

Spring 2023

 MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION



Spokesman

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ON THE COVER:
 Farmers adapt to new advanced technologies.

PHOTO BY ADDISON MAGILL





CYNDI JOHNSON
President, MFBF

More Government is not a solution to the “Right to Repair” issue

As a consumer of farm equipment technology, I am thrilled by the recent Memorandum of Understanding between the John Deere and Case/New Holland original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and the American Farm Bureau Federation, the largest agriculture advocacy organization in the country. Farming in the heart of the Golden Triangle of Montana and serving as the president of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation, I enjoy the benefits on both sides of this equation. The American Farm Bureau Federation has embarked on the beginning of a great relationship with John Deere that allows my family and me access to the information, software, and tools we need in a time frame we can rely on at a price we can live with, to repair our own equipment. This also gives us the option to hire an independent repair service with the same access to help us fix our own equipment on our own farm or at a location of our choice. Farm Bureau will continue to be in frequent consultation with John Deere about what’s working and what isn’t with these new Memorandums of Understanding.

Actively involved in our family’s farm as a combine driver and sprayer operator, I’ve heard plenty of horror stories about planting and harvesting “downtime” that costs everyone money and sometimes long-standing relationships with equipment dealerships. About ten years ago, after my husband replaced the parts that needed replacing in our combine turbo actuator (which controls the engine turbocharger), we had to wait for the “tech guy” to come with his computer and sit in the cab of the combine and “reboot” all of the computer systems of the combine. We lost over six hours of prime harvest time and money we didn’t have, but at the time, we had no choice. We weren’t alone in our frustration – the dealership’s hands were tied. Since then, John Deere has made great strides in providing information, access

to diagnostic steps, and troubleshooting guidance through their Service Advisor. Other equipment companies have similar programs.

Every farmer’s needs are different, but these collaborative efforts made by these agriculturally focused organizations, John Deere and the American Farm Bureau Federation, proves they are dedicated to solving a genuine problem – the equipment owner’s need to repair their modern equipment either on the farm or with an independent qualified repair facility of that owner’s choosing. The fact that Case/New Holland followed with their own agreement with Farm Bureau demonstrates that the agricultural equipment builders recognize the value of a better relationship with their customers.

Legislation introduced to our legislators in Helena proposed to force all equipment companies to provide these same services agreed upon in this MOU between Farm Bureau and John Deere at a cost that’s “reasonable” with no definition of reasonable, no sideboards as to what can be repaired or replaced without jeopardizing the equipment companies’ liability protection, and no limits about what folks could do to their own equipment that could potentially harm themselves, their employees or even their customers. That sounds like a colossal problem to me. I would be horrified if someone were requesting a law to be passed in Montana that required me to honor a request for access to my personal business information to make it easier for my customers to take advantage of me. No business could agree to that arrangement. I need my equipment dealerships to remain viable components of my agricultural community. Those equipment companies must protect their intellectual assets (information) like any other business, including our farms and ranches.

A government solution is not necessary, and both the House and Senate bills that proposed a government solution to the right-to-repair issue were bad ideas. Both versions of the bill have been tabled by their respective committee in the state legislature. Thanks are extended to everyone who testified in opposition to these bills, especially our ever-vigilant legislative team. A private, free-market-based solution, such as the Farm Bureau/Case/New Holland and John Deere agreements, is the proper way to solve the problems of past barriers to our farmers’ and ranchers’ ability to repair our equipment. ■

“Equipment companies must protect their intellectual assets (information) like any other business, including our farms and ranches.”

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Leadership, Inc.

Providing leadership opportunities and training is at the core of what we do. Our role in leadership development is so important that one could say it is encoded in Farm Bureau's DNA. In fact, our organizational vision is "Leading Montana agriculture towards a future with a prosperous ag economy and thriving rural communities." Essentially, Montana Farm Bureau is in the leadership development business—and business is good.

According to a publication prepared for Montana by rural sociologist Benjamin Winchester, titled "Montana's Leadership Demand," one in every 13 adults must hold a leadership position to keep the state's existing government and nonprofit organizations running. This puts Montana second highest of any state in demand for leaders per capita. In this environment, an organization has to be very deliberate in its approach to attracting potential leaders. Once we gain a leader for our organization, we must provide the resources necessary to keep them invested. Following are three months of activity that demonstrate our success in this arena.

In January, 45 Montana Farm Bureau members traveled to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Convention. They attended leadership development and informative workshops that provided the skills and knowledge necessary to advocate for agriculture. MFBF president Cyndi Johnson and Vice President Gary Heibertshausen promoted MFBF policy on the AFBF delegate floor and were successful on every count. Mark Boyd, along with Ben and Karli Johnson, competed gallantly in the Young Farmer & Rancher Discussion Meet and Achievement Award contests designed to attract and recognize young agricultural leaders.

Shortly after the AFBF Convention concluded, our YF&R Committee hosted its annual Young Farmer and Rancher Leadership Conference. While a winter storm kept many of those registered from traveling to the conference, more than 60 farmers and ranchers ages 18-35 braved snowy roads and sub-zero temperatures to attend the leadership development-focused conference. Advocacy topped the list of topics with workshops such as a community coalition panel, taxes, economic impact forecasts, and value-added agriculture.

Next was our Calling on the Capitol event in Helena in early February. This conference gave MFBF members a chance to learn about the political process in the state's capital. The event included legislative updates and training followed by a reception in the Capitol Rotunda where legislators could learn about Farm Bureau and visit with their constituents. The following day featured visits with Attorney General Austin Knudsen, Director of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Hank Worsch, Director of the Department of Agriculture Christy Clark, and Department of Livestock Executive Officer Mike Honeycutt. The group also met with Lt. Gov. Kristen Juras, thanked her for her work on the Red Tape Initiative to streamline government regulations, discussed water bills, the progress on de-listing grizzly bears, and other rural issues.

Later in February, MFBF leaders serving on the AFBF Issues Advisory Committees traveled to Washington, D.C. MFBF Senior Director of Governmental Affairs, Nicole Rolf, joined Tom DePuydt, Federal Lands Committee; Jillien Streit, Farm Policy and Wes Jensen, Market Structures. Jensen shared MFBF's priorities for the Farm Bill and concerns about the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). DePuydt chaired the Federal Land Committee and used his position to lead discussions with House and Senate Ag and Natural Resource Committees members regarding concerns about losing private property to acquisitions by the federal government and lack of funding for grazing lands restoration. The group visited Capitol Hill, where they met with Senator Jon Tester, Senator Steve Daines, and the staff of Congressmen Matt Rosendale and Ryan Zinke.

In early March, 36 Young Farmers & Ranchers, Women's Leadership Committee, and Promotion & Education Committee members traveled to the AFBF FUSION Conference in Florida. They joined 1,000 volunteer leaders from across the nation to learn, share and grow together to build a stronger Farm Bureau.

Our quarterly Board of Directors meeting was held in mid-March in Helena. Our officers and board members spent an evening with several of Montana's legislators to discuss priorities for the 68th Montana Legislative Session. Governor Greg Gianforte sat down with our Board of Directors to discuss issues important to Farm Bureau. They thanked the Governor for his open-door policy, for supporting Montana agriculture, and for creating a culture of accountability and service to Montanans within the state agencies he directs.

Our Senior Director of Organization, Sue Ann Streufert, and our Director of Membership and Leadership Development, Liv Holt, have been leading efforts in our elite leadership training program, ACE, which stands for Advocate, Communicate and Educate. They are guiding 10 Farm Bureau volunteers through a year-long program designed to empower members to become confident and effective leaders for Montana agriculture.

I have never been more proud of our volunteer leaders and staff members who dedicate their lives and careers to lead Montana Farm Bureau. These are women and men of action who further our cause from the grassroots to the halls of Congress. These people are making our vision a reality and leading Montana agriculture toward a future with a prosperous ag economy and thriving rural communities. ■



SCOTT KULBECK
Executive Vice President,
MFBF

"I have never been more proud of our volunteer leaders and staff members who dedicate their lives and careers to lead Montana Farm Bureau."



MARIAH SHAMMEL
Contributing Editor

The (Lost) Art of Civility

Remember when political bumper stickers read “I am a Republican” or “I voted for Clinton?” I miss those days. Thanks to the paraphernalia of today, which generally include the f-word, derogatory terms and graphic pictures of what the driver would like to do to those who don't agree with them, there is absolutely no question as to a what a person might think.

Lord knows I've been known to let some cuss words fly but I don't think my friends and neighbors need to see them written across the expanse of my Suburban's back window, and I definitely don't need window clings to advertise my perception of certain groups of people. Judging by the vehicles in line to pick kids up at our schools, however, it's obvious that some people do. As a result of said visuals, I have found myself in various discussions with my kids aged 11, 9, 6 and 4, regarding subjects I hadn't planned on bringing up anytime soon, and awkwardly praising my youngest for being able to sound out the four-letter words plastered on the pickup in front of us.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for free speech and standing up for what you believe in—as long as it's done with respect, appreciation and civility. After all, our kids, and everyone else's, are watching and learning from us every step of the way. My parents encouraged my two siblings and me to show up for the issues we were passionate about but above all, we needed to take our stance with kindness. We didn't know anyone else's stories or what had led them to their belief, and it wasn't our place to decide whether it was right or wrong.

