



LET'S SOLVE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE CHALLENGES TOGETHER

Providing healthy food to consumers in the U.S. and around the world is a big and growing challenge. So DuPont solvers are bringing a wealth of scientific innovation to work with farmers, companies and governments here and around the world to increase the production, quality and safety of food. Together, we can accomplish what no one can do alone.

Welcome to The Global Collaboratory™

To learn more, visit dupont.com/collaboratory

50 under 50: Farm, rural advocates plant seeds of passion and commitment

By Ann Tracy Mueller

WASHINGTON, Aug. 4, 2014 – From the grass fields of the Pacific Northwest across the nation’s wheat-, corn- and soybean-covered prairies to the cotton fields and citrus orchards of its southernmost states, America is growing one much-needed crop: its future voice.

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture released its 2012 Census of Agriculture on June 27, the report included a troubling statistic. The average age of the American farmer is 58.3. To those in farm country, this wasn’t much of a surprise. Visit any farm organization board meeting these days and you’ll find more of today’s leaders than not sporting white or thinning hair.

Through the years, farming, like other industries and cultures, has looked to its elders for leadership and guidance. But, today’s farm and rural leaders – many Baby Boomers and older – will eventually climb down from those leadership tractor steps. Who will ascend them? Is rural America ready for this exodus?

Agri-Pulse asked its readers and contacts in Washington, D.C., and nationwide to tell us about bright young people they’ve seen at work in recent years – men and women under 50 from across the nation, involved in all types of crop and livestock operations – who are stepping into leadership roles, spreading the word about what matters to rural America and promoting causes important to today’s agricultural and rural communities.

High priorities: Family, feeding the world and protecting a legacy

As we spoke with these young leaders, certain things became more and more obvious. These farmers have a passion for what they do. They love where they live; it’s where they want to “grow” their children. Some have tiny babies, toddlers or grade school children, while others have kids busy with high school activities or off at college.



PACKING POLITICAL PUNCH IN RURAL AMERICA



For some of these leaders, farming wasn't always in the plans. Nicole Van Vleck, a California rice farmer, set out to be an attorney, then found herself drawn back to her farm roots.

Kate Danner of Illinois, a fifth-generation farmer, wasn't involved in ag activities in high school. But while at a nearby community college on a volleyball scholarship, she became curious about the passion other rural kids had for farming. She took a year off from school to work with her dad and was hooked, returning to the family's century-old farm full-time after finishing her degree.

Providing a safe and stable food source for the world is top on these young leaders' minds. It's important to them – whether they're first-generation farmers or eighth – to protect the legacy and the industry, so their children and grandchildren can follow in the footsteps of previous generations if they choose.

Spreading the word has never been more important

Yet, to these young leaders there is another top priority: it's spreading the word about agriculture and rural America – to our nation's leaders and to consumers.

Again and again, these young people echoed the same messages:

“There are fewer and fewer of us [farmers].” (Only about 2 percent of the nation farms today.)

“We want the same things for our children as others do for theirs: a safe food supply.”

“Farmers are under attack more than ever before.”

“We have to tell our story.”

“If we don't stand up for ourselves, who will?”

Whether it's selling crops at a local farmers' market where they can talk with their customers about how food is grown, offering farm or vineyard tours, talking with legislators and their aides, hosting political fundraisers, or using social media to showcase farm practices, all have the same goal in mind – letting the rest of America know what's important to farmers and why it matters to them.

That's why these young farmers are stepping into leadership roles – on commodity boards, in farmer organizations, in politics.

Professional speaker and registered Holstein breeder Michele Payn-Knoper of Indiana, who often speaks to farm groups about improving conversations about food and agriculture, stresses the importance of finding time to be the voice of agriculture. “You may think you don't have time today, but you'll have time when you're regulated out of business,” she says.

Protecting priorities requires scheduling, sacrifice, support

None of this is easy. Farming certainly isn't a 9-to-5 job, and serving on a board isn't as simple as blocking out a few hours on a calendar one evening a month. The farm and rural advocates under 50 with whom we spoke often serve on multiple boards.

One, Boe Lopez, is the mayor pro-tem of his small town, while others serve on church councils or school boards, or coach their children's sports teams. Some also pursue interests off the farm,

such as Tim Nilsen, a California turkey farmer who has won national wakeboarding championships, or John Lee of Arkansas, who enjoys hunting and fishing.

They are busy people. How do they juggle it all?

“That’s tough. That’s the hardest part,” says Geoff Ruth, a Nebraska soybean farmer. Yet, “thanks to technology today, you can always be somewhere where you are physically not,” he adds, using Skype as an example.

One after another, they said, “It’s not easy,” or “It’s a balancing act.”

Though this listing features individual farmer leaders, many emphasized the importance of the contributions of their spouses, families and employees to their leadership and success.

They often said, “I couldn’t do it without my husband’s (or wife’s or family’s) support.”

Fourth-generation California farmer Josh Pitigliano says when the opportunity to lead presented itself, his dad and brothers said, “Do it now. We’ll make it work.”

Some farmers said, “We’re a team,” or “We (including neighbors) help each other out.”

Many said, “You’ve got to be organized.” Some also spoke of the value of technology – smartphones and iPads – in helping them stay on top of their schedules.

“You’ve got to do a lot of mapping out of your schedule to try to stay ahead of the game,” says Wyoming cattle rancher and auctioneer Adam Redland.

Often, they spoke of choosing what was most important – and of sometimes having to make sacrifices. Many try hard not to make those sacrifices at the cost of time with family, though.

“There will always be things pulling us,” says Illinois farmer Grant Noland. He tries to focus on the “high-value things” and says his wife is flexible and understanding, recognizing the end goal – they want their youngsters to be the ninth generation on the family farm. Noland echoes the comments of other busy people when he says, “Balance isn’t easy.”

Some leaders grew up traveling to commodity events or Washington, D.C. with their parents. Now they take their own children with them to board meetings or the nation’s capital.

“First of all, stay on top of the farm stuff,” says Nebraska farmer Zach Hunnicutt, echoing a sentiment expressed by others. “See the value in everything you do.”

Another priority for Quint Pottinger, whose family has farmed in Kentucky since a Revolutionary War veteran ancestor settled there in the 1780s, is lifelong learning. He schedules time to begin his day reading *The Wall Street Journal* and articles on ag policy and checking Twitter. He reads up on investments in the evenings.

