

# AFR TODAY

THE PUBLICATION OF AFR INSURANCE  
AN AFFILIATE OF OKLAHOMA FARMERS UNION  
VOL. 104, NO. 2 | SPRING 2023



## GOING GLOBAL PAGE 12

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

03	AFR Day at the Capitol	08	AFR Convention Highlights	TRI-STATE LEARNING
05	Rallying Against Recreational	11	Oklahoma Certified	PAGE 15
06	Policy in Action	19	Ag Achievement Contest	
		20	State Scholarship Winners	
		24	Oklahoma Strong w/ Scott Blubaugh	

NON PROFIT  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO 1601  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

RETURN ADDRESS:  
American Farmers & Ranchers  
P.O. Box 24000  
Oklahoma City, OK 73124

# UPCOMING 2023 EVENTS

May 29	Memorial Day; AFR Home Office Closed	July 26-29	Senior Leadership Summit, Midwest City
June 1	County Match Scholarship Deadline	Sept. 4	Labor Day; Home Office Closed
June 13-16	NFU State to State Forum, Minneapolis, MN	Sept. 6-12	Ag & Historic Trip - Coastal Maine
June 27	Tulsa Cattle Grading, Tulsa Stockyards	Sept. 8-13	NFU Fall Legislative Fly-In, Washington, D.C.
July 4	Fourth of July; AFR Home Office Closed	Sept. 28-Oct. 8	Tulsa State Fair, Tulsa
July 18-20	OSU Big 3 Field Days, Stillwater	Oct. 19	AFR Golf Tournament
July 23-25	Teen Leadership Summit, Midwest City		

**VOL. 104, NO. 2 SPRING 2023**  
**www.afrcoop.org**  
**First Published in 1920**

*AFR Today* is published by  
AFR Insurance  
Oklahoma Farmers Union  
4400 Will Rogers Parkway  
Oklahoma City, OK 73108  
(405) 218-5400 | (800) 324-7771  
Fax: (405) 218-5589

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
**WRITING & DESIGN**  
Laici Wedel Neumann  
AFR Cooperative Press Secretary

**DESIGN & PROJECT MANAGEMENT**  
Karli Fuss  
AFR Communications Specialist

**Oklahoma State Union of the Farmers  
Educational and Cooperative Union of America**  
**OUR PRIVACY POLICY:** We do not sell membership information. We do not provide members’ personal information to persons or organizations outside of affiliate companies. We afford prospective and former members the same protections as existing members with respect to personal information.  
**INFORMATION WE MAY COLLECT:** We only collect the member’s name, physical address, e-mail address and phone number.  
**INFORMATION DISCLOSURE:** We do not share members’ personal information with outside entities. Your personal information is used to mail our quarterly publication or advise you of information pertinent to your membership in the organization. It may be used to offer you membership benefits. If you are a policyholder of an affiliate insurance company, your information may be shared to verify correct contact information.

**AFR COOPERATIVE**

**President**  
Scott Blubaugh, Tonkawa

**Vice President**  
Ryan Plemmons, Broken Bow

**Secretary**  
Paul Jackson, Ringling

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Independent Director District 1**  
Roger Edenborough, Goodwell

**Independent Director District 2**  
Brett Morris, Ninnekah

**Independent Director District 3**  
Jim Shelton, Vinita

**Independent Director District 4**  
Loyd Steward, Shawnee

**Agent Director District 1**  
John Porter, Edmond

**Agent Director District 2**  
Dustin Tackett, Ft. Cobb

**Agent Director District 3**  
William Lane, Grove

**Agent Director District 4**  
Landon Jestis, Bokchito

**Independent Statewide Director**  
Mason Mungle, Norman

**AFR INSURANCE**

**President/CEO**  
Jon Srna

**Secretary**  
Paul Jackson

**CFO**  
Bernadette Autrey

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Independent Director District 1**  
Roger Edenborough, Goodwell

**Independent Director District 2**  
Brett Morris, Ninnekah

**Independent Director District 3**  
Jim Shelton, Vinita

**Independent Director District 4**  
Loyd Steward, Shawnee

**Agent Director District 1**  
John Porter, Edmond

**Agent Director District 2**  
Dustin Tackett, Ft. Cobb

**Agent Director District 3**  
William Lane, Grove

**Agent Director District 4**  
Landon Jestis, Bokchito

**Independent Statewide Director**  
Mason Mungle, Norman

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to AFR Cooperative, P.O. Box 24000, Oklahoma City, OK 73124



# AFR Day at the Capitol



AFR brought rural issues to the Oklahoma Capitol Building April 12, when AFR members from across Oklahoma convened to discuss agriculture and rural issues and meet directly with state lawmakers. AFR members lobbied on behalf of all rural Oklahoma. Most importantly, each AFR member was encouraged to talk with their representative about the issues most important to their farm, their family and their community.





# OKLAHOMA LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

## SPRING *Highlights*

By Bray Haven, AFR Cooperative Lobbyist

In a year with many new legislators, the 2023 legislative session began with the certification of nearly \$1 billion in extra recurring revenue and billions more in savings for the state of Oklahoma.

Session continues through the end of May 2023; however, legislative leadership is still at an impasse over school funding and a controversial tax credit for children attending private school. This issue has consumed the legislative session as Speaker of the House Charles McCall released his plan in February, which would have increased school funding by more than \$600M with some of the money being dispersed through unconventional methods to ensure districts not on the funding formula would receive additional funding. The Speaker’s plan also capped at \$2M per school, which proportionally

would have funded rural schools more per pupil. The plan was not well received in the Senate; it saw many modifications, including much of the money being sent to the funding formula for equal distribution and a guaranteed teacher pay raise. It was eventually returned to the House in early April. Since then, negotiations have ensued, but there is no real result at the time of this writing in early May. Legislators could come to agreement, enter into special session, or elect to go home with no agreement on education. However, they are constitutionally bound to pass a balanced budget

before they adjourn. This has not been a particularly productive legislative session as there have been a hefty number of governor vetoes due to the disagreements between the Governor and the Senate, while the Governor was backing the House’s education plan. Very few policy bills will make it to the finish line with deadlines looming, but a few key wins for AFR this session includes additional marijuana grow regulations, driving permits for younger farm family teens and reform to the Oklahoma Drought Commission.



### FDA Guidance for Industry #263

#### Livestock Antimicrobial Labels

#### What is changing?

Antimicrobials that are currently available over-the-counter (OTC), will become prescription drugs (Rx) on **June 11, 2023**.

#### Why?

Guidance for industry (GFI) #263 is part of a broader effort by FDA to combat antimicrobial resistance.

#### What products are impacted?

- Oxytetracycline
- Penicillin
- Sulfa-based antibiotics (sulfadimethoxine & sulfamethazine)
- Tylosin
- Cephapirin & Cephapirin Benzathine
- Swine medications Lincomycin & Gentamicin

#### What does this mean for stores?

Stores that currently sell the above OTC products will have to become licensed through the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy as a wholesale distributor. The completion of the application process will allow wholesale distributors to sell all animal prescription drugs, except for controlled substances.

#### What does this mean for producers?

Producers looking to purchase Rx drugs from a wholesale distributor must have a prescription from a licensed veterinarian who has a veterinary/client/patient relationship with the producer/purchaser.

**Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy**  
Phone: (405) 521-3815  
email: [pharmacy@pharmacy.ok.gov](mailto:pharmacy@pharmacy.ok.gov)  
website: [www.ok.gov/pharmacy](http://www.ok.gov/pharmacy)



OKLAHOMA  
Dept. of Agriculture,  
Food and Forestry



[CONTACT US](#) [FARM STRESS](#) [YOUTH PROGRAM](#) [COUNTIES & LOCALS](#) [Q SEARCH](#)

[ABOUT AFR](#) [PROGRAMS](#) [LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY](#) [MEMBER RESOURCES](#) [NEWS](#)



CHECK OUT AFR COOPERATIVE’S  
NEW WEBSITE AT [WWW.AFRCOOP.ORG](http://WWW.AFRCOOP.ORG).

## DO YOU GROW A PESTICIDE SENSITIVE CROP?

ODAFF ASKS YOU TO REGISTER YOUR  
PESTICIDE SENSITIVE CROP. REGISTERING  
YOUR ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA  
WILL ALERT COMMERCIAL AND PRIVATE  
PESTICIDE APPLICATORS OF YOUR CROP AND  
LOCATION AND HELP PREVENT DRIFT DAMAGE.

