

Minnesota Agriculture

a publication of Minnesota Farmers Union

June 2019

JUNE is



DAIRY MONTH



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The Hoese family farm,
MFU members in Carver County

Minnesota Farmers Union *Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers*

Is your farm covered by the new U.S. FDA regulation?

by Bruce Miller, Director of Membership, Outreach, Minnesota Cooks and FSMA projects



Does your farm meet the standards of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)? From November 2018 through April 2019, 16 Grower Training Sessions have been conducted in conjunction with a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Farmers Union and others to help growers make sure they're up to speed on the rule. Additional classes will be conducted in the fall of 2019.

The sessions were held in Bemidji, Windom, Morris, Hutchinson, Brooklyn Park, St. Paul, St. Cloud, Mankato, Cloquet, Saint Charles, Andover, Moorhead and Farmington. One of them was conducted in Spanish.

Overall, 307 farmers from 220 farms participated in the training sessions to receive their Certificate of Training in recognition of having successfully completed the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Course delivered by PSA trainers. Many of these farmers and trainers braved harsh winter weather to get to the one-day trainings.

While the information is great for all farmers growing produce, it is essential for "covered farms." MFU is working closely on helping family farmers identify whether they are a covered farm, meaning they must participate in a produce safety training class and are subject to an on-farm inspection from the MDA Produce Safety Inspection staff.

MDA operates under an agreement with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to promote an understanding of the new Produce Safety Rule. The FDA established these new minimum standards for safe growing, harvesting, packing and holding of produce grown for human consumption. The rule was created as part of FSMA.

It is important for Minnesota farmers to learn where their farm falls under the Produce Safety

Rule. Farms may fall under one of three categories (covered, qualified, exempt or excluded). Where a specific farm falls depends on whom you sell to, what products you sell and how much you sell.

To learn where your farm fits, information is available online from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture: www.mda.state.mn.us/food-feed/produce-safety-program

Additionally, you can review the chart made available by the US FDA that helps farmers sort out where their farm fits: www.fda.gov/media/94332/download.

In our Minnesota collaboration, we have regulators (MDA), educators (UMN Extension) and advocates (Minnesota Farmers Union). As an advocate for family farmers, Minnesota Farmers Union is also here to help you learn more about the training programs, the rule and the on-farm inspections. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate in contacting me at bruce@mfu.org. ▲



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marketplace has driven down the price these farmers can receive for their products, and small dairies continue to go out of business far too often. We stand with all dairy farmers in the work for a fairer system.

Remember that the Dairy Together campaign, a joint project of Farmers Union, National Farmers Organization and Holstein USA, has given us several ideas that could level the playing field for dairy farmers. Visit www.dairytogether.com to learn more.

VP Pence visits Minnesota amid trade war

You've probably noticed that the trade war between the United States and China has escalated, causing alarm for farmers and businesses everywhere. The two countries had been in negotiation for a new trade agreement. Unfortunately, those negotiations abruptly broke off in early May. President Trump announced via tweet that he would be implementing tariff hikes on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports, in addition to the ones imposed last year. Both China and the U.S. economy have responded in kind – China with retaliatory tariffs on \$60 billion of American exports, the markets with yet another drop in grain futures prices. This has prompted another round of Market Facilitation Program payments, this one worth \$14.5 billion, which has complicated planting decisions for some farmers affected by severe weather events.

Shortly after the tariffs announcement, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence made a trip to Minnesota, including a visit to a farm in Glyndon, Clay County. It was part of a national tour to promote the Trump administration's proposed U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, intended to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement. Though the administration touted USMCA as a major economic boost to the U.S., it's not likely to reverse the economic damage caused by all the trade disputes with China, Canada, Mexico, the European Union and other global trade partners. Plus, it will take decades to get back the Chinese market that we lost so quickly. And, though the 2018 steel and aluminum tariffs on Canada and Mexico have been lifted, damage has been done.

Some have criticized Congress for "stalling" on voting on USMCA. But they can't do that until the administration formally presents the agreement to them for their reading and debate. The House is supposed to receive the



document first and have 60 days to vote on it, then pass to the Senate, which would have 30 days. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has not received the agreement from the administration and thus cannot bring it to the House floor for a vote. The ball is still in the Trump administration's court.

Trade agreements are important in getting fair prices for family farmers. We agree with the Trump administration's desire to hold China accountable for its wrongdoing, but its go-it-alone approach has cost us the Chinese market and alienated U.S. allies we need working with us to address China's actions and on other trade agreements. We call on the President, Vice President and administration leaders to construct fair, cooperative trade agreements that benefit everyone.

Rice County's Peterson testifies in D.C.

We were pleased that Rice County Farmers Union member Mike Peterson, a grain and hog farmer in the Northfield area, was invited to testify before the House Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management. The subcommittee held a hearing on the state of the farm economy, and Peterson was one of three farmers from different U.S. regions who spoke.

Mike raises corn and soybeans on 800 acres and finishes 1,200 hogs with his wife and two sons. He spoke to the ways he's worked to lower his input costs, such as switching to no-till and planting cover crops. Many family farmers have done similar things in order to stay afloat in this time of low farm income. But that hasn't made up for the losses the trade war, commodity surpluses and agribusiness consolidation have caused.

On trade specifically, Mike reflected our organization's position that while addressing

June Dairy Month

We're thrilled to celebrate June Dairy Month once again, with Breakfast on the Farm events all over the state. MFU and Farmers Union Insurance Agency will have a presence at these each weekend this month, held on dairy farms to welcome people of all kinds to experience agriculture. One of our member farms, Hoese Dairy Inc., is hosting the Wright-Carver County breakfast on June 22. They are also our Members in Focus this month – read about them on page 13. You can also learn about the Farmers Union Milk Marketing Cooperative, which MFU was a part of during the 1970s, on page 5.



Unfortunately, economic conditions for most dairy farmers have not improved significantly. The glut of milk on the

(continued on page 4)

China's transgressions was right, the results of the administration's actions have been more damaging than helpful.

