



**Women's  
Agricultural**  
LEADERSHIP  
CONFERENCE

2024 WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

**ELEVATE. EMPOWER. EVOLVE.**

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# WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2024

## Celebrating 26 Years of the Women's Agricultural Leadership Conference

For over 25 years, our agricultural leadership conference and network have focused on the integral roles women play in agriculture.

In 1998, Robin Kinney and Doris Mold decided that something needed to be done to activate more women in agriculture. Gathering other like-minded women to help, they launched the first Women's Agricultural Leadership Conference, "Making Our Place in the World," in 1999.

Now it's 2024, and we are celebrating 26 years of quality programming, networking, and leadership development offered through this annual conference and our Women's Ag Leadership Network (WALN) events. We're also proud of our collaborative partnership with the Cultivating Resiliency for Women in Agriculture program to offer stress reduction opportunities geared toward the unique needs of farm women and women in agriculture.

This is also our 22nd year of honoring outstanding agricultural mentors. This award recognizes those who have been positive mentors and role models for people in agricultural fields, especially women. Mentors play an integral role in the development of our agricultural leaders and they often go unheralded. We're excited for our 2024 award winners to join the other 87 outstanding mentors we've celebrated over the years!

## 2024 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The conference planning committee is entirely volunteer-driven and involves members from all walks of agriculture.

### Jennifer Alexander

Regional Marketing Specialist, Minnesota  
Department of Agriculture

### Katala Anderson

Financial Advisor and Client Relationship  
Manager, Ameriprise Financial

### Jill Brindamour

Licensed Real Estate Broker, Realty Group, LLC

### Jenna Davis

Farmer Relations Manager, Midwest Dairy

### Sarah Dornink\*

Executive Director, Minnesota Agricultural  
Education Leadership Council

### Amanda Durow\*

Vice President – Lead Relationship Manager,  
CoBank ACB

### Caitlin Keck\*

Director of Stakeholder Communications,  
National Pork Board

### Emily Krekelberg\*

Extension Educator of Farm Safety & Health,  
University of Minnesota Extension

### Isabelle Lindahl

Finance Analyst – Diversified Industries Group,  
BMO Commercial Bank

### Riley Mareth

Grain Merchandiser, ADM

### Doris Mold (Co-Founder)\*

President, Sunrise Agricultural Associates and  
Co-CEO, Annie's Project

### Kim Neumann

AVP Loan Officer, AgCountry Farm Credit  
Services

### Carrie Stowers

Agriculture External Relations & Engagement  
Manager, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

### Greta Tank\*

Education Program Specialist, University  
of Minnesota

### Sue VonBank\*

Special Projects Coordinator, Minnesota  
Department of Agriculture

### \*Indicates 5+ year committee volunteer

#### Public Relations Intern: Kyle Thomas

Undergraduate at University of Minnesota – Twin  
Cities, studying Applied Economics, International  
Agriculture, and Agricultural and Environmental  
Science Communications

#### Graphic Designer: Molly VanBrocklin

BFA, Graphic Design, University of Minnesota  
College of Design Alumni  
([behance.net/offtheorbit](https://behance.net/offtheorbit))

If interested in joining the WALC  
planning committee, contact

Doris Mold at [doris@sunriseag.net](mailto:doris@sunriseag.net).

## PAST CONFERENCE THEMES

**2023:** Sterling History: Empowering Leaders for 25 Years

**2022:** Deep Roots Strong Future

**2021:** Leading for Change into a New Decade

**2020:** Dare to Lead: Through Challenging Circumstances

**2019:** Changing the Agscape

**2018:** Passion for Progress

**2017:** Embracing Innovation

**2016:** Activate Her

**2015:** Planning Our Future

**2014:** Lean In!

**2013:** You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet!

**2012:** Changing the Face of Agriculture

**2011:** Telling Our Story

**2010:** New Perspectives

**2009:** Activating "Generation Next"

**2008:** Celebrating the Power of 10

**2007:** Deciphering Our Future

**2006:** Re-Defining Agriculture

**2005:** The Power of Leadership

**2004:** Breaking New Ground

**2003:** We are the Strongest Link

**2002:** Together We Stand

**2001:** Creating Your Future in Agriculture

**2000:** Empowering Yourself for the Future

**1999:** Making Our Place in the World

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# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2024

7:45-8:30 AM

**Registration and Networking**

8:35 AM

**Welcome:** Emma Kuball, Princess Kay of the Milky Way

**Emcees:** Jennifer Alexander & Jenna Davis, WALC Program Committee Chairs

8:45 AM

**General Session:** *Women who Elevate, Empower and Evolve*

Colette Campbell, Chief People and Culture Officer, Bremer Bank

Theresa Gillie, Kittson County Commissioner and Owner of Theresa Gillie Farms

Deeann Lufkin, Owner and Head Cheesemaker, CannonBelles Cheese

Lillian Otieno, Director, Emerging Farmers Office - Minnesota Department of Agriculture

*Roundtable Discussion by Conference Participants*

10:15 AM

**Break and Networking**

10:45 AM

**Breakout Session I**

*Please grab your lunch in the Great Hall before the luncheon program.*

12:00 PM

**Luncheon Program**

**Greeting:** Doris Mold, Conference Co-Founder

**Remarks:** Thom Petersen, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

**Outstanding Agricultural Mentor Award:** Emily Krekelberg, WALC Mentoring Committee Chair

**Speed Networking - Bring your business cards to share with other attendees**

1:45 PM

**Break**

2:00 PM

**Breakout Session II**

3:15 PM

**Mini Sessions:** *Roundtables on different topics*

*Stay abreast of industry issues, new ideas, and other trends on a wide range of topics. Take part in up to three 14-minute mini sessions. Multiple sessions occur simultaneously, creating substantial energy.*

4:00 PM

**Closing and Prizes - Join us for a quick wrap up and prizes**

4:30 PM

**\*Optional\* Continue the Conversation – Farm at the Arb**

Explore the Arboretum grounds and see the Farm at the Arb's newest feature: the Myers Education Center Kitchen Classroom. Join Chef Beth Fisher in the Farm's new Kitchen Classroom for cooking demonstrations and tastings while continuing conversations from the conference.