REGISTER YOUR SENSITIVE CROP AREA AT  
[WWW.ODA.STATE.OK.US](http://WWW.ODA.STATE.OK.US).



# RALLYING AGAINST RECREATIONAL

## SQ 820 Defeated with Rural Votes

Story by *Bray Haven, AFR Cooperative Lobbyist*

In March 2023, Oklahoma voters soundly rejected State Question 820, a proposition to legalize recreational marijuana within state boundaries. AFR Cooperative joined fellow agriculture organizations to express concern about the legalization of recreational marijuana so shortly after medicinal marijuana was legalized in the state. AFR's policy book states clear opposition to SQ 820. This policy was developed shortly after the passage of SQ 788, which legalized medicinal marijuana virtually overnight in 2018. Many rural Oklahomans saw a shift in the landscape when grow houses popped up on the edges of rural communities and neighboring agriculture enterprises. SQ 788 provided very little framework around the new industry prompted by the state question. The Oklahoma Legislature has had to be careful while passing laws to establish a regulatory environment without "undoing" the will of the people. Legislative sessions since 2018 have included several efforts to curb the influx of illegal marijuana grow operations and to set up a regulatory framework around growing, processing, delivery and the sale of medicinal marijuana. According to multiple law enforcement outlets, Oklahoma has become the place for organized crime to grow and sell marijuana. Our state has become known as the "Wild West" and has attracted marijuana growers from around the world. Syndicates of organized crime operate under the guise of "legal" marijuana grows and it is believed

an overwhelming percent of marijuana grown leaves the state illegally. This illegal activity has created issues for rural communities and farmers and ranchers who neighbor these grow facilities. AFR has added extensive policy the past couple of years and, with the support of rural legislators, have seen tremendous success in passing laws to protect existing property rights and to bring our medical marijuana industry regulations up to par with other states. Almost every AFR policy item on medical marijuana has become law. Even with this success, rural Oklahomans have remained frustrated. It is our belief that this frustration led to the failure of SQ 820, which would have legalized recreational marijuana and removed some of the new regulations recently implemented into law. The AFR policy team will continue to watch this issue closely and work hard to protect our policyholders and members.



AFR Cooperative participated in a March 1 press conference with Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association to oppose State Question 820. Highlights from AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh's comments:  
"We oppose State Question 820. We have seen the negative impact the rapidly growing, unregulated "medical" marijuana industry has had on Oklahoma's agriculture and rural communities. We have seen the rise in farming challenges. We have seen the increasing strain on rural utilities. We have seen the rise in crime...  
Many growers operate their facilities legally and in a way that is friendly to their traditional farming and ranching neighbors. They have found homes in rural communities. They work with their neighbors and, in their own way, are farmers themselves. But, we are at max capacity. Our infrastructure cannot handle more industry growth. Nor do we want to see big corporate marijuana growers from other states come to Oklahoma and run our established, friendly mom-and-pop operations out of town. We are finally getting proper regulations around the medical marijuana industry—something we have long fought for in rural Oklahoma. We do not want to turn back the clock to a Wild West industry now that we finally have better control. It's not good for anyone."

## American Farmers & Ranchers... In the Field!



Left Photo: AFR Eastern Okla. Field Rep. Jim Pilkington (far left) with AFR Insurance Agent Hunter Miles, Okeene, at Enid Agrifest. Center Photo: AFR Insurance Agent Geneva Bolenbaugh, Enid, at Agrifest. Right Photo: AFR Insurance Agent Tammy Neher, Oklahoma City, at the OKC Farm Show.





# POLICY IN ACTION

AFR Cooperative set legislative policy for the upcoming year at the 118th AFR State Convention Feb. 17.

“The AFR policy process is a model of grassroots legislative efforts,” said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. “Because many of our policies originate from resolutions crafted in our local and county organizations, AFR members know their voices are heard at the state and national level.”

Policy topics ranged from production agriculture and rural Oklahoma to urban areas and the U.S. as a whole. As with last year’s policy committee, key issues included concerns over the proliferation of medical marijuana grow facilities, dysfunction in the fed cattle market, and agriculture’s “right to repair,” as well as consumer-related issue like truth-in-labeling for food products and public-school funding.

Each year, organization policy includes “special orders of business” that address recent, current or future issues of significance to rural Oklahoma and agriculture at large.

Special Orders of Business with continued relevance carried over from last year include:

**Education:** “We support the Oklahoma State Legislature continuing to address the crisis in public education funding. No public school should be funded at a lower per student rate than any charter school. We support all public education-designated revenue from ad valorem taxation and any other common local, state, or federal government funding remaining in the public school system and not being transferred by voucher or any other method.”

Rural public schools are vital to the survival and growth of rural communities. The 2023 AFR Policy Committee remains urgently concerned about the prospect of funds being diverted away from rural Oklahoma’s public schools in favor of any other classification of non-public education. The proposed introduction of school vouchers into Oklahoma’s education system was a political battle in 2022. Although the AFR Policy Committee knew that battle would return in 2023, they stood firmly in the position set by previous committees.



The 2023 AFR Cooperative Policy Committee included (left to right) Kyle Jech, Watonga (second from right); Wayne Whitemore, Coyle; PJ Martin, Edmond; Gregg Girffin, Comanche; Barry Squires, chairman, Carnegie; Brent Smith, vice chairman, Haworth; Kevin Hart, Hobart; Veda McPeak, Warner; Chris Parker, Cherokee; and Andy Cunningham, Laverne. Additional policy committee member not pictured is Ashley Hawkins, Finley.

**Right to Repair:** “We support farmers and ranchers having the right to repair their own equipment and/or cause to be repaired through third-party non-manufacturers. We support increased access to service manuals, product guides, on-board diagnostics and other information to identify and repair machinery, parts and software. We oppose the further consolidation of farm machinery dealerships and branded repair facilities.”

The increasing difficulty of repairing late model farm equipment is a concern to farmers and ranchers statewide. The inability to conduct on-farm repairs adds unnecessary production costs and labor hours to what is already a stressful season for producers. Other agriculture organizations have signed memorandums of understanding (MOU) with major equipment manufacturers, but the 2023 AFR Policy Committee did not believe those MOUs have resolved the problem and that Right to Repair will be a continued concern for farmers and ranchers.

**Antitrust Enforcement:** “We demand enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act, the Sherman Antitrust Act, and the Clayton Antitrust Acts, specifically in regard to the antitrust issues surrounding the packing segment of the beef industry in the United States.”

Four major packing firms control more than 80 percent of all beef slaughtered in the United States. With such a controlling interest in the marketplace, these groups are poised to influence and potentially manipulate U.S. beef prices. The 2023 AFR Policy Committee felt very strongly that not enough progress has been made in limiting the potential for anti-compet-

itive behavior, and that antitrust enforcement is still one of the most urgent issues facing American agriculture.

**Fed Cattle Marketing:** “We support an increase in the amount of the negotiated cash trade percentage as it relates to the fed cattle market. To address the issue of captive supply in the fed cattle industry, we recommend that no one of the major four beef packing companies may purchase more than 25% of their weekly slaughter needs from any one feeding entity...”

Over the last two decades, the number of cattle sold on a negotiated cash basis (i.e. through an auction barn) has diminished significantly. The percentage of cattle sold through negotiated cash sale is now so small, some industry experts warn the beef cattle industry lacks a market baseline. In light of this, the 2023 AFR Policy Committee supports urgent and sincere efforts to increase competition in the fed cattle market and to encourage large meatpackers to purchase a minimum percentage of their cattle inventory through the cash market.

**Medical Marijuana:** “We recognize the production of medical marijuana is an evolving industry in Oklahoma. We recommend continued attention be given to developing policies that protect Oklahoma’s rural citizens, landowners and communities.”

The proliferation of medical marijuana grow facilities has strained Oklahoma’s rural resources and created challenges for farmers, ranchers and rural citizens. The 2023 AFR Policy Committee encouraged steps be taken to mitigate the negative impact on rural resourc



es and the ability of Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers to produce agricultural products in proximity to medical marijuana grow facilities. The Committee acknowledged that significant strides have been made, but felt it was too early to deem those strides a success.

**Truth in Labeling Standards:** "We demand the USDA enforce truth in labeling. We oppose the use of food product labeling that misleads consumers. To qualify for 'Product of USA' labeling, livestock and poultry must be bred, born, fed, harvested and processed within the borders of the United States."

