

SPRING 2022

 MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Spokesman

WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY



2022 SUPPLY CHAIN CHALLENGES

PAGE 16

SHEEP RANCHING AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

PAGE 6

RANCH MOM MUSINGS

PAGE 8

NEW MEAT CUTTING SKILLS

PAGE 12

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MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

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- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>4 From The President
PRACTICE SAFETY EVERY DAY WITH EVERYTHING</p> <p>5 The EVP Message
FINDING THE TRUTH IN NEWS REPORTING</p> <p>6 New MFBF Vice President
DEDICATED TO FARM BUREAU</p> <p>8 Ranch Mom Musings
HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN, JIGGETY-JIG</p> <p>9 Annual Meeting
64TH ANNUAL AGENTS' MEETING HELD IN BILLINGS, MONTANA</p> <p>10 Guest Editorial
CI-121 NOT IN BEST INTEREST OF COMMUNITIES AND SMALL BUSINESS</p> <p>12 Meat Cutting Course
MCC STUDENT SHARES THOUGHTS ON MEAT PROCESSING</p> | <p>14 Meet The Agents
MEET FERGUS COUNTY'S MOUNTAIN WEST INSURANCE AGENTS</p> <p>16 Supply Chain Issues
FARMERS, RANCHERS AND EQUIPMENT DEALERS AFFECTED BY SHORTAGES</p> <p>20 Membership Training
ACE CLASS LEARNS TO ADDRESS DIFFERENT VIEWS</p> <p>22 Ag Education
BOZEMAN HIGH SCHOOL IS COOKING UP PULSES</p> <p>24 AG CHAT</p> |
|---|---|



ON THE COVER:

New MFBF Vice President Gary Heibertshausen and his wife, Joyce at their ranch in Alzada.

Photo by Dylan Davidson.

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**Cyndi Johnson**

President, Montana Farm Bureau Federation

“ The FFA organization, Montana Extension Service, Montana Agri-Safety program, Montana Farm Bureau Federation, and the American Farm Bureau Federation have many resources available to create local programs or events that highlight the subject of safety and the importance of physical and mental health. ”

Practice safety every day with everything

With the world in turmoil, it's challenging to focus on what needs attention on the ranch or farm. In our digital world, we can instantly see others suffering worldwide. We are bombarded with news from every point of view and struggle to sort facts from opinion. It can be daunting to see so many terrible situations totally beyond your control. No matter what is happening in the world, however, our livestock needs to be fed, and our fields need preparation, which is something we can control.

We can also have some control over sharing our story. The celebrations of agriculture that occur in the spring and throughout the year provide us with multiple occasions to tell consumers about our lives on the farm or ranch and share our experiences with like-minded agriculturalists.

Does your story include safety in agriculture? Does your County Farm Bureau have an event that promotes or highlights ag safety? American Farm Bureau Federation's Ag Safety Awareness Program Week (March 7 – 11) or National Ag Day (Mar 22) provided an excellent time for talking about life on the farm and ranch. Other opportunities include Earth Day in April. May is Mental Health Awareness Month and June is National Safety Month. Don't forget National Farm Safety and Health Week in September – you get the idea.

Farm and ranch mishaps happen every day. The slightest misstep, shortcut or idea for efficiency that pops into our head can lead to very frightening outcomes. Montana Farm Bureau members are too familiar with accidents in their neighborhoods or at their own places. One long-time Teton County member is still recovering in a facility far from home after an accident with cattle over two years ago.

My brother, who works with us on our farm, climbed into the top of a grain bin as we were unloading it. He intended to “hang on the ladder” while attempting to remove a bit of sprouted grain from the top of the pile. My husband stopped the auger immediately and quickly reminded everyone that wasn't how we worked on our place. We've had our share of accidents with equipment – backing and parking accidents that have cost thousands



of dollars to repair. We've experienced all kinds of slips and falls. Nearly every accident I can think of was because of trying to hurry whatever task was at hand. Speed doesn't always equate to efficiency, and it's never worth the price if things go wrong. It reminds me of an old saying – “Slow but steady wins the race.” Practice safety every day and teach everyone you work with on your farm, ranch or business that safety must be a priority.

May is the month when our community holds a “Farm Safety Day.” The event is hosted at the local high school by the FFA, FFA Alumni and Farm Bureau members. The fourth-grade students from the surrounding schools learn about safety around machinery, animals, electricity, large and small tools, ATVs, and railroads since there are many miles of railroad in north-central Montana. The local electric co-ops and electricians, railroad employees, equipment and ATV dealerships, ranchers, and farmers teach children and answer the most curious questions. Quite a few county Farm Bureaus host similar events that provide an excellent opportunity for members to get involved with a worthwhile project.

As I write this article, I'm volunteering at Conrad's annual FFA-4H Crops and Mechanics contest. This event makes me think of the fantastic partnerships we have with our local community youth organizations and our connections to share the message of ag safety. The FFA organization, Montana Extension Service, Montana Agri-Safety program, Montana Farm Bureau Federation, and the American Farm Bureau Federation have many resources available to create local programs or events that highlight the subject of safety and the importance of physical and mental health. Get involved in promoting safety, and as the famous saying goes, “Safety is no accident.”



Finding the truth in news reporting

The world has gone to hell in a handbasket! Or has it? It might depend on who you listen to in today's news climate. I have been particularly frustrated in the last few years with the information we hear on issues such as COVID, the environment, agriculture or a myriad of other topics. How often have we read headlines or listened to breathless reporters as they expounded on the latest tragedy, conflict, sports event or movie star gossip only to find that much of what they were reporting was pretty darn ordinary?

Let's start with COVID. Is this the year we have turned the corner on the pandemic, or is the end nowhere near? Your answer might depend, once again, on whose reporting you heard or the social media influencer you follow. If you relied on coverage of America's number of COVID infections, you probably think we are on a seesaw, where we make progress only to see infections spike again. However, if you listened to coverage about the percentage of American COVID infections that resulted in death or hospitalization, you would think we were making real progress. You might have panicked last fall when you saw on NBC news that 125,000 fully vaccinated people had tested positive for COVID. You would be less panicked if you knew that it was 125,000 out of the 165 million people vaccinated at the time—about 0.08% of all those vaccinated. A September report from CNN was the stuff of parents' nightmares: they reported that cases among children were growing exponentially, with over 750,000 in a month. The missing detail? It was the same month that kids were going back to schools requiring testing that hadn't previously been done; it wasn't necessarily a spike in cases, just in diagnoses for kids who felt just fine for the most part.

News reports claimed that last year was a scary year for the environment. As agriculture and other industries tried to figure out ways to deal with climate change, the New York Times reminded us of the extraordinary burden on the United States as "historically the largest source

of planet-warming pollution." This is true if, by "historically," you meant "hasn't been the leading source of emissions for most of this century." While we wouldn't know it from the coverage, America's carbon emissions have decreased in the last couple of decades while emissions in other countries haven't. That brings us to cattle emissions. News reports would have you think that cattle farts and belching are dooming the world as we know it. Ruminant livestock can produce 250 to 500 liters of methane per day. The news doesn't tell us that this is less than 2% of the total contribution to global warming.

Meanwhile, better breeding, genetics and nutrition have increased the efficiency of livestock production in the U.S. In the 1970s, 140 million head of cattle were needed to meet demand, and now just 90 million head are required, all the while producing more meat. (Sources: "Methane Emissions from Cattle" from the Journal of Animal Science and "Cows and Climate Change" from research by Dr. Frank Mitloehner, UC Davis.) When taken as a whole, agriculture has a very low net input to global warming because we grow plants that use CO₂ and store it in the soil.

In each of these examples, the news fails to put information into context. Their purpose has shifted from reliable communications where people can draw their own conclusions to reporting more concerned with viewership, ratings, and personal bias. The news sources will never let a good catastrophe go to waste, and if there isn't one, they will create it.

The environment and the pandemic are serious issues that should inspire serious coverage. Too often, though, the goal of the media outlets is to get us angry or scared enough to click on the story or stay on the channel. The next time you see a news report that seems exaggerated or incorrect, check with a second or even a third source. If the reporters aren't going to do their research, it's up to us to become the investigative reporter and make educated conclusions.



John Youngberg
Executive Vice President, MFBF

“The next time you see a news report that seems exaggerated or incorrect, check with a second or even a third source.”

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Dedicated to **Farm Bureau**

BY REBECCA COLNAR, *SPOKESMAN EDITOR*

Gary Heibertshausen and his wife, Joyce, packed up their sheep, horses and dogs in 2010 and moved from their farm in Ohio for a ranch in the open sagebrush country of Alzada. Today, they have a small band of registered Corriedales, with their Columbia ewes out on the rangeland. In addition, the Heibertshausens grow dryland hay, and Joyce uses working border collies.

Heibertshausen served on the Montana Farm Bureau board for almost seven years from 2015 to 2021, finishing a term and then being elected for three two-year terms. "In 2021, when MFBF President

Montana to help our members prosper."

The sheep rancher said he especially appreciates that Farm Bureau is truly a grassroots organization. "I can be a producer, yet be a delegate and go to meetings and I can be on the delegate floor. What's so impressive with Farm Bureau is that the members can develop a resolution at the county level that is then voted upon at the state level and make it to the delegate session at the American Farm Bureau Annual Meeting of Voting Delegates. We need this because farmers and ranchers are such a small part of the population, we need to get

our voices heard in every aspect, or someone else will decide how our industry will proceed—by people who don't know the whole story."

He readily agrees that being involved takes time, but it's critical to take the time and have voices for our membership. "Our board needs to take that time and be a voice for our membership. After meetings, I can talk to my neighbors and discuss their

thoughts and concerns when I go home. In turn, I can voice their concerns to MFBF and ask the staff for answers.

