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TODAY



THE ART OF BRONZE:
JAMES BREWER'S SCULPTING JOURNEY

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AFR TODAY

WINTER 2025 | VOL. 106 | NO. 1

In This Edition

6

AFR Welcomes New CEO

Yearwood to Lead Mutual Company

7

A New Kind of Storm

Increasing Repair Costs and Extreme Weather

8

America's Best

AFR Insurance Included in Forbes 2025 List

16

The Art of Bronze

James Brewer's Sculpting Journey

22

R.A.I.L.S.

Celebrating 120 Years of AFR

4 Oklahoma Strong

10 Convention Announcement

11 NFU Comes to OKC

12 Winter Legislative Review

14 Mandatory Animal ID

26 AFR Board Candidates

31 OCBA Renewals

32 Speech Contest Winners

34 Meet the YAC

Oklahoma STRONG

From the Desk of *Scott Blubaugh*

Greetings, AFR Members!

When you read this column, you'll be in the new year. And, what a great year I hope 2025 will be! As I write this, it's mid-December and I'm looking back on a very busy and rewarding 2024.

For the AFR Cooperative, our year was filled to the brim with projects and programs. We expanded our youth Leadership Summit to three age groups and hosted more students than ever before. We unveiled a new membership benefit package that has been valuable for agents and members alike. Our AFR Strive program for young farmers and ranchers has continued to grow. And, AFR Insurance was named to the Forbes Best Insurance Companies for 2024. (And we earned it again in 2025! Check out Page 8.)

We had so many big wins in 2024! I hope you and your family celebrated a good year as well!

As an organization, we also experienced some challenges. First and foremost, it was another tough year for our insurance company. This is a difficult time for all insurance companies as the industry is changing quickly. Many carriers have gone out of business or have stopped writing business in

Oklahoma because of our adverse and severe weather. AFR has proven resilient, but we still have challenging days ahead. To learn more about what's happening in insurance, read AFR Insurance CEO Chad Yearwood's article on Page 6.

Another major challenge is the continued political disfunction in Washington, D.C. As I write this, we have seen an extremely tumultuous week on Capitol Hill as lawmakers try to pass an end-of-year funding package. The funding deal includes another one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill and some much-needed economic assistance for our farmers and ranchers. But, the funding package came extremely close to not passing and our farmers were almost left with nothing.

Our farmers and ranchers have waited two long years for a new farm bill. Although we did get the one year extension to the current bill, it's really not a win. At this point, many are skeptical of even hearing a farm bill discussion in the coming year. We could very easily be looking at a 2026 Farm Bill or, heaven forbid, even later than that.

No matter what this year brings politically, your AFR Cooperative staff will continue to work on AFR's priorities being included in a farm

bill, whenever it might happen. We hope our work will eventually be rewarded.

Until then, we will look toward a good year ahead. One of 2025's highlights will be National Farmers Union Convention being held right here in Oklahoma City! See Page 11 for more details.

Don't forget our own AFR State Convention is just around the corner. This year's gathering features some great speakers (Page 22), our popular live AFRPAC auction, and of course fellowship with other AFR members.

We can't wait to see you there!
Until then — God bless and
Happy New Year!



Scott Blubaugh
PRESIDENT



Upcoming 2025 Events

Jan. 9-10

Tri-State Producers Conference; Fargo, North Dakota

Jan. 10-11

KNID Agrifest; Enid

Jan. 20

Martin Luther King Jr Day; AFR Home Office Closed

Feb. 21-23

AFR State Convention; Norman

March 9-11

National Farmers Union Convention; OKC

March 11-21

Oklahoma Youth Expo; OKC

March 14

OYE—AFR Cattle Showmanship; OKC

March 15

OYE—Ag Mechanics; OKC

March 16

OYE—AFR Ag Achievement Written Test; OKC

March 18

OYE—AFR Sheep Showmanship; OKC

March 20

OYE—AFR Goat Showmanship; OKC

March 20

OYE—Ag Achievement Interviews; OKC

April 1

AFR State Scholarships Due

April 3-5

Oklahoma City Farm Show; Tulsa Fairground

April 18

Good Friday; AFR Home Office Closed

April 20

Easter Sunday

April 22

Ag Day at the Capitol

April 29

AFR Day at the Capitol

2025 Convention Notices

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL POLICYHOLDERS' MEETING OF THE AMERICAN FARMERS & RANCHERS MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

In accordance with Article III, Section 1, of the Bylaws of the American Farmers & Ranchers Mutual Insurance Company, Notice is hereby given that the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Policyholders of the American Farmers & Ranchers Mutual Insurance Company will be held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Norman – Hotel & Conference Center, 2501 Conference Drive, Norman, Okla., February 21-23, 2025 in conjunction with the AFR Convention. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. with the meeting to convene at 1:15 p.m. on Friday, February 21, 2025. Presentations of financials, officer reports, director elections, educational sessions and other necessary business will be conducted at this meeting.

Chad Yearwood, President & CEO
Paul Jackson, Secretary

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OKLAHOMA STATE UNION OF THE FARMERS EDUCATIONAL AND COOPERATIVE UNION OF AMERICA, INC.

