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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU NEWS
Volume 16 | No. 5
June/July 2017

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Cover photo by:Tim Thornberry
Driving to the farm in Woodford County

Interior graphics by Melissa LaRoche

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As a child growing up on our family farm, I didn't think much about a world that existed beyond our fence rows. To me, all that I needed was right there in Nancy, Kentucky. I didn't realize what we grew on our farm would eventually make its way to so many places and so many people.

But as I grew older, learned more about the family business and became more involved, I soon discovered the need to think beyond those fence rows, not only for the good of the farm but for the good of our customers.

Today, we as farmers not only think in terms of getting what we produce to the next town or city but throughout the country and around the world. We truly live in a global economy and international trade is as important to our farm as it is to any Fortune 500 company. We must have viable trade and trade agreements in order to ensure our operations are around for the next generation, not only for the benefit of our farm families but for the 98 percent of the population who do not grow their own food.

International trade has been a hot topic of conversation in agriculture circles for several months, especially since the new administration came to Washington. Our agricultural organization's leaders including commodity groups and those of us at Farm Bureau have voiced our opinion at the local, state and national levels of how important it is to foster existing and new trade agreements.

I can't emphasize enough how critical it is to keep trade avenues open, explore new trade opportunities and look at existing trade agreements, doing all we can to make them better.

And this isn't just a farming issue; this is about economic development, rural community development and providing the world with an adequate, safe food supply. What farmers do in producing crops to supply the food needs of the nation and the world affects everyone; no exceptions.

All of us have to eat, meaning our farms have to remain sustainable in order to meet that need. We must always remember, if we don't grow our food supply here, someone else, somewhere else, will do it for us. The trade dollar keeps our farm families in business. And that's important to us all.

Kentucky Farm Bureau is dedicated to those farm families in doing all we can to serve as their voice on issues affecting their farms and their way of life. From being active in local community projects to advocating in our nation's capital, KFB has been a part of Kentucky for nearly a century.

I have been blessed to be one of the five generations on our family farm and I want to make sure my children, grandchildren and their children have the same privilege, not only for their sake or the sake of the farm, but to ensure the farming community that stretches across this great state remains vibrant and alive for everyone.

Mark Haney
President
Kentucky Farm Bureau

2017 County Annual Meetings

All times are local

Barren County
September 16, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Cave City Convention Center
Bath County
September 18, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Bath County Extension Office
Boone County
September 12, 2017, 5:30 p.m. Kinman Farms, 4175 Burlington Pike, Burlington
Boyle County
September 19, 2017, 7:00 pm. The Showroom, 2405 Lebanon Road, Danville
Butler County
September 12, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Eva J. Hawes Ag. Building
Campbell County
September 17, 2017, 1:00 p.m. Neltner's Farm
Carlisle County
August 10, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Carlisle County Extension Office
Christian County
June 29, 2017, Doors will open at 4:30 p.m. and the meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. Western Kentucky State Fair Convention Center
Clark County
September 7, 2017,, 6:30 p.m. Clark County Farm Bureau office
Daviess County
August 3, 2017, 5:00 p.m. Reid's Orchard
Graves County
August 12, 2017, 11:30 a.m. Mayfield High School Cafeteria

Henderson County
July 29, 2017, 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Chase Fulcher Archery Center
Hopkins County
September 1, 2017, 5:30 p.m. Ballard Convention Center
Jackson County
September 18, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Jackson Energy Farm
Lewis County
August 6, 2017, noon Ruggles Camp, Tollsboro
Lincoln County
September 7, 2017, 6:30 pm Lincoln County Fairgrounds
Madison County
July 10, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Madison County Fairgrounds
McLean County
July 29, 2017, 5:00 p.m. McLean County High School Purchase tickets @ door day of event
Meade County
August 21, 2017, 6:00p.m. Meade County Farm Bureau Community Building
Mercer County
September 11, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Mercer County Extension Office
Muhlenberg County
July 21, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Muhlenberg County Ag Center Pavilion
Nicholas County
July 27, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Vice Community Center

Ohio County
July 25, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Ohio County Extension Office
Pendleton County
September 28, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Pendleton County Farm Bureau Office
Rockcastle County
September 15, 2017 Food served at 6:00 p.m. Business at 7:00 p.m. Roundstone Elementary School
Simpson County
August 31, 2017, 6:30pm Ag Building, Jim Roberts Community Park
Trigg County
August 11, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Trigg County Recreation Complex
Trimble County
August 17, 2017, 7:00 pm Trimble County Cooperative Extension Office
Union County
June 24, 2017, 3:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Union County Fairgrounds
Warren County
September 16, 2017, 5:30 p.m. South Warren High School
Webster County
August 11, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Webster County High School Annex
Wolfe County
September 25, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Wolfe County Extension Office



Kentucky Farm Bureau is a voluntary organization of farm families and their allies dedicated to serving as the voice of agriculture by identifying problems, developing solutions and taking actions which will improve net farm income, achieve better economic opportunities and enhance the quality of life for all.

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comment

COLUMN



When Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation got its start nearly 100 years ago, our state looked much different than it does today. The larger metropolitan areas were much smaller and our farming communities were much more populated with farm families.

Through the years that demographic has changed as fewer people grew up on the farm and more grew to depend on those who remained in our rural communities working to provide for our food, fiber and fuel needs.

The importance of those rural farming communities has always remained the same regardless of where we now live or what we do. Farm Bureau actually began with the encouragement of the business community, which had the realization of knowing a strong rural economy translated into a stronger overall economy wanting to make sure the strength of rural America remained intact.

I feel strongly in that sentiment today. If our farm families are successful so are the communities in which they live. And if those communities thrive, the economy of the whole state becomes better along with the lives of those living in the Commonwealth. This same scenario can be seen all across our country.

Serving as an advocate for agriculture remains our primary purpose today. We are a farm organization serving farm families. But our commitment to help our members be successful has created benefits for all Kentuckians.

With its introduction in 1943, the Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance Company has become the largest mutual insurance company in the state serving not only our regular farm members but associate members who are a part of the Farm Bureau family because of their insurance needs.

Serving our nearly half-a-million family members is something we take very seriously at Kentucky Farm Bureau and while we are two different entities, we serve under the same organizational umbrella. Together the Federation and the Insurance Company have made such a difference in the lives of our citizens.

There are very few communities throughout the state that don't have a KFB sign displayed somewhere; whether hanging up at the little league field or in a school gym we support the citizens of each of these communities every day.

The value of our member benefits and our relationships with the people of Kentucky are just a couple of things we are proud of at KFB. Whether we are advocating at home or in our nation's Capital, KFB truly loves KY.

It has been said that the more things change the more they stay the same. I see that often in our organization and while we may do things differently than we did 100 years ago, we do them for the same reasons; serving as the voice of agriculture by identifying problems, developing solutions and taking actions which will improve net farm income, achieve better economic opportunities and enhance the quality of life for all.

David S. Beck
KFB Executive Vice-President



KFBF's Philip Dowdle, left and David S. Beck accepted the award on behalf of the organization.

Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation

Named as a Best Place to Work in Kentucky

The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and the Kentucky Society for Human Resource Management recently announced that the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation (KFBF) has been named as one of the 2017 Best Places to Work in Kentucky in the small-sized employer category. KFBF is one of only 40 employers in the category given this honor. A total of 100 companies were named to this year's list in three different size categories.