"I think it's essential to be a go-between with farmers and urbanites. One of our greatest challenges is working our way through the entire "climate" issue, along with the fact that people who aren't



Joyce and Gary Heibertshausen take a break from ranch work with their border collies.

involved in agriculture need to understand where their food comes from and how safe it is. To me, telling our story to people who don't know is my most important job. I have a good understanding of agriculture, and I can tell the story to those people. I can open up our ranch to visitors so they can have seen the reality of the work and passion that goes into raising livestock."

Heibertshausen said in eastern Montana, dealing with the ongoing drought will make tough times this year, compounded with the rising input costs of fuel and fertilizer. "Some people have talked about making equipment more fuel-efficient; others are talking about ways to use less fertilizer. You will have to think about that trip to town with a load of calves or lambs and how to get there efficiently. But producers are frugal, and there are a lot of smart farmers and ranchers who will figure out a way to save costs. We've been working on very thin margins."

The Montana Farm Bureau vice president has a seat on the board for the Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company. The MWFBMIC board consists of Wyoming and Montana Farm Bureau leaders who provide economical insurance and a user-friendly company to customers.

"I look forward to serving our Farm Bureau members, having new responsibilities, and traveling the state to visit our directors, farmers and ranchers. I plan to get information to our members to make them more profitable, answer questions about policy, and work with our politicians. In summary, I want to keep our Farm Bureau strong."



MFBF Vice President Gary Heibertshausen with President Cyndi Johnson during the 2022 American Farm Bureau Voting Delegates Session in Atlanta.

Hans McPherson retired from the board, and Vice President Cyndi Johnson ran for president, I decided to throw my hat in the ring for vice president," noted Heibertshausen. "I felt I wasn't done helping our members and attending more functions through MFBF so I could bring knowledge and information back to

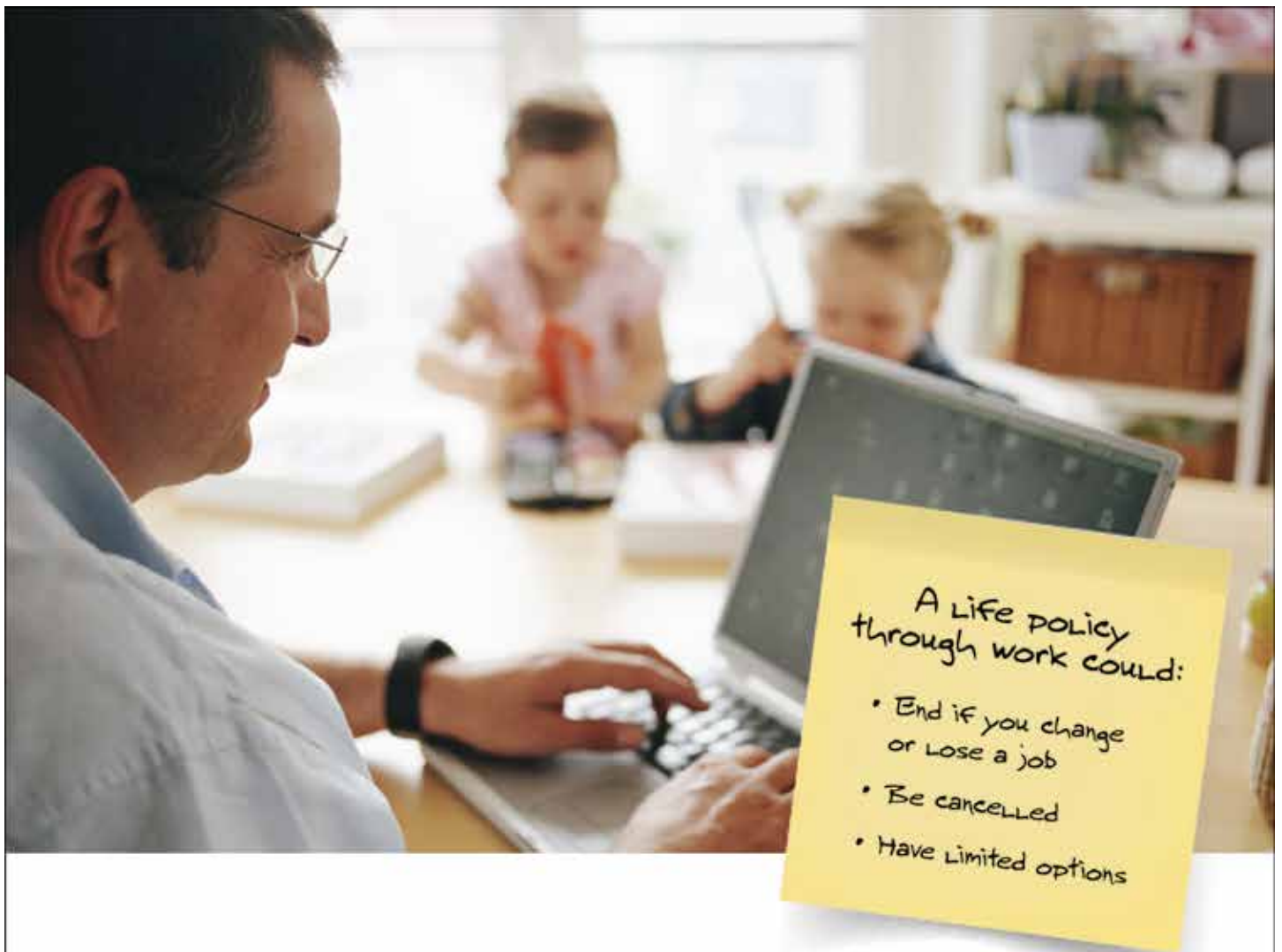
➤ **Wool—an international commodity**

BY GARY HEIBERTSHAUSEN, *MFBF VICE PRESIDENT AND SHEEP RANCHER*

We have our sheep sheared in late April/early May, and it takes five shearers four days to shear our sheep, with approximately 10 pounds of wool per sheep. Since the pandemic, the wool market has become soft because of delivery issues, and when the fleece can be spun into cloth; transportation problems trickle down to us.

We're in a buyers' group which gives us a bigger clip of wool for the buyer to bid on. Ours is around 30,000 pounds. We just sold last year's wool. We've sold to Pendleton and Groenewald Fort Wool Company to make blankets for the Army. This year our wool went to China. They will scrub it, and it may come back to the U.S. as material to be made into clothing or other countries for clothing and carpeting.





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Home Again, Home Again, **Jiggety-Jig**

BY MARIAH SHAMMEL

Since having kids almost eleven years ago, I went on a girls' trip for the first time. No husbands, no little people to think about (like that would ever happen), no laundry to fold or calves to feed. Just me, three of my decades-long girlfriends, and an empty schedule. Bliss! We were calving, but my parents had the kids, Favorite Farmer and his parents had the cows, and I couldn't deny I was ready for a weekend with nothing but myself and relaxation to worry about. It was strange packing just one bag; well, two, but obviously, I needed a shoe/boot bag, and since they were both for me, it didn't count.

were minding their p's and q's at home, and ding! A text from Favorite Farmer.

My heart skipped a beat (13 years later, and he still gives me butterflies), and I read on to find out which kid lost their backpack or which cow had calved. But no, he was reminding me to avoid gelled fuel from the below-zero temps rolling in and plug in the vehicle I was forced to take when our Suburban found itself in the shop with no return date in sight.

I sheepishly asked the concierge if they had an exterior outlet I could use. "Oh, for your Tesla?" she excitedly responded. I tried not to roll my eyes or laugh out loud. No,

for that massive diesel pickup with (very expensive) chunks of hay wedged in the spindles of the bale bed and the hood smashed in by a wayward branch five years ago.

"Yep! Those plug-ins are there, too!" she said. I trudged into the snow, mumbling to myself, and made my way to the charging stations on the far side of the parking lot. There was no three-pronged outlet amid the fancy plug-ins for electric vehicles (that I can't wait to own, by the way), but after some rummaging, I eventually found what I needed outside a service building not far away. I plugged in the extension cord that Favorite Farmer had so chivalrously

thrown in the back seat, attached it to the pickup, and headed inside to get back to pretending I hadn't a worry on my mind.

No matter how far I get from my front door, I can't completely forget about what's going on at home. Reminders are everywhere. Driving all afternoon with just myself and a whole list of podcasts was amazing. Still, after spending \$90 to not even fill the fuel tank before leaving Lewistown, I couldn't stop wondering how our family operation would afford

the rising costs affecting every aspect of our lives, from fuel to food to machinery. The views around the resort were breathtaking, but it was hard to ignore the barely-there snow on the usually snow-covered peaks, knowing the same is true at home where creeks aren't filling and plants aren't growing.

For all of us, thoughts of home would slowly creep into our conversations before quickly being steered back to something that would make our cheeks hurt with laughter. Then reality would find its way back in: pasture being lost, cows with nowhere to go, sky-high prices for unobtainable farm ground just a stone's throw away, wondering how to carry on a generations-old operation in a newly built landscape, the future of the livestock industry, and so on. One of us would bring up a story that we'd all rather forget from our pre-being-responsible lives, and off on a tangent we'd go.

Naturally, we did an excellent job of (mostly) ignoring our nagging thoughts but let's say it wasn't easy to avoid the dark red pickup and bright yellow extension cord blaring like a beacon in the parking lot. Truthfully, I couldn't have imagined a better time, and I wouldn't have changed a moment of my time with three incredible women who are never far from home, either.