How we grow our leaders

What plants the seed of leadership in a young person in agriculture? How is it nurtured?

Among the leaders with whom we spoke were young people who got their start as FFA officers, student council members or class presidents, captains of sports teams – or in leadership roles in college organizations or fraternities.

Josh Moore of Arizona, a member of the Colorado River Indian Tribe, says his grandfather told him when he was small, “If you look at a ram, the ram’s defending and leading. You have to be the ram.”

Moore remembered that advice and volunteered for his first leadership role when he was only nine years old, serving as secretary of his 4-H club.

Redland, whose mother was a 4-H leader, said, the tradition of leadership in his family “started in the crib.” Others have parents, grandparents or great-grandparents who served on commodity or farm organization boards or served in politics. South Dakota State Senator Jason Frerichs is the fourth generation of his farming family to serve in political office.

In many areas, programs are in place to identify future leaders and offer them opportunities to learn and grow. A number of states have agricultural leadership programs, as do some commodity groups, ag-related corporations and Farm Bureaus. Through such groups, many of these young people have had the opportunity to develop their leadership potential, learn about struggles in agriculture, visit Washington, and travel overseas to learn about global agriculture or trade.

50 farm advocates under 50



Gary Baldosser, 47, Republic, Ohio, raises corn, soybeans and wheat and has a cow/calf operation. Currently he serves on the board of directors of Ag Credit, a farm credit organization, is assistant chief of his local volunteer fire department, and is on his church’s board.

In the past, Baldosser served in a number of Farm Bureau roles, including chairmanship of the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers & Ranchers.

Baldosser and his wife have two sons – one a recent college graduate and the other a college sophomore. He says there came a time as his boys were growing up that he stepped back from a busy leadership travel schedule to spend more time with his family. The more local positions require less travel.

To young farmers, such as his sons, coming back to family farms and looking to step into leadership roles, Baldosser says, “Start out small. Find something you’re passionate about. Make that your issue.”



Josh Beckley, 33, Atwood, Kansas, is a third-generation customer harvester, who admits that an agricultural lifestyle that may seem strange to some is his “normal.” He was born in South Dakota while his parents were on the road during harvest season and began working full-time during harvest season when he was still young. Beckley and his wife have three sons (one born during harvest season in North Dakota).

With a brother and family, the Beckleys spend three or four months a year living in campers while harvesting canola, corn, field peas, milo, soybeans and wheat far from their Kansas homes.

Beckley is the state chairman of the U.S. Customer Harvesters and says it's important to be involved in leadership roles so that those passing laws impacting agriculture understand the work harvesters do.



Ryan Bivens, 35, Hodgenville, Kentucky, is a first-generation farmer, growing soybeans, corn and wheat in Kentucky.

Bivens is president of the Kentucky Soybean Association Board, serves on his county Farm Bureau's board of directors and, with his wife, earned the Kentucky Farm Bureau's Outstanding Young Farm Family Award and the American Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmer and Rancher Achievement Award in 2012. He's served the Farm Bureau at county, district and state levels. He and his wife have two young sons.

Bivens didn't get his start in farming as many do, by moving back to the family farm. He grew up hearing farmers couldn't make it unless they were in a farm family or married into it, but got his start growing corn and soybeans as an FFA project.

When Bivens finished college, got married and was ready to farm full-time, he ran an ad in the paper advertising that a young, energetic farmer was looking for land to rent. The ad was answered, and he was soon farming 500 acres. Next, Bivens used an innovative manner to market himself and get more land to rent. He made sure land he farmed looked sharp and put roadside signs in his fields touting "another quality crop" from Bivens Farms.

Besides his leadership roles, Bivens also spreads the word about agriculture and issues important to farmers through a [Facebook](#) page and events on the farm, such as the Kentucky Joint Interim Ag Committee meeting he recently hosted.

"If we're not involved, plenty of others will do it for us," Bivens says.



Ben Boyd, 37, Sylvania, Georgia, whose family has farmed in Georgia for five generations on one side and six on the other, has a farming operation diversified beyond his main crop, cotton. He also raises cattle, corn, hay, oats, peanuts, rye, soybeans and wheat. Boyd says he, his wife and one-year-old son live "13 miles from a Coke or a gallon of gas."

An alternate member of The Cotton Board, Boyd also serves as district director on the Georgia Farm Bureau board and learned the importance of being involved on his first trip to Washington, D.C., as a young farmer, when a legislator told him, “If you work on your planters once a year, come and talk to me once a year.”



Dow Brantley, 38, England, Arkansas, took over as chairman of USA Rice Federation on Aug. 1. He got involved in leadership roles shortly after he began farming with his father because he realized it was important to be outside the farm to listen to what was going on in each commodity group. Brantley also serves the Farm Bureau on both the county and state levels and has previously served as a delegate to the National Cotton Council and in leadership roles in other organizations.

Brantley raises rice, cotton, soybeans and corn and worries that the average person doesn’t understand agriculture. He and his wife have four young daughters.

Brantley’s advice to young people who want to get involved in agriculture: “First, get an education.”

“That,” Brantley says, “is where they’re going to learn how to learn.”



Anne Burkholder, 39, Cozad, Nebraska, grew up in an urban area, far from the Plains cattle ranch she now calls home. The Dartmouth College graduate from West Palm Beach, Florida, says she was “an athlete fueled by beef for a long time before she knew where it came from.” When she married and joined her husband’s family cattle operation, she quickly learned.

Burkholder, who says she’s been involved in outreach since the “get-go,” has held a number of ag leadership roles. She is currently on the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association board, Nebraska Beef Council, National Beef Quality Assurance Advisory Committee and on the Tyson Fresh Meat’s Animal Wellbeing Advisory Committee.

Transparency is important to her – closing the gap between the farm and consumers wondering where their food comes from. She’s on a mission, saying, “If I don’t have somebody that wants to buy my beef, there’s no reason to be a farmer.”

Burkholder gets numerous requests to speak about animal health issues, but she often turns them down these days. She and her husband have three daughters. Time with them is important, Burkholder [blogs](#) to spread important messages about farming.



Chris Chinn, 39, of Clarence, Missouri, serves on the state board of the Missouri Farm Bureau, is secretary of her county Farm Bureau, is on the National Pork Board, and on the Missouri Pork Producers membership committee.

