

WINTER 2021

 MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Spokesman

WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY

THE NEW LAND RUSH IN MONTANA

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A publication for the more than 20,000 member families of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation



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Spokesman

MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY

WINTER 2021

**ON THE COVER:***Ice by Carol Hartman*

Carol Hartman, a fourth generation Montanan, born and raised along the Missouri River near Sidney, MT, currently creates her artwork at her studio in the Red Lodge Roosevelt Center. Her paintings can be viewed at her studio or at www.hartmanfinearts.faso.com. Custom paintings of family homesteads are available upon request. Read more about Carol in the 2021 Spring Spokesman.

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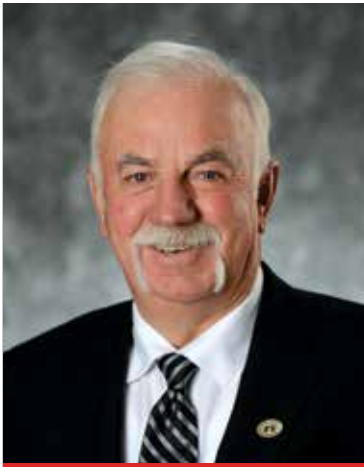


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Hans McPherson
President, Montana Farm
Bureau Federation

“As a Farm Bureau member, you have the ability to influence policy, contact your Montana Farm Bureau lobbyists and your American Farm Bureau lobbyists.”

What is the **value of your Farm Bureau membership?**

When you look at the discounts you receive as part of your Montana Farm Bureau membership benefits—everything from 10-percent off your Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company package policy, to discounts at hotel chains, discounts at Grainger, rebates from Ford and Lincoln Motor Company, discounts and rebates on Caterpillar, John Deere and CASE IH—it becomes quite obvious that the more products and services that you use, the greater the return on your membership benefit.

But let's look at it a couple of other ways for you to see value in your membership. First of all, when you pay your Farm Bureau dues through your county, you're actually joining three organizations: your county organization, the Montana Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation. Three memberships for the price of one is a real bargain.

Look at the benefits on the county level: As a county Farm Bureau member, you can be with other county members visiting with your local legislators, local county commissioners and school boards. On the state level, we have two well-respected lobbyists in Helena you can contact with any concerns or questions during the legislative session or even during the interim committee meetings. Keep in mind that Farm Bureau lobbyists love to have you testify before committee meetings in Helena. It's very simple and fun to do. (Although you might be testifying virtually this year, we shall see.)

On the national level we have a very talented national affairs director who has many contacts with our congressional delegation as well as many agencies in Washington D.C. She can answer your national policy questions or concerns you may be having.

As you know, Montana Farm Bureau is a non-partisan organization and I'm glad, because the wind changes directions regularly in Washington, D.C. and Helena. We are prepared to represent you no matter which way the wind is blowing and look forward to working with the new administration. There will be many changes in the agencies that directly affect agriculture, especially the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management and the Environmental Protection Agency.

One other great benefit is that as a member of the Farm Bureau, you are able to influence local, state and national policies. Many Farm Bureau policies originate around a table at the local coffee hang out and from there, move on to the county policy development committee, then are voted on at the county annual meeting which is then taken to the state convention to be discussed, debated and voted on. Some policies that are national in scope are submitted to the American Farm Bureau to be voted on at the venerable delegate session during their convention--and that policy idea may have started with you.

What is the real value of your Farm Bureau membership with a unified voice for agriculture? I'm talking about all of agriculture, not just individual segments, but all of agriculture. As a Farm Bureau member, you have the ability to influence policy, contact your Montana Farm Bureau lobbyists and your American Farm Bureau lobbyists. With the changes we will see in the next few months in Washington D.C., having a strong voice banded together is priceless!

Here's to a productive, profitable and happy New Year.



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Putting a period on the 2020 elections

I am sure all of you are still exhausted by the 2020 elections. We all thought it was over November 3, only to learn about recounts, runoffs, potential fraud and vote certifications. I am still getting more than three texts or emails a day asking for money to assist in the runoff in Georgia. The smart money on November 4 would have been to buy stock in media companies in Georgia. It is estimated that the four candidates in the runoff will spend north of \$1 billion on the two races. These are extremely important races because the outcome of the vote will determine the majority in the U.S. Senate.

To put a period on the 2020 elections, I will give you an idea of what drove the votes and what we can expect in the upcoming months and years under a new administration with some key takeaways from the presidential election.

President Trump lost for failing to manage COVID competently and was characterized as creating excessive chaos and division. House Democrats lost where voters feared too-aggressive progressivism. Our nation remains closely and bitterly divided with the Senate and the House nearly tied. Biden had no coattails and enters with a very narrow mandate. Both parties face huge internal battles over future direction and leadership.

Biden is a transitional leader, hired to manage COVID as well as lower the chaos. His ability to do more will depend on his success managing the pandemic. Issues that Trump won on were the economy, immigration, abortion and law enforcement as well as foreign policy, while the Biden campaign scored very high on health care, climate change, the pandemic and racism. The bottom line was that the Democrats were able to make the election about President Trump while the Republicans were not able to capitalize on the administration's success on trade, immigration, the economy and regulatory reform.

It's no surprise to any of us who endured non-stop political ads that the amount spent on campaigns more than doubled previous highs with more than \$13 billion spent even before the Georgia runoff. Democrats outspent Republicans by 2 to 1 in the presidential and congressional races.

What does the change in administration and control of Congress mean to agricultural

producers? In Montana, it will mean the end of unprecedented access in Washington D.C. It was refreshing that for four years, we have had more high-level agency officials in our state than under any other administration, and they actually listened to us.

At the time I am writing this editorial, the control of the Senate is yet to be determined, but I will provide two scenarios. The first is if Republicans maintain control of the U.S. Senate, a Democratic president would likely attempt major regulatory reforms through executive agencies, but would not be able to pass large legislative initiatives; trade focus would return to market expansion and WTO enforcement. We could see increased regulation and renewed scrutiny of commodity contracts and concentration. The administration will continue to support agriculture but be less industry-friendly in labor and environmental disputes. We could see modest expansion in farm conservation practices and land reserves and decreased farm program income for larger farms.

If the Democrats are able to control both houses of Congress and the Presidency, many Trump-era reforms could be reversed via executive agencies. The Senate may move to eliminate the filibuster rule and there would be a change in philosophy for judicial appointments. The ag safety net would likely be examined for impacts on environment and health.

In Montana, like much of the rest of the nation, the red states got redder. We are excited to work with Governor-elect Gianforte and his administration. Republicans will control both houses of the legislature with large margins, although dealing with the pandemic will cause disruption of the legislative process. We are still waiting on final word on how the session will be managed, but no matter what form the lawmaking takes, we will be there representing our members' interests. Montana and American agriculture will survive and thrive under any administration because America's farmers and ranchers will continue to produce the cheapest, safest food and fiber in the world and belong to advocacy organizations like the Montana Farm Bureau Federation.

I wish you and yours a safe and prosperous New Year.



John Youngberg
Executive Vice President, MFBF

“ Montana and American agriculture will survive and thrive under any administration because America's farmers and ranchers will continue to produce the cheapest, safest food and fiber in the world and belong to advocacy organizations like the Montana Farm Bureau Federation. ”





Zippy Duvall
President, American Farm
Bureau Federation

“Clearly, we have our work cut out for us, and if 2020 has shown us anything it’s that Farm Bureau, with our grassroots-developed policy and our army of engaged farmer and rancher member advocates across the nation, is up to any task. We are STRONGER TOGETHER.”

Farm Bureau’s policy plate is full

It’s curtains for 2020, and what a year it has been! Now that we can put 2020 in the rearview mirror, we also can look ahead to what’s on our plate for 2021.

We started this year with hopes of achieving policy wins on ag labor, regulatory reform, expanding broadband, addressing mental health in rural America, and expanding trade. While those goals have seemed, at times, to be overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic and all the crises it brought our way, I’m proud that we still brought home some big wins for farmers and ranchers on our original goals.

We must work to strengthen our food and agriculture system in light of what we’ve learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we need Congress to act on ag labor reform, we applauded the Administration’s release of new H-2A guest worker rules. The Administration changed the calculation of wage rates and locked them in for two years, a move that will bring more predictability and stability to farmers who rely on those workers.

Trade is headed in the right direction, with USDA recently issuing a forecast that ag exports will increase to \$140.5 billion next year, with China leading the increase. In addition to the new U.S.-China Phase 1 Agreement that commits China to greater purchases from the U.S., the U.S.- Mexico-Canada Agreement took effect this summer, the U.S.-Japan agreement took effect last January, and negotiations are well under way with the United Kingdom.

Signed into law in March, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allocated more than \$500 million to help rural communities connect to broadband internet. Also in March, the Broadband DATA Act was signed into law, changing the way the government collects data on broadband access so that maps correctly show the areas that are lacking and need help. On mental health, the House and Senate passed language in the Defense Authorization bill that would provide more training, improve awareness through public service announcements, and require federal agencies to work together to determine best practices in responding to rural mental health challenges.

On the regulatory front, we made progress on modernizing Endangered Species Act rules and, finally, delisting the gray wolf, which has seen population growth for years and now will be managed appropriately at the state level. We also welcomed decisions from the Environmental

Protection Agency that will preserve farmers’ and ranchers’ access to critical crop protection tools.

Through Farm Bureau’s legal advocacy, we have defeated early efforts to block implementation of new rules that provide a reasonable definition of “navigable waters” and commonsense reforms of the process for environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act. The litigation is ongoing, and AFBF remains fully committed to defending these and other administrative wins of the past few years.

All of these achievements came as we worked for assistance to farmers and ranchers as markets were decimated by COVID-19 and as they struggled to provide adequate protection for their farm workers.

Farm Bureau membership always has been a great value for our members, but I believe we showed that value more than ever this year.

Looking ahead to January, we will work with elected leaders to bring home more wins for farmers and ranchers. We have work to do on taxes—protecting the tax cuts enacted in 2017 and making agricultural estate tax relief permanent.

We must be engaged in the discussion on climate, ensuring that voluntary incentives are part of the solution. We must work to strengthen our food and agriculture system in light of what we’ve learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussions about the next farm bill will get under way, and we’ll be hard at work to ensure that farmers and ranchers have adequate risk management tools and conservation programs.

We must maintain the hard-won regulatory reforms of the past few years, continue to work for a regulatory environment that allows farmers and ranchers to be productive, and implement renewable energy mandates. Infrastructure improvements, broadband buildout and agricultural research are also on the plate.

