





# January Report

President, Paul Hunsinger



Paul Hunsinger, CCFB President

I hope everyone had a good Christmas and got to spend some good quality time with family and friends. I sure did. Back in the beginning of December, the delegates from Champaign County headed up to Chicago for the Illinois Farm Bureau Annual Meeting. We knew it was going to be an interesting year since President Guebert was retiring, but this will definitely be an Annual Meeting to remember. The new resolution portion of the meeting definitely brought some great ideas to add to our policy book. There were a number of resolutions that strengthened our stance on issues and will definitely set forth great guidance for Illinois Farm Bureau in 2024.

The big surprise on Sunday night before the annual meeting was that Philip Nelson, who is a past IFB president, was going to run against Brian Duncan for President of the Illinois Farm Bureau. This honestly was not received well by most for a number of reasons but mainly it didn't give the delegates enough time to properly educate themselves about the candidates. Even with this excitement Brian Duncan was elected by an overwhelming majority to be the new President of the Illinois Farm Bureau. The Vice Presidential race didn't have any last minute announcement of new candidates but it was just as exciting. All three nominees were great candidates but Evan Hultine was elected as the new Vice-President of Illinois Farm Bureau. President Duncan and Vice-President Hultine I think are going to do a great job leading this organization in the years to come.

I hope everyone has a great start to the New Year!

Sincerely,  
Paul Hunsinger

## Prime Timers Meeting

Prime Timers DOES NOT meet in January

Call the CCFB Office with questions at

217-352-5235

Stay tuned for details regarding the

February 2024 meeting!

## CCFB Calendar of Events January 2024

January 8	Women's Committee	9:30 a.m.
January 18	Full Board	5:30 p.m.
January 23	Governmental Affairs	7:30 a.m.

## Women's Committee

The Champaign County Farm Bureau Women's Committee is open to all women interested in agriculture.

### Calendar of Events

Women's Committee General Meeting  
January 8th, 9:30 am @ CFB Auditorium

Guest Speaker: Nancy Miller, talking about  
Being Prepared with Car Safety Backpack

## PREP, FREEZE, COOK

February 22 | 6:30 PM

Champaign County Farm Bureau | 801 N. Country Fair Drive | Champaign, IL

\$150 for all attendees

Participants will get 10 meals that each feed 5 people

RSVP by Feb. 14

<https://form.jotform.com/233396120194151> or scan the QR code to register



Save  
the  
Date

2024

GOVERNMENTAL Affairs  
LEADERSHIP Conference

BUILDING  
for Success

FEB20,2024

ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU • RISK MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

### EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR YOUR FARM

FEBRUARY 12TH

Lunch at 11:15 a.m. in auditorium  
Viewing begins at 11:30 a.m.

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FARM BUREAU  
801 N. Country Fair Drive | Champaign, IL 61821

RSVP by Feb 5th <https://form.jotform.com/233396423996167> or scan the QR code



COUNTRY  
FINANCIAL



This is a no cost for the viewing session

Mark your  
Calendars!

CCFB Members  
join us for  
EUCHRE.



Dates: January 14th & January 28th

Location: CCFB Auditorium

Games - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.



# 2024 Champaign County Farm Bureau Trips

**Monday, April 29, 2024 (Matinee)**  
**A Rock n’ Roll Tribute from Elvis to The Beatles featuring The Neverly Brothers – Starved Rock Lodge - Oglesby, IL**

The Neverly Brothers concerts take you on a guided musical VIRTUAL TOUR of the birth, near death and resurrection of rock n’ roll – from 1955 to 1965. You’ll learn rock history and be thoroughly entertained with their chronological song sequence, stories behind the music and vintage wardrobe changes. Their energetic stage show consists of show stopping renditions of early hits by Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, The Beatles, Rolling Stones, and more!

