MFU members invited to our spring Rural Voices Discussions

For the third year, Minnesota Farmers Union is planning a series of Rural Voices Discussions in locations around Minnesota. These events have been popular not just among our members, but among family farmers, rural residents, media and advocates in general. All members and the general public are invited to these free, open sessions.

If you’ve never been to a Rural Voices Discussion, here’s what you can expect: The focus is on listening to you, not having someone talk at you. MFU puts together a listening panel, usually consisting of President Gary Wertish; state agency commissioners or assistant commissioners; and a representative from National Farmers Union. The panelists have no agenda for the discussion other than to hear from you. MFU Membership and Outreach Director Bruce Miller is the moderator.

If you’d like to speak up, raise your hand and you’ll likely be called on. Stand up, state your name and where you’re from, and say what’s on your mind. Sometimes a panelist will respond if you have a specific question they can help with; otherwise they just listen.

Once all who desired to speak have had their turn, each panelist will share their reflections on what they heard and any actions they can take as a result. You will have time following to talk with them if you have further questions.

Also in attendance are staff from Minnesota’s members of Congress. They sit among the rest of the attendees, but also share their thoughts at the end about what they’ll bring back to our representatives. Occasionally, state legislators attend as well. We make a point to invite other groups who share our advocacy interests and can provide resources that could benefit you.

The Rural Voices Discussions are your chance to be heard. It may feel sometimes like you’re not being heard, especially if you can’t make it to St. Paul or Washington, D.C. often. But your voice matters. We’re making it easy to speak up. Not to mention, there are refreshments such as coffee, milk and pastries.

Even if you can’t attend a discussion in person, we livestream each of them on our Facebook page and live-tweet them on Twitter, so you can still share your thoughts.

At the time of the Minnesota Agriculture deadline, we have not yet finalized the exact dates and times of the 2019 Rural Voices Discussions, but we’re planning on late March and early April. They will be finalized soon and posted on our website (www.mfu.org), in our weekly email newsletter, on our Facebook page and sent to statewide media.

We look forward to seeing each of you at the Rural Voices Discussions happening nearest you. ▲
In Memoriam: Cy Carpenter
Minnesota Farmers Union lost a leader this past month. Cyril Carpenter, MFU President from 1972-84 and NFU President from 1984-88, passed away at 96 on Feb. 4.

Carpenter grew up on a family farm in Sauk Centre, Minn., joining MFU as a lobbyist and secretary in 1965. He served as president of MFU from 1972-1984, and in 1984, he was elected by NFU membership to serve as president, a position he held until 1988. In 1989, the NFU Board of Directors honored Carpenter with a Meritorious Service Award to Agriculture and to World Agriculture, the organization’s highest honor.

Carpenter was instrumental in building membership and making farm training management programs available under the GI Bill of Rights. Cy led the 1976 effort to organize a Farmers Union hay lift, which brought forage to livestock farmers in our state who were affected by the drought disaster. It saved many dairy farms.

“Cy was a Farmers Union advocate for life, from the time he joined the organization at 23 years of age until the time he passed. He was a forward thinker and a leader at a tough juncture for family farm agriculture,” said National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson.

MFU will forever be grateful for Cy’s service to our organization. Everything he did was motivated by his love for the family farm. He not only was a gifted leader himself, but also raised up new leaders and active members, making people feel like they could make a difference with us. He cared about MFU so much that in his health decline, his wife Fran would read issues of Minnesota Agriculture to him, as he still wanted to stay informed about how we were doing. A memorial service was held on Friday, Feb. 8 in Bloomington, which I attended, along with former MFU and NFU President and MDA Commissioner Dave Frederickson (our Member in Focus), and many former MFU staff. We send our condolences to Fran and his loved ones. Cy asked that any memorials be sent to the Minnesota Farmers Union Scholarship Fund.

MFU Full Board elects Executive Committee
Our Full Board of Directors, consisting of all county Farmers Union presidents, met on Feb. 16. One of their orders of business was to elect the 2019-2020 Executive Committee. For the next year, the following people will serve with me and President Bryan Klabunde on the committee:

Anne Schwagerl, Browns Valley – State Secretary
Carol Anderson, Foley – Committee Chair
Ted Winter, Fulda – Committee Vice Chair
Linda Larson, Rosemount
Steve Linder, Oklee
Joshua VanDerPol, Clara City

We look forward to working with the new committee. We also extend our thanks to Eunice Biel, Larry Jacobson and Alan Perish for their years of dedicated service on the Executive Committee.

New Government Relations Director
I am pleased to announce that we have selected Stuart Lourey to serve as our next Government Relations Director. Stu has years of experience working in government, including on health care issues with Senators Al Franken and Tina Smith, both in regional and Washington, D.C. offices. He lives on a family farm in Kerrick, Pine County. He’ll officially begin work with us on March 11, and he’s excited to get to know you all. Welcome, Stu!