We must continue to expand global markets, improve access to mental health services in rural America, and continue working for real, lasting reform of immigration and ag labor.

Clearly, we have our work cut out for us, and if 2020 has shown us anything it’s that Farm Bureau, with our grassroots-developed policy and our army of engaged farmer and rancher member advocates across the nation, is up to any task. We are STRONGER TOGETHER.

I look forward to reporting on more policy wins in the days and weeks ahead.





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Fingers Crossed

BY MARIAH SHAMMEL

Ever since I was little, before I could even open my mouth to think about criticizing someone or anything about them, my mom would pounce in mid-sentence to stop me. She would immediately tell the story about her Grandma Starner (Great Grandma Starner to me), who had the worst varicose veins she'd ever seen. She told herself how horrible it would be to have legs like that and that it was never going to happen to her. And then it did...or so she says. My mom claims she got it way worse than Grandma Starner ever did and she's pretty sure it's because she scorned them as a little girl.

It's safe to say I'm not such a good person that I never criticize anyone or anything but thanks to my mom, I generally keep my grumbling to the confines of my own head. Obviously, if I were to say it out loud I would jinx myself. I cross my fingers while I'm thinking it, just to be sure. I guess I should have crossed my toes, too, because one of the things I have inwardly rebuked all my life has now become a reality of our family existence.

My dad's parents, Granny Ruth and Grandpa Fred, ranched in Bridger when they were raising their four young kids. From the stories I've been told over the years, it sounds like a lot of mayhem and chaos (and fun, clearly) took place, so much so that when my Uncle Lanny was a toddler, Granny tied him to a clothesline via some sort of leash-type thing so he could run back and forth along the cord and she would always know he was safe. There was a ditch that ran through the property so it kind of makes sense in some weird way but that, combined with the time one of her kids got rammed by a, well, ram, and the other time my dad got run over by the neighbor when she backed out of her driveway made me question my grandma's attentiveness as a mother. She used to always laugh and say that every time the neighbors saw the Baumann pickup heading to town, they would wonder which kid was headed to the ER "this time." Granny was one of my favorite people in

the world but I always wondered what she was so busy doing during these injury-laden incidents.

Then our youngest turned into a two-year-old and I knew exactly what Granny was doing. She was blow-drying her hair, emptying the dishwasher and helping her other kids with their homework. At least that's what I envision her doing because that's where I was when our curly-haired blondie got into her older brother's allergy meds, decided she could reach the purple sparkly colored pencil on top of the piano if she balanced her whole body on the inside of her pinky toenail while standing on a barstool, and attempted to do pirouettes on the arm of our couch for the 394th time. We've certainly had to make our fair share of white-knuckled trips to

“ One thing about Granny is she never would have questioned her own ability (at least not in public) but sometimes I question my own. ”

the ER, and waving at our neighbors as we go barreling past. Thankfully we have something Granny never had—a direct line to the ER so we can ask if “this time” is a pedal-to-the-metal sprint or a “keep a close eye at home” kind of moment. The amazing ER staff probably has our phone number memorized by now; I'd rather have them recognize us by voice than by face.

My “judginess” toward Granny's apparent absence withered more and more with each child we had, and I can say with complete confidence it's nowhere to be found these days. I totally get it. I'm with our kids 24/7 and still, they find ways to get into mischief. We're fortunate that safety features have improved and technology



Mariah Shammel is a rancher, wife and mom who lives in Hilger, MT. She has four kids, lots of dogs, cats and chickens and even more cows.

has made communications better but even with that, kids will be kids. They've been falling off chairs, sticking fingers where they shouldn't and putting everything they can into their mouth since time began. Literally. It isn't going to change now and no matter how much you say it's not going to happen to you, it will. Or it won't. Who's to say? It's just like those veins—you can go through your whole life without lifting anything heavy or crossing your legs and you might have the smoothest legs a person could ask for. Or you might not.

There are a million things I would love to discuss with Granny if she were still around today, (like more info on where a person might find one of those leash-type doohickeys she used to constrain my uncle), but the first thing I would do is apologize for all those times I questioned her as a mother. She never knew it, of course, and one thing about Granny is she never would have questioned her own ability (at least not in public) but sometimes I question my own. Maybe that hug would be for me. Either way, she would tell me not to worry and that in life, you can't control everything. Then she'd lean in real close and whisper that she's never had a varicose vein in her life, just loud enough for my mom to hear. With her fingers crossed, of course.

Protecting your Livestock from Harsh Weather Conditions

As the year winds down and we head into January, the temperatures reach their lowest points and snow and ice storms welcome us in the New Year. Farmers and ranchers know that extreme weather can be especially dangerous for livestock. Minimize your risk and protect your herd with these helpful tips.

Provide Adequate Shelter— Your livestock will weather the storm much better indoors. If possible, move them into a barn or similar shelter that will provide warmth and protection from the wind. No buildings large enough? Try rotating the animals in and out so that no single animal is out during the worst of the conditions. Consider providing wind blocks for animals outside during severe weather to help shield them from the biting cold.

Feed the Need— Livestock will need more food and water during extremely cold weather to help them maintain body temperature. Depending on how cold it is, consider increasing feed. Some larger livestock consume twice their normal food amount during cold snaps.

Limit Time in Concrete Pens— Cattle and pigs can develop foot problems from walking on slippery concrete in rainy/snowy conditions. To combat this, line concrete pens with woodchips or sand or transition to gravel floors. These will be easier on hooves and joints.

Be Conscious of Noses and Ears— The noses and ears of livestock are especially vulnerable to frostbite as they can easily become wet or damp. This can put animals

in danger of losing these parts when the temperatures plunge. Keep an eye on your livestock and shelter those that are having the most difficulty with the weather.

Keep a Special Eye on Babies— It goes without saying, but the youngest members of your herd will have the hardest time adjusting to extreme temps. Shelter young livestock first and monitor them for signs that they might be struggling.

As a farmer or rancher, your livestock is your livelihood. Before the temperatures plummet, talk to your Mountain West Farm Bureau agent about our farm & ranch coverage options that can help you protect yourself from loss when the worst happens. Prepare early— and have a safe and happy New Year!



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CCI Grant: Funding for the study of a Prairie County Irrigation Project

BY REBECCA COLNAR

When the Montana Farm Bureau Federation turned 100 in 2019, the Montana Farm Bureau Foundation offered grant funding for the benefit of communities around the state. With these grants the Foundation looked to increase rural prosperity and stimulate economic development by strengthening its roots and bettering small towns across Montana. The Foundation's goal was to raise \$100,000 for the grants.

"The Centennial Community Initiative was established to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs, support infrastructure improvements, increase support in community service, and provide a long-lasting impact in Montana rural areas," noted Scott Kulbeck, foundation coordinator. "We realize that \$100,000 is just a start in addressing rural development. Our hope was that this program would be used to kick-start projects where seed money was needed to attract larger funding sources. The grant money could help in the completion of a business plan that allows an entrepreneur to secure financing or it may be a grant that is used as matching funds so that a project could attract a larger grant."

One of the recipients of the grants was the Prairie County Irrigation Project. The CCI helped fund Prairie County's Feasibility Study and Preliminary Engineering Report to examine the feasibility and cost of creating a new irrigation project on the Fallon Flats.

What did the CCI grant do to potentially help the community grow? The proposed irrigation project would pump water directly from the Yellowstone River via pump and pipeline systems—a 340-foot lift—providing irrigation water to the proposed project area that would be applied with highly efficient center pivot irrigation systems. The feasibility study will identify and detail existing conditions, present alternatives, provide cost estimates, provide a financial analysis to determine cost effectiveness of alternatives, examine environmental



consequences of the proposed alternatives, provide for selection of a preferred alternative, and detail required permits and authorizations for construction of the system. This project will provide for the development of approximately 17,000 acres of irrigated farmland. The feasibility study is expected to be completed by spring.

Dennis Teske is not only a farmer in Prairie County, but has served on the conservation district for 15-20 years and is a Prairie County commissioner. Seeing agriculture thrive in Prairie County is a goal of Teskes.

"I irrigate out of the Yellowstone," Teske said. "The county has 68,000-acre feet reserved water rights, and I have some water rights dating back to 1905. This will greatly benefit our county. If we're going to save our county, we have to save ourselves. We're agriculture and we're strong. Our reserved water rights are a blessing for our county and if we don't use it, we'll lose it. This could turn a dryland farm into irrigated land."

Teske believes that by establishing a Fallon Flats irrigation project, it will make farms more valuable and could even possibly lead to bringing a son or daughter home. "We are the oldest, as in age-wise, county in the state and the sixth oldest county in the nation. We need to bring our young people home, and agriculture is the key. We've been talking about this irrigation

project for years, and people were saying it sounds good but what will it cost? That was main driver to get funding for the study to give hard data to give them quality data to make educated decisions."

Scott Aspenlieder, a principal engineer with Performance Engineering, the firm hired to complete the study, noted that the only way for rural ag-driven communities to survive is to do more with less by increasing production and providing what rural Montana does well—growing and raising crops and livestock.

"If we get this going, it would be the first irrigation project formed in the state of Montana since the 1950s," said Aspenlieder. "Since the Buffalo Rapids Irrigation Project (which took 30 years from start to finish to build), a new irrigation project hasn't been done for a long, long time. We're dealing with water rights, it's expensive and it's a challenge."

"Reserved water is an asset and if we don't use it, we will lose it and that water will be gone forever so it was important we used our CCI grant money to do a feasibility study," noted Teske. "We can apply it for beneficial use for all citizen of the county, as it will enrich their lives when they can grow a diversity of crops and we can guarantee a water system. Certainly, we need God to give us the rain, but we can help that with irrigation."

Teske worries that in small communities, populations are getting older and growing smaller. In the homestead days there more than 4000 people in this county; today, there are only 1100.

"If we don't do something to keep our young people here, there will be even less," said Teske. "Dollars are huge to our community and it brightens our future and gives us options. Maybe we can step through this and create something someone will be talking about 90 years from today, that those folks had a vision and this is what it looks like, the Fallon Flats Irrigation Project."



➤ Montana Farm Bureau Foundation offers a mini-grant program

The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation has established a mini-grant program to provide grants up to \$1,000 for use in educational forums or activities promoting agriculture.