A hog farmer who has a feed mill, a small cow-calf operation and raises hay, Chinn says a previous role as chair of an American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee “lit the fire,” opened her eyes to the struggles American farmers face, and showed her she “needed to pay attention.”

This wife and mother of two teens admits that balancing involvement on the farm and in other organizations is a challenge some days. With more than 5,200 [Twitter](#) followers and a [blog](#), Chinn carves out 20-30 minutes each day for social media. When she’s on the road, as many as four or five days a week during the busy months from August through October, she takes work with her so she’ll have more time with her family when she is at home.



Jacob Chisholm, 21, Gary, Minnesota, raises sugar beets, wheat, corn, soybeans and dry beans, attends college at North Dakota State University, and interned this summer for the American Sugarbeet Growers Association in Washington, D.C.

Chisholm has had his own farm operation since high school. A winning essay on its diversification landed him one of 10 spots in the 2011 National FFA Risk Management Essay contest and a trip to the nation’s capital. It’s that trip, he says, that sparked his interest in ag leadership.

Chisholm’s family looks after his crops while he’s off at school or away in D.C., but he plans to return to the farm when he’s completed his education.

“There’s something special there that the past generation worked hard for,” he says.

This young farmer leader sees the leadership opportunities in agriculture, too, though. Chisholm says, “There are lots of shoes to be filled.”

His sugar internship has given him a sweet tooth for the industry. Among Chisholm’s goals are a seat someday on the American Crystal Sugar Company board.



Tamara Choat, 36, Terry, Montana, and her husband raise cattle and horses and own a butcher shop and meat processing plant. Her involvement runs the gamut from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and Montana Stockgrowers Association to membership in the Farm Bureau at county, state and national levels, to membership in chambers of commerce, alumni organizations and more.

Choat, an alumni of the Indiana Ag Leadership Program, has also served as a keynote speaker at annual meetings in the cattle industry.

She and her husband left corporate jobs in Indianapolis three years ago to move to Montana to raise cattle. They're now raising young children as well – and running their meat processing business.

As for leadership and growing her businesses going forward, Choat says she has lots of ideas. She knows this much – she wants to continue to be a leader in the business world in her community and state, and to continue to tell agriculture's story. As a product of youth agriculture activities, including 4-H and FFA, Choate also wants to create more activities for young people.



Justin Dammann, 34, Essex, Iowa, is a fourth-generation farmer who raises food grade yellow and white non-GMO corn, soybeans, hay and rye, along with managing a cow-calf operation along the rolling hills of southwestern Iowa. He started farming 14 years ago, aided by a Farm Service Agency beginning farmer loan.

Active in his local Page County Farm Bureau, he and his wife Jennifer were given the Young Farmer Achievement Award from the Iowa Farm Bureau in 2012. He also serves as a Farm and Food Ambassador for the Iowa Soybean Association and welcomes the chance to talk about farming to non-farmers and members of the media.

“Anytime we can provide a positive experience to someone who has never been on a farm, that's what we need to be doing,” says Dammann. “We are not perfect, but we don't have anything to hide.” He's concerned that, for far too long, agricultural groups have been playing defense, rather than having “a good offense” to share their story to non-farmers.

While volunteering in organizations takes time away from the farm and his family, which includes a young daughter and son, Dammann emphasizes the importance of getting involved in both community and state groups. In addition to the education gained,

he says the people he's met have become "almost like a second family" who can "help you understand that you are not the only one facing the same kinds of challenges and opportunities."



Kate Danner, 25, Roseville, Illinois, raises corn and soybeans with her father. She currently serves as an Illinois Soybean Association Soy Ambassador, a role that has helped to give her a view of what it would be like to serve on a commodity board. Earlier this year, Danner spoke in Washington, D.C., at the USDA Ag Outlook Forum about her path to a full-time career as vice-president of the farm operation her great-grandfather founded in 1901.

In July, Danner was recognized by the White House as a Champion of Change in Agriculture.

Danner believes it's important to be involved in leadership roles, because there are fewer and fewer farmers every day, with people becoming disconnected. She says, "Food is so secure that [people] don't have to think about where it's coming from."



Miguel Diaz, 27, Alamosa, Colorado, raises potatoes and barley and serves on the National Potato Council board of directors.

Diaz admits that as a student he didn't pay much attention in government class in high school, but he understands today the importance of getting his industry's grassroots messages to lawmakers and their staffs throughout the year.

He credits some of this understanding to his industry's program to help develop young leaders, the Potato Industry Leadership Institute. Diaz says, "Leadership programs are amazing!"



Zach Ducheneaux, 45, Eagle Butte, South Dakota, is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. He is the program director for the Intertribal Agriculture Council Technical Assistance Program and his tribe's delegate to the council. Ducheneaux was appointed by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to the USDA Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. He also serves on the board of the Eagle Butte Cooperative Society.

With his family, which includes a son and daughter, Ducheneaux raises cattle and quarter horses, and is starting a horsemanship intern program.

Involvement in leadership is important to Ducheneaux, not only as a farmer, but in his culture. As a Native American, it's important to him to improve the lot for the entire people, not just himself.

Ducheneaux says one of his goals is to train the next generation of leaders. One way he did so recently was by speaking at the Native Youth in Agriculture Summit held at the University of Arkansas.

Ducheneaux has some advice for young people looking toward a future in farming or ranching: “Careers in agriculture are more than just the guy out on the farm or ranch. Make connections. Don’t take ‘no’ for an answer. Don’t let someone else define your happiness.”



Stacie Euker, 33, Wiota, Iowa, raises cattle, hogs, corn and soybeans. She is president of her county Farm Bureau and pork producers group and is on the board of the Agricultural Development Division of the Iowa Finance Authority. She also was a member of a Farm Bureau Ag Leaders Institute.

Euker and her husband are now parents to a baby boy, but that hasn’t weakened her passion for being a voice in agriculture. She knows farmers will continue to have to respond to consumers’ needs – and the ag community will need to keep educating the public.

“We all have the same goals,” she says. “We want what’s best for our families.”



Kole Fitzpatrick, 31, Browning, Montana, is a member of the Blackfeet Tribe and a third-generation cattle rancher. He also has a trucking business, hauling cattle and hay. He works for the Intertribal Agriculture Council’s Technical Assistance Network and was appointed in 2013 to Secretary Vilsack’s Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers.