In accordance with Article V, Section 5.3, of the Bylaws of the Oklahoma State Union of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, Inc., the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting of the Oklahoma State Union of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, Inc., will be held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Norman – Hotel & Conference Center, 2501 Conference Drive, Norman, Okla., February 21-23, 2025 in conjunction with the AFR Convention. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. with the meeting to convene at 1:15 p.m. Friday, Feb. 21, 2025. Presentations of financials, officer reports, director elections, consideration and adoption of policy resolutions, educational sessions and other necessary business will be conducted at this meeting.

Scott Blubaugh, President
Paul Jackson, State Secretary

AFR INSURANCE ANNOUNCES

NEW CEO

The AFR Board of Directors is pleased to announce the next President and CEO of American Farmers & Ranchers Mutual Insurance Company. Chad Yearwood is an Oklahoma native who has a wealth of insurance experience to bring to the position.

“The AFR Board is pleased that Chad Yearwood has agreed to become our next CEO,” said AFRMIC Board

Chairman Dustin Tackett. “I have known Chad for over two decades and his integrity and work ethic are unmatched in our industry. Chad’s history with our company and his dedication to the AFR mission will benefit policyholders for years to come.”

Yearwood began his insurance career in 1997 with AFR Insurance. Over the course of nearly two decades, he held various positions within



the claims department, eventually rising to the role of AFR Director of Claims.

In 2016, Yearwood transitioned to a corporate risk management and claims position in the energy industry, and later filled the role of a claims specialty practice leader advocate in a brokerage setting.

Yearwood’s credentials include a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Legal Studies, accompanied by several professional insurance designations.

Growing up on a family farm in western Oklahoma is an integral part of Yearwood’s background. During their leisure time, he and his wife, Lori, find joy in trying to keep up with their two active children.

A New Kind of Storm

Increasing repair costs and extreme weather events are affecting Property & Casualty Insurance.

In recent years, the Oklahoma property and casualty (P&C) insurance industry has faced unprecedented challenges. With escalating repair costs, an uptick in extreme weather events like severe convective storms and wildfires, and the resulting implications on insurers' homes and operations, the industry is navigating a complex and shifting landscape.

Materials and repair costs for damaged properties have surged due to demand, inflation, labor shortages and supply chain disruptions. Construction materials such as lumber and shingles have seen a nearly 30% price increase over the past few years. And similarly, we observed auto repair costs increase by 34% between 2020 and 2023. These trends impact insurers in the form of increased claims frequency and payments.

The amplifying aspect of these increased repair costs is Oklahoma's geography, which has long made us prone to damaging severe weather events. Tornadoes and hailstorms are frequent, while wildfires are becoming an increasing concern. Recent years have seen a sharp uptick in the frequency and intensity of these events, affecting insurable

property. We are not alone, as this trend has been observed throughout the nation.

According to NOAA, in 2023, the U.S. experienced 28 separate weather and climate disasters costing at least one billion dollars. This places 2023 in the position of the highest number of billion-dollar disasters in a calendar year. And, we have continued to see escalated storm losses into 2024 as compared to other years in the past decade.

Reinsurance, the practice of primary insurers (like AFR) transferring part of their risk to other insurance companies, has traditionally provided a crucial financial buffer against catastrophic events. Reinsurance provides primary insurers with insurance of their own to protect them from solely facing the prospect of catastrophic losses, which could be financially devastating. However, the reinsurance market is tightening. Reinsurers are raising rates, reducing coverage or eliminating non-profitable products altogether due to repeated, significant losses. For primary insurers, this causes higher costs of doing business and increased difficulty managing risk. Ultimately, increasing loss costs and operational costs such

as reinsurance, result in increasing insurance premiums for us all in the long-term.

This translates to a ripple effect throughout the economy. Homeowners and businesses in high-risk areas face rising insurance costs. At the same time, insurers face tough decisions about how they can continue to operate profitably while providing valuable insurance protection to customers. Policymakers and regulators are even stepping in to help address the issue, with initiatives to educate the public and fortify homes. Regardless, without a notable break in the weather, our challenges will likely remain for the foreseeable future.

In summary, the property and casualty insurance sector is in flux. Insurers must balance the increasing costs of repair and reinsurance with the growing risks posed by weather-induced catastrophes. While not easy, AFR is committed to vetting long-term solutions for these challenges to ensure we are here for our policyholders well into the next hundred-year chapter of our organization.

*Story by Chad Yearwood,
AFR President & CEO*

AMERICA'S BEST INSURANCE COMPANIES

Forbes

2025

POWERED BY STATISTA

AFR Insurance Included in America's Best Insurance Companies of 2025

AFR Insurance and AFR Life have been included in Forbes' America's Best Insurance Companies 2025 ranking. This award is presented in collaboration with Statista, the world-leading statistics portal and industry ranking provider. The list was announced Sept. 24, 2024, and can be viewed on Forbes.com.

The America's Best Insurance Companies 2025 ranking was determined based on an independent survey of over 18,000 policyholders across the nation in the insurance types of Auto, Homeowners, Renters,

Permanent Life, and Term Life. Insurance companies were considered for the award based on policyholder satisfaction in six different areas: Agent

guidance, Customer Service, Cost, Transparency, Digital Services, and Claims Service. AFR Insurance is pleased to have met the mark in the study and is honored to be recognized on Forbes' America's Best Insurance Companies 2025 list.