In 2002, one of the recipients of the mini-grant was the Heart of Montana Farm in the Dell of Lewistown, which held its first annual Fall Festival Saturday October 3 and Sunday October 4. The primary goal was to provide a fun and educational weekend for hundreds of families in Central Montana centered around pumpkins and agricultural education while showcasing their organization at their farm location.

The organizers set the farm up into stations: pumpkin picking, petting zoo, hoop house, maze, hayride, music and refreshments. The farm had a flood of people at the start and ran out the pumpkins both days and need to purchase more from a local grocery store. They had 426 people on Saturday and 269 on Sunday.

"We believe we were successful to our goals of educating the community about farming and our mission to provide a residence for developmentally disabled adults in an agricultural setting," said Rachel Stansberry, board member, Heart of Montana Farm in the Dell. "The petting zoo, hoop house and hayride each provided a view of what a working farm produces. We made some changes to our initial plan for pumpkin carving and decorating and farm to table stations to meet the requirements of our local health district for social distancing."

Another recent recipient of the MFB Foundation Mini-Grants included the Lewistown Boys and Girls Club which provides afterschool and summer programming for school-age youth. One of their programs was "An Agricultural State of Mind" which explored the many facets of agriculture and included hands-on opportunities for 70 youth (capacity was limited this summer due to COVID-19) to visit local agriculture producers, grow their own food, and learn from local experts about the economic, cultural and nutritional aspects of agriculture. This was third year the Lewistown Boys & Girls Club offered this popular curriculum as part of their summer program.


In addition, a mini-grant was presented to the Big Timber FFA for their efforts to build an Ag-Ed Learning Lab Fence. The FFA planned to build a fence on five acres they lease adjacent to the Sweet Grass County High School. The FFA noted that the property had immense potential to provide learning opportunities for SGCHS students and FFA members through classroom activities and SAE projects. Since it was not fenced, students could not bring in livestock in any capacity. By building an attractive and lasting continuous border fence, the students would be able to open up opportunities for class labs and FFA projects/events. Check out the student video of the project on the Montana Farm Bureau Facebook page.



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Cultivating a **culture of safety during calving**

BY AUSTIN GRAZIER

With this being the winter issue of Montana Farm Bureau Federation's *Spokesman*, I wanted to send out some safety tips and reminders for the ranchers who will start calving in the near future. Although the tips and reminders below are well known, curbing complacency will help as we work together to *cultivate a culture of safety* on Montana's farms and ranches.

The majority of claims on farms and ranches are in either the category of slips, trips and falls, or injury caused by livestock. In these two categories

alone, the Montana Agriculture Safety Program has incurred over \$600,000 in losses just in the past three years. As we are all well aware, working around livestock is inherently risky. Add in the snow, ice and bad weather during calving season and we create an ideal situation for something bad to happen. Some accidents are just that, accidents. However, many accidents can be avoided or can significantly be reduced by taking the time to consider how we can minimize the risk and increase the safety for not only ourselves but for our



Austin Grazier is the director of agriculture safety for the Montana Agriculture Safety Program.



employees, our family and our livestock.

Every ranch across the state has a different way of calving. Some ranches have a very hands-on approach, whereas others are very hands-off. Some ranches use barns and sheds, and others use their wide-open pastures. Some check on their cows once a day and some check every couple of hours. Whichever way you do it, it is important to take the time prior to the start of your calving season to check and prepare your ranch for a safe and successful season. Include your employees and family during this check. Be sure to go over rules, prepare a plan, and confirm everyone understands how to be safe. This is also a good time to make sure your head catch is in good repair, you have ropes to tie up a hind foot, and sedation just in case.

Being safe during calving season starts before you ever leave the house. Check the weather report and be ready for changing weather conditions. It could be a beautiful, sunny winter morning but be blizzarding in a matter of minutes. First and foremost, dress for the worst. It is recommended to wear at least three layers of clothing: a base layer against the skin, a middle insulating layer, and an outer wind and water-resistant layer. Layering gives you the ability to adjust to changing tasks and weather. Before leaving the house do not forget good gloves, a hat, and warm boots! Keep others informed of where you are going and what you will be doing. Make sure you have a fully charged phone or two-way radios so you can call for help in an emergency.

If you are calving in a confined setting, check and prepare your escape routes in case of an aggressive cow. Can you get out of the pen easily? If not, consider making improvements that will allow you to quickly climb out, roll out, or even jump out. A strategically placed feeder can offer good protection. In a pasture setting, never stray too far from your vehicle or horse. These are often your only available barriers, so keep them nearby to stay safe. Remember, maternal instincts are strong and cows can become very protective of their young.

Often, especially in a hands-on operation, calving requires a lot of

walking and lifting. Be sure to protect your back by lifting and carrying calves properly. Calves should be picked up by placing an arm under and at the base of the neck and the other arm behind the stifle joint, bend at the knees, and lift straight up. Avoid lifting and twisting at the same time. When you have to carry calves a distance, keep the calf close to

your body and carried just above waist height. Remember, stay vigilant at all times when checking on your cows and enlist help when needed.

Be sure to visit www.mtagrisafety.com for more safety information or contact Austin Grazier at (406) 587-3153 or austing@mtagrisafety.com.



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Meet New District 10 Director **Jim Willis**

BY REBECCA COLNAR

Long-time Montana Farm Bureau members will recognize the name Jim Willis. He was active on the MFBF Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee and served as chair of that committee in 2009. He was featured in a Spokesman article for his time as farm boss at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. Now, Willis is back in a leadership role at MFBF as District 10 Director, representing Gallatin, Broadwater, Meagher and Park counties.

Willis grew up in Colorado and in 2000 moved with his wife, Heather, to Missoula for her job with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Moving to Missoula led Willis—who was working for potato farmers when they first arrived in the Treasure State—to take a job as ranch manager, then farm boss, with the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. Willis oversaw hay and crop production on 3000 acres. After seven years at the prison, he accepted a job as manager for a diversified ranch in Buffalo, Mont., owned by Jim Peterson. Seven years later in 2015, Willis accepted a ranch manager position with the Four Diamond Ranch. Willis, Heather and their three children, Amanda, Sage and Hunter, moved to the ranch which lies north of Wilsall.

Willis handles the day-to-day operation of the Four Diamond, working with employees and developing planned grazing, marketing, budgeting and researching other buyers for their grass-fed, grass-finished cattle. The ranch retains the calves, keeping them on the ranch until they reach the finished or fattened stage and sells the live animals to processors who then market the grass-fed beef through retail, restaurants and wholesale outlets.

"This is our second year selling grass-finished cattle; we keep those calves who will be processed to between 24 and 30 months of age. Currently, however, the slaughter capacity in Montana is small, and COVID has really pushed out processing dates into later this year and beyond," Willis said. "We use intensive grazing for our yearlings, and it's resulted

in higher quality and size."

Willis, who got involved with YF&R in 2006, said once he attended a national YF&R Conference, he was hooked. "Southwest Counties Farm Bureau generously helped pay our way to the YF&R National Conference in Salt Lake, and I was so impressed with the grassroots advocacy for agriculture. I met many good people with Farm Bureau, such as Jeff Welborn, now Montana Senator Jeff Welborn. He asked me to be a voting delegate at the MFBF convention. I had the wonderful opportunity to sit on the MFBF Board of Directors when I was Montana's YF&R Chair. The MFBF Convention always impresses me because it really drives home the point that agricultural producers are the ones guiding the organization. I like the deliberation members have during the delegate session. At one convention, we heard motivational speaker and third-generation logger Bruce Vincent speak, using the phrase, 'The world is run by those who show up' and that resonated with me. You need to get involved with what you believe in."

In 2020, when retiring MFBF District 10 Director Patti Davis asked if Willis would consider serving on the board, he said yes. "A few times in the past, a spot had come available on the MFBF board, but it wasn't the right time for me to run for that

position," he said.

The rancher said initially in his role as board member, he wants to learn the nuts and bolts of the MFBF, since in his year as YF&R Chair on the board didn't give him the time he needed. (YF&R chairs term out at age 35.) "I hope the members in my district will keep me in there for a while. In my new capacity as director, I also serve on the Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Board. I feel we need to develop a more symbiotic relationship with the insurance company. They need to understand our membership while still being a viable insurance company, and I look forward to working with them."

The challenges facing agriculture include commodity prices and volatility in markets, Willis believes. The other challenge facing farmers and ranchers currently is the influx of people moving into rural areas.

"As Bruce Vincent says, they feel they need to save us from ourselves. This manifests itself into bigger issues such as trespassing, land use, farmers using pesticides and wanting to regulate large animal facilities. It boggles the mind when they say they want it to stay like it is but they don't want us to keep it like it is," Willis said. "It's a huge challenge. Also, I'm very worried about the current level of federal spending which is unsustainable, and I'm worried they will look at the two percent of the population involved in production agriculture and make huge cuts. At some level, farmers and ranchers may need to realize they need to give some to save the whole."

Willis explained that although there are challenges, being involved in Farm Bureau means you really do have a voice in agriculture. "I really appreciate that Farm Bureau is involved at all levels of policy making on the county, state and national levels. In addition, being part of Farm Bureau means you have excellent representation in Helena and Washington, D.C. I look forward to being on the board of this great organization."





Agent Norris Phelan: 25 years of serving clients

BY REBECCA COLNAR

Norris Phelan takes a practical attitude about insurance. “I want to be advocate for my clients,” the veteran agent said. Phelan, who has bragging rights to 25 years with Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company—and all those years in Livingston—explained that his roots in the Livingston area are deep.

“I grew up on the Bozeman pass between Livingston and Bozeman. Although at one point I moved as far away as Manhattan and went to high school there, and studied finance at MSU-Bozeman, I have been in Livingston for the last 35 years.”

His career as an agent came about when he decided to make a career change. His friend, Kevin Gillaspie, was a Livingston agent at the time and encouraged Phelan to consider applying for an agent job when it came available.

“At that time our (agency) manager was Dave Paul. He was going through some personal health challenges, but insisted on going through the whole interview process with me. Honestly, I didn’t want to quit my current job unless I had a high probability of success in a new career,” Phelan explained. “I started in the fall of 1995, and officially began as an agent in February 1996, always out of the Livingston office.”

Phelan’s wife, Lisa, has been involved in the agency since Phelan started his career. She continues to keep up her licenses in life insurance as well as in property and casualty. When the Phelans made their venture into insurance, their children were young. Lisa handled the initial contacts, but was busy with the family, which necessitated hiring their first full-time employee.