As members of the ag industry, our livelihoods are at stake with what's going on in the world right now, and many of us aren't sure which road to take next. Most of what's happening is out of our control, but that doesn't make it easier. Cows, crops, and community are who we are and what we love. The road home is never long enough for that front door to be entirely hidden from view, but sometimes it's long enough to refuel, clear your head, get ready for the bumps ahead, and enjoy the ride. Three of your besties, a few glasses of wine, and a bag full of cute shoes don't hurt either.

Mariah Shammel ranches in Hilger with her husband, four active kids, and various cows, dogs, and other critters.



Mariah Shammel and her friends get ready for a fun weekend girls' getaway.

After making the 3½ hour trek to the luxury lodge near Pray (which we scored on a Black Friday deal), my friends and I checked in, grabbed a fancy drink while waiting for our room to get ready, and immediately started catching up as old friends do. Before long, we were stuffing our faces with delicious food (when you don't have kids' meals to attend to, your own food is actually hot when you eat it) and heading to the hot tub for a nightcap. I checked my phone to make sure all my little tornadoes

64th Annual Agents' Meeting Held in Billings, Montana

Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company recently held its 64th Annual Agents' Meeting in Billings, Montana. The annual conference includes recognition of those agents who achieved superior production and overall service during 2021.

Will Johnson of Missoula, MT, was honored as Mountain West's "Top Montana Agent" for his outstanding sales production.

An elite group of agents qualified for Mountain West's President's Club. This award is presented to those agents who were on goal in three lines of

insurance: life, auto, and fire/liability. The Montana agent who earned this prestigious award was Shawn Friedeman of Missoula, MT.


Mountain West Farm Bureau agents have been serving customers across Montana and Wyoming for over 70 years and specialize in building personal relationships within their communities. The local, face-to-face communication and dedication to quality service are what set Mountain West agents apart from the rest.



Will Johnson
Top Montana Agent




Shawn Friedeman
Mountain West's President's Club

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CI-121 not in best interest of communities and small business

BY JOY DEPUYDT, MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION DISTRICT 7 DIRECTOR

CI-121 is not in the best interest of our communities, businesses, or schools. We need to protect new homeowners and keep families in their homes. We also need to protect small businesses already struggling in our communities from a tax shift that could potentially devastate their livelihood; this includes our agriculture community. If CI-121 were to pass, we can be assured that it would be challenging to make further changes to our constitution. Legislative changes are a better option.

CI-121 proposes to cap residential property taxes at 2019 appraised value and would inflate the value by either 2% or the Consumer Price Index yearly. What does this mean? It can potentially transfer any additional tax burden to the other property classes, including centrally assessed businesses (railroads, power companies, gas pipelines, etc.) and agricultural property taxpayers. I do not believe we can afford to put this burden on these entities. Since COVID-19, many businesses have taken a hit financially. Many were forced to close their doors due to mandates; supplies were hard to get to stock the shelves, and the prices of the goods to stock the shelves rose, and people started to buy more items online. The agriculture industry has also been hit hard. The drought we experienced this past year and this year's forecast do not look promising. Just as everyone is seeing rising costs at the store, we also see it in the agriculture community. The input costs for fuel, fertilizer, chemicals, equipment, and parts are rising and, in some cases, tripled since

last year without increasing the cost of goods sold. We all need each other, and I believe we must share the tax burden fairly to keep our communities healthy and vibrant, and CI-121 is not the answer.

The passage of CI-121 would require the legislature to define what property

would be classified as residential.

It would roll the value of that property back to its 2019 assessed value. It also would limit the yearly increase or decrease in residential property to the lesser of inflation or 2% and limit the property tax levied against residential property to no more than 1% of market value.

Upon change of ownership, the residential property would be updated to current market value; this would be true for significant improvements to the property or when there is new construction. CI-121 would allow for acquisition value for other property types upon legislative approval.

The passage of CI-121 would have one of two results depending on the action of the next legislature. 1) Property tax revenues collected would decrease in many areas or 2) Property tax reductions to residential property would be shifted to other properties if the legislature changes tax laws.

The first scenario would provide property tax relief to all property in cities where the total mill levy exceeds 740 mills. There would be some tax shifting to rural properties as schools and counties raised their mill levies to compensate for lower collections from properties within the city limits. Under the current property



Joy DePuydt

tax administration, all property that pays taxes to the same jurisdictions pays the same mill levies. Mill levies spread the tax burden equally across the taxable value of each property regardless of the classification. Since current law and practice do not allow for differing mill levies on properties, CI-121's tax cap of 1% of market value on residential property

“ The savings CI-121 affords residential property will be shifted to all other properties and could amount to over 150 million dollars. Vote no on CI-121. We need to protect our businesses and the new and old homeowners who downsize because if we don't, we risk losing our communities. ”

would limit the number of mills that could be assessed against residential property. That same cap would apply to all property in the levy district. The total mills that could be currently applied to a residential property and not exceed the 1% cap is 740 mills. If there is a residential property valued over 1.5 million dollars in a levy district, the mill cap in that district would be 526 mills because residences of

TOTAL TAXES DUE
LESS PAYMENTS
PLUS: PENALTIES PAID
REFUNDS ISSUED
NET BALANCE DUE
FIRST INSTALLMENT PAID
SECOND INSTALLMENT PAID

ROLL YEAR
LAND
IMPROVEMENTS 08-09

TOTAL
LESS EXEMPTION: HOME
TAXABLE VALUE



that value have a higher tax rate than lower-valued homes. Many residential properties in cities pay over 740 mills. Properties outside cities are almost all below the 740-mill cap. However, if a 526-mill cap were applied, most counties and school districts would face lower revenue collections. If the mill cap is exceeded, the legislature will have to determine how to apportion the limited mills, so all taxing entities share in the revenue shortfall.

The second scenario will require the legislature to make any statutory changes to implement CI-121, allowing for some tax shifting from residential property to the other classes to allow funding to remain relatively stable for property taxing entities. This will be a complex endeavor as many issues would need to be addressed.

Why vote no on CI-121? It will limit the tax exposure to those properties defined as residential. The voters won't know that definition before they vote on the initiative. CI-121 will allow for different tax burdens on similar residential properties. The savings CI-121 affords residential property will be shifted to all other properties and could amount to over 150 million dollars. Vote no on CI-121. We need to protect our businesses and the new and old homeowners who downsize because if we don't, we risk losing our communities.

MFBF District 8 Director Joy DePuydt has a diversified farm with her husband, Tom in Saco. She is a graduate of the MFBFACE Program.

KNOW

THE CONSEQUENCES

NO ON CI-121



CI-121 DRAMATICALLY ALTERS OUR MONTANA CONSTITUTION

Once in our Constitution, this initiative will be almost impossible to remove, even if it hurts Montanans for generations to come.



CI-121 HURTS MONTANA'S FARMERS, RANCHERS, AND SMALL BUSINESSES

Wealthy out-of-staters will profit off their new tax breaks while our economy suffers.



MONTANA FARM BUREAU OPPOSES THIS TAX SHIFT AT THE EXPENSE OF MONTANA'S FARMERS AND RANCHERS

CI-121 threatens not only current agriculture operations, but also future investments in the agricultural sector and makes it harder to maintain family owned and operated farms and ranches.

READ UP ON OUR CAUSE AT
WWW.KNOWTHECONSEQUENCES121.COM

DECLINE TO SIGN CI-121

Montana Farm Bureau members can contact Rachel Cone at rachelc@mfbf.org with questions on CI-121

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MCC student shares thoughts on meat processing

BY REBECCA COLNAR, SPOKESMAN EDITOR

During the pandemic, flaws with the supply chain became the subject of concern. When large meat processing facilities drastically cut their capacity due to worker illnesses, the high meat prices and meat shortage resulted in small meat processors uptick in demand. That fact, coupled with steadily growing interest in local foods, found the small processors striving to expand their facilities and more small meat processing being developed. The snag was finding a trained workforce for these new plants and plant expansions.

Montana Farm Bureau, Miles City Community College and the Montana Meat Processors Association looked to develop a meat cutting course. After establishing a plan, the next step was to seek funding to make the program

a reality. MCC applied for a Montana Meat Processing Infrastructure Grant and received \$117,000 used to develop a Montana meat processors workforce. MCC entered its first group of students in January 2021 and will graduate five in May. There are currently seven full-time students.

The Meat Processing Program is a one-year certificate that can be obtained online minus the internships completed at a plant near the student's residence. This program is excellent for those who want to open up their own plant, future plant managers or supervisors, and general meat cutters. Courses required—most online—include Business Math, Elementary Technical Writing, Biology/ Biology Lab, Communicating in a Dynamic Workplace, Meat Processing 1,

Meat Processing 2, Food Safety/HACCP certification, and Farm to Table Marketing. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) is designed to fight safety hazards potentially present in food throughout the manufacturing process.

Jullian Link will graduate in May 2022 with a Professional Certificate-Meat Processing. Interest in the program was piqued when his parents suggested the MCC program. Link, born in Crow Agency, had started college in Mayville, ND, on a baseball scholarship but needed to be closer to home for family reasons. He attended MCC to work towards a degree in physical education but wasn't taken with that major. He had helped his uncle, who owns Crow Country Outfitters, to process wild game, so the idea of expanding on that knowledge led him to take the course.

Although Link is now employed full-time by S Ranch Meats in Hardin, he had done internships with Cowboy Meats in Forsyth and Project and Fourth Avenue Meats in Billings.

Caleb Scott bought the building where S Ranch Meats sits today and began extensive renovations in October 2020. The facility was ready for business in July 2021 and became a USDA-inspected plant in mid-October 2021. The plant currently processes 25 animals per week.

From the MCC course and then at the plant, Link, who has his HACCP certification, learned meat cutting skills, including how to break down quarters and different ways to cut steaks, roasts and other cuts. "I've learned everything from when the animal comes in until they're on the dinner plate."

