



Strengthening Agriculture

2019/2020 Planning & Advisory Committee

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Hello Farm Sisters,

I am sure many of you are in the middle of battling the weather and praying you can get at least most of your crops in before too much snow is on the ground, I know we are. It makes you wonder at times why you are a farmer. But then you see a new life born on the farm, the crops coming out of the ground in the spring that seems to grow almost overnight, or the sunset or sunrise over the land that you love and it makes you remember.

This is the time of Thanksgiving and remembering the reason for the season as they say. May it also be the time that you remember why you do this work as well. The times when your child got mad and stomped off down the farm lane, you could see his anger being vented at the dirt, but you knew he was safe. The time your daughter came in covered with hay and sweating but with the biggest smile from all the hard work she was so proud of and her smiling Dad right behind her bragging about what a hard worker she was getting the hay in. The values you have instilled in your children and the hard-working caring individuals you have raised and are so proud of. The joy in your husband's face when nothing broke down while they picked corn today. I am sure each of you has memories that you could share. I agree there are times you wonder why in the world you are a farmer, but for the next couple of months maybe occasionally enjoy the wonder that goes with...Wow, you are a farmer!

I can't believe 2020 is when our next Symposium will be. That number is something from Star Wars or Buck Rogers if you remember that. We will be going to a new place again next year. Gaylord at the Treetop Resort has graciously agreed to host our Symposium. They have been very kind and helpful to our committee. We know you will enjoy the place we are staying in. We want to encourage everyone to make your reservations soonest. We have a special drawing for a spa day for those that register early.

We have some great speakers lined up that will share some amazing information with us. The bus trip will be very special. Have you ever been up close and personal with an Elk but perfectly safe? The shopping downtown is so nice and the smells of Chocolate in one place... oh my. You don't want to miss 2020 Symposium.

Enclosed you will find the registration brochure with this newsletter, please don't forget to register for your hotel early as well. We have a date that will be listed for letting Kimba know what, if you can, you will be bringing for the silent auction. Please let her know as soon as you can, it helps so much.

You don't want to miss anything for 2020. The committee is working on the final details to make it another great 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. If you would like to help, please talk to the people you buy from about being a **Sponsor**. Without **Sponsors**, we would not be able to put the program on that we do. Hoping to see you all at the 2020 Symposium in March.

May the end of 2019 bring you blessings and peace.

Debbie Rasmussen

Debbie Rasmussen
Chairperson
(616) 824-5306

We have an interesting and diverse line-up of speakers confirmed for FWS 2020, representing a wide range of topics gleaned from suggestions and hot button issues. Please continue to let the committee know of your ideas!

Jeanne Bernick (Lenexa, KS) was raised on a cattle ranch in southern Missouri. After college, Jeanne moved to big city life, but ultimately returned to farms across America, listening to ag producers, their stories fueling her passion for connecting farmers with the right business resources to sustain the life they loved.



Over her 20-year career at Farm Journal Media, Jeanne became one of ag journalism's top editors, while developing relationships with generations of farm families. She grew Top Producer magazine into a leading industry brand, and established the Executive Women in Agriculture Conference. Currently Jeanne is a consultant working with large commercial producers at a food/ag industry accounting firm, KCoe Isom based in Kansas City.

Her morning presentation, *What Women in Ag Want*, will give us examples of farm women changing agriculture, tips on empowering, provoking both laughter and learning. Her after-lunch talk will highlight Jeanne's life experiences while in the journalism world and traveling the world.

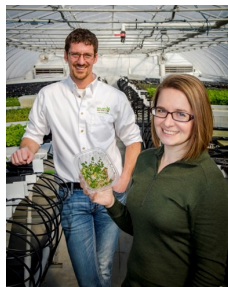
Lisa McComb from Otsego County Economic Alliance, and **Rachel Frisch**, County Administrator, will give the "Welcome to Gaylord".

Ryan Kratochvil, GFCS Crop Insurance Specialist (Cadillac), will be on hand to discuss "Is Crop Insurance Worth It? Roller Coaster 2019 and Outlook 2020."



FWS's own **Diane Reed Loew** (Byron Center) will lead an interactive segment before lunch called "*I Never Knew That About You!*" We will find common interests, find others who may have weathered similar storms, share encouragement—all helping to weave strands of friendship through our group of wonderful women.

During Wednesday afternoon, **Ben & Alison Sklarczyk** (Johannesburg) will come in and talk about their seed potato farm that grows ~6 million potatoes annually and ships all over the world. Alison, an owner and lab



manager who was named 2019 Spudwoman of the Year, will also lead a hands-on demonstration of tissue culture cutting. This will provide a timely lead-up to a more traditional potato farm we'll be touring on Thursday.



Wednesday we'll conclude with *Mindful Laughter* led by MSU Extension Health Educator **Tracie Abram** (St. Ignace). Interactive, fun-filled, and impactful, the sessions use mindfulness, or paying attention to the present moment without judgment, to help reduce worry, depression, and tension, while discovering the therapeutic benefits of laughter.