"We could not have achieved this award without the diligent work and commitment of AFR's agents and staff associates," said AFR Insurance President and CEO Chad Yearwood. "The accomplishment exemplifies our team's dedicated approach to providing excellent service and products to



our valued policyholders. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our recognition on the Forbes' America's Best Insurance Companies list for the second year in a row!"

AFR Insurance provides automobile, home, farm and life insurance with an emphasis on quality products and exceptional customer service. AFR Insurance is available statewide and is recognized as a leading domestic insurance carrier serving more than 150 communities throughout Oklahoma. AFR Life Insurance provides individual and worksite/group life insurance and is available in 17 states.

Statista publishes hundreds of worldwide industry rankings and company listings with high-profile media partners. This research and analysis service is based on the success of statista.com, the leading data and business intelligence portal that provides statistics, business-relevant data, and various market and consumer studies and surveys.

For more information regarding AFR Insurance's inclusion in the Forbes List, contact Laura Reihart at laura.reihart@afrmic.com. For more information regarding AFR Life's inclusion in the Forbes List, contact Liby Hansen at liby.hansen@afrmic.com.



AFR Insurance President and CEO Chad Yearwood (left) and AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh celebrate AFR Insurance's second year of being listed as a Forbes top insurance companies.



AFR Insurance President and CEO Chad Yearwood (left) and Vice President of AFR Life Insurance Brandice Rhoades celebrate AFR Life's announcement as a Forbes top life insurance company.

2025 AFR Convention

Celebrating 120 Years of AFR... Relationships, Accountability, Integrity, Loyalty, Service

The 2025 AFR State Convention is scheduled for Feb. 21-23 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton, Norman Hotel & Conference Center, 2501 Conference Dr., Norman, Okla. The convention is held in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Farmers & Ranchers Mutual Insurance Company and the Oklahoma State Union of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, Inc.

Filing for the Cooperative Officer President position – Scott Blubaugh, Tonkawa; for Southwest Agent Director District 2 – Dustin Tackett, Fort Cobb; for Northeast Independent District 3 – Raymond Schiltz, Ponca City, and Jim Shelton, Vinita; and for the Statewide Independent Director – Ron Ramming, Warner. Qualified delegates will vote in the contested race at the convention. in lieu of elected local delegate representation, was December 31. The deadline for policyholders to notify the



RELATIONSHIPS · ACCOUNTABILITY · INTEGRITY · LOYALTY · SERVICE

CELEBRATING 120 YEARS OF AFR

AFRMIC Secretary of their intent to vote in person for directors at the annual policyholder meeting, County and local policy resolutions received by the office of State Secretary Paul Jackson are now being considered by the 2025 AFR Cooperative Policy Committee. The Committee will complete final actions on-site on Friday morning of the convention. No bylaws changes are proposed for either corporation.

Delegates to the National Farmers Union (NFU) Convention in Oklahoma

City, March 9-11, 2025, will be elected at the state convention on the afternoon of Saturday, Feb. 22. NFU delegate candidates must provide a biographical paragraph reflecting AFR/OFU activities to be given to the state delegates during the NFU delegate election. Delegate cards and biographical information must be received by the AFR Cooperative State Secretary no later than noon, Saturday,

Feb. 22. NFU bylaws require individuals who are delegates to be currently or formerly “actively engaged in farming.” The organization recognizes such as an individual eligible for membership in NFU, provided such individual is a farmer/rancher who (1) makes significant contribution of labor and management in a farm or ranch AND (2) depends on a tangible income from farming or ranching. For convention details, see page 22.

Convention Door Prize Announcement

EVERY SESSION WILL HAVE A MAJOR DOOR PRIZE. MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN.

Sponsored by: Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma,
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NATIONAL FARMERS UNION IS COMING TO

Oklahoma City!

123RD ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION MARCH 9 - MARCH 11, 2025

NFU Convention attendees will learn, collaborate and grow through thoughtful discussions and breakout sessions.

WHY ATTEND?

2025 POLICY BOOK DEBATE AND ADOPTION

See democracy in action as NFU members craft the document that influences federal legislation.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS AND TOP SPEAKERS ON FARM POLICY, INNOVATION AND COMMUNITY

Learn from national experts, while networking with your peers from across the nation.

STATE OF THE FARMERS UNION

Hear NFU President Rob Larew's "State of the Farmers Union" address.



**National
Farmers
Union**

Oklahoma Legislative Review

By Bray Haven, AFR Cooperative Lobbyist

Federal Transmission Corridor Plan in Oklahoma

Plans for a federal electric transmission corridor that would have crossed the northern half of Oklahoma have been canceled, a decision celebrated by Oklahoma lawmakers, residents and landowners.

The Delta-Plains National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor (NIETC) was initially proposed to stretch from the Panhandle to Little Rock, passing through Oklahoma's Panhandle counties to northern regions near Tulsa, and into Arkansas. Federal energy officials argued that the corridor would improve reliability, meet growing demand, alleviate grid congestion, and integrate clean energy sources. However, the proposal met immediate resistance from state lawmakers and residents, who viewed it as federal overreach and a threat to private property rights.