He noted that although a student doesn't need to work at several different plants for an internship, he wanted to experience how different plants operate.

Link not only enjoys that art of meat cutting but thrives on the camaraderie of his co-workers. "Everyone is very

Jullian Link praises the Miles Community College Meat Processing program for his success at S Ranch Meats in Hardin.



knowledgeable and helps each other," he noted.

The hard-working 20-year-old admits processing meat is physical labor; he hits the gym every morning before work to stay in shape.

"Meat processing is not something most people want to do, so being willing to work and knowledgeable about it means it's in high demand," Link said. "There are jobs available for skilled labor, and I recommend the course to anyone who wants to know how to process their own beef or wild game. Meat cutting at this level is more of an art form than just an average job."

Plant manager Dustyn Anzalone believes Link's MCC training prepared him well for the job. "He is very knowledgeable about HACCP and food safety issues. It also

➤ MT Getting Approval for Interstate Shipping of Meat

The Montana Farm Bureau was thrilled to learn that the Montana agreement for the Cooperative Interstate Shipping (CIS) program has been finalized by the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service. Authorized in 2008 and launched by USDA in 2012, the CIS program permits selected state-inspected establishments that comply with federal inspection requirements to ship their product in interstate commerce. Montana joins only nine other states approved and certified for the CIS program.

At MFBF's request, the Montana Legislature allocated funding and directed the Department of Livestock to pursue CIS certification.

For the full story visit mfbf.org/news.

taught him to develop an understanding about where he wanted to go with his career."

If anyone is interested in enrolling in the program or taking individual classes

without fully committing to the program, or if anyone has any questions, contact Tina Sackman at sackmant@milescc.edu or call 406-874-6442.



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Meet Fergus County's Mountain West Insurance Agents

BY REBECCA COLNAR, SPOKESMAN EDITOR

Jeanine Pendergrass and Rod McClure enjoy many hours serving their Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company clients in the Lewistown area. Here they share their thoughts about the insurance business, Montana Farm Bureau and the importance of being involved in the community.

Q: Tell us about your background.

JP: I grew up in Illinois in a large family of seven children. At age 18, I left home to attend the University of Iowa for two years before transferring to the University of Montana. I graduated in 1997 with a B.S. in Health and Human Performance. I was planning to attend the Physical Therapy program in Missoula. Still, my classmates who had graduated from the program could not get local jobs because the market was saturated with many graduates from the program each year. So, after graduating, I started my own catering business.

RM: I was born and raised on a small wheat and hay farm and cattle ranch outside Lewistown, MT. I graduated from Fergus High School in 1983 and attended tech school in Helena, receiving my degree in Diesel Technology. Following school, I worked as a diesel mechanic for several years in Glasgow, Billings, Lewistown, and Helena.

Q: What led you to become an agent with MWFBMIC?

JP: In 2009, a good friend of mine, who was an agent for Mountain West, asked me to come to work with her as a sales associate. I jumped at the opportunity. In 2012, my husband Pat had an opportunity to manage a ranch in Roy, and as fate would have it, Rod McClure needed a sales associate in the Lewistown office. My husband and I decided to take a leap of faith and move our family to central Montana. In 2015, I contracted as an agent with Mountain West and shortly after that became a financial advisor when FBL converted to a full-service broker/dealer. It has been the best decision we have ever made.

It is an honor to serve my farm and ranch clients to help protect them



Jeanine Pendergrass enjoys time spent on the ranch with her family and working with Mountain West



financially. We appreciate our clients more than they know. People in agriculture work harder than in any other industry and often do not get the credit they deserve. It is an honor to be part of the Farm Bureau family that works to educate the public and legislators on real issues affecting agriculture.

“ People in agriculture work harder than in any other industry and often do not get the credit they deserve. It is an honor to be part of the Farm Bureau family that works to educate the public and legislators on real issues affecting agriculture. ”

RM: With the desire to return to central Montana to raise my family, I was presented an opportunity to become a Farm Bureau agent as a long-time agent, Howard Kolstad, was retiring. I jumped at the chance to return home. I began my career with MWFBI in August 1991 and have enjoyed my 30 years working with great clients and helping to plan and prepare for life's unexpected events.

Working with the Farm Bureau Federation

provides an excellent opportunity to introduce members to an individualized insurance program for their specific needs. This partnership gives its membership well-balanced insurance coverage and a voice to support all aspects of their business and protects their rights.

Q: What would you like your insureds to know?

JP: We are here as a resource and a partner. We only succeed in our business if our clients are successful with their operation and business succession plan. We are here to help develop a financial and estate plan with our clients, and we now have excellent tools to help support them.

RM: I like to review our policies with clients every year; it's a crucial part of your business and can ensure that we have the coverage you need. I also like to answer any questions and make sure that the clients understand their coverage and are confident in my recommendations. Reviewing your insurance is a way to bring the best value to your program.

To relieve some of the stress related to claims, I would like to remind my clients to take the time to inventory and take photos of their contents and personal property

to relieve some of the stress related to claims. Members need to be aware that we offer coverage beyond farm and ranch policies, estate planning, life insurance programs, business policies, etc. I want my clients to know that our "door is always open" to answer questions or concerns they have on their minds.

Q: What kind of community outreach do you do?

JP: Rod and I are supporters of 4H. We purchase a few animals every year from local county fairs to support the kids in their agriculture endeavors. We partner with Fergus County Farm Bureau with their events. My favorite is their Christmas open house held in our office, a tradition where members can socialize and reconnect.

RM: Our family enjoys working with various groups, 4-H, FFA, rodeo clubs, and our schools, as well as provides sponsorship and partnerships in many different areas all over Central Montana. Fergus County Farm Bureau uses our office for meetings and events, providing another way to get to know our clients.

Q: Tell us about your families.

JP: My husband, Pat, and I have two boys, a senior and a sophomore, who attend Roy High School. We have been very appreciative to be able to raise them in rural Montana. They have social, mechanical, and agricultural skills that



Rod McClure, pictured with Kheon and Kleo, has years of insurance and ag experience to share with his clients.

they would never have if we hadn't moved, and for that, we are so grateful!

RM: My wife, Doreen, and I have been married for over 32 years. We have four exceptional children. Danielle, a nurse, and her husband, Kyle Moseman, live in Roy, where he farms and ranches, and they have two children, Khoen (7) and Kleo (3). Our daughter, Danyce, is my associate agent and married Luke Stulc. They live, farm, and ranch near Winifred and have a son, Rhen (3). Denae is currently in her clinical rotations in the Physician Assistant Program, and our son, Roddy, is a

freshman in high school, active in football, basketball, FFA, and keeps us young. In addition to my insurance career, we farm and ranch north of Roy. As a family, we enjoy camping, fishing, snowmobiling, and ranch activities that each season brings.

Q: Any additional thoughts?

JP: Sie Schindler, who passed away last year, was a great mentor and a huge part of office culture. He was the rock in our office and a dedicated agent to our company and his clients for over 44 years. We miss him dearly and will work hard to carry on the legacy he created, serving our clients to the best of our ability!

RM: It's hard to believe I have been an agent for 30 years. I have been given so many opportunities to build great relationships with clients, and I genuinely enjoy my work, which has now offered me the chance to work with the next generation.


I have been in the Farm Bureau family all my life and a member since being on my own. I advocate for their work for my clients and myself as a farmer and rancher. My father, MFBF Past President Dave McClure, was always supportive of my choice to become an agent with Farm Bureau, with both having very different roles in providing support for members.



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Supply Chain Issues in Montana

Farmers, ranchers and equipment dealers affected by shortages

BY REBECCA COLNAR, SPOKESMAN EDITOR

The term “supply chain issues” has become an all-too-familiar phrase in today’s society. Many items are in short supply no matter where you purchase consumer goods or what you are purchasing. Anyone who knows simple economics knows the law of supply and demand; the higher the price, when there are fewer available goods. The perfect storm of the pandemic, international crises, and weather events has resulted in skyrocketing prices and limited inventory, resulting in concerning times for all, especially for farmers and ranchers.

Farm equipment shortages

Whether you’re looking for a truck, tractor, combine, lawnmower or car inventory is unfortunately in short supply.

“We’re having a tough time with major equipment lines. The only way you can order is a sold/retail order. We can’t order for our inventory at our business,” lamented Tami Christensen of Tri-County Implement in Sidney, an authorized Case-IH dealer. “Currently, any orders we take are sold/ retail, designated to get to our dealership in late 2023 or 2024. We might have an exception with limited access to skid steers that aren’t sold/retail. We have three models, but not many.”

She said their short lines—such as mowers—availability is a little better, but it still means they won’t be able to get those items in until next year.

Christensen noted that the hard part is that the electrical components are in short supply, which makes customers’ machines unusable. At press time, the war in Ukraine hasn’t affected their business, but they have concerns about parts shortages.

“We’re ordering parts early for haying and combining to ensure we have them during haying and harvest season,” she said. “Of course, another issue is the lack of workforce, and finding people who want to work is a huge issue.”

Christensen said Tri-State Implement is working to be proactive and planning. “That’s a mentality we’ll have to get used to. We’ve looked at buying a few new vehicles, knowing it will be 9-12 months until we receive them. There’s not much used equipment out there either.”

Case-IH parts for repair are still available, and they’ve been good about getting us parts. “We repair trucks, and we will sporadically have issues; for instance, there is a certain filter that has been on backorder for eight months. So far, we haven’t seen a huge problem with parts, but we feel there will be an issue with that

before the year is over.”

“I have been in this business for 30 years and have never seen anything like this,” Christensen concluded.