Price per person: \$120.00                      Deadline to Register or cancel reservation: Friday, March 29

**Thursday, June 20, 2024 (Matinee)**  
**Honky Tonk Angels – The Little Theatre On The Square – Sullivan, IL**

When three gutsy gals from different backgrounds take charge of their lives, the decide to follow their honky tonk dreams to the city of Nashville. Combining 30 classic country tunes (including “Stand By Your Man,” “9 to 5,” “Harper Valley PTA” and more!) The Honky Tonk Angels is a hilarious, foot-stomping good time from the creator of Always....Patsy Cline.

Lunch will be at Yoder’s and is NOT included in the price.

Price Per Person: \$95                      Deadline to Register or cancel reservation: May 17

**Wednesday, August 14, 2024 (Matinee)**  
**Menopause The Musical –CIRCA ’21 Dinner Playhouse – Rock Island, IL**

This funny and inspiring musical parody finds the humor in a woman’s “change of life.” Four women of a certain age meet by chance at a department store lingerie sale, and bond over their woeful hot flashes, forgetfulness, mood swings, wrinkles, night sweats, chocolate binges, and more! These diverse women create a sisterhood as they realize that menopause is a shared experience that doesn’t have to be suffered in silence. This hilarious musical parody set to classic tunes from the ‘60s, ‘70sand ‘80s will have you cheering and dancing in the aisles!

Price Per Person: \$120                      Deadline to Register or cancel reservation: July 10

**Thursday, September 26, 2024 (Matinee)**  
**Million Dollar Quartet – Beef & Boards Dinner Theatre – Indianapolis, IN**


On December 4, 1956, an extraordinary twist of fate brought Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley together at Sun Records in Memphis for what would be one of the greatest jam sessions ever. Million Dollar Quartet bring that legendary December night to life featuring an incredible score performed live onstage, including: “Blue Suede Shoes”, “Fever”, “Walk the Line”, “Sixteen Tons”, “Who Do You Love”, “That’s All Right”, “Folsom Prison Blues”, “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On”, “Hound Dog” .....and more.

Price Per Person: \$120                      Deadline to Register or cancel reservation: August 23

**Christmas Show in December – TBD**  
More Information to Come

## Debbie Styan Spotlight

Debbie Styan of Pesotum, IL was hired as the new CCFB Administrative Assistant in November. She worked previously at Piatt County Farm Bureau for 1 year and the University of Illinois for 22 years. Debbie is married to Todd Styan, a farmer from Sadorus. They have 4 children: Madelyn 29, Luke 21, Tyler 15 and Cade 12. When Debbie is not working, you can find her at a Unity sporting event, at one of her daughter’s vendor markets, or in the summertime, relaxing by the pool with the family.



## Mark Your 2024 Calendars!

*Marketing Meetings will be held on*

- Jan. 15th
- April 2nd
- June 27th
- August 6th

## Lucas Stark Spotlight

Lucas Stark of Tolono, IL was hired as the new CCFB Assistant Manager as of late November. Lucas is a Champaign County Native having grown up in Tolono. After finishing high school, Lucas went on to graduate from the University of Illinois with his degree in Technical Systems Management in 2020. Upon graduating Lucas took a position in Tulsa, OK as a manager for Consolidated Grain and Barge. In 2021, he moved back home to work with the same company in Homer, IL. That experience allowed Lucas to gain valuable knowledge about the grain industry across the central United States. He worked with the company until late 2023 when he made the switch to the Champaign County Farm Bureau. On the weekends and other free time, Lucas spends time on the family farm in Vermillion County where he helps in raising a small herd of cattle and assists with other projects. Lucas and his fiancé now reside in Ogden.



Continue from Lifetime, page 1

in Germany to be organic by 2030 and an additional 30% of ground out of farm production and back to a natural state by 2030. These goals have presented an incredible number of challenges for German farmers. One common theme of discussion was the difference in American farmer’s political power and ability to punch above their collective weight and the relative lack of political power for the German farmers. Another discussion point was the lack of risk management tools for German farmers. There is not a program like crop insurance or disaster aid for the German farmers, their only risk management tool is to diversify both the crops they raise and the income streams of the farm. There were several common challenges though. Consumer education, labor shortages, input costs, and government overreach were all issues that have common ground across the Atlantic.