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# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

## BREAKOUT I: 10:45 am – 11:45 am

### MacMillan Auditorium

#### Inside Out: Reflecting On Ourselves So We Can Better See Others

During this session, Colette will challenge participants to become culturally competent leaders. Competency starts from a place of knowing ourselves and tapping into the desire to be seen and to belong. We will do this together through exercises that prompt reflection and retrospection. From there, participants will be better equipped to begin growing their cultural competency and emerge as more effective leaders.

**Colette Campbell**, Chief People and Culture Officer, Bremer Bank

### Azalea Classroom

#### Conservation Economics for Producers

Minnesota Farm Business Management provides data to help farmers make better decisions around cover crops, water quality, and soil health. Keith will share a preview of this data and perspectives on producer use of data. Additionally, we'll cover how this area of work is matching consumer demand for using environmental metrics in production agriculture.

**Keith Olander**, Executive Director, AgCentric – Minnesota State

### Snyder Auditorium

#### Ag Entrepreneur Highlight: The Quebracho Story

Learn how Belén Rodríguez, Founder and CEO of Quebracho Empanadas, built a local food business out of homesickness for her Argentinian heritage. From backyard pop-ups and farmers markets, to selling in more than 250 stores regionally and winning the 2023 MN Cup Food and Ag Division, Belén's inspiring journey highlights the power of connecting culture through food.

**Belén Rodríguez**, Founder/CEO, Quebracho Empanadas

### Snyder Classroom I

#### Addressing Stress, Mental Health, and Wellness in the Ag Community: A Call to Action

This presentation will focus on understanding the signs, symptoms, facts, and figures related to stress, anxiety, depression, suicide, and other mental and chemical health issues among farmers and ranchers. Participants will learn about prevention and intervention strategies to increase emotional health and well-being. Information on how to be an effective "ag ally" for someone struggling with stress-related issues and other helpful resources will also be shared.

**Dr. Brenda Mack**, DSW Consulting

### Fireplace Room

#### Crops & Cows... Insure 'Em

Whether your operation is producing crops or livestock, there is an insurance policy out there to protect your farm and family. With the right policy and coverage, crop insurance can safeguard a farm's income against mother nature or times of market volatility. In this session, we will discuss how a policy can be a risk mitigation tool, rather than another bill that has to be paid in the fall.

**Shelby Hartwig**, Insurance Specialist, AgCountry

## BREAKOUT II: 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

### MacMillan Auditorium

#### 2024 Agriculture Policy Panel

Continued Farm Bill discussions, trade imbalance woes, and an election year! Come to this session to hear from experts on both D.C. and Minnesota policies that impact the agriculture industry.

**Amanda Bilek**, Senior Public Policy Director, Minnesota Corn  
**Ashley Kohls**, Executive Director, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association

**Staci Martin**, Director of Government Relations, AgriBank

**Moderator: Sarah Dornink**, Executive Director, Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council

### Azalea Classroom

#### CannonBelles Cheese: A Road to Cheese in Cannon Falls

Learn how these three women created Minnesota's newest artisan creamery. The Belles will share how CannonBelles Cheese came to be, the pitfalls they ran into, and their path to opening their own plant in Cannon Falls in April of 2023.

**Kathy Hupf**, Owner, CannonBelles Cheese

**Deeann Lufkin**, Owner, CannonBelles Cheese

**Jackie Ohmann**, Owner, CannonBelles Cheese

### Snyder Auditorium

#### Cultivating Connections: Using Storytelling to Elevate Your Business & Brand

Owning – and sharing – your story is crucial for connecting with potential customers and elevating your business and brand. From hot topics like sustainability to newsworthy happenings like an announcement or milestone anniversary, we'll break down how to begin the storytelling process by considering four questions, plus we'll share specific next steps to create an action plan. We'll share three real-life examples of this approach and results, and do a Q&A, making sure this storytelling session sets you up for success whether you want to share more about your farm, strengthen the position of your agribusiness, or build your personal brand.

**Sara Grasmon**, Account Supervisor, Belmont Partners

**Krista Kuzma**, Senior Account Executive, Belmont Partners

### Snyder Classroom I

#### Emergency Planning for Your Farm: Prepare Today; Be Ready Tomorrow

Preparation and planning are key to managing an emergency and will save you valuable time if a disaster occurs on your farm. Emergencies and disasters can include illness, injury, and inclement weather. In this session, we will learn about various types of emergencies on farms and how to prepare for and respond to them. Emily will cover the steps any farmer can take to prepare for possible emergency situations and continuation of business.