"While I originally supported the goals of securing better trade agreements and holding bad actors accountable, the approach to these trade disputes has caused damage that I'm afraid will take us decades to overcome," he said. "If policy makers are going to use our export markets as bargaining chips, they are either going to have to help us manage supply or keep funding the farm safety net. I realize that trade negotiations are tough, but American farmers can't bear the weight right now."

Thank you, Mike, for representing us in Washington. Thanks also to U.S. Rep. Angie Craig, D-MN02, for hosting him. Craig is a member of the subcommittee.

Legislature squabbles over budgets, calls special session

The Minnesota Legislature adjourned on May 25 after a frenetic month finalizing budget targets and a one-day special session. This year's legislative results were a mixed bag for MFU. The good news is, the provider tax will be kept in place without a sunset, a policy provision we worked hard to achieve. This maintains a sustainable funding source for our state health care programs, albeit at

a slightly lower rate – 1.8 percent, down from 2 percent.

Unfortunately, the session ended without plans to substantially increase transportation funding. MFU advocated for an increase in dedicated funding for transportation projects. Increasing the gas tax by any amount would have been a way to do that, as the tax is constitutionally dedicated toward funding road and bridge work statewide. We've heard from you that you want to see long-overdue improvements to our rural roads and bridges and will keep working to get funding for it.

More about the Legislature's results can be found on page 6.

WFO General Assembly

At the time of the *Minnesota Agriculture* deadline, I was in Luxembourg attending the World Farmers' Organisation General Assembly. This annual event brings together family



MFU President Gary Wertish with Denis Felix Kabiito at the World Farmers Organization General Assembly in Luxembourg. Denis is with the Uganda National Young Farmers Association. He has been very involved as a young farmer himself working for young farmers in Uganda. Denis is a great leader and very passionate about helping young farmers.

farm organizations from across the globe to discuss issues they are facing and how we can work cooperatively. I've served for the last year on a WFO Livestock Working Group

as facilitator. At the assembly, I moderated two panels covering topics we addressed in our working group, including antimicrobial resistance and the impact of global livestock production on our food supply.

I will share more about the General Assembly in the July issue of *Minnesota Agriculture*. ▲



MFU President Gary Wertish addresses WFO General Assembly panel



MFU members Kayla Biel, Amy Kylo named as finalists for 66th Princess Kay of the Milky Way



Princess Kay of the Milky Way finalists. Kayla and Amy are in the back row, first and second from the left.

Dairy princesses from across Minnesota gathered for the Dairy Promotion and Leadership Event held May 17-19 at the Courtyard by Marriott in St. Cloud. The weekend consisted of a leadership training, a chance to compete for a finalist spot for Princess Kay of the Milky Way and networking opportunities.

To compete to be a finalist for Princess Kay of the Milky Way, each princess had to apply, participate in a personal interview, prepare and deliver a speech and participate in a mock media interview. From there, 10 finalists were named to go on to

compete for the title of Minnesota's 66th Princess Kay of the Milky Way.

Two of these finalists are from Minnesota Farmers Union families. They are:

- Kayla Biel, Harmony, daughter of Kevin and Kelly Biel, representing Fillmore County
- Amy Kylo, Byron, daughter of Paul and Susan Kylo, representing Olmsted County

Congratulations to Kayla and Amy! They and the eight other young women will have their likeness carved in blocks of butter during the 2019 Minnesota State Fair. ▲

STUDY: HOW CAN FARMERS REDUCE ENERGY COSTS?



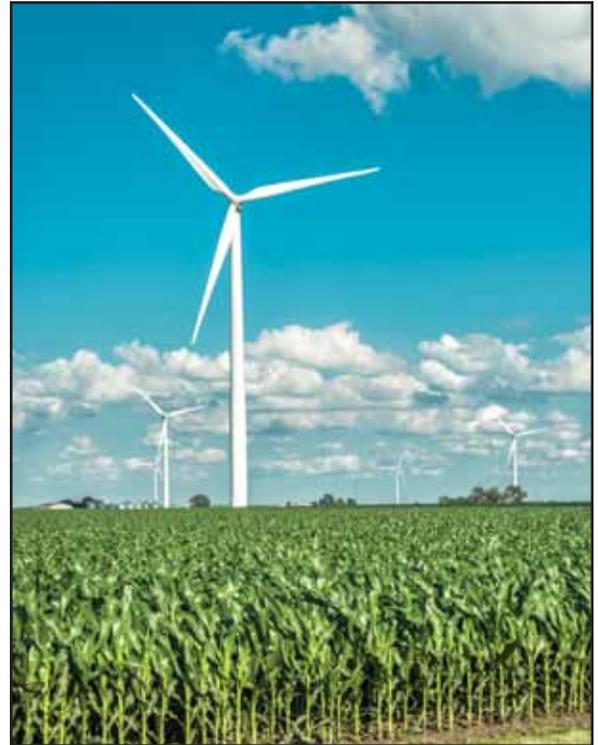
MICHELLE MEDINA,
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costs that farmers have some control over. This is important to note during this time of prolonged low farm income.

The study considered direct on-farm energy use, which included electricity, liquid propane and natural gas. It concluded that Minnesota farmers spend around \$261 million per year on these energy costs and that the approximate potential energy savings are \$39 million per year, or 15 percent. The best way to determine potential energy savings or how to be more efficient is by getting an on-farm energy audit. This audit will help you inventory how much energy you are using, how to improve efficiency and get cost savings through upgrades and improvements, as well as looking at renewable energy additions as an option.

The On-farm Energy Initiative through NRCS-EQIP has financial assistance for farmers looking to complete an Agricultural Energy Management Plan, or (AgEMP) which is done by NRCS-certified Technical Services Providers. More information can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=stelprdb1046252. Knowing where and how you use energy is the first step in understanding where



you can save energy. We suggest you consider having an energy audit completed to find opportunities to save money and energy.

