

Rensselaer County Farm Bureau

February 2022



President's Report

Hello Rensselaer County Farm Bureau Members, We've been keeping busy on our board since the last newsletter, with regular monthly county meetings, and our county and State Annual Meetings. After having to meet electronically last year, it was nice to be able to get together in person again. Although we were limited as to how many people could attend, we were able to send three county board members to State Annual Meeting at The Desmond Hotel in Albany to help, amongst other things, set the agenda for Lobby Day.



Lobby Day is one of the most important things we do in Farm Bureau, as it is an opportunity to have direct meetings with state representatives and advocate on behalf of agriculture. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, we will once again be unable to meet with our representatives in person. However, we still had a successful experience last year through online meetings which we are arranging again this year.

We are happy to have such a diverse group on our Rensselaer County board, representing a wide range of agricultural areas, including dairy, produce, hay, grain, equine, sheep, horticulture, Christmas trees and agritourism, which means that we are in a great position to represent the interests of our members. We will be striving to keep in touch more frequently in the coming months. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the board with any concerns. I hope everyone has a happy and drier New Year.

Mike Swartz
President

Scholarship Funds Available

Promotion & Education Chair Megan Swartz

New York Farm Bureau's Promotion & Education Program is sponsoring an Agricultural Youth Scholarship for 2022 Graduating High School Seniors who plan to continue their education in preparation for a career in agriculture. Awards of \$3000 and \$2000 are available to the first and second place winners statewide, as well as a \$250 award at the District level. Applicants must be a current Farm Bureau member through a Family or Student membership. To apply and for more information, visit <https://www.nyfb.org/programs/promotion-education/scholarship>. The deadline for application submission is March 1.

Rensselaer County Soil and Water District provides agricultural landowners with Soil Group Worksheets with Maps to bring to their local assessor for an ag assessment leading to an ag exemption. Each year, these documents are required to be submitted to the town assessor by March 1. To request one to be prepared for your property or for more information, contact Laura Bornt, RC SWCD Conservation District Technician at 518-396-7008 or Laura.Bornt.RenscoSWCD@gmail.com. The cost is just \$25 per parcel.

RC SWCD also participates in Ag and Market's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program with the ability to implement \$100,000 in Best Management Practices (BMP) on farms with resource concerns throughout our county (up to \$50,000 per farm). BMPs can range from upgrading existing stream crossings/culverts to stream bank stabilization, and much more. To schedule a site visit and assessment, contact Megan Myers, RC SWCD District Manager at 518-380-0384 or Megan.Myers.RenscoSWCD@gmail.com. The deadline to submit projects for the 2022-2023 round is May 1.

NY FarmNet is Open

Please keep these numbers and websites available to call or share should you, a family member or friends need someone to speak with in these uncertain times. Support is available at www.nyfarmnet.org and at 1-800-547-3276.

Southwestern Rensselaer County Farm Centennial

By *Scott Van Nederynen*

On August 14, 2021 the Van Nederynen family celebrated four generations and 100 years in agriculture on their farm, Maple Till Trees. In 1907 Gerrit and Maria VanNederijnen emigrated their family to Castleton-on-Hudson.

The farm had a succession of owners between 1854 and 1921. An interesting time was when James Brandon died in 1897 he left it to his mother, Mary. She passed 13 years later in 1910 leaving the farm to her sister, Catherine residing in Ireland, and her brother Thomas residing in Australia. Ultimately the farm was transferred in 1911 through probate to Catherine's daughter Nora Allen who sold it to the Braun's in 1912.



On March 30, 1921, hearing that farm living would be good for their boys Albert and Fred (Gijsbartus and Volkert) exposed to gas warfare in France, Gerrit and Maria bought the Castleton Road farm on Maple Hill Rd. The problem, Gerrit was a retired Dutch Marine who didn't know much about dairy farming. And in southwest Rensselaer County they were surrounded by farms run by families such as Rate, Peter, Schwartz, Lemka, Bult, and Goold. After considering the work involved, capital needed and how quickly he could get revenue, eldest son Albert bought the portion known as the Hay Farm on April 1, 1926. He and his emigrant wife and begin selling agricultural products while establishing the egg farm. He built the landmark 'corncrib', the original section of a chicken house along Maple Hill Rd, and the two-story brooder house.

With the Great Depression in the 1930s, the farm was a subsistence farm supporting Albert's growing and the extended family. During this time the fruit orchard was cut to heat the home. In the early 1940's during the war years, Albert paid close attention to the war news, relayed messages with those in Holland he was involved in the aircraft spotters' network in Rensselaer County. Albert's son, Albert L (simply call AL) was in 4H and raised a calf as a project. By the late 1940s AL had graduated SUNY Cobleskill and was taking an interest in the egg operation as his father AL became more involved serving the people of Rensselaer County and returning WWII veterans.

During the 1950s AL took on expanding and operating the Fair-Dale Poultry Farm. The hen house for egg layers quadrupled in size, and a two-story brooder house was built for raising the young chicks. During the Korean War, AL's egg farm was classified as an essential business by the U.S. government. AL employed local kids and, in a unique arrangement, coordinated with the school to employ kids in the afternoon in what today would be called a work study program. AL, like many local farmers also drove a school bus for Schodack Central Schools that was done with farm chores and provided supplemental income. More importantly it provided medical insurance.

