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# Ag Link

May - June 2008

A newsletter of:  
**UW Extension**

**THE CHAMBER**  
WAUSAU REGION  
Partnership for Progressive Agriculture

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### JUNE

**June 1 – June Dairy Breakfast held at Blue Ridge Dairy**  
(see article)

**June 6-8 – Marshfield Dairyfest, Marshfield**

**June 10 – Grain Market Trend Seminar** (see article)

**June 10-11 – Wisconsin Grazing Schools – River Falls**

Designed to teach producers, educators and agency staff the basics of management intensive grazing with a hands-on approach. These two-day, intensive workshop will provide opportunities for indepth discussions, field exercises, and reference materials that cover both livestock and agronomic topics related to grazing. The program is available to anyone. The cost is \$75 per person (\$35 for 2nd person from same farm) includes meals. For more information or to register contact Tom Cadwallader at (715) 536-0304.

**June 20-22 – 19th Annual Energy Fair** has shown 190,000 fairgoers how to change the world while having fun. The Energy Fair is the world's largest renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable living educational event of its kind. The Energy Fair features hundreds of workshops and exhibits all emphasizing clean energy & sustainable living and is fun for the whole family. Located at the Midwest Renewable Energy Association, Custer, Wis.

**June 24-25 – Wisconsin Grazing Schools – Gleason**

Designed to teach producers, educators and agency staff the basics of management intensive grazing with a hands-on approach. These two-day, intensive workshop will provide opportunities for indepth discussions, field exercises, and reference materials that cover both livestock and agronomic topics related to grazing. The program is available to anyone. The cost is \$75 per person (\$35 for 2nd person from same farm) includes meals. For more information or to register contact Tom Cadwallader at (715) 536-0304.

### June Dairy Breakfast

It is almost that time of year for the June Dairy Breakfast. This year, it will be held on Blue Ridge Dairy owned by Mark and Ben Zimmermann, from 8 am to 1 pm. The menu includes scrambled eggs (with ham and cheese), pancakes, sausage, donut holes, cheese, milk, coffee and Culver's sundaes. There is more to do than just eating the delicious meal. Get a tour of the farm, take part in the educational tent, participate in the kiddie tractor pull, or look at the farm equipment. There is something for the whole family. Directions to the farm: Take Highway 52 east of Wausau approximately 6 miles to Junction Road. Continue east 1.5 miles to Sunrise Road. Turn left (north) at Sunrise. The farm is the first property on the right (east) side of the road. Watch for signs.

We are also still looking for volunteers to help make the day a success. These people help with set up, parking, ticket collection, helping with a variety of adult and children's activities, clean up and more. All volunteers will receive a complimentary breakfast. For more information contact Melissa Klein at the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce [mklein@wausuachamber.com](mailto:mklein@wausuachamber.com) or call (715) 848-5948.

## Farm City Dinner Recap

Over 300 people attended the 76th annual Farm City Dinner to celebrate Marathon County Agriculture. Century Farms and the Outstanding Young Farmer awards were presented. The Farm Progress Days Scholarships were awarded to Melissa Ploeckelman of Stensonville and Travis De Wolfe of Mosinee.

This year there were six farms that were recognized for their achievements that began 100 years ago.



**Marilyn Dulak**  
**Dulak Family Farm, LLP** is owned by Marilyn Geurink Dulak. The farm was purchased in 1908, by Henry Geurink. Floyd Geurink, Henry's son, assumed ownership in 1957

and farmed until 1976 when Ted and Marilyn Dulak purchased the farm. Ted and Marilyn were recipients of the Marathon County Young Farmer. Son Fredrick became partner in the Dulak Family Farm, LLP in 1996. In 2004 son Benjamin Dulak joined and managed the dairy herd. On September 19, 2007 Ted succumbed to multiple sclerosis, but his memory lives on in the family farm.



**Fredrick T. Dulak and Benjamin J. Dulak** own their family farm near Ringle. William Reimes traveled to Ringle in December 1908 with Henry Geurink. William's son Alfred, took over farming in

August of 1939. Upon Alfred's death in 1970, his son Marvin began to farm the homestead. Due to health concerns, Marvin's cousins, Fredrick and Benjamin Dulak helped out. Marvin eventually sold his herd and auctioned the machinery in 1995. He rented the barn and land to Fred and Ben, who in 2000 purchased the 60 acres.