Sen. Casey Murdock (R-Felt) emphasized the coordinated opposition from state leaders and landowners. He credited Oklahoma farmers and ranchers for their advocacy, saying their voices helped prevent federal intrusion.

Speaker-elect Hilbert (R-Bristow), who previously filed a resolution pledging legislative action against the project, praised the outcome while reinforcing the importance of respecting private property rights. He stressed that future infrastructure projects should involve community input and collaboration with Oklahoma landowners.

Attorney General Gentner Drummond also sent a letter to U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, firmly opposing the corridor. Drummond argued that the threat of federal eminent domain was unacceptable and pledged to protect Oklahoma farmers and ranchers.

While the Delta-Plains corridor has been shelved, other transmission line projects are still in progress. Invenergy's Cimarron Link project, which follows a similar route, aims to carry electricity from the Panhandle to a substation near Jenks. Unlike the federal project, Invenergy claims to emphasize transparency, stating that all landowners along the route have been contacted and offered above-market compensation for easements.

Invenergy supported the Energy Department's decision to cancel the Delta-Plains corridor, framing its own project

as a more collaborative and economically beneficial alternative. The company claims the Cimarron Link will improve grid reliability, stabilize energy prices, and boost long-term energy security in the region. The Cimarron Link project is currently embroiled in litigation. AFR has entered into this litigation on behalf of our members; we are following the situation closely.

Additionally, Transource Energy plans to build a 76-mile transmission line connecting OG&E's Sooner substation in Noble County to Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO)'s Wekiwa substation in Tulsa County. State leaders have reiterated their commitment to addressing Oklahoma's evolving energy infrastructure needs while protecting landowner rights.

Hilbert assured residents that future projects would require transparency, community involvement and respect for private property. Governor Stitt underscored Oklahoma's sovereignty in energy matters, indicating the state would remain cautious about federal involvement in land acquisition and permitting processes.

The cancellation of the Delta-Plains corridor marks a significant victory for Oklahoma landowners and lawmakers who fought to preserve private property rights. As energy demands grow, the state is poised to work collaboratively on solutions that balance development with local interests.



NOTICE

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For more Information
call 405-218-5561 or email afrcoop@afmic.com



New Leadership in Both Legislative Chambers

House

House Speaker-Elect Kyle Hilbert (R-Bristow) has announced a restructuring of House committees aimed at providing more time and in-depth deliberation of bills during their initial review.

Under the new two-tier system, committees and oversight committees will work together to ensure legislation is more thoroughly examined and debated before reaching the House floor. This approach mirrors the current structure used for appropriations.

"Each year, the Legislature considers thousands of bills, and committees are where the majority of deliberative work should be done to build consensus around language and needed changes," said Hilbert. "The more thorough work we can do in the beginning of session, the more likely we are to have a clear, transparent process that allows good bills to become law."

Speaker of the House

Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, District 29

Floor Leader Team

Floor Leader: Josh West, R-Grove, District 5

Deputy Floor Leader: John Pfeiffer, R-Mulhall, District 38

Deputy Floor Leader: Steve Bashore, R-Miami, District 7

House Appropriations Committee

Chair: Trey Caldwell, R-Faxon, District 63

House Natural Resources Committee

Chair: Jim Grego, R-Wilburton, District 17

Vice Chair: Carl Newton, R-Cherokee, District 58

House Education Oversight Committee

Chair: Dell Kerbs, R-Shawnee District 26

House Common Education Committee

Chair: Dick Lowe, R-Amber, District 56

Energy & Natural Resources Oversight Committee

Chair: Brad Boles, R-Marlow, District 51

Vice Chair: John Pfeiffer, R-Mulhall, District 38

Agriculture Committee

Chair: Kenton Patzkowsky, R-Balko, District 61

Senate

Pro Tem-Elect Lonnie Paxton, R-Tuttle, recently announced the appointments of chairs and vice chairs of Senate committees for the upcoming Legislative Session.

"We have put together a strong group of Senators who will collectively help move our state forward," Paxton said. "Each individual members have subject matter expertise in these areas. These senators will be charged with hearing legislation and issues that are important to Oklahomans, while acting as leaders and mentors to everyone on the committees they oversee. They will also be crucial in working with other state partners, agencies and our federal delegation. With a new administration starting in January in Washington, we are at a pivotal time to make positive change on the state and federal levels. I am excited to get to work."

President Pro-Tem

Lonnie Paxton, R-Tuttle, District 23

Floor Leader

Julie Daniels, R-Bartlesville, District 29

Agriculture and Wildlife Committee

Chair: Casey Murdock, R-Felt, District 27

Vice Chair: Roland Pederson, R-Burlington, District 19

Business and Insurance Committee

Chair: Bill Coleman, R-Ponca City, District 10

Vice Chair: Jerry Alvord, R-Wilson, District 14

ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION BEGINS

On April 26, 2024, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) amended its animal disease traceability regulation to include the mandatory electronic tagging of all sexually intact cattle 18 months of age and older moving interstate.

The new rule went into effect Nov. 5, 2024. Any qualifying animals tagged after that date are required to be tagged with official electronic identification (EID) that is both visually and electronically readable. Traditional metal clip tags will no longer be accepted as the sole form of identification.