My dad was raised alongside three siblings by a widowed mother in the 1950s. He has dedicated his entire life to teaching under-privileged students. My mom grew up with a father who fought in World War II and a mother who served as legal secretary for the Nuremberg Trials. She taught elementary students until she retired and now teaches parenting classes to inmates at the Montana Women's Prison. My brother went to an Ivy League school on the East Coast and worked on environmental issues for most of his professional life. Now he works as the Chief of Staff to the Undersecretary of Infrastructure in the Department of Energy and travels back and forth between D.C. and New York, where his partner lives. My sister went to a private college in the Mid-West, then got her master's degree in social work. She and her husband are raising

their three kids in Bozeman while she works for a nonprofit as a parent liaison with the Bozeman schools. I went to Montana State University, obtained my animal science degree, and advocated agricultural issues with the Montana Farm Bureau until I married Favorite Farmer. Now we ranch with our four kids, and I run a beef business with my fellow ranchERS.

One family, one dinner table shared (almost) every evening, but five very different walks of life.

I can't tell you how it feels to lose a father at four years old, but my dad knows. I have no idea what it's

like to grow up with parents reeling with PTSD from the war, but my mom does. I'm not sure how it feels to be a gay man in America, working for the betterment of our country, while every aspect of both my professional and personal

life is scrutinized by the public, but my brother could tell you. I don't know what it's like to live in a town surrounded by incredible wealth yet spend every waking moment advocating for families who are invisible to those around them and can't afford to put food on their table, but my sister can.

None of them know what it's like to be up all night keeping newborn calves alive in minus 40-degree weather, only to walk inside and see newspaper articles about how ag producers don't care for their animals. Or the anxiety you feel from not getting rain for months on end, wondering how you're going to navigate through yet another livelihood-ending disaster. But I do.

Until we've walked in each other's shoes, we can't judge. They've made their journey, just as we've made ours and our kids are making theirs. It's okay to stand up for the things we believe in, but we need to be aware of the responsibility that comes with it. What we do, say, and stick to our bumpers affects people, from the four-year-old who's just starting to read to the woman who's been forced to make some tough decisions during her own personal road trip. We might not have all chosen the same options on our ballots last November, but like it or not, we've chosen to live amongst each other, working and raising our kids in the same communities. The least we can do is try to get along.

How our kids treat other people both now and as they grow up is a direct reflection of what they see and hear from those around them. In other words, it all starts with us. If we don't show everyone the respect, dignity and grace we all deserve, then why would we expect our kids to? Why would we expect anyone else to have the same decency toward our kids? Civility isn't lost; it's just been temporarily covered up by a few misplaced bumper stickers. Lucky for us, it's car wash season and it has never come at a better time. ■

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

Be kind.

“Bumper sticker or not, a little civility can go a long way and it all starts with us.”



I don't want to leave
my family to cover:

- Mortgage debt
- Monthly expenses
- Funeral costs
- Kids' college tuition

I know you say I need **life insurance**, but **do I really?**

Yes! While the reasons for having life insurance vary from person to person, coverage is a smart move no matter what stage of life you're in. **Talk to your agent about the many ways life insurance can help protect you and your loved ones.**



2023 Annual Agents' Meeting

Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company recently held its Annual Agents' Meeting in Sheridan, Wyoming. The annual conference includes recognition of those agents who achieved superior production and overall service during 2022.

Sean Cirullo of Helena, MT, was honored as Mountain West's "Top Montana Agent" for his outstanding sales production.

An elite group of agents qualified for Mountain West's President's Club. This award is presented to those agents who attain 100% of the annual goal for Life and P&C insurance. The Montana agents who earned this prestigious award were:

- Julie Bramlet of Dillon, MT
- Sean Cirullo of Helena, MT
- Dustin Gillaspie of Townsend, MT
- Randy Moore of Big Timber, MT
- Jeanine Pendergrass of Lewistown, MT

Mountain West Farm Bureau agents have been serving customers across Montana and Wyoming for over 75 years and specialize in building personal relationships within their

communities. The local, face-to-face communication and dedication to quality service are what set Mountain West agents apart from the rest. ■



Montana Agent Of The Year: Sean Cirullo

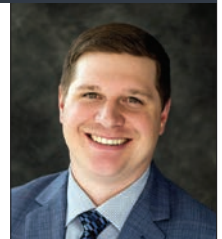
Mountain West's President's Club



JULIE BRAMLET



SEAN CIRULLO



DUSTIN GILLASPIE



RANDY MOORE



JEANINE PENDERGRASS



Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company

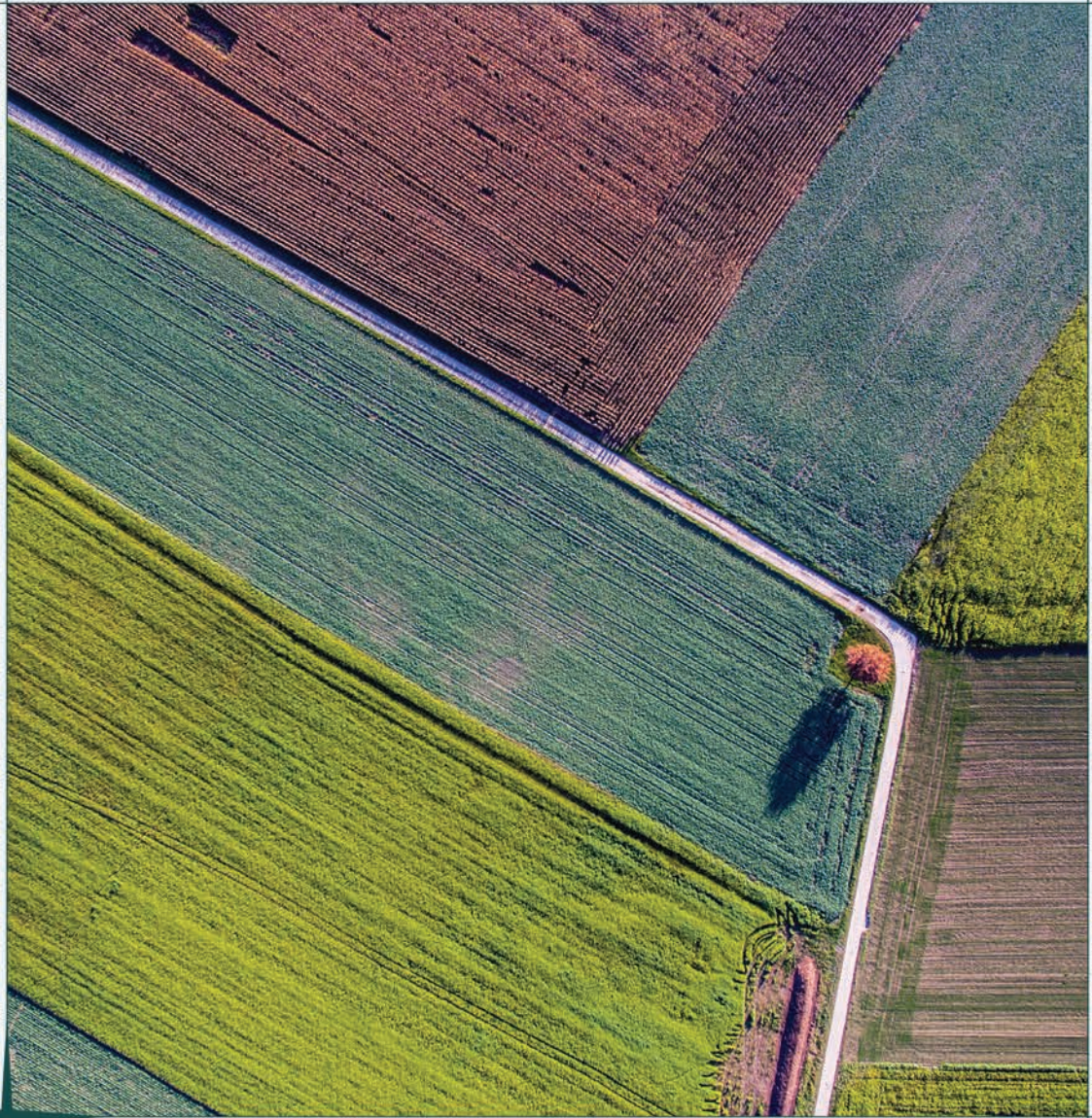
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Control pests and handle chemicals safely



Spring has sprung and unfortunately, so have the pests. Pests come in a wide variety on farms and ranches – weeds, insects, vermin, fungi, your neighbor’s fence-jumping/cattle-guard walking cows, and the list goes on. I’m mostly kidding about the last one, but, truthfully, they are probably the hardest to manage. In order to maintain yields, a safer work environment (depending on the pest) and, ultimately, economic viability, pests must be controlled. Easier said than done in some cases. Thankfully, agricultural producers today have as many options for pest control as there are pest that need controlling. Pesticides are one of those options.