Lawnmowers and more

Chouteau County Farm Bureau President Jess Bandel grows wheat in Floweree and owns Powerhouse Equipment, a small business selling Country Clipper zero-turn lawnmowers.

“There is a shortage of lawnmowers. I sold out last year because I couldn’t reorder, and I ran out of product. I went into the fall with nothing,” Bandel admitted. “I decided this fall during the fall booking special, to place a larger order than I’ve ever done. The ship date was unknown, and in January, the company said to reduce my order by 40 percent, and they said I’d get mowers for spring. I did get my short order, of which half are pre-sold. Some of my customers still took the mowers with a price increase from early 2022. I have lawnmowers left, but I plan to promote them at some home shows, and I anticipate running out.”

Bandel noted that he’s a farmer that sells mowers, not a salesman. “However, I’m now in the position where I have to tell people that you have to decide today

if you want one, and I can't hold a mower for later. When they told me they were shipping my first order on reorder, the company said it would be June or July, and now they've moved it to August or September—if at all."

The shortage of mowers isn't based on the output of the southern Iowa-based factory, but from their supplies, from engine parts and steel to gas caps. A tornado in the past hit a hydro gear dealer for transmissions.

"This affects my business that I can't get the product to sell to my customers. It's terrible," Bandel said.

As for his farming, the drought coupled with supply costs and shortages has caused a perfect storm. "Chemicals are unavailable, and I'm trying to buy early at quadruple the price, so I at least have some for the crops. You have to look in the warehouse when you spray now to see what to create," Bandel said. "Fertilizer is available, but it's costly, as is fuel. Filling up the tank is the pits. People in town can hop on a bike, but I sure can't pull my plows with one."

Bandel's tactics for dealing with the shortages include buying extra replacement parts for his farm equipment. "Prices have gone up, so I'm trying to order items now. Torgerson's always has a combine clinic and offers a discount if you order then so that I will order some duplicates. I've noticed a shortage of oil filters for cars, pickups, and semis."

He'll start seeding the first two weeks of April and plans to plant some peas followed by spring wheat.

"I plan to put in the peas to help reduce the dependence on Round-Up, and I am reducing the fertilizer a little bit to shave a few dollars off the budget."

Shay Richter comes from a farming family north of Joplin and works as an agronomist in Fort Benton, Chester, and Hingham. He calls himself a "farmassistent" as he tries to assist his growers in their unique farming operations. He explains that fertilizer prices continue to skyrocket, which causes challenges for farmers.

"Fertilizer prices are double from last October and on-the-rise again," said Richter. Supply is down, which is causing most of the upward movement, along with some supply chain problems of simply getting the fertilizer where it needs to go. Of course, with Russia closing their

Tami Christensen, Tri-State Implement, noted, "This is just one more challenge that we will overcome."



Jess Bandel and his wife, Nikki, are facing the challenges of skyrocketing inputs.

exports to U.S. and Canadian markets, that has caused another \$200 jump on prices. We haven't seen that locally yet, but I imagine by spring we could."

Chemical prices are inching up, and Richter reports that in December, they were up about six percent overall but heading more towards 10 percent. Richter explains that price increases vary among chemicals. "Some chemicals were up triple, but others were up just because of shipping cost, maybe three to six percent. I guess it averages out; unfortunately, the cost is way up for the ones used most in our state."

Although the cost of inputs is high, the return for grain and the pulse crops (chickpeas, lentils, peas) are about double what they were last year.

"There is room to make money, but there is a lot more front-loaded risk, especially in a drought. If we had a normal fall precipitation number on the books, we would be better," said the Chouteau County Farm Bureau Secretary and YF&R District 8 Chair.

Richter explains that farmers strive to use fertilizer and chemicals as little as possible. "For the most part, a lot of the chemical we sell goes on before the crop has been sewn or on fallow ground. The chemical is applied at a small stage so that the crop has almost two months to metabolize the chemistry before being taken off for food production," he said.



Farmers do everything to minimize the number of chemicals they use, which is a high cost. They spray crops to reduce the moisture use of weeds in our fields; weeds can sometimes out-compete crops leaving low production areas. Farmers need to maximize the number of bushels they can harvest; this is good for them and good for consumers. The more grain availability (or anything), the less food will cost at the grocery store.

Farmers use fertilizer to increase their yields; a bushel of wheat uses about 2.5 units of nitrogen to get it to maturity. Without the usage of nitrogen and phosphorus, yields would decrease by half or more.

"Unfortunately, our soils in the Golden Triangle replenish the amounts of nutrients needed to take off 55-bushel winter wheat crops yearly. The use of fertilizer helps us produce much more supply of grain. When we are in charge of feeding the world and raising the highest grain quality, I don't believe it would be the right thing to reduce our yields by half and double or triple the price of grain products at the grocery store. Some say they can grow the same amount of grain without the usage of fertilizer or chemicals, and I hope there is a day that we can do that in The Golden Triangle, but that day is not today; our moisture levels and pH of soil does not allow for that type of grain production."

As for the planting season across the Golden Triangle, with the price of pulse crops up from last fall, many farmers were planning to increase their pulse acreage. In the last few weeks, with the grain prices rising, Montana will probably still be up on pulse acres planted, but not up to that 20 or 30 percent that was estimated. More spring wheat will be planted, and farmers will be seeding re-crop to lessen the fallow costs.

"It will be cheaper to grow a crop than spray fallow ground five times. Sometimes

we forget how much money we spend spraying the ground with no crop on it," said Richter.

In the past 20 years, farmers have been moving towards a two-thirds crop rotation with one-third left idle, or fallow, to conserve moisture because there hasn't been a drought like this in the Golden Triangle since the early 2000s. The difficulty is making the decision; the fallow crop keeps a little more moisture in the soil to combat drought and increase next year's yields, but the price of glyphosate may push growers to opt for more re-crop, lowering their variable costs for chemicals.

The agronomist cautions that there is a balance. "In Chester, the average precipitation is about 10.5 inches. If you're growing crops every year, you're going to run out of sub-moisture after one or two dry years. Farmers who are going full-on re-crop have seen that the last year." "I love the idea of a full re-crop farm, but it will differ on each farmer's cropping history and where they are on that journey of building soil organic matter."

On Richter's family farm in Joplin, he says they may increase pulse acres this year but will plant more spring grain now that the prices are more favorable.

"I'm trying to keep everybody optimistic because there's money to be made out there," said Richter. "I'm telling farmers to not set themselves up for disaster by not getting their fertilizer out there. There are a large net dollars per acre difference between 35- and 55-bushel wheat this year, almost 10x per acre. I would try not to overreact to these markets. We saw a few weeks ago that wheat prices shot up two-and-a-half dollars, to fall back a dollar and a half, while elevators raised their basis. Fertilizer and chemical move slower than the wheat market, but I hope we can see some decreases by mid-June or July."

An organic viewpoint

Long-time Big Sandy organic farmer Bob Quinn said he's not hurt by the increase in input costs as he grows his own inputs.

"My goal is to focus on the soil and grow legumes that improve the soil. We don't purchase any inputs. That's the advantage at times like this. The prices are high, and the non-organic markets push up the organic markets. The push has been for greater and greater yields. The economics of that is when the market is high, you do well, but with the inputs when the market is depressed, you don't make a dime."

Inputs grown on the Quinn farm include alfalfa, sweet clover, lentils and peas and sometimes buckwheat. Buckwheat stabilizes the phosphorus and gives a protein boost to support the plants better. They do a rotation with our soil-building crops every year; otherwise, plants will get diseases.

For his cash crop, Quinn, a Chouteau County Farm Bureau member, grows organic winter wheat, spelt and other heirloom wheat,

spring wheat (Kamut), and hullless barley for human consumption, peas for pea market, and high-oleic acid sunflowers for cooking oil. He plants alfalfa hay in the second year of the rotation. "Alfalfa is our greatest home-grown input for nitrogen buildup and weed competition. If you have a good alfalfa stand, you can dry up a Canadian Thistle. Weeds and insects tend

to be with cash crops, but rotation helps. You need to watch for the weeds and make sure they don't go to seed."

Cattle handling equipment

Agri-Best Feeds, the regional marketing arm of Sweet-Pro Feeds, Redmond Natural Trace Minerals, and Arrowquip livestock handling equipment, focuses on maximizing animal health, forage utilization, and producer profits.

Owner Scott Anderson explains that the company hasn't experienced any feed and mineral line issues. However, prices have been increasing over the past six months, and they have had challenges finding trucks.

"We've opted to purchase two of our trucks, figuring we could run empty one way and make sure it's a wash cost-wise," Anderson noted. "Hopefully, we can have the flexibility to move those loads to where we deliver to ranches. Currently, there are more loads than there are trucks. With our Sweet-Pro line, we did run into a problem with some of their ingredients coming out of Canada. There were two different occasions where we had trouble getting that ingredient; one was a weather-related incident that took out a road that didn't allow the trucks to get to the mine, so that set us back. The other was the trucker vaccination deal in Canada that impacted us."

Anderson explained that their input prices are increasing, from the costs of pallets to plastic and raw ingredients, fuel and transportation. "It's been a real challenge, but our customers realize the



Agronomist Shay Richter spends his time helping farmers with their planting decisions.



Scott Anderson, Agri-Best Feeds, said cattle handling equipment and feed prices may be higher, but the supply to date has been reliable.



challenges we're all facing."

Their Arrowquip product line comes out of Manitoba. "Starting in May 2021, the steel price went crazy. The price increased by 300 percent, so the cost ratcheted up and kept changing monthly through August. In August, they started to plateau, so that's been positive, at least."

Anderson said instead of sales slowing due to price increases, they have grown recently. He attributes it to a change in demographics. With the population of ranchers becoming older and many working cattle by themselves, they want reliable equipment that can improve cattle flow safely.

