



Strengthening Agriculture

**2019 Planning & Advisory Committee**

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Hello Everyone and 2019,

Harvest is finally finished and what unusual fall weather we had but it is Michigan. It made it hard to know what to wear some days since it changed from morning to night. It also made for some grumpy farmers that were sure they would never get done before the snow came. Many of you can relate, but somehow they got it all in and finished. I hope you all had a special Thanksgiving and Christmas with your family and loved ones and made some wonderful memories. I had a milestone in my life where I am officially a retired lady now.

Many of us are so glad 2018 is over. Hoping and praying that 2019 will be so much better. The 2019 Symposium is going to be wonderful. We are going to stay at the Hilton Garden Inn in Benton Harbor with so many places to visit where we have never been before. We have new things to see and do while we are there. The speakers that have been secured, sound very interesting and I am sure we will learn lots of new things. I want to thank our fabulous committee for the hard work they have put in so far, to narrow down the many ideas to the best ones for us to enjoy,

The Bus trip was a difficult one to narrow down for our committee, but it looks like they have again done a fabulous job. They may have flowers, drones, hops, culture, and wine involved. You never know what the bus committee will have lined up for us, but you know you don't want to miss it.

The registration brochure once again can be found in with this newsletter. We ask that you read it carefully, as we have made a few changes to it. Listed there you will find the many diverse topics the speakers will discuss and a special speaker, Evelyn Smallbladder. You don't want to miss anything for 2019. There are some final details our committee is still working on to make it another perfect Symposium. Please check on our Facebook page for any changes or updates. If you see any of our **sponsors** please let them know how very much we appreciate them. Without sponsors, we would not be able to put the program on that we do.

Hoping to see you all at 2019 Symposium in March.

*Debbie Rasmussen*

Debbie Rasmussen  
Chairperson  
(616) 824-5306



**2019 FWS  
Planning  
Committee**

I have an exciting line-up of speakers confirmed for FWS 2019, representing a wide range of topics gleaned from surveys and suggestions. Please continue to let the committee know of your ideas!

**Katie Dilse**, from Scranton, North Dakota, is a business owner, wife, supervisor of her family's farm management training program (AKA—Mom to four sons), small grains farmer, and Big Rig driver. She brings her life experiences to the stage and shares her energy and dynamic spirit. Just as her farm helps to feed the world, Katie's passion for life will feed your soul. Her audiences draw motivation from her message on the business of life. Katie combines her "Top 40—Under 40" business leadership with the gusto of a Farm and Ranch Guide Country Woman of the Year finalist. She's a vibrant keynote speaker spreading a message packed with humor, insights, and empowerment.



Her morning presentation is called "Life is a Highway—Roll On!" Katie emphasizes that a happy life can depend on an efficient operation, a little GPS guidance, and keeping an eye on the dashboard. Production means dollars, but living makes "sense". Fill your tank, make it your own ride, equip yourself for adventure, and triumph in the detours.

After lunch, Katie will present a more informal, interactive workshop called "When the Scale Tips." The scale to balance farm, family, and business is rarely perfect. A crazy farm life can be the birthplace of resilience. Set healthy boundaries, and let your core values guide you and block distractions.

**D. Jeffrey Noel**, Corporate Vice President, Communications and Public Affairs, Whirlpool Corporation, has been confirmed to give the "Welcome to Benton Harbor" address. Surveys have suggested including an icebreaker to get to know others. **Dann Sytsma**, creator and coach of Improv Effects, Kalamazoo MI, promises to accomplish this goal with his presentation *Starting with, "Yes, and . . ."*, an experience that helps set the foundation for a culture of stronger collaboration, positive communication and more efficient problem-solving.

The popular **Producer Panel** returns, with three Berrien

County farmers scheduled to give overviews of their operations, challenges and successes. FWS plans to have **Erica Burke** of Hillside Orchards; **Matt Schilling** of Greg Orchards & Produce; and **Trevor Meachum**, President of Vegetable Growers Ass'n.

There was considerable interest in the social issue **Human Trafficking**—a complex and sensitive subject that is under the radar to many Michigan residents. We are fortunate to be able to have three experts from the field give us an overview: **Kathy Maitland**, Executive Director of Michigan Abolitionist Project (MAP) of SE Michigan; State Senator **Judy Emmons**, 33rd District, Sheridan MI; and a **trafficking survivor** who will tell her story.