**James and Barbara Pagel**  
The Blue Jay Angus Farm, is owned by James L. and Barbara J. Pagel of Wausau. Herman Pagel purchased a 160 acre block of land in 1908 that was divided between sons Dietrich and

Henry. Dietrich Pagel became the sole owner of the land in 1922. Property ownership transferred to James in 1960. At one time the farm had dairy cattle then beef cattle. Cash cropping

still continues on the land. The farm is currently listed as a partner on the membership roll of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA.



**Herbert Sr. and Mary Seeger** reside on their century farm located near Edgar. Paul and Marie Seeger began farming in 1907. Their son Herbert Sr. and his wife Mary purchased the 80 acres on March 30, 1950.

The family milked 72 cows and had about 80 youngstock until 2002 when the animals were sold. Currently, they rent out the cropland, rotating corn and soybeans.



**Harvey and Rosemary Soczka**, the Soczka family farm is located in the town of Rietbrock near Edgar. It was homesteaded by John Soczka in 1906. At that time the land was entirely forested, so John built all the farm buildings. The main dairy

barn was lost in a summer storm in 1964 and was rebuilt. In 1965, John's son Harvey purchased the farm. Harvey and his wife Rosemary raised four children on the farm. They purchased another farm nearby in the '70's and it became part of the family operation, bringing total tillable acres to 240. Currently, Harvey's son, Kenneth rents the farm and raises heifers and a small herd of milking cows.



**The Rick and Ginger Urmanski** farm is located near Edgar. In 1888 Rick's great grandfather, August Urmanski Sr. purchased the farm, which at the time was a log barn. The farm was handed down to August and

Emma Urmanski who operated the farm until 1947 when their son, George, and his wife, Lottie, took over. Their sons Ray and Rick bought the cattle and machinery while renting the farm, until the death of George and Lottie in 1996. Ray decided to leave the farm in 1998 so Rick and his wife Ginger bought the farm. Today the Urmanskis crop 450 acres of corn and alfalfa. They are milking 110 cows and have 100 youngstock. It was Rick's desire to farm that kept it going all these years.



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**Brazil Trip – March 09... stay tuned for details.**

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## Cisar is 2008 Ag Ambassador Intern



Nikole Cisar was selected as this year's Ag Ambassador Intern for the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce. The Ag Ambassador is responsible for sharing agriculture's message to groups like the Kiwanis, Rotary, County Board and child care centers. In addition to these presentations, the Ag Ambassador serves as the coordinator of the Ag Adventure tent at

the Wisconsin Valley Fair July 29 – August 3. Nikole grew up in Oconto on a 300 cow registered dairy. Currently she is attending UW-River Falls double majoring in dairy science and marketing/communications with an agriculture emphasis. She will graduate in December. Last summer she interned with the Wisconsin State Fair agriculture department. Nikole will be starting her new position at the end of May. If you are interested in having Nikole speak at a meeting or event, please contact Melissa Klein at [mklein@wausauchamber.com](mailto:mklein@wausauchamber.com) or (715) 848-5948.

## NTC Agriculture Programs in Full Force

- ♦ Did you know that Idaho Potatoes generates \$2.5 billion of economic activity for the state—Wow.
- ♦ Did you know that the citrus of Florida accounts for \$9.0 billion of that states economic activity—Wow.
- ♦ BUT, did you know that dairy in the state of Wisconsin generates \$20.6 billion of economic Activity—WOW!! —that is why we are "Americas Dairyland!"

Northcentral Technical College realizes the importance of the dairy industry to the state. To help educate the next generation of dairy producers, the two-year associate degree in Dairy Science Management begins Fall of 2008. In addition to the program we have certificates in Dairy Science, Agronomy, Agriculture Business, Cheese and Milk Processing, Veterinary Science, Introduction to Agriculture and Dairy Grazing. After the completion of the \$5.8 million dairy learning lab -- Dairyland State Academy -- students, producers, and the community will have access to cutting-edge technology, through classes and workshops, to enhance community awareness and student learning. Through these educational components, we will continue to be "America's Dairyland" for years to come. Also, we have three new certificates in the Horticulture area -- Horticultural Sales, Nursery and Landscape, and Greenhouse and Floral.