In addition to the roles Fitzpatrick has within Indian country and at the national level, he’s making a commitment to the agricultural future of his community, working with volunteers to start a 4-H fair and build a fairgrounds. It’s an effort that’s reaping dividends. “More kids in the community are getting into ranching,” Fitzpatrick says.

Fitzpatrick and his wife have a son and daughter. He says his goals are to keep on doing what he’s doing, without getting away from the production end of it. He explains how he balances it all: “It’s easy when you want to do things and love what you’re doing.”



Stacey Forshee, 42, Delphos, Kansas, raises cattle, alfalfa, corn, milo, soybeans and wheat.

Forshee sits on the board of the Kansas Farm Bureau, and got her start in leadership at the county level. She says she's always felt the political part of ag leadership was important, but on a trip to Topeka, the state capital, saw that the "legislators really valued [farm leaders'] thoughts." Later, on a county Farm Bureau presidents' trip to Washington, D.C., she says she "fell in love with that kind of connection with national leaders."

These days, Forshee often speaks on issues related to ag advocacy, and has joined Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-Kansas) in press conferences related to GMO labeling.

One of the reasons Forshee feels it's important for farmers to be involved as leaders is that "there just aren't that many of us [farmers] anymore." She recognizes the disconnect between the farm and non-farmers, even in the rural communities.

That's why she says to young people aspiring to leadership in agriculture, "You have a voice. Be sure you're not afraid to speak up and say what you feel."

Forshee and her husband have two daughters – one in college and one who recently earned her degree.



Jeff Fowle, 44, Etna, California, raises cattle, horses, hay and grain. Active on social media, he has more than 51,000 [Twitter](#) followers.

Fowle has served on the board of his county Farm Bureau since 1996. He serves on the California Farm Bureau Beef Commodity Advisory Committee, the state's Animal Health and Welfare Advisory Committee, the county planning commission, and more.

Fowle says he got his start in leadership in the 1990s when the Coho Salmon was listed as an endangered species. His local area is a habitat. Fowle says he got involved early to do what he could to ensure the financial sustainability of farms and ranches in the future.

For time management, Fowle follows the mantra, "Plan your work and work your plan." He agrees, it's probably not that simple, but says he does budget his time – and lives within the budget. In 2013, Fowle averaged one-and-a-half trips a month for speaking engagements. He's not taking to the road for speaking

engagements now, but instead focusing time on family. Fowle and his wife have a young son.



Jason Frerichs, 29, of Wilmot, South Dakota, a fourth-generation farmer and politician, got his start as an elected official in 2008 in the South Dakota House. Two years later he was elected to the state Senate, where he's now serving his second term.

Frerichs explains that, aside from the tradition of politics in his family, he got his start watching a South Dakota ballot initiative when he was in fifth grade – Amendment E, which concerned ownership and interest in farming in the state. The amendment, aimed at saving the family farm, passed.

Frerichs is still active on the farm, raising cattle and helping his brother, who focuses more on the crop side. To balance involvement on the farm and in politics, he tries not to be gone during the planting, harvest or calving seasons. He relies on help from family, neighbors and friends when he does have to be off the farm and is thankful for his generation's willingness to work together.



Patrick Frischhertz, 31, Plaquemine, Louisiana, was a “city kid” when he grew up in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. At college, he majored in history and education, then went on to law school. Today Frischhertz is directly involved in the day-to-day operations of a sugar cane plantation with his father-in-law, a seventh-generation farmer. He's also facing another new role, that of “dad.” Frischhertz and his wife just welcomed their first son.

As a member of the American Sugar Cane League, Frischhertz has visited Washington, D.C., on matters important to the industry. He is in Louisiana State University Ag Center's Agricultural Leadership Development Program, which exposes him to ag issues. He says, as one with fewer years in farming, what he learns in the program is “all new and exciting” to him.

It's helpful for Frischhertz when he needs to leave work to travel on behalf of the sugar interests that his staff keeps things running smoothly. “Everyone is like a Swiss Army knife and can step in and fill a void,” he says.



Brenda Frketich, 30, St. Paul, Oregon, raises grass seed and hazelnuts. In addition, she grows crimson clover, green beans, straw and wheat.

Frketich didn't plan to make a career of farming. After high school, she went to Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles to major in business. While there, "I realized how special this place [the family farm] was," she says. "I missed harvest. It broke my heart."

When Frketich talked to her father about moving back to the farm, he offered her a two-year internship. She says she's in her eighth year farming now, and her father has retired.

Frketich says in her family, living in a community of about 300 people, there was "never a question that you would be involved." She's also a firefighter and emergency medical technician, and is involved with her county Farm Bureau and Oregon Young Farmers and Ranchers.

Frketich believes there's a need for transparency in agriculture today, as consumers have a thirst for understanding how food is grown. She uses a [blog](#) and [Twitter](#) to talk about "hot" topics and heartwarming ones, such the Frketich's first son, who may someday be the fourth generation on the Oregon farm.



Colleen Gerke, 36, Platte City, Missouri, owns Jowler Creek Vineyard and Winery with her husband, a fifth-generation farmer. Vineyards are nothing new to Gerke, who was raised in California wine country, and neither is livestock. Living in a rural area, where her parents were teachers, Gerke was involved in 4-H and FFA and used the proceeds from her hogs to help pay for college.

Turning a cow pasture into habitat for wine grapes was something new for the California girl. Yet, just as the couple built the state's first vineyard and winery using "green technologies," Gerke is building a legacy as an advocate for agriculture and her industry.

She's the first female president of the Platte County Farm Bureau and serves on an agri-tourism committee. Agri-tourism is something Gerke knows. Her family hosts farm tours two weekends each month, drawing as many as 150 guests each tour from nearby Kansas City and the surrounding area.

Gerke also has been involved in ag leadership and advocacy through grape and wine organizations, and wants to stay involved in the organizations she's served.

Now with two young children, she also wants to make an impact where they are, so this ag communications major is calling upon her communication skills to promote her business and agriculture through websites and social media – in the Kansas City area and beyond, through a [website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#).



Will Gilmer, 35, Sulligent, Alabama, is often called the “singing dairyman.” He has a strong social media presence, with almost 7,500 followers on [Twitter](#), nearly 3,500 likes on [Facebook](#), and more than 100 videos on [YouTube](#). Gilmer also uses [Instagram](#) and has a [website](#) for his dairy.

