – it takes a village to run a successful operation. This conference will not only focus on the concept of agricultural community building, but it will provide attendees with their own network of women farmers and ranchers they can reach out to throughout the year.

Farms, policy makers, educators and specialists will present on a number of subjects, including financial management, food safety, innovative marketing, conservation, USDA programs and more.

The convention also includes a half day of local farm tours.

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2019 Keynote Speakers:

Karen Washington has been a community activist since 1985, striving to make the New York City a better place to live. As a community gardener and board member of the New York Botanical Gardens, she worked with Bronx neighborhoods to turn empty lots into community gardens. As an advocate, and former president of the New York City Community Garden Coalition, she spoke out for garden protection and preservation. As a member of the La Familia Verde Garden Coalition, she helped launched a City Farms Market, bringing fresh vegetables to the community.

Karen is a Why Hunger board member, a Just Food board member and Just Food Trainer, leading workshops on growing food and food justice across the country.

Since retiring from Physical Therapy in 2014, Karen is co-owner/rarmer at Rise & Root Farm.

Patty Edelburg is a dairy farmer in central Wisconsin. Along with her husband and 18-year-old twins, Edelburg owns and operates Front-Page Holsteins, a registered Holstein dairy where they milk 120 cows and run 350 acres of corn and alfalfa, mainly for forage. The Edelburgs purchased their farm in 2008. Beyond milking good quality cows, they also strive for excellent genetics that will do well in the show ring and club sales.

Patty has been an advocate for agriculture for a long time. Most recently, she has been elected to serve as the National Farmers Union Vice President. Prior to that she served for a short time as the State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency in Wisconsin and spent 12 years on the Wisconsin Farmers Union state board.

Visit NFU.org/Education/WomensConference for more information and to register.

FUIA AGENT HIGHLIGHT:

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Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and MFU important to you? I find working with people to be so rewarding. Everyone’s life has a different path and obstacles along the way. Helping them navigate their insurance needs is what makes me love what I do. Farmers Union Insurance Agency gives me a wide variety of products and resources to help meet each clients needs. I enjoy getting to know people and sharing in the pride they have for what they do and knowing the importance of what we are protecting if something happens. Farmers Union Insurance Agency is built to allow the Agents to best serve our clients.

What community organizations are you passionate about?

I have coached football in Fergus Falls for the last 5 years. I am a board member for the Fergus Falls Young Professionals Network as a branch of the Fergus Falls Chamber of Commerce. We set up several great opportunities for volunteering/professional development/social networking. I have been on a church committee for the last 3 years in helping to show how our church is active in the community.

I am an active participant in the Fergus Falls Dollars For Scholars program in helping deserving students receive local scholarships for further education.

Please tell us a little bit about your family life. I was born and raised in Fergus Falls and currently live in town with my wife Mariah and daughter Addison. We are blessed to have several family members in the area and spend a lot of time with them as well. We take advantage of the wonderful lakes and outdoor opportunities that this area has to offer.

What is your #1 concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance? When I visit with a farmer and review their coverage I find too often that the building and equipment values have not been updated appropriately. If there was to be a loss and they could not appropriately get their property back it would have a long lasting negative impact and could potentially lead to the failure of the farm. I never feel that I am selling a coverage to a farmer. When the information is provided by the farmer and we breakdown the needs of the operation, it is sharing information for the farmer to become an educated consumer on how and why we can fill those needs with the products offered.

Grant took over the Fergus Falls Agency in June of 2017. You can see more about Grant’s Agency and his community involvement on Facebook at @fergusfallsinsurance. Follow Farmers Union Insurance Agency on social media at MNFUIA, and visit our website at mnfuia.com.
FSMA Produce Safety Rule Grower Trainings

This fall and winter, MFU is partnering with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), University of Minnesota (UMN) Extension, Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (MFVGA), Minnesota Farmers Market Association (MFMA) and other partners to host Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule trainings around the state for produce farmers. The Produce Safety Rule is one of seven parts of FSMA, which is a new federal food safety regulation. The Produce Safety Rule applies to produce growers who sell more than $25,000 in produce per year (adjusted for inflation). Some farms covered by the rule may also qualify for an exemption based on sales, crops grown or the intended use of the produce.

To comply with this rule, fruit and vegetable farms that grow, pack, harvest and/or hold produce and that do not qualify for an exemption or exclusion need to attend this training that uses the FDA-approved curriculum. To learn if your farm is fully covered by the rule, view the FDA’s Coverage and Exemptions/Exclusions Chart at www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/UCM472499.pdf or see this fact sheet by UMN at extension.umn.edu/growing-safe-food/fsma-and-produce-safety-rule-does-rule-apply-me.

However, all growers interested in learning about produce safety, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and the FSMA Produce Safety Rule are encouraged to attend. Learning about and implementing good agricultural practices protects your farm and business, can help you get a GAP audit if needed and keeps our local foods safe and healthy. These courses will be co-led by trained fruit and vegetable farmers and staff from UMN Extension and MDA.

Register: www.psp.tix.com. Deadline is 10 days before each class or until full. Producers are encouraged to register early, as last year 4 of 5 courses were sold out with wait lists.

Cost: $25 (this cost is subsidized and will likely rise in the coming years). Registration includes training materials, lunch, refreshments and a certificate of attendance issued by the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO). Certificate of attendance is good for life.

Schedule: Check-in is at 8:30 a.m. Training runs from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Class Size: Limited to 40 participants on a first-come, first-served basis. No walk-ins accepted.

For more information: Contact the MDA Produce Safety Program at (651) 539-3648 or www.mda.state.mn.us/food-feed/fsma-produce-safety-rule-grower-training-courses. Visit UMN Extension On-Farm GAPs Education Program for more information on Good Agricultural Practices and the FSMA Produce Safety Rule at extension.umn.edu/safety/growing-safe-food.

Learn about FSMA: www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm334114.htm.

Learn about the Produce Safety Alliance: producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/
...There’s still time to sign up for health insurance!

Open Enrollment runs through various dates in December (depending on company and plan), but will definitely end soon... so don’t delay! Contact your friendly neighborhood FUIA Agent for assistance navigating through the health plan options we have available and for you and your family.

Remember, FUIA Agents can also offer 40 Square Cooperative Solutions health plans (must be an active farmer to be eligible)!

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