Currently, cattle or beef that is imported into the U.S. and undergoes further processing or handling at a USDA-inspected facility can be labeled "Product of U.S.A." Because this practice can mislead consumers and be detrimental to U.S. beef markets, the 2023 AFR Policy Committee strongly opposes the practice and demands increased truth in labeling.

The Committee also deepened last year's Local and Regional Food Systems special order by including a specific directive for food system development:

**Government Beef Purchases:** "We demand efforts be made to shift Oklahoma's government beef purchases to locally-sourced product, to include specifically the state prison system and public schools. We further encourage efforts be made to change the EBT card system to allow installment payments toward the purchase of large quantities of beef (i.e. quarters, halves, wholes)."

Additional previous special orders were modified to reflect current needs:

**DPS Licensing System:** "In an effort to increase the number of students earning their

driver's license prior to high school graduation, driver education courses in public schools should be reinstated and fully funded on a school-by-school basis by an entity outside the public school system.

The 2023 AFR Policy Committee discussed the ability to obtain a driver's license as vital for the development of a vibrant and stable work force and considered the ability to legally drive a primary determining factor in an individual's future financial wellbeing.

Other additions to the 2023 AFR Special Orders include:

**Oklahoma Drought Commission:** "We support the Oklahoma Drought Commission be expanded to include at least two additional board members with direct knowledge of agricultural practices."

**Disaster Relief Programs:** "We support an effort to give Farm Bill disaster relief programs permanent authority."

**Bus Driver Training:** "We support a new program for public school bus driver training that would properly train applicants, but would not require a full CDL."

**School Resource Officers:** "We support adequate school security funding assistance with the help of state or federal funding. We further support funding for at least one school resource officer on each public school campus."

**Elections:** "Any local or county primary election where party filing is required shall allow all eligible voters to vote if only one party is represented. Alternatively, any local or county primary race where only one party is represented should be moved to the general election."

**State Legislature:** "We direct effort be made

## COMMENDATIONS

Each year, the AFR Policy Committee honors individuals and organizations for a job well done. Highlights of this year's commendations were:

- **We honor former AFR/OFU Field Rep Pete McDaniel for his many years of service to the organization, to the future of Oklahoma agriculture and to the Farmers Union way of life.**
- **We commend Rep. Frank Lucas and his staff for their efforts in securing permanent funding for the Livestock Forage Program (LFP).**
- **We commend public educators for their dedication to Oklahoma's children.**

to help provide rural issues education, preferably including attendance of on-farm field days, for newly elected state legislators and executive-level state agency personnel. These efforts should begin with a welcoming event for freshmen legislators."

Each year, AFR selects committee members from across the state. The appointed individuals are an accomplished and diverse group representing the broadest spectrum possible of the AFR membership. This year's committee members were Andy Cunningham, Laverne; Gregg Griffin, Comanche; Ashley Hawkins, Finley; Kevin Hart, Hobart; Kyle Jech, Okarche; P.J. Martin, Edmond; Chris Parker, Cherokee; Veda McPeak, Warner; Brent Smith, Haworth; and Wayne Whitmore, Coyle. Barry Squires, Carnegie, chaired the committee.

## Shearer Completes Term on National Policy Committee



Jordan Shearer, Slapout, has completed his one-year tenure as the AFR Cooperative representative to the National Farmers Union (NFU) Policy Drafting Committee. Shearer is a fourth-generation farmer and rancher. He has a cow/calf operation, raises wheat and sorghum,

and is an agricultural lender.

The NFU Policy Drafting Committee develops and proposes policy that will influence lobbying efforts of the national organization. Policies formed or altered during policy drafting meetings, then approved during the NFU Annual Convention, govern NFU legislative efforts throughout the year. AFR is one of only two state organizations with an annual seat at the NFU policy table.

"I am pleased to have one of our longtime members represent Oklahoma at the national level," said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. "Jordan Shearer has hands-on experience with agricultural finance and a long history of land and animal stewardship through farming and ranching. His experience has been a vital resource for the national committee and we're proud of the work he's doing on behalf of AFR and Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers." Shearer is the assistant vice president at SNB Bank National Association, Shattuck branch. In this role, he serves as a lender for agricultur-

al and commercial loans, oversees the bank's SBA program and handles public relations. Shearer previously served as executive director of the Oklahoma, Colorado and New Mexico Sorghum Associations. He managed sorghum-related association and commission activities, as well as worked with each group's board of directors to coordinate state programs. Prior to that, he served as chairman of the Oklahoma Sorghum Association for five years and worked as a project director for the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts.

Jordan is a member of Leadership Sorghum Class I, a Sorghum Checkoff program established in 2011, and Leadership Oklahoma Class 30. He is also a business partner in a guided hunting business that specializes in wild quail. He serves on the Harper County Local 8 and Harper County Farmers Union boards of directors. Shearer chaired the AFR Policy Committee from 2019-2021.



# 2023 AFR Convention

## AFR Elects Leaders, Celebrates a Great Year

American Farmers & Ranchers/Oklahoma Farmers Union (AFR/OFU) hosted the organization's 118th annual state convention at the Embassy Suites & Conference Center – Norman Feb. 17-19. The event features educational speakers and entertainment, annual business meeting of Oklahoma Farmers Union and American Farmers & Ranchers Mutual Insurance Company, discussion and adoption of AFR legislative policy and officer elections. This year's convention theme was "Honor Tradition, Embrace Change."

This year, three seats on the AFR Board of Directors—District 1 Northwest Independent Director, District 3 Northeast Agent Director and District 4 Southeast Independent Director—were up for re-election.

**Roger Edenborough**, Goodwell, was elected AFR District 1 Northwest Independent Director and will serve a three-year term. Edenborough graduated from Goodwell High School. He attended Oklahoma Panhandle State University and was named a partner in Edenborough and Edenborough, CPAs, in 1992. He served 19 years on the Goodwell Public Schools Board of Directors and 11 years on the Oklahoma State School Board Association, serving as OSSBA President in 2016-2017. Edenborough has served on the board of trustees for Panhandle Telephone Cooperative for 27 years and currently serves on the Goodwell Town Council. He and his wife, Shelley, have three daughters.

**William Lane**, Grove, was elected AFR District 3 Northeast Agent Director and will serve a three-year term. He graduated from Jay High School and attended NEO and Oklahoma

State University as part of collegiate livestock judging teams. He graduated from OSU in 1996. He was also a member of Class 10 of the Oklahoma Ag Leadership Program. Lane is a third-generation AFR Insurance agent. He began his insurance career in 1998 and currently owns an agency in Gentry, Ark. He also helps his family with their AFR Insurance agency in Langley, Okla. Lane owns a small purebred Shorthorn cattle operation, which produces nationally-successful show genetics. Lane and his wife, Jennifer, live in Grove. Together, they have five children.

**Lloyd Steward**, Bethel Acres, was elected District 4 Southeast Independent Director and will serve a three-year term. Steward graduated from Oklahoma State University. For the past 30 years, he has owned and operated RS Lawn Services. Steward served on the Bethel School Board for 11 years. He voluntarily improves the turf on the local school's sports complexes and also maintains a community cemetery. He's been a longtime AFR member and has served as county president for more than 20 years. He has served on the AFR Policy Committee and attended the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-In. Steward owns a cow/calf operation. He and his wife, Becky, have two children and five grandchildren.

In addition, AFR Cooperative Secretary **Paul Jackson**, Courtney, ran unopposed and will retain his current position for a three-year term. In addition to elections, 2023 AFR State Convention attendees learned about rural economic issues, connected with the next generation of AFR members during the youth program, learned about new opportunities available

through the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association and much more.

The three-day event featured presenters such as National Farmers Union (NFU) President Rob Larew, Oklahoma Speaker of the House Rep. Charles McCall, North Dakota Farmers Union President Mark Watne, Associate Economist and Regional Affairs Manager of the Federal Reserve – Oklahoma City Branch Megan Williams, Oklahoma State Statistician Troy Marshall, and Oklahoma AgCredit Chief Executive Officer Patrick Zeka.

This year's convention banquet was one to be remembered. In addition to a lively auction to benefit the AFR Political Action Committee, the organization also honored the late Mona Lee Brock, who was instrumental in the farmer suicide hotline developed during the 1980s Farm Crisis.







# Thousands of Students Participate in 2023 AFR Poster Contest

More than 3,703 students participated in the 2023 AFR Poster Contest. Participants represented 153 schools and 57 AFR Insurance agencies from across the state.