The first day featured two farms that were committed to “closing the carbon circle”. These farms raise a much larger variety of small grain crops than are typical in Illinois. Crops included: corn for corn grain and corn silage, rye, wheat, canola, rapeseed, alfalfa for haylage, oats, and sorghum. Each farm also had a livestock component, one milked dairy cows and the second fed out beef bulls (castration is illegal in Germany, so they feed out bulls instead of steers) for a grocery store chain. The goal for both these farms is to not have carbon “leave” the farm. The small grains are grown for cattle feed and the manure from the cattle is spread on the fields. Additionally, one farm has an on-site biogas reactor that crop residue is used in to provide electricity for the farm and the surrounding houses.

The second day was all about Berlin and meeting with government officials. The day started with a breakfast roundtable sponsored by the Aspen Institute – Germany and Bayer that discussed Transatlantic Perspectives on Fostering a Culture of Innovation in Agriculture. All four American participants on the tour participated in the roundtable with Nicolas Rubio, Agriculture Counselor from the US Embassy in

Berlin and Astrid Jakobs de Padua, Agriculture Minister from the German Embassy in Washington DC. After that, a walking tour of central Berlin commenced with visits to the Brandenburg Gate and the Bundestag, the German Parliament. Lunch was at a restaurant on the roof of the Bundestag with Roland Theis, a member of the German Parliament who sits on their agriculture committee, along with his staff members. It was an incredible discussion over lunch that focused on the common challenges facing agriculture on both sides of the Atlantic and on the differing ways that the US and Germany are facing those challenges. The final meeting of the day was at the US Embassy in Berlin with Agriculture Counselor Nicolas Rubio and his staff to discuss how the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service works for American farmers and the resources that they provide.

On Thursday, more farm visits took place. The first was a large, diversified crop and dairy farm that farms ~9,500 acres of small grains and hay and milks 20 hours a day. This farm has been on the cutting edge in developing pollinator plot programs and habitat protection for endangered species, and they even get a government subsidy to keep piles of dirt around as habitat for an endangered lark. The second visit on Thursday was a university research farm that would be equivalent to an extension research farm in the US. This farm has been utilized continuously since the 1930’s and they focus on comparing production types and novel ways to reduce compaction.

The final full day was the highlight in a trip full of highlights. The group was able to spend an entire day at Agritechnica, the largest indoor farm trade show in the world. American exceptionalism really happened as all the Americans expected this to be like Louisville or Commodity Classic. That was not the case. Agritechnica makes Louisville look like Gordyville. With over 200 acres under roof in 35 buildings and a 300-acre total footprint, this show was huge. The agriculture group DLG was a main sponsor of the program and is the main sponsor of Agritechnica. They expected 400,000 people to pass through the gates to visit the show. Every global agribusiness was there, from John Deere to Precision Planting, and booths showed off everything from self-propelled wheelbarrows to fully electric, fully autonomous tractors. The marketing effort at the show was incredible. All of the large booths had nice places to sit down and chat and most of them had servers serving drinks and snacks to the patrons. It was incredibly impressive to see. Chandler and Bailey took over 22,000 steps and can say that while they did not see everything, they did set foot in all 35 buildings.

This trip was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity to build relationships across the Atlantic. Chandler and Bailey would like to thank the Aspen Institute – Germany for their development of this project and to Bayer, Agrargenossenschaft Trebbin, Klima Bauern, DIN, Klim, DLG, and Agritechnica 2023 for their support and sponsorship of the program. There is no doubt that this program will have a lasting impact on transatlantic ag collaboration.

gave the date

# YOUNG Reader

CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 2-3, 2024

PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN HOTEL  
& BANK OF SPRINGFIELD CENTER

SPRINGFIELD, IL



KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
ERIC SNOGRASS





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# Ag in the Classroom



2  
3  
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2  
4

Lesson Spotlight

Pine trees are the longest surviving tree. Students learn how protective the pine cones are of the seeds and experiment with weather conditions to see when the pine cone will open or close. The lesson was featured on WICA's Ag in the Classroom segment.