“I don’t really enjoy being a boss, as I like things to be simple,” Phelan explained. “Our last full-time employee was an awesome woman, Shanna Fellows, who helped us for about seven years. However, once she moved on, I really didn’t want to find someone new. By then our kids were grown and gone so

Lisa started working in the office with me. We work really well together, although recently we have hired a new part-time employee, Bridget Sazzarin.

The long-time agent admits that although he enjoys meeting with all of his clients, he especially enjoys getting out of the office to visit with his farming and ranching clients.

“I see what they face every day and they are ethical, kind, hard-working people. I get great satisfaction doing a good job for them,” Phelan said. “Plus, over the past 25 years, you can’t help but make friends. In many cases our kids all grew up together.”

Although most of Phelan’s clients hail from Park County, he has clients scattered across the state in Missoula, Big Fork, Ennis and Dillon. Generally, they are children of long-time clients who have moved away but wanted to keep Phelan as their agent.

“It is easier today to have clients who aren’t in the area. With technology, we can do almost anything by email, although I still great satisfaction by returning phone calls and providing that personal touch,” Phelan said, adding that he will recommend a more local agent to clients who move to other areas of the state.

Phelan’s advice to insurance customers

is to develop a professional relationship with their agent. “Listen to what your agent has to say. You need to respect that he will give you the tools for you to make an informed decision. When working with my clients, my personal motto is do the right thing for the right reasons.”

As for community service, Phelan noted that when his children were in school and were involved in sports he served as a coach and was active in his kids’ activities. Today, he and Lisa have six grandchildren, all which live nearby, who keep them busy.

The Phelans enjoy taking their utility vehicle into the mountains for recreation and they also enjoy hunting and fishing. He had been a bicycle enthusiast until he sailed over the handlebars in October which resulted in a broken arm and surgery. He’s still recovering and is hoping he will have the courage to get back on the bike.

In addition, Phelan is an avid tennis player. “Before COVID shut down the indoor courts at MSU, I played a lot of tennis. It has been my most consistent hobby. Lisa’s the arts-and-crafts person in the house. In December she goes into the basement and makes gnomes to sell at craft shows.”

Phelan reiterates how much he enjoys his career. “I feel I can serve my community in what I believe is a meaningful way—protecting their assets. It’s amazing how fast time goes. I can’t believe it will be 25 years of working with Mountain West this coming February.”



Lisa and Norris Phelan show off the halibut they caught at Water’s Edge Lodge in Elfin Cove, Alaska.

A new land rush in the Last Best Place

BY REBECCA COLNAR

The year 2020 has had a profound impact on society. The ability to work remotely, the desire to leave urban living behind and the need for a “simpler life” has brought the Treasure State sharply into focus. The open spaces and freedom most Montanans enjoy is now being sought by others. History repeats itself, and this latest land rush is no exception. Montana’s no stranger to newcomers, having seen a rapid influx of population in the past, from Gold Rush following the American Civil War to the passage of the Homestead Act. The territory/state promised riches and opportunities for a new life.

Some areas in rural Montana have been losing population steadily. Other areas that had been seeing steady increases in

population are now seeing growth pick up exponentially. There are challenges and opportunities with the arrival of new faces and new ideas.

One-hundred-year-old farms and ranches are common in Montana with many even older than that. Some have been in the family for generations, others a few decades. One thing is certain; farmers and ranchers love their land, have kept it sustainable for the next generation, and fervently hope to see agriculture and the agricultural lifestyle continue in the future.

Prickly Pear Simmental Ranch, owned by the Burnham family, lies on land that has been ranched since 1864 a few months even before Helena was founded as a mining town in November, 1864.

“My husband’s family has owned this



Karl Christians, a cattle rancher from East Helena, encourages new residents to ask questions about agriculture.

ranch since the 1930s and I was born in 1960 and raised in Helena, and I’ve seen it grow from a small town to a large city with suburban sprawl,” said Loretta Burnham. “In the past year it’s really built up and there is a lot of development even past our ranch now. We need to be a lot more careful when trying to move cattle or equipment on the road. Although we try to keep being on our road to a minimum, we sometimes need to set it up with the highway patrol or get people with flags. Our highway has been reconstructed to have a wider shoulder, so we try to move our equipment to the shoulder of the road.”

Burnham said some of the challenges with having growth around them is trespassing issues and people driving too fast for conditions, and ending up in their fences. “We’d like new people to realize that agriculture was here long before they were, and urge them to be understanding of what we do. If there are cows around and you don’t like cows, don’t move close to a ranch. We have some urban folks who moved out here on five acres for their horses who buy hay from us, but there aren’t a lot of ag people around here anymore. There definitely needs to be education about agriculture.”

Educating a non-ag audience is key, and last year the East Helena High School established an FFA program. “After our



Loretta and Gary Burnham own the Pearly Pear Simmental Ranch in Helena. Gary’s family has been ranching on that land since the 1930s, although the ranch dates back to before Helena was founded.



Lewis & Clark Farm Bureau Ag Day for fifth-grade students this year, we were going to do a special ag day for FFA students. Unfortunately, because of COVID, we weren't able to do the ag day at all, but hoping we can schedule it in 2021."

The family also invites legislators and other dignitaries to visit the ranch during the Montana Legislative Session to "Meet the Bulls." The event provides the Burnhams and other ag-oriented people to talk one-on-one about ag issues directly to elected officials.

Although the Burnhams recognize they could sell their property, they feel strongly that it's important to keep the land growing wheat, barley, hay and cattle, and hope their nephew will want to continue in their footsteps.

Cattle rancher Karl Christians, who lives three miles north of East Helena, bought his ranch in 2004 after moving from the Denton, Mont. area with his family. He and his wife purchased a bare piece of ground, built ranch infrastructure and currently lease 300 acres of irrigated hay ground.

"It was actually the subdivision of a ranch, so our deeded acreage is small. What we actually bought was just a weed patch," said Christians. "Folks who have lived here longer said they used to grow sugar beets around here, so it was sad when agriculture stopped and the land sat idle. We've put a

lot of time and effort into this place to get it back in agricultural production."

Recently, there has been an influx of people from all over. Christians tries to reach out and open up the ranch to people who have moved there, showing what ranchers do and importance of weed control.

"One thing we're really up against with growing subdivisions coming is litter. There are some really small acreage folks with chickens and we keep having feed bags on a weekly basis that blow over to our place. My neighbor's calves can be seen chewing on the plastic that blows over, and it's just a matter of time until that harms those calves. The amount of garbage is phenomenal."

Early on, the family invited people to help with roping calves at branding, but with the majority of people not knowing how to wrestle calves, the Christians moved to a calf table and scaled back outside help, for the safety of all.

"We try to educate people and have some dialogue, like our 'Where's the Food Without the Farmer?' (WTF) signs. We try to educate friends and folks who stop by, and talk to the horse folks who buy hay about weeds and managing their grazing," Christians said. "In addition, we stress the importance of agriculture and the misinformation being spread about issues such as hormones in beef and GMOs. They

need to realize if ag leaves, then what?"

Christians, who is president of the Lewis & Clark Farm Bureau, agrees with Loretta Burnham that having the East Helena High School start an FFA program is progress, indeed. "With the Ag Days we started for grade school kids, we found out that we needed to keep the education going. We talked to the school superintendent who was 100 percent behind us and fast-tracked ag education—we have 25 kids enrolled in the ag program. We're hoping to have an Ag Day for high school students next year and hopefully we can make it into a community event. We're also working with the school to build an ag center, and have strong support from businesses and the Lewis & Clark Conservation District."

The rancher hopes to be able to educate adults about agriculture through their children.

"My advice if you've just moved into an area with agriculture is reach out to the neighbors who have been there for some time. If you have horses or want to raise chickens or other livestock, talk to your county Extension agent, your conservation district or county Farm Bureau members. Let them know you want leave your place better than when you bought it."

Along with the small subdivision newcomers are some large land purchases.

Cattle on roads

If you are traveling through Montana, you will eventually come across ranchers moving cows across or down a major roadway. So, you ask yourself, "How do I keep driving?" Well, simply put don't go driving through the middle of the herd without permission. Chances are the ranch was there long before that roadway was and the rancher is just trying to do his job. Often times the rancher will wave you through, when they do GO SLOWLY, CAUTIOUSLY, AND STICK TO ONE SIDE OF THE ROAD. The cows will move out of your way, albeit at their own pace, and it's up to you to be patient.

Rural living knowledge:

- Slow down on dirt roads and be sure to give oncoming vehicles a friendly wave.
- Open range means you must watch out for livestock on the roads, it is your responsibility.
- Cows are domestic, but generally they're not pets. Don't try to pet or feed one without the owner's permission. Cows with calves can be very protective and even dangerous.
- If you go through a gate, leave it how you found it.
- If you run into and tear down someone's fence, fix it or let the owner know.
- If it snows, there's a good chance your driveway won't get plowed.
- At certain times of year, farmers and ranchers work around-the-clock. This could involve loud equipment, lights, dust or mooing cows.
- Dirt roads are bumpy and dusty. They get very muddy during snow melt or rain and there are even some that are "impassable when wet." Heed the signs.
- Farmers spray fertilizer and crop protectants to keep their crops healthy and growing.
- Yes, Montana has grasshopper infestations every so often and they will be all over everything.
- Don't be in a rush, enjoy the scenery and be friendly to you neighbors. They will be the ones pulling your car out of the ditch!

"What often happens is someone, often a group of investors, buys a large tract of land and kicks the cows off because they want it as their own hunting preserve. What happens is without managed grazing, all you get is duff and noxious weeds, and nothing can graze there, so the wildlife moves onto someone's ranch and are in the hayfields. We have that problem right now in one area of the Snowy Mountains. It's now all knapweed. We need to talk to the owners of that land and have them understand the importance of managed grazing and weed eradication."

MFBF President Hans McPherson has a diversified farm in Stevensville, south of Missoula. His family has farmed in the Bitterroot Valley for 68 years. "My dad talked about when they first moved here, he had a flashy new car and everybody looked at him because he was somebody new. Today, that's still the same when new

people show up."

McPherson remembers the first wave of people in his lifetime who moved to his area in 1960-70s blended in. But the next wave put up no trespassing signs before they unpacked.

"People want to move here because they have more freedom than where they came from. But then they want zoning and all kinds of things that they moved to get away from and in reality, they have brought their problems with them," McPherson said. "It's unbelievable the amount of folks moving in. Realtors have no inventory and can't keep a listing more than a day. People are buying bare land; people are buying houses that are here. They want to get out of the big cities. It's been said Montana is the Last Best Place, and it's true."