**Emily Krekelberg**, Extension Educator, Farm Safety & Health – University of Minnesota Extension

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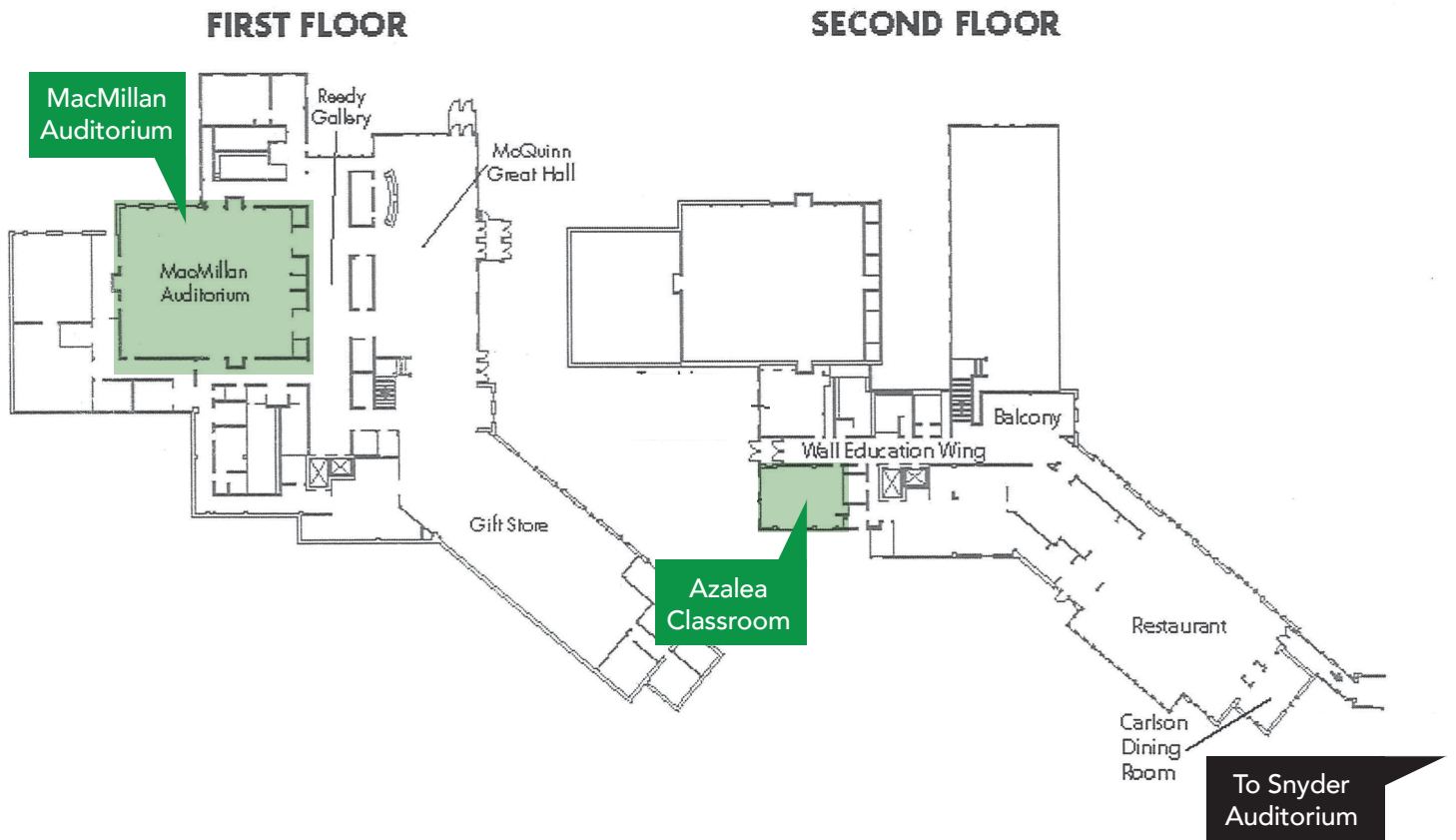