## Ag Volunteer of the Year

In 1993 Steve Stierwalt led the charge to create the Champaign County Farm Bureau Ag Literacy program called Earth Partners. Today, Champaign County Ag in the Classroom impacts thousands of students each month as they discover the world of agriculture through hands-on and interactive classroom lessons. Earlier in December, at the Illinois Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Chicago, Steve was recognized as the Illinois Ag in the Classroom Volunteer of the Year. We were so proud to nominate Steve for this award and we're forever thankful for his vision, leadership, and constant support of Ag Literacy.



Pictured (left to right): CCFB President Paul Hunsinger, Judi Stierwalt, Steve Stierwalt and Champaign County Ag in the Classroom Director Sarah Kaper



Thank you to all who supported our Flight Night at Riggs, especially our little supporters who got to play Spot It Illinois.



Connect with us!

Sarah Kaper, Director & Educator  
Julie Adcock, Educator



Cash Prizes  
Dinner  
Casino Games  
Golf Cart  
Raffle

Join us for the 2024 Cash Bash!

Royal Community Center  
Saturday, March 2nd - 4:00pm-8:00pm

**\$100 / Ticket - Admits 2**  
Only 200 Tickets Being Sold!

**Purchase Your Ticket Today!**

Online [www.CCFBFoundation.com/CashBash](http://www.CCFBFoundation.com/CashBash)



Mail a Check Payable To: CCFBFoundation  
"Cash Bash" in Memo

In Person Champaign County Farm Bureau Office  
or 801 N. Country Fair Drive - Suite A  
By Phone Champaign, IL 61821  
217-352-5235

## ATTENTION AG STUDENTS!

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS  
ARE OPEN NOW!

Deadline: January 31, 2024 / 11:59pm

To Find Out More or To Apply:  
[www.ccfbfoundation.com/scholarship](http://www.ccfbfoundation.com/scholarship)





**KORY KRAUS,**  
**GENERAL MANAGER**

**Now, it is time to reflect on changes to consider.** Make time to refresh or change some of the long-term traditional practices or to challenge how decisions are made. Here is a compilation of things to consider as we enter a new growing season in 2024.

**Nitrogen impacts both the environment and farm economics.** It is second only to sediment as an impairment to water resources in Illinois. It is the most critical nutrient input for corn production and is among the top two input costs. Each year, new pattern tiled fields make it easier for unused soil nitrate-N to find its way from the point of application to ditches, rivers, lakes, and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico. Off-target movement increases the risk of finding nitrates in drinking water (elevated nitrate-N) and causing eutrophication (accelerated algae growth). Changing management practices to reduce N loss without impacting harvest yield will increase farm profitability by optimizing the investment in N applied (use it, don't lose it). It is all about M.O.M., Minimizing environmental impact by Optimizing harvest yield and Maximizing input utilization. Focus on N management in 2024 to improve farm profitability and environmental quality.

**The soil holds several thousand pounds of N.** About 95% of the N found in our East-Central Illinois soils is bound organically and is unavailable to the plant for uptake. Only a fraction of the bound N is released annually, depending upon the microbial activity and a process referred to as mineralization (plant-unavailable N to plant-available N). It is assumed that approximately 25 pounds of N can be released as plant-available N for each percent of soil organic matter (cropping season). If the soil has 3% organic matter, approximately 75 pounds of N can be released during the growing season.

**Tillage enhances the release of plant-available N (P.A.N.) from soil organic matter.** Tillage increases the mineralization of organic matter by providing an environment favorable for microbial activity. A short-term benefit of increased N release means more N becomes available for crop uptake. Unfortunately, the faster plant-available N is released from soil organic matter, the quicker it oxidizes, minimizing soil productivity long-term. If we want the soil to remain a productive natural resource for future generations, it is time to understand management practices that will maintain its productivity in 2024 and beyond.