In general, Anderson said that supply

for chutes, alleys and panels is not the problem, but the trucking is. "The challenge is ordering a year out to get a slot of manufacturing and trucks. We have enough trucks on order for 2022 with a monthly delivery ensuring we can get the product we need on the truck. We've been on time or even early until mid-March this year. A truck with our load was delayed by a couple of weeks because of an unvaccinated driver at the border. They kept telling us each week the order would be here. We had a couple of calving pens and hydraulic chute, alley, and tub sold, and we've been waiting. This is the time of year you don't want to wait for a calving pen. However, once we get the equipment

here, we can deliver it, thanks to our two new semis."

In late spring and summer 2021, the price and the availability of steel were an issue, but Arrowquip did not have a significant material shortage since they bought their steel from the United States. Prices have stayed stable since August 2021.

Anderson advises connecting with your feed and equipment dealers sooner rather than later. "If you have a custom order, you might be waiting at least six weeks. Most dealers who have cattle-handling equipment have inventory, but if you need an entire corral system or other custom order, visit your dealer today."



2022 – A Season Like No Other

Heading into the 2022 growing season, farmers are facing supply chain challenges like never before. And that's why it's hitting their wallets like never before.

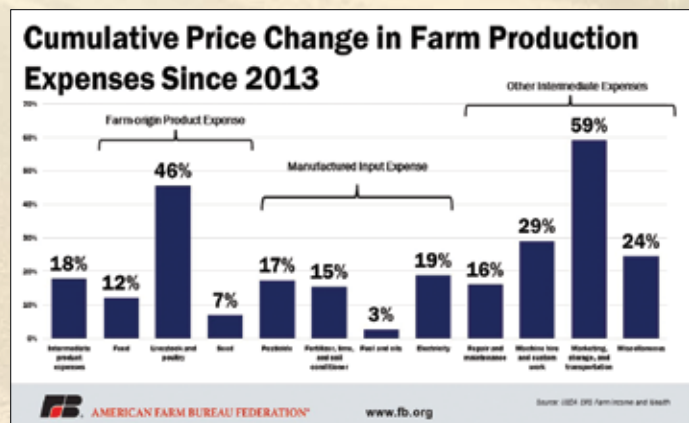
To begin with, there is increased global demand to plant a crop. The global outlook for commodity production continues to increase, according to the March World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates. Russia's recent military action in Ukraine significantly increased the uncertainty of agricultural supply and demand conditions in the region and well beyond. With these most recent events, there is increased pressure on all the other commodity-producing countries to deliver all of, if not more than, the expected production in 2022 to make up for any potential production lost and cut off from the market in Ukraine and Russia. With increased planted acres comes increased demand for crop inputs like fertilizer, seed, pesticides and machinery, to name a few. Not only is demand increasing for these inputs, COVID-19-related government deficit spending and loose monetary policy by central banks across the globe have put more money into circulation; these efforts to stimulate economies have also contributed to rising global inflation. Thus, expect to pay a little more for everything, including highly demanded crop inputs.

COVID-19 also disrupted labor markets and interrupted the production of goods, including crop inputs, which has led to production lagging behind demand, and the price increases that typically follow. Consumers, and farmers and ranchers in particular, used to thrive in a "just in time" delivery system. This was intended to keep inventory and overhead costs low and ensure efficient economies of scale. But now, due to those production disruptions and congested delivery channels, when farmers need their inputs just in time to put a crop in the ground, availability is not guaranteed and the price to get it keeps rising.

Since 2013, farmers have seen nearly all production expenses increase. Most notably, livestock and poultry farm-origin expenses have increased 46% and marketing, storage and transportation expenses have increased 59%. Overall, the intermediate expense category, which includes the majority of the farm production inputs, has increased 18% since 2013.

While crop revenues may be up this year, as projected by USDA, crop production expenses are rising just as quickly and could potentially outpace revenues. This is leaving many farmers to question their ability to just break even this year, despite high crop and livestock prices. While increased investment and capacity may help in the long run, in the near term, farmers are concerned about making sure they have the inputs they need to put a crop in the ground, especially at a time when the pressure to do so is rising. The question is, will they be able to afford to do so or will it be too expensive to farm?

Follow the Market Intel series, www.fb.org/market-intel, that dives deeper into the rising prices of farm production expenses like fertilizer, seed and pesticides, energy, machinery and land that are pushing farmers further away from breakeven and questioning how they will make ends meet for the 2022 growing season and even into the 2023 season.



ACE class learns to address different views

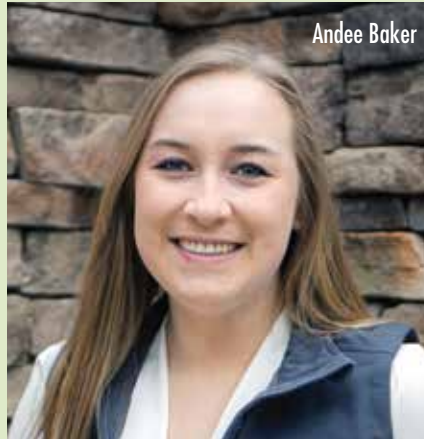


The ACE program empowers Farm Bureau members to advocate on key industry issues and be confident, influential leaders in their County Farm Bureau and local communities. The focus is three primary objectives: developing leaders, engaging local communities, and issues advocacy.

Participants learn to refine and establish premier leadership and advocacy skills necessary to communicate industry issues effectively, engage in and address the needs of their rural communities, and new leadership responsibilities within their county and state Farm Bureau. They will practice public speaking and learn to address the media and non-agricultural audiences.

Andee Baker

It's a rare student that tackles ACE while still in college, but Andee Baker embraces



Andee Baker

the challenge. Baker, who will graduate in Fall 2023, has a passion for agriculture and Farm Bureau, doing an internship at the American Farm Bureau in Washington, D.C., and assisting staff during the 2021 MFBF Annual Convention.



Josh Senecal

Baker grew up in Park City on a farm that raised swine and hay. She was involved in 4-H and FFA, which expanded her horizons in agriculture and leadership, leading her to attend Montana State University in Bozeman. She plans to use her double

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major in agricultural communications and psychology to develop resources to assist farmers and ranchers struggling with mental health issues.

The young woman applied for ACE when she heard people from Yellowstone and Stillwater Counties singing its praises. "ACE attracted me because after I did the internship with American Farm Bureau, I realized Farm Bureau was a lot more than just an organization that gave me a scholarship. Then when I helped at the Montana Farm Bureau convention, I heard some of the ACE presentations and realized how ACE transformed these people and decided it would be a great way to invest in myself. ACE is an adult-level class that teaches you to become a better leader and advocate."

To date, the ACE class had speakers on Farm Bureau's history and advocacy, and has traveled to Helena to learn about state government and the legislature.

"My favorite speaker was Bruce Vincent, raised in a logging family that saw hard times with environmental issues in Libby. He said it's essential not to shout facts, but deal with the public and ask what their concerns are," Baker said. "I have a sustainable food class, and most students are vegan. Thanks to ACE, I can have a productive conversation with them. I also learned how our state government works by meeting with the agency directors in Helena and meeting with Lieutenant Governor Kristin Juras."

Baker said what she's learned to date is how to be more open-minded. "At age 21,

I'm not quite ready to run for office, but I will support people in positions who want change to happen. People say, 'I want to change the world,' but nobody explains how. ACE gave me the methods to identify how to make that change."

Josh Senecal

Although Josh Senecal had hoped to apply for the ACE program over the past few years, his election as president of Northwest Counties Farm Bureau was the impetus he needed to apply for 2022.

"Because I'm a self-employed rancher, I knew it would be difficult to leave the ranch for the January and March ACE classes, so I had an honest talk with my wife, Sarah, and she agreed to take over my work while I'm gone and said I might as well do it," said Senecal.

What's he gleaned is learning how to talk to people who don't share your beliefs. "In the first session, presenter Sarah Bohnenkamp explained that instead of telling someone they don't know what they're talking about, say, 'I hear you' and start asking questions. Instead of shutting down a conversation, learn how to keep the conversation going. Although you might disagree with the person, ask them directly what their solutions are and then bring that into what you are doing."

The Farm Bureau history session with MFBF Historian Laura Nelson proved valuable. Senecal said he recruits people to MFBF by talking about the organization's impressive heritage. "It's

an organization born out of love, and the farmers and ranchers in Farm Bureau have always developed our grassroots policies. We're the largest general agricultural organization in Montana and the nation, and we truly do have a voice in ag policy."

During the March session in Helena, the fifth-generation Ronan rancher appreciated discovering that testifying is not scary and that the legislators want to hear from farmers and ranchers. Senecal, who attended the MFBF Candidate Training in February, is contemplating running for county commissioner in the next few years. "Between ACE and the candidate training, I've learned so much about leadership."

He believes ACE will make him a stronger advocate for agriculture, providing him with a more controlled approach to people. "You don't have to have a yelling match. I know there is so much misinformation about agriculture, but ACE gives you the tools to approach people, have a discussion and lighten the mood. Keep the conversation going, and you will gain respect."

Senecal appreciates that his county Farm Bureau board agreed to sponsor him and, in turn, says he'd like to see all of his board apply for ACE in the future.

"I'm very impressed with this program, and it's well worth the money," Senecal said. "You get your \$500 worth of information back in the first session."