## Division I Top Winners

- 1<sup>st</sup> Liliana Lopez, Frederick
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Hailey Robert, Garber
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sophia Arana, Chisholm
- 4<sup>th</sup> Marlee Williams, Frederick
- 5<sup>th</sup> Aislee Collom, Frederick

## Division II Top Winners

- 1<sup>st</sup> Angel Rubio, Frederick
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Laya Woodring, Hinton
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Stella McKee, Chisholm
- 4<sup>th</sup> Hadli Patterson, Cherokee
- 5<sup>th</sup> Oziel Castaneda, Frederick







# 2023 NFU CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

MAR. 5 - 7 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA





# Oklahoma Certified!

## OCBA Celebrates Distribution Opportunity



During the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association membership meeting at the 118th AFR State Convention in Norman Feb. 17, Brady Sidwell of Sidwell Distribution presented an opportunity available exclusively to OCBA members. Sidwell Distribution, a new cold storage and distribution business located in Enid, will have a special focus on locally sourced products. Through this opportunity, OCBA beef and other Oklahoma-based products will be available for purchase by restaurants and retail. Some OCBA beef is currently in a trial run with the new company. The opportunity is expected to be available to all OCBA members later this year. AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh and Interim OCBA Coordinator Laici Neumann have been working on this new opportunity with Sidwell Distribution for months and were proud to play a part in the Sidwell Distribution Grand Opening May 1.

Above: (Left to right) Okla. Sec. of Agriculture Blayne Arthur, Sidwell Distribution CEO Brady Sidwell, and AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh show off OCBA beef at Sidwell Distribution's grand opening. Right: Scott Blubaugh talks OCBA beef with Alan Clepper of 103.1 KOFM in Enid.

## OCBA Producer Directory

- Barnhart Angus Cattle Ranch** - Billings  
918-873-2511
- Benefield Cattle** - Claremore  
918-629-0642
- Black Star Cattle Co.** - Watonga  
469-338-1554
- Blubaugh Angus Ranch** - Tonkawa  
580-628-3660
- Burns' Far Away Ranch** - Morrison  
580-307-5970
- Brainard Beef & Dairy** - Enid  
580-761-7780
- Circle R Ranch** - Holdenville  
405-596-0348
- Cruise Cattle Co.** - Okmulgee  
918-260-6074
- Decker Cattle Company** - Ringwood  
580-819-1242
- Denton Farms** -Choctaw  
405-517-5145
- Dunagan-Farms** - Guthrie  
405-821-0562
- Double Z Cattle** - Okarche  
405-388-8874
- Happy Trails Longhorns** - Rush Springs  
580-678-0895
- Hilltop Ranch** - Morrison  
405-747-6449
- Inhofe Land & Cattle** - Muskogee  
918-684-4000
- Jackson Farms** - Ringling  
580-276-4678
- L&L Cattle** - Cushing  
918-223-6425
- Myrick Farms** - Cushing  
918-223-6425
- Morrisland** - Ninnekah  
405-274-5114
- NoName Ranch** - Wynnewood  
580-768-1023
- Plemmons Farms** - Broken Bow  
580-306-1024
- Rafter O Cattle Co** - Ponca City  
580-763-2893
- River Bottom Cattle Co.** - Norman  
405-650-7172
- Rounds Cattle Company** - Leedey  
580-922-5238
- Sandy Creek Beef** - Pauls Valley  
405-238-0494
- SER Ranch** - Okarche  
580-318-4508
- Shallow Creek Ranch** - Muskogee  
918-687-1321
- Sharp Ranch** - Wynnewood  
201-913-1923
- Shelton Farm Grass-fed Beef** - Vinita  
918-244-1077
- Watson Farms** - Council Hill  
918-474-3267
- 4D Cattle Company** - Wynnewood  
405-665-2591
- 4T Ranch Beef** - Agra  
620-762-0275





# GOING GLOBAL

## AFR Member Travels to Berlin, Joins Global Policy Effort

You never know where your policy journey will take you. That's something Woodward County AFR Member Tim Bates learned first-hand this January when he traveled to Berlin, Germany, to represent National Farmers Union (NFU) on the global stage.

Bates joined 19 other young farmers and ranchers from 17 countries for the International Young Farmers' Forum at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA), an annual event that brings together agricultural ministers from more than 70 countries. The young producers are convened to bring a beginning or young producer's perspective to the GFFA.

In addition to the Young Farmers' Forum, the 2023 GFFA included the 15th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference and several days of high-level global agriculture policy discus-

sions. Tim and other Young Farmers' Forum participants watched the proceedings, but were not allowed to join in the discussions.

"It's the conference for ag ministers from all over the world," said Tim. "All the ministers are in this room with a huge round table and each flag. We could look, but couldn't go in."

A formal kick-off event hosted by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture marked the start of the GFFA. It was followed by an evening reception for "foreign guests of honor," where the Young Farmers' Forum participants rubbed shoulders with foreign dignitaries.

"All the ministers were in that room," said Tim. "They were talking amongst each other. Some of the women—probably from African countries—had hats and big, beautiful chains and huge necklaces. They just looked like royalty. They must have been because they had security. And, we were all just amongst them."

Tim interacted with several of these dignitaries during the week, including the president of the World Farmers Organization and agriculture ministers from Norway and Bangladesh.

"The ag minister of Bangladesh looked at my hat," said Tim. "He asked 'From the U.S.A.?' That hat sparked a lot of conversations."

Tim's cowboy hat set him apart not just from other forum participants, but from the entire city of Berlin.

"Three million people in Berlin and I bet he was the only one wearing a cowboy hat," said Kelsey, Tim's wife who traveled with him. "He stuck out like a sore thumb. Even when we were going through the airport in New York, people were staring."

### Green Week

The Young Farmers' Forum and the GFFA kicked off International Green Week—Grüne Woche. The highlight of the annual event is an enormous trade show featuring food and agricultural products from around the world.

"One of the workers said there were 4,000 vendors," said Tim. "You can't fathom how big

it was. There were probably 15 buildings. It was all indoors, there was nothing outside.

"We walked three miles one day and only went down one side of the building," said Kelsey. "They had all kinds of stuff. Lots of people dressed up in traditional garb."

"It's like the world's biggest state fair," said Tim.

"It was a lot of German food," said Kelsey. "But, one whole side was food from other countries. Every country had a booth."

Ever the farmer, Tim was interested in the technology on display. "They did have a lot of agriculture products. They don't have big stuff like we do here, but they're a lot more efficient than we are. They use everything."

Specifically, both Tim and Kelsey were impressed with an implement that injects slurry (hog farm waste) into farm ground. They described it as similar to an air seeder.

Not to be outdone by alternative fertilizers, alternative fuels for farm equipment were also featured.

"They had this tractor that isn't available in the U.S., but it's very similar to what we run," said Tim. "It was multi-fuel. The vendor said, 'They're making it where you can use vegetable oil.' I thought that was really cool. Of course, it's not available in the States yet. We're behind. We're behind on a lot of things."

### Getting Down to Business

The diverse group of young agriculturalists were tasked with responding to difficult questions related to the main topic of this year's GFFA—"Transforming food systems: A global response to multiple crises." The group was given three prompts dealing with resiliency, sustainability and collaboration to answer in



Tim Bates and his wife Kelsey farm and ranch near Mutual. They grow wheat, triticale, alfalfa, milo, cow peas, other crops and stocker calves. The Bates also have a custom farming business and background calves for other ranchers.



a joint statement to be presented in front of the agriculture ministers.

Although the group met virtually beforehand and even drafted a document, the early meetings did not spark confidence.

"They wanted to complete the statement over Zoom, but I couldn't understand what they were saying," said Bates. "They spoke English, but it's hard trying to understand accents over a computer."

Bates convinced the group to wait until they could discuss in person. This proved fruitful; the group ultimately collaborated to produce a four-page joint statement, although the going wasn't easy. Much of the difficulty stemmed from culture and language barriers.

"I love policy," said Bates. "It was rough—12 hours. But, I loved it. You learn so much...Each of us came in with different knowledge...we each had our own knowledge base of what we do. As we explained to others in the group, we all understood each other better."

Even with an atmosphere of mutual respect, the discussions weren't easy. The prompts provided by the GFFA leaned into difficult, controversial topics—creating crisis-proof, climate-friendly and sustainable food systems.