We are looking forward to hearing the story of 29-year-old **Pauline Wendzel**, just elected to the 79<sup>th</sup> House District, scheduled to give our legislative update on Friday morning. Pauline is from a 4-generation local farming family.

Highlighting Friday's session will be the presentation of **Dr. Alexandra Solomon** of **Northwestern University**, Northbrook, Illinois, where she is a Clinical Assistant Professor and Staff Therapist at the Dept. of Psychology and Family Institute. As a sought-after speaker and source on multiple relationship topics, Alexandra has led presentations for several national organizations and is a regular faculty member at the Psychotherapy Networker Symposium, the largest mental health conference in the country. Alexandra will talk about the key principles of thriving relationships, covering spouses, parent/child, and friendships, using her ability to connect with audiences across generations and professional and educational backgrounds, in a way that is insightful, warm, and relevant. Her book, "**Loving Bravely**" will be available for purchase.



FWS 2019 will conclude on a light note, with clean, candid comedy about life's awkward moments from entertainer **Denise Gutenschwager** of Flat Rock MI, using her alter-ego, Evelyn Smallbladder.

## FWS 2019 Bus Tour Program by Emelee Rajzer

We are very excited to be in the Southwest part of the state in 2019. Southwest Michigan is rich in agricultural diversity and the bus tour will highlight several agricultural industries that are located in the area.



One of the stops this year will be Sawyer Garden Center, located in Sawyer. Founded in 1986, Barry and Linda Patejdl started a small garden center that has grown to be a destination garden center of Harbor Country. Along with trees, shrubs, bedding plants, they also offer apparel, gourmet foods, fresh produce, wine, craft

beers and spirits. They strive to offer the best locally grown produce, along with many other great Michigan-made products.

Hop Head Farms, located in both Hickory Corners and Baroda, was established in 2011.

Their goal was to supply the Midwest craft beer community with high quality Michigan hops. They currently have over 500 acres of hops in



production located throughout the Midwestern United States. In 2016, they added a second processing facility in Baroda, to double their production capacity. We are very excited to tour the Baroda processing facility.

With the "Lake Effect" being very beneficial to fruit growers in the area, fruit farms have been established for well over 100 years. 12 Corners Vineyards was founded by a small group of friends that wanted to grow wine grapes in the Twelve Corners neighborhood. Situated on a picturesque 115 acre estate, the grape plantings include Riesling, Cabernet Frac, Merlot, Chardonnay and Traminette. We will experience the tasting room on our tour.



The North Berrien Historical Museum showcases the history of the northern part of Berrien County. A few years ago, one of the largest Agricultural packaging suppliers donated their historical museum pieces to the Museum. From bushel basket making machines to all other aspects of fruit packaging,

the exhibit is amazing to tour. We welcome you to take a step back in history, when all fruit and vegetables were packaged in wooden baskets or boxes.

### Thursday Night Options

### FWS Committee

Please watch Facebook for options available for Thursday Night. The committee is working hard to arrange several options for the group.

In addition to FWS organized options, there is plenty to do in the "Twin Cities."

- Shop Downtown St. Joseph
- Catch a movie at Celebration Cinema (next to hotel)
- Eat dinner at a fabulous venue
- Check out the famous St. Joseph Lighthouse

More information on what to do in Southwest Michigan, can be found by visiting the Tourism Council web page at:

<https://www.swmichigan.org/>



Farm Women's Symposium  
c/o Sheryl Oswalt  
16029 S 33<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Vicksburg, MI 49097

Address Service Requested

#### SCHOLARSHIP INFO

With GreenStone Farm Credit Services dedication and support for rural communities and agriculture, the association will again offer **\$150 scholarships** to its members attending the Farm Women's Symposium on a **first come first serve basis**. Scholarships will be awarded to those who register before **March 1, 2019**. Please see Registration Brochure for more information.

#### Hotel Registration Deadline:

Garden Inn: **February 12, 2018**.

Accommodations include free Breakfast.

#### SILENT AUCTION:

We appreciate all donations of new items to the **silent auction**. Please Notify Kim Clunis of all donations and the estimated Value prior to **February 25th**. She can be reached at [kclunis3588@gmail.com](mailto:kclunis3588@gmail.com) or by phone at (989) 550-3588.

#### REGISTRATION FORM CHANGES

We have made some minor changes to the registration form. Please be sure to sign, where indicated!