Successful Lobby Day Drive-In; other legislative activity
Despite some tricky weather in early February, we had a strong turnout at our annual Lobby Day Drive-In. Thank you to each of you who attended.

About 80 MFU members came to the Capitol, meeting with legislators from their districts. The first thing that happened that day was a visit from Gov. Tim Walz, who came to us. He shared his understanding of the importance of agriculture in our state and of working together for the common good. He was joined by Commissioner Thom Petersen, our former Government Relations Director, who provided the same encouragement to members as he always has: showing up makes a difference. We thank the Governor and Commissioner for coming to talk with us.

We’d also like to thank Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman, who followed them. She expressed gratitude for members coming and making their voices heard and that she’d make sure members of the House took MFU priorities into account. Thank you, Speaker Hortman, for taking the time to meet with us.

In addition to these, several members met with Secretary of State Steve Simon and Attorney General Keith Ellison, both of whom expressed their support for healthy rural communities and civic engagement. We thank them for their time as well.

The most important part of Lobby Day Drive-In is that those who make policy decisions for our state see us with our Farmers Union nametags and are reminded of the family farmer’s role in Minnesota’s culture and economy.

(continued on page 4)
President’s Message (continued)

We are well-respected across the political spectrum. The point of farmers being at the Capitol is not just leaving pieces of paper with legislators, but to express the personal side of what it’s like to be a farmer. If they’re not familiar with farming and rural issues, they don’t necessarily know what the problems are that they can help with. Our members come together to make each other’s voices stronger. Getting to St. Paul and Washington, D.C., makes that happen. We thank our legislators for taking the time to hear from us and for their support.

We’ve been active at the Legislature not just at Lobby Day Drive-In, but every day. I have been pleased to testify on several bills presented to legislative committees within the first few weeks of session.

One of our excellent leaders, State Secretary Anne Schwagerl of Big Stone County, shared her farm story with the House Agriculture & Food Finance and Policy Division in late January. Anne told the committee that she and her husband Peter are lucky to be able to farm full-time, especially as relatively new farmers, but to make that a reality for all family farmers who desire this lifestyle, we need fair prices for our labor, reliable and affordable health care and high-speed internet. Thank you, Anne, for traveling to St. Paul and speaking on behalf of MFU and family farmers.

For a full story on Lobby Day from intern Emily Pliscott, see page 9. For a general legislative update from Membership and Outreach Director Bruce Miller, see page 7.

National Farmers Union Convention

At the time you’re receiving this issue of Minnesota Agriculture, we’ve likely just returned from the National Farmers Union 117th Anniversary Convention, held in Bellevue, Wash., just east of Seattle. Several of our members and staff spent these days advocating for rural and agricultural policies important to them, while learning about the diversity of agriculture across the state. Thank you to our delegates for serving and to Rice County’s Steven Read, who served on the NFU Policy Committee.

I’d also like to mention Gene Paul, a longtime active MFU member and policy analyst for the National Farmers Organization. Gene was awarded the Meritorious Service Award to Humanity at the NFU Convention. I nominated him because of his lifelong dedication to the family farmer. He’s attended many MFU Lobby Day Drive-Ins and NFU Legislative Fly-Ins, and for many years milked cows in Delavan, Fairbault County. Thank you, Gene, for all you do.

Trade agreement deadline with China approaches; steel and aluminum tariffs threaten USMCA

President Trump gave his annual State of the Union address in early February, after it was delayed by the government shutdown. In it, he touted the economic gains we’ve made because of his trade policies with China and the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Unfortunately, family farmers have not experienced those gains.

“We tout progress with China or USMCA as a win is misleading – you can’t dig a ten-foot hole, fill it up with a foot of dirt and call that a win,” NFU Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Communications Rob Larew said in response to the State of the Union.

We’ve been saying for a long time that we agree with the president’s desire to address China’s unethical trade practices, which have harmed American agriculture. However, steel and aluminum tariffs were the wrong way to do that. These tariffs prompted retaliatory tariffs on many agricultural products, including soybeans and pork. China is moving to replace their U.S. soybeans with South American ones, a market which will likely take years to get back.

By the time you’ve received this, we’ll have reached the March 1 deadline for the U.S. and China to come to a deal on trade before tariff rates rise. Negotiators are meeting now, and there’s a chance they’ll extend the deadline. Regardless, damage has already been done to family farmers’ income, which had already dropped by more than 50 percent over the last five years, even before the trade war.

Perhaps more importantly, the steel and aluminum tariffs were not just levied on China. They were levied on U.S. allies such as Canada and Mexico – the very allies we worked with to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and that we need working with us to get China to change its ways. A recent report from Agri-Pulse said that Canadian and Mexican officials told U.S. Senator Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, that the legislative bodies from those countries were unlikely to ratify the USMCA unless the U.S. lifts the steel and aluminum tariffs. Additionally, our own Congress has not ratified the agreement and it’s unclear when (or if) they will do so. Any economic progress USMCA would make is far from being seen.