Gilmer says his family’s tradition in farm organizations goes back a long ways. Not only his father and grandfather, but also his great grandfather, were active in their Alabama Farmers Federation programs.

Gilmer serves on the board of the county Farmers Federation and on the American Dairy Association of Alabama board. He’s been involved with the American Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher program on county and state levels. He was also a member of the inaugural class of his dairy cooperative’s leadership program.

Gilmer and his wife have two young sons, He’s involved in church and youth sports activities, as well, which he says gives him an opportunity to interact with a lot of people.

Whether through social media or in his community, Gilmer stresses the importance of relationship building to help consumers understand farming and issues important to it.



Zach Hunnicutt, 32, Giltner, Nebraska, is a fifth-generation farmer, raising corn, seed corn, popcorn and soybeans with his dad and brother. He’s the president of his county Farm Bureau, served as chair last year of the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee and is a member of Nebraska Corn Growers. He and his wife have two sons and a daughter.

Hunnicutt says his family has always been active in organizations, including the Farm Bureau and church leadership. Though his high school didn’t have an FFA chapter, he was involved in class government and an ambassador for the College of Agriculture when he attended the University of Nebraska.

He first joined the Farm Bureau a couple years after college when a friend invited him to a meeting. Hunnicutt has seen first-hand the power of a farm spokesperson's influence on trips to Capitol Hill.

Hunnicutt also serves on the AgChat Foundation board and is active in social media, presenting in 2013 at the South by Southwest Interactive (SXSW) mega-festival. He has more than 3,200 followers on [Twitter](#).

In talking about farming today, Hunnicutt says, "A key component now is to talk to non-traditional audiences. My dad and grandpa didn't have to do this."

One thing he and other farmer leaders today show those who don't understand farming is that the 21st century farmer is often someone with "an Android and an iPad," not an "old man in bib overalls."



Whitney Klasna, 27, Lambert, Montana raises cows, wheat, feed barley and hay along with her husband, Dylan, and his parents in the resource-rich northeastern area of the state.

Her political involvement spans a wide range of organizations, including Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE) where she has helped with social media, chairs the beef committee and also serves as vice president of the Montana chapter. She is involved with the U.S. Cattlemen's Association and serves as a member of Montana's Livestock Loss Board where she helps oversee a fund to compensate producers who lost livestock due to wolves or grizzly bears and to create incentives for producers to take preventative steps to decrease losses.

In 2013, she was selected to take part in the two-year Resource Education and Agriculture Leadership (REAL) Montana program, offering education and training in the agriculture and natural resource industries and taking her to places like Washington, D.C. and international destinations next year.

Being involved in state and national organizations "is a vital part of our success of our family farm," Klasna says. "Policies developed in Congress and at the state level have an incredible impact on us on the ground – especially with so many overbearing and overreaching regulations."



Jesse LaFlamme, 36, Monroe, New Hampshire, is CEO and co-owner of Pete and Gerry's Organics, which offers eggs from small family farms, like its own, to consumers.

LaFlamme serves on the American Egg Board, has served on the producers' advisory board for Humane Farm Animal Care, has served his county Farm Bureau and has worked with the Organic Standards Board and others on topics related to agriculture.

As an organic producer, this fourth-generation farmer believes it's important to serve in leadership roles to lend perspective where he can. Today, the egg farm, which has been in his family for four generations, offers organic eggs from about 30 family farms in the eastern United States, but it wasn't always like that. When LaFlamme was growing up, the family business used traditional egg production practices, but changed to cage-free, organic eggs produced without antibiotics, hormones, pesticides, GMOs or animal byproducts. Later, they became the first Certified Humane egg farm in the country.

Another reason LaFlamme is involved in leadership about the industry is his concern about the definition of "organic" in the United States. It's important, he believes, to be a voice for organic farmers by working with the USDA and Organic Trades Association to make sure what organic standards are and what they stand for. LaFlamme says he doesn't want to see the meaning of organic be diluted.

LaFlamme and his wife have two youngsters – a daughter and a son.



Kendra Lamb, 31, Oakfield, New York, is a social media advocate for agriculture. While the farm on which Lamb, a stay-at-home mom, and her husband are raising their two daughters is part of her husband's family dairy operation, Lamb has roots in the industry herself. She once served as a spokesperson as the New York State Dairy Princess.

Recently, as a voice of rural America, Lamb was asked by Rep. Chris Collins (R – New York) to testify about the need for more rural broadband.

Speaking for others in rural America is something Lamb takes seriously. As coordinator of a mom's group, she saw the hunger in other moms of young children to learn more about the food they feed their youngsters.

“We have a good story to tell,” Lamb says, and she set out to tell it. “We believe in a product enough to feed it to our own kids.” One of the ways Lamb tells the story of the dairy farm and its 6,000 cows is through a [Facebook](#) page. Another is the tours she hosts for preschoolers, scouts, church youth groups, leadership programs, and tour groups. The farm was even the stop once on a senior citizens’ “mystery tour.”

Balancing the social media isn’t as much of a challenge as it may seem, though. Lamb often takes photos as she and her young daughters walk through the barn. “It demonstrates we’re a family farm,” she says. With cell phones today, it’s easy to snap photos, and Lamb says others on the farm sometimes send pictures to her to post as well.



John Lee, 43, Little Rock, Arkansas, who grew up on a farm, purchased his first one six years ago. He grows corn, milo, peas, soybeans and wheat. Lee is a member of the Farm Bureau, and while he doesn’t sit on the board or belong to any grower groups, he says his leadership lies in a much-needed but informal effort with his peers.

Lee has joined with a group of other college-educated black farmers helping older farmers with some of the complexities of today’s farm environment.

He explains, “This is the older generation we grew up with,” and says many of these older farmers taught younger ones valuable lessons about the land and the profession. Now it’s time to give back.

From the previous generations, Lee and his fellow farmers learned what they didn’t learn in college – things like how to deal with the “what ifs” – farming’s uncertainties.

Yet, because some of the older farmers struggle with literacy problems, Lee and others of his generation help the older generation understand the complexities of crop insurance, farm management techniques and more.

Among the advice Lee offers to future generations of farmer leaders is this: “Agriculture offers lots of opportunities that pay above other [fields]. It’s not just about playing in the dirt.”