A celebration for winners was held April 26 in Lexington marking the 13th year for the program which is managed by Best Companies Group. The selection process is based on an assessment of the company's employee policies and procedures and the results of an internal employee survey. Winner rankings were announced during the celebration event.

"I am extremely proud of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation being recognized as an organization that is a good place to work and takes care of its people," said David S. Beck, Executive Vice-President of KFBF.

"I tell our state board often, if you take care of your employees, they will take care of the organization."

Peter Burke, president and co-founder of Best Companies Group said getting on the list of Best Places to Work isn't easy to do.

"You have to have a workplace where the majority of your workforce loves to come to work every day and that is what is so amazing about this program," he said. "The irony of a recognition program like this is that, the companies that are here understand the value of recognition. They (employees) love where they work and have a tremendous amount of pride; they feel incredibly connected emotionally to their employer. That's a hard thing to make happen in your organization and so it's a huge accomplishment."

Beck added that being named to this prestigious honor will help in employee retention, employee recruitment and future growth of the organization.

"All the information collected from an independent, confidential, anonymous

survey by the employees evaluated what they thought was important; what they enjoy about their work and their benefits and what they can contribute to make the organization a success," he said. "All that information and data is beneficial as a roadmap to the future and we look forward to working with our employees, our leadership team, our state Board of Directors, and all the county Farm Bureaus all of whom share in this recognition of excellence. We all take pride in that recognition."

Beck and Philip Dowdle, KFBF Director of Accounting and Finance accepted the award during the ceremony on behalf of the organization. The full list of winners can be viewed at bestplacestoworkinky.com.



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Kentucky Agriculture Represented at Meeting with USDA Secretary

Kentucky agriculture was well-represented during a recent announcement made by USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue in Cincinnati. Perdue, surrounded by farmers, including two from Kentucky, announced the creation of an undersecretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs within the agency.

David McGlone, from Carter County and a Kentucky Farm Bureau State Director, along with Russel Schwenke, from Boone County, KyCorn past president and KyCorn Promotion Council member, were invited to the event and participated in discussions

with Perdue about issues facing the agriculture industry.

"It was an honor to be at the event and there were many good discussions held especially about trade and the new farm bill," said McGlone. "Everyone there had a farming background and Secretary Perdue wanted to hear from the people who sit in the tractor seats every day."

He also said there were a lot of frank discussions about exports and trade agreements like NAFTA.,," said McGlone.

"Secretary Perdue said he wants someone in the undersecretary for trade position to get up every day and say,

'Who can I sell U.S. agricultural products to today.'"

In speaking about trade, Perdue said U.S. farmers have proven they can grow enough food not only for domestic consumption but to sell in other countries.

"Food is a noble thing to trade. This nation has a great story to tell and we've got producers here that produce more than we can consume," he said. "And that's good, because I'm a grow-it-and-sell-it kind of guy. Our people in American agriculture have shown they can grow it, and we're here to sell it in markets all around the world."

Schwenke said the meeting was very interesting and many issues were discussed including the migrant worker program, crop insurance, as well as the trade issue.

"I've never attended a meeting like this one with a USDA Secretary who spend so much time to answer our questions and was very upfront with his answers," he said.

Schwenke added that, in the case of discussing trade for instance, he had a better feeling about it after the meeting.

Perdue made the announcement about the undersecretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs along the Ohio River with barges full of agricultural products in the background.

In a press release issued by the USDA, Perdue said the plan to establish an undersecretary for trade fits right in line with his goal to be American agriculture's unapologetic advocate and chief salesman around the world.

"By working side by side with our U.S. Trade Representative and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, the USDA undersecretary for trade will ensure that American producers are well equipped to sell their products and feed the world," he said.

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Bluegrass and Backroads Tour Set to Zoom Through Cave Country

For the past 14 years, Kentucky Farm Bureau has produced a television show that celebrates the state, especially rural Kentucky, her people and the many places that make the Commonwealth so unique.

Bluegrass and Backroads has

grown to be to a statewide and nationally televised showcase of all that makes Kentucky special not only to its citizens but to people around the world thanks to the growth of social media. During its tenure, the show has notched 14 Emmy nominations and three Emmy Awards.

KFB's Matt Hilton, Director Studios, said through the years people who have seen the show had such an interest in the places visited, the idea of a Bluegrass and Backroads Tour to visit many of these destinations came to fruition.

"Last year we hosted the very first Bluegrass and Backroads Tour to give attendees a sense of what it's like to go on a B&B video trip," he said. "This year we will conduct a tour of the Bowling Green area visiting venues we have featured in the past on the show."

He added that the B&B Tour continues the Kentucky Farm Bureau tradition of offering distinctive tours, to guests and members, throughout the country and close to home.

This two-day, all-inclusive excursion will include a stop at Mammoth Cave where experienced and not-so-experienced cave explorers will have the chance to see the world's longest known cave system. Next will be a stop at the famed National Corvette Museum, home to America's Sports Car produced right there in Bowling Green.

Day-two will take B&B Tour attendees to Chaney's Dairy Barn, where they will see first-hand a modern-day dairy operation that includes a restaurant/gift shop that offers home-made ice cream. In fact, Chaney's ice cream has gained national attention and was voted the number one ice cream in Kentucky.

The final stop on this year's tour is Jackson's Orchard, a family owned business in operation for the past 50 years.

Hilton said the tour allows fans to be a part of the show in the real-time settings while giving them a glimpse into some of the many unique places that call Kentucky home.

The 2017 Bluegrass and Backroads Tour will take place September 28-29 with registration beginning June 14. Seating is limited to 50 so Hilton is encouraging everyone to register early.

For more information about Bluegrass and Backroads Tour, go to kyfb.com/bbtours17.



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Kentucky Farm Bureau

the Voice of Kentucky Agriculture

Our Mission

Farm Bureau is a voluntary organization of farm families and their allies dedicated to serving as the voice of agriculture by identifying problems, developing solutions and taking actions which will improve net farm income, achieve better economic opportunities and enhance the quality of life for all.

Our History

For nearly one hundred years, Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) has served as the "Voice of Kentucky Agriculture," representing the interests of agricultural producers and rural communities. The organization was founded at a meeting in Louisville, in November 1919. With nearly 500,000 members, KFB is one of the largest Farm Bureaus in the nation.

Our Services

Kentucky Farm Bureau has established a reputation as an effective advocate for its members. Its information products and member service programs are also well respected and highly successful.

Programs offered include Public Affairs, Farm Bureau Insurance and other member services, Women's Leadership Activities, Ag in the Classroom, Safety, Health and Wellness, Theft Reward, Estate Planning, Commodity Market Information, Scholarships, Certified Roadside Farm Markets and Young Farmers.

Our Executive Committee



Mark Haney
President, Kentucky Farm Bureau

Mark Haney has served as president of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation (KFB) and Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance Companies since December 2008 and March 2009, respectively, following three years as the first vice president and seven years as second vice president of their Executive Committees.

He is a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFB) Executive Committee, a director of the AFBF as a representative of the Southern region and a director of Southern Farm

Bureau Life Insurance Company.