The one-pager and full study are available on MFU's website at: www.mfu.org/on-farm-energy-study. Please contact me at michelle@mfu.org or 651-288-4096 if you have any questions or are looking for more information. ▲

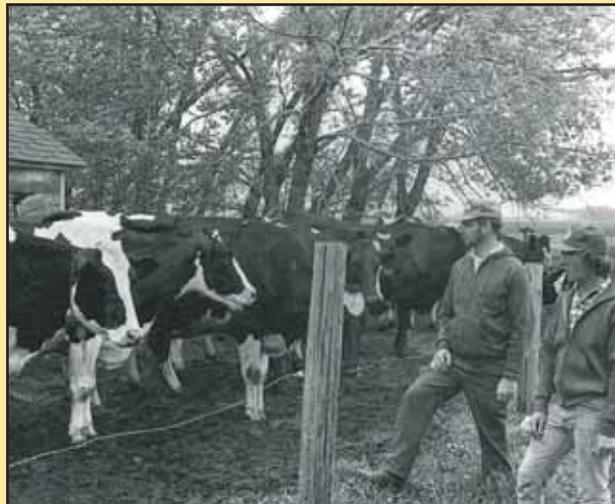
Farmers Union History Corner

The Farmers Union Dairy Cooperative

During the 1970s, Minnesota Farmers Union joined a multi-state effort to market milk at a fair price.

The Farmers Union Milk Marketing Cooperative, based in Madison, Wisc., started in response to a shift in federal milk pricing to Class I bottling sales, away from the dairy price support program. Then-MFU President Cy Carpenter knew that could negatively affect income for Midwest dairy farmers whose milk was processed into cheese, powder and butter.

"It became clear to us that if family dairy farming was to have a future, we needed to form a dairy cooperative to fight our battles,"



Carpenter told Don Muhm, author of *More Than a Farm Organization: Farmers Union in Minnesota*.

Wisconsin Farmers Union organized the co-op in 1971, and MFU joined it four years later. At one time, it marketed milk for more than 6,200 family farms in the Midwest.

It's just one example of Farmers Union members coming together to stand up against unfairness in the marketplace. We carry on that legacy today. ▲



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kept legislators, staff and advocates working through the night on May 24. The “omnibus” bills – large pieces of legislation that define total spending in broad topic areas, such as agriculture or health – reflect compromise budget targets worked out between Gov. Walz, the DFL-controlled House and the GOP-controlled Senate.

As with any compromise, no one got everything they wanted. And that includes MFU. However, the budget agreed to by the governor and legislative leaders is a step forward for Minnesota farmers in that it includes commitments on several key priorities, such as health care, agriculture programs and taxes.

Firstly, the budget includes a repeal of the sunset of the provider tax, continuing investments in programs that help make health care affordable and accessible for people across the state. This is particularly significant for MFU given that health care has been a main priority for our members this session.

With so many farmers being hit by high health care costs – along with the stressors of the current ag economy – protecting a proven investment in affordable health care is critical. The provider tax—which was lowered to 1.8 percent from 2 percent—raises about \$700 million each year which helps fund MinnesotaCare, Medical Assistance, the Office of Rural Health and a number of other programs that make up the health care safety net.

While repealing the sunset is a step forward, there’s still more work to do to make sure everyone, including farmers, can get the health care they need. One significant piece not included was the Governor’s ONECare plan, which would allow people on the individual market a health care “buy-in” option. MFU strongly supports this proposal and will work hard to advance it in future sessions.

Second, agriculture has been a bright spot of bipartisan work at the capitol, with the ag policy bill passing unanimously off the floor of both the House and the Senate and being signed by the governor ahead of the May 20 regular session deadline. The largely non-controversial bill includes a number of requests from the MN Department of Agriculture, along with a five-year extension of the Organic Advisory Taskforce, expanded eligibility for beginning farmer loans, food safety provisions and a number of other items that don’t require spending money.

Similarly, the agriculture finance bill, which defines the state’s investment in agriculture programs over the next two years, was negotiated ahead of the May 20 deadline and nearly passed off the floor before the end of regular session. During the special session, it was first up on the docket and passed both chambers with broad bipartisan support (114-14 in the House and 66-0 in the Senate). The compromise bill includes a number of MFU priorities, including needed investments in rural mental health and the Farm Advocate program, increased funding to address the backlog in meat inspections, direct financial relief for dairy farmers and an additional trade and marketing position at MDA that will focus in part on Farm to School. The bill also increases funding for ag emergency preparedness, industrial hemp and control of noxious weeds.

Third, the tax bill includes a phased-in 30 percent increase to the Ag2School tax credit, which reimburses owners of agricultural land for a portion of their school construction bond levy. This represents a win-win for farmers and rural school districts and will provide farmers significant and needed property tax relief. Also, this bill includes conformity with Section 179 (with an 80 percent add-back) for equipment expensing. Finally, the tax bill makes a fix that will help farmers pass their farm onto the next generation, without risking their agricultural homestead tax credit.

As of May 28, Gov. Walz had yet to sign these bills into law, but he is expected to do so in the coming days.

There are a number of other issues that we’ll need to revisit next year, and we’ll need your input to keep the voices of rural Minnesotans strong. If you have any questions or thoughts on MFU’s legislative work don’t hesitate to reach out to me at stu@mfu.org, (320) 232-3047, or @stulourey on Twitter. ▲

May has kept MFU’s legislative team busy. Early morning on Saturday, May 25 – after weeks of negotiations, months of committee work and a long night of debate – legislators passed a series of bills that together detail the state’s budget for the next two years.

Throughout all this, MFU worked hard to make sure that the voices of family farmers, ranchers and rural communities were heard at the Capitol. In order to keep policymakers up-to-date and help them make informed decisions, MFU met with Walz legislators and the administration, wrote letters to committees, testified on priority legislation and maintained a steady presence in St. Paul.