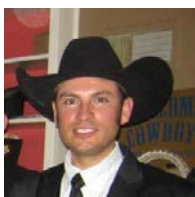


Joanna Lidback, 34, Westmore, Vermont, has a small dairy, grows hay and grass silage for her cattle, raises Jersey bull calves to sell for beef, and sells cow manure for compost. She's on the board of her county Farm Bureau, active in her local dairy coop and recently testified in front of a subcommittee for the U.S. House of Representatives.

In addition to working a full-time job for a farm credit association, tending to her farm, serving farm organizations and caring for her family, Lidback uses social media on behalf of agriculture. Her [blog](#), farm [Facebook](#) page, [Twitter](#) and Instagram help Lidback show a people farther and farther removed from the farm what happens there.

In February, Lidback partnered with other dairy farmers on a social media strategy using the hashtag [#farmlove](#). She and the others planned to use videos and photos to show the things they loved about farming. The campaign grew even larger than the group dreamed, gathering posts and views from all over the world.

Last time Lidback checked, #farmlove had more than 4 million impressions.



Boe Lopez, 32, Springer, New Mexico, is a fourth-generation cattle rancher, serving on the boards of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association and New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau. He is chair of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Young Cattlemen's Leadership Subcommittee. Lopez also serves his county Farm Bureau, county fair board and other organizations.

Though Lopez admits his free time is limited, he feels fortunate that his parents are supportive. He's got another person in his corner, a grandmother he calls his biggest supporter. Among the words of wisdom she's offered are to "get involved now; listen and learn."

Lopez says his grandmother also said, "You'll have ideas," but reminded him, "you don't have to reinvent the wheel."



Eric McClam, 28, and his father, both trained as architects, are building a new legacy as farmers raising 100 crops on 3.5 acres in the midst of a large metropolitan area – Columbia, South Carolina's state capitol – and from another 25 acres. McClam's sustainable urban farm, City Roots, provides produce to on-farm customers, farmer's markets, 100 restaurants, grocery stores and more.

McClam is on the board of the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association and served as a U.S. delegate to an international Slow Food conference in Turin, Italy.

Before he was on these boards, advocating for agriculture on a state, national or international level, McClam and his father took on another challenge – convincing the city of Columbia of the value of rewriting zoning regulations to allow agriculture as an accepted land use for vacant lots in underdeveloped areas. They were successful and their urban farm is now a tool through which they can reach out to discuss and educate on methods of farming.

McClam plans to stay involved at the local level and to continue to promote the profession through agri-tourism. In July, City Roots hosted a festival that drew 3,500. It also hosts farm tours for as many as 5,000 youngsters each year.

This young farmer leader gives youth this advice: “Farming is a viable career path due to the mounting desire for uniqueness,” he says. “There’s a need for more farmers; we’re not replacing them as fast as they’re dying off.”



Andrew Moore, 32, Resaca, Georgia, raises canola, sunflowers, barley, grain sorghum, winter oats and winter peas while producing vegetable oils and running a feed mill.

He serves on the U.S. Canola Association board and is a member of other farming, soybean and cattle organizations.

By serving in a leadership role, Moore is carrying on a family tradition just as he is by farming. He says both his grandfather and father have been involved in ag policy “for a long time.”

Moore’s advice to others considering leadership in farm organizations is, “You don’t always see the results of it. The benefit is somebody has to be the voice of agriculture.”



Josh Moore, 23, Parker, Arizona, is a member of the Colorado River Indian Tribe. The tradition of leadership runs deep in Moore’s family, so from the time he volunteered to serve as secretary of his 4-H club as a nine-year-old, he’s been committed to serving.

Moore says the 200,000-acre reservation where he was raised is a great agricultural hub, and he’s now starting to invest in farming there.

Moore, who is going to school for his masters in ag education, is also committed to making an investment in young people. From judging livestock to serving on the state board for the Arizona Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers to being involved with the Farm Bureau on a local level, it's important for him as a Native American to try to make himself as visible as possible so children on the reservation have a connection to agriculture.

As someone who says he has a “passion for youth,” he believes children on the reservation interested in agriculture “need someone to push them along.” He's done workshops, serves as a 4-H leader, and founded an organization for young farmers and ranchers at the University of Arizona, where he is a student.

Moore says he tells his 4-H kids, “Watch and learn as much as you can before you jump in. Keep learning and act like a pro; eventually you're going to be a pro.”



Tim Nilsen, 39, Wilton, California, is a third-generation farmer who raises turkeys and serves on the board of the California Poultry Federation. He's also been on the board of his county Farm Bureau and traveled to Washington, D.C., on policy issues.

Nilsen says it's important for farmers to be involved in industry leadership roles, not only to help shape rules and regulations but to gain rapport with consumers. He wants customers to feel good about the turkeys from his operation.

He'd like to see it easier for people like him to get into farming – and tells those who aspire for leadership to “go into it with eyes wide open, really stay involved, get to know your local legislators.”



Grant Noland, 30, Decatur, Illinois, is an eight-generation farmer, serving as a district director on the board of the Illinois Corn Growers Association. He's also on U.S. Representative Rodney Davis' Ag Advisory Board and was recently selected to the 2016 Illinois Agricultural Leadership Class.

Noland's family began farming in Macon County, Illinois in 1833, just three years after 21-year-old Abraham Lincoln moved with his family to a farmstead about eight miles away. Noland says his own involvement in farm organizations had roots in a service-minded household. His father, like Lincoln, spent time in the Illinois Legislature, while Grant has been more involved behind the scenes.

Noland raises corn and soybeans. He and his wife have a young son and daughter.



Odessa Oldham, 22, Lander, Wyoming, a member of the Navajo tribe, started raising her own sheep herd when she was three years old. These days she has 200 head of cattle, attends the University of Wyoming and works to encourage and inspire the next generation of Native American farmers.

While in high school, Oldham was the first Native American to run for the National FFA board.

One reason she thinks it's important to be a leader in agriculture is this: "A lot of individuals don't realize how important agriculture is or have any idea where food comes from," Oldham says. "We need to close that gap."

Another is that she wants to be a role model, especially to other young Native Americans, to get an education.

Oldham saw the seeds of one of her dreams reach maturity in July at the University of Arkansas when a gathering she'd long envisioned came to be. She watched as 50 youth came together for the inaugural Native Youth in Agriculture Summit for training in the legal and business complexities unique to Indian lands and agriculture.