These are exciting times for Agriculture and NTC so enroll today and be part of a great team!!

## Marathon County to Host Wisconsin Farm Technology Days in 2011

On April 9, the Wisconsin Farm Technology Days Board of Directors named Marathon County as the host for the 2011 show. A resolution passed by the Marathon County Board in December 2007 provides initial funding and authorization to host the event. The local delegation presenting the bid to host included: Sandi Cihlar, Mosinee dairy producer; Keith Langenhahn, Marathon County Board Chair and Marathon dairy and ginseng producer; Tim Buttke, M&I Bank and Partnership for Progressive Agriculture Chair; Melissa Klein, Agriculture Coordinator for the Wausau Region Chamber and Northcentral Technical College; and Mike Wildeck, Director/Dairy Agent, Marathon County UW-Extension.

Wisconsin Farm Technology Days (WFTDs) is the state's largest outdoor agricultural show. The annual three-day event showcases the latest improvements in production agriculture, including practical applications of recent research findings and technological developments. Last year's show in Green County was expected to be the last fall show. Future Wisconsin Farm Technology Days show are expected to occur in July.

The show's organizing structure, WFTDs, Inc., is a non-profit, educational organization. At the host county level, the University of Wisconsin-Extension coordinates the events with the cooperation of the host county and many volunteers under the direction of the general manager.

The Marathon County Extension and Education Committee will begin forming the Executive Committee for the 2011 show at their May 14 meeting. Nominations, including self-nominations, may be submitted to Mike Wildeck, Marathon County UW-Extension at (715) 261-1239. It is hoped that a host farm or farms will be selected by late this year, or January 2009.



## Outstanding Young Farmers

To be eligible for the award, applicants need to be age 37 or younger and receive at least 2/3 of their income from farming. Any agricultural enterprise is eligible and the applicant can either be the farm owner or an operator involved in the business. Each applicant was evaluated on the progress in their agricultural career, soil and water conservation practices they implement, as well as their involvement in community activities.



**Kat Becker and Tony Schultz** of Athens are this year's Outstanding Young Farmers. Tony had always dreamed of continuing the

family farming tradition until his parents decided to sell the cows during his senior year of high school. After being pushed by his mother, Tony went to college and received his Bachelors degree from UW-Madison. Kat, originally from New York City, had always dreamed of having her own farm some day. She has a Bachelors degree in Agriculture and Life Sciences from Cornell University and Masters in Rural Sociology from UW-Madison. After meeting Kat, Tony decided to move back to the family farm and began raising Scottish highland cattle, Herefords and Galloway cattle. Today the farm operation consists of approximately 120 acres of land with 90 acres in permanent pasture. Stoney Acres Farm is part of the Community Supported Agriculture and is moving toward organic certification. Kat and Tony will represent Marathon County at the Wisconsin Outstanding Young Farmer competition in January, 2009.

## Grain Market Trends for 2008 – A seminar looking at the forces shaping them and strategies to manage their influences

With the extreme volatility of agricultural commodity markets, both buyers and sellers are and will continue to face some tough decisions on establishing contracts for the upcoming year's crop. Although it is still too early to forecast what the markets may bring as the crops come off the field, it is possible to look at the various trends that may shape those markets. UW-Extension Agricultural Marketing Specialist Brenda Boetel will cover those market shaping trends and lead a discussion on potential risk management strategies people on both sides of the grain market may want to consider. Breakfast is included in the cost.

**When:** Tuesday, June 10  
**Time:** 7:30 am to 9 am  
**Where:** Northcentral Technical College cafeteria

**Speaker:** Dr. Brenda Boetel  
UW-Extension Agricultural Commodity Marketing Specialist UW-River Falls  
**Cost:** \$20 pre-registration or \$25 at the door

The seminar is hosted by the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce Partnership for Progressive Agriculture Economic Development/Advocacy committee and Northcentral Technical College in cooperation with UW-Extension.