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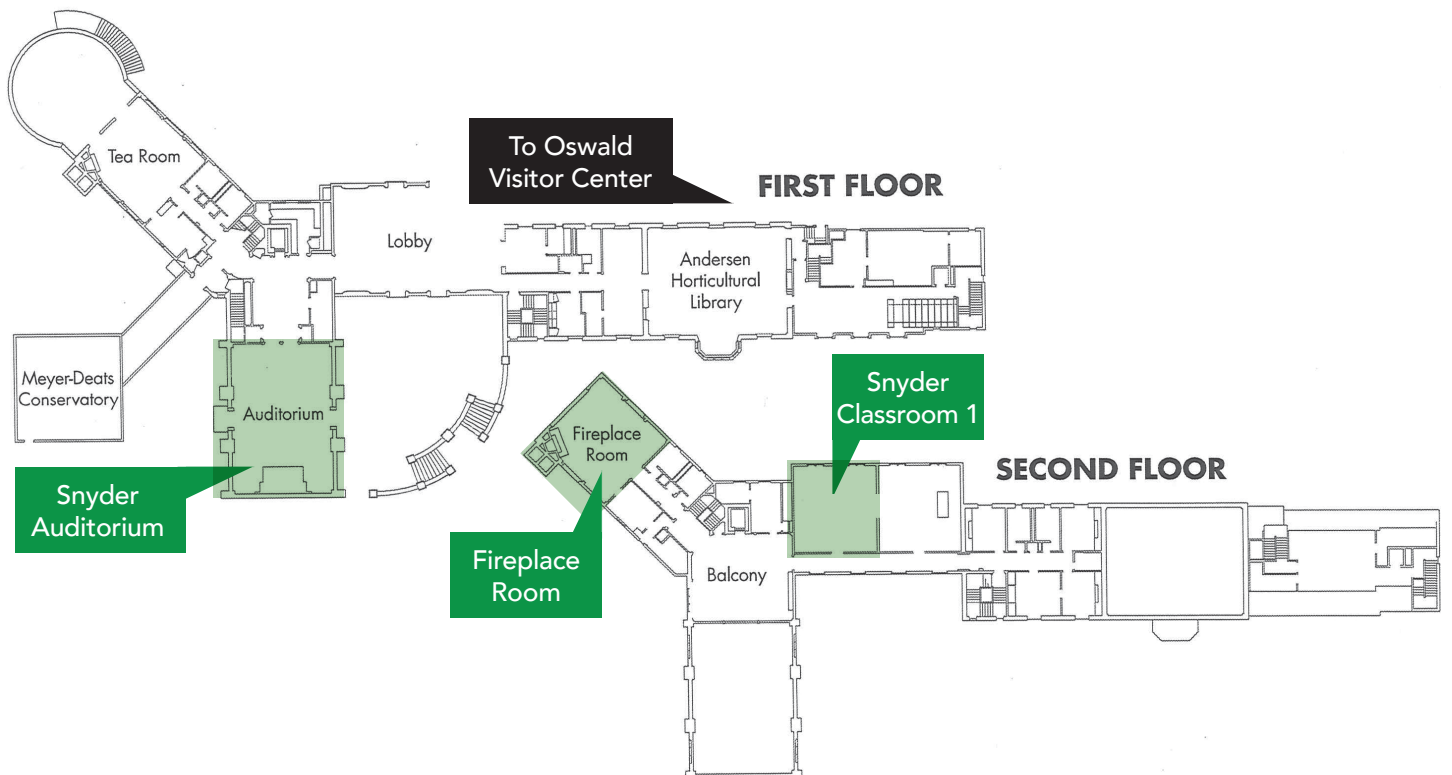


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# MINNESOTA LANDSCAPE ARBORETUM OSWALD VISITOR CENTER MAP



# MINNESOTA LANDSCAPE ARBORETUM LEON C. SNYDER BUILDING MAP





# MINI SESSIONS

Take part in up to three 14-minute mini sessions. Multiple sessions occur simultaneously, creating substantial energy.

## Annie's Project Minnesota Style

If you're yearning to learn more about the ins and outs of production agriculture, take a look at Annie's Project. This national program introduces farm women to the Five Risk Management Areas of Agriculture – production, financial management, human resources, marketing, and the legal field. Join us for a fun budgeting exercise and introduction to Annie's Project.

**Colleen Carlson**, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota

## Becoming Unstuck: Make Change Happen

Why do I feel powerless in my life? How come I struggle to implement changes that I know would benefit me? In this mini session, we will explore why it's difficult to make change happen as well as talk about the stages of change. Be prepared to think about a change you are personally wrestling with. This session will help you understand where the struggle is coming from and how to overcome it!

**Monica McConkey**, Ag Mental Health Counselor/Consultant, Eyes on the Horizon Consulting, LLC

## Climate in Minnesota: What to Expect and Tools for Adaptation

We'll discuss changes we project to see to Minnesota's climate in 20-30 years, in addition to sharing current resources and tools producers can use to address their concerns to prepare their farms for extreme weather conditions. We'll also talk about the value of creating a climate action plan for your farm/business. Resources will focus on health/worker safety, localized climate data, and frameworks for creating climate adaptation plans.

**Katie Black**, Extension Educator, Climate Resilience – University of Minnesota

## Creating Financing - How We Financed CannonBelles

Learn about the alphabet soup of grants and loans that a small business can access. From DBIA, EDA, SBA, and SMIF to MDA, VA, and USDA – we'll share how we navigated the acronyms and financed our new \$1M+ cheese plant.

**Kathy Hupf**, Owner, CannonBelles Cheese

**Deeann Lufkin**, Owner, CannonBelles Cheese

**Jackie Ohmann**, Owner, CannonBelles Cheese

## Farm to School Connections/ Minnesota Farmers Market Food Hubs

Farming is complicated enough, and marketing to schools, hospitals, and restaurants on your own adds an additional layer of stress. Learn how participating in a Virtual Food Hub, aka the Farmers Market Food Hub, can add dollars to your pocket and help you gain wholesale relationships and sales.

**Sara George**, Farmer Focused Program Manager, Renewing the Countryside

## FVC & Farming

Shelly will share her story of finding community and leading the way for women and veterans to find meaningful careers in agriculture.

**Shelly Woods**, State President, Farmer Veteran Coalition of Minnesota

## Grant Writing - the Basic Basics

All kinds of organizations offer grants for different purposes and in different sizes. In this mini session, we'll discuss some basic principles that can help you prepare a compelling proposal and increase your chances of success.

**Meg Moynihan**, Senior Advisor, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

## Grant Opportunities through the MDA

We'll provide an overview of the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) grant opportunities offered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. We will provide more information about each grant program and a general timeline for applying.

**Dacia Hinkhouse**, Grants Specialist for County Fairs, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

**Emily Mehr**, Grant Manager, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

## Growing Local Foods Partnerships

Minnesota Cooks™ is the local foods program of Minnesota Farmers Union. Since its inception in 2003, Minnesota Cooks has highlighted the importance of supporting locally-grown and made-in-Minnesota foods and products and helping grow local food markets. In 2021, MFU launched Minnesota Foodshed, a platform designed to help farmers and wholesale buyers connect easily to buy and sell more local food. Learn about local food marketing resources in Minnesota and how to build successful local food partnerships.