AFR Cooperative and the ranchers we represent are concerned about this shift to mandatory electronic identification. AFR is one of the only agriculture organizations in Oklahoma actively opposing mandatory electronic identification.

APHIS claims to have “collaborated extensively with stakeholders” before publishing the new rule. However, **AFR has encountered NO cattle producer who wants mandatory electronic cattle identification.**

Is this a solution looking for a problem?

Disease traceability is already a priority for the industry. The metal tagging system currently in place has been successful in maintaining the health of the national herd.

APHIS claims that more rapid traceability will limit the spread of disease and help domestic and foreign markets stay open. However, the new rule only applies to about 11% of the national herd and a mere

.4% of the national herd was exported in 2023, including all classes of cattle.

If traceback speed is the concern, it’s important to remember that current EID technology still requires a tag reader to be in proximity to the animals. Unless USDA requires all ranches to purchase a tag reader, state officials must still travel to ranch locations to manually read EID tags.

Are private property rights at stake?

As an organization in firm support of private property rights, AFR is concerned about the data gleaned through a mandatory EID system. Could this information be leaked or misused, including unauthorized tracking of herd size, production practices or marketing dates?

The concern over data usage is compounded by the capability of new technologies. The new rule allows for a conversion away from current RFID (radio-frequency identification) in the future. Next-generation technology, such as ultra-wideband (UWB), will at some point be cost-effective enough to replace RFID. This new technology will allow data to be tracked in real time via satellite, instead of only in-person, onsite. emissions than 2026 vehicles.

How much will it cost ranchers and agribusinesses?

USDA is currently providing official RFID tags to producers free of charge through state veterinary offices, but it’s unknown

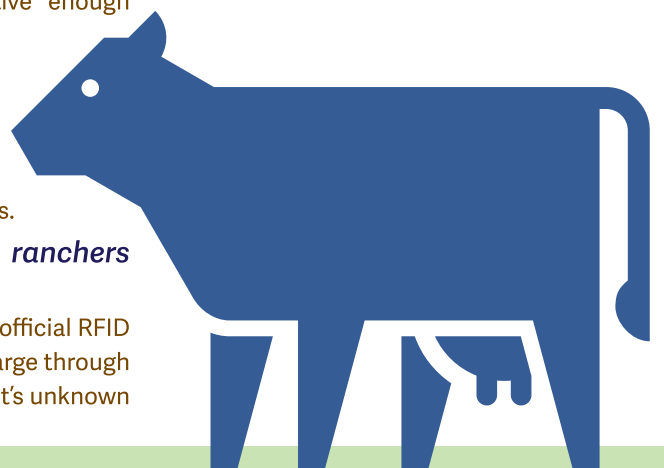
how long the free tags will be available. The official electronic identification tags currently average about \$2.50 apiece; and wand readers range up to \$2,200.

Why are we really worried about mandatory electronic animal identification?

Ranchers have been worried for years that there is a broader goal in mind for mandatory EID. These concerns were confirmed earlier this year.

According to a statement released by APHIS in April 2024, USDA is “committed to implementing a modern animal disease traceability system that tracks animals from birth to slaughter.”

With that statement, USDA admits it plans to ultimately tag all ages and classes of cattle. The U.S. live cattle industry is made up of thousands of independent ranchers, each with their own business model and goals. **The forced tagging of every single animal would be burdensome, unrealistic, and a step toward reducing the independence of the American rancher coast-to-coast.**



AFR WELCOMES NEW STAFF TO COOPERATIVE TEAM



Ashley White

Ashley White grew up in the heart of rural Oklahoma in Newcastle. As the only girl in her family with six younger brothers, Ashley learned the value of hard work and the importance of getting her hands dirty. This upbringing instilled in her a resilient spirit and a strong sense of responsibility.

Ashley began her journey with AFR in 2020 in the executive office at American Farmers & Ranchers Mutual Insurance Company. She brought her expertise to the AFR Cooperative team in October

2024. In her current role as the AFR Cooperative Executive Operations Coordinator, Ashley is dedicated to managing the desk of AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh and planning events for the Cooperative at large, ensuring smooth operations and contributing to the organization's success.

Ashley currently resides in Erin Springs, Okla., with her husband and daughter. As a family, they raise and breed Brahman cattle. Ashley has a love for travel and a multi-generational passion for restoring and collecting classic cars, reflecting her appreciation for history. Through her diverse experiences and deep-rooted values, Ashley strives to make a meaningful impact in her community and beyond.



Katie Whitfield

Katie Whitfield joined American Farmers & Ranchers Cooperative in November 2024. Katie serves a dual role as AFR Cooperative's Western Oklahoma Field Representative and the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association Coordinator. Katie brings several aspects of relevant experience to the

role, including a strong background in agricultural advocacy, community outreach, and beef industry knowledge.

Originally from North Texas, Katie grew up actively involved in 4-H, FFA and the performance horse industry, which fostered her passion for agriculture. She relocated to Stillwater, Okla., in 2019 to further her education and earned a degree in Animal Science - Business from Oklahoma State University in 2023.