Michele Payn-Knoper, 44, Lebanon, Indiana, is a professional speaker, registered Holstein breeder, author of the book, "No More Food Fights," and founder of the public Twitter conversations, #AgChat and #FoodChat. Payn-Knoper says that when she founded the chats in 2009, they were the second and third weekly chats on Twitter.

Through her business, Cause Matters, Inc., which Payn-Knoper started in 2001, she works to help agriculture have a better conversation around agriculture and food. Payn-Knoper presents for grower groups, farm organizations and conferences around the country. She says she got her start in ag advocacy through 4-H and FFA, as she saw the growing need for leadership in agriculture. Besides her [Cause Matters website](#) and [Gate to Plate blog](#), Payn-Knoper has a strong presence on social media. She has more than 20,000 [Twitter](#) followers, 6,000 [Facebook](#) likes, a [YouTube](#) channel and a [Pinterest](#) page. She serves on the board of directors of the Ag Chat Foundation.

Payn-Knoper, who has one daughter, says she'd give this leadership and political advocacy advice to young people looking

toward careers in agriculture: “Find your passion and try to build your life around your passion.”



Josh Pitigliano, 36, Tipton, California, is a fourth-generation farmer, raising almonds, pistachios, and wine grapes with his wife, brothers and parents on the farm where his great-grandfather once planted potatoes.

Pitigliano serves on the executive committee of the Tulare County Farm Bureau. Tulare County is one of the three largest agricultural producing counties in the nation and number one in dairy production.

One of Pitigliano’s goals going forward is to get word of what farmers do out to the masses – to urban people. “Growing food in America is a national security issue,” he says. “Farmers need to be here in America. If the masses don’t help, don’t embrace that, we’ve got a problem.”



Quint Pottinger, 25, New Haven, Kentucky, serves on the board of the Kentucky Soybean Association. He raises corn, soybeans, jalapeno peppers, snap beans, squash, sweet corn and tomatoes. Pottinger is on the board of the Kentucky Soybean Association and participated in an American Soybean Association DuPont Young Leaders program.

Pottinger thanks a persistent ag teacher for encouraging him to get involved in leadership roles, saying that’s what he needed to do if he really wanted to make a difference.

Looking to the future, this soybean farmer would like to take his leadership skills beyond his native Kentucky. Pottinger says he’d like to be involved in the United Soybean Board and the U.S. Soybean Export Council.



Seth Pratt, 23, Blackfoot, Idaho, is a Noble Agricultural Scholar at the Noble Foundation and a fifth-generation livestock and cattle rancher. Pratt served as National FFA western region vice president in 2011-2012 and is now finishing his education at the University of Idaho.

While many of the young leaders are balancing home and leadership responsibilities, Pratt is also juggling school, internships and opportunities such as his work with the Noble Foundation. Yet, there are times when he makes it a point to be home on the ranch, such as when it’s time to move cattle.

His number one piece of leadership advice to young in agriculture is, “First and foremost, make sure things are in order back home.”



Adam Redland, 25, Ten Sleep, Wyoming, a cattle rancher and auctioneer, is a member of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association.

With a family tradition of leadership and a personal path that includes serving as a captain in sports and president of his class in high school, Redland got his start in the cattlemen's group when he was at an auctioneering competition four years ago.

Redland says he's always been interested in politics. Now, when the opportunity to be the voice of agriculture presents itself, he sees it as "talking for everyone that pulls a plow or herds a cow."



Vena A-dae Romero, 33, Lanai, Hawaii, is a member of the Cochiti Pueblo and Kiowa tribes. She farms with her family in New Mexico, raising blue corn and varieties of Pueblo corn, and with her husband's family in Hawaii, growing taro.

Romero is also a Princeton University graduate, an attorney, and the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship to study the Maori people of New Zealand. She is a member of the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance and Native American Farmers Advisory Board for New Mexico.

Romero's grandfather was a leader among his people. When construction of the Cochiti Dam flooded agricultural land used by their tribe, Romero was just a child. Yet she remembers playing nearby as her grandfather and other leaders discussed the loss of the land for farming, which was vital to the tribe's livelihood.

Romero says it was a "very intimate and powerful time" in her life, as this community dependent on agriculture struggled with the question, "Who would we be without farming?" As she began to develop an interest in a profession that could help her to be a voice of her culture, she found a mentor who encouraged her to pursue her dreams of law school.

Romero and her husband have a young daughter who is often with her as she travels in efforts related to agriculture and Native Americans.

Romero worries today about people – on and off the reservation – so removed from agriculture that they don't really understand where their food comes from. She's working to sow seeds of interest in agriculture in today's young people.

"After all," Romero says, "farming is about getting our hands dirty, and there is a simple kind of happiness in that."



Geoff Ruth, 30, Rising City, Nebraska, is the chair of the Nebraska Soybean Association. He raises corn and soybeans.

Ruth says he had some experience with ag leadership even before he was old enough to lead himself. In 2001-2002, his father was the president of the American Soybean Association. “Tagging along” to meetings in St. Louis and to the Commodity Classic gave the younger Ruth a taste of some of what he does today.

Ruth knows what leadership entails, both at the local and national level. He and his wife have three young children – two girls and a boy. Right now, he says, with little ones at home, he’s focusing his ag leadership efforts on the state level and serving on his local school board.



David Schemm, 43, Sharon Springs, Kansas, raises wheat, grain sorghum and corn in a farming operation started when his grandparents came to the U.S. from Germany in 1928.

Schemm is the secretary/treasurer of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and past-president of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers. He’s also served on his local school board for 12 years.

Schemm says when he moved back from college, he saw a need in his small rural community for people to step up into roles and serve. He illustrates his philosophy on leadership by using circles. Schemm believes it’s good to stretch beyond our own circle and that of our family. A leader, he says, expands his circle into the community, knows what’s good for it and helps with it. A great leader expands beyond the circle into the industry.

Involvement beyond the family and community and into the industry at the national level has had Schemm on the road to the nation’s capital in the past. As he moves into other positions of increasing responsibility with NAWG, he’ll be away from home even more.

But service and leadership is something he and his wife, who have two sons, have discussed. They decided early on that, as parents, they wanted to lead by example.