**Claudine Arndt**, Membership & Minnesota Cooks Director, Minnesota Farmers Union

**Lisa Holm**, Local Foods & Climate Coordinator, Minnesota Farmers Union

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# MINI SESSIONS

## Leading with Hope: Navigating our Uncertain World

Learn to harness the possibilities of uncertainty, and let it be your ally in creating organizational and personal transformation, growth, and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in an era of disruptive change, exposing the cracks in all facets of our personal and professional lives. These cracks show us the way forward, spaces where we can do and be better. Join me to reflect on your power, strength, and even your fears to overcome the roadblocks to HOPE!

**Dr. Marya Wilson**, PhD, Principal, MW Advising

## Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (and beyond)

Resources, experiences and opportunities – Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom has something for everyone.

**Ann Marie Ward**, Executive Director, Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation

## Minnesota Farm Advocate Program

The goal of the Farm Advocate program is to empower farmers. Minnesota Farm Advocates assist farmers and others with legal and financial matters, provide support in navigating agricultural policies and resolving disputes, and help farmers access relevant resources. They may offer guidance on farm business planning, risk management, and government programs. Advocates work closely with agricultural organizations, government agencies, lenders, and input suppliers to address unique challenges faced by farmers in Minnesota.

**RuthAnn Karty**, Minnesota Farm Advocate, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

## Partnering with Purpose

With the unprecedented growth of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) / FFA programs in the state, learn how Minnesota FFA and the Minnesota FFA Foundation are actively serving more than 43,000 students in grades 7-12 in over 230 schools. AFNR programs prepare students for entrepreneurship projects, career opportunities, the development of leadership skills, and community service. Explore ways that you can partner with FFA on the local and state level. Opportunities include sharing of your time, talent, and treasures.

**Val Aarsvold**, Executive Director, Minnesota FFA Foundation

## Programs & Promotion through Farm Bureau

Are you looking for more opportunities to increase your leadership development? How about resources for telling your story of agriculture? Look no further than your local Farm Bureau. Learn more about the leadership programs and agriculture awareness resources through the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation.

**Pam Debele**, Education Coordinator, Minnesota Farm Bureau

**Rachael Peterson**, Leadership Coordinator, Minnesota Farm Bureau

## Telling Your Climate Resilience Story

In the age of climate change, Minnesota's farmers live a dual, often misunderstood existence. They are both directly impacted by the effects of climate change and are a critical part of the solution to lower greenhouse gas emissions by sinking carbon into soils and making their operations more efficient. This mini session will highlight opportunities for farmers to share their own stories of climate resilience on their farms with the broader public via social media and news outlets.

**Anne Schwagerl**, Vice President, Minnesota Farmers Union

## USDA Climate Smart Commodities Reimbursement Opportunity through ADM

We're partnering with ADM to support underserved farmer outreach on their \$90 million USDA Climate-Smart Commodities Grant. Funds are given directly to farmers who implement regenerative land management practices like cover cropping and tillage reduction on their corn, wheat, soy, cotton, and peanut crops. This reimbursement program includes no commitment with respect to selling crops into ADM supply chains. We aim to reach more small, beginning, and women farmers to take advantage of this opportunity.

**Grace Liao**, Food Systems Consultant, Food Works Group

## What's Happening in Minnesota 4-H?

As summer approaches there are many exciting opportunities happening with Minnesota 4-H. Learn about the crop scouting event, the youth leadership conference YELLO, the engineering design challenge, and more!

**Meg Clark**, Minnesota 4-H State Ambassador Coordinator, University of Minnesota Extension – Minnesota 4-H

Joined by Minnesota State 4-H Ambassadors **Sidney** and **Ellen**

## What is Mandatory Farmer-Lender Mediation?

The Mandatory Farmer-Lender Mediation Program in Minnesota has been helping farmers, lenders, rural families, and other members of the agricultural community for over 38 years. The goals of Farmer-Lender Mediation are to: achieve open communications between the parties to resolve differences, create a non-hostile environment, define the rights and responsibilities of the parties, treat all parties with dignity and respect, and produce agreements that are acceptable to all the parties involved.

**Mary Nell Preisler**, State Program Director, Farmer-Lender Mediation Program – University of Minnesota

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## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

**Val Aarsvold**, Executive Director, Minnesota FFA Foundation, has been in agriculture her entire life growing up on a livestock and crop farm. Having served as an ambassador for various agricultural groups throughout college, she dedicated her professional career first as a high school agricultural education teacher in Willmar and Plainview and then as the Executive Director of the Minnesota FFA Foundation, a position she has held since 2001. Her role allows her to connect businesses and organizations with FFA members on the state level.

**Jennifer Alexander**, Regional Marketing Specialist, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, works to promote Minnesota agricultural and food products through the development of wholesale markets for farmers and processors at the local, statewide, and regional levels. With over a decade of experience in the local food sector, including founding a local plant-based food company, she leverages her industry knowledge and connections to fuel the growth of local food and farm businesses. Committed to fostering a well-connected food system, she also serves as Co-Chair of professional food industry networking group, Women Who Really Cook.

**Claudine Arndt**, Membership & Minnesota Cooks Director, Minnesota Farmers Union, helped create The Farmer and the Chef: Farm Fresh Minnesota Recipes and Stories on behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union and believes that quality, local foods are vital to the health of people, the planet and local economies.