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Bozeman High School is Cooking Up Pulses

BY LINDSAY OREM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MONTANA AG IN THE CLASSROOM FOUNDATION

Montana Ag In the Classroom is working hard to make sure we get all the agricultural learning in before the end of the school year. We are still working on getting books, lessons, activities and resources out to teachers throughout the state, but we have a large grant with Montana Department of Agriculture and Montana Pulse Crop Research & Marketing working with Bozeman High School. It's a layered program that will bring opportunity to build additional partnerships and teach awareness of pulse crops with students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

One portion of the grant works with Culinary Arts II students cooking with pulse products. Students worked to identify pulse crops, learn the nutritional values, understand the health benefits of consuming pulse crops, and prepared foods made primarily of pulse crops. Using a Pulse Cookbook generously provided by the Northern Pulse Growers Association, students worked to explore pulse crops for cooking that are grown in Montana. Students explored the Pulse Crops Ag Mag, utilized interviewing activities, played pulse crop bingo and more in their research. The project has been using the cookbook provided to pick recipes to develop into a meal box, much like one that people subscribe to regularly. Students were responsible for prepping, packaging and marketing the products; researching



packaging possibilities, logos and developing a marketing plan. High school students get to keep the recipe books and are taking recipes home for chickpea hummus and bread, split pea pasta, lentil soup and more. It's truly been a fun project to watch develop and be implemented. Students were surprised by how much they enjoyed the recipes and learned to not be afraid to try different products, knowing they might not like everything, but they may discover new favorites.

The second portion of the grant gathers books for primary students that engage in pulse crop identification, production



Students at Bozeman High School learn creative cooking with pulses, which include chickpeas and lentils.

and/or consumption. Activities and lesson plans are being developed to be bundled with the books based on grade and engagement level, then lessons will be distributed to Family and Consumer Studies (FCS) teachers to be used in childhood development courses. Lessons will be available to classroom teachers upon request.

Primary student activities include garden experiments, identification of pulse crops in the field, and once harvested, cooking with pulse crops, trying new things and games like Pulse Crop Bingo. Students will engage and have fun while learning about great products produced in Montana from older students that they look up to. The implementation of this portion of the grant takes place during the last part of the semester in the 2022 school year.

In the last phase of this project, we will be presenting and sharing all of these resources with FCS teachers at a conference in April. Teachers will receive meal boxes, activity kits and resources to use in their programs. We anticipate interacting with over 100 FCS teachers statewide. The opportunity to share about Montana Pulse Crops is exciting and I am hopeful it leads to the development of additional ways to implement more Montana-grown product lessons into FCS programs. Knowing that we have many innovative, dedicated teachers in Montana, I am excited to engage, brainstorm and hopefully design additional grant ideas that highlight Montana crops. Teacher collaboration is very valuable.

Membership Drive

Montana Ag in The Classroom is currently engaged in a membership drive. The goal is to have 50 new Contributor Memberships. These memberships consist of simply a minimum of a \$100 contribution to the foundation. Businesses and individuals who give will be given a tax-deductible receipt, certificate for display, unique Montana Ag in the Classroom swag and sincere appreciation for helping sustain a program that is in huge demand across the state. We are growing and need to build in additional resources, but cannot do it without financial support from the Montana agricultural community. If you haven't filed your taxes; you still can contribute to our Tax Check-Off program, line 18C on the short form and 69C on the long form. All donations go directly to MAITC and help us build our annual budget. For additional information, contact Lindsay Orem at montanaaitc@gmail.com.

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*We're here for you at **bnsf.com/ag***



COUNTY NEWS

Rosebud/Treasure County Farm Bureau held an ag safety day at the Hysham Community Center March 10. Bob Sperle, safety consultant, Montana State Fund Safety Department, talked about safety with machinery and animals, and Megan Von Emon conducted a Beef Quality Assurance training.

Sperle covered the gamut of safety, from using shields on machinery to electrical safety and safety around ranch animals and how to stay safe when loading grain.

Although ag safety is a common theme, there is always more to learn. Sperle discussed the dangers of electricity, including how electricity can arc, the importance of having the third ground prong on extension cords, and the importance of the GFCI on electrical outlets. He urged the group always to obtain a Safety Data Sheet when using any chemicals, including cleaners and paint.



Montana State Fund Safety Consultant Bob Sperle discusses farm and shop safety.

Both Sperle and Von Emon covered safety when working livestock, including caution, especially when working with a cow and new calf, an escape route when working livestock in a pen or alley, and the importance of working stock quietly.

Rosebud-Treasure County also has an ATV Safety Workshop scheduled May 3 at Hysham Elementary School.

Northwest Counties ran Ag Week radio ads on KERR, 106.3 The Bear, and The Ranch and The Ride in Missoula. The county donated \$1500 to sponsor a meal-a-month for a year and donated Ag Mags for beef, pizza, wheat, and cards to explain how to get on the My American Farm video games.

Northwest Counties is holding the Fourth Grade Ag Days for students at the Senecal Ranch May 5-6. The county Farm Bureau will cook food and have equine, pig and potato stations. Other organizations will have educational booths, as well.



Teresa Windham, Ronald McDonald House in Missoula (left) accepts donations from Beth Blevins, DVM, Northwest Counties.

Phillips County plans to host Accurate Ag Book readings in Malta and Saco schools during April.

Lewis & Clark County Farm Bureau Annual Ag Day for students from the East Helena School System will be held May 10 at Prickly Pear Ranch. The county plans to have 15-17 educational stations, including a new stop on fruit and berries.



Regenerative Ranching Workshop

Regenerative farming and ranching pioneer Gabe Brown will share his secrets to more profitable and enjoyable ranching during a workshop April 19 in Big Timber. The full-day workshop will be held in the Ag Pavilion at the Fairgrounds starting at 9 a.m.

During the workshop, which the **Sweet Grass Farm Bureau** sponsors, Brown will cover a range of topics, including how to increase profitability through adaptive grazing, soil health on rangeland, integrating livestock on cropland and the power of stock density.

To register for the workshop, go to www.mfbf.org/events. Space is limited, with registrations closing April 12.



Montana Farm Bureau Summer Conference June 13-15, 2022 – Fairmont Hot Springs

Look for upcoming details at mfbf.org, on the MFBF Facebook page and in the May News Brief.

Entrepreneurs Wanted for Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge

The American Farm Bureau Federation, in partnership with Farm Credit, is seeking entrepreneurs to apply online for the 2023 Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge. Now in its ninth year, this national business competition showcases U.S. startup companies developing innovative solutions to challenges faced by America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

Farm Bureau is offering \$165,000 in startup funds throughout the course of the competition, which will culminate in the top 10 semi-finalists competing in a live pitch competition in front of Farm Bureau members, investors and industry representatives at the AFBF Convention in January 2023 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Applications remain open through April 29, and the 10 semi-finalist teams will be announced Sept. 13. Each of the semi-finalist teams will be awarded \$10,000 and a chance to compete to advance to the final round where four teams will receive an additional \$5,000 each. The final four teams will compete to win:

- Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Winner, for a total of \$50,000

- Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Runner-up, for a total of \$20,000
- People's Choice Team selected by public vote, for an additional \$5,000 (all 10 semi-finalist teams compete for this honor)

Prior to the live pitch competition, the top 10 semi-finalist teams will participate in pitch training and mentorship from Cornell University's SC Johnson College of Business faculty, and network with representatives from the Agriculture Department's Rural Business Investment Companies.

Examples of successful Ag Innovation Challenge participants, as well as detailed eligibility guidelines and the competition timeline can be found at fb.org/challenge.

Entrepreneurs must be members of a county or parish Farm Bureau within their state of residence to qualify as top 10 semi-finalists. Applicants who are not Farm Bureau members can visit <https://www.fb.org/about/join> to learn about becoming a member.

Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on April 29, 2022.



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Young Farmer and Rancher News

A great conference

– By J.M. Peck,
MFBF Young Farmers and
Ranchers Committee Chair

The 2022 YF&R Conference, hosted by American Farm Bureau, was held on February 25-28 in Louisville, Kentucky. YF&R Committee member Zack Weimortz and YF&R member Weston Cassens joined me in the Bluegrass state and collegiate YF&R members from Montana State University and UM-Western. Their adviser, Olie Else, accompanied Western. MFBF Staff members Sue Ann Streufert and Rikki Swant did an excellent job leading us on our adventure across the Mississippi.

In 2020 I was looking forward to my first YF&R Conference when it was abruptly canceled due to the impending pandemic. It was refreshing to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel and be able to travel again. One of my favorite parts of these conferences is networking with young farmers and ranchers from



around the country. The first day offered trainings and seminars for all the state YF&R Chairs. An escape room challenge, which capped off the day, demonstrated how smart and resourceful we are as farmers and ranchers.

AFBF had put together a great schedule with inspirational speakers and informative breakout sessions. It was great to watch our Montana delegation be inspired by the messages shared and find new information to take home. The breakout sessions included policy issues, social media advocacy and succession planning. Inspirational speakers Dr. Delatorr and Braxten Neilsen shared messages of self-improvement by finding a way each day to be just a little better and explaining that those small moves would lead to large waves over time.

Tours are always one of the most exciting parts, and Kentucky did not let us down. We all had the opportunity to visit Churchill Downs and walk through the winner's circle. Tours included distilleries and horse farms, to name a few. I had the chance to see the Lexington Stock Yard and glimpse how cattle are marketed in a different part of the country and how their Beef Checkoff works. The entire conference was a great experience, and I brought home information pertinent to issues we are facing at home.

The conference's theme was the "Triple Crown of Agriculture: Fuel, Food, and Fiber." AFBF President Zippy Duvall gave the closing remarks and perhaps most impactful talk of the trip after winning a close match of musical chairs. He tasked us with finding our "Triple Crown," or three essential things for us to focus on. He shared his own: family, farming and Farm Bureau. I believe everyone left Louisville feeling inspired about something new and headed home more prepared for the future of farming, ranching and leadership than we arrived.



Tyler Noyes represented Montana in the Collegiate Discussion Meet.