While at OSU, Katie was engaged in several organizations within the Ferguson College of Agriculture. Most notably, she was a member of the OSU Spirit Rider Team. The team manages OSU's live mascot, Bullet.

Katie now resides in Enid. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her friends and family, including her dogs, and staying active at the gym.


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988



THE ART OF BRONZE: JAMES BREWER'S SCULPTING JOURNEY



Story by Karli Fuss, AFR Communications Coordinator

Sometimes, talents take shape early in life, like a natural musician or a storyteller whose words captivate those around them from a young age. Other times, talent may lie dormant; it might take a lifetime to find, hidden beneath layers of doubt or overshadowed by life's distractions. But the talent is still there. Like a seed buried in the soil, it requires the right conditions to grow—patience, encouragement, determination and a willingness to explore the unknown.

Like that seed that needs time to flourish, AFR member James Brewer's journey to becoming an award-winning sculptor has taken patience, diligence and the time to grow.

Growing up near the Red River, Brewer was surrounded by natural materials that fueled his creative spirit. At the age of six, he moved to Marietta, Okla., with his family where they lived in an old rent house. "They moved the hay out so we could move in," said James.

The Brewer family didn't have much, but they had each other. James' mother was a talented artist who used her skills to entertain her children. "At night, she made some little dogs that were sitting up," said James. "She made three of them and then baked them in oven until they were harder than a rock."

While living in Marietta, James and his little sister Melba discovered a ditch near their house. Children can make everyday things special, but this particular ditch actually was special.

"It seemed like it was like a mile, but it was probably no further than 50 yards," said James. "There was a terracotta type clay in that ditch. You could build anything out of it because it wouldn't fall apart. I made a deer's head, found

some sticks and stuck them in it."

James' early works were simple, yet they laid the groundwork for his future passion for sculpting. Even as a child, he was drawn to the way things should look, often modifying toy horses to make their limbs more realistic.

"They always looked stupid to me—just the way their feet were," said James. "I was forever getting in trouble for heating up a butter knife over the stove and melting that horse joint. I manipulated them and changed them, but I wasn't very good."

Later James' family moved to Muskogee, where he graduated high school. At 19, he married his high school sweetheart, Cheri. They settled in Haskell, Okla., and together they raised three children who eventually gave them a handful of grandchildren. They lived a full life of work, marriage and family.

James had a diverse career, he worked everything from cleaning sewer lines to welding, and eventually found his niche working with gas compression equipment for the oil industry. This work took him around the globe—Russia,





Nigeria, Norway—where he experienced some challenging and at times dangerous environments.

Despite his success in the oil and gas business, James eventually retired to Hitchita, Okla. That's when he finally began to sculpt again. "I started trying," said James. "I just more or less locked myself in a room. I worked 10-12 hours a day on it."

Early in his rekindled sculpting journey, James happened upon Dave Lemon, an artist from Montana who taught about sculpting on YouTube. Lemon talked about what he was sculpting and explained all the details.

"He's the one that gave me the push off the ledge," said James. "He talked about the armatures, about the difference in clays and all kinds of things that would help you get started."

The learning curve was steep, but James' commitment paid off as he honed his skills and focused on perfection with every piece. He embraced the challenges, knowing that each piece would teach him something new.

His process, which is meticulous and labor-intensive, turns his raw ideas into works of art. He carefully molds the figure, paying close attention to every fine detail. James even uses a mirror to help him check and maintain symmetry, allowing him to identify any discrepancies and ensure both sides are evenly balanced.

He often prints a picture that represents what he is sculpting and studies it to make sure he's

sculpting muscles and other characteristics accurately. He believes it's a vital step toward making his sculptures be true to life, capturing the movement and energy that defines an animal or human figure.

"Everybody has their own style of doing things," said James. "You can pick out some people. You can pick out John Wayne, just by his silhouette. You know it's him. So, I'm particular about putting in the swagger in the animals and in the people."

The Bronzing Process

So how does the swagger James captures go from moldable clay to a permanent bronze work of art? Just like James' journey to sculpting, the process turning clay to bronze takes time and a lot of patience.

Once the clay sculpture is complete, it's sent to a foundry where the transformation begins. The first step at the foundry involves coating the clay sculpture with a layer of rubber about half an inch thick. This rubber mold captures every intricate detail of the original clay sculpture, allowing it to be reproduced accurately.

"The foundry then coats the mold with plaster of Paris, which forms a mother mold," said James. "The rubber can look rough on the outside, but the plaster holds everything in place perfectly. Once that's done, they break the mold apart and remove it from the clay."

At this point, the sculpture is fragile, with some parts easily falling apart, while others remain intact. James stresses the importance of this process, as the final mold reveals the perfect cast inside. "When they bolt it together, they'll pour hot wax in that mold and slosh it around," said James. "They'll build that mold up to over a quarter inch or three eighths thick, and they'll let that cool."

After the wax has cooled, it's carefully removed from the rubber mold, and any damaged areas are restored. The process ensures that the final sculpture is true to the original design.

Once the sculpting is finished, the piece will

typically be divided into four or five parts. "They usually cut it at the feet, the head, and often at the top of the hat to make the mold hollow," said James. "This prevents it from being too heavy. The back of the horse is usually cut out as well, including the tail, though they don't always like doing that due to the extra work."