Triston Cole, State Representative for the 105th District (Mancelona), will give the legislative update on Friday morning. **Kate Pigott**, Intake/Outreach Coordinator, MI/FL Ag Mediation Programs (Lansing), will lead a short course in Ag Mediation. For those experiencing turmoil and stress in their lives, Kate is a phone call away at 800-616-7863. She has several contacts who deal with specific issues. **Ashley Messing-Kennedy** (Bad Axe), blogger/farmer/young mom, will focus on Ag Promotion using social media, but also talk about transparency while dealing with depression and stress.



FWS was fortunate to be able to book **Rachel's Challenge** (home base in CO) to conclude our 2020 conference. Rachel Joy Scott was the first victim in the Columbine school shootings tragedy in 1999. Her parents found her journals which so inspired them that her father launched a national non-profit organization in her memory, dedicated to creating safe, connected school environments, where learning and teaching are maximized.

Although only some of us ladies are involved in education, many are moms or grandmothers, but ALL are community members—we can return home inspired with the knowledge that the concepts of Rachel's Challenge are available to make a difference in our own towns and cities. (to learn more about the organization before FWS, visit rachelschallenge.org)

Our committee hopes that with this combination of education, empowerment, empathy, building and strengthening friendships, inspiration, and laughter, that there will be something for everyone and all will feel **FWS 2020** a very worthwhile experience.

Located smack in the middle of the 45th parallel, Gaylord is at the heart of Northern Michigan. With over 90 inland lakes and plentiful wildlife, Gaylord is an outdoor person's dream! The FWS Bus Tour committee has lined up a very diverse number of tour locations this year and you are in for a treat!

Kitchen Farms

One of our stops this year on the bus tour will be Kitchen Farms, in Elmira. The farm began in the early 1900's with Robert Kitchen purchasing 80 acres, planting potatoes.



Today, both William (3rd generation) and Donald (4th generation) own and operate over 5000 acres. They utilize controlled temperatures to store potatoes and we will be taking a

tour of their storage and packing facility. They also have a retail store that offers bags of potatoes for sale.

Gaylord's City Elk Park

The city of Gaylord maintains an elk herd of approximately 70 Elk, on over 100 acres.

City staff feed the elk corn, hay, sugar beets as well as vitamins. A few of the bulls weigh over 800 pounds and stand approximately six feet tall. If we are lucky, the bulls will still be donning their massive horns when we visit the Elk Park next March.



Big Buck Brewery

Our lunch stop of the day will be Big Buck Brewery and we will be able to take a short tour while there. In 2018, the brewery was rebranded, featuring a focus on Michigan-made products.

The food is amazing and they are known for their black-cherry house-made soda.

Alpine Maple Farms

Owners Jordan and Amanda Hunt have maple syrup running in their blood. After years of making syrup on a large scale with their family for six years, they decided to open their own "sugar bush." Located on over 40 acres, they offer not only a full array of maple syrup products, but also snowshoeing on groomed trails as well as tours. We are excited to be able to tour their facility and taste the sweet syrup made from trees.

Alpine Chocolat Haus



Bruce Brown, also known as "Der Chocolatmeister" to many in the Gaylord community, will be taking us on a tour of his facility and what he calls "confectionery magic." Alpine Chocolat Haus has been in business since 1985 and particularly is known for their chocolate covered potato chips, fine chocolates and white chocolate covered caramel corn, mixed with peanut butter.

In addition to the tour, we will also be visiting his retail store in the downtown area, as well as providing additional time to shop some of the fine stores in the downtown area.



Thursday Night

by Wanda Skinner

After the bus tour on Thursday, dinner will be on your own. There are several restaurants within the Treetops complex. Additionally, there are a number of restaurants and shops in the downtown area. Please visit Gaylord City's site for more details on activities, dinner venues and shopping: <https://www.gaylordmichigan.net/>

Please listen to the announcements on Wednesday, during Symposium, for additional options for dinner and entertainment. Of course, you could take some time to relax and sit in front of the fire.



Farm Women's Symposium
c/o Wanda Skinner
749 S. Van Dyke Rd.
Bad Axe, MI 48413

Address Service Requested

Hotel Reservation Reminder:

Treetops Resort™ -
Gaylord reservation number is
855-261-8764. Designated FWS
rooms will be released after **Jan 3** for
use by others (rate will revert back to
standard, with no guarantees on
availability).

Hotel Deposit at reservation:

When booking your reservation,
please be aware that the Treetops
Resort™ will be charging the first
night's stay to your charge card, as
a deposit.

Treetops Cancellation Policy:

**Cancellations must be made at
least seven (7) days** before your
arrival, or your first night will be
forfeited. Those that don't show up
for a room reservation will also
forfeit their first night stay.

Gaylord—2020 - Helpful Tips/Reminders

GreenStone Scholarship

Deadline :

GreenStone Scholarships will be
awarded to those who register
before **Feb. 12, 2020**. Simply mail
your registration in with your \$30
co-pay and indicate your local
office.

Silent Auction:

To receive recognition for your
donation to the 2020 Silent Auction,
you must notify Kim Clunis **by Feb. 12**
of your intention to donate.

Spa Raffle:

As an added incentive to book hotel
and register early, all who register
for FWS (postmarked) by **Jan. 3** will
be entered in **raffle for \$50 gift card**
towards Treetops Resort™ Spa