We need to work together with other nations instead of taking this “go-it-alone” approach with China. Removing the steel and aluminum tariffs would be the right start to restoring fair and stable markets for family farmers and continuing to build fair trade partnerships.

New Intern Amber Cafferty

My name is Amber Cafferty and I am the Minnesota Farmers Union spring intern. I grew up on my family’s dairy farm, where we milk 62 Holstein cows and raise broiler chickens. While growing up and working on the farm, my passion for agriculture grew and it’s the reason why I am pursuing a career path in agriculture communications.

Currently, I am a senior at the University of Minnesota where I am double majoring in Agricultural Communication and Marketing and Animal Science. Upon graduation this spring, I hope to have a career in an agricultural organization where I will have the opportunity to work for farmers and support their hard work.

I have also had the privilege to have held two internships before working for MFU. This past summer, I worked for The Dairy Alliance in Atlanta, Ga., as the communication intern, and in 2017 I worked as the Wright County 4-H intern. During my time with The Dairy Alliance, I aided the communication team in creating social media content, editing videos and photographs, and creating promotional materials to be used at Dairy Alliance events across the nine-state region.

In 2017, while working for Wright County as a 4-H intern, I gained valuable experience managing day camps from start to finish, including training in camp counselors and emphasizing the importance of clear communication to the local community. I enjoyed my time as a Wright County 4-H intern, and I look forward to bringing the skills I learned in both my past internships to my position with MFU.

I am excited to work for MFU, and I am looking forward to learning and growing in this position.
Managing stress, talking about stress, sharing our experience with stress is not something that comes easily to farmers. During these last few years of a tough agriculture economy and extreme weather events, we’re all feeling the stress, which is why I was glad to see it featured at the Northern Corn & Soy Expo on Feb. 12 in Fargo, N.D.

The breakout session “Managing Stress” presented by Meg Moynihan of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Dr. Sean Brotherston of North Dakota State University (NDSU) was filled with farmers. At many farm expos the attendance for breakout varies, but for this breakout the room was full of farmers. Meg and Dr. Brotherston asked questions like, “What does stress feel like?” and “What things do you think you can do to deal with stress on your farm?” There were hands up around the room and farmers were sharing about what stress is like for them. I thought that was very powerful to hear farmers sharing their experience with each other.

The resources from this breakout were also empowering. A handout from NDSU Extension (www.ag.ndsu.edu/drought/stress-resources), “12 Tools for your Wellness Toolbox in Times of Farm Stress,” shares 12 tips. A few that I found most helpful were:

- **Exercise 20 minutes or more daily.**
- **Share concerns with a mental health professional.**
- **Seek constructive feedback on your farm operation and ways to grow or improve.**

I’m a member of the Early Childhood Education Board, as well as the Johnson Memorial Nursing Home Foundation Board for 13 years, helping with two building campaigns, visiting residents, and decorating for various holidays. I’m very active in my church, Grace Lutheran, as well as the choir and the ELCA Synod Endowment Committee. I love my community!

**Please tell us a little bit about your family life.**  
I have been married to Dale, a dedicated Agronomist, farmer and local co-op employee, for 40 years. Together we have two children and three grandchildren, and enjoy gardening, fishing, golfing and traveling together.

**What is your #1 concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance?**  
My main concern with farm insurance has been the aspect of it is properly covered in the event of a loss.

**What community organizations are you passionate about?**  
I currently serve as the Secretary/Treasurer for the Lac Qui Parle County MFU, have served on the Dawson Development Corporation for two terms, and was the Vice Chair for the Dawson Community Foundation for 8 years. I chaired the Riverfest Celebration Committee for 12 years, resurrected Dawson Designated Charities and raised and distributed $9,000 to our community non-profits. I’ve been a member of the Hospital Auxiliary for many years and have served as President for two;
A monthly update from National Farmers Union

Now that the longest-ever government shutdown is over, federal employees are back at work on the issues that affect family farmers and ranchers. Farm Service Agency offices are fully open, economic reports have been released and the U.S. Department of Agriculture is rolling out the 2018 Farm Bill. In February, Senator Ed Markey and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez released their Green New Deal framework. Also, President Trump gave his State of the Union address. Sadly, the content of his speech did not reflect the realities that family farmers are experiencing, in part due to antagonistic international trade policies. To encourage the administration and Congress to address these challenges, the NFU Board of Directors passed a resolution calling for strengthening the farm safety net.

NFU applauds Congressional impetus on climate change

Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., released a long-anticipated framework for a “Green New Deal.” Though the nonbinding resolution is not expected to be adopted, it has kick-started congressional conversation around climate change and creates opportunity for future action that could benefit family farmers and ranchers.