Mr. Haney is a past president of the Pulaski County Farm Bureau and the Kentucky Center for Cooperative Development.

The Pulaski County native produces apples, peaches, and beef cattle in partnership with his brother, Don, near Nancy, Kentucky. They also operate a Farm Bureau Certified Roadside Farm Market, selling fresh produce from the farm, as well as cider, jellies, baked goods and other products.

Kentucky Farm Bureau serves as the voice of agriculture and is the largest ag advocacy organization in the state, but more specifically, the organization enhances a way of life in the state from a variety of aspects; be it legislatively, a protection of assets, or advocating for the agriculture sector and rural economies; it's all about what is best for Kentucky.

For many decades, KFB has been a leader in helping communities when it comes to education of youth, leadership development, governmental issues, economic development endeavors,

and so much more and it begins in these local communities through the county Farm Bureau organizations and a process which sets our policy and priority issues.

Agriculture is the backbone of rural Kentucky, as it is nationwide, and KFB is there to fill a gap when it comes to keeping issues of importance related to the industry moving forward. But agriculture affects everyone, not just rural residents in farm communities. I see our role in supporting agriculture's big picture as one that is based on a locally-centered, democratic system we have utilized as an organization since we began in 1919. We may have an issue that comes up with many different directions available to reach a solution, and through that democratic process we move through those differences to ultimately support what is best for our state, our farm communities and our rural economies. We want to be a part of varied interests and commodity groups and them, a part of us.

It's important to all of us to have a solid farm economy. KFB is recognized both statewide and nationally as a very

Agriculture is the backbone of rural Kentucky, as it is nationwide, and KFB is there to fill a gap when it comes to keeping issues of importance related to the industry moving forward. But agriculture affects everyone, not just rural residents in farm communities.

-Mark Haney
President, Kentucky
Farm Bureau

strong organization; one of convictions, clarity and fairness. And it's because of what we have done here, in Kentucky, and through our vast membership of more than 470,000 member families, we are the fourth largest Farm Bureau in the nation.

This strength allows us to be noticed in what we say and stand for when it comes to our issues and the well-being of our communities both rural and urban. By having that strong voice nationally, we can be assured that Kentucky will always have a seat at the table during discussions and decisions of federal policy as it relates to agriculture and rural development. We have strong leadership in our local communities and a very talented staff which contribute to this recognition.

But there is a role to play in issues outside the realm of agriculture and we support many, such as health and safety, insurance matters, taxes, and education. Our members take a stand on issues they feel are important and we will continue, for many years, to take those stands while being tolerant of other ideas, as well. It's something we accept and embrace as part of our democratic freedom.



Eddie Melton
First Vice-President

Eddie Melton serves as first vice-president of KFB and Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance Companies.

He was elected as first vice president in December 2010, following two years as second vice president of the Federation and one year on the insurance company's executive committee.

Mr. Melton represents District Two as a member of the Federation's board of directors and is chair of both the State Resolutions Committee and Health Care Task Force.

He is an active member of the Webster County Farm Bureau where he has served in a variety of leadership positions, including president and chairman of the young farmer committee. He also serves as a director of Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company.

Mr. Melton produces corn, soybeans and beef cattle on his farming operations.

The policy process at KFB is a key component in understanding who we are as an organization and what issues are important to us. Representing an industry that affects all Kentuckians, our policies are related to a number of topics in addition to those directly related to agriculture, including research, environmental issues, transportation and economic development, to name a few.

Each year, policy resolutions are channeled from county Farm Bureaus to the state organization and reviewed by advisory committees and a Resolutions Committee comprised of members from the 11 districts that make up KFB across Kentucky.

During our state annual meeting, the chosen recommendations are taken to voting delegates who set forth our policy for the coming year along with a list of our upcoming priority issues. This same process is followed for national policy, as well.

In keeping with the grassroots origins of KFB, policy recommendations are a critical component in allowing county Farm Bureaus a voice in what issues are supported by the organization. These recommendations really exemplify who we are as a farm organization and what issues we consider to be important. For instance, education is one of the more prominent topics in our policy book demonstrating the importance our members place on the subject. If our members recommend a policy, it validates how important that is to them. This system has been in place for nearly a century and gives a sense of ownership to those local organizations in KFB as a whole.

If not for the input we see at the county level, it's safe to say KFB would not be the strong advocate for agriculture that it is today. As more and more people become farther removed from the farm, it takes more efforts to keep them informed and our members, who are located from one side of the state to the other, do just that; help to educate the public on ag matters with correct information. We as farmers, should never apologize for what we do but rather educate the public with the actual facts and information about the industry.

If not for the input we see at the county level, it's safe to say KFB would not be the strong advocate for agriculture that it is today.

-Eddie Melton
First Vice-President



Fritz Giesecke
Second Vice-President

Fritz Giesecke serves as Second Vice President of KFB and Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance Companies. He was elected to the Executive Committee in December 2010.

Mr. Giesecke represents District Three on the Federation's board while serving as chair of the Beef Cattle Advisory Committee and as a member of the Health Care Task Force. In addition, he serves on the Board of Directors for the United States Meat Export Federation representing KFB members.

He is an active member of the Hart County Farm Bureau where he has served in a variety of leadership positions, including county president. His cattle operation is located in Horse Cave, Kentucky.

There is at least one county Farm Bureau office located in each of the 120 counties of Kentucky, something that makes the organization unique in that, no matter where you live, be it in the more rural areas of the state or in our more urban areas, Farm Bureau has a presence and is there to help better the lives of each and every member.

Taking care of our members is something KFB takes very seriously. In fact, it is at the very core of our existence. Having offices in each county assures each member family they have that connection to the organization as a whole both at the state level but also from a national perspective. When it comes to agriculture advocacy, KFB has long been a strong voice in policy and priority issues for the AFB. This local presence has helped KFB become a strong advocate for farm communities here and in some respects for all the country. This strength is not only

critical to those rural area economies but also to the state's overall economic well-being.

Local Farm Bureaus are at the heart of creating policy and priority issues that are reviewed and refined annually. We have seen many initiatives move forward to become organizational programs and even laws because of the involvement that begins at the county level. Often an idea arises first in our local communities whether it is related to a farmer trying to protect his or her livestock, a tax issue or something regarding natural resources such as adequate water supplies. Having a presence at that county level ensures issues, no matter where they might arise in the state, will be heard.

When it comes to agriculture advocacy, KFB has long been a strong voice in policy and priority issues for the AFB. This local presence has helped KFB become a strong advocate for farm communities here and in some respects for all the country. This strength is not only critical to those rural area economies but also to the state's overall economic well-being.

-Fritz Giesecke
Second Vice-President



David S. Beck
Executive Vice-President

David S. Beck began serving as executive vice president for KFB on January 1, 1995. In this position he has overall administrative responsibility for KFB's programs and services, and he manages the organization's staff and its finances.

Starting his career with KFB in May 1977 as an area field service director in central Kentucky, Mr. Beck was named to the chief executive officer's position by the Kentucky Farm Bureau Board of Directors, following 12 years of service as director of governmental affairs and assistant to the executive vice president.

He is also serving as corporate secretary for the Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance Companies and is a member of their Executive Management Team.