The prompts worried Kelsey. "I was afraid it was going to be Tim against the world," said Kelsey. "But out of 20, only two participants were 'out there.'"

### **An Oklahoma Perspective**

Even with level heads in the room, tough conversations started early with a discussion of Oklahoma's top two industries.

Tim was alarmed by a draft of the statement that pushed for the removal of fossil fuel from agricultural production and a reduction in beef consumption due to methane concerns.

"Right off the bat, I was like that isn't going to work."

"I was very vocal about how I'm in support of the oil and gas industry. It's a big part of Oklahoma. Obviously the beef side is, too. I told them I drive around with 'Eat Beef' on my pickup. Here, that's part of being a farmer and rancher."

Ultimately, the oil and gas industry and beef production conversations went well for Tim.

"Nobody understood oil and gas except me," said Tim. "But, most of them compromised easily...I explained how oil and gas isn't bad, how industrialized farming isn't bad. It may sound bad or look bad on paper, but that's not reality...It's just like beef producers. We're not out there to destroy the environment, but that's how they see us."

"They were comparing oil and gas to their coal industry," said Kelsey.

A conversation with the participant

from South Africa provided clarity.

"We conversed about fossil fuels and mining coal. I told him how the oil and gas industry in America works and he told me about how the coal industry where he is from destroys the land...So for the statement, we agreed upon 'let's not strip the land of everything, but let's have responsible mining.'"

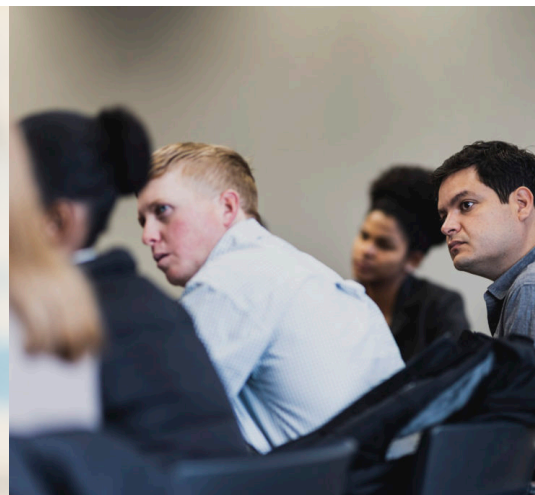
Some forum participants pushed to emphasize the promotion of electric farm equipment.

"I said 'It's not feasible,'" said Tim. "I told them we have big tractors and big equipment. You may run it 20 hours a day or it may never shut off. The tractors just keep running. But, some of those people are from poor countries. They have a garden, so they didn't understand."

When it came to beef production, Tim did have some participants on his side.

"There were about four of us that could really relate to each other—they were from New Zealand/Australia, Norway, Ukraine and me. The girl from Georgia and the chicken farmer from Japan kind of understood. The guy from South Africa was also on our side; he was a big producer. There were just a handful of us that talked; everybody else just joined our side."

"They were understanding that we have to have it—we're not just going to do away with beef," said Tim. "But, they also just agreed with me because they didn't really understand the



industry—Oklahoma's beef industry, or America's beef industry for that matter. There was nobody there that represented that except me."

When some participants tried to include ending industrialized farming in the joint statement, Tim spoke up again.

"I asked them to explain 'industrialized farming.' They said, 'You

know, like feedlots.' I said 'We have to have feedlots. That's just part of it.' That's a very critical part of the beef industry."

At another point in the discussions, the language barrier sparked confusion.

"The statement draft said they wanted to give landless people more access to land. And I thought 'So you want to come take my land? Why would you give land to someone who's landless?' Well, what they call 'landless' is a renter."

"...So, there were definitely some language barriers. Some of the things they said in English had different meanings from what we mean here...But, once everyone explained their definition, we were fine."

"We worked on those questions for 12 hours. I had to compromise. There were some things I did not agree with, but all in all, I think it turned out well."

### **The Real Conversation**

For many in the young farmers group, the comradery was immediate.

"Some participants weeded themselves out pretty quickly," said Tim. "For the rest of us, when we spoke, we were respectful to each other. When I spoke, they listened. When they spoke, I listened. We fed off each other. Their views were a little different than mine, but they explained why. Just like I explained as to why or what we do."

"We would all sit and talk; it's so interesting to hear how they live—what their lives are like," said Kelsey. "They would show us on the map where their farms are. The dairy farmer from Norway—her kitchen view is the ocean and her farm is right on the coast. They catch lobster and crab—fresh seafood all the time."

While the GFFA had provided prompts for the young farmers to respond to, the real conversation happened during these after-hours discussions at the hotel.

"This is the stuff that should have been in the statement, not the stuff they asked us to put in there," said Tim. "These side talks—everybody had the same issues."







Tim connected with several forum participants, including a crop farmer from South America, an agricultural rep from Georgia, a goat farmer and vintner from Italy, a chicken farmer from Japan, a dairyman and lobbyist from Australia, and a coffee and sugar cane cooperative manager from Costa Rica. He felt he had the most in common with a dairywoman from Norway, whose dairy had been in her family since the 1700s. He also connected with a crop consultant from Ukraine, who because of the war, had to drive a small Volkswagen 1,800 km (1,100 mi) through borders and check points to get to Berlin.

"Input costs are expensive everywhere. It costs so much money to operate, so much money to grow crops. We all felt that way. Especially with the war, the price of fertilizer, the price of fuel and everything else—we're all taking a direct hickey."

The farming participants all felt the cost of equipment was too high. "Everybody said the dealerships, they're gauging us. It's the exact same problem...the cost of what equipment costs is so unaffordable."

A point of full consensus in the group was the need for country-of-origin labeling.

"Everybody was pretty much on board with COOL...Every country wants to know—If I'm buying garlic from China and I live in Georgia, I want to know the garlic from China came from China. We were all in agreeance to that."

"If there's something that might cost a bit more, but it's from local farmers, they're going to spend a little bit more money, just because they know where it's from and how it was raised. That was the entire group—all the way across the board."

"It's important, especially for American beef producers. We take pride in our products. We take pride in the way we raise our products."

"Our group was very like-minded to the Fairness for Farmers campaign. We answered the prompts, but while we were answering them, we talked about the struggles we face. A lot of us have the same struggles and the same things we're battling all over the world."

"For everybody—it was the profit gap from the retail to the farmer...Market transparency, the true cost of what farmers have in their products versus what people think they have."

"I guess it made me feel better that there are people from around the world dealing with the same problems we're dealing with here in Oklahoma, or even on a U.S. basis. They're dealing with the same stuff, just in a different part of the world."

### Leaving a Legacy

Like many conversations about farming, the evening discussions turned to the future.

"Another thing we found to be a worldwide

problem is how to make agriculture more attractive to young people," said Tim. "That was a problem everywhere. Because, who wants to work seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It's either in you or it's not."

The group came up with several reasons for the lack of young people interested in agriculture. From financing and land access to knowledge transfer, the reasons echoed the problems in the United States.

"Just like here; just like in Mutual," said Tim. "The reason we've gotten as much land as we have is because all these old farmers retire and their kids have moved to the city. They're not going to come back."

Also similar to the U.S., many of the participants were part of a family operation or had inherited their land.

"We're about the only ones I know of who started our operation," said Tim. "...We're living it. We're doing it. I write the checks. I have to figure out how to make this work."

Tim did acknowledge that he had more help than some of the young farmers in the group.

"I'm very fortunate. My old farmer friends that I rent ground from—they're retired. They don't have anything else to do but show up at the shop and impart wisdom. I do have that... Other people don't have that knowledge sharing. They kind of felt like it was a vacuum. Whereas, I feel like I have more support."

Tim also felt more fortunate than the other young farmers in his access to policy.

"Policy, that's a big thing for them. I told them the group I'm involved with meets with lawmakers and we tell them what we want. They don't have that; they don't have an avenue. Apparently, there's a lot of countries that won't listen to farmers and they make laws without their input. Here we've got a voice. Now, we need to maintain that voice to keep that voice. It may get harder and harder with the age gap now. Those old guys are still standing at the mic. That's one thing I'm glad for."

### A Policy Journey

It was an older mentor that pushed Tim to get involved in agricultural policy.

"That was someone I thought about while I was there—Terry Peach. He basically kicked me in the butt and said we've got to have young people stand up. I never thought I'd end up in Germany. I didn't even know what ag policy was until my first AFR policy meeting. I loved it. But, I had no idea that even existed."