The proposal, though radical in spirit, is fairly vague and abstract in practice. Its long-term goals are primarily to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and to create new high-wage jobs. To achieve this, it suggests sweeping changes to nearly every sector, including manufacturing, energy production, waste management, transportation, infrastructure and – of course – agriculture.

The deal proposes that policy makers work “collaboratively with farmers” to “eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions… as much as technologically feasible.” More specifically, it suggests they support family farming, invest in “sustainable farming and land use practices that increase soil health,” and build “a more sustainable food system that ensures universal access to healthy food.”

The wide-ranging reactions to the Green New Deal prove that farmers and ranchers must have a seat at the table as Congress considers climate solutions. Farmers are already feeling the effects of climate change. More frequent and severe weather events pose direct threats to their livelihoods and global food security. NFU Vice President of Public Policy and Communications Rob Larew reiterated the need for farmers’ voices to be heard in the climate debate, stating, “NFU stands ready to work with Congress to ensure that federal legislation recognizes what’s at stake for farm families and rural communities and the potential we have to offer national and global efforts to sequester carbon and curb the worsening effects of climate change.”

Farmers are not only especially vulnerable to the challenges presented by a changing climate, but as stewards of the land, they are uniquely positioned to be part of the solution. As such, NFU supports incentives for farmers to implement conservation practices for soil carbon sequestration and to install on-farm renewable energy systems. NFU is also a strong advocate for the expanded use of biofuels to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

State of the Union address neglects dire farm economic conditions

In early February, President Donald Trump gave his annual State of the Union Address. In the 82-minute speech, he touted his administration’s work on a broad range of issues that affect agricultural and rural communities, including tax reform, the Farm Bill, trade negotiations, opioid misuse and infrastructure. On most of these issues, his remarks largely ignore the reality that family farmers and ranchers face on a daily basis.

“The reality is that the downward trend in the farm economy has only worsened over the last two years, leaving many farmers and ranchers in significant financial stress,” said Larew. He added that most of the difficulties that farmers are enduring have been exacerbated by President Trump’s international trade war. “To tout progress with China or USMCA as a win is misleading – you can’t dig a ten-foot hole, fill it up with a foot of dirt and call that a win.”

To improve conditions in agricultural communities, Larew urged President Trump to “restore our reputation around the world as a reliable trading partner.” In particular, Larew recommended that he “reassert American leadership in the international trade arena” and “back up his calls for bipartisanship by working with Congress to ensure farm families can succeed with fair and stable markets for their goods.”

NFU Board urges administration to strengthen the family farm safety net

Due to depressed commodity prices and oversupply, which have been exacerbated by trade barriers, the NFU Board of Directors is calling on the administration and Congress to strengthen the farm safety net. In a resolution created during the quarterly board meeting in San Diego, Calif., the Board emphasized the economic difficulties family farmers and ranchers have been enduring for several years.

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Net farm income in 2018 is estimated to be nearly 50 percent less than 2013 levels. Median farm income is estimated to be -$1,548, meaning a majority of farms – farms of all sizes – lost money this past year,” the resolution states. “Despite their best efforts, many farmers are struggling to stay afloat.”

The Board expressed appreciation for recent efforts to provide greater assistance to struggling farmers and ranchers, including improvements in the 2018 Farm Bill and trade assistance provided through the Market Facilitation Program. However, these efforts only provide marginal, short-term aid for significant, long-term problems.

“In neither case do the changes reflect the severity of existing market challenges and the immediacy of the financial crisis facing family farmers and ranchers,” the Board said.

To address these problems, the NFU Board urged lawmakers to pursue “significant, long-term solutions to strengthen the farm safety net.” Additionally, they recommended that Congress “examine options to meaningfully address chronic oversupply in the marketplace,” which has damaged U.S. dairy and grain sectors.

The Washington Corner can be found at www.nfu.org/corner.
Here at the Farm Service Agency, we are glad to be back at work serving our producers after the 35-day government shutdown. Recently, we experienced an adverse weather event with the cold snap that occurred, closing schools and many main street businesses. The Livestock Indemnity Program is available to assist producers who may experience livestock losses due to inclement weather.

2019 livestock losses
The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2019, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2019, and no later than 60 calendar days from the ending date of the applicable adverse weather event or attack. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 90 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred:

- Proof of death documentation.
- Copy of growers’ contracts.
- Proof of normal mortality documentation.

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5 percent and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 5 percent. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2019 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent.
- An application for payment by March 31, 2020.

How to document livestock losses
To participate in the LIP, producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Producers should record all pertinent information regarding livestock losses due to the eligible adverse weather or loss condition, including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock that have died, supplemented, if possible, by photographs or video records of ownership and losses;
- Rendering truck receipts by kind, type and weight – important to document prior to disposal;
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts;
- Documentation from Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Natural Resources, or other sources to substantiate eligible death losses due to an eligible loss condition;
- Documentation that livestock were removed from grazing pastures due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition;
- Costs of transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, such as receipts for equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal;
- Feed purchase receipts if feed supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed.