**Amanda Bilek**, Senior Public Policy Director, Minnesota Corn, leads policy and strategy development for state and federal government affairs for Minnesota Corn. In this role, she leads state and federal lobbying activities working closely with other policy staff, contractors and Minnesota Corn's federal affiliate, the National Corn Growers Association. Prior to joining Minnesota Corn, Bilek held government affairs and public policy positions with non-governmental entities at the state and regional level. Bilek grew up in central Minnesota and attended the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul where she earned degrees in Political Science and Environmental Studies.

**Katie Black**, Extension Educator for Climate Resilience, University of Minnesota, works to advance statewide climate change adaptation efforts in Minnesota's agricultural sector. Prior to joining Extension, she worked as a naturalist at parks, a cover crop researcher, and an outreach assistant focused on increasing equity and diversity in the agricultural sciences. She received her master's degree in Applied Plant Sciences from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.

**Colette Campbell**, Chief People and Culture Officer, Bremer Bank, is known for her dynamic ability to help others create powerful shifts in their own thinking and behavior. In her role at Bremer, she has led and helped shape a comprehensive DEI strategy across the organization. Colette holds degrees in religious studies and counseling, as well as management and leadership and human development. She was raised in Canada by Jamaican-born parents and has lived and/or taught on almost every continent in the world, providing her with a rich world perspective. She lives in St. Paul with her husband, three kids, and pet bird.

**Colleen Carlson**, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota in Scott and Carver Counties. Colleen was raised on a crop and livestock farm in Le Sueur County and lives on a farm in Waseca County where she, her husband and three sons raise beef, hogs and chickens, and rent crop ground. She has a degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.

**Meg Clark**, Minnesota 4-H State Ambassador Coordinator, University of Minnesota Extension – Minnesota 4-H, loves to educate people about agriculture and where their food comes from. She grew up on a dairy and crop farm and has a bachelor's degree in Animal Science with a Dairy Production emphasis from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. With her today are State Ambassadors Sidney and Ellen, both seniors in high school. **Sidney** is planning to attend a tech school for welding or ag mechanics. **Ellen** is going to attend Eastern Wyoming College to study animal science and agriculture.

**Jenna Davis**, Farmer Relations Manager, Midwest Dairy, joined Midwest Dairy in 2017 where she helps dairy farmers and young leaders bring dairy to life! She's responsible for connecting farmers with promotional resources and training opportunities. Additionally, she provides direction for the Princess Kay of the Milky Way and Minnesota Dairy Ambassador programs.

**Pam Debele**, Education Coordinator, Minnesota Farm Bureau, focuses on programs to spread the message of agriculture throughout Minnesota and provide resources to county Farm Bureaus on classroom engagement, consumer outreach, and safety/health education.

**Sarah Dornink**, Executive Director, Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council, has nearly 20 years of experience promoting and expanding Agricultural, Food & Natural Resources Education at all levels. She currently serves on the board of directors for the Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership (MARL) program (Class IX Alum) and also teaches an Agricultural Policy & Issues course at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. She holds a BS and MS in Agricultural Education from the University of Minnesota. Dornink and her family reside on a small cattle farm in southeast Minnesota.

**Sara George**, Farmer Focused Program Manager, Renewing the Countryside, directs and coordinates three of RTC's programs to provide underserved farmers with information, tools, and one-on-one technical assistance connecting them to resources and services to improve their farm's viability. Sara is also part of the Minnesota State Farm to School Leadership Team, is a FSMA trainer, manages the Red Wing Farmers Market, and owns and operates a small produce farm in Pepin, Wisconsin. She is a talented and experienced project manager and very passionate about supporting farmers and local food systems. As a farmer herself, she has deep ties to the farming community and is very understanding of obstacles farmers can face.

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## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

**Theresa Gillie**, *Kittson County Commissioner and Grain Farmer at Theresa Gillie Farms*, is a successful farm business owner, a past President of Minnesota Soybean Growers, and serves on numerous boards and committees. Theresa's husband, Keith, died by suicide in April of 2017. She continues to be an advocate for suicide survivors, helping them to find their resilience in their grief journey and helping others understand the stress in the ag community. She's also a voice for women in AgriCult-HER, helping women understand their value on their family farms. She is a graduate of General Colin Powell's High Performance Leadership Academy and MARL Program (plus a few others). In her farming operation, she farms with her two neighbors. They all contribute equipment and labor and work together. Her motto is: She Believed She Could, So She Did.

**Sara Grasmon**, *Account Supervisor, Belmont Partners*, joined the Belmont Partners team in 2017 after spending eight years working in professional baseball. She grew up in the Corn Capital — Olivia, MN — where her first job was picking rock, and she also spent four summers working in soybean research. Now, with 15 years of experience in communications and marketing, she enjoys returning to her roots to share the stories of agriculture and horticulture clients, including Minnesota Grown, Midwest Dairy, Bachman's, Monrovia and more.

**Shelby Hartwig**, *Insurance Specialist, AgCountry*, grew up in Albany, MN, on a small cow-calf operation and was very involved in 4-H and showing cattle at the local, state, and national levels. She attended North Dakota State University in Fargo studying Agricultural Economics. After graduation, she began her role as an Insurance Specialist for AgCountry Farm Credit Services in Litchfield, MN, working with local producers to customize their crop insurance policies to best mitigate risk on their individual farms. In her free time, she enjoys playing cards with family and the occasional round of golf.