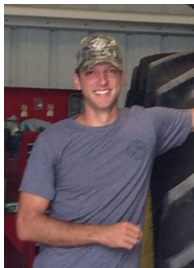


Justin Sobie, 30, Hollywood, Florida, raises sugar cane, sod, citrus and vegetables and is involved in a number of groups and boards. Sobie has worked closely with his 87-year-old grandfather for the past 15 years, learning the business and making decisions in a large, diverse agricultural operation.

Sobie is directly involved with many groups and boards on which his grandfather serves – from a water control district board to the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida.

Sobie's path to leadership has roots spanning generations, continents and countries. Because of Hitler's influence in Europe, Sobie's grandfather, like many, fled his native Poland in 1936, following relatives to Cuba. While there he started a business and created a family, but in 1960 under Castro's regime, it was time to move again – this time to America, "with a suitcase, a couple of dollars and a family of five," Sobie says. Today, the family's business spans nearly 25,000 acres.

"We have to have the younger generation know what happened in the past," Sobie says. "We have to know where our roots come from."



Alex Tiedtke, Orlando, 31, Florida, raises sugar cane, sweet corn and silage corn in the Florida Everglades and has participated in the American Farm Bureau Federations Young Farmers & Ranchers program.

Tiedtke is involved in a sugar growers coop and says trips to Capitol Hill a couple times each year since high school have helped him build relationships important to his industry and his operation.

He says to other young people pursuing careers in agriculture, "It is paramount that you cooperate with other farmers/ranchers in your region and nationally. Because of the existing laws and competitive nature of the American agricultural markets, the only farmers who are successful are those who are able to produce foodstuffs affordably and safely."

Tiedtke's concern, he says, is that "without a group effort among farmers, our story will not be heard."



Jeff VanderWerff, 34, Sparta, Michigan, grows apples, corn, peaches, soybeans and wheat.

As president of Ag Chat Foundation VanderWerff, has an active presence on social media. He has 2,500 [Twitter](#) followers, uses a [Facebook](#) page to raise awareness about agriculture, and posts videos about his farm operation on [YouTube](#).

VanderWerff got his start in ag leadership serving the Farm Bureau at the county level. He's also served on state level committees and on the Michigan Farm Bureau State Young Farmer Committee.

VanderWerff says he liked politics before he began serving as a leader. Once he realized farm organization's involvement could help create policy, he says he was hooked. VanderWerff has traveled to both his state's and the nation's capital as a voice of agriculture, as well as internationally.

As he's seen the value of being involved and growing connections when he represents agriculture to lawmakers and consumers, VanderWerff says to those aspiring to leadership in agriculture, "Building relationships will benefit you more than you ever know."



Nicole Van Vleck, 46, Sacramento, California, manages her family's rice operation in Sutter County. This former political science and history major didn't plan to come back to the farm when she went to the University of California at Los Angeles, but intended to go to law school. Ironically, her husband, who planned to farm after college, became an attorney instead.

Before the farm pulled her back, Van Vleck did legislative work on land use, the environment and agriculture at a law firm. Her interest in politics and experience in the legal workplace are both tools upon which she can call in leadership roles, while ag leadership classes provided ideas on how she could serve the industry. Van Vleck is a graduate of both the California Agricultural Leadership Program and the USA Rice Leadership Program.

Van Vleck is on the board of the California Rice Commission and co-chairs the USA Rice Federation's Rice Quality Task Force. She also serves in other roles in her community, in the rice industry, and related to water issues. Van Vleck, who now travels to the nation's capital several times a year, says she began to transition to national work a few years ago, as her son and daughter, now teenagers, got older.

This leader encourages her children and other young people in agriculture to take advantage of internships at the state and federal level, participate in leadership groups and “go to D.C.”



Keith Wedgworth, 38, Belle Glade, Florida, raises sugar cane, green beans, sweet corn and rice.

Leadership is a family tradition for Wedgworth. His grandfather served as president of a sugar cooperative for 50 years. “Big shoes to fill,” Wedgworth says.

When the younger Wedgworth returned to the farm after college, he says he started from the ground up. The fourth-generation farmer is now vice-president of his county Farm Bureau and serves on the soil and water advisory boards at the state level. He participated in and serves on the board of the University of Florida Wedgworth Agricultural Leadership Program. He’s also active in his community at the local level through Rotary and area leadership programs.

Wedgworth and his wife have a two-year-old son. “Agriculture is the best industry out there,” he says. “It’s one of the last family-oriented.”



Antron Williams, 31, Rowesville, South Carolina, is a sixth-generation farmer and a full-time soil conservationist. He raises corn, cotton, grain sorghum, oats, peanuts, soybeans and wheat.

Williams served the National Peanut Board on its Diversity Advisory Council, following in the footsteps of a late uncle, who served the organization. He is involved in party politics at the local level, Farm Bureau and County Young Farmers chapter president.

Williams stresses the importance of one-on-one contact with elected officials to help influence policy in the face of changing rural demographics. He says farmers are the best ones to tell agriculture’s story. If not, he says, “Others will tell it for you – not as it is.”



Stuart Ziehm, 34, Buskirk, New York, is a dairy farmer, who serves on his county Farm Bureau board and town planning commission. He’s also served his local land trust and been involved with Farm Bureau young farmer committees.

Ziehm and his wife have served as delegates from their local dairy cooperative to the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) meeting. The couple, who have two small children, chair the NMPF Young Cooperative Program.

Ziehm explains that his parents taught responsibility “at a very young age,” doing chores first – even on special days, such as Christmas. In the dairy business, “no matter what, you have to care for the animals,” he says. Ziehm believes that sense of responsibility carried over, setting the stage for leadership today.

The New York dairyman urges young people interested in ag leadership to build personal relationships with legislators, so lawmakers will remember them.

Serving with pride

As Agri-Pulse spoke with these farmers across the country, over-arching themes were the love of their work and the land on which they practice it and the commitment they have to spreading the word about this profession essential to Americans and the world.

All that and one more thing: Ben Boyd put into words what many expressed in other ways. As he spoke of his father, Boyd said, “He’s really proud to be a farmer, and so am I.”

Learn more

Read earlier articles in our “Packing political punch in rural America” series:

1. [Digging into the Demographics: Will fewer farmers still be able to deliver political punch?](#)
2. [Farm leaders crave comfort and clout in new coalitions](#)
3. [PACs pave the way for greater political influence in rural America](#)
4. [Farmers can still flex muscles in mid-term elections](#)

#30

For more news, go to www.agri-pulse.com.