For more information on these programs and documentation requirements, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster or contact your local FSA office.
A big “thank you” to all that attended our annual Lobby Day Drive-In on Tuesday, Feb. 5. About 80 members took on Capitol Hill to meet with their legislators regarding health care, support for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, farm stress and more.

The first speaker of the morning was Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, a longtime MFU member himself, who shared his support of greater Minnesota, saying “If our farm economy is strong and healthy, our rural communities are healthy.” We were delighted that the governor came out of his way that morning to speak with us.

We were also excited to hear remarks from Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture, our former Government Relations Director Thom Petersen. Both Gov. Walz and Commissioner Petersen have had busy weeks, working on the state budget and tackling issues in agriculture, respectively.

The Speaker of the House, Melissa Hortman, DFL-Brooklyn Park, also came out of her way to speak to us. She said rural issues are a big priority for her this session leading the State House. Thank you, Speaker Hortman, for making time for MFU.

We were also able to meet with Secretary of State Steve Simon and Attorney General Keith Ellison. Simon discussed topics around voting, such as township election processes and absentee ballots, which members took special interest in since many live in townships. Ellison was particularly interested in our Right to Repair priorities and concerns about corporate farming.

Around 45 legislators from both parties met with members to discuss issues such as MinnesotaCare options, rural mental health, the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit, property tax relief, buffer compensation and a strong budget for MDA. We were able to schedule appointments with legislators representing the areas where members live, making the crucial connections between constituents and policymakers. Members left copies of our Legislative Priorities with everyone we visited.

You can get copies of this document by contacting us anytime.

Thank you to all our members who attended Lobby Day. It is important to have farmers share our stories with legislators. We believe your visits and calls are one of the biggest factors in driving change in our farming communities.
Dave Frederickson, Swift County

“Son, it’s a good idea to have one foot in the furrow and the other in public policy.”

That’s what Dave Frederickson’s father said to him when Dave was growing up on his Murdock family farm. He took that to heart in a big way, as a farmer, school board member, state Senator, MFU President, NFU President, congressional staffer and Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture. But not because that’s what he thought he would do.

“You don’t step into it by waking and saying, ‘One day I want to be the president of National Farmers Union,’” Dave said.

His decades in public service taught him about the importance of cooperation, navigating relationships and the balancing act of family, farming and off-farm work. Having retired in January, he’s ready to spend plenty of time relaxing and reflecting.

‘Hogs, corn, soybeans, a little bit of hell’

The Frederickson family farm consisted of 1,200 acres of corn and soybeans and a pork operation. Growing up, Dave said he raised “a little bit of hell” too.

“We worked in a little wool shed in De Graff, where we learned how to cuss, and then my mother would send us to Bible camp to clean that out of our vocabulary,” he said with a chuckle.

Dave took over the farm in 1974 with his wife Kay, and they raised daughters Anna and Emmy there. Dave also taught school for awhile, and he continued his service to public education by getting elected to the local school board. He saw the Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg schools through a difficult time, when it was decided that the three cities’ schools would merge because of low population.

That turned out to be the right decision, but at the time, Dave said, “there was a lot of anger” about it. He made both friends and enemies in the process.

He also served on the board of his local Farmers Union Oil Cooperative for Swift County, learning about the supply co-op side. This was during the 1980s farm economic crisis.

“I’m proud of that co-op for sticking with those farmers,” he said.

The Frederickson farm wasn’t immune from the economic downturn of the 80s. To try to supplement what they had, Dave ran for the Minnesota Senate to represent his district, including his hometown Murdock – and won by 32 votes.

“Farmers Union gave me a necktie with ‘32’ stitched into it,” he said. “I still have it.”

One of the key pieces of legislation he worked on was the mandate calling for 10 percent ethanol to be blended in gasoline.

“That’s a cool thing, to be part of a process that makes laws for the 5 million Minnesotans,” he said. “It is an onerous responsibility that one has to take very seriously.”

He served in the Senate for six years, before deciding to return home to farm.

“As a farmer you can only work all the time,” he said. “I found that I was doing that and more, serving as a member of the Senate, full-time farmer, parent of two, it’s difficult to do a good job of any of them.”

But he didn’t stay away from the public arena for long.

Finding common ground

When former MFU President Willis Eken retired in 1991, we needed someone to complete his unexpired term. Dave got a call asking if he’d consider it. He took the chance and ended up leading our organization for 11 years. Then he took it even further and ran for president of National Farmers Union in 2002, winning and holding that office from 2002-06.

“I lived in Denver, had a hotel room in D.C. and a home in Minnesota,” he said.