**Dacia Hinkhouse**, *Grants Specialist, Minnesota Department of Agriculture*, manages grant programs for the state's county fairs. Prior to this position she worked at the Minnesota House of Representatives as the Administrative Assistant to the Chief Clerk for 16 years. Before that, she was the legislative assistant for a lobbying firm, focusing on agricultural clients. Dacia lives with her husband and their two children in her hometown of Waseca.

**Lisa Holm**, *Local Foods and Climate Coordinator, Minnesota Farmers Union*, graduated from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities with a degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems and a minor in Global Studies. Most recently, Lisa was a government relations intern with MFU. In February 2023, Lisa joined the team full-time as Local Foods and Climate Coordinator. She enjoys convening groups around farmer-led climate solutions, policy ideas, and local foods.

**Kathy Hupf**, *Owner, CannonBelles Cheese*, is passionate about the dairy industry and entrepreneurship! She has spent most of her life working and living on a dairy farm, managing her own herd of cows for 18 years, and has a clear sense of what it takes to run a successful business. She brings a strong work ethic, knowledge of the dairy business, and a network of people in the dairy industry to the team.

**RuthAnn Karty**, *Minnesota Farm Advocate, Minnesota Department of Agriculture*. RuthAnn has been a Farm Advocate since 1986 and has many years of experience in agricultural lending, lender negotiations, farm mediation, farm programs and disaster relief. Advocates are neither attorneys nor accountants, but have been trained to recognize needs for and make referrals to legal and social services as well as crisis counseling.

**Ashley Kohls**, *Executive Director, Minnesota Turkey Growers Association*. Prior to working for Minnesota's turkey industry, Ashley served as the Vice President of Government Affairs for the Nebraska Cattlemen. Ashley is a South Dakota State University graduate, earning a bachelor's degree in Animal Science and Microbiology. Ashley's family owns and operates Kohls Land and Cattle in rural Hutchinson, MN. When not working for Minnesota's poultry farmers, Ashley works for her two 4-Hers in their family's show cattle barn.

**Emily Krekelberg**, *Extension Educator for Farm Safety & Health at the University of Minnesota Extension*, grew up on her family's dairy farm near Le Sueur, MN. Her work focuses on grain bin safety, livestock safety, tractor safety, farmer mental health, and suicide prevention. A passion of Emily's is advocating for wellness in agriculture. She has a BS in Animal Science and a master's degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.

**Emma Kuball**, *Princess Kay of the Milky Way*, serves as the official goodwill ambassador for 1,850 Minnesota dairy farm families. She is from Waterville, MN, and attends the University of Wisconsin – River Falls.

**Krista Kuzma**, *Senior Account Executive, Belmont Partners*, has a solidly rooted passion for agriculture from her dairy farm upbringing in southeast Minnesota. After numerous years in youth and young adult programs such as 4-H and Princess Kay of the Milky Way, she spent 14 years as a Dairy Star newspaper journalist, traveling the countryside to gather stories and share news about Midwest dairy farmers. In 2021, she joined Belmont Partners, working with agriculture and horticulture clients such as Midwest Dairy, Agtegra, Monrovia, Toro, Minnesota Grown and more.

**Grace Liao**, *Food Systems Consultant, Food Works Group*. FWG is a women-owned consulting firm that specializes in equitable food system transformation. FWG is dedicated to building a more equitable, sustainable food system by elevating stakeholder voices and needs. Grace has experience in sustainable food procurement, food recovery, strategic investment, and more. Grace holds a bachelor's degree in Anthropology and Sociology from Carleton College.

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## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

**Deeann Lufkin**, *Owner and Head Cheesemaker, CannonBelles Cheese*, is one of three owners of CannonBelles Cheese and CannonBelles Coffee and Ice Cream in Cannon Falls, MN. She is the head cheesemaker, having taken courses such as the Wisconsin Cheesemakers Short Course; Pasteurizer, Boiler, and Food Safety; and many other cheese-related classes.

**Dr. Brenda Mack**, *Owner, Brenda Mack DSW Consulting*. Dr. Brenda Mack is a trainer, presenter, consultant, and Associate Professor in Social Work at Bemidji State University. Brenda was employed for 20 years as a supervisor, therapist, and crisis responder for Alluma, in Crookston, MN, and worked with farmers and their families. She was raised in a farming family in northwest Minnesota and is married to a fourth-generation crop producer. She is dedicated to promoting mental wellness and well-being within the ag community and destigmatizing access to behavioral health services.

**Staci Martin**, *Director of Government Relations with AgriBank*, coordinates the strategic direction of AgriBank's government relations activities. Her career includes service at the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation on the public relations/foundation and public policy teams. Later, Staci joined AgStar Financial Services (now Compeer Financial) as director of legislative affairs. Post-merger, Staci was connected to Compeer's legislative, client education, and corporate giving programs, and the senior leadership team. She proudly serves as a Minnesota FFA Foundation board member and on her local FFA Alumni chapter board. Staci and her family live in Le Sueur County.

**Monica McConkey**, *Ag Mental Health Counselor/Consultant, Eyes on the Horizon Consulting, LLC*. Monica is a behavioral health counselor, consultant, speaker and trainer with a focus on agriculture. She has worked in the mental health field for nearly 30 years and is passionate about helping others overcome barriers and create change that allows them to find joy, improve relationships, and live with purpose. Monica grew up on a farm in northwest Minnesota and has an intimate understanding of the stressors in agriculture.