McPherson believes most people appreciate seeing farming even though they sometimes get irritated about farm

equipment moving along the roads. His best way to deal it is to engage with the new people and educate them about agriculture.

"We've had the FFA kids come out to practice judging with our livestock. We have our potato project where we invite the community to come out and pick potatoes. We have a produce stand in the summer and get to interact with consumers. Once people meet you and see what farmers and ranchers actually do, they gain trust. A lot of people who move in need to learn that livestock are beneficial to wildlife."

McPherson chuckled that farming in his area is a spectator sport. "We have people call to tell us a cow is calving and they will pull over to the side of the road to watch it. It's a whole new experience for them."

"If new people can accept our way of life, we will welcome them."

A hot market: Montana real estate

Although the popular areas of Bozeman and Missoula, as well as the beautiful scenery in western Montana has attracted newcomers, even parts of Montana that aren't generally considered places out-of-state people flock to are being discovered. Montana real estate has become the hot commodity as people are leaving urban areas.

Sheena Schiffer works as a real estate broker for Eastern Montana Land & Home helping buyers and sellers in Forsyth and surrounding areas. The main office is in Terry although it's common for its brokers to travel from Colstrip to Volborg, Jordan to Hysham, Ingomar, Melstone, Vananda and all of the small towns in between.

"I have been seeing a lot of people coming in from California and Washington. I've had buyers from Idaho, Arizona and so on. Many are looking to buy land and live the wide-open space Montana dream,"

the young realtor said. "I have a hard time keeping my voicemail space free. My phone is ringing non-stop daily. My co-worker and I have taken 300-plus new calls over the past month. Today alone I had calls from Utah, New Jersey, Washington, Minnesota and other areas in Montana. I was out riding for a day with my husband and some others and they couldn't believe when I came back to my phone and had over 40 new text messages."

In the past, nobody would buy property or a home without seeing it first and "kicking the tires" as it were. However, that's changing and Schiffer noted that sight unseen deals are becoming more common. Some buyers have never even been to eastern Montana, let alone to the town or area they are moving to.

"I personally love eastern Montana, but it can be a complete change of lifestyle. We tend to live a slower pace here and for



Sheena Schiffer, a real estate broker and rancher from Rosebud, wants newcomers to rural areas to appreciate Montana's rural lifestyle.



someone moving from a big city, that can be hard to understand. As an agent selling sight unseen, it can be tough to explain to a client how “off the grid” a property really is. You may not be able to get out of your house for several days,” Schiffer tells her clients. “As agents, we really have to do our best to make that clear. It is hard to explain what a 15-mile dirt road is like any time of year, let alone during Montana winters.”

Schiffer often gets asked if an area like Rosebud has a grocery store or hospital along with things like, “What is a stock tank? Can you put horses in these corrals? Would your ranch be willing to train people how to farm and ranch for free labor?”

“Even if a question seems silly to us, I want them to know everything about what they are getting themselves into. I provide them with all of the information I possibly can so they know what to expect, but it is also my job to provide them with resources to learn,” the realtor noted. “I offer contacts with the Montana Farm Bureau Federation, the Department of Natural Resources, local FSA offices, local clubs, extension offices, trainings and even local contacts who are willing to talk, so they can really learn for themselves.”

“I am currently working with a very nice, young, large family moving here from Washington state. They really want to be involved in the community and follow their dreams. They have been great about

asking questions about our lifestyle,” Schiffer said. “My advice to them was to talk with your neighbors, be open about what you’re doing and find out as much as you can about our lifestyle and why we live the way we do, our thoughts and values. It is important for people from out-of-state to understand these things so

“ I personally love eastern Montana, but it can be a complete change of lifestyle. We tend to live a slower pace here and for someone moving from a big city, that can be hard to understand. ”

— Sheena Schiffer

Montana can continue to be the wonderful state that we all love. I understand a lot of locals are concerned about people coming from out of state. New people mean new ideas, which might mean new challenges, but if you can be open and welcoming to new neighbors, it will go far.”

Schiffer, who was raised on a ranch and

is still involved with ranching, notes it is important for everyone to understand that agriculture is the number-one industry in Montana and increasing prices of land poses challenges for those who wish to continue that way of life. “Rosebud County is beef country and I let buyers know that. I want my clients to get involved and learn from locals so that we can continue our cherished way of life.”

Many people moving to the rural areas want to “get away from the craziness” in their cities. Many just like the idea that they can pay off their homes right now and come to our area where prices are still relatively affordable. Schiffer added that many buyers are now able to work remotely and want to get out of the city; however, internet access and phone service is very important.

There is concern among locals, farmers and ranchers about the increasing cost of land, which makes expansion of land and passing on land, difficult if not impossible.

“Even in eastern Montana, we are seeing more and more land investors,” Schiffer said. “Growing up as a ranch kid and being a ranch wife today, I really understand these concerns. I intend to do my best to educate buyers about this issue. I love seeing families come buy land who intend to work it and who appreciate the agriculture in our state.”



➤ Equipment on roads

— by Austin Grazier, director of agriculture safety, Montana Agriculture Safety Program

If you've moved to Montana, there is a good chance you'll encounter a large piece of farm equipment on the road. First and foremost, if you are nervous about meeting large farm equipment/machinery, try driving it! Farm machinery is often loud, large, and challenging to maneuver. Remember, if you cannot see the operator, he/she probably cannot see you.

BE PATIENT! Tractors, swathers, combines, etc. are not designed to go 60 MPH. The farmer or rancher is going as fast as possible and will likely pull over when there is a safe spot to do so. If you must pass, DO IT SAFELY. That means pass on long, straight sections of the road. DO NOT pass on bridges, curves, or hills. Pass slowly and cautiously.

When you see agriculture equipment, slow down. If you are traveling at 55 mph it will only take you seven seconds to rear-end a tractor traveling at 15 mph.

Recognize wide vehicles make wide turns. When you see farmers and ranchers veering one direction, DO NOT assume they are moving out of your way. They are likely preparing to make a turn. Slow down and wait until you are certain you can safely proceed.

If you are approaching wide machinery, SLOW DOWN AND YIELD. This might mean you need to stop and pull off the road, back up, or even find a different route if you are in a rush. Farm equipment is often wider than their lane and cannot safely pull over on the shoulder. Recognize that agriculture machinery is often tall, unstable, heavy, and at risk of tipping over if they are on the shoulder or loose surfaces.

Finally, remember these wise words from Craig Morgan, “Well, I know you got your own deadlines but cussin’ me ain’t savin’ no time, hoss. This big-wheeled, wide load ain’t goin’ any faster, so just smile and wave and tip your hat to the man up on the tractor.”

ACE graduates praise program

BY REBECCA COLNAR

In November, members of the ACE program had their “graduation ceremony” in Bozeman, with some class members opting to join virtually. The ACE program is designed to empower Farm Bureau members to actively advocate on key industry issues and be confident, effective leaders in their County Farm Bureau and local communities. The program emphasizes leadership development, issue education and the engagement of local communities.

In 2019, ACE graduates presented their projects in front of Farm Bureau members during the MFBF Convention and enjoyed a special luncheon and graduation ceremony with selected dignitaries. As with many things this past year, the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed plans for a graduation ceremony. Despite these challenges, ACE Program Coordinator, Chelcie Cargill shares the impressive perseverance displayed by the 2020 class to overcome and adapt.

“The ACE Class of 2020 didn’t get the same graduation recognition as other classes. However, that didn’t stop this group from showing up and delivering some high-quality presentations to a group of peers and virtual audience members,” Cargill said. “Each class member gave a 10-minute presentation that described how they would take the resources and skills learned through their time in the program and implement them in their own communities and county Farm Bureaus. The creativity and adaptability these individuals displayed in creating these presentations is great testament to the valuable leaders they will be for their communities and Montana agriculture.”

Although ACE is about communicating agricultural topics to consumers, Pam Converse found what she most gleaned from her year in the program was unexpected: discovering her strengths. “Sometimes you don’t realize your full potential. The ACE training had a way of bringing out those hidden truths and strengths you know you had, but didn’t really know how to use them,” said Converse. “We learned how to take those strengths, and



Doreen McClure

even weaknesses, and compile them and use them for the betterment of agriculture, which is my passion.”

Converse explained that her end-of-program project was two-fold: developing a sort of “ABCs” of Farm Bureau, and working to get regional ACE graduates together.

“I really didn’t know who Farm Bureau was until Vice President Cyndi Johnson told me to apply,” said Converse, who is the Pondera County weed coordinator as well as a rancher. “I think it would be beneficial for new Farm Bureau members to have a booklet that might include the district map, Farm Bureau’s beliefs, how to connect with the different committees and how their voting process works, that this organization is truly grass roots.”

She noted that the voting process, that comes from a county and can progress all the way to be voted on the delegate floor at the American Farm Bureau Delegate Session, makes her especially enthusiastic to be a member and thinks others need to realize how grassroots Farm Bureau is.

“I think it’s important to reach out to new members and have a meet and greet at the state convention for new people, with a few of the more established members to visit with them, as well,” Converse said.

As for the second part of her project, since four ACE graduates live fairly close by—Ethridge, Brady and Conrad, she’d like to see them meet regularly to develop new advocacy ideas for their communities and see how they could help each other.

“ACE is one of the greatest hidden gems out there for the cost, the amount of



Pam Converse

information you receive, the support—it’s been amazing.”

Doreen McClure ranches with her family in Roy. She found ACE provided a vast learning experience and met new friends from all sectors of agriculture across Montana.

“Our group found that our collective focus was more on listening to engage in new conversations and begin to focus on things we all can agree on as we advocate for our causes and bridge the gaps of misinformation and miscommunication,” she said.

McClure’s project was aimed at creating an effective board in any organization. “I have begun to use my recruitment focus already in two other organizations and will as needed in Fergus County Farm Bureau when meetings are back up and running at capacity. Doing this project helped me organize effective thoughts to help develop a board that is inclusive, engaged and effective all year round. My dream board includes one that does not burden one or two members to carry the entire load, but uses the individual talents and desires of members to share the vision of the organization and creates enthusiasm while it accomplishes missions.”

“ACE was a wonderful experience and the presenters were very inspiring,” McClure said. “We all need introduced to a variety of agricultural advocates, in order to learn and grow. A.C.E. provided me with many more resources for learning.”

She expressed the sentiment of the other ACE graduates—the need for more ACE. “I wish there was an ACE 101.”