**Soils release a significant amount of P.A.N. each growing season.** Suppose each percent of organic matter can be approximately 25 pounds of plant-available N annually. In that case, soil with 3% organic matter may release as much as 75 pounds of N during the growing season. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to estimate or predict how much N is being released since the amount depends on the soil environment and microbial activity, and both are unpredictable in each growing season. The mineralization of soil organic N is likely the primary cause of nitrate-N in subsurface tiles and drainage ditches. Research is starting to focus more on organic N release, especially in fields following soybean production. Research funded by the Nutrient Research and Education Council (Fertilizer Check-Off) is focused on unraveling the science behind the mineralization of organic N and the fate of released inorganic N. Visit [www.IllinoisNREC.org](http://www.IllinoisNREC.org) for more information about funded research and what we have learned so far.

**Apply Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K) by removal, not just soil tests.** Determining how much phosphorus and potassium to apply is moving toward a removal-based recommendation system. Adding nutrients back to the areas of the field where they were removed by grain makes sense. Areas of the highest yield should receive the highest nutrient applications. Areas of below-expectation harvest are likely yield-limiting due to other growth factors (water, soil type, soil structure, etc.). Adding additional phosphorus and potassium may not have an impact on productivity. Traditional soil tests will remain a part of nutrient management. Still, they will eventually be used to establish an up/down trend of P and K availability, not the primary basis for application rates. Traditional soil tests will remain essential to nutrient management to determine soils' overall P and K status.

**Apply P and K together at a rate relative to plant uptake** of the harvested crop. Nearly all nutrients enter the plant with water by plant transpiration. Transpiration is the process used by plants as a cooling mechanism. Water is pulled from the soil through the plant's xylem by evaporating from the leaf surface, cooling the plant. Over 90% of the water that enters the plant is used for cooling. Water-soluble solutes like ortho-phosphate and potassium are pulled into the plant along with soil water. The concentration of nutrients found in soil water will determine the concentration that will enter the plant.

Making fertilizer applications based on harvest yield within fields makes economic sense. Site-based yield provides the basis for site-based nutrient rate recommendations. The value of the site-based harvested crop provides income to cover the site-based input costs. High-yielding crops generate more revenue to pay for the higher removal rates. Although low-yielding areas will generate less income, fewer nutrients will be recommended based upon fewer nutrients removed.

**Grain nutrient removal rates may need further adjustment.**

On-Farm Discovery work has uncovered that P and K removal rates vary significantly within and by field. Suppose we can lower removal rates without an overall effect on harvest yield. In that case, we will demonstrate a focus on M.O.M. What we have learned from our 2024 nutrient removal projects and other discovery trials will be shared at upcoming local farmer meetings. Are you interested in discovering nutrient removal rates from your field? Visit your local Illini F.S. Crop Specialist to participate in nutrient removal projects for 2024.



**Trusted harvest yield mapping is needed for decision-making.** The importance of harvest yield data management continues to be emphasized as we enter an era of input management within a field. A wide range of variable rate technologies allows for changing the rate of input application, seeding rate, planter down pressure, and pesticide applications across the field. Harvest yield maps are the primary metric (measure) used to determine a treatment's economic Return-On-Investment (R.O.I.). Make time to maintain/replace yield monitoring systems on the combine. Give your local Illini F.S. Crop Specialist a call to help calibrate yield monitors next fall. It is essential to make management decisions on good harvest yield data. Make plans now. The fall of 2024 is seven months away.

**Sulfur applications continue to support higher crop yields.** Over the past several years, many strip trials have resulted in an economic R.O.I. The form of sulfur applied will make a significant difference in crop response. Elemental sulfur is water-insoluble and is not plant-available. It is typically ground into a fine powder (to increase surface area) and pressed into pastilles (half-moon-shaped) to be blended with dry fertilizer. It must be oxidized by soil microbes, which won't happen until sometime in June, making it a poor choice if used for the 2024 crop. Sulfate-sulfur is the ionic form (SO<sub>4</sub>-2) taken up by the plant. Common sulfate-sulfur containing fertilizers include Ammonium Thiosulfate (A.T.S.), Ammonium Sulfate (A.M.S.), Calcium Sulfate (Gypsum), and Micro-Essentials MES-10 (50% elemental S and 50% sulfate-sulfur). Need help with sourcing a sulfate-sulfur fertilizer for 2024? Visit with your local Illini F.S. Crop Specialist. If possible, avoid making applications of any fertilizer to frozen or snow-covered soils unless applications are made to an existing crop, such as dormant cover crops or winter wheat.