Pesticides are any substance (or combination of substances) – organic or inorganic – that can be used to prevent, destroy, repel, or mitigate unwanted living organisms from doing damage to crops, animals, or humans. Proper selection and judicious use of pesticides is crucial to avoiding further problems. Some products are considered “Restricted Use” pesticides, typically due to their elevated risk of environmental hazard and high toxicity and can only be purchased and applied by (or under the direct supervision of) licensed commercial and private pesticide applicators.

While we typically think of these restricted use products as being the ones that are dangerous to use, it is important to

remember that all pesticides have special considerations for their safe application. Signal words on the label indicate the presence of a hazard. DANGER-POISON or a Skull and Crossbones signifies a product has a high relative acute toxicity and is potentially lethal at relatively low exposures. While extreme caution should be used with products labeled DANGER-POISON, no less attention to proper handling should be given to those products labeled with only CAUTION. Always read the label thoroughly and keep it in an accessible location so that it can be referred to easily. Remember, the label is the law.

Because chemicals enter the body through many ways including through the mouth, skin, eyes, and lungs, wearing proper personal protection equipment is imperative for managing the hazard of pesticide application.

Applicators should wear:

1. Long pants and long-sleeved shirt
2. Chemical resistant gloves
3. Chemical resistant footwear and socks

Leather is not chemically resistant, even for dry formulations and should be avoided. Be sure to wash your hands, face, and any exposed skin before eating, drinking, or using the restroom. If accidental exposure occurs, consult the label, Material Safety Data Sheet, or Poison Control Center to take appropriate

Read the entire label before using this product.
Use only according to label instructions.
Read the "LIMIT OF WARRANTY AND LIABILITY" statement at the end of the label before buying or using. If terms are not acceptable, return at once unopened.

THIS IS AN END-USE PRODUCT. MONSANTO DOES NOT INTEND AND HAS NOT REGISTERED IT FOR REFORMULATION. SEE INDIVIDUAL CONTAINER LABEL FOR REPACKAGING LIMITATIONS.

1.0 INGREDIENTS

ACTIVE INGREDIENT	
*Glyphosate, N-(phosphonomethyl)glycine, in the form of its potassium salt	48.8%
OTHER INGREDIENTS	51.2%
	100.0%

*Contains 660 grams per liter or 5.5 pounds per U.S. gallon of the active ingredient glyphosate, in the form of its potassium salt. Equivalent to 540 grams per liter or 4.5 pounds per U.S. gallon of the acid, glyphosate.

This product is protected by U.S. Patent No.'s 5,668,085 and 6,365,551. Other Patents Pending. No license granted under any non-U.S. patent(s).

2.0 IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

1. FOR PRODUCT INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE IN USING THIS PRODUCT, CALL TOLL-FREE, 1-800-332-3111
2. IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY INVOLVING THIS HERBICIDE PRODUCT, OR FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE, CALL COLLECT, DAY OR NIGHT, (314)-694-4000

3.0 PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENTS

3.1 Hazards to Humans and Domestic Animals

Keep out of reach of children
CAUTION!
CAUSES MODERATE EYE IRRITATION
H302+332 (P273)

Avoid contact with eyes, skin, or clothing.
Avoid breathing vapor or spray mist.

corrective action.

Once a pest has been identified and an appropriate product has been selected, proper application is critical. Carefully calculate the amount of product that will be needed and take time to calibrate equipment. Not only does this help avoid costly over/under application, it also reduces the amount of product that will need to be stored or disposed of after application. Make sure to have a spill kit handy and spray only when weather conditions are favorable and avoid times of high wind and low humidity. Observe all re-entry restrictions and do not allow others to enter areas that have been sprayed before the re-entry interval has elapsed.

Proper cleanup, disposal and storage of pesticide is as important as proper and safe application. After application, all equipment should be cleaned thoroughly. Pesticides should be stored only in the original container. If storage in a different container is necessary, select an appropriate container and label immediately. Attach the manufacturer's label to the new container, if possible. Store all chemicals in a location out of reach of children and pets – ideally, a locked storage room. All storage areas should have adequate ventilation and be organized in a way that products are stored up off the floor and out of direct sunlight.

Montana Ag Safety Program



Cultivating a Culture of Safety



DANA JANSEN
Director, Montana
Agricultural Safety
Program

Producers are encouraged to take advantage of the Montana Department of Agriculture's Pesticide Waste Disposal Program. For more information on 2023 dates and locations for waste collection or to register for an event visit <https://agr.mt.gov/Pesticide-Waste-Disposal-Program>.

Pesticides are an important management tool on most farms and ranches, but improper use could be disastrous. Take time to read the product label, follow all label recommendations and handle, apply and store appropriately not only for the greatest effect, but for the safety of you, your family, your employees and your livelihood.

For more information regarding the Montana Ag Safety Program or task-specific safety, including a printable chemical safety work plan, visit www.mtagrisafety.com or contact Dana Jansen at danaj@mtagrisafety.com or (406) 850-9978. ■



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MEET THE AGENT

Jay Cochran at the American Royal in 1998 riding the 1996 AQHA Steer Wrestling Horse of the year, Super San Wood.



JAY COCHRAN
Agent, Mountain West
Farm Bureau

From Rodeo to Farm Bureau

Who knew that dreaming of a career in rodeo as a teenager would turn into a successful career as an insurance advisor.

Jay Cochran has been involved in agriculture since his grandfather had him horseback when Jay was in diaper. He was in the same FFA chapter as his dad and uncles, and both sides of his family raised livestock. Jay loved FFA and had a great relationship with his high school ag instructor, Jim Gilreath. "Jim is an incredible man who was instrumental in my life in many ways," said Jay.

Besides FFA, Jay also competed in athletics including High School Rodeo. When Jay received a college rodeo scholarship, Ag Education became his obvious choice as a major. Jay assumed that teaching would be his fall-back career after he was done rodeoing. As an 18-year-old dreaming of the bright lights at the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, Jay also received a different kind of education. He was getting to practice

regularly with current and future World Champion steer wrestlers which fueled his desire to obtain his PRCA card.

On a long road trip back from South Dakota, 2004 World Champion Frank Thompson gave Jay an education on the economics of rodeo. "Frank gave me a lot to think about when it came to the personal and financial sacrifices of going down the road," said Jay. "At that point in my mind, becoming an ag teacher became my primary objective and rodeo would be a secondary hobby."

While pursuing his undergraduate degree, Jay went on to qualify multiple times for the College National Finals Rodeo and reached his goal of obtaining his PRCA membership card. "One of the highlights of my student teaching experience was getting to bulldog a steer at the American Royal in Kansas City during the National FFA Convention.

"All of my students got to watch me throw a steer off Todd and Randy Suhn's AQHA Steer Wrestling Horse of the Year. I still have that picture," Jay said proudly.

After graduation, Jay did an apprenticeship shoeing horses at Cornell University in their veterinary hospital.

"I figured I would teach school, shoe a few horses, maybe put up a little hay and enter a few rodeos for fun instead of income," the energetic agent said.

 **Mountain West Farm Bureau
Mutual Insurance Company**

This is when life started to come full circle for Jay. Previously, while at the College National Finals Rodeo in Bozeman, Jay had some positive interactions with the Montana State University ag faculty. The head of the Ag Education program advised Jay to apply for an opening. Jay interviewed for it and was offered the position. Jay became an ag teacher and enrolled in a few graduate courses during the summer. At that time, he wanted to pursue a Master's degree in Ag Education. Unfortunately, the pay increase wouldn't offset the tuition.

About this time, five years into teaching, Jay met Tom Cunningham. Jay was familiar with Tom as he had his oldest son as a student. At that time, Jay held his personal insurance through Farm Bureau with Agent Greg Piper.

"I was familiar with Farm Bureau as a client but also from being involved with agriculture," said Jay. "Tom convinced me that Mountain West Farm Bureau would allow me opportunities that aligned with my interests."

Jay agreed and signed on as an independent contractor. Now, as Jay looks back on his career almost 20 years later, he is glad he made the switch. However, his passion for education never left. He researched the country's top MBA programs. He decided on The University of Florida. He graduated with an MBA but was still left with a hunger for knowledge. At this point he applied to Columbia University's Master's in Insurance Management program. Jay loved his experience at Columbia University. He graduated with a 4.1 GPA and has been asked to record lectures and currently serves as a guest lecturer. Jay credits much of his success in the insurance world to his education and his experiences as a teacher.

"There are a lot of teachers who transition and make successful careers in many industries. Successful teachers have a skill

set that is easily transferable," noted Jay who is also quick to give credit to his staff: Nicole Mineer, Michelle Larson, Katie Koenigshof, Sharon Wilson and Ross Corson. "An agent's staff is critical to their success. I am very thankful for the team I get to work with every day."