The final \$48 billion budget was agreed to during a sprint of a special session that





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several things that farmers have zero control over, weather, commodity prices, emergencies, equipment failures and so on; but there are other things that we DO have control over, like being good stewards of our land, being positive role models, supporting your community and neighbors, taking care of yourself physically and mentally and how you respond to the negativity surrounding agriculture. If we focus on these specific things and do what we can, it will be the start of a positive force that will keep going even when we feel stuck.

Tough times don't mean a lack of strength or community; in fact, I believe these tough times bring rural communities together. We build friendships and farming families, and leaders emerge during these times. After the March flooding happened in Nebraska this year, farmers headed straight to help their friends in need with supplies and a shoulder to simply lighten the load in any way possible. Farmers come from around the country to gather together to provide support. This is just one example.

I mentioned that great leaders emerge during difficult times. Right now, we have some of the best leaders and advocates that farming has to offer, including in the Legislature and in our own backyards. These men and women are spending countless hours advocating for the future of agriculture, environmental sustainability and the importance of biofuels. They offer speaking sessions, committee boards and advocacy programs to ensure rural voices are heard.

MFU has a history of building positivity in farming communities all over the state. Every month MFU publish *Minnesota Agriculture*,

focusing on how we are "Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers." Our magazine highlights important subjects that range from legislative updates to renewable energy to the Women's Conference and Members in Focus. It is a great message for positive insight and farming resources.



We also have resources and support for our farm stress. Years ago, the stigma around mental illness and stress was so dark and disgraceful that it wasn't recognized as even a real thing. Today we have many advocates who have spoken out about their own personal experience and the importance of seeking help and looking out for our neighbors. Although we continue to fight the stigma surrounding mental illness in farm country, we have come leaps and bounds and will continue to do so every day moving forward. Some of the resources for farmers are local advocates to help with natural disasters or financial problems. The Farm Advocate program has been supported by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture since 1984. These people understand the needs of agricultural families and communities. These advocates can be found at www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissioners_office/farmadvocates and cost nothing to talk to. (See page 12.)

One of the greatest blessings we get from life is our youth and the opportunity of teachable moments. The next generation is always watching and learning. All aspects and levels of life have peaks and valleys. Farming is not excluded from this, which gives us a unique opportunity to teach our youth strength and resilience. If farming were easy, everyone would do it. So today and every day, look for the positive, and continue to do the work you do. ▲



USDA announces repayment options for producers with coverage in previous margin protection program for dairy

Dairy producers who had coverage under the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy), which provided payments to producers when the price of milk fell below the feed costs to produce it, are eligible to receive a repayment for part of the premiums paid into the program.

To be eligible for this repayment, which was authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill, a dairy operation must have participated in the MPP-Dairy during any calendar year from 2014 through 2017, have the repayment calculated and verified by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and elect one of two options by Sept. 20. Operations whose established production history has been transferred to an heir or new owner also are eligible.

An operation's repayment amount is calculated for each applicable calendar year in which that dairy participated in MPP-Dairy, from 2014 through 2017. The repayment amount is equal to the difference between the total amount of premiums paid by the dairy operation for each applicable calendar year of coverage and the total amount of payments made



to the MPP-Dairy participating dairy operation for that applicable calendar year.

An operation either can elect to receive 50 percent of the repayment amount as a cash refund or take 75 percent of the amount as a credit that can be used toward premiums for the new Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program. **Sign-up for DMC begins June 17 and ends Sept. 20.** Like MPP-Dairy, DMC is a voluntary risk management program that helps dairy producers deal with shifting milk prices and feed costs and replaces MPP-Dairy. Both MPP-Dairy reimbursement options will be subject to a 6.2 percent sequestration rate.

Eligible dairy producers will receive a letter from FSA soon outlining their repayment options.

USDA announces new decision tool for DMC

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced the availability of a new web-based tool – developed in partnership with the University of Wisconsin – to help dairy producers evaluate various scenarios using different coverage levels through the new DMC program.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized DMC, a voluntary risk management program that offers financial protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. It replaces the program previously known as the Margin Protection Program for Dairy. **Sign-up for this FSA program opens on June 17.**

"With sign-up for the DMC program just weeks away, we encourage producers to use this new support tool to help make decisions on participation in the program," Secretary

Perdue said. "Dairy producers have faced tough challenges over the years, but the DMC program should help producers' better weather the ups and downs in the industry."

The University of Wisconsin launched the decision support tool in cooperation with FSA and funded through a cooperative agreement with the USDA Office of the Chief Economist. The tool was designed to help producers determine the level of coverage under a variety of conditions that will provide them with the strongest financial safety net. It allows farmers to simplify their coverage level selection by combining operation data and other key variables to calculate coverage needs based on price projections.

The decision tool assists producers with calculating total premiums costs and administrative fees associated with participation in DMC. It also forecasts payments that will be made during the coverage year.

"The new Dairy Margin Coverage program offers very appealing options for all dairy farmers to reduce their net income risk due to volatility in milk or feed prices," said Dr. Mark Stephenson, Director of Dairy Policy Analysis, University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Higher coverage levels, monthly payments and more flexible production coverage options are especially helpful for most farms who can cover much of their milk production with the new five million pound maximum for Tier 1 premiums."

For more information, access the tool at fsa.usda.gov/dmc-tool. For DMC sign-up, eligibility and related program information, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local USDA Service Center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.



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(continued on the next page)



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YAC participate in the Annual MFU Convention as well – you probably saw them helping during the convention by escorting people to their tables during the banquet or at the auction, displaying items to potential buyers. The YAC also plan camp activities for the following year and grow as leaders. This is a crowning achievement for many campers. The YAC is another example of how MFU Camp program provides opportunities for youth leadership to blossom. The planning weekend was very productive and resulted in many decisions relating to Minnesota Farmers Union Leadership Camp

2019. The overall theme of this year's camp is "Old at Heart," which reflects the history of the MFU camp program and how it has continued to thrive through many generations of campers. This summer's camps also feature lessons on cooperatives, Farmers Union history and agriculture.