The wax pieces are then fitted with venting screws, which are small wax tubes that allow gas to escape when the molten bronze is poured into the mold. The sculpture is coated in a ceramic shell through a process known as the lost-wax method, where the sculpture is dipped into liquid ceramic to form a hard rock-like shell. This is done several times until the shell is about inch thick.

Once the ceramic shell has dried, it's heated to melt and drain out the wax, leaving a hollow mold. "The shell looks like a large rock, and when it's ready, they will cure it with fans to dry it completely before they pour the molten bronze in," said James.

The foundry workers heat the bronze and use a wheelbarrow-like apparatus to pour the molten metal into the mold, filling it from the bottom up and pushing the air and wax out through the vents. The result is a solid bronze sculpture that captures the look of the original clay sculpture.

Once the bronze has set up, the foundry workers will break the ceramic shell away, and the sculpture is cleaned up using sandblasting to remove any remaining shell fragments. "Then it goes to a team who work with the metal," said James. "They use a TIG welder to carefully reassemble the pieces, welding the joints and smoothing over any seams."

This stage requires a delicate touch, as even the smallest imperfections must be corrected. The final step in the process is applying the patina. "They use a large torch to heat the bronze then apply patina with a brush to create specific colors," said James. "Some pieces require multiple brushes and techniques to get the right effect, but once it's done, it looks incredible."

Sharing the Gift

James' sculptures are true works of art when they're completed. In fact, his artistry has earned him recognition, such as winning the "best of show" at the Oklahoma Sculpture Society with his piece "Last Warning."

But creating art is not just about the recognition; it's also about sharing the work with others. Brewer markets his sculptures through various channels, including art shows and direct sales. One of his recent pieces found a new home when a buyer saw it at a horse show in Tulsa. "His wife came by first, then he came to take a look," said James. "Before long, he came back and said, 'I'll take this one and that one.'"

Bronze sculptures are expensive, but James likes to keep his work fairly priced and as accessible as he can for interested clients. He wants to be sure his work is not an impossible investment for those who truly appreciate it. "I try to keep my prices as low as I can," said James. "I try to stay realistic about how many are going to sell."

The cost of creating a bronze sculpture varies, with the mold alone often starting at \$3,200, but Brewer emphasizes that that price covers the cost of producing multiple copies. "Once you pay for the first one, that cost is covered," he explains. "Then the foundry can make as many as I say. For example, if I say there will only ever be 12 of these, the mold can produce all 12."

James has only produced one custom piece. "It took me about three years because I changed it



so many times," said James. "I probably had better versions, but I ended up with the final one probably because I was just sick of looking at it."

Though he's had many people ask him for additional custom sculptures, James hasn't taken on those larger projects. "Now I'm not interested in taking on custom work because some of them want big life size pieces," said James.

But, who knows what's next in James' long journey toward sculpting mastery? Winter is a good time for James to work, so you can bet he'll be in his studio over the next couple of months, working on something beautiful.

His journey from frustrated beginner to master sculptor has been a long one, but his love for the craft and dedication to the process have made him one of the few who can turn a lump of clay into a timeless work of art.



AFR member James Brewer proudly stands beside his award-winning sculpture "Last Warning," which earned him the prestigious 'Best in Show' title at the Oklahoma Sculpture Society competition. The sculpture can be seen on the right.



OFU MEMORABILIA

Oklahoma Farmers Union Egg Mash Bag Discovered



Tommy Petty, an AFR Insurance property specialty adjuster, recently made a big find at an eastern Oklahoma County estate auction. He plans to frame the historic feed bag for display in his home with other Farmers Union collectables. Research is still ongoing as to the age of the bag.

As part of the cooperative mission of American Farmers & Ranchers and Oklahoma Farmers Union, feed and farm supplies were sold to farmers and ranchers at a price better than they could find elsewhere. The sales benefited all the members of the cooperative.

Petty is shown with AFRMIC/AFR (OFU) Secretary Paul Jackson. Jackson maintains an archive of historic AFR and OFU items. To view or contribute to the collection, contact Jackson at paul.jackson@afrmic.com.

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2025 AFR Convention

What to Expect at the 2025 AFR Convention

Top Speakers

Insurance for Policyholders: In what continue to be difficult times for policyholders and insurance companies in Oklahoma, Gallagher Reinsurance Executive Vice President Jon Hammar will address policyholders during a general session as he reviews national and global challenges and local impacts in the insurance business.

Insurance for Agents: Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Glen Mulready has been invited to address AFR agents. AFR Insurance President & CEO Chad Yearwood and AFR Insurance Property Claims Manager Brett McGavock will give a claims and pre-catastrophe season catch-up in preparation for seasonal challenges. "How to Attract and Retain Quality Employees for Your Agency Office" will be addressed by AFR Human Resources Director Stacy Pederson and Crowe & Dunlevy Attorney Jaycee Simon. The annual meeting of the AFR Agent's Association will also take place.