**Emily Mehr**, *Grant Manager, Minnesota Department of Agriculture*, is a member of the MDA's Grants Team and manages various programs relating to urban agriculture, farmers' markets, and increased food access for both farmers and consumers. She has a master's in Sustainable Food Systems and a background working in ag-based education and community development using local foods as the connector.

**Doris Mold**, *co-founder Women's Ag Leadership Conference, co-CEO of Annie's Project, president of Sunrise Agricultural Associates, co-lead for Cultivating Resiliency Project, superintendent of Minnesota State Fair Milking Parlor and Moo Booth, and instructor for MAST International at the University of Minnesota*. Doris is a farmer, agricultural consultant, agricultural economist, educator, Ag Advocate, Ag Stress Maven, connector, 4-H leader, FFA mentor, mom, partner, and catalyst. She is passionate about developing agricultural leaders, the future of agriculture, and elevating women in agriculture.

**Meg Moynihan**, *Senior Advisor, Minnesota Department of Agriculture*, focuses on emerging issues and leads the agency's work on farm stress. She previously managed the MDA's organic program, worked in the nonprofit and education sectors as a program director and evaluator, and served with the U.S. Peace Corps – Thailand. She has decades of experience writing and reviewing grant applications. Moynihan also owns and operates a 70-cow dairy farm with her husband, Kevin Stuedemann.

**Jackie Ohmann**, *Owner, CannonBelles Cheese*, served as a Director of Christian Education for 15 years before jumping into the entrepreneurial world. She comes from a family of entrepreneurs so it was in her blood to start her own business. She's married to a dairy farmer, which led her into the dairy world. She is an avid lover of all things cheesy and enjoys finding new ways to incorporate CannonBelles cheese into cooking.

**Keith Olander**, *Executive Director at AgCentric – Minnesota State*, invests his time in major responsibilities to augment the capacity and enrollment in comprehensive agricultural education from K-12 through post-secondary to fill industry needs. Directing the work of Minnesota Farm Business Management is also a major part of his role for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, with 62 faculty at seven colleges and nearly 3,000 farmer-students. Keith is married with three children and they reside in rural Staples. Faith, family, and his passion for agriculture consume his schedule.

**Lillian Otieno (she/her)**, *Director, Emerging Farmer Office – Minnesota Department of Agriculture*. Before joining the Emerging Farmer Office, Lillian led the outreach and engagement efforts for the MDA's Produce Safety Program implementing the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). A 2021 graduate of the state's Emerging Leaders Institute, she also served as a Public Engagement Liaison with the Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan in 2021 and 2022.

**Thom Petersen**, *Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture*, was appointed in January 2019 and reappointed in 2023. Commissioner Petersen is a long-time resident of Royalton Township near Pine City where he lives on a horse farm. From 2002 to 2019, he served as the Director of Government Relations for Minnesota Farmers Union, working on behalf of farmer-members in both Washington, D.C. and St. Paul, MN.

**Rachael Peterson**, *Leadership Coordinator for Minnesota Farm Bureau*, oversees programs like Young Farmers & Ranchers, The Herd, Agriculture Leadership Network, and youth programming, as well as opportunities for member engagement.

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# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

**Mary Nell Preisler**, State Program Director, Farmer Lender Mediation Program – University of Minnesota Extension, was instrumental in bringing the Farmer Lender Mediation program to Minnesota, becoming the program’s director in 1999. She has taught and consulted about mediation in Canada and across the U.S. She selects and trains program mediators, conducts statewide outreach, assures accountability to state and federal funders, and assures that the step-by-step process of mediation is grounded in fair practices, confidentiality, and ethical problem-solving.

**Belén Rodríguez**, Founder/CEO of Quebracho Empanadas, is passionate about sharing her Argentinian heritage. In 2018, she stepped back from her 14-year career in scientific translation and interpreting to bring Quebracho to life. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Belén took the opportunity to restructure her then catering company and turn it into a consumer packaged goods (CPG) food brand. Today, she is leading the company through growth with the mission of making her empanadas the go-to handheld food in the U.S.

**Anne Schwagerl**, Vice President, Minnesota Farmers Union, is a grain farmer in Big Stone County in western Minnesota. In 2021, Anne was elected the Vice President of Minnesota Farmers Union after serving as the State Secretary for four years. In her free time, Anne enjoys gardening, cooking with her husband, and going on adventures with their two children.

**Ann Marie Ward**, Executive Director, Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, is passionate about agricultural literacy and cultivating collaborations that empower educators and advocates to help students see there is a place for everyone in agriculture.

**Marya Wilson**, PhD, Principal and Organizational Dietician for MW Advising, is an advisor, entrepreneur, educator, and researcher. Mayra brings first-hand knowledge to the learning experience and a clear understanding of the underlying emotional processes that drive behaviors and create individual and team success. Marya has an extensive business and industry career in the areas of manufacturing, information management, telecommunications, ISP, and the semiconductor industries, as well as in higher education, government, and nonprofits. She is also an ICF trained coach.

**Shelly Woods**, President, Farmer Veteran Coalition of Minnesota, runs Ama’s Farm with her husband and son. She is Mom to eight grown kids and 10 grandkids. Shelly helped found the Minnesota chapter of the Farmer Veteran Coalition and serves on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Emerging Farmers’ Working Group.

## NOTES:

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# WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2024

## 3 WAYS I CAN *ELEVATE* MY PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL NETWORK:

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## 3 THINGS I CAN DO TO *EMPOWER* OTHER WOMEN:

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## 3 WAYS I CAN *EVOLVE* IN THE NEXT YEAR:

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