Tim's policy journey began in 2020 when he let Terry Peach talk him into serving on the AFR Policy Committee. Because of Covid, one year of service turned into two and Tim participated in the NFU (virtual) Legislative Fly-In from the cab of his tractor.

By spring of 2022, Tim had his policy legs. He lobbied at AFR Day at the Capitol, served as a policy delegate to national convention, and traveled to Washington, D.C., for NFU Advocacy Training, which includes board and communications training and lobbying lawmakers one-on-one.

"Before I feel I was kind of shy. I don't think I talked very much at our first policy meeting. I was never one to do that kind of thing, but now if there's something we don't agree on, I'm going to say it."

Tim's newfound voice served him well during his time in Germany.

"He was definitely a leader in the group," said Kelsey. "They would ask his opinion and talk to him. Everyone would listen when he spoke. It made me really proud to watch him."

"There's a lot of people who think the way we do, but there's not a lot of them willing to take that next step of doing stuff like this. Taking time away from their families and their operations. Going and doing the hard stuff of actually making change. Everyone wants to just talk about it, but there's not a lot of young people that feel capable of doing what Tim did."

"It's been very good," said Tim. "I'm so grateful for what I've been able to do through AFR. It took me halfway across the world and I've learned so much. It just changed my whole perspective. The world's a lot smaller than I realized, and we're all in the same boat."

"I never had any desire to leave US soil. But, I'm glad that you guys pushed me." ■



# TRI-STATE LEARNING

Young farmers and ranchers from Oklahoma, South Dakota and North Dakota gathered in Deadwood, S.D., Jan. 20-21 for professional and personal skills building and cross-state networking. The inaugural Tri-State Producers Conference celebrated a successful first event and participants went home with skills that will help them grow their operations.

AFR Cooperative joined South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU) and North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU) in the development of the new conference, which is designed to bring young farmers and ranchers together in a collaborative group atmosphere where they can learn from each other.

"We wanted this conference to be different from most," said AFR Cooperative Press Secretary Laici Neumann, who was part of the working group that developed the new event. "The Tri-State Producers Conference is designed to be interactive. The number of participants is kept at a level where everyone in the room has an opportunity to get involved in activities."

The conference kicked off with a welcome from the presidents of each organization—AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh, NDFU President Mark Watne and SDFU President Doug Sombke. Also unique for a conference, those in leadership roles participated in some of the workshops.

"It was so encouraging to see 20 of our young AFR members, learning with each other as a group," said Blubaugh. "It's not often those of us in leadership get to spend time interacting with just our young farmers and ranchers. It was great to be amongst them for a couple of days."

Programming was specifically tailored to young farmers and ranchers on a growing operation, with skills attendees could employ as soon as they got home, such as hedging strategy and communicating with spouses and family members involved in their operations.

"We're proud to have created an event that provides tangible, ready-to-use skills," said Neumann. "The young farmers and ranchers at this year's conference can put their new skills to work immediately."



Even the legislative aspects of the conference were designed for interaction. Attendees tackled resolution writing as a group, giving them a jump start in their policy work within their state organizations and with National Farmers Union (NFU).

The market concentration panelists—U.S. Cattlemen's Association President Justin Tupper, NFU Vice President of Advocacy Mike Stranz, and NFU Vice President Jeff Kippley—shared a meal with conference attendees and stuck around afterward to answer every last question.

"There wasn't a stage for the panelists," said Blubaugh. "They were on the same level with the young farmers and ranchers. It was just like a group of friends hanging out—talking about cattle and learning about each other's operations."

Several of Oklahoma's attendees voiced appreciation for the opportunity to network with their counterparts in other states. Conference attendee and Pawnee County AFR member Dillon Travis appreciated discussing common challenges.

"We are all in this together. This becomes obvious when you meet with producers from other states," said Travis, who has a cattle and hay operation and an agri-

cultural inputs business. He attended with his wife, Kaylee, who farms alongside him.

The Tri-State Producers Conference is part of the new AFR Strive adult education program. AFR Strive is intended for 25-40-year-old farmers, ranchers and agribusiness owners. The program focuses on business and personal development, industry involvement and networking. Funding for AFR Strive is provided by the AFR Cooperative, the AFR Foundation, and educational grants.



AFR Cooperative sent two AFR Strive participants to the National Farmers Union Advocacy Training Workshop April 17-18 in Washington, D.C. Former AFR Policy Committee member Zack Rendel (far left), Miami, and incoming AFR Policy Committee Chair Brent Smith (second from left), Haworth, attended the training, which included board training, Toastmasters workshops and congressional visits on Capitol Hill where they met with Sen. Markwayne Mullin (far right). AFR Cooperative Press Secretary Laici Neumann (second from right) guided the trip.



# AFR YOUTH

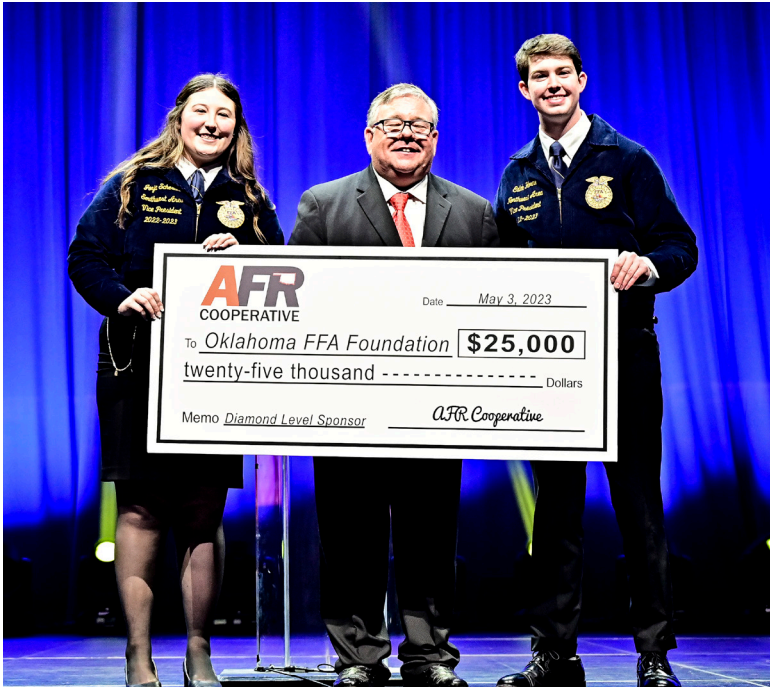
## Proud Sponsor!



AFR Cooperative sponsors many contests throughout the year, including the 2023 OKC West Cattle Grading Contest held on April 14 at OKC West Stockyards.



The AFR Foundation sponsored the 2023 Carter County Heart of a Champion Live-stock Show on March 2. Heart of a Champion is a special needs livestock show that gave participants the opportunity to exhibit sheep, goats and swine. 50 students and 50 volunteers from around the county participated.



AFR Cooperative was proud to be a diamond-level title sponsor of the 2023 Oklahoma FFA Convention. This year, student attendees from across the state visited the AFR Cooperative booth to enter to win a free registration spot to AFR Leadership Summit.



AFR Cooperative sponsored the 2023 National Range Judging Contest held on May 4 at Redlands Community College and Canadian County Event Center. AFR Cooperative staff assisted with the lunch and also attend the annual banquet and cheered on the winning teams. Oklahoma's own Morris FFA walked away with National Champion Homesite Team. Members included Ali Salyer, Haylee Sullins, Hailey Steele and Rem Wade. (Photos by Nichol Ragland, Okla. Association of Conservation Districts.)



# AFR YOUTH

Leadership Summit 2023!