In addition to his service to many civic and church organizations, in 1992 he was selected Outstanding Agriculture Alumnus of the Year by the Murray State University (MSU) Agriculture Alumni Association and in 2016 was selected as a Distinguished Alumnus by the Murray State Alumni Association.

KFB got its start in much the same way as other state Farm Bureaus, by way of business groups and organizations who knew the value in a strong agriculture community and how valuable that farm economy was to the overall well-being of those states, as a whole. At the same time farmers were looking for an organization that could help with issues that were important to them. The local businesses and chambers of commerce knew that if the farm community did well so did the business community.

In the early 1900's the Louisville Board of Trade teamed with the Kentucky Bankers Association to create a strategic plan for the future of Kentucky. Meetings were held around the state and a plan containing several ideas was developed including the creation of a farm organization to represent agriculture and improve net farm income. KFB was created in 1919 and was one of the first states to be involved in creating the AFB.

To this day, even though KFB is led by farmers, we have good relationships with the business community because it takes all of us to move Kentucky forward.

Even in the early days of the organization, the need for member benefits was recognized and creating those benefits became a priority. Insurance was hard to come by in rural Kentucky back then, including insurance for health and protection of assets. This need continued through the 1920's and 1930's.

But, in the 1940's we partnered with a new company called Blue Cross for health care while working with other state Farm Bureaus that already had these types of insurance benefits to get property and casualty assistance for Kentucky members. Eventually those insurance benefits would grow from protecting just livestock to covering farms, homes, automobiles and the rest is history.

Today, KFB Member Services works extensively to identify needs of member families so benefits can be added or modified to fit those needs. Benefits for the farm, for the home; identity theft, security, health, travel, automobiles and banking are an example of what KFB does to assist its member families in making their lives better. Member services have helped to stabilize membership of which we have had consistent growth for over 50 years in this state.

Time after time the process of discovering a situation or an idea through local Farm Bureaus, advisory committee meetings or at annual meeting gatherings, has led to solutions, new regulations or even new laws and it has worked well for Kentucky and the member families we represent.

Some examples that stand out include the Farmland Assessment Constitutional amendment which

has had a tremendous impact on the protection of farmland. House Bill 44, which was passed in 1979, contains a provision that limits annual revenue from property taxes to no more than a four percent hike plus new growth. This law benefits every property owner whether on a farm or in an urban area. In the 1980's there were problems with grain elevator bankruptcies but thanks to a new law supported by KFB, there is now a farmer financed, state government administered insurance for grain; and this year, KFB was instrumental in getting House Bill 529 passed, which will create the Kentucky Water Resource Board to help water related issues in a proactive way.

At the federal level, we've been involved in every Farm Bill and not just the language but the implementation of the bill as well as working with the EPA upon its creation on matters such as protection of wetlands.

We've also been involved at both the state and federal levels in the development of tax policies, positive ground water and water quality legislation, the tobacco quota buyout and implementation of the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, environment issues and advocacy for better roads.

And these are just a few of the many initiatives in which KFB involvement helped to bring about positive change for all Kentuckians.

While we are a farm organization, so much of what KFB does affects all Kentuckians. Issues and ideas of which our members support are important to them whether it is education, transportation, taxes or environmental policy. All KFB policies are member driven and we encourage participation at all levels of the organization.

A couple of great examples of our initiatives that have benefited so many include our scholarship foundation and the tradition of our Country Ham Breakfast and Auction held each year at the state fair.

Since 1953, approximately 1,637 scholarships worth over \$2.53 million dollars have been awarded to Kentucky students by the KFB Education Foundation.

The annual Country Ham Breakfast & Auction has enabled KFB to

help raise nearly \$10 million for dozens of Kentucky charities, educational institutions and non-profit organizations through the 52-year history of the auction. All money raised through this event is donated directly to the charity of the winning bidder's choice.

Above all, KFB is Kentucky and our members Kentuckians. A good, strong, viable agriculture sector helps build and strengthen our rural communities and benefits all.

Today, KFB Member Services works extensively to identify needs of member families so benefits can be added or modified to fit those needs. Benefits for the farm, for the home; identity theft, security, health, travel, automobiles and banking are an example of what KFB does to assist its member families in making their lives better. Member services have helped to stabilize membership of which we have had consistent growth for over 50 years in this state.

-David S. Beck
Executive Vice-President

Understanding the Farm Bill

And why it's important to everyone

According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, the expenditure chart for the Agricultural Act of 2014, aka the Farm Bill, doesn't list Title 6, Rural Economy and Development, separately; it falls within the "Other" category which represents several programs and one percent of the total bill's budget.

But the significance of adequate rural development is vital to the farm economy as well as the overall economy, said Kentucky Farm Bureau President Mark Haney.

The rural economy of the Second District is driven by agriculture and farmers. Farm Bureau members are deeply involved in their communities in many ways and are the best advocates for local farmers.

-Brett Guthrie

"In a state like Kentucky, where so many of the communities are small and rural in nature, the farm economy is crucial to the well-being of the state's total economic outlook," he

said. "Our rural communities serve as the backbone of our local, state and national economies and keeping those communities alive and well is not just a wish or hope; it is a necessity."

Haney, who also serves on the Executive Committee of the American Farm Bureau Federation, has been involved in discussions of the next farm bill at that level, prompting him to encourage the creation of Kentucky Farm Bureau's Farm Bill Discussion Group.

The group is composed of committees that have been holding meetings across the state involving commodity leaders, local producers and government agriculture representatives all in an effort to bring forth unified recommendations when debate over the next bill occurs.

"In looking at the big picture, the entire farm bill is really about rural development. The nation's food, and much of the food supply in the world, relies on the success of our farm families," said Haney. "Our rural communities must stay vibrant in order to maintain the supply as well as provide for fuel and fiber needs which come from the farm."

Kentucky is poised to have a strong voice as debates begin at the federal level concerning the contents of the next farm bill with Congressional representation in critical areas including the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and appropriation committees.

Congressman Brett Guthrie, Kentucky's 2nd District representative

recently held two meetings to hear from local farmers about what they feel is working in the current farm legislation and what is not.

He said meeting with local farmers and Farm Bureau members is a good way to hear what is needed when it comes to this bill.

"The rural economy of the Second District is driven by agriculture and farmers. Farm Bureau members are deeply involved in their communities in many ways and are the best advocates for local farmers," he said.

Guthrie added that because so many people including lawmakers don't come from farming backgrounds, it's important to learn of the needs of farm families and small rural businesses in order to have a better understanding of what provisions should be included in the next farm bill.

"At today's meetings I heard firsthand about not just overall farm policy but the specific details regarding how these programs are working for Kentucky farmers," he said. "While we are just starting our work on the next farm bill in this Congress, I think we are on track to be able to get the reauthorization passed on time."

Guthrie recently met with House Agriculture Committee Chair Mike Conaway to discuss the bill. He said listening to local farmers and ag leaders provided valuable information to relay to the Chairman about what's working in the bill and what's not.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RURAL PROGRAMS

With the passage of each farm bill, some new programs are created while others are discontinued. From a rural development perspective, the 2014 bill included programs related to value-added agricultural product market development grants, access to rural broadband telecommunication services, the rural energy savings program, rural business development grants, rural transportation issues and eligibility for rural housing service programs authorized under the 1949 Housing Act, to name a few.