**It is time to add boron and zinc to the Nutrient Management Plan.**

N-TRACKER Plus continues to suggest the need for supplemental boron and zinc. On-Farm Discovery Trials confirm the same. Frequently, the concentration of both zinc and boron was below what is considered adequate. Tissue analysis has been a component of N-TRACKER Plus since 2019. The combination of nutrient concentration in the upper soil profile and tissue analysis at V4 and V.T. validate the need to investigate crop response possibilities with both nutrients. Does every farmer need to apply supplemental zinc and boron on every field? No. Should farmers be testing for crop response to these two micronutrients? Yes. Does the form of nutrient applied and the timing of application make a difference? Yes. Visit with your local Illini F.S. Crop Specialist and ask for help with the source, rate, timing, and placement of both boron and zinc in 2024—the rate of boron applied matters. Boron has the shortest range between deficiency and toxicity of any essential nutrient. More IS NOT better. Let Illini F.S. help create your Nutrient Management Plan.



**Designate a field for On-Farm Discovery.**

Although the number of products that claim to improve harvest yield continues to grow, local data showing a consistent response is usually inconsistent or nonexistent. Many products are supported by data collected from across the Midwest. Unfortunately, a field local to Central Iowa may not reasonably estimate an area in East-Central Illinois. Take ownership of determining the value of new products by selecting one of your fields and designating it as a place to test new products or practices in 2024. Technology makes it relatively easy to apply treatments, and your local Illini F.S. Crop Specialist will make it easy to create a trial design and locate the product for treatments. Let your local Illini F.S. Crop Specialist help you track crop response, whether it be scouting for treatment response on the ground or from the air. On-Farm Discovery addresses your questions in your fields and utilizes your data.

If readers have any questions about the referenced material in the recent newsletter, please contact me directly from below

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# Prepare Your Home for the Unexpected

*Written by Carrie Skogsberg*

*Reviewed by John Butkus, Director, Property Claims*

No matter where you live, you're likely to experience severe weather or other unexpected dangers. Whether it's thunderstorms and tornadoes or drought and wildfires, being prepared is the first step to staying safe and protecting your property.

Here are some tips to get you started.

## 1. Build your emergency kit and show your family where it is

This is one of those things we all say we should do, but too few of us take the time put it together. It's easy when you know what to include. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend including the following in your emergency kit:

- A battery-operated flashlight and NOAA Weather Radio (and extra batteries for each)
- An emergency evacuation and shelter plan, including a map of your home
- A list of important personal information, like:
  - Telephone numbers of neighbors, family and friends
  - Insurance and property information (we make that info available on the COUNTRY Financial mobile app)
  - Telephone numbers of utility companies
  - Medical information
- A first-aid kit
- A three-to-five-day supply of bottled water and nonperishable food
- Personal hygiene items
- Blankets or sleeping bags

A separate emergency kit for your car

## 2. Meet with your insurance agent at least once a year

According to John Butkus, Director, Property Claims at COUNTRY, "Your insurance agent can help you identify gaps in coverage that could surprise you at claim time and make sure you have enough coverage to repair, or if necessary, rebuild your home."

Check out COUNTRY Financial's Home Insurance 101 explainer to answer all your home insurance questions, like:

- What does home insurance cover?
- What is not covered by home insurance?
- Do I need additional coverage like sump pump failure?
- How can I be sure I'm covered for a home insurance claim?

Contact your COUNTRY Financial Insurance Agent to learn more.

## 3. Complete a home inventory of your belongings

"Having a home inventory on file can ease the home insurance claim process so you won't have to remember all of your belongings if they are damaged," said Butkus.

The easiest way to take a home inventory is to create a video! No professional video experience is needed, and you can do one in 10 minutes or less.