Teen: July 23-25

Senior: July 26-29

Heartland Conference Center

Midwest City, OKC

afrcoop.org

### AFR Leadership Summit

#### 2023 REGISTRATION FORM

SELECT SESSION:

Teen Session | July 23–25, 2023  
(Entering grades 7, 8, 9)

Senior Session | July 26–29, 2023  
(Entering grades 10, 11, 12)

SELECT SHIRT SIZE: (Adult sizes)    S    M    L    XL    2XL

STUDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ SEX: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE ENTERING: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_ 4-H/FFA CHAPTER: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT'S ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ STUDENT PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ STUDENT EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ARE YOU OR YOUR PARENT CURRENTLY AN AFR/OFU MEMBER?    ☐ Y    ☐ N

NAME ON MEMBERSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_

ARE YOU OR YOUR PARENT CURRENTLY AN AFR INSURANCE POLICYHOLDER?    ☐ Y    ☐ N

NAME ON POLICY: \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF POLICY:    FARM    AUTO    HOME    LIFE

AFR INSURANCE AGENT: \_\_\_\_\_

**Teen Session: \$125**

**Senior Session: \$160**

Make check payable to: AFR

Non-Members: Include a SEPARATE check for \$35 & membership form for annual membership dues. ONE PER FAMILY

**AFR YOUTH**

Submit Payment and Form:

Taylor Atkinson, AFR Cooperative, Attn. AFR Leadership Summit, P.O. Box 24000, Oklahoma City, OK 73124

## Interested in running for Youth Advisory Council?

During AFR Senior Leadership Summit, five youth program participants are elected to the AFR Youth Advisory Council. These young Oklahomans represent AFR through the next year as they work side-by-side with the AFR Youth Coordinator on projects in service to the youth of Oklahoma.

Election Process:

- 1.Fill out a written application at leadership summit.
2. Interview with a panel of three judges.
3. Give a short campaign speech in front of your peers.

Requirements:

1. Entering the 12th grade at the time of leadership summit.
2. Attended leadership summit at least two previous times.
3. Current AFR Insurance policy holder.



# OYE BEHIND THE BANNER

The Oklahoma Youth Expo (OYE) welcomed students back for the 109th year March 10-17. Students, ages 9-18, brought their families, advisors and other spectators to watch what some call “The Greatest Show On Earth.” OYE has a long-standing tradition of excellence within the state of Oklahoma and across the country. At the Sale of Champions \$1.5 million, which will be used towards future projects or continuing education, was awarded to 211 exhibitors from across the state. This included \$400,000 awarded in academic scholarships and \$1.5 million awarded to more than 100 exhibitors. AFR Cooperative is a proud sponsor of OYE, awarding \$33,000 to 59 members and policyholders who made the OYE Sale of Champions. AFR also sponsored the reserve grand champion trophy for each species. More than 7,500 exhibitors from all 77 counties competed in the 2023 OYE, exhibiting 15,000 head of cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and agricultural mechanics projects.







Ten agricultural youth from across Oklahoma earned top placings in the 2023 AFR Agricultural Achievement Contest. The contest was conducted in conjunction with the Oklahoma Youth Expo (OYE) in Oklahoma City March 10-17. This year, AFR presented \$5,000 in prizes to contestants prior to the OYE Grand Drive March 16.

The AFR Agricultural Achievement Contest recognizes outstanding youth in Oklahoma who display exceptional showmanship skills and extensive knowledge of the livestock industry, including production, management, processing and end product utilization.

"As an organization, we are proud to offer development and scholarship opportunities to the youth of Oklahoma," said AFR President Scott Blubaugh. "Our annual Agricultural Achievement contest is a great way for us to support the future of Oklahoma agriculture."

**The 2023 Top Ten were:**

- 1st- Aubrie McEndoo, Stillwater**
- 2nd- Luke Spradlin, Webbers Falls**
- 3rd- Karson Osborn, Fort Gibson**
- 4th- Kinzie Bell, Crescent**
- 5th- Maysen Garrett, Guthrie**
- 6th- Morley Griffith, Dale**
- 7th- Kolten Hunt, Wellston**
- 8th- Carl Stamps, Gore**
- 9th- Shelby Harland, Mustang**
- 10th- Carly Ballagh, Newkirk**

Participation in the AFR Agricultural Achievement Contest is limited to Oklahoma junior and senior high school

students who exhibit an animal at OYE. Contestants participate in showmanship rounds with their OYE animal and take a written test about the livestock

industry. The top 10 finalists are interviewed on their individual livestock project and the industry as a whole to determine final placing.



Oklahoma FFA students from across the state competed in the Third Annual OYE Ag Mechanics Contest at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds March 8. The grand champion was exhibited by Brayden Rexford, Frontier FFA.

More than 150 projects were entered by individuals or team participants. The projects designed, fabricated and built by the students ranged from decorative projects to custom-built trailers and livestock equipment. Exhibitors were required to display their projects and provide an in-depth portfolio that included blueprints. They were judged on execution and documentation.

Agriculture is a vast and diverse industry and mechanics and fabrication are a large part of it," said Bray Haven, vice president of operations at the Oklahoma Youth Expo. "The ag mechanics contest showcases the best and brightest students and their abilities to create functional, custom-built projects. The skills students learn in the shop are priceless and help prepare them for future careers in trade and technical fields."

The top five projects in each division were sold through an online BigIron auction. Proceeds went back to exhibitors to fund future projects and higher education goals.



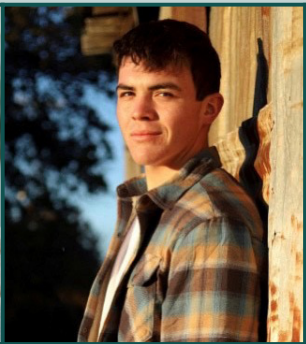
# Incoming Freshman Scholarship Recipients



Baylan Byrd  
Northwestern Okla State University



Baylee Wilbourn  
Redlands Community College



Braden Long  
Rogers State College



Calen Cox  
Oklahoma State University



Eliza Maylen  
University of Oklahoma



Garren Fields  
Oklahoma State University



Halle Pullen  
Oklahoma State University



Jacob McCullah  
Fort Scott Community College



Jana Stacy  
Eastern Oklahoma State College



Joe Tripp  
Murray State College



Katelyn Fleming  
Connors State College



Kelby Ott  
Oklahoma State University



Kelsey Dowdle  
Oklahoma State University



Kolten Hunt  
Oklahoma State University



Konner Shebester  
Oklahoma State University



Luke Spradlin  
Connors State College



Madilynn Campbell  
Northeastern A&M College



Morley Griffith  
Oklahoma State University



Raygen Krey  
Oklahoma State University



Rylee Glazier  
Oklahoma State University



Stormi Hopkins  
Oklahoma State University



Taryn Earp  
Northeastern A&M College

**78TH ANNUAL SPEECH CONTEST:**  
CENTRAL DISTRICT- NOV. 6  
NORTHEAST DISTRICT- NOV. 7  
SOUTHEAST DISTRICT- NOV. 9  
SOUTHWEST DISTRICT- NOV. 13  
NORTHWEST DISTRICT- NOV. 16  
STATE CONTEST- DEC. 2



# Continuing Education Scholarship Recipients



Elena Santiago  
Oklahoma State University



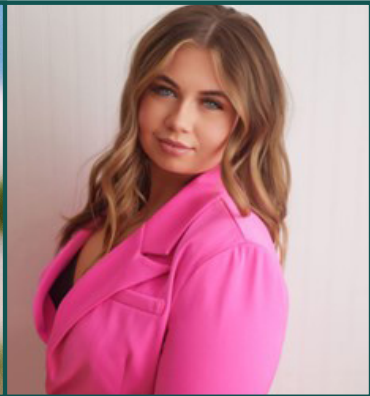
Katelyn Blevins  
Oklahoma State University



Kye Heldermon  
Oklahoma State University



Jentry Squires  
Oklahoma State University



Sophie Varner  
Oklahoma State University



Kensington Kerbs  
Oklahoma State University



Abbigail Long  
East Central University



Cooper Shebestor  
Oklahoma State University



Jordan Jones  
Eastern Oklahoma State College



Hailey Suntken  
Oklahoma State University



Kaden Brunker  
Oklahoma State University



Reagan Detrick  
Oklahoma State University



Joseph McCullah  
College of the Ozarks



Dax DeLozier  
Blinn Community College



Paike McNeil  
Southern Baptist University



Taylor McConnell  
Oklahoma State University



Kinley Bratcher  
Eastern Oklahoma State College



Jace James  
Oklahoma State University



AMERICAN FARMERS & RANCHERS

2023 AFR COUNTY/LOCAL  
MATCH SCHOLARSHIP

Applications Due June 1, 2023

Applicant or member of applicant's immediate  
family must be an AFR Insurance policyholder.



# In Memoriam

## Willie Ratterman



Harold William “Willie” Ratterman, 80, passed away Jan. 19, 2023, Yukon. He was interred at St. Joseph’s Catholic Cemetery in Union City.

Willie was born Jan. 7, 1943, at Union City to Albert William and Mary Catherine (Weigl) Ratterman. He was raised in Union City and graduated from Union City High School in 1961. He was a lifelong member of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and married Reba Louise Bromlow there on Sept. 27, 1963. They made their home in Union City and later moved to Minco in 1999.