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Farm Bureau shows perseverance, creativity despite challenging times

The year of 2020 proved difficult for many associations, yet Montana Farm Bureau and 30 county Farm Bureaus continued to excel at reaching out to their members, helping their communities, working on agricultural advocacy and setting Farm Bureau policy for the upcoming year.

Advocacy and education play a large role in Farm Bureau. The pandemic caused the cancellation of activities such as farm fairs, but that didn't stop students from learning. Farm Bureau's creative staff and members coordinated a virtual farm fair to bring educational ag-related topics directly into homes using cell-phone filmed videos of farmers and ranchers telling their stories. The Virtual Farm Fair featured 10 videos that were directed toward a fourth-grade learning level, but appropriate and fun for all ages—even for parents. Many members participated in the social media campaign #stillfarming #stillranching. Others sent in videos for the "Right This Very Minute" campaign, sharing information about daily work on their farms and ranches.

County Farm Bureaus donated more than \$20,000 worth of scholarships to local students enrolling in college and generously donated \$7,000 to the Montana Food Bank Network when Hoofin' it for Hunger, a Young Farmer and Rancher race to raise money for the MFBN, was cancelled. (See YF&R News.) County Farm Bureaus continued their support of local 4-H and FFA programs by sponsoring awards and belt buckles, as well as serving at the buyers' dinners for the local market sales. At least ten county Farm

Bureaus awarded prizes for a variety of classes at their county fairs.

In addition, county Farm Bureaus stepped up with a variety of activities aimed to promote membership as well as educate others about agriculture in their areas. They helped sponsor a 4-H project parade for nursing homes, held presentations for Ag Week and Ag Safety Awareness Week, posted a video of harvest from a drone and read Accurate Ag books. Some counties handed out May Day baskets to new members during May Membership Month. Other counties have been working on local programs to connect ranchers with direct marketing materials, local processors and consumers. One county was a sponsor for an inaugural fall festival, as well as helping a community college to start a collegiate YF&R chapter.

Members stayed active with both in-person and virtual leadership opportunities like the MFBF ACE Program, participating in virtual advisory committee meetings, and virtually meeting to discuss issues and programs with state lawmakers.

"Despite all of the challenges Farm Bureau and our members faced with pandemic concerns and restrictions, it was so admirable to see all of the creativity that kept Farm Bureau members active and advocating for agriculture," said MFBF President Hans McPherson. "Instead of stepping back, our members forged ahead, which is what Farm Bureau is all about—being positive and resourceful."



A different kind of delegate session

The Montana Farm Bureau's Annual Convention, which had been slated from Nov 9 – 12 in downtown Billings, was drastically changed in 2020 with everything COVID changing plans. Instead of conducting an in-person meeting with workshops, speakers and the delegate session, where policy is discussed and voted on, the state's largest agricultural organization did a pandemic pivot and opted to hold a delegate session and its annual meeting scattered across the state. Each of the 10 districts held Zoom sessions from their local communities, channeled through the Farm Bureau State office in Bozeman where Montana Farm Bureau staff members, parliamentarians from the Montana FFA, and MFBF Vice President and session Chair Cyndi Johnson ran the meeting.

During district caucuses members voted for state officers, nominated district directors and state committee members, and reviewed the proposed



Each district held a Zoom session in their local communities that allowed them to participate in the Voting Delegates' Session.

new policy. Next, the delegate session began via Zoom where if a voting delegate felt discussion was warranted, they could walk to the computer and state their thoughts on each new policy after being recognized by the Chair. Each of the districts would then vote, with the results being tabulated online.

"Even though there have been shutdowns and business closures, farmers and ranchers have kept growing food this entire time during the pandemic," noted MFBF President Hans McPherson. "Farm Bureau needed to keep the business of their organization going, most importantly guiding policy for the upcoming year, and this was the most sensible way to do it. It worked great, even with challenges—although I know most of our folks hope we can return to our usual convention next year."

Four Farm Bureau members retired from the board in November 2020. Many thanks for their years of service to the organization. The board members were recognized in their districts during the delegate session.


(Not Pictured) District 10 Director Patti Davis retired after six years on the board and YF&R Chair Gil Gasper served five years.



(Left) Retiring board member Wes Jensen, left, receives his service plaque from the newly elected District 6 Director Don Steinbeisser, Jr.

(Top) District 4 – Women's Leadership Committee Chair Carla Lawrence, left, presented the service plaque to Sarah Boyer, wife of the late Lee Boyer, who passed earlier in 2020.

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Register today for the American Farm Bureau Convention

The American Farm Bureau Federation has opened registration for the 2021 American Farm Bureau Virtual Convention and unveiled the lineup of featured speakers including Mike Rowe, Rorke Denver and Beth Ford.

The AFB Virtual Convention will be held Jan. 10-13, 2021, and for the first time ever, registration fees are being waived to give all Farm Bureau members and anyone interested in agriculture the opportunity to experience one of agriculture's premier events from the comfort and safety of home.

"We are excited to open up the doors of this event and to bring home the high-quality content our attendees have come to expect from our events," AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. "Our featured speakers this year are no strangers to Farm Bureau. We are honored to have Mike Rowe, Rorke Denver and Beth Ford join us as we reflect on this unique year and press on, stronger together, for agriculture and our rural communities."

Best known for his hit TV series *Dirty Jobs* and most recently his



show *Returning the Favor* featuring people making a difference in their communities, Mike Rowe will join the AFB Virtual Convention as our special guest for a fireside chat in the closing general session.

Land O' Lakes President and CEO Beth Ford will join AFBF President Zippy Duvall to discuss hot topics and issues facing agriculture today.

The AFB Virtual Convention will also feature an inspirational and entertaining keynote address from Navy Seal Commander Rorke T. Denver. Commander Denver has run every phase of training for the U.S. Navy SEALs and led special-forces missions in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and other international hot spots.

This open invitation is a rare opportunity to attend the American Farm Bureau convention free of charge simply by registering. Registration will provide access to live sessions as well as special on demand programs focused on hot topics in agriculture.

Featured live events include:

- AFBF President Zippy Duvall's annual address
- Ag Innovation Challenge
- Young Farmers & Ranchers competitions
- Foundation Night In, featuring Phil Vassar and Sara Evans
- Workshop topics range from the future of the livestock industry to financial planning for disasters and from standing up for agriculture with effective advocacy to sustainability in 2021 and what it will mean for farmers and ranchers.

To register visit fb.org/events.

Recent Memorials

Montana Farm Bureau Foundation receives a number of memorial donations to recognize departed members. What an appropriate way to remember someone to whom Farm Bureau has been an important part of their lives. This charitable remembrance perpetuates their belief in the future of agriculture. Next time you ponder how to express your appreciation for a friend or acquaintance who has passed away, consider a memorial that promotes agriculture and will have a meaningful impact.

Billie Lou Arnott ...In memory of Lee Boyer

Bonnie and LaVerne Zieske and Lil Hylland ...In memory of Lee Boyer

Brian and Kary Engle ...In memory of David Gibson

Dawson-Wibaux County Farm Bureau ...In memory of Warren Nelson

Eric Engebretson ...In memory of Lee Boyer

John and Debe Youngberg ...In memory of Sarah Zimmer

Lew Zimmer ...In memory of Sie Schindler

Rhonda Hergenrider ...In memory of Lee Boyer

Roger and Kathleen Webber ...In memory of Lee Boyer

RT, Susan and Watson Snyder ...In memory of Lee Boyer

Scott and Casey Kulbeck ...In memory of Sarah Zimmer

Sky Anderson ...In memory of Sarah Zimmer

Sweet Grass County Farm Bureau ...In memory of Lee Boyer

Tom and Sherri Cunningham ...In memory of Lee Boyer



MONTANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION
Investing in the Future of Montana Agriculture

Tom and Sherri Cunningham ...In memory of Sie Schindler

For more MFB Foundation information visit <https://mfbf.org/foundation/> or contact Scott Kulbeck, 406-587-3153, scottk@mfbf.org.

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JOHN DEERE

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Farm Bureau Insurance - Members have access to competitive rates on a wide range of insurance plans through Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company. Call (307) 745-4835 or go to mwfbf.com.

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MDLIVE Discount - Talk to a doctor, anywhere, anytime, straight from your phone! Members receive access to this system for only \$50 a year or \$4.95 a month, (3 to 4 times cheaper than the same services of this type) and NO COPAY required. With MDLIVE, you can talk to a board-certified doctor 24/7 via phone or video, wherever you are. Visit mdlivebrokers.com/mfbf or call (801) 288-1400.

Ford and Lincoln Bonus Cash - Members receive Farm Bureau Bonus Cash on eligible new Ford and Lincoln vehicles! Members receive \$500 Ford Bonus Cash and \$750 Lincoln Bonus Cash off the purchase or lease of an eligible new Ford or Lincoln vehicle. Some exclusions apply. You must be an MFBF member at least 30 days prior to using the Farm Bureau Bonus Cash. Visit FordFarmBureauAdvantage.com or LincolnFarmBureauAdvantage.com or see your authorized Ford or Lincoln Dealer for qualifications and complete details.

Case IH Tractor & Equipment Savings - Farm Bureau members save \$300-\$500 per unit on select Case IH equipment. Visit your dealer and make your best deal. Then present your discount certificate to subtract another \$300 - \$500 from the bottom line. Your certificate, along with valid ID, must be presented to the Case IH dealer in advance of delivery. Print your certificate at mfbf.org/member-benefits.

Avis Car Rental - Farm Bureau members receive up to 30% off Avis base rates with Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) number A298826. Enjoy offers like dollars off, a complimentary upgrade, or a free weekend day. Visit avis.com/mtfb or call (800) 331-1212 to make a reservation.

Budget Car Rental - Members save up to 30% off Budget base rates. Plus, get other great offers like a free upgrade or a free weekend day. Visit budget.com/mtfb or call (800) 527-0700 to make a reservation. Use Budget Customer Discount (BCD) number Y775726.

Coast to Coast Vision Plan™ - Save 20% to 60% on prescription eyeglasses, including frames, lenses and specialty items. Save 10% to 30% on eye exams at participating retail locations nationwide. For the nearest participating retail location, call (800) 800-EYES. Mention you are a Montana Farm Bureau member and use group code #103.