James Comer, Kentucky's 1st District representative in Congress is in the minority when it comes to his colleagues, being a farmer and former Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner. He has first-hand knowledge of the farm bill and what these rural development programs mean to farming communities.

Comer said without the Farm Bill the average farmer doesn't have the tools he needs to effectively manage the risks inherent to farming that are out of his hands, such as the weather.

"Without those tools, you'll see many farmers get out of agriculture. Without those farmers the businesses in rural communities will be hit, from the seed dealer to the grocery store," he said. "The compounding effects would devastate rural communities and force more and more rural Americans, especially young people, out of their communities."

One of the issues at hand with this farm bill and those in the past is funding. Comer said rural communities are already at a disadvantage when it comes to getting federal dollars.

"They lack the resources, such as full staffs dedicated to getting federal dollars, that big cities have," he said. "Infrastructure projects in rural areas are usually smaller, less costly, and don't affect as many people so they can be overlooked in the fight for limited federal resources. That's why it's important to have programs dedicated to helping rural communities."

It's also important to engage with legislators and others outside of the rural community early and often to help those without farming backgrounds to understand the important of farm communities and why this bill affects everyone, noted Comer.

Groups like the Kentucky Farm Bureau do a great job of helping facilitate that connection. With more Americans disconnected from where their food comes from, it's important to help them see that what affects farmers and ranchers affects them, too, even if they don't live in a rural community.

-James Comer

"Groups like the Kentucky Farm Bureau do a great job of helping facilitate that connection. With more Americans disconnected from where their food

comes from, it's importance to help them see that what affects farmers and ranchers affects them, too, even if they don't live in a rural community."



Gov. Matt Bevin presents an official written acclamation to the Breathitt Veterinary Center Director Dr. Debbie Reed and MSU President Robert Davies.

MSU's New Breathitt Veterinary Center

Murray State University's (MSU) new Breathitt Veterinary Center was recently dedicated as a capacity crowd of collegiate, government and agriculture leaders gathered marking the occasion.

The new 77,000-square-foot facility, located in Hopkinsville, is one of the most modern animal diagnostic veterinarian labs in the country with 53,000 square feet of diagnostic space and the only Biosafety Level III suite for veterinary use in Kentucky. The center is also accredited by the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians and is part of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network.

Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) worked to help secure funding for the project making it one of its priority issues from the onset of discussions about the new center.

KFB Executive Vice-President David S. Beck addressed the audience providing a history of the center from its earliest days which began in 1967 to the

dedication of the new facility. He said of the event, it was a great day for MSU and a great day for Kentucky agriculture.

"Kentucky Farm Bureau has been involved since day-one from a policy standpoint and it has been a priority on our legislative agenda to seek the funding necessary to bring this about," said Beck. "This facility does a lot for Kentucky. In addition to being involved in animal disease diagnostics, it also has an impact on human health and economic development.

Beck pointed out the growth of the livestock industry in Kentucky, especially the poultry sector and how beneficial the lab has been in helping to build that industry.

"This lab was key in making that opportunity come about and not only does it lend itself to assisting the livestock producers from an economic development perspective, it serves as a facility that will make sure we are on top of any kind of disease that could impact our huge agriculture industry."

Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin attended the ceremony reiterating to the crowd how important this center is and will be to the Commonwealth in safeguarding its animal agriculture industry. He also read an official written acclamation presented to the Breathitt Veterinary Center Director Dr. Debbie Reed and MSU President Robert Davies recognizing the center and its many functions in aiding the veterinarian and agriculture industries.

Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles also participated in the ceremony. He said the new center uses state-of-the-art facilities and equipment to provide vital services for Kentucky's livestock and poultry producers.

"As large and small animal agriculture continues to play an important role in the economic health of Kentucky, having a facility like this gives us a distinct advantage," said Quarles. "The Breathitt Veterinary Center helps protect our industry from foreign animal disease and



A host of collegiate, government and agriculture leaders participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Breathitt Veterinary Center.



Breathitt Veterinary Center. Photo courtesy of Murray State University.

This facility is an important part of Murray State but we couldn't have done this on our own. If it hadn't been for the partnership with Kentucky Farm Bureau, we wouldn't be standing here talking about it today.

-Dr. Tony Brannon

provides diagnostic services to enable producers and veterinarians to care for their animals. Kentucky's investment in this new laboratory will pay off many times over."

Dr. Tony Brannon, Dean of MSU's Hutson School of Agriculture said the new center will serve in many capacities

including educational, agricultural and economic development aspects.

"The new building has served as a great impetus for the further development of the animal industry in Kentucky and the protection of our food supply, as well," he said. "This facility was designed by the people who previously designed all the new veterinarian diagnostic labs, and we have the newest and most state-of-the-art. But the facility is only part of it; you've got to have good people. We have good leadership under Dr. Reed and give homage to Dr. Wade Northington, our former director."

Brannon also noted how important partnerships have been in making the new center a reality.

"This facility is an important part of Murray State but we couldn't have done this on our own. If it hadn't been for the partnership with Kentucky Farm Bureau, we wouldn't be standing here talking about it today," he said.

Northington, who served as the director of the center from 2004 until 2015, said upon taking the director's

job at the previous center, it was readily apparent it had become obsolete.

"It really became my passion to pursue getting the funding in order to replace that facility with this beautiful, state-of-the-art, most modern laboratory facility in North America," he said. "But it was very much a learning process for me about how to start to build the broad level of support that it was going to take."

Northington, added that one of the first groups approached to help get this done was KFB.

"Kentucky Farm Bureau is the voice of agriculture in this state and certainly has a long-standing, respected presence in the legislature," he said. "They were able to provide us with wise counsel about how to present this project to help people understand the value and importance of what we were trying to accomplish. We really would not have been where we are today without the help and assistance from them."

While animal health and education are paramount in the mission of the Breathitt Veterinary Center, its presence in West Kentucky will be a benefit to the economic well-being of rural development and job opportunities.

"This facility will be a magnet to attract jobs and economic development of other types of industries. It can serve agriculture but other areas, too," said Beck. "That would improve our economy ultimately providing jobs that would help keep families on the farm and improve net farm income. We are excited about that and I believe with a favorable tax policy, less regulations and more partnerships we can see some good things for Kentucky."

COUNTY CORNER

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities



BOONE COUNTY

KFB's Joe Claxon, left, and Tim Alexander, Agency Manager of the Florence Office presented Blake Berry with a Boone County Farm Bureau scholarship.



BOONE COUNTY

KFB's Joe Claxon, left, and Tim Alexander, Agency Manager of the Florence Office presented Savannah Allen with a Boone County Farm Bureau scholarship.



FRANKLIN COUNTY

Franklin County Farm Bureau Legislative Appreciation Dinner.

GARRARD COUNTY

For over 30 years the Garrard County Farm Bureau Federation has offered a college scholarship to high school seniors. This year's recipient was Mary Katherine Oberman, who will attend Centre College in the fall and major in Biochemistry. Mary Katherine is the daughter of Tyler and Tawnya Oberman of Lancaster.