## 4. Don't forget about regular home maintenance

"Staying on top of home maintenance can go a long way to prevent home insurance claims," said Butkus. Keep your trees trimmed, don't forget to clean out those gutters and always keep an eye on the age and condition of your roof. Check out our spring home maintenance checklist and our winter home maintenance checklist for an easy guide.



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# Farms Prep For Next Busy Season

We hadn’t started changing oil in the tractors, backhoe nor skid steer yet, and our 15-year-old expressed concern. I explained that his favorite, after-school activity in the farm shop was on hold until after the two weekends of extended-family Christmas parties that cleared the space and prompted a deep clean for a holiday potluck, gift opening and gymnasium-style fun on the farm.

Soon enough, maintenance work will dirty the shop floor and oil absorbency granules will be our son’s best friend. Most of our farm’s equipment will rotate through the shop this winter for oil changes, inspections and replacement of high-wear parts. Planters will unfold for row-by-row examination, part replacements and technology upgrades. The hay baler, mowers and even the small things like Mom’s garden tiller make their shop presence before field work resumes in April. The goal: everything works at go time.

Our farm team appreciates the pattern of normal, eight-hour workdays with a designated lunch break between harvesting and planting crops. We take this time to regroup, recharge, market grain and move forward. In this winter season of self-evaluation, my parents, brother and I will meet to discuss farm improvements and transition plans. Bookkeeping, balance sheets, tax planning, land leases and employee meetings quickly fill the days between conferences and meetings about farm policy, grain marketing, agronomic research and other ways to better the farm.

Dad tends to our small herd of beef cows, a daily chore most pleasant in mild winters. Otherwise, heavy snow and sub-zero winds add shoveling, scooping and thawing to the routine. Our employees haul corn from our grain bins to facilities that produce biofuel and feed co-products. They deliver soybeans, depending on the type, to various places for export, seed or use in high-protein foods.



This year will bring a combination of sticking with what works and trying something new in search of the next tried-and-true. The knowledge passed down from previous generations tells us our farm was shaped on both failures and successes, but we’re always aiming for the latter. Here’s hoping for a safe and successful 2024 in farm country.

*About the author: Joanie Stiers farms with her family in west-central Illinois, where they grow corn, soybeans, wheat, hay and cover crops and raise beef cattle, backyard chickens and farm kids.*

## WOMEN’S COMMITTEE RECIPE OF THE MONTH

*Submitted by Marilyn Whalen*

### Chicken Corn Chowder

My chicken corn chowder is absolutely BURSTING with flavor and texture. It’s perfectly creamy without being too heavy--perfect for using up that summer corn you froze or canned a few months ago! Plus, you can make enough for the whole family in less than an hour.

#### Ingredients

- 6 strips uncooked bacon cut into pieces
- 3 Tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium yellow onion diced (about 1 cup)
- 1 Tablespoon diced jalapeno seeds and ribs removed
- 1 ½ Tablespoons minced garlic
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon table salt plus more as needed/to taste
- ¾ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¾ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon dry ground mustard
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup water or use another cup of chicken broth
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 lb Gold potatoes diced into 1” cubes you do not need to peel, but do remove any shoots (we prefer them peeled)
- 1 lb cooked, shredded boneless skinless chicken breast (I use approximately two medium size breast pieces)
- 2 ½ cups sweet corn--fresh, frozen, or canned (if frozen no need to thaw, if canned drain before using)

¾ teaspoon smoked paprika

- Slowly whisk in chicken broth until completely combined.
  - 4 cups chicken broth
  - Add water, milk, cream, potatoes, chicken breast, and corn. Bring mixture to a boil and cook until the potatoes are tender.
  - 1 cup water,
  - 1 cup whole milk,
  - 1 cup heavy cream,
  - 1 lb Gold potatoes diced into 1” cubes,
  - 1 lb shredded, boneless skinless chicken breast
  - 2 ½ cups sweet corn
  - Use an immersion blender to puree approximately half of the soup (see note if you do not have an immersion blender).
  - After pureeing, return chicken to the pot. Stir reserved bacon back into the pot (or to preserve its crispness, serve soup topped with bacon crumbles, but don’t skip the bacon entirely, it adds so much flavor!). Taste-test the soup, adding more salt/pepper as needed (any soup that tastes a bit bland almost always needs a few shakes more salt!).
  - Serve warm with desired toppings and enjoy!
- Desired toppings. We enjoy this chicken corn chowder plain but also like corn chips, Fritos, or crackers, scallions/green onions, additional jalapeno, cilantro, shredded cheddar cheese, and more!