The weekend wasn't only camp planning, the YAC members also got a chance to have fun and relax by going out to eat at the Minnesota Cooks restaurant "Zellas" and capped the night off with cosmic bowling! ▲



The 2018-19 YAC members are: Abigail Heacock of Grove City; Isabella Brockhouse of Middle River; Jacob Talty of Chaska; Josiah Zapf of Saint Bonifacius; Lily Guillemette of Red Lake Falls; Lisette Amacher of Saint Paul; Nicholas Foss of Saint Bonifacius; and Trevor Rieck of Litchfield.

The annual Youth Advisory Council (YAC) spring meeting took place on May 18 and 19 in Hutchinson, Minn. The YAC consists of eight campers, elected by their peers at MFU Senior High Camp to help plan camp and represent their fellow MFU youth at events throughout the year. The

FSA NEWS AND VIEWS (continued)

USDA accepting applications to help cover producers' costs for organic certification

Organic producers and handlers can apply for federal funds to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP). **Applications for fiscal 2019 funding are due Oct. 31.**

"Producers can visit their local FSA county offices to apply for up to 75 percent of the cost of organic certification," said FSA Administrator Richard Fordyce. "This also gives organic producers an opportunity to learn about other valuable USDA resources, like farm loans and conservation assistance, that can help them succeed. Organic producers can take advantage of a variety of USDA programs from help with field buffers to routine operating expenses to storage and handling equipment."

OCCSP received continued support through the 2018 Farm Bill. It provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent.



Eligible expenses for cost-share reimbursement include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Certified producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75 percent of certification costs each year, up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope, including crops, livestock, wild crops, handling and state organic program fees. ▲



A monthly update from National Farmers Union

Trade tensions with China Escalate

On the heels of unsuccessful trade negotiations with China, the White House increased tariffs from 10 percent to 25 percent on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods in May.

Though the two countries have continued talks, they have not yet reached an agreement. As a result, China intends to impose retaliatory tariffs on \$60 billion worth of American imports starting June 1. The long list of affected products covers many agricultural goods, including preparations of beef, fruit and vegetables, peanuts, sugar, wheat, chicken and turkey. President Donald Trump, not to be outdone, threatened to levy duties on an additional \$325 billion worth of imports, which, if implemented, would mean that nearly all U.S. imports from China would be subject to tariffs.

NFU President Roger Johnson expressed concern about how the recent escalation would affect family farmers and ranchers.

“China’s unfair and manipulative trade practices are clearly a problem that need to be fixed,” said Johnson. “But addressing these practices has created new problems for American farmers and ranchers in the form of lost export markets, a commodity glut and severely depressed prices.”

The administration has indicated that it plans to provide a trade assistance package to support struggling family farmers and ranchers, though details about how much assistance will be available, how it will be allocated and who will be eligible to apply have not been released at the time of this publication. In response to the news, NFU sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue providing recommendations for how best to “craft a package that will adequately address the broad, long-term impacts to all of American agriculture.” We urged USDA to base payments on historical production, aid producers of all affected commodities and avoid undue disparities between payment rates for various commodities. NFU also suggested that the agency “address the growing problem of oversupply by providing farmers with incentives to reduce overall production.”



Farmer's share falls to all-time low

For every dollar Americans spend on food, U.S. farmers and ranchers earn just 14.6 cents, according to the latest Farmer's Share report recently released by ERS. This value marks a 17 percent decline since 2011 and the smallest portion of the American food dollar that farmers have received since the USDA began reporting these data in 1993. The remaining 85.4 cents cover off-farm costs, including processing, wholesaling, distribution, marketing and retailing.

The ERS report supports a larger story about the weakened state of the farm economy: net U.S. farm income is estimated to be just \$66.3 billion for 2018, a 12 percent drop from 2017 and a nearly 50 percent drop since 2013. Similarly, median farm income is estimated to be -\$1,548, meaning most farms lost money last year.



“Conditions for farmers have been eroding since 2011, and there’s only so much longer they can hold on. Many have already made the heartbreaking decision to close up shop; in just the past five years, the United States lost upwards of 70,000 farm operations,” Johnson said regarding the report. “We sincerely hope this startling report will open policy makers’ eyes to the financial challenges family farmers and ranchers endure on a daily basis and convince them to provide the support they need.”

Oversupply, depressed prices plague dairy industry

In response to sustained depressed milk prices, chronic oversupply, farm-level consolidation and a wave of farm closures, the U.S. House Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture

held a hearing on the state of the dairy economy. Dairy farmers, trade specialists and economists presented verbal testimony about the Dairy Margin Coverage program, international trade policy, milk consumption in schools, farm labor and other issues affecting the industry.

President Johnson submitted written testimony highlighting the considerable financial difficulties American dairy producers have withstood for the past several years.

“Most dairy farmers have been paid below the cost of production for more than four consecutive years,” Johnson wrote. “With mounting debt and no significant price rebound in sight, thousands have been left with no choice but to close their doors.”

NFU Vice President Patty Edelburg, who co-owns and operates a dairy farm in Amherst Junction, Wisc., largely attributed the

problem to overproduction, which has plagued the industry for some time.

“The 2018 Farm Bill provides improvements that will help stem losses for many family farmers, but this support alone won’t be enough to save the dairy industry,” Edelburg said. “We need to have a meaningful conversation about supply management options that will ensure dairy farmers are paid a fair price from the market.”

NFU supports E15 waiver, pathway for higher-level ethanol blends

In March, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced a proposed rule which would allow year-round use of gasoline blended with 15 percent ethanol, also known as E15. The rule also includes regulatory changes to renewable identification number (RIN) market, which aim to prevent market manipulation.

NFU, which has long supported ethanol for its environmental and economic benefits, submitted comments to the agency on the rule, as did MFU. By allowing for year-round E15, the rule would provide expanded market opportunities for family farmers, spur economic growth in rural communities, lower fuel costs for consumers and cut down on pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. However, President Johnson said that the EPA should more strongly commit to further expanding higher-level blends of biofuels, including E30, which the proposed rule does not include.