Montana Farm Bureau's delegation numbered 28, the highest of any state at the YF&R Conference.



(Above) James Ramirez and Laci Wiggins from UM-Western and Zack Weimortz, YF&R member from Yellowstone County with MFBF staff Sue Ann Streufert and Rikki Swant. (Left) MSU Collegiates Megan Bittner and Erin Brush at Mulberry Orchard Tour.

YF&R Events

Don't miss YF&R Day June 13 that kicks off the MFBF Summer Convention at Fairmont Hot Springs. The YF&R Day will feature tour, speakers and the YF&R Committee Meeting.

Northwest Counties YF&R Committee is hosting Ag Trivia Night at 6 p.m. April 26 at the local brewery, better known as the Ronan Co-op. A taco truck with complete the tasty fun of the evening. In February, **Dawson-Wibaux County** hosted a YF&R Social & Seminar at Pin High Sports Bar in Glendive. The event featured guest speaker, Bradie Schmidt who talked about using EPDs in sire selection.

Discussion Meet 2022-2023

The Farm Bureau Discussion Meet contest is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each participant. This competition is evaluated on an exchange of ideas and information on a pre-determined topic. The judges are looking for the contestant that offers cooperation and communication while analyzing agricultural problems and developing solutions.

2023 AFBF YF&R Discussion Meet Questions

1. How can Farm Bureau effectively support and equip young farmers and ranchers to successfully manage economic and infrastructure challenges to ensure healthy and sustainable farms and ranches across the country?
2. Due to current economic demands, many farmers and ranchers spend a lot of time outside the "fence rows" on off-farm jobs. How can Farm Bureau become more accessible and welcoming to members who are working in related fields and juggling responsibilities on and off the farm?

3. Climate has become a major topic among business leaders, policymakers and consumers. As an industry that depends on the weather, what role do we as farmers and ranchers play in shaping climate initiatives to benefit society overall as well as our own farms and ranches?
4. Advancements in autonomous equipment and drone technology offer solutions to challenges farmers and ranchers have faced for years. How can Farm Bureau improve access to, and help farmers and ranchers deploy, these emerging technologies on their operations?
5. Many external influences are causing supply chain disruption for agricultural goods. How can Farm Bureau reduce the impact of external influences through policy development and programming?

These questions will be used for the YF&R Discussion Meet held during the AFBF Annual Convention and the Collegiate Discussion Meet held during the AFBF FUSION Conference in 2023.

A big thank you to our participating Polaris dealers.

Young Farmer & Rancher Committee members say thank you to the participating Polaris dealers that make it possible to give away a Polaris Ranger to the winner of the YF&R Discussion Meet.

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Havre Hilene Polaris, Havre, MT



Nick Courville at Montana Power Products, Ronan



Zack Weimortz at Yellowstone Polaris, Billings



Katherine Taylor at Gallatin Recreation, Bozeman



(Far left) Nick Courville at Russell Motorsports, Missoula
(Left) Kevin Arntzen at Lewistown Honda & Polaris

People in the News

Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP)

Joe C. King & Sons Ranch in Winnett received the Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP) District 5 Award during the National Cattleman's Beef Association Meeting in February. The ESAP annually recognizes outstanding stewardship practices and conservation achievements of cattle producers.

Chris King, Fergus County Farm Bureau, shared about the family's long-time belief in stewardship and sustainability.

"My dad always told us that we stand on the shoulders of people who came before us. Dad started rest rotation grazing 50 years ago, and we've continued to develop that," said King. "My wife, children and I read everything we can about improving the land. We attend soil health and grazing management workshops. We're always trying to make our grazing system work better. The new fences we've built are to wildlife-friendly standards and we monitor the range. We've done that for many years and have added soil sampling to get a better read on soil health. We even do bird-tracking data to make sure our grazing practices don't have a negative effect. We were doing sage grouse work in the 1960s, so have good data on that. Everything we do for our cows is better for our wildlife."

King pointed out that ranching is a business, but it's also their home, so they care about the land. "You develop an emotional attachment to the land, especially if it's multi-generational."

The rancher explained their grazing management model. "We initially divided the pasture into five smaller pieces, grazing four and

resting one. Then we increased the amount of rest for a more desirable impact. Next, we grazed all five, but for a shorter time. The one we grazed first this year is the one grazed last the following year," King explained. "Now we have a seven-pasture system and graze the same number of months, but the cows are in each pasture for a shorter amount of time, so each area has extended rest."

King admitted to continually developing water systems, adding pipelines. "If we didn't have a tank system and pipelines in these drought years, we would have been in serious trouble."

He said he was humbled by the award, and looks forward to making the ranch even more productive and sustainable so his son, daughter and their families can continue the ranching tradition.

Etiquette Dinner teaches social skills, table manners

Miles Community College students attending the Etiquette Dinner learned how to conduct themselves in business social situations. Hosted by the MCC Collegiate Farm Bureau Young



Students learn dining etiquette during the Miles Community College Etiquette Dinner at the Miles City Club.

Farmers and Ranchers on March 23 at the Miles City Club, the program included speakers followed by a three-course dinner.

Speakers covered a range of necessary skills for young people to be successful in business, including building a resume based on experiences, attending social events, becoming involved in your community, communicating with elected officials and students, and money.

MCC President Dr. Ron Slinger provided tips on attending a business event. "Before you go, do some reconnaissance, so you know what is happening at the event and what to wear. Once you're there, be a lone ranger and optimize the opportunity to meet new people, and be aware of your body language."

Slinger advised the students to have a good handshake, ask open-ended questions, and be kind more than anything.

Montana Farm Bureau's Senior Director of Governmental Affairs Nicole Rolf urged the students to become active in their communities, whether with like-minded individuals or joining a group with a common cause.

"Everyone is busy, but we need people, especially young people, who realize something is important and want to get involved," said Rolf. In addition, she encouraged the group to visit with their state legislators and Montana's Congressional delegation. "They want to hear from you, whether it's presenting testimony or sending an email."

The following topics centered around dining included eating styles across cultures, place settings, and what to wear when an event is designated "business casual" or "business formal."

Blayne Hubing, Collegiate YF&R president, a sophomore studying ag production, said he enjoys involvement in the collegiate YF&R. It allows him to learn more about agriculture outside of Montana, mainly when meetings include tours. "It was great to dress up for this event, get caught up with everyone, and learn about how to read people, as well as I, got to learn more about table manners."

Vice President Rebecca Stroh, studying ag pathways, noted being involved in collegiate YF&R was a good continuation of her learning in 4-H and FFA. "I'm a rodeo queen and do a lot of networking events, so the advice given at this dinner is certainly as valuable and great to hear from people who are good leaders."

Daylon Danks, another collegiate YF&R member studying ag production, said it was valuable to learn about developing a good resume and eating correctly.

The idea for the etiquette dinner was born when MCC Ag Instructor Kim Gibbs took a student to the Montana Farm Bureau Annual Convention. "This individual started eating the dessert first and grabbed all of the forks. I decided it was time to have a dinner to teach students proper table manners and other business social skills."

Gibbs, who serves as Custer/Fallon County Farm Bureau president, added, "When you're involved in agriculture, there is always a banquet to attend."



Chris King receives the National Cattleman's Beef Association Stewardship Award for District 5.

May Membership Month is back

Montana Farm Bureau is dedicating the entire month of May to our grassroots membership. May Membership Month serves as a salute to our members as well as an opportunity for member recruitment. This is the perfect time to

get the word out regarding why our members are Farm Bureau Proud. It's also the chance for County Farm Bureaus to ignite their competitive spirit. Once again, MFBF staff will travel to the home county that recruits the most members for a personal barbeque and celebration of their recruitment efforts.



Membership month will be divided into four weeks:

May 2-6: Farm Bureau Proud Week

May 9-13: Member Benefits Week

May 16-20: Member Appreciation Week (giveaways!)

May 16 – Recognize our **MFBF Advisory Committees Members**

May 17 – Recognize **Student Members**

May 18 – Recognize **Recruiters & Recruited Members**

May 19 – Recognize our **MWFBMIC Agents and Staff**

May 20 – Recognize **County Farm Bureau Leaders**

May 23-27: Member Involvement Week

Keep watching the Montana Farm Bureau Facebook page and check out the May News Brief (MFBF's newsletter for ag producer members) for more information.

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Creative students selected winners of Montana Ag in Color" Drawing Contest

The Montana Farm Bureau Federation announced the winners of the Montana Youth Agriculture Literacy program drawing contest "Montana Ag in Color" during National Ag Week, March 20-26. It was developed as a creative competition for elementary school children. Each grade was given a different agricultural theme ranging from "Grains of Montana" and "Cattle in Agriculture" to noxious weeds, farm safety and ag-related careers. One winner was selected from each grade with judges selecting one drawing from the winners to receive the "Farm Bureau Proud" designation.

A. Kindergarten – Audrey Gunderson,
Choteau Elementary, Teton County

B. First Grade – Aubrey Donnelly,
Sacred Heart, Custer County

C. Second Grade – Clair Duty,
Choteau Elementary, Teton County

D. Third Grade – Leeila Oxarart,
Malta Elementary, Phillips County

E. Fourth Grade – Olivia Ritchey,
Malta Elementary, Phillips County

F. Fifth Grade – Cheyenne Clements,
Hillcrest Elementary,
Wheatland County

G. Sixth Grade – Maeve Bryan,
Sacred Heart, Custer County

Clair Duty received the
"Farm Bureau Proud" designation.

Entries were judged by the Montana Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee on agricultural content, originality, neatness and reproducibility. Winners and their families attended an educational field trip to Helena which included a ranch tour and visit with Montana's Lieutenant Governor during Ag Week.



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