To register for this event call Northcentral Technical College at (715) 675-3331 ext 4940. The seminar registration number is 11107. If you have questions feel free to contact Melissa Klein at Northcentral Technical College [klein@ntc.edu](mailto:klein@ntc.edu) or by phone (715) 803-1671.

## Employee Survey Conducted on Large Dairies

Last summer, UW-Extension collaborated with the Program on Agricultural Technology Studies at UW-Madison to conduct a survey of dairy employees and employers in Fond du Lac and Sheboygan counties. The information gathered provides insight to the issues and opportunities that exist within Wisconsin's dairy workforce.

Dairies were randomly selected from a list of farms with 200 or more cows. Such farms currently produce more than 41% of all milk produced in Wisconsin. All workers (309) from the selected dairies were interviewed, as well as one of the owners or managers (34).

The main objective of the survey was to document key characteristics of dairy employment and the experiences of workers in the industry. The study was structured around questions relating to work and family life, interaction in the community, language skills, and career advancement. Another objective was to compare the perceptions of employers and employees with respect to various aspects of the workplace. The following are some of the findings.

**Workplace training:** Sixty-five percent of employees reported receiving training when they started their current job, and 96 percent who received training felt it was adequate to perform the job. Furthermore, nearly 80 percent of the workforce

expressed interest in learning advanced skills, such as animal health care or machinery operation. This strong interest in learning advanced skills puts a premium on the bilingual language abilities of dairy employees and management.

**Language skills:** Although only one-quarter of employers cited communication as a problem on the farm, many were quick to note that more advanced job skills require fluency or near-fluency in English. The survey found only 22 percent of employees would classify their English as good or fluent. In order to capitalize on this interest to learn advanced skills, language deficiencies need to be addressed. Ninety percent of the employees who had not taken any language classes, expressed interest in improving their second language. This study highlights the importance of creating more effective language training so that employers can take advantage of employee interest in learning advanced skills.

The survey yielded a wealth of data and statistics about dairy employment on larger farms. A complete report is available online at <http://marathon.uwex.edu/ag/pubs/index.html> or from Marathon County UW-Extension upon request. According to Mike Wildeck, Extension Dairy Agent, results from a similar report will be available in the coming months from dairies located in the Marathon, Shawano, and Clark County region.

## Conflict in the Farm Business Can be Positive

Discussions about the future of a farm are not always easy, especially when there are multiple families involved. Even when communication between all members of the farm management team has been good, there are often difficult decisions that need to be made and avoiding conflict may not be possible. There is nothing wrong with a little healthy conflict over differing ideas. Mixing and matching various ideas is where innovation comes from. When discussions turn from a healthy debate over various options to a negative battle, it usually means someone's interests or feelings were not taken into consideration. If they were, they weren't being respected. Once communication breaks down and relationships begin to sour it is tough to turn things around.

One of the best ways to avoid negative conflicts from the start is to get the help of someone outside the farm to act as a facilitator to make sure there is healthy discussion between all members of the farm business. While some farm businesses may be lucky enough to have someone within who can be an impartial facilitator or mediator, it is very difficult to have someone involved in the business play such a role because they are usually too close to the situation.

There are a variety of people that may be able to serve as a facilitator. Some attorneys have a niche for helping businesses go through transitions. Rather than advocating for a particular member of the business they work on behalf of the farm business itself. There are even a few farm financial consultants who can step out of their financial advisory role and take on the job of facilitator. Another possible source is the Wisconsin Farm Mediation and Arbitration Program of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Although this free program was originally set up to help farmers deal with an existing conflict, any good mediator will tell you that it is much easier and more pleasant to help people constructively manage conflicts rather than deal with them once things have broken down.

If you would like more information on how the Wisconsin Farm Mediation and Arbitration Program may be able to assist, call them at (800) 942-2474. If you would like some tips on how to handle difficult conversations positively you can contact Lincoln and Marathon County Ag Development Agent Tom Cadwallader at (715) 536-0304 or (715) 261-1240. Tom has over ten years of experience teaching and consulting conflict management techniques in a wide variety of situations.