As the national president, he got immersed in the variety of agriculture in our country and realized even more the value of cooperation, especially among people who seem to have completely different interests on the surface.
“As a general farm organization, you’re talking about the interests of dairy farmers, soybean farmers, corn farmers, tobacco farmers, you name it,” he said. “You have to find some common ground. We’ve been able to do that in the Farmers Union. You look for areas you can cooperate on, particularly with other farm organizations, because if you all stand together, you can make things happen in public policy.”

Eventually he tired of the long travels and returned to Minnesota again, becoming an agricultural advisor to Sen. Amy Klobuchar.

He traveled the country roads he once did when he was MFU president.

“We’ve been lucky that (Sen. Klobuchar) has been supportive of Farmers Union positions over time,” Dave said. “I hope I’ve been a little influential in that, but who knows.”

**Being part of the solution**

When Mark Dayton was elected governor in 2010, he asked Dave to serve as the Agriculture Commissioner. Soon Dave took on his own part on Gov. Dayton’s water quality work, spearheading efforts at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to make farmers part of the solution to Minnesota’s water quality issues.

“I’ve always said that we have a moral obligation to make sure that the water that goes down the Mississippi River is clean,” Dave said. “I don’t think there’s a farmer out there who will disagree with that.”

He spearheaded the department’s Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program, which provides regulatory certainty to farmers who install best management practices most suitable to their land.

“I’ve always felt that water quality approaches should be done acre by acre, farm by farm, township by township,” he said. “I’m proud of the farmers in Minnesota who have stepped up.”

He’ll see how the work has paid off this summer when he and Kay travel the entirety of the Mississippi by boat, from the headwaters in Itasca County all the way to New Orleans. There, a friend of his will meet them with Dave’s truck and trailer and haul them back to Minnesota.

“I’ll experience all the locks and dams going through so we’ll get a better sense of the needs of those locks and dams from a maintenance perspective.”

**Advice for hardships**

Having lived through the 80s farm crisis, Dave can speak to the financial struggles many family farmers are experiencing now. He advised being as prepared as you can be.

“Working with Farm Business Management is such a good idea, to have someone else at the table with you,” he said. “I advise that for anyone, no matter your age.

“At the end of the day, you’re going to be all right. There’s a lot of help available if you’re really struggling. Don’t be afraid to ask for help.”

And you can lean on the family of Farmers Union, too.

“Farmers Union has certainly influenced me – the people, the policy, the leaders, and I will never forget that.”

Enjoy your retirement, Dave!
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.

Every year Minnesota Farmers Union and National Farmers Union offer many scholarship opportunities to members and their children. This year there is over $14,000 worth of scholarship money available. Please encourage any student currently attending or starting college this fall to visit www.mfu.org/scholarships for more information and to download the applications.

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“With the high cost of college education, it’s important to provide support for students that seek higher education and will bring that knowledge back to farms and rural communities in Minnesota,” said MFU President Gary Wertish.

Minnesota Farmers Union Scholarship – MFU will be offering five $1,000 scholarships to be awarded to MFU members or their children.

Rice County Farmers Union has a long history of sponsoring scholarships within Rice County and to students across the state. Scholarships from Rice County Farmers Union are available to MFU family members planning to attend or currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution, which can be a technical or trade school, community college, state university or private institution.

The Don Tentis Memorial/Wabasha County Scholarship is available to MFU family members who reside in Wabasha County and plan to attend or are currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

The Howard Warmbold Memorial Scholarship is available to any Minnesota Farmers Union member or their child who is planning on pursuing an agricultural education and lives in Hubbard, Beltrami or Wadena counties. Scholarship awarded by Hubbard County Farmers Union.

National Farmers Union also offers many scholarships, such as the Stanley Moore National Scholarships, the Hubert K. & JoAnn Seymour and the Stanley Moore FUI Foundation Regional Scholarships. Please visit nfu.org/scholarships for more information on these scholarships.

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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. Most 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 Ellisson 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 Bossmann Fosston (218) 200-9432
Steve Zenk Danube (320) 894-2517

www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates
The inaugural class of the NLA is off and running! The group got together for the first time in November for the first session which was held in conjunction with the MFU State Convention. At the first session the academy learned about the importance of MFU’s policy and how it shapes the direction of the organization. Participants got to experience first-hand how policy is drafted, submitted debated and passed. Also at the first session the class met MFU members and staff as well as having the opportunity to hear from speakers like Whitney Place, Assistant Commissioner at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and NFU President Roger Johnson.

More recently, the second session was held with the MFU lobby day as a backdrop. The participants arrived at the MFU office the day before the lobby day and received information on how to effectively advocate to their Senators and Representatives. Speakers for the second session included: former Minnesota Ag Commissioner Dave Frederickson, former Rep. Clark Johnson and Taylor Putz, who is a public policy advocate for the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. The next day the participants got to put their knowledge into action and meet with their legislators during the MFU Lobby Day Drive-In.