Jay accepts that he'll never be in the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame; however, he is one of very few Montanans to be inducted into the Farm Bureau Financial Services Hall of Fame. "I'm very proud of that. It's no gold buckle but they did give me a nice watch," he quipped.

As for his future, Jay considers himself mid-career. "Twenty years might seem like a long time in the insurance world but I really look up to the agents who have had even longer-term, sustainable careers. Good people like Dirk Smith, Norris Phelan, Kay Bright, Warren Krone and Deann Cranmore. Those are agents that I really respect for not only their abilities but their character, too."

Jay enjoys the social good that insurance does and being able to tangibly see the benefits of insurance. He's seen financially devastating events impact people he knows and loves. He's thankful that he and his staff can provide products that financially protect families.

"I sure didn't wake up when I was five years old and dream of being an insurance agent. All I wanted to be was a cowboy," he said.

Jay still gets to play cowboy. He puts up his own hay and still shoes his own horses. He also competes in team ropings, and enjoys the comradery that brings him.

Jay and his wife, Mikel make their home just west of Billings. Jay has two sets of twins, Kate and Emma and Dawson and Ivy. Jay's office is located in Billings. You can find him most days behind a desk instead of in the saddle but on the weekends, you'll have to track him down at the barn. ■

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Technology in Agriculture

BY REBECCA COLNAR, EDITOR, SPOKESMAN

Are the feet out? Is mom licking him? Has he nursed? Although I would never consider our ranch a “high tech” kind of place, several years ago we purchased a calving camera system. We can keep an eye on the pregnant cows in the calving pen, even at night with the infrared light. We can watch a birth progressing to see if we need to help. We can watch a cow in the barn to ensure she is letting her calf nurse and not getting overly aggressive. The software is loaded on a laptop in the house and a device on our window talks to one in the barn and runs the barn cameras. Plus, animals can be watched on the Ipad and on cell phones. The lives saved by the remote camera system are many, plus who doesn't enjoy doing a 3 a.m. heifer check while sitting in a warm house in pajamas?

Certainly advanced technology in the farming sector, which has

been around for more than 30 years, continues to become more precise and is now the norm for farmers who 20 years ago scoffed at the idea of a computer in their tractors. Certainly, there are many companies, large and small, developing precision ag tools in Montana. This article visits with a ranching and a farming business involved in developing technologies, with the understanding that there are many other creative businesses around. This article simply provides readers with a glimpse of the technology available and the possibilities that abound.

Where are those cows?

Smittie Smith explains that while big technological advances continue to be aimed at row crop farmers, devices like drones and satellites have allowed more of the broad acre farmers to get in on the game. Ranchers, however, have not seen much technology in their businesses, and tend to be cautious when a new technology comes along. Some have adapted precision ag devices in their tractors while haying, but why put your records in a database when

the pocket-sized red book contains an entire season of calving and cattle care?

Many commercial (raise calves to be sold for feeding out and processing) producers use spreadsheets to manage calf crops, and new apps online for managing pharmaceuticals. Seedstock producers (ranchers who raise animals for breeding purposes) frequently use software to track genetics, and some ranchers can capture data on their animals using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) ear tags in their cattle.



Smith, owner of RanchHacks, has looked at the GPS tracking of cattle. "There are some benefits on a couple different fronts. We started looking at GPS because Jim Steinbeisser (Richland County Farm

Bureau member) suggested it. I was talking about counting cows with drones and Jim asked, 'Can you count cow patties? He wanted to know where his cows are spending most of their time so he could deploy necessary resources.'

That question resulted in a GPS device placed on a cow, but the device was expensive, as was the monthly fee for cellular and web interface services.

Currently there is the company 701x Autonomous Rancher with a web-based and smart-phone-based product that competes with companies like HerdOne and CattleMax for managing records and tracking cattle. 701x has developed a tracking strategy using two devices. One is a solar-powered ear tag containing a GPS transceiver, cell transceiver and BlueTooth. It records an animal's location every 15 minutes and stores that, so you can see where your cows are going. Their other ear tag device runs on button batteries and has a Bluetooth transceiver and an accelerometer. You could put one type of tag on the mom and the other on her calf and know where the calf was, and how far from his mom he traveled.

Another use for GPS livestock tracking, which Smith has worked with a researcher at Montana State University, is to put collars on 10 percent of the animals and use statistical analysis to aggregate and determine how pastures are being used. By using GPS with bulls, you can track which bulls are traveling the countryside to cover the cowherd instead of staying in one place.

"You would be able to set geofencing so you know when the bull gets out and where they are when you're doing your bull gather. This would make this easier for bull breeders or people who have bull pastures and could provide a better indication of which bull is coming to end of his productive life. There are a lot of companies and researchers working on GPS and it is worth watching."

Smith explained that drones work well to fly a pasture and see if there are cattle present. When RanchHacks first started using drone for ranches, it was thought that you could find missing cows, but it's turned out to work best for seeing where cattle are not.

"If you fly the drone out at 8 a.m. and you don't see any cows, you know that's one area you don't need to check," said Smith. "Flying your drone out to monitor water tanks located a long distance away doesn't work, as regulations say maintain unaided visual contact, but you can stay on the road, send the drone out

from your truck, prevent ruts on muddy ground, and check to see if the bubbles in the water—if there are, you know your water isn't frozen and your pump is working."

He cautions that although drones can be helpful, it's important to check FAA regulations and make an informed decision; a safe approach is to get your Small UAS Rule (Part 107) Remote Pilot Certification and keep it current.



Real life drone application

When J.M. Peck heard about drone technology on the ranch, he purchased a borderline commercial drone that he says is a handy tool.

"The drone is a time saver. When I need to gather a section or two of cows, we can fly a section in about 20 minutes and know where the cows are before we leave the truck," said Peck. "If we're missing a yearling, we can fly miles around the area and get a view. It might take me a half day to find her without the drone."

The MFBF District 2 Director said his drone has a hi-definition camera and works with his cell phone. The drone can take photos and videos and has many features. Peck shared that it cost roughly \$2000 but in the time it's saved him, has paid for itself.

"We have irrigation canals and ditches, so it might take a half day to for us to see where there is a problem or if we even have a problem. The drone can fly over and we can check those canals and ditches in a fraction of the time it would normally take us."

At this time, Peck can set a route for the drone using Google Earth, with the drone recording pictures the entire time. The drone sends the photos back to Peck's cell phone, then he uploads the data and sends it to a third party who analyzes the pasture, and measures the grass height and soil moisture.

Peck said the batteries last about 30 minutes, and the drone calculates how long it can fly before it needs to come back to you before it runs out of power and crashes. "You should stay in the line of sight of it, but it can easily go one to two miles away. It's been fun and very useful."

He noted that he has FAA Part 107 drone operators license, and noted that since he has his private pilot's license, qualifying for the Part 107 certification was not a problem.

A new technology Smith has been researching is known as LoRaWAN, which stands for Long Range Wide Area Network, which is a type of Low Power Wide Area Network. It uses a long-range and lower frequency wireless network to communicate between LoRaWAN gateways and remote nodes that operate in a license-free radio frequency spectrum. On the farm or ranch, it can be used to monitor farm assets and crop and livestock conditions. Ranchers could use it to monitor water levels in their stock tanks in remote pastures and view the data on their cell phones.

The tech-savvy Smith said that this technology works well for smaller bits of information; not videos, but takes tiny photographs. "That's cool because from a single router you can get a five-mile radius coverage and in some areas, you might get 10-15 miles of coverage. You put one router in the main office, go four miles out and set up another router. The second router communicates with the router at the office. Ranchers can cover a big area using this technology. You connect the first router to the internet through an Ethernet; the one four miles away doesn't need a connection as it's talking to the first. Data comes in from the second, to first and then onto the internet. Ranchers can cover a big area as well as monitor closer calving and winter pastures."

He added that devices using this technology could be placed on cattle to record their location, on water tanks that could report



the volume and water temperature, and even check to see if a gate was left open in the back 40. You could check ground moisture and use your RFID reader when processing livestock even if you weren't close to the house.

"I keep looking at this technology and how it can help ranchers," said Smith. "Three to five ranchers in the general proximity could pool resources and install LoRaWAN devices together, yet their cow information would only come to them. Setting up a LoRaWAN device is easy; the only trick is setting up the antenna, as it needs to be as high as you can get it so the signal spreads further."

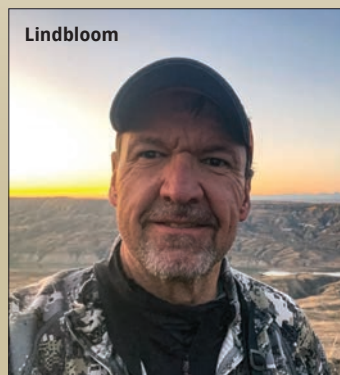
As for virtual fencing, Smith admits it's too early to tell. It is still expensive and has challenges, such as cows in the brush losing the transmitter devices or bulls that learn to run through the shock. In addition, you need to have a device that monitors the system to let you know if it's still working. When the tower isn't working, you lose your fence.