“What we need from EPA is allowing year-round sales of higher-level blends of ethanol in gasoline,” said Johnson. “That’s the way we cut into over-supply. That’s the way we better our environmental impact. And that’s the way we save consumers more money at the pump.”

Johnson also proposed EPA separate its proposed RIN reforms from the E15 rule until the agency has considered the potential implications of the reforms and made such findings public.

The Washington Corner can be found at www.nfu.org/corner. ▲



Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company ethanol processing plant in Benson, Minn.



FUIA AGENT HIGHLIGHT:
PAUL JOHANNES
(320) 235-2540 – Willmar
 1303 1st Street S, Suite 9
(320) 523-1150 – Olivia
 127 9th Street S
pjohannes@johannesagency.com

Nicholas works at a Co-op and Alexander joined my Agency in Willmar two years ago. Most of my free time is spent doing outdoor activities, like hunting or ice fishing. I also raise and train English Springer Spaniels and compete in AKC Field Trials around the Midwest.

What is your #1 concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance? *I believe value is the number one concern with farm insurance, and we know with the current farm economy, both price and coverage are concerns for every farmer. We take great time in reviewing all aspects of the farm, making sure the building and machinery values are accurate so farmers are not spending unnecessarily. We ensure all the farm exposures are addressed, and make sure the deductible is appropriate for the exposure. I have found by taking time to explain the exposures with the premiums to my clients, we are able to offer the best value during these challenging times.*

Paul has offices with licensed Staff in both Willmar (his main office) and Olivia, MN, and offers all lines of insurance coverage. You can follow his Agency's community involvement and updates on Facebook at @JohannesAgencyInsurance, and read more about his staff and services at his website, www.johannesagency.com.

*Be sure to follow Farmers Union Insurance Agency on Facebook and Twitter at @MNFUIA, and visit our website at www.mnfuia.com for more information about our Agents and the insurance services we can provide. **We are Trusted. Local. Committed.***
 Photo © 2019 Katie Cannon Photography

Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and MFU important to you? *I have been an Agent for Farmers Union Agency for 27 years. I always try to stay informed and to do what is in my clients' best interests and by being involved in both organizations, I feel I can stay on top of current issues in our communities.*

What community organizations are you passionate about? *I am a Minnesota Farmers Union member, a member of Ducks Unlimited, the Eagles (Club 2334), a member of the Willmar and Olivia Area Chambers of Commerce, and the Willmar Wrestling Club. I just finished my term on the Board of Directors for the Olivia Chamber of Commerce and Willmar Wrestling Club, but I volunteer for many fundraising activities.*

Please tell us a little bit about your family life. *I have been married to my wife, Seda, for over 15 years and live in Willmar. I have two sons: Nicholas and Alexander, and two grandchildren.*



Farm Stress Radio Series



Prompted by the many sources of stress currently impacting farmers and ranchers, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Red River Farm Network (RRFN) have joined forces to create a new radio series called **TransFARMation**. MFU is proud to be one of its sponsors.

The series uses farm radio, podcasts and social media to increase awareness and reduce inhibitions about acknowledging farmer stress while highlighting sources of support.

“Many people are struggling and need to know they’re not alone,” said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. “This is a powerful series. We hear from farmers, ranchers and others in agriculture talk about some of the strategies and solutions that helped them when times got tough.”

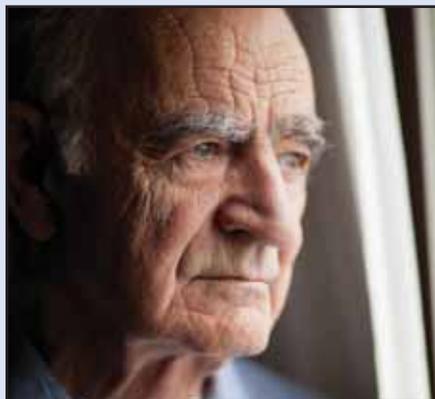
The 60 second prime-time radio stories can be heard on all of RRFN’s 20 stations throughout Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. In addition, the in-depth podcasts can be found at www.rrfn.com/transfarmation.

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.

Wright-Carver County Breakfast on the Farm

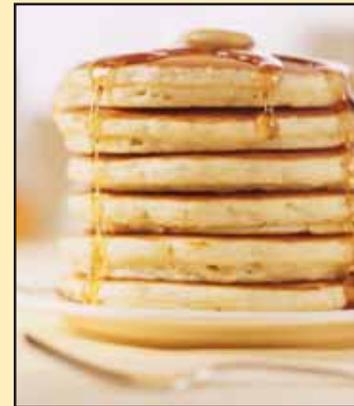
Saturday, June 22 • 7 a.m. – 1 p.m

**Hoese Dairy Farm,
MFU June Members in Focus**

Where: Hoese Dairy Farm, Mayer, with bus pickup at Waconia High School, 1650 Community Dr., Waconia, MN.
No parking on the farm.

Cost: Free admission, \$5 for food, 5 and under eat free

Activities: All-you-can-eat pancakes with sausage, free milk, free beef sticks, free cheese curds, free ice cream cones, AgCentric educational trailer, Ridgewater College combine simulator, petting zoo, live band, radio stations, “Milking Molly” (a pretend cow that kids can milk using recycled water)



MFU will have a booth at the breakfast along with Farmers Union Insurance Agent Lisa Valiant! We hope to see you there.

Farm Advocates

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

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

Farm Advocates:

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

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

MEMBERS IN FOCUS: HOESE FAMILY, CARVER COUNTY

The Hoese family has farmed their Mayer-area land since 1876. This century farm family, Scott, Yvonne, Eric and Erica, Cade, Ryann and Jace, has innovated their dairy in ways that would surely make those who came before proud.

The 130-cow Hoese Dairy, Inc., owned by dad and mom Scott and Yvonne (fourth generation) and son Eric (fifth), installed a robotic feed mixer and pusher a few months ago. Five hundred acres out of their 1,250 are in the fourth year of a five-year Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract. They're certified under the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). They sell milk to Bongards Creameries. And on June 22, they'll be able to say they've hosted a Breakfast on the Farm.