#### Notes

##### Bacon

The bacon adds a beautiful depth of flavor to the chowder that you can’t really get without it, but if you must omit the bacon use 5 Tablespoons of butter instead of the 3 listed. No other changes needed.

##### Potatoes

May substitute russet potatoes instead but I recommend peeling them before using. The russet potatoes are typically what I use.

##### Chicken

You may substitute a pound of precooked diced chicken instead! After pureeing the soup, add it to the pot and make sure it is warmed through before serving.

##### Blender

If you don’t have an immersion blender, you can transfer half of the soup to a blender in batches and puree that way. Alternatively, you can use a potato masher to try and mash the soup though it won’t be as smooth/creamy this way. I use a potato masher, because I like the consistency it provides.

##### Storing/Freezing

Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. I generally do not recommend freezing soups that contain cream as the dairy may separate, making the consistency and texture not as smooth as it ought to be.

### CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FARM BUREAU NEWS

(USPS 099-840)

801 N. Country Fair Drive, Ste. A, Champaign, IL 61821  
Published Monthly by the  
Champaign County Farm Bureau  
801 N. Country Fair Drive, Ste. A,  
Champaign, IL 61821

SUBSCRIPTION RATE -- \$3 PER YEAR

Periodicals Postage Paid at Champaign  
(ISSN 1078-2966)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to “Farm  
Bureau News” 801 N. Country Fair Drive,  
Ste. A, Champaign IL 61821-2492

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- Desired toppings. We enjoy this chicken corn chowder plain but also like corn chips, Fritos, or crackers, scallions/green onions, additional jalapeno, cilantro, shredded cheddar cheese, and more!

#### Instructions

- Place bacon pieces in a large pot or Dutch oven. Turn heat to medium and cook until bacon is crisp. Remove to a paper towel lined plate and set aside.

6 strips uncooked bacon

- Drain all but approximately 2 Tablespoons of bacon grease (you can eyeball it, no need to be exact! I like to use a ladle and ladle out the excess and pour it into a can to solidify before disposing of it).
- Add butter to the pot with the remaining bacon grease and cook until butter is melted.

3 Tablespoons unsalted butter

- Add diced onion, and jalapeno and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened (about 5 minutes).

1 medium yellow onion,

1 Tablespoon diced jalapeno (this can be adjusted to your tasting)

Add garlic and cook until fragrant (about 30 seconds).

1 ½ Tablespoons minced garlic

- Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and stir until it’s fully absorbed. Cook another 30 seconds longer to lightly toast the flour.

¼ cup all-purpose flour

Stir in salt, pepper, smoked paprika, and ground mustard.

1 teaspoon table salt,

¾ teaspoon ground black pepper,





# IFB Annual Meeting

Delegates from Champaign County Farm Bureau attended the Illinois Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Chicago, IL at the beginning of December. Delegates had a busy weekend which included IFB elections, new resolutions, awards, and more.



Steve Stierwalt accepting AITC Volunteer of the Year



Jason Watson getting interviewed by Jacob Dickey about annual meeting



Delegate Dinner with Adopted Legislator Hoan Huynh



Delegates on the floor prior to voting

# Shipshewana Trip

On November 27 & 28, 2023, farm bureau members enjoyed a trip to the Blue Gate Theatre in Shipshewana, Indiana. Guests on the trip were treated to special performances at the theatre which included the Daniel O'Donnell Christmas Show & Salute to the Stars: Country Christmas.



Stars of the shows visiting with trip attendee Jane Piatt.



Members enjoying the trip include Bonnie Reifsteck, Daniel O'Donnell, Dixie Curry, and Dan Curry.