With the constantly evolving technology, which generally leads to lower prices for those technological devices, ranchers will be able to afford these unique systems and devices that save the lives of livestock, save themselves time, and use rangeland and water more efficiently. ■

Earlier this year, the Montana Department of Agriculture held the Montana Ag Tech Innovation & Investment Summit in Great Falls. During the forum, Lance Lindbloom, 406 Agronomy, claimed third place in the Montana Agricultural Speed Pitch Competition with the "Field Analyzer", a plug-and-play device that can be attached to most tractors to determine real-time fertilizer, fungicide, and pesticide rates. Spokesman Editor Rebecca Colnar visited with Lindbloom regarding emerging technologies in farming.

Editor: How would you define technology.

Lindbloom: Technology has been drastically evolving over time. One of the ways I like to think about how technology is advancing is to compare it to resolution. Precision agriculture 20 years ago might have been managing one part of the farm differently than another part of the farm. Over the last 10 years, we've started to look at the inside of individual fields, dramatically increasing our "resolution." Today, we're not only looking at the zones across a field but we're also looking at variability in depth, more of a 3D view. There is so much data in each field that we're working on,



the resolution's becoming much higher, moving to more of a High-Definition Resolution so to speak.

Editor: What's the latest with technology for farmers?

Lindbloom: What we have seen progressing quickly in the last few years is "See and Act" technology. This technology can scan the crop or field in front of it and make real time adjustments to the application rate. In the past, if we scanned a crop, like for instance with a drone, we had to take the data collected, download it in a computer or upload to the Cloud, then later, react to it. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming so powerful now the sensor can scan as it's traveling, creating a different recommendation on the go. See and Act is a game changer.

Editor: How does See and Act work?

Lindbloom: With the new See and Act technology, we're seeing what's going on right now in real-time, looking at that variability of what's happening right now, and addressing that field. Now we're able to put that right rate across that field because we're seeing what's going on right there right now.

Editor: Is See and Act cost prohibitive?

Lindbloom: Actually, as the years go on the pricing becomes more affordable. One of the things that we think about when talking to farmers, especially with See and Act technology, is money that can be saved by this technology. Say a farmer is spraying a field and they're doing it at a flat rate, but when they're going across that field, they understand that there's a lot of areas in that field where there's very little weed pressure and they really

don't want to spray it. They used to have no other options in the past, but the See and Act technology allows them to be more accurate and cost-effective in their spraying.

Editor: *By having more precise, instant information, farmers can use less chemical, which is good for the environment?*

Lindbloom: Many times, we jump to: "Well, it's all about the dollars." Yes, it's about the dollars but it's also about good stewardship. When it is not needed, producers don't want to have to spray an entire field. They know not only does that cost money, but they are building a chemical load in that soil, and it can negatively affect our future crops. Farmers really like the stewardship part of See and Act, so they're very accepting of the technology. Another positive we sometimes don't attribute to this technology is the ability to save time when we are able to apply at greater precision.

Editor: *What else is coming along?*

Lindbloom: Other technology that's really progressing is in analytics. With soil sampling and tissue sampling, those are two types of analytics that producers use to determine what's going on in their soil, and a blood test that tells us what's going on with that plant. Traditionally, soil testing meant taking a sample then sending it to a lab. At the very quickest, it's a three-to-four-day process. Now technology can perform those analytics right in the field. Instead of taking a soil sample, bringing it back to your home or your office, labeling it, shipping it, and then getting results back in a week, now we can take that same sample, scan it in the office, and have those results within 15 minutes. This same technology with tissue sampling is not quite there yet but is right around the corner.

Editor: *Are drones helpful in farming?*

Lindbloom: Drones are becoming more powerful, built to fly longer and cover more

area. 406 Agronomy uses them for scouting, to have a quick bird's eye view of a field. Drones are small enough, you can put them in a pack when you're out in the field scouting, on your UTV or four-wheeler, and hand launch/land them right in the field! Innovative applications like using drones to spray noxious weeds over rugged terrain have increased dramatically across Montana this past few years. Even more affordable models of unmanned aerial vehicles now provide the unique advantage of being able to cover larger areas efficiently - a real asset when it comes to farming vast expanses characteristic of our Big Sky State. Another positive for Montana is the growth in not only companies using drones but local companies like Aizy Tech out of Bozeman who are manufacturing drones.

Editor: *Are most farmers embracing all this new technology?*

Lindbloom: I would say they all use some technology to a certain degree. There are those who are fully engaged and those dabbling in it. As much as we talk about the technology that's out in the field, there's also the technology in your office, and the evolution in FMS - Farm Management Systems. We have farmers who do record-keeping on a napkin all the way to ones who put every transaction into an electronic device, so it's a very wide spectrum. Farmers are using a variety of mobile phone apps to help them manage their farms, such as weather, crop management, marketing, and accounting apps.

Ag tech has the potential to revolutionize how we do things in agriculture; from the way we produce and market our products to how we manage the land. It's an exciting time for the industry, and I'm confident that our continued investment in ag tech will lead to a more successful, efficient, and sustainable agriculture industry.

(Right) A remote sensor in a field. (Below) A drone scouting a field in central Montana.



Sixth ACE Class ready to tackle advocacy

The Montana Farm Bureau Federation's ACE (Advocate. Communicate. Educate) Leadership Program empowers Farm Bureau members to become confident and influential leaders in their local communities and for Montana agriculture. The program arms its participants to communicate industry issues and represent Farm Bureau interests at the local, state and national levels. ACE successfully does this by focusing on leadership development, engaging local communities and issues advocacy. The 2023 class has 10 participants.

Tommy Flanagan

Tommy Flanagan, born and raised in Absarokee, applied for ACE to become a better advocate and supporter of Montana agriculture and to contribute to improving our rural communities. "As the fifth generation in a family cattle operation, I respect the legacy of agriculture, the people doing and living agriculture, and how it has shaped our history and culture in Montana. I want to communicate better with others, especially non-agricultural audiences, about what we do in agriculture and its importance in everyday life."



"The lesson I learned from Bruce and forestry applies to all agricultural industries."

Tommy Flanagan

Flanagan said that at their first seminar, advocate Bruce Vincent resonated. "I have no background in forestry, which has had a considerable role in Montana's history. However, the lesson I learned from Bruce and forestry applies to all agricultural industries—we need to communicate better. We cannot expect other people to understand what we do. For a prosperous future for agriculture, we need to communicate better, and central to communication is listening."

He said that growing up, he took advantage of all the opportunities of a rural school and community, including FFA, 4H, band, choir and drama and more. "My mom is from Finland and, like almost all Montanans, we are proud of that heritage. I'm fortunate to have both rural Montana and Finland in my life as part of who I am. I think this combination made me curious about international relations, so I studied political science and German and earned a master's in European relations. I have been talking with non-agricultural audiences about agriculture for a good part of my life. Now, I am the executive director of Finlandia Foundation, a national nonprofit that focuses on preserving



Finnish-American history as well as offering programming and education about Finland today."

Bronya Willmore

Bronya Willmore became interested in ACE after visiting with people in Fergus County Farm Bureau who had been through the ACE program and shared their extraordinary experiences. More freedom in her work schedule allowed her the time commitment needed to travel to ACE programs.

She grew up in Iowa and came through agriculture via 4-H, FFA, and rodeo. "We have friends in Broadus who invited us to a branding there, and one of them said if I wanted to move to Montana, why not go to college there? I applied and got a scholarship to Montana State University, met my husband there, and he moved me to central Montana."

Willmore, her husband and their three young daughters currently live on her husband's parent's ranch north of Roy, where they raise cows.



"Focus on what you can bring to the table and work on recognizing other people's strengths."

Bronya Willmore

She praised the first seminar held in Bozeman. "At our first seminar, Bruce Vincent was very emotional and moving. It made me realize I need to re-prioritize some things in my life. It takes a big person to stand in front of people and say, 'We did it wrong,' and then learn from those mistakes.

"I also enjoyed hearing Sarah Bohnenkamp," said Willmore. "I liked what she said about focusing on what you can bring to the table and working on recognizing other people's strengths. Piece together an effective team. I could have listened to Laura Nelson, who wrote the Legacies book, for days about her interviews with Montana Farm Bureau members and the history she unearthed."

Willmore said with productive agricultural land in the county butting up against the American Prairie Reserve. "It's essential to work on the message of why keeping farms and ranches in production is so important," she said.

Willmore works as a sales associate for Mountain West Farm

Bureau Mutual Insurance Company out of Fergus County and says it provides her a great way to have a perspective on the insurance and federation sides.

Beth Blevins

Beth Blevins was inspired to become involved with ACE due to two adages she heard. One from natural resources industry advocate Bruce Vincent, "The world is run by those who show up," and from a classmate in veterinary school who shared, "Service is the price you pay for the space you occupy." She saw ACE as an excellent way to learn the skills necessary to advocate effectively. The large animal veterinarian from Ronan (and "hired hand" for her family's Rafter E Angus purebred business, she jokes) added



"ACE is an excellent way to learn the skills necessary to advocate effectively."