John Deere - Farm Bureau members receive an upgraded John Deere Rewards membership (Platinum 1) - which unlocks extra discounts on equipment, parts, and merchandise. Go to JohnDeere.com/Farm-Bureau to register, and explore all that Rewards has to offer. Check out the savings on the following equipment categories: Commercial Mowing - \$200 to \$1,700 off, Residential Mowing - \$50 to \$150 off, Utility Vehicles - \$100 to \$250 off, Tractors - \$150 to \$250 off, Compact Construction - \$550 to \$1,400 off.

Farm Bureau Bank - Farm Bureau Bank offers a full line of banking services. Call (800) 492-FARM or go to farmbureaubank.com.

Reward Signs - Farm Bureau's neighborhood watch program will help protect your property by paying \$500 to \$2500 for information leading to an arrest. Request your reward sign today by calling (406) 587-3153. Certain limitations & exclusions apply.

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Montana State Fund Workers Comp - As a member and an employer in the agricultural industry, you may be eligible for a partial premium return on your Montana State Fund workers' compensation insurance plan. Call (406) 587-3153 or go to mtagrisafety.com for more information.

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Young Farmer and Rancher News

A Polaris, a virtual competition and more

Montana Farm Bureau Discussion Meet Winner Karli Johnson recently picked up her prize Ranger 570 EFI from the Gallatin Recreation Polaris dealer in Bozeman. Johnson was named winner of the Discussion Meet competition with the first round being held virtually Sunday, November 8, with the Final Four in person Thursday, November 12 at the MFBF office in Bozeman. In past years, the Discussion Meet has been held during the Montana

Farm Bureau Convention in early November, but due to the pandemic, the convention's format was cancelled/changed. The Discussion Meet, which is open to Farm Bureau members age 18-35, is meant to simulate a committee meeting with ideas discussed and solutions developed.

Farm Bureau members were unable to watch the competition in person but were able to view it via Facebook Live. Karli

Johnson, Mark Boyd, Morgan Rose and John Walker discussed trade issues and solutions during the Final Four. Not only did Johnson win the MFBF competition and the Ranger—which she plans to put

to good use on her ranch—but she has earned the opportunity to compete in the national competition during the 2021 Virtual American Farm Bureau Convention, January 10-13.

Johnson explained that having a virtual first round of the state competition allowed her to become familiar with that format. “I liked competing virtually in the first round. I’m looking forward to being able to participate that way. I feel like everyone is a little more comfortable and polite from the beginning, which allows for a better discussion.”

She added that having a virtual Discussion Meet in 2021 works in her favor, as a rancher and mother of a young boy, along with being 7 months pregnant. “Virtually was the only way I could have participated this year nationally. I look forward to being able to discuss these important issues on a national scale. The conversations are always interesting.”

The Collegiate Farm Bureau competition also took place November 11 at the state office in Bozeman. The state Farm Bureau winner was Andee Baker, a student from Montana State University. She will compete during the American Farm Bureau FUSION Conference scheduled for March 2021 in Portland, OR. Although because of the pandemic, plans for the competition and conference are still very tentative.

“The Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee wants to thank Montana Polaris dealers for their generous donation of a Ranger for the sixth year in a row,” noted YF&R Committee Chair J.M. Peck. “It means a lot to us that they are so supportive of helping young people in agriculture.”

Thanks to these participating Polaris dealers for supporting our Young Farmers and Ranchers: Gallatin Recreation, Bozeman; Helena Cycle, Helena; Yellowstone Polaris, Billings; Beaverhead Motors, Dillon; Riverside Marine & Cycle, Miles City; Montana Power Products, Ronan; Jesco Marine, Kalispell; Redline Sports, Inc, Butte; Lewistown Honda & Polaris, Lewistown; and Hi-line Polaris, Havre; Sports City Cyclery, Great Falls and Kurt's Polaris, Missoula. Be sure to stop by their dealerships to say thank you for supporting the Montana Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers, and check out their inventory.



MFBF Discussion Meet Winner Karli Johnson with son, Brooks, putting the Polaris to use on their ranch in Choteau.

Montana Food Bank Network Donations

Thank you to the following County Farm Bureaus and businesses for donating to the Montana Food Bank Network as part of the Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee effort to end hunger in Montana.

Counties

Northwest
Big Horn
Richland
Yellowstone
Fergus
Carbon/Stillwater
Sweet Grass

Judith Basin
Meagher
Southwest
Lewis & Clark

Businesses

Matt Korell, MWFBMIC Insurance Agent
Equine Align

A special thanks to the many individuals who donated, as well.



Young Farmers and Ranchers donate \$7000 to the Montana Food Bank Network

When the Montana Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee started the Hoofin' it for Hunger Race in 2011 to help end hunger in Montana, there were no thoughts of a worldwide pandemic that would exacerbate the situation and see more demand than ever for assistance from food banks. 2020 marked the 11th year the group has presented a check to the Montana Food Bank Network, although usually the donation has been from proceeds raised during the Hoofin' it for Hunger race held every October at the Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Station in Miles City. In 2020, even though the Hoofin' it for Hunger Race was cancelled, the YF&R Committee still managed to donate \$7,000 to the Montana Food Bank Network.

"Due to concerns about the pandemic, our committee made the tough decision to cancel the race this year. However, our entire committee felt strongly about continuing our efforts to help Montana Food Bank Network, so instead we solicited donations," said YF&R Chair J.M. Peck.

Several county Farm Bureaus donated generously and some sponsors and individuals continued their support. In a year where more people than ever have been experiencing hunger and the demands on food banks are elevated, it was especially critical to keep money coming to the MFBN which serves as a distribution center for food banks and food pantries statewide. MFBN is Montana's only statewide food bank. They work with the national hunger-fighting organization, Feeding America, and have developed several programs specifically to address the unique challenges of accessing food in Montana.



YF&R Chair J.M. Peck with MFBF President Hans McPherson, show the check donation to the Montana Food Bank Network in November. The amount increased by \$1000 in December due to additional donations.

"The Montana Food Bank Network is grateful for the support and partnership with the Montana Farm Bureau Federation and the Young Farmers and Ranchers over the last 11 years," said MFBN's Chief Development Officer Bill Mathews. "The Hoofin' it for Hunger event has created awareness for hunger relief throughout our state and has raised over \$63,000 including this year's donation. That amount has provided more than 189,000 meals to those in need. A big statewide thank you to the Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee and Montana Farm Bureau from the Montana Food Bank Network."

The YF&R Committee hopes the race will resume in 2021 and they will be able to continue to donate to such a worthy cause.

If you have not renewed your MFBF membership, this is the last issue of the Spokesman you will receive. Renew today at mfbf.org.

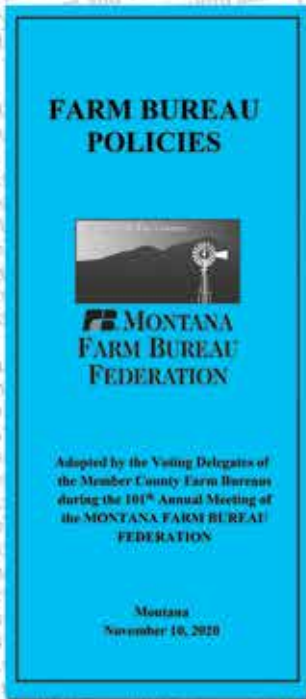
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MFBF Policy Book Online!



To read up on all the latest Montana Farm Bureau policies, go to www.mfbf.org/policy-advocacy and look for the Policy Book button. You may also call the state office at 406-587-3153 to request a copy of the 2021 Policy Book.

Officers elected during MFBF hybrid delegate session

The Montana Farm Bureau elected officers during its hybrid in-person/virtual voting delegate session November 10.

Hans McPherson, a diversified farmer from Stevensville, was re-elected as president of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation with **Cyndi Johnson**, a Conrad small grains farmer, re-elected as vice president.

Newly elected to the board were: **Casey Mott**, District 4, a cattle rancher from Custer; **Don Steinbeisser, Jr.**, District 6, a diversified farmer from Sidney and **Jim Willis**, District 10, a cattle producer from Wilsall.

Re-elected to the board were **Rhonda Boyd**, District 2, a cattle rancher from Alder and **Ed Bandel**, District 8, a wheat farmer from Flowerree.

Carla Lawrence from Boyd was re-elected as the organization's Women's Leadership Committee Chair and **JM Peck** from Melrose was elected as Young Farmer and Rancher Committee Chair.

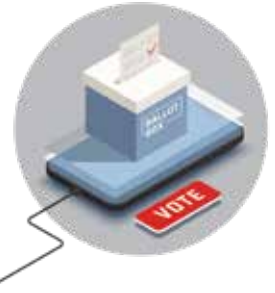
Following are the district chairs for the Women's Leadership Committee and the Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee:

District Women's Leadership Committee:

- District 1:** Beth Blevins - Ronan / Lorena Erickson - Corvallis
- District 3:** Mary Hill - Raynesford / Debbie Bricker - Moore
- District 5:** Lillian Ostendorf - Powderville / Cathy McDowell - Powderville
- District 7:** Joy DePuydt - Saco / Julie Reddig - Frazer
- District 9:** Bonnie Jones - East Helena / Pam Converse - Conrad

District Young Farmer/Rancher Committee:

- District 1:** Jo-Hanna Lien - Ronan / Neela Andres - Missoula
- District 2:** (Vacant Seat) Michael Walsh - Twin Bridges
- District 3:** Vic Lewis - Ryegate / Kevin Arntzen - Hilger
- District 5:** John Olson - Broadus / Fiona Mott - Miles City
- District 7:** Gwynn Simeniuk - Opheim / John Walker - Nashua
- District 9:** Rocky Forseth - Helena / Klayton Lohr - Devon
- District 10:** (Vacant Seat) Kat Taylor - Bozeman



Applause for Mountain West Farm Bureau

2020 has not been an easy year, but Farm Bureau is needed even more in the tough times than in the good times. Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company's (MWFBMIC) work is essential and provides a great deal of security to Farm Bureau members during these trying times. Montana Farm Bureau is thankful for the time and talents of all the Mountain West Farm Bureau staff that is spent on bringing new members into our organization and serving our current members.

Each year, Montana agents who are at the top of membership recruitment are presented with cash awards by Montana Farm Bureau. These awards are presented for overall membership recruitment and for voting member recruitment. Here are the top membership recruiters for 2020. The top overall recruitment winners were **Tom Schulke**, **Will Johnson**, **DeeAnn Cranmore**, **C.J. Mayer** and **Shawn Friedeman**. Top voting member recruitment awards go to **Julie Bramlet**, **Rod McClure**, **Trevor Motichka**, **Jared Vielleux**, **Brett Keaster** and **Deeann Cranmore**.