Coming up next will be the summer session. This session will dive into Farmers Union’s past, present and future. The current class has expressed an interest in the history of the organization and how it has evolved over the years. The capstone session of the NLA will be a trip to Washington, D.C. in September for the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-In.

The inaugural class of the NLA includes 12 selected individuals from Minnesota. They come from various backgrounds and locations. Leadership classes can include farmers, ranchers, Farmers Union insurance agents, cooperative leaders, local food and urban food advocates, and entrepreneurs.

Members of the inaugural class are: Cynthia VanDerPol of Kerkhoven, James Kanten of Milan, Marcus Irrthum of Wanamingo, John Beaton of Saginaw, Eric Monson of Eagle Bend, Eric Sannerud of Milaca, Theresa Bentz of Northfield, Sarah Hill of Waubun, Amy Liddell of Ada, John Hest of Dilworth, Melissa Roach of Cook and Jessica Keddy of Sebeka.

Please visit mfu.org/new-leader-academy to learn more.

Apply for the 2019-20 NFU Beginning Farmer Institute

The application period for National Farmers Union’s Beginning Farmer Institute is now open!

National Farmers Union’s Beginning Farmer Institute (BFI) is a free training program that prepares beginning farmers of all ages and operation types for a successful future in agriculture.

Participants will attend three in-person learning sessions over the course of the year, one each in Washington, D.C., Northern California, and Savannah, Georgia. The sessions include farm tours as well as seminars on a variety of beginning farmers issues, such as business planning, USDA programs, and acquiring land. Each year’s curriculum will be tailored to the participants’ needs as determined by a pre-attendance survey.

Applications for the 2019-2020 BFI cohort are open through 4/15/19. Learn more and apply: nfu.org/education/beginning-farmer-institute/
Bacon Jam Slam Breakfast Pizza

Braucher’s Sunshine Harvest Farm & Big River Pizza

**For bacon jam:**

Yields: 1/2 qt

- 1 1/2 lb sliced bacon, cut crosswise into 1-inch pieces
- 2 medium yellow onions, diced small
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 2 oz Makers Mark Whiskey
- 1/2 c cider vinegar
- 1/2 c packed dark-brown sugar
- 1/4 c pure maple syrup
- 3/4 c brewed coffee

In large skillet, cook bacon over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until fat is rendered and bacon lightly browned, about 20 minutes. Transfer to crockpot with slotted spoon. Pour off all but 1 T fat from skillet (reserve for another use). Add onions and cook until caramelized about 6 minutes. Add garlic after onions are caramelized.

Deglaze pan with whiskey; add vinegar, brown sugar, maple syrup, and coffee and bring to a boil, stirring and scraping up browned bits from skillet with a wooden spoon for about 2 minutes. Add bacon and stir to combine.

Transfer mixture to 6-qt slow cooker and cook on high, uncovered, until liquid is syrupy, 3 1/2 - 4 hours. Transfer to food processor; pulse until cool, then refrigerate in airtight containers, up to 4 weeks.

**For pizza crust:**

Yields: 4 dough balls

- 4 c unbleached wheat flour
- 1 1/4 c beer (or water)
- 1 packet active dry yeast
- 8 T olive oil
- 1 egg
- 1/4 t salt

Heat beer (or water) to 110° F. Add yeast and wait 5 minutes to be sure it’s activated (foamed). Add olive oil, egg and salt. Mix with spoon or whisk.

In kitchen mixer, add liquid ingredients over flour and mix on lowest speed using a dough hook for 6 minutes. Increase speed one notch and mix for another 2 minutes. Place mixed dough in lightly oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap for 2 hours or until doubled in size.

Remove from bowl, cut into 4 equal pieces, form into balls, and place on lightly oiled tray. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use. Dough will keep for 2 days in the refrigerator or 3 months in the freezer.

Each dough ball yields a 14 inch pizza.

Steve’s note: Beer makes the dough flakier and lighter, but water can be used, if you prefer.

**For pizza:**

Yields: 1 pizza

- 2 oz bacon jam
- 1 lb sausage
- 1 lb mozzarella, grated
- 2 c organic tomato sauce (Muir Glenn)
- 1/4 lb arugula
- 1 medium white onion
- 2 oz pecorino/romano cheese
- 2 quail eggs

**To grill:**

Prepare grill for high direct heat. Prepare a small bowl with olive oil for greasing grill grates and brushing the pizza. Prepare toppings so they are ready to go on the pizza – tomato sauce, cheese and anything else you wish.

Shape pizza dough by flattening it with your hands on a slightly floured surface. Use your fingers to stretch dough out, or hold up edges of dough with your fingers, letting dough hang and stretch, while working around the edges of the dough. Once dough is stretched, let sit for 5 minutes and then push out the edges with your fingers again, until you have a nice round shape, approximately 10-12 inches in diameter. Do not make a raised rim; it will interfere with the grilling process.