Agriculture: "The Packer's Playbook" with Corbitt Wall, of "The Feeder Flash" popularity, will give insight to how the price cattle producers receive is impacted by a handful of large processors. As emerging crisis issues headline news stories, "Sharing Our Story: An Approach to Crisis Communications Strategies" will be the topic of Dairy MAX Director Jayce Winter and Dairy MAX Manager of Issues and Crisis Communications Susan Allen. Oklahoma Beef Council Executive Director Heather Buckmaster will bring an update on Beef Check-Off initiatives and impacts on beef consumption and sales. Dr. Shannon Ferrell, Professor of Agricultural Law in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University, will bring insight to one of the hottest state topics today with "Transmission Lines, Private Property

Rights and You."

State Issues: Oklahoma Rep. John Pfeiffer, R-Mulhall, will speak to what to expect in the upcoming legislature and will address other state issues. AFR Cooperative Legislative Liaison Bray Haven and AFR Insurance Legislative Liaison Jeremy Rich will provide a snapshot of the upcoming state legislative session and associated activities.

National Issues: U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas, OK-03, member of the House Agriculture Committee will bring perspective with "Government Reset, the Future & the Farm Bill." National Farmers Union President Rob Larew will give the latest on a new Congress and a new White House and prospects for a new Farm Bill.

Registration

Registration is FREE and underwritten by AFR Insurance and AFR Cooperative. General education sessions are open to non-delegate members, but members must be credentialed delegates to participate in business sessions. Non-delegate members must check-in at registration. General education session participants may contact Jamie Goodson at jamie.goodson@afrmic.com for non-delegate pre-registration. All participants will receive BEEF bags sponsored by the Oklahoma Beef Council. Custom Promotional Products is sponsoring attendee badges and pens. Convention registration and office needs are supported by R.K. Black, Inc.

Counties/Locals

The Local & County Chapters Luncheon honors the service of local and county AFR Cooperative boards. National Farmers Union Vice President Jeff Kippley will bring a South Dakota perspective to "Proven Successful Strategies for Farmers Union Chapters" as he reviews the "South Dakota Farm Days" educational program. Various

county programs from Oklahoma will also be showcased. The luncheon is sponsored by BancFirst and the Oklahoma Wheat Commission.

Business Session

Friday afternoon will be dedicated to annual meetings of the AFRMIC and American Farmers & Ranchers Cooperative (Oklahoma Farmers Union), which will include financial reports, officer reports, director candidate speeches and consideration and adoption of policy resolutions. Reports for the AFRPAC, CALF, Farmers Union Foundation and OFU Enterprises, Inc., will be presented.

Youth Program

Recognition of top AFR Youth and a look back at last year's activities will be part of Friday evening's activities. Up and coming red dirt country performer and 2025 American Idol contestant Kase Tippens will showcase his Oklahoma talent. A former Miss Rodeo Oklahoma, Taylor McAdams, content manager for Justin Boots and former marketing coordinator and rodeo relations manager for the Cowboy Channel, will reflect on her career and impact the AFR Speech Contest had on her life. A top AFR State Speech winner will present and a new AFR Youth Champion honoree will be named.

OCBA

The annual meeting of the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association will be held on the first day of the convention. Voting members of the Association will conduct business and AFR Cooperative members can attend to learn more about OCBA and how they can benefit from the newly formed entity to help market Oklahoma bred, born, raised and processed beef to put more money back in the pockets of the cattle producer.

Ag & Historic Conference

Visit the AFR Ag & Historic Conference

2025 AFR Convention

What to Expect at the 2025 AFR Convention

trade show booth to discover the adventures in store both internationally and domestically — Summer 2025 to Scotland and Fall 2025 to the Minnesota/Wisconsin region!

PAC Auctions

The AFRPAC “live” auction is again part of the convention banquet. The auction assists with legislative efforts by giving to candidates and legislators who support the AFR organization and legislative initiatives. A few of the items up for auction include a two-night Hochatown/Broken Bow cabin experience; a shotgun with an AFR logo; a Henry .22 rifle with an OFU logo; a cruise; a Frederic Remington Mountain Man sculpture; a chute-side veterinary cooler, vet supply certificate and cattle processing supplies package; custom spurs by Mike Emberson; a Shiloh Ranch hog hunt and an AFR-branded saddle. The AFRPAC silent auction items will be available for bid on Friday and Saturday. Both live and silent auctions are open to all attendees; you do not have to be a convention delegate to participate. Both new and vintage items will be offered.

Reception/Banquet

All banquet attendees are invited to mingle with members and special guests at the pre-banquet reception. Oklahoma 4-H President Bridger Arrington will showcase his fiddle skills on the national anthem. Oklahoma Certified Beef Association members’ products will be served as the entrée. The bread will be sponsored by the Oklahoma Wheat Commission. National FFA Prepared Speech Winner and AFR Youth Council Member Coy Davidson will present his award-winning “Securing the Future of American Agriculture” speech. After dinner entertainment will be Dr. Dennis Swanberg, considered by many to be “America’s Minster of Encouragement.” He uses laughter as a tool to bring

down people’s barriers to promote faith and family values in a lighthearted and humorous way. A retiring AFR director will be honored. In addition to the AFRPAC “live” auction, the convention’s grand door prize drawing will round out the evening.

Worship Service

The convention will close out with the Convention Worship & Memorial service on Sunday morning with a video tribute honoring members who passed away in 2024, congregational