LEWIS COUNTY

Lewis County Farm Bureau Agency Manager Rex Elam and Women's Chair Jennifer Meadows, who also represented Rips Farm Center, met with Suzanne Pick's class at Tollesboro Elementary. The fourth grade students were given a copy of local artist Mitch Tolle's book: The Most Wonderful Dream, written and Illustrated by him, for Kentucky Farm Bureau is a beautiful story about the Value of hard work and the nobility of farmers. All fourth graders in the county received the book donated by Lewis County Farm Bureau and Rip's Farm Center.



BULLITT COUNTY

Bullitt County Farm Bureau hosted their annual Ag Field Day. Nearly 400 third graders were able to enjoy multiple ag workshops.



FAYETTE COUNTY

Fayette County Agency Manager Jim Knight retired from the Clays Mill agency. Pictured from left: Sean Millard Fayette County Farm Bureau President, Sue Knight and, Jim Knight.



PULASKI COUNTY

David Taylor, Vice-President of Pulaski County Farm Bureau, presents a scholarship to Evan Brinson at Somerset High School's Honors Night. Brinson was the recipient of one of four \$1,200.00 scholarships awarded by the county Farm Bureau.



ROBERTSON COUNTY

Robertson County Farm Bureau hosted a legislative appreciation dinner at Blue Licks State Park May 4. They honored former State Representative Mike Denham for his years of service to his district. Pictured from left are: KFB Executive Vice-President David S. Beck, Troy Martin, Robertson County FB president, Rep. Denham, and KFB President Mark Haney.



ROCKCASTLE COUNTY

Rockcastle County Farm Bureau scholarship presentation From left to right: Garry Hurst, Rockcastle Farm Bureau Federation Vice President; Jonah Pillion; Allyssa Bustle; Madelyn Bullen; Ari-Anna Lawson; Terry Lawson, Rockcastle Co Farm Bureau Federation President. Each scholarship was for \$400.



SHELBY COUNTY

Shelby County Farm Bureau, Simpsonville office ribbon cutting held April 24.



SHELBY COUNTY

Shelby County Farm Bureau Beef Day. Pictured from left are: Jack Trumbo, Shelby County director and Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles.



TRIMBLE COUNTY

Trimble County Farm Bureau board member Traci Heveline presented county scholarships of \$1000 each at the school awards program. Pictured are County President Jerry Oak with John Michael Sachleben and Corbin Thornsberry..

CANDID CONVERSATION

Adam Hinton, Hinton Mills

KFB Candid Conversation presents a discussion about the topical issues facing the agricultural industry in a question and answer format with a member of the agricultural community. In this column, Adam Hinton of Hinton Mills discusses the importance of rural communities and the farms and businesses that make up those rural economies. Hinton Mills is a multi-generation owned farm and feed supply business with five locations in three counties.

What is some of the history of Hinton Mills?

We've been in business for nearly 100 years. It was started in 1918 by my great grandfather Frank L. Hinton in Goddard, Kentucky. A few short years later he and my great grandmother took over the Plummers Landing location, which was started by his uncle O.L. Hinton as a wagon spoke factory. There was this rich history of agriculture in the family even before our business started. Over the years, an employee or two would be added along with additional store sites until we grew to have 50 employees working in five locations to serve the agriculture community six days a week. We rest on Sunday and get up and do it again the next day. While the businesses are located in three counties, we have regular deliveries all over the region. I feel like we have been able to make a difference in the agriculture industry in a much wider area than ever before.

Do you think the small town atmosphere lends itself to rural community businesses?

For rural businesses, one of the key things to success is having repeat customers who are satisfied and tell their neighbors. That is how we have grown over the last century. Growing through word of mouth has worked really well for us is, the ag community



as a whole, and rural communities in general. Growing through word of mouth, it's the true definition of grassroots. Historically and still today rural businesses are dependent on their neighbors. That sense of neighbor and community is strong in these smaller areas. We are dependent on the loyalty of these folks, our customers. Loyalty, community and neighbor are important words to Hinton Mills, and agriculture in general we are really glad to be a part of that.

Farming is primarily a family business, as often is the case with rural businesses. What has family meant to this business?

I'm one of three brothers who represent the fourth generation in the business and we bring three different perspectives to the business. We all had similar upbringings, living in Fleming County, going to the same schools and college, but after that we began to get diverse perspectives. I moved away and worked at an aeronautical university in Florida; my older brother Matt moved away and got his MBA and worked in the manufacturing industry; and Nathan came to work here straight out of college. I think we all have brought something unique and positive to the table with different views. But we have also kept traditions started by generations gone by like celebrating birthdays with our

employees by letting them have that day off. Being away was something good but every time I came home, there was something pulling me back. I wanted to be a part of my grandparents' lives and family. Another thing was the rural and agriculture lifestyle. I missed that and there's no place like home. But we also saw the work my dad was doing and how it was positively impacting the business and community, it made it exciting to think about being a part of that.

How important are rural businesses to the farm communities they serve and beyond?

The things that Hinton Mills stands for are the same things found in every business in every small town throughout America. You'll find people who care about their community, they care about their neighbors, they care about their employees, and they care about their families. The business owners are at every town function that they are asked to participate in. They are behind the scenes of many things happening in those small towns - like little leagues, events with the local fire departments or local fundraisers for someone who is sick or going through hard times. These folks are passionate about their communities. They live their value system in their work. That is what has built America and the existence of that kind of mentality will continue to make America great in the future.

If you could send a message to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, who also hails from a small town, what would that be?

In borrowing a statement from Warren Beeler, head of the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy, I would say, you really don't have to do anything for us; just don't do anything to us. The message is to let agriculture keep doing what we do. I don't think we need lots of special favors but we don't need over regulation. There's no one who cares more about their livestock, the ground in which they grow crops, and the people who are our friends, neighbors and consumers than farmers and their farming communities. Agriculture communities have historically done a good job and are still doing so today. Can we get better? Absolutely. Are there some things the government can

The things that Hinton Mills stands for are the same things found in every business in every small town throughout America. You'll find people who care about their community, they care about their neighbors, they care about their employees, and they care about their families.

-Adam Hinton

do to help? Yes. However, I believe government can best help agriculture by letting us do what we do best. There are programs to help rural communities found in the current Farm Bill and while

dollars are short, I would say at the very least, don't cut programs for agriculture and farm communities. Keep in mind, no matter where you live, all of us need food. It is a necessity.



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Dohn and Dohn Gardens

A Louisville farm that has become a part of the Churchill Downs tradition.



Local high school students help with packaging the mint that will go to Churchill Downs.



Bill Dohn speaks to a visiting group.

For nearly 90 years, the Dohn family has operated a farm once located on the outskirts of South Louisville. While the farm hasn't moved, the city has, to the point that Dohn and Dohn Gardens is now nestled in a neighborhood in Louisville's Pleasure Ridge Park community. However, the neighbors don't seem to mind especially since one of the main crops grown by Dohn is mint. And it's not just any mint but the variety that goes to storied Churchill Downs and used throughout their racing season including Derby Day.

Bill Dohn, who took over the business from his father said it's a good feeling to be associated with such a highly visible and historic event but he is just carrying on a family tradition in the place where it all began.

"My dad and grandfather moved here in 1930 and at one time there was more than 60 acres to the farm. I remember when only five houses were visible from the farm," he said. "Over the years it was sold off and by the time I was in high school, my dad was down to 10 acres."