By the mid-1960s, Fair-Dale Farm became a two-farm operation with a farm in Nassau for raising chicks. Customers included SUNY Albany, restaurants on the Thruway's Berkshire Spur, several diaries, and many stores in the neighborhood where the Empire State Plaza stands today.

But the times were changing, the completion of the interstate highway system allowed eggs to be shipped from farms in the south and Midwest to the Capital District. And the State of New York undertook the construction of the Empire State Plaza, destroying the neighborhood that was an essential market. Feed prices were going up, while egg prices at the farm didn't keep up. In the mid 1960s AL made the decision to just supply eggs to Harold and Betsy Ehrenfreund's Owl Kill farm located south of Cambridge, NY in Washington



County. Shortly after, AL decided to end the egg farming business with his father. From the late 1960s to the early 1980s pastureland was leased to Peters Dairy; many buildings were torn down and those remaining were used for boat and

camper storage. In the early 1980s, the Boy Scout Troop 53 in Castleton needed to raise money to replace equipment and they approached AL to see if they could sell Christmas trees and wreaths at the farm. AL agreed, this was the start of what today is Maple Hill Trees. The first Christmas trees, Scotch Pine and Douglas Firs, were planted in 1983. By 1991, the trees planted in 1983 had grown enough to be sold. Today the farm has about 4.3 acres of tree fields that can grow about 3,000 trees. In 2015 AL's son Scott returned home with his wife and today, Scott and AL are operating tree farm growing premium Christmas trees and looking to the future of the farm.

Is Retirement in your Plan?

By County Treasurer, Ken Johnson

I sit here perusing all the literature for Medicare sign-up, I turn 65 in March, I wonder where the time went. We came back to the farm 27 years ago when my father-in-law decided it was time to retire. I don't know if he had been planning to, or just decided it was time. I suspect the latter. We came back to a farm that had no plan in place for the transfer and no real idea on how it was going to be accomplished.

We met a community of other farmers like my father-in-law who were conducting business as they had been for decades. I was introduced around over the next year to farmers in their late 70s and early 80s still farming. My question to most was, "When do you plan to retire?". To my surprise and amazement most responded that they either didn't plan to retire, or did not know when. The common theme amongst them was that farming was in their blood, a lifestyle so they would keep farming until they couldn't, that would be the point when they would retire. Retirement wasn't a planned phase of life, just when you no longer could work. Over the past decades most have. Now no judgment if that's what they wanted, but the question I should have asked those individuals was "If you wanted to retire today could you?".

Kris and I have always approached farming as a business, unique in many ways encompassing family and lifestyle to mention two, but a business nonetheless. We made the conscious decision that we were not going to work until we no longer could; we were going to phase into retirement at some point. Any decision in life and business helps if you have a plan. Granted the best laid plans don't guarantee success; however, a plan provides at least a guide with benchmarks. Plans and decisions were made. Along the way things have changed, they always do, but our plan is fluid and always towards the goal of retirement.

Time continued to pass by at what seemed like an ever increasing rate. The business grew and changed as new opportunities arose. The children grew up and began their life journeys', however, as these occurred we never lost focus on the end goal of retirement. In the process we finally established a time frame for retirement. Typical

of most personal interactions, the key is communication and it is important that all involved are informed. Kris is a better communicator than I am, so between the two of us we composed a letter to our children laying out the timeline we had established. We discussed in general terms the financial and structural conditions of the business. We also established a decision time-frame if they wished to return to the business. It appears, with three years to go, none of our children will be returning to the business. Things may change but at this junction we will be seeking new ownership of the business.

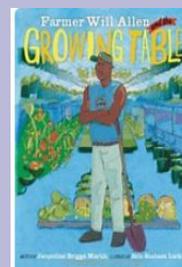
While the process is unique to each person and/or business, resources are available in the form of: books, podcasts, lending institutions, other business owners, attorneys, and financial advisors to name a few.

Where do you stand on the continuum? Will you be one to plan for your retirement, or will retirement be thrust upon you? Is retirement a goal and if so do you have a plan in place to achieve that goal? It is never too late or too early to start planning.

Agricultural Literacy Week - March 21-25

For the past 17 years, volunteers throughout the state have helped to celebrate New York agriculture by reading a book with an agricultural theme to elementary school students.

This year's featured book "Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table" written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin with art by Eric Shabazz



Larkin, focuses on farmer Will Allen who is no ordinary farmer. A former basketball star, he's as tall as his truck, and can hold a cabbage, or a basketball, in one hand. Farmer Will sees what others can't, the opportunities for growing food whether you have 100 acres or a rooftop and shares the journey from soil to table with those around. This book will take students on an explorative journey learning about community gardens and inspire them to build communities through food, even if they only have a pot on their porch to cultivate. Hands-on activities related to the book are also offered to extend learning. Books are then donated to the school or classroom library.

New York Farm Bureau
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Rensselaer County Farm Bureau

Farm Bureau members receive

\$500

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