Environmental stewardship

In the partnership, Scott's in charge of field-work. So he's been the one spearheading the conservation initiatives. Having served on the board for the Carver County Soil and Water Conservation District, he knows his way around this area of knowledge.

"We're in the CSP, and we planted a few cover crops this year with an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost-share," Scott said.

Their CSP contract includes grid sampling, precision sprayers and nitrogen testing, with the advice of a crop consultant.

Receiving MAWQCP certification in 2017 was a way the Hoeses could know for sure that they were in compliance with the buffer law, one of Gov. Mark Dayton's signature pieces of legislation mandating buffer strips on farmland by public waters.

"We have a private ditch down here that's classified as public waters, and we would

have had to put a 50-foot buffer on it," Scott said. "Going through the MAWQCP, we could get it down to 16 feet. There are some areas where the water runs off the field, so we had to put grass strips there too. It was a pretty easy system to go through. We have regulatory certainty for like 10 years, which is nice because you never know what's gonna happen with regulations."

The MAWQCP is a good option for farmers who don't want to worry about evolving regulations and incorporate conservation practices that are best for their specific land. Information about the program is on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture website.

Opportunities for growth

The Hoeses doubled their land size last year, going from 600-1,250 acres. They purchased land near their original acreage and rent out about two-thirds of it. They were able to do this because they've managed to avoid the brutal effects of low milk prices.

"We were set up financially better coming into the last few years," Eric said. "We knew our numbers and cost of production. Last year we about broke even. We didn't buy anything when prices were high."

Still, they're deeply aware of how low dairy prices are affecting other family farms like theirs. They do face the issue of needing to find workers.

"We do have part-time help, but either Eric or I have to be here. For us to leave the farm together is almost impossible right now, until we find someone more reliable," Scott said. "That's hard with such low unemployment numbers right now. It's the same with milk truckers; they can't find people to haul milk, but they have to do it every day."

Spouses Yvonne and Erica both have off-farm jobs, though they pitch in when they can. Yvonne is a tour director for a bus company. Erica is a personal trainer at a nutrition club in Waconia that she and Eric are part owners of. They have three young children, which take up most of their time outside of their careers.

Farmers Union leadership and education

Scott and Yvonne have the distinct honor of being the first Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership Couple from Minnesota. Farmers Union Enterprises is made up of five state organizations: Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The leadership couples program began in 2008.



Each state picks one couple to go through the program.

"It was mostly getting to know other states and what they do there," Scott said. "You had to interview each other, practice public speaking. We got to go to Washington, D.C., the NFU Convention in Las Vegas and other states' conventions."

He's following in his dad's footsteps in Farmers Union leadership, having grown up in the organization. Eric got his own membership in his mid-20s when he applied for the NFU Beginning Farmer Institute. He was one of four from Minnesota in his class.

"We went to D.C., the NFU Convention in Santa Fe and Shepherd's Way Farms here in Minnesota," he said of the experience.

That led him to apply to speak at a young farmers summit in Bordeaux, France. Eric represented the United States in a breakout session, speaking on how government plays a role for young farmers and the various young farmer loans in the U.S. And he has a funny story to tell from it.

"I was told, 'Someone will be at the airport in Bordeaux to meet you there,'" he said. "I ended up walking around lost. I ran into a dairy farmer from New Zealand who was as lost as I was. We ended up being roommates."

Being involved with Farmers Union, as well as other local groups, is important to the Hoese family because they want to stay informed and proactive.

"People ask me what's going on in the township or state or Farmers Union and I can tell them," Scott said. "A lot of people complain about things but aren't involved in trying to solve the problems."

This June Dairy Month, support our Minnesota dairy farmers by having a glass of milk, a slice of cheese, a bowl of yogurt or an ice cream cone. And, bring your friends and family to a Breakfast on the Farm (see pages 12 & 15)! ▲

minnesota cooks™

Croque Monsieur

Yield: 4 servings

- 8 slices brioche bread
- 8 slices Shepherd's Hope cheese
- 12 slices prosciutto
- 4 Tbsp butter, room temperature
- 2 cups Mornay sauce, heated
- Finely sliced chives, for garnish

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Heat 2 large skillet over medium low heat. Spread butter evenly over brioche slices. Place four slices of bread buttered side down on a clean work surface. Place one slice of cheese on each slice of bread, followed by three slices each of prosciutto. Top each sandwich with the remaining cheese, and finish with the last four pieces of bread, buttered side up. Using a large spatula transfer the sandwiches to the preheated skillets. Fry until golden brown, 3-4 minutes, then flip the sandwiches over. Transfer the skillets to the oven for 5-6 minutes, or until the bottoms are golden and the cheese is melted.

For Mornay sauce:

- 1 Tbsp butter
- 1/2 yellow onion, diced
- 4 Tbsp flour
- 1-1/2 cups whole milk
- 1-1/2 cups heavy cream
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 tsp black peppercorns
- 2 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 cup Shepherd's Way Friesago cheese
- grated nutmeg, to taste
- salt and white pepper, to taste

Melt butter in saucepot over medium heat. Add onions and sauté until translucent. Whisk in the flour and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Turn the heat up to high and whisk in 1/3 of the milk and cream. When the sauce comes to a boil, add another third and repeat until all the milk is incorporated. Add the bay leaves, peppercorns and mustard.



Reduce heat to low and simmer for 30-45 minutes. Strain the sauce through a fine mesh sieve and add the cheese, whisking until melted. Add the salt, pepper and nutmeg.

To serve:

Cut each sandwich on the diagonal and put on plates. Ladle 1/2 cup of the hot Mornay sauce on each sandwich. Garnish with chives.

Order MFU County Fair Kits!

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

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

Some examples of items included in the kits:

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



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

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

Please allow 2 weeks to receive your items.