Farming was not on Dohn's radar at that time. He said he and his brother had worked the farm all of their lives and continuing was not something he had planned on. But after he graduated from college, and meeting his future wife, he reconsidered and came back to the farm to work with his father.

"It was my decision to do it which made all the difference in the world to me, mentally," said Dohn. "And we got along great. It was an extremely good partnership."

Dohn would eventually buy out his dad's portion of the business and he has continued to this day. Over the years Dohne has grown different vegetables along with the mint. Today he grows mostly kale, collard greens and other herbs.

Dohn has sold to a variety of customers during his time on the farm

It's fun to know that you are a part of it and I have been for 30-some years. There are not a lot of farmers who supply anybody that many years.

-Bill Dohn

including local venues, Kroger and currently to Champion Pet Foods but the one customer that has likely brought the most attention is Churchill Downs.

That relationship began in the early 1980s when the person providing mint to the track became ill. Dohn volunteered to cut his crop, which was to be delivered to Churchill, for him.

Eventually Dohn bought the contacts from that business upon the owners passing making his farm the sole provider of mint to the Downs and the mint of choice for the famous Mint Juleps.

"I've been supplying Churchill Downs all these years but there is a lot of work to it. I have to have a mint that looks right all season long. We are constantly weeding and constantly preparing for the next crop to come along," he said.

Dohn laughs when he says the hard work is probably why no one else grows

the plant but he has been able to enlist the help of local high school students to help, many of them working their first jobs on the farm.

He notes that most of his neighbors know the operation is in the middle of their neighborhood but occasionally he will find someone who is amazed that his farm is located in the city. But urban

agriculture isn't necessarily a new thing.

Projects of different sorts have begun all across the country and there are even some support programs to help these urban endeavors be successful. But Dohn doesn't really see his farm as an urban farm. It just happens to be where it always was and the city came to him.

He also doesn't make too much of his place in Derby Day history as putting the "mint" into the Mint Julep, but he enjoys being a part of that history.

"It's fun to know that you are a part of it and I have been for 30-some years. There are not a lot farmers who supply anybody that many years," he said.

Bill Dohn says he is looking forward to retiring in a few years but for now he will continue to grow something special, in a unique setting, as part of a tradition that is truly Kentucky born but known all over the world.

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Local volunteers worked to pack 40,000 meals that went to local food pantries.

Nelson County FFA and Meals of Hope

Community service has always been at the heart of FFA since its beginning and nowhere was that more evident than recently at Nelson County High School (NCHS) where the FFA chapter held an event to help feed the county's hungry.

Meals of Hope is a national initiative that brings together community organizations and individuals to pack food boxes for those suffering from food deficiencies.

Nelson County FFA Chapter President Martin Williams first discovered the program while participating at an event in Washington, D.C. during an FFA leadership conference.

"Meals of Hope is a non-profit organization looking to reduce hunger in local communities. I wanted to try this event at our high school in order to reduce the number of hungry individuals within our community," he said.

In Nelson County alone, Williams

said there are more than 6,400 people who are food insecure and in reaching out to the local food pantries, a decision was made to host the Meals of Hope event.

"We were able to raise \$10,000 to pay for the 40,000 meals we packed which will go directly to our food pantries," he said.

The money was raised through various efforts throughout the community but Williams said he

thinks the biggest contributors were just local individuals who felt the need to help.

The Nelson County High School gym was turned into an operations center on the day of meal packing which brought more than 100 community members and leaders, along with FFA members from other chapters together to help make the event a success. Amazingly, the system is set up so efficiently that the 40,000 meals can be packed in two hours.

Matthew Durfee, is the representative from Meals of Hope who worked to help Nelson County participate in the program. He said the non-profit's primary focus is to find community organizations and members who want

Hunger has always been known as a silent epidemic and there are some of the kids at schools that suffer with hunger, so this kind of program provides a means for them to get food and support if they need it.

-Matthew Durfee

to provide for those in the communities in need of food assistance.

"Hunger has always been known as a silent epidemic and there are some of the kids at schools that suffer with hunger, so this kind of program provides a means for them to get food and support if they need it," he said.

Durfee added that it is surprising how many first time participants will commit to this activity again once they have been a part of it.

Mike Glass, one of the agriculture education teachers at NCHS said in seeing how involved his students were in similar events led to the Meals of Hope coming to Nelson County.

"This is the best two hours anyone will ever spend, packing 40,000 meals for our food banks," he said. "We want to make a positive impact on our community and we thought this was the

best way to do it and our students have shown up in a big way."

Glass also said many of the students as well as some parents were surprised to discover how big the need is, right there at home, for food assistance.

Makenzie Thomas, who is also an agriculture education teacher at NCHS, said this event is a chance to give back to the community that is very supportive of FFA.

"I think the one thing that has gotten our students to really buy into this is knowing (the food) is going back to our local food banks," she said. "Something they may not realize is that a lot of people who will take these meals may

be their classmates."

Thomas added that something else which has been surprising to the students has been the tremendous support shown by the community through sponsorships.

Williams put everything into perspective by saying it really hits him hard to know there are fellow students coming to school who don't know where their next meal is going to come from.

"I thought, what better way to help them out than to pack these meals," he said.

To see more about the Meals for Hope program at NCHS, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsvoujpqZSk>.

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Kentucky Agriculture Well-Positioned to Have a Voice in National Ag Issues

The state's agricultural industry may well be in its best position ever when it comes to having a say in agriculture issues facing the country's farm families. With solid agriculture advocates in Kentucky's federal Congressional delegation, a coming together of commodity groups to discuss the next Farm Bill, and leadership through organizations like Kentucky Farm Bureau, the Commonwealth's ag sector stands ready to address issues and policies affecting the industry at all levels.

Kentucky also has an agriculture commissioner who has gained national attention for his advocacy efforts on a number of industry related topics from addressing hunger problems to promoting the Kentucky Proud brand.

In a recent interview with Kentucky Farm Bureau News, Commissioner Ryan Quarles discussed a number of issues facing farm families and how well positioned the state is to have a role in addressing those issues.

"The Kentucky farmer is a story of efficiency; a story of hard work and it's a story about small-town America," he said. "I'm so proud to represent an industry that has a \$45 billion economic impact."

That impact includes approximately \$6 billion in cash receipts annually, which rose during a time when the rest of the country was limping through a tough recession. That growth was helped by investments and diversification efforts made possible by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund that has sent half of tobacco settlement dollars back into the industry.

And while diversification has certainly bolstered the farm economy, research efforts, that go back many years, have also helped solidify the state's ag industry as a leader in many areas.

"Kentucky continues to be the epicenter for major research whether it is the invention of no-till corn or the adoption of conservation practices early on in Kentucky that helped get



Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles.

the rest of America out of the Dust Bowl, it's our agriculture industry that continues to lead the way," said Quarles who grew up on a small family farm.

Along with the Commonwealth's rich history of leadership in the ag industry, there are now many leaders at the federal level who have an understanding of agriculture is really all about.

"We have a new USDA Secretary (Sonny Perdue) who understands agriculture very well and we have had a lot of conversations with him about the priorities for Kentucky agriculture including an emphasis on trade and access to labor," said Quarles. "But also to remind people, we as a farm community stick together and we want to make sure that we do what's best for agriculture and I think the

Secretary will play a key role between agriculture and the Whitehouse to make sure as trade negotiations or regulatory review occurs, we have good representation."