Willie went to auctioneer school and real estate school; he also became an insurance agent and broker. Willie and Louise owned Ratterman Insurance Agency and R&R Auction and Real Estate. He served as president of the Union City School Board for many years, on St. Joseph’s Parish Board, and as president of the Grady County American Farmers & Ranchers organization. He was also the retired Fire Chief for the Union City Volunteer Fire Department.

He loved riding horses in the Minco Round-up Club.

Willie was preceded in death by his parents, Albert and Mary Catherine Ratterman; daughter, Regina Glenn Ratterman; and son, Robert W. Ratterman.

Willie is survived by his loving wife of nearly 60 years, Louise, of the home in Minco; daughters, Rebecca and Ronda Ratterman, both of Minco; grandsons, Stetson and Stratton Ratterman, both of Minco; brothers, John Ratterman and wife Donna of Yukon, Marion Ratterman and wife Norma Jean of Yukon; sister Mary Ratterman of Union City; sister-in-law, Sharon Bromlow of El Reno; and numerous nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

## Virginia Drew



Virginia Aline Drew, 91, of Harrah, passed Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023. She was born April 12, 1931, in Harrah to John and Marie (Ertel) Smith. She was raised and educated in Harrah, graduating from Harrah High School in 1949.

Virginia married John Drew on Feb. 9, 1950, at St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church. She was a member of the St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church and the Altar Society. She was also a member of Oklahoma Farmers Union (OFU), where she was a youth leader,

taught classes, and even cooked at summer camps.

Virginia was active in her community and served on the local Election Board and attended many functions at the Harrah Senior Citizens Center. Later in life, she and John seldom missed a lunch or a dance at the center.

Virginia was well known in Harrah for her delicious cooking, beautiful wedding and birthday cakes, and wonderful quilts. Her best work was done as a homemaker, wife and mother, and later in life, as a grandmother and great-grandmother.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband John, granddaughter Patricia Drew, and two brothers, Billy Smith and Elmer Smith.

She is survived by her children, Judy and husband Sammy Martin, David and wife Linda Drew, Penny and husband Allen Beam, all of Harrah; a half-brother Gilbert Gough; three grandchildren, Jawna and husband Justin McGehee, Jeff and wife Athena Martin and David Allen Drew; and eight great-grandchildren, Kabrin and wife Lexi Martin and Carlyee Martin, Mason, Jenson and Maverick McGehee, Teagan,

Kensley and Adley Drew; and numerous extended family.

*Managing*  
**FARM STRESS**  
*in*  
**2023**

**AFR FARM STRESS HOTLINE**  
833-FARM-911

**AFR FARM STRESS TEAM**  
farmstress@afrmic.com

**NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE**  
988

**FREE FARM STRESS COURSE**

FOR MORE INFO OR TO REGISTER,  
EMAIL FARMSTRESS@AFRMIC.COM.



# In Memoriam

## Janet Lively



Janet Lee Lively, 90, passed away April 21, 2023, in Woodward. She was a resident of Sharon and was interred at North Persimmon Cemetery east of Sharon. Janet was born April 5, 1933, in Shattuck to George Harvey and Ruth Marie (Valentine) Baker. Janet grew up in Catesby, Wood-

ward and Sharon; she attended school in Woodward and Sharon, graduating in 1951. Janet married Dale Leon Lively on Feb. 27, 1952, in Sharon; they made their first home in Sharon, but also lived at Ft. Sill while Dale was in the Army. Janet worked for the Stock Exchange Bank and owned the Lively AFR Insurance Agency. She was also a farm wife, mom, grandmother and homemaker. She loved spending time with her children and grandchildren. She always loved it when her family came to visit her, and she enjoyed going to church. She was always busy. She worked on many 4-H projects and enjoyed playing cards with her family, dominoes with her friends and, in her later years, spending time with Ray. She made Christmas stockings and baby quilts for her family and others. She was always organizing newspaper clippings, photos and other items for the many albums she made for her family. Janet was a member of the

Sharon United Methodist Church and the United Methodist Women, and was a 4-H leader for more than 30 years. Janet is survived by two sons, Randy Lively and wife Vicki and Steve Lively and wife Cindy, all of Sharon; daughter, Susan Lively Allen and husband Russ of Guthrie; daughter-in-law, Tasha Lively of Mooreland; seven grandchildren, Kurt Lively and wife Jarie, Kendall Schnoebelen and husband Jacob, Wade Lively, Wyatt Lively, Audrey Allen, and Luke Allen; three great-grandchildren, Skyleigh Lively, Blaire Lively and Kennedy Lively; her longtime companion, Ray Blakley of Woodward; other relatives and many friends. Janet was preceded in death by her husband, Dale Leon Lively; son, Ken Dale Lively; grandson, Ryan Burk Lively; parents, George Harvey and Ruth Marie Baker; and sister, Rozann McFarland.

## AG & HISTORIC COASTAL MAINE

SEPT. 6-12

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK | LIGHTHOUSES | HARBORS

The AFR Ag & Historic Conference team is ready for our next adventure....COASTAL MAINE! The "Vacationland" of Maine is New England on a grand scale. AFR will share in the state's all-encompassing natural beauty with a visit to Acadia National Park, historic Maine lighthouses, picturesque harbors and much more! AFR members will learn about the history and agriculture of this iconic region.

This is going to be one of our best membership adventures yet and is a great opportunity to mark Coastal Maine off your bucket list! "Coastal Maine and Acadia National Park" is scheduled for Sept. 6-12, 2023. Space is very limited! For information or to reserve your spot, call Jamie Goodson (405-218-5665) or Paul Jackson (405-218-5559).

## Find us on *Social Media*

For the most up-to-date information on AFR activities, follow us on social media!

**AFR Cooperative**

facebook.com/AmericanFarmersandRanchers

Instagram @afrcoop

**AFR Youth**

facebook.com/AFRYouth

Instagram @AFRYouth

*We love to see what you're doing in your communities. Don't forget to tag us in your pictures!*

You can also visit us at [www.afrcoop.org](http://www.afrcoop.org).





# Oklahoma STRONG

From the Desk of Scott Blubaugh

*We've had a busy spring here in the Cooperative!*

*We've done legislative work at both the state and national level. We completed our annual policy committee discussions, passed this year's policy at AFR State Convention, and had a great turn out for AFR Day at the Capitol—our state lobbying day.*

*On the national level, we represented Oklahoma's interests in National Farmers Union policy discussions and sent two young farmers to learn the ropes lobbying in Washington, D.C., so they can lead the next generation in the important work we do.*

*We've also been hard at work in the AFR Youth Program. We've hosted several skills contests, including the annual National Land and Range Judging Contest, and we've also played a major role in the Oklahoma FFA Convention and the Oklahoma Youth Expo, including sponsoring the new OYE Agricultural Mechanics Contest for the third year in a row.*

*In addition to this literal skills-building, our Youth Program also emphasizes leadership skills. The*

*upcoming annual AFR Leadership Summit will immerse students in a deep dive into leadership of all styles. Examples abound of outward leadership styles, but I'm most proud that our leadership summit focuses on the type of leadership I think is most important—leadership from within. Leadership that comes from within may not be flashy, but it's the glue that holds our society together. In my opinion, it's the mark of a true leader.*

*Here are some of what our Leadership Summit participants will learn this summer:*

*First and foremost, a true leader uplifts those around them. They encourage; they try to bring out the best in others, rather than tearing them down. Instead of focusing on faults, they search out the good in each person.*

*A true leader seeks to unite people, and never intentionally divides others. Rather, they help those around them find common ground and work toward compromise.*

*A true leader considers other points of view. They don't bully those who disagree. Rather, they respect all voices*

*and listen to opinions that are different from their own. They understand there is strength in diversity.*

*I'm so pleased that Oklahoma's young people can learn these important lessons, and that they can learn them with us at our Leadership Summit. I pray our AFR Youth Program participants become leaders who unite, instead of divide.*

*We all need to improve our leadership skills, me included. It's a skill that develops over a lifetime and we should put effort into that self-improvement. With that purpose in mind, I recently completed the Leadership Oklahoma program. It was a great opportunity to build relationships with experts from across Oklahoma's industries, but it was also a great opportunity for me to deepen and improve my own leadership skills. It's a great program and I encourage you to consider participating.*

*Until next time, I wish you progress on your leadership journey! God bless!*

*-Scott*