MFU offers FREE agritourism sign to members

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

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

To get your sign, contact MFU Operations Director Laura Sherar at laura@mfu.org or (651) 639-1223.



KGLB Radio Farm & Ag Day

Tuesday, June 11 • 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Glencoe City Center, 1107 11th St. E,
Glencoe

- Free pork burger lunch & refreshments
- Register for prizes

Managing Rural Stress: How to Support Your Neighbor

Thursday, June 20 • 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Sourcewell, 202 12th St. NE, Staples

Speakers: Goodhue County Farmers Union
President Deborah Mills, AgCentric Director
Keith Olander, Wellness in the Woods

FFI: Jode Freyholtz-London, (218) 296-2067
or jode@mnwitw.org

Sponsored in part by Todd County Farmers Union

June Dairy Month Farm Events

June 14 • **Goodhue County Breakfast on the Farm** • Schrimpf Family Farm, 35939 205th Ave., Goodhue

June 15 • **Kanabec/Isanti County Breakfast on the Farm** • Haubenschild Farms, 35050 Nacre St. NW, Princeton

June 15 • **Mahnomen County Breakfast on the Farm** • Jim Steinmetz Farm, 2326 170th St., Mahnomen

June 20 • **Wabasha County Family Night on the Farm** • Stelling Farms, 62728 305th Ave., Millville

June 22 • **Olmsted County Breakfast on the Farm** • Blue Horizons Family Farm, 4329 75th St. NE, Rochester

June 22 • **Todd County Breakfast on the Farm** • Twin Eagle Dairy, 20061 380th St., Clarissa

June 22 • **Wright-Carver County Breakfast on the Farm** • Hoese Dairy Inc., bus pick-up at Waconia High School, 1650 Community Dr., Waconia (see page 12 for more information)

June 29 • **Carlton County Breakfast on the Farm** • Laveau Dairy, 508 Cemetery Road, Wrenshall

July 6 • **Clearwater County Breakfast on the Farm** • Alroy and Debbie Lewis Farm, 15491 306th St., Bagley



Registration for 2019 MFU Leadership Camps

There's still time to sign up for our 2019 MFU Leadership Camps!
Go to www.mfu.org/camp to register.

Day Camps

June 10-14 and July 8-12

Various locations in Minnesota

Weeklong Camps

Northern Elementary Camp (Ages 8-11)

June 17-21 (Mon-Fri) • Farmers Union Lake Sarah Campground (near Erskine)

Northern Junior Camp (Ages 11-14)

June 24-28 (Mon-Fri) • Lake Sarah Campground

Southern Elementary Camp (Ages 8-11)

July 16-20 (Tues-Sat) • Sibley State Park (near New London)

Southern Junior Camp (Ages 11-14)

July 22-26 (Mon-Fri) • Sibley State Park

Senior High Camp (Ages 14-18)

July 28- Aug 2 (Sun-Fri) • Sibley State Park



2019 Camp Theme Nights

Each night at camp we hold different activities, according to themes chosen by our Youth Advisory Council. This year the themes are Mythical Fantasy Night, Fake an Injury Night, The Letter S Night, Roarin' 20s Night (Senior Camp only) and Banquet Night! We ask that campers please try their best to dress-up in themed costumes to make the most fun of the nights. Be creative and have fun!

Mythical Fantasy Night

Camp will transform before your very eyes to your favorite mythical fantasy! Dress up as a dwarf to get ready for a hike to Mt. Mordor, Harry Potter for a game of Quidditch, or you could even be a fairy to fly to Neverland! Art

thou brave enough to step into this other realm for this night of camp? Whether you're a king, queen, goblin, wizard, knight in shining armor or even a dragon, it's going to be a blast!

The Letter S Night

Seriously, this stupendous theme will surely be a success! The Letter S Night is the night to get creative and dress up as anything that starts with an S. Choose anything from a shark to a solar system and get ready for a talent show you won't soon forget!

Fake an Injury Night

Ever wonder what it would look like if you had a broken arm? Well dig up all those

old crutches, eye patches, gauze and slings, because on Fake an Injury Night we want you to dress up in your best fake injury gear!

Banquet Night

A camp tradition! Put on your best dress clothes and join us for an evening of fine dining, fine music and awards.

Roarin' 20s Night (Senior Camp Only)

Get ready to really put on the Ritz this night of camp. Know your onion and dress up in your most sophisticated garb. Try your hand at some of the casino games or just hang out at the speakeasy. Party like it's 1929 at the dance! This night is sure to be the bee's knees! ▲



We are proud to serve the hardworking men, women and families of Minnesota during June Dairy Month and every day.

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or (651) 639-1064 locally
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ALEXANDRIA Daylon Faber (320) 763-9455	DULUTH Brad Anderson (218) 481-0812	GOODHUE Dan Hedeem (651) 923-4433	MARSHALL Dennis Klocow, Jr. (507) 532-0418	NORWOOD YOUNG AMERICA Lisa Valiant (952) 467-2922	WILLMAR Paul Johannes (320) 235-2540
BEMIDJI Ben Caron (218) 751-7761	ELK RIVER Rob Pampusch (763) 441-4250	GOODHUE Alison Peters (651) 923-4433	NEW! MENAUGA Kristine Hendrickson (218) 564-5300	OLIVIA Paul Johannes (320) 523-1150	WINDOM Ted Winter (507) 831-3541
BENSON Tom Hollingsworth (320) 843-2422	NEW! FARIBAULT Ben Flemke (507) 497-1010	HALLOCK Jay Swanson (218) 853-2468	MONTEVIDEO Ivan Anderson (320) 269-9463	ROCHESTER Chris Sanders (507) 282-4411	<p>Be sure to follow us on Social Media!</p> <p>MNFUIA on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.</p>
CANBY Mike Panka (507) 223-5527	FARMINGTON Jerry Theisen (651) 463-7667	IVANHOE Mike Panka (507) 694-1750	MOORHEAD Dennis Fjeld (218) 236-1966	ROSEAU Steve Dostal (218) 463-2369	
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