Along with Perdue, the new Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Scott Pruitt is a Kentuckian and has been given the task of unclogging the arteries of the American economy.

"He actually spent some time on a tobacco farm when he was growing up. He's somebody that understands rural Kentucky and someone I've had some one-on-one meetings with since he assumed office," said Quarles. "We are seeing an EPA Secretary who is responsive and understands the appropriate relationship between the environment and our farm land owners."

The Commissioner also pointed

out the strength of Kentucky's Congressional leaders, some of whom are in key positions related to agriculture and revenue along with the Majority Leader of the Senate.

"Not in modern history that I know of has Kentucky been so well positioned to have a voice in national agricultural issues," he said. "I think it is a testament to how successful our federal delegation is but also how they interact with us on the state level. We are fortunate to have a very strong Kentucky General Assembly with a lot of strong agricultural leaders who understand how Kentucky can be positioned to help on the national level."

With a farm bill that will soon be discussed in Washington and as issues such as international trade, farm labor, regulatory control and proposed budget cuts are facing farm families today, being in a position to be heard is vital to the state and the industry.

"It's important to realize that we may not get all that we want 100 percent of the time, but we've got some folks in Washington who understand rural America and understand Kentucky," said Quarles.

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The Kentucky Mesonet:

The Commonwealth's official source for weather and climate data

While many citizens in the Commonwealth don't realize the state is home to one of the most comprehensive weather data systems in the country, they all are reaping the benefits of having a real-time weather data reporting system known as the Kentucky Mesonet.

This network of automated weather and climate monitoring stations is being developed by the Kentucky Climate Center (KCC) at Western Kentucky University and is proving to be invaluable in a variety of ways.

Dr. Stuart Foster, Director and State Climatologist for Kentucky is in charge of community outreach for the Mesonet. He said the system is designed based on what was best for Kentucky.

"We had to build things from scratch and we worked closely with the National Weather Service (NWS) and what was known at that time as the National Climatic Data Center (now the National Centers for Environmental Information) in terms of helping to design specifications for the stations,"

he said. "But we had to build all the software and computer systems, while meeting with area development districts, county judges, emergency managers, Extension agents and whoever was going to be a champion for the system and wanted to bring the Mesonet to their communities."

The first station was installed in 2007 and the network now includes 68 sites of weather collecting equipment that gather localized data and transfer those data to the center at WKU where data can be processed and distributed via the Mesonet website. Two more locally-funded stations are scheduled for installation this year.

The system first received funding in 2006 with the help of Kentucky Senator and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and has been a success story mainly due to those partnerships built with legislators, community leaders and organizations that saw the benefit of having such a comprehensive system.

"We think those relationships are really crucial to the long term viability of

the network and realizing the full value of the network," said Foster, who also is a contributor to Kentucky Farm Bureau's Water Management Working Group and the Kentucky Water Resources Board.

Dr. Rezaul Mahmood is the associate director of the Mesonet and KCC. He said having such a comprehensive system is useful to a variety of stakeholders.

"The Mesonet plays a very important role. The National Weather Service uses the data all the time for forecasting and issuing warnings, but others also use it such as farmers and water managers, for instance," he said. "And now for the first time, we have received state funding which is allowing us to think more about the future."

Mahmood added that in considering some of the more important aspects about the system, it is likely the contributions to public safety and agriculture.

Local Involvement

LaRue County is home to one of the Mesonet stations and located at its Environmental Education Center.



The county's Judge Executive Tommy Turner said after learning about the system and the kinds of data it would gather, it was something he wanted in his community.

"Since we do operate an environmental education center here not only used by our community but by others throughout the state, and universities from other states, it was an ideal fit to couple the educational component and the data gathering ability of the Mesonet that helps our community in many ways," said Turner.

He added that often people do not realize how important the weather is until events such as floods or tornadoes occur.

"The weather plays a part in everything we do every day and the Mesonet helps us to understand it and understand it in our community," he said. "We can look at a microcosm of the entire weather system right here out our own backdoor and that is so very important to be able to do that; to learn and teach about it, and I think we are raising a generation who will understand and pay more attention to it."

Bob Sims, director of the Community & Economic Development with the LaRue County Industrial Foundation said while other sites in the county were considered when deciding where to put the Mesonet station, the education center has many advantages especially when it comes to the students who visit each year.

"One of the most enjoyable and rewarding things I see as it relates to this site and the data collected is the expression on the children's' faces and the learning that takes place here," he said. "With this added weather element

to the park, we get a great benefit from that and more and more local people are understanding the Mesonet is here and they see the benefit in it, as well."

State Representative Brandon Reed from Hodgenville said the Mesonet is a huge asset in the areas of research, education & agriculture.

"We are blessed to have such a system in our local community that enhances scientific data for practical weather/meteorological application," he said. "I appreciate the local foresight from our Fiscal Court, which actively sought out this development to be placed appropriately at the LaRue County Environmental & Research Center."

Agriculturally Speaking

The Mesonet has become a valuable instrument for agriculture not only for its ability to relay current weather conditions but because that data is stored for future reference. Daniel Carpenter, LaRue County Extension Agent for Ag & Natural Resources Education said he knows many local farmers who have the LaRue County Mesonet page saved to their home screen or bookmarked on their smart phones so they can have instant access to real-time weather data.

"Precipitation, temperature, wind speed and direction, are all critical data for the day-to-day management of the farm," he said. "The historical data available also has great value. When we have pollination issues, herbicide failure, disease issues, etc. we can reference detailed weather data for each day and track down the source of our problem. Just this March, our local farmers utilized our Mesonet site to confirm

temperatures that got down to 16 degrees Fahrenheit for two consecutive nights and damaged our local peach and wheat crops."

Carpenter added that he believes the Mesonet site is a valuable tool in the tool box that provides farmers with accurate information that increases efficiency, especially in regards to input applications.

Mesonet Specifics

Charlie O'Connell, a meteorologist with the Kentucky Mesonet takes care of much of the equipment, which measures a variety of elements, that each site contains.

"There is a precipitation gauge, a wind monitor which measures average wind speeds and gusts, sensors that measure relative humidity and solar radiation, along with redundant temperature sensors to make sure those values are accurate," he said. "Stations also include a datalogger that records data from the various instruments, a digital modem and antenna to enable wireless communications, and a power supply." Most stations are solar powered.

Sensors that measure soil moisture and temperature at depths ranging from two inches to 40 inches are being added at many sites.

The Bigger Picture

Each monitoring station gathers information that is being used not only locally but by more and more people and organizations across the state. John Gordon, director of the NWS in Louisville said a great relationship exists between the weather service and the Mesonet in helping to protect life and property.

"Before the Mesonet, all we really had were some of the airport observations. Now, with its 68 stations across the Commonwealth, that gives us high quality, reliable data that really helps us issue better warnings and put out better forecasts," he said. "The addition of the Mesonet has meant a huge addition for public safety and it continues to get better. We would be lost without the Mesonet. It would be very detrimental to weather forecasts and warning operations without it," he said.

The Kentucky Mesonet site can be accessed at <http://www.kymesonet.org>.

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