Once grill is hot (you can hold your hands an inch over grates for no more than 2 seconds), dip a tightly folded paper towel in olive oil and use tongs to wipe grill grates. Place pizza dough round on a lightly floured (semolina flour works well) rimless cookie sheet (or pizza peel, or large cutting board). Slide dough off the cookie sheet onto the hot grill grates. Close the grill lid and cook 2 minutes.

After 2 minutes, open grill and check underneath the dough to see if it’s getting browned. If browned on one side but not the other, use a spatula or tongs to rotate dough 90 degrees and cook for another minute. If it is not beginning to brown, cover grill and continue cooking a minute at a time until bottom has begun to brown. It should only take a couple minutes if you have a hot grill. The top of the pizza dough will start bubbling up with air pockets.

Once pizza dough has browned lightly on one side, use your cookie sheet or pizza peel to remove from the grill. Use spatula to flip dough so grilled side is up. Keep grill covered so it retains its heat.

Paint grilled surface of pizza with a little olive oil, then cover with 1 ladle of sauce, sausage, onions and cheese. Add dabs of Bacon Jam randomly throughout the pizza. Dust lightly with pecorino/romano cheese blend. Add arugula. Remember to go light on the toppings or your pizza will be heavy and soggy. Add salt to taste.

Slide topped pizza back onto grill. If using a gas grill, reduce heat. If working with a charcoal grill, close vents on cover almost all the way. Close lid and cook 2-3 more minutes, or until bottom begins to char and cheese is bubbly. Pull off grate with a spatula onto a cutting board or other flat surface and let rest for a couple minutes before cutting into slices.

Steve’s notes: Dough stretching can be done with either traditional hand stretching method or with a rolling pin. If dough is too soft, put in freezer for 5 minutes and let set up. For larger parties, pre-stretch dough and separate with oiled parchment paper in the fridge. Remember to not “over top” pizzas.
Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!
Follow Minnesota Farmers Union on social media to find out about events, policy happenings, photos and more.

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

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

Look for MFU at these upcoming events!

MFU will have a presence at several trade shows and conferences coming up. Members are welcome to help us staff the booths during the events. If you are interested in doing this, contact MFU Membership & Outreach Director Bruce Miller at (651) 470-5438 or bruce@mfu.org. Or, come and say hello and get some MFU swag!

Trade Shows and Conferences:
- March 3-5 • National Farmers Union Convention • Bellevue, Wash.
- March 14-16 • North American Farm & Power Show • Four Seasons Centre, Owatonna
- Late March/Early April • Rural Voices Discussions • locations around Minnesota
- April 28-30 • Minnesota FFA Convention • University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Camp registration now open!

Minnesota Farmers Union Leadership Camp is affordable and open to everyone, regardless of your connection to farming.

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. While at camp, participants have many opportunities to develop positive qualities through some of the simple day-to-day tasks. These activities provide a foundation for all campers to share the responsibility of making camp a fun, safe place to be, and develop cooperation skills that can last a lifetime.

Leadership and cooperation happen at all levels of Farmers Union Leadership Camp, and sometimes these skills are demonstrated in an act as simple as helping a younger camper with a craft project or assembling a costume to wear at a theme night.

Campers develop strong leadership roles by participating in groups where campers are taught the importance of legislation and how it can affect their community, and how to become an effective leader. Farmers Union Leadership Campers can make a difference in their community.

Farmers Union strives to provide an environment that continually fosters young people. One of the many ways the organization achieves this is by allowing campers to take on an active role in shaping the educational component of camp. During the year, the Youth Advisory Council, elected by their peers at Senior Camp, discuss, select and build the base for the annual educational theme. But camp isn’t only about education. It’s also about providing a safe environment where campers can hang out, be kids and have fun. Campers get to sing at campfires and dress up in crazy costumes for theme-night. They can swim, play games, go on nature hikes and much more.

Most of all, campers can meet young people from throughout the state, both urban and rural, with whom they can build lifelong friendships.

Weeklong Camps
- Northern Elementary Camp (Ages 8-11)
  - June 18-22 (Mon-Fri): Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground near Erskine
- Northern Junior Camp (Ages 11-14)
  - June 24-28 (Mon-Fri): Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground near Erskine
- Southern Elementary Camp (Ages 8-11)
  - July 16-20 (Tues-Sat): at Sibley State Park near New London
  - July 22-26 (Mon-Fri): at Sibley State Park near New London
  - July 28-Aug 2 (Sun-Fri): at Sibley State Park near New London

Day Camps
- June 10-14 and July 8-12
  - Various locations in Minnesota

For camp updates, check our website: www.mfu.org/camp-calendar/