MFBF's staff extends a heart-felt thank you and Happy New Year to all of the employees at Mountain West Farm Bureau MIC and their families.

Time for the 2021 Legislative Session

The 2021 Legislative session is upon us. Projected for a start date of January 4, 2021, the newly elected legislators of the Montana Legislature will begin their work to create good policy for all Montanans. This year looks different, just like everything else we have been through. At the time of writing this, there is not a concrete decision as to how work will get done. Will it all be virtual? All in-person at the Capitol? Maybe a mix of the two? While leadership is working on ensuring an opportunity for participation from all legislators and the public, they are also balancing how to keep all parties safe and at a low risk for the Coronavirus.

Your MFBF lobbyists are paying close attention to the discussions happening and preparing to lobby for this session, regardless of how the session may play out.

All voting members and Century Club members receive updates on MFBF legislative efforts throughout the session. The Legislative Highlights newsletter is published five times during the session, while the Legislative E-source, is distributed weekly. Urge your agricultural friends and neighbors to join MFBF and receive these important communications and plan to stay involved to hear how Farm Bureau is representing you, and how you can help.

This year MFBF has two staff lobbyists: Nicole Rolf, director of national affairs and Rachel Cone, director of state affairs. Learn more about them below, and always feel free to reach out to them on policy issues.



Nicole Rolf
Email: nicoler@mfbf.org
Phone: (Office) 406.232.1559
(Cell) 406.951.2429

Nicole Rolf serves as the national affairs director and eastern Montana regional manager for the Montana Farm Bureau Federation. In that capacity, her duties include correspondence and communications with Montana's Congressional Delegation and regulatory agencies on many agricultural topics ranging from taxation to regulatory reform and immigration to farm policy. Additionally, she works with the Montana Legislature, serving as one of MFBF's lobbyists in Helena, focusing on bills related to public lands, wildlife, property rights, taxation, animal care, and more. She has the privilege of working directly with MFBF's farmer and rancher members in eastern Montana, helping them achieve their organizational goals and programs of work, developing new leaders and facilitating communication between local county Farm Bureaus and the state organization.

Nicole grew up on her family's ranch east of Miles City, Mont., where she developed a passion for agriculture at a young age. She graduated from Montana State University in 2007 with a degree in agriculture business and second major in economics. She and her husband, Ryan, reside on his family's ranch east of Miles City, where they raise cattle, hay as well as their son and daughter.



Rachel Cone
Email: rachelc@mfbf.org
Phone: (Office) 406.587.3153
(Cell) 970.646.8001

Rachel Cone is the director of state affairs for the Montana Farm Bureau Federation. She serves as the staff lead for three commodity advisory committees including the Water Committee, Livestock Committee and Resource Management, Environment and Technology Committee. Rachel helps to coordinate the MFBF PAC to help advocate for pro-agriculture leaders in Helena. During the legislative session, Rachel will lobby on behalf of Montana Farm Bureau members in Helena and share the voice of farmers and ranchers.

Rachel is a graduate of Colorado State University where she earned degrees in agricultural business and equine science. She has been a part of the Farm Bureau family since college and interned with the Colorado Farm Bureau. Following college and working in ag policy in Washington, D.C., she joined the MFBF team to advocate on behalf of agriculture.

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Food Bullying: How to Avoid Buying B.S. — By Michele Payn

REVIEW BY REBECCA COLNAR

Agricultural advocate Michele Payn has written a book that's not afraid to tackle a hard issue: is your way of eating wrong? She uses science and her lifetime on a farm to help consumers make common-sense decisions on what to eat based in their own preferences—not what the food bullies tell them.

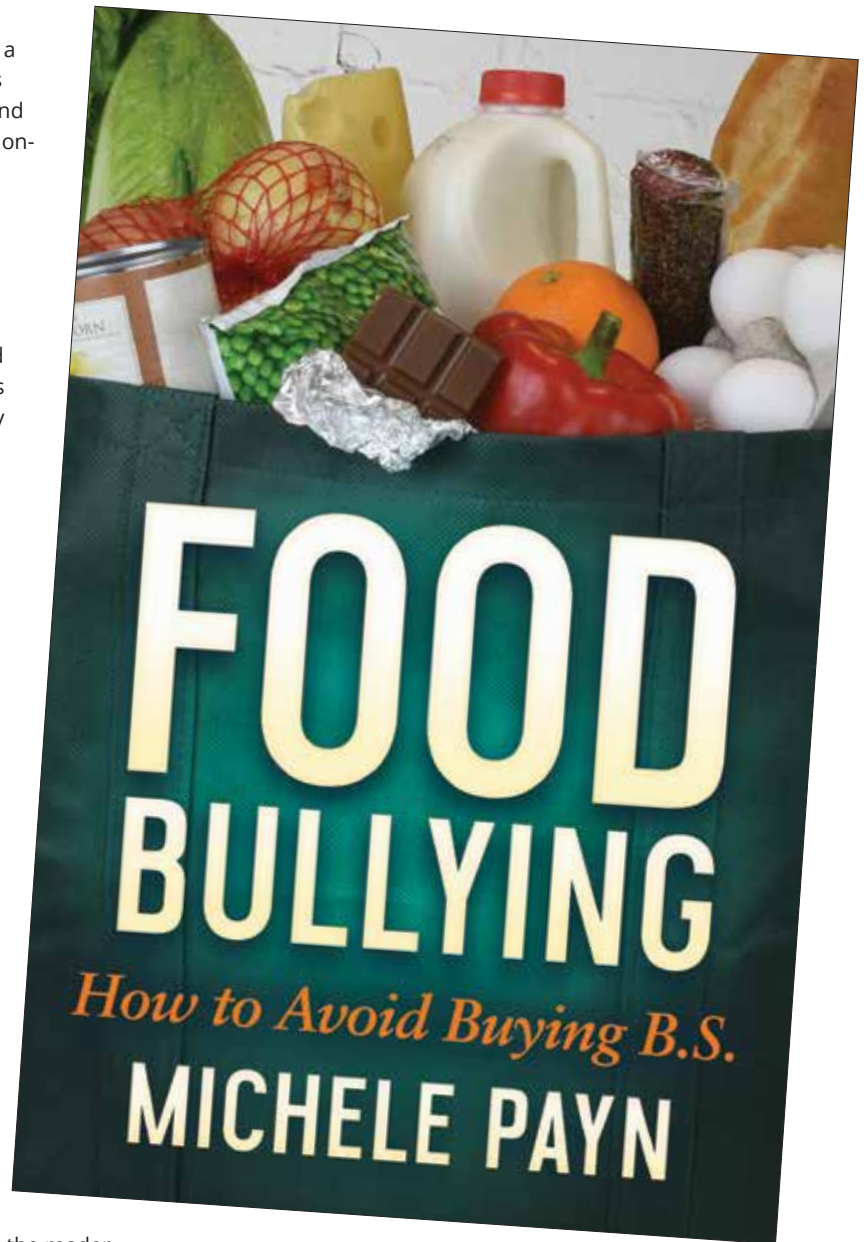
She dedicates her book to: "Every person who has been shamed about your food or farming choices; may this book give you the courage to stand up to the bullies." In her introduction, "Are you buying B.S. (Bull Speak)?" Payn notes that people feel judged and bullied around food and goes on to provide five ways to avoid B.S. with food. Those include ignoring empty food claims, understanding the journey, standing up to bullies, getting to know people and making our own decisions.

Payn explains, "The book is arranged to first frame food bullying, including an examination of different levels of bullying and offering familiar examples of bully figures in food fairy tales and folklore. The third section outlines the who, what, where, when and how in understanding food bullying, including what it's doing to our brains. The fourth section includes food label descriptions and how you should manage and evaluate them to avoid information overload. The book's final chapter offers specific tools to help you find your own solutions, including your personalized action plans to help you create a better food story."

“ Food Bullying is carefully researched which is evident with its 10-page bibliography. ”

She tackles those difficult but oh-so-prevalent subjects like GMOs, hormones in meat, sustainability and, yes, cow farts, then goes on to help the reader understand how the hype about those common subjects is food bullying. She explains how and why animal agriculture is not ruining the planet and talks about why animal agriculture actually decreases the carbon footprint.

What Payn advises is visiting with registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) who spend years in school learning about the science of nutrition and are expected to make science-based recommendations. (However, there is some question as to what research dietetic and health college students are being taught today.) She strongly advocates getting advice from people who are actively involved in food production as well as reviewing the



Nutrition Facts Label—the most functional food label to avoid B.S.

Food Bullying is carefully researched which is evident with its 10-page bibliography.

Kudos to Payn for standing up to the food bullies, critiquing the obsession over food choice and writing this important book. Buy it for your friends, neighbors (especially ones who might be food bullies themselves) and the local library. Payn ends the book, "Thank you for helping clean up the chaos and keep bullies off the food playground."



The book is available for \$17.95 from your local bookstore or through Amazon.



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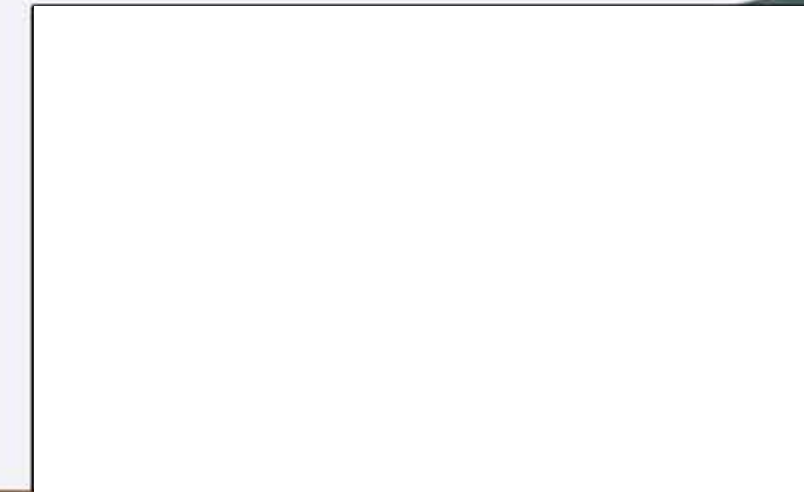
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Congratulations to KARLI JOHNSON of Choteau for earning top honors in the 2020 MFBF YF&R Discussion Meet. Karli is a proud owner of a new Polaris Ranger 570!

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