Beth Blevins

that it's imperative to help young people in agriculture with their advocacy mission.

With the ACE class held in Helena March 22-24, the group had the outstanding opportunity to sit down with Montana Governor Greg Gianforte to discuss leadership.

"He runs Montana like a business, and talked about a book by Jim Collins that covers OGSM, which stands for Objectives, Goals, Strategies and Measures. The governor explained that measures aren't something in the distant future but something to review every six months," explained Blevins. The group heard from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Director Amanda Kaster who is using OGSM in her department as well as from other state agencies using the goal-setting action plan.

"It's impressive that this successful strategy is being carried out by Montana governmental agencies. In addition, we heard from Justice James A. Rice regarding how the Montana Supreme Court operates," said Blevins. The group's meeting with three legislators— Representative Russ Miner (R) HD 19, Senator Jeff Welborn (R) SD 36 and Representative Jill Cohenour (D) HD 24— emphasized the importance of integrity and trustworthiness. The three emphasized that being on either end of the political spectrum is not helpful.

"It was wonderful to hear those three legislators discuss working together. Their message was that we need to respect people even if we do not agree, and find common ground, which is what ACE is all about." ■

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2023 Legislative Session

By the time the Spring 2023 Spokesman is in MFBF members' hands, the 2023 Legislative Session will be winding down. MFBF Legislative Team Nicole Rolf and Rachel Cone assisted members in giving testimony and visiting with senators,

By the transmittal deadline of March 3, MFBF had been involved with 52 bills covering many different topics relating to agriculture and rural communities. This session MFBF has seen bills on red tape relief, livestock issues, foreign ownership, taxes, water and more. Of these 52 bills, MFBF opposes seven of them. Each general bill needs to pass out of the committee where it was first heard, and fully pass out of the chamber it started in, before Legislative Day 45 or March 3. At the time the Spokesman went to press, all bills opposed by MFBF had been killed in committee, except for one, HB 642. MFBF also paid close attention to bills they are supporting. If a general bill was not transmitted before the

transmittal deadline, it died as a result. Note that this only applies to general bills, meaning no appropriation is attached to it.

Other bills, including budget, resolutions and study bills, all have different transmittal dates. The 68th Legislative Session had 4,622 draft requests; on average there are normally 2,625. Additionally, on average there are 1,306 bills introduced per session and this session there have been 1,412 bills introduced.

MFBF feels successful in representing our members



Senator Mike Lang, SD-17, visits with Lewis & Clark County President Karl Christians and MFBF Vice President Gary Heibertshausen.



The MFBF Lobbyists Nicole Rolf and Rachel Cone.

representatives and agency directors. They adhered to the American Farm Bureau policy and the Montana Farm Bureau policy set during the Delegate Session at the 2022 MFBF Annual Convention in November.

and advocating for legislation that benefits farmers and ranchers.

Bills that MFBF have been successful on advancing include but not limited to:

SB 85, which requires management of delisted grizzly bears at sustainable levels, updates Montana law to reflect the proactive way the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is currently managing the species to the extent they are allowed management, given federal oversight. This legislation helps show our federal partners what Farm Bureau believes; the state is well-qualified to manage grizzly bears and is ready to take over management.

SB 295 revises laws to accommodate grizzly bear delisting, amends state law to illustrate the way the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will manage the species after delisting. This bill is modeled largely after legislation that was put in place to help Montana with the delisting of wolves. It clarifies that after grizzly bears are removed from the Endangered Species list, FWP will manage the species at levels necessary to maintain a delisted status, requires a management plan to be enacted, and allows for limited takings of grizzly bears for the purpose of preventing livestock depredation and protection of human safety.

MFBF participated in the Montana Comprehensive Water Review that took place throughout the past interim session. Through this process two bills, HB 114 to revise timelines for water right permit and change process and SB 72 to revise judicial administration of water rights were created and both were supported by MFBF. HB 114 provides more timely and efficient water right permit and change application processes



Becky Stuart, Southwest Counties Farm Bureau, testifies at the Senate Ag Committee Hearing.

adding sideboards that ensures water users can get through their change or permit in a more streamlined manner. SB 72 creates a one-stop shop to administer water now that final decrees are being issued and protects local knowledge and control by relying on four water division judges who specialize in water law.

One bill strongly opposed by MFBF is the harmful exempt well bill HB

642. MFBF opposed this bill on the grounds that it gets rid of the “combined appropriation” language and would put senior water rights at risk. Both points are priorities for Montana Farm Bureau. MFBF members are largely senior water right holders and the combined appropriation guidelines ensure that exempt wells are not able to be “stacked” or consolidated at a level to impact other water users.

MFBF continues to support the administration's Red Tape Relief efforts and were thrilled to see two tax bills signed into law by Governor Gianforte in mid-March including HB 212 that increases the business tax exemption to \$1 million and SB 121 that will reduce top marginal income tax rate. To learn more about the Montana Legislative Session, look up your legislator and review bills, visit <https://mfbf.org/Policy-Advocacy> and leg.mt.gov. ■



MFBF members met with Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras during Calling on the Capitol.

Calling on the Capitol

During every legislative session, the Montana Farm Bureau holds a Calling on the Capitol event for the board, counties, Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee and Women's Leadership Committee. This year, 45 members attended the event that was held on February 6-7. The members met with agency directors, sat in on Floor Sessions in the House and Senate, testified in hearings and had several opportunities to visit with their legislators.

“This was a great event for those who have attended many times, and for first-timers,” said MFBF President Cyndi Johnson. “It gives me a sense of pride to see Farm Bureau participating in the political process in our state. I loved seeing our young people putting pen to paper to develop their testimonies and their leadership skills. At this event, we got to know each other better and learned about the potential of our organization. It always makes me excited to come to these events and realize the impact Montana Farm Bureau has on agricultural issues in this state.”

A National Conference and County Activities

BY **NICK COURVILLE**, CHAIR, MFBF YOUNG FARMERS & RANCHERS COMMITTEE

A group of Montana Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers recently wrapped up the American Farm Bureau 2023 FUSION Conference in Jacksonville, Florida. For me, it started a day early with a specific training session geared towards networking with other Young Farmer and Rancher Committee Chairs and learning how to create productive teams. We learned interactive games that we could recreate and build teams—and even be a little goofy while doing it. We had 27 YF&R members attending the conference, with two from our MFBF YF&R Committee and the others from the collegiate chapters of Montana State University, Miles Community College and UM-Western.

The keynote speakers were excellent. AFBF President Zippy Duvall spoke about how we can make a difference with Farm Bureau and how our membership can be the change and support somebody needs. The American Ninja Warrior Alex Weber shared his thoughts about overcoming personal struggles and what those challenges can do for you to have something to believe in. Lauren Sisler, a sports broadcaster for ESPN, explained the power of telling our own authentic stories.

All the workshops were interactive, whether it was creating reels for social media to advocate for agriculture, giving and receiving feedback, or being the team member you want to work with. The Power Hours were a fantastic way to unwind or continue networking, and offered social media content creation and two-minute networking sessions. If you needed to simply relax, you could enjoy line dancing lessons or a corn hole tournament.

The third day of the conference offered tours that ranged from



The entire group that traveled to the FUSION Conference from Montana Farm Bureau included Young Farmers & Ranchers, the Promotion & Education Committee and Women's Leadership Committee.

a walking tour of St. Augustine, the oldest town in the country, to interacting with live dolphins. Networking and socializing were abundant at any location, and many business cards and social media handles were exchanged. A few of our members even made it to the beach. Although the water was cold, the sun was intense, and you could tell who had made it to the beach by the red tint on their skin.

We attended a group dinner as the Grand Finale event at the Jacksonville Jaguar stadium with games to play and a caricature artist there to capture the memory.

The networking continued after FUSION as I received messages from people I met as we traveled home. They reminded me where we had met, where they were from, and to travel safely home. The ideas we learned from the workshops and the people in attendance were fantastic.

We will put what we learned into action. The Montana YF&R Committee is already getting ready for the YF&R Day at MFBF Summer Conference in June and planning the 2024 YF&R Leadership Conference next February. Several of our districts have started on the goals set last November by holding trivia nights and social hours to bring young farmers and ranchers together in their respective communities. The results have been outstanding. For instance, the Fourth Annual Dawson/Wibaux County YF&R Social had more than 100 attendees. We have a few members of our YF&R Committee who are in the 2023 ACE Leadership Class this year and will continue their learning through workshops and training around the state. ■



Robbie Chesterfield, serving as advisor for the UM-Western Collegiates, shows his form at corn hole.



Montana State University Collegiates Tyler Noyes, Emily Evans and Mandy Brandt on the dolphin-watching tour.



Young Farmers & Rancher Collegiate Discussion Meet

Andee Baker, Montana State University, competed in the national Collegiate Young Farmers & Rancher Discussion Meet during the FUSION Conference in Jacksonville, Fla. Thirty-three competitors participated in this year's Collegiate Discussion Meet.

The Collegiate Discussion Meet is designed to replicate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each collegiate participant. Participants are judged on their ability to exchange ideas and information on an agricultural topic and find answers or solutions related to it.

Baker said, "Competing at the national level was a great opportunity to collaborate with outstanding students across the country on topics that do not have easy solutions. I enjoyed competing and getting to know the other competitors. I encourage people in the future to compete in the Discussion Meet."

Contest Judging, Ag Safety and Graze Boards

BY CARLA LAWRENCE, CHAIR, MFBF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

The MFBF Women's Leadership Committee (WLC) Training Seminar was held March 5-6 in Helena, MT and just ahead of the MFBF Calling on the Capitol, held every other year when the legislature is in session. It was very rewarding to finally be able to carry out the training that has been in our plan of work for a couple of years. The training was targeted for those women, two in each of the 10 MFBF Districts, who are currently serving on the WLC for 2022-2023. The agenda topics resulted from a survey taken by the WLC members during their meeting at MFBF Summer Conference in June 2022.

The WLC Training Seminar kicked off on Sunday evening, with a fun Graze Board Class hosted by Bootleg Boards. If you have not had the opportunity to create a "Graze or Charcuterie" board, I would highly recommend it. Graze boards typically feature a selection of cured meats, pates, cheeses, crackers, breads. Candy, cookies, chocolates and dried fruit may also be added and really there is no right way to create the Graze Board; it is an individual's preference and the arrangement on the board is limited only by one's imagination. These boards

served as an icebreaker and an opportunity for the participants to relax and enjoy each other's company.

The next morning, we launched into agenda and addressed the topics of interest including a presentation on Social Media for Ag Advocates by Dylan Davidson, MFBF digital communication lead. Dylan provided insight into using Facebook and touched on other media platforms. He provided more ways of getting involved on social media and what works best for agriculture. Next, we were able to learn more about the Ag in Color Drawing Contest and given the honor to judge the drawings for grades K-6. The winners on the state level were determined by a majority vote. The Ag in Color Drawing Contest is part of the Montana Youth (MY) Ag Literacy Program, which is under the umbrella of the WLC and is managed by Rikki Swant, MFBF director of membership and business development.

We learned about "Ag Safety and The Not-So-Average-Farm & Ranch Wife" presented by Dana Jansen, MFBF director of ag safety – Montana Ag Safety Program. For Farm Bureau members wanting to learn more about farm safety, Dana is a wealth of knowledge and can provide you with useful tools regarding safety on your farm or ranch.

We were able to Zoom with Amy Peterson, CEO at Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Western Montana. In



The WLC Committee shows off their charcuterie, or graze boards, created as an icebreaker on the first evening of their training seminar in Helena.

Montana, there are two RMHC, located in Missoula and Billings. The WLC works each year with the two RMHC to donate beef or needed items or to prepare meals for families. We look forward to working with both RMHC houses this year.

Most of the women attending the WLC Training Seminar joined the other MFBF members who arrived for Calling on the Capitol. What a wonderful opportunity for Farm Bureau members to meet with legislators and state leaders. ■

Inspiring and equipping women in agriculture to succeed in leadership

Ag ConnectHER will elevate and celebrate dynamic and successful women leaders in agriculture by showcasing their leadership journeys, connecting them through a quarterly on-line event with Farm Bureau women from across the country, and inspiring women in agriculture to discover their potential and succeed in leadership. This initiative will enable Farm Bureau women to hear from prominent women all across agriculture—from top leaders of ag organizations to government officials or elected leaders.



Ag ConnectHER will include the following resources on a quarterly basis for state engagement:

- A quarterly online event for Farm Bureau women to meet the national leader, hear about her leadership journey and discuss her advice, lessons learned and leadership best practices for women in agriculture.
- A social media graphic spotlighting the national leader for state or county Farm Bureaus to share on social media channels.
- A media spotlight (article or interview) capturing the national leader's leadership journey for state Farm Bureaus to share with your membership.

AFBF recommends state and county WLC programs consider incorporating the Ag ConnectHER stories and leadership advice spotlights as a prompt for discussion about leadership during committee meetings.

SAVE THE DATE! Ag ConnectHER Online Event Dates – Held at 8:00 PM EST

- May 9, 2023
- September 5, 2023
- December 5, 2023

More information about Ag ConnectHER online event registration and promotional materials for the May event will be made available in April. If you have any questions, please contact Carrie Walker, AFBF Director, Member Engagement at carriew@fb.org.



Montana Director of Agricultural Safety Dana Jansen with her "Ag Safety and the Not-So-Average-Farm & Ranch Wife" presentation.



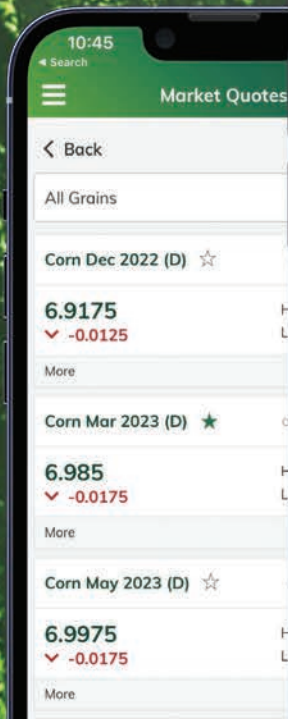
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People



Evan Helle, a fourth-generation sheep rancher and son of Duckworth co-founder and head rancher, John Helle, led a group from the Montana Department of Agriculture in a shearing demonstration including Governor Greg Gianforte and Director of Agriculture Christy Clark. The Helles, from Dillon, are members of **Southwest Counties Farm Bureau**.

“People want to know where their clothing comes from, and we had all the tools in place to be able to start a company with products made in the USA from Sheep to Shelf,” Helle said.

Governor Greg Gianforte shows his skill at shearing a sheep at the Helle Ranch.



Northwest Counties Farm Bureau President Josh Senecal was featured in the Spring issue of RANGE magazine. Senecal talked about horse training, cattle, packing in the wilderness, grizzly bears and being involved in your community and organizations. For the full story visit rangemagazine.com.

Carrying on the family ranching tradition—even with chickens—are Tel, Rylie, Josh and Sarah Senecal.



Chuck Plymale, past **Broadwater County Farm Bureau** president, was inducted into the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame for District 8 during the organization’s induction brunch February 11 in Great Falls. The inductees were chosen from a field of candidates nominated by the general public. Inductees are honored for their notable contributions to the history and culture of Montana. For the full story visit montanacowboyleft.org.

Chuck and Carole Plymale at the Heritage Inn during the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame Induction Brunch. The Plymales have been active in the Broadwater County Farm Bureau. Carole currently serves as county secretary.



Front Range County Farm Bureau member and Choteau rancher Karli Johnson traveled to Washington, D.C. to testify before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources regarding the Grizzly Bear legislation, H.R. 1419. The bill, sponsored by Montana Representative Matt Rosendale (R), directs the Secretary of the Interior to issue a new rule removing the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) population of grizzly bears from the Federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife. Johnson explained her concerns about ranching and living in an area with increased numbers of human/bear encounters, and bears being close to the elementary school. For the full story visit mfbf.org/media/news.

Choteau rancher Karli Johnson testifies about Grizzly Bear legislation before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources.

County News



Richland County Farm Bureau held their Souper Bowl Party February 23 at 1035 Brewing in Sidney after they were forced to cancel their annual Christmas Party in December due to winter weather conditions. Each board member provided their favorite soup for the occasion. Held on one of the coldest days of the year, it was the perfect potluck! Richland County held Ag Beyond the Classroom, which featured an evening about dairy for the 50 attendees, March 21 at Weller Enterprises.



Dawson-Wibaux County Farm Bureau members read "Right this Very Minute" to first and second grade students at Jefferson School in Glendive March 22-23. In February Dawson-Wibaux County held a very successful social which included a calving difficulties presentation by veterinarian Katie Rein Loose and her fiberglass cow, Stella.

(Left) Megan Kubesh and Jasmine Evans doing the correlated activity with second graders. (Right) Tienna Canen (YF&R chair) reading to 2nd graders



Kids learn all about dairy cows during Richland County Farm Bureau's Ag Beyond the Classroom.



On Wednesday, March 24 at the Melstone School, Jodie Drange aka The Bee Lady, **Yellowstone County Farm Bureau**, did honey production with the K-Fourth grade students in Melstone.

Rosebud/Treasure County Farm Bureau held a safety training March 3 at the Community Center in Hysham. The morning session covered equipment and shop safety. Following lunch provided by the Treasure Belles, Al Koenig, Montana Beef Council, provided Beef Quality Assurance certification training.



May Membership Month is Back

Montana Farm Bureau is dedicating the entire month of May to our grassroots membership. **May Membership Month** serves as a salute to our members as well as an opportunity for member recruitment. This is the perfect time to get the word out regarding why our members are Farm Bureau Proud. It's also the chance for County Farm Bureaus to ignite their competitive spirit. Once again, MFBF staff will travel to the home county that recruits the most members for a personal barbecue.

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



Yellowstone County Farm Bureau members gathered their kids to speak to the Northern Ag Network on National Ag Day about their families' ties to agriculture, their 4H projects and what agriculture means to them. All five kids are members of Yellowstone County 4-H.

Left to right, Paisley Vogel, Rex Koivu, Lukas Arkell, Addison Vogel and Corbin Vogel



Powder River/Carter County Farm Bureau held an agriculture safety training on Ag Day March 21 at the Boyes Hall in Boyes.

Wheatland/Golden Valley Farm Bureau had an ice cream social to show their appreciation for students at Hillcrest Elementary who participated in the Ag In Color Drawing Contest. Each class winner received a pair of wool gloves and other agriculture-related prizes. They donated the book *Tale of a Dairy Godmother* to the library. Hillcrest had a student who won at the state level! Her class received a pizza party.



MFBF District 3 Director Kris Descheemaeker conducted an ATV safety and grain entrapment prevention training for the 5-6th grade. Bev Fryer from **Musselshell County Farm Bureau** helped plan the event. Jodie Drange, **Yellowstone County Farm Bureau** president, also talked to six classes at West Elementary during Ag Week.

News



Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee District 5 Co-Chairs Fiona Mott and John Olson caught up during the Beef Breeders Sale in February in Miles City.



The **Miles Community College Young Farmers and Ranchers Club** and **MCC Students Senate** held their annual etiquette dinner March 22 at the Miles City Club. The 33 students attending learned about writing resumes, interviews and how to dress, along with working with the media, stepping outside their comfort zones and eating styles across cultures.

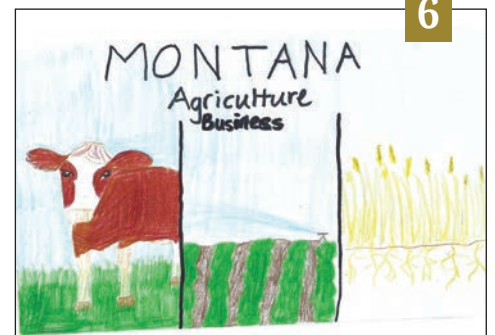
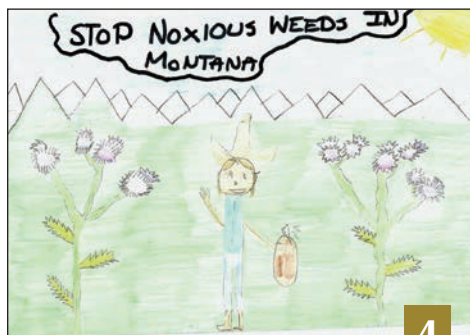
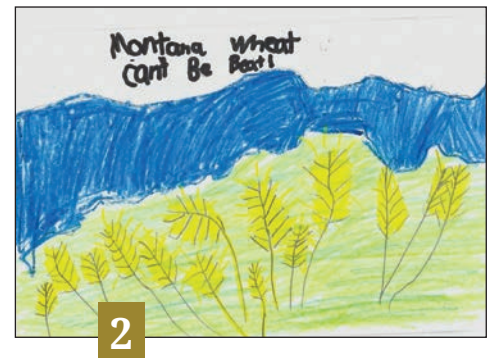
Winners of Montana Ag in Color Drawing Contest

In March, elementary school students participated in the Montana Farm Bureau Federation's Montana Youth (MY) Agriculture Literacy program drawing contest. "Montana Ag in Color" was developed in recognition of National Ag Week, March 21-27, as a creative competition for elementary school children. Each grade was given a different agricultural theme ranging from "Grains of Montana" and "Cattle in Agriculture" to noxious weeds, farm safety and ag-related careers. One winner was selected from each grade with judges selecting one drawing from the winners to receive the "Farm Bureau Proud" designation.

- **Kindergarten** - **Greyson Zimdars**, Saco School, Phillips County
- **First Grade** - **Abraham Waldner**, Zenith Elementary, Glacier County
- **Second Grade** - **Khloe Brown**, Hillcrest Elementary, Wheatland County
- **Third Grade** - **Garnet Gibbs**, Gibbs Home School, Dawson County
- **Fourth Grade** - **Hennessey Williamson**, Malta Elementary, Phillips County
- **Fifth Grade** - **Seterah Pekovitch**, Malta Elementary, Phillips County
- **Sixth Grade** - **Lyndie Wickens**, Winifred School, Fergus County
- **Seterah Pekovitch**, received the Farm Bureau Proud award.

Entries were judged by the Montana Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee on agricultural content, originality, neatness and reproducibility.

Winners were treated to a pizza party in their local classrooms and receive a prize package from Montana Farm Bureau during Ag Week. Winning entries will be printed and distributed on usable items and educational materials and have been posted on the Montana Farm Bureau website and Facebook page. ■



Montana Farm Bureau Foundation announces Youth Speech Contest winners

Great Falls, Montana—**Sadie Branham**, a student with the **Malta FFA Chapter**, **scored first place** in the Montana Farm Bureau Foundation (MFBFo) Youth Speech Contest held during the 2023 FFA State Convention, March 23, at the Montana ExpoPark in Great Falls.

Branham tackled the challenging topic regarding Gen Z Consumers: What makes them unique and how will their purchasing power affect the agricultural industry, how will farmers and ranchers need to adapt to compete in these market trends, and what role do youth in ag organizations play in this conversation?

The Youth Speech Contest was open to students in the 7th, 8th and 9th grades and needed to be between 2.5 and 4 minutes in length.

Branham won \$400 and bragging rights for winning the tough competition. The MFBFo awarded more than \$1000 in prize money to first place through fifth place students.

The runners up included **Kealie Hixson**, Stevensville FFA, **second place**; **Adelaide Meyer**, Stevensville FFA, **third place**; **Joel Stermitz**, Gardiner FFA, **fourth place**, and **Joel Standley**, Missoula FFA, **fifth place**.

"I've judged the Montana Farm Bureau Foundation Speech Contest a couple of times, and it's nice to see some of the kids competing again and progressing to being comfortable with speaking in front of people," said MFBF District 9 Director Scott Stoner. "I appreciate that the Foundation sponsors this competition to provide students with a venue to hone their research and speaking skills."

For more information on the Montana Farm Bureau Foundation visit mfbf.org/Foundation. ■



Montana Farm Bureau Foundation Speech Contest Winner Sadie Branham with District 9 Director Scott Stoner and MFBF President Cyndi Johnson.

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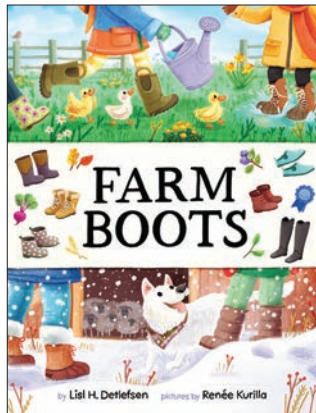
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Pull On Your ‘Farm Boots’ for Another Ag Adventure with Feeding Minds Press

Families, educators and anyone wanting to follow in the footsteps of farmers and ranchers can now pull on their boots for another exciting agricultural adventure with the latest publication from Feeding Minds Press, the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's publishing venture. "Farm Boots" tells the story of several farm families as they work and play throughout the year, in boots for every kind of weather and activity.

Joyous and delightful, "Farm Boots" depicts a wide variety of agricultural settings in all four seasons. The book is a celebration of footwear, fun and life on and off the farm, and brought to you by the award-winning writer and illustrator of "Right This Very Minute," Lisl H. Detlefsen and Renée Kurilla.

"Many of us don't think about how our footwear helps us prepare to brave the elements each day. But farmers and ranchers



do," said Foundation for Agriculture Executive Director Daniel Meloy. "Feeding Minds Press is excited to tell the story of agriculture through the lens of something we can all relate to, our shoes. Kids may even learn about some unexpected places farm boots could take them."

"Farm Boots" joins an ever-expanding list of titles from Feeding Minds Press, including "Right This Very Minute," published in January 2019, and "I LOVE Strawberries," a Good Housekeeping 2022 Best Kids' Book Award Winner.

Feeding Minds Press also offers several free printable books that focus on careers in agriculture. All Feeding Minds Press publications are available for purchase directly from Feeding Minds Press, as well as on Amazon and Barnes & Noble online. Of course, you can always ask your independent book seller to order it, as well.

Educational resources for "Farm Boots," including an educator's guide, will be available soon. ■

About Feeding Minds Press:

Feeding Minds Press is a project of the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture. The mission of the Foundation is to build awareness and understanding of agriculture through education. The goal of Feeding Minds Press is to publish accurate and engaging books about agriculture that connect readers to where their food comes from and to who grows it.

Are you a Montana Farm Bureau member and an author who would like the *Spokesman* to possibly review your book? Email enquiries to rebeccac@mfbf.org.

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Congratulations to Mark Boyd of Alder for earning top honors in the 2022 MFBF YF&R Discussion Meet. Mark is a proud owner of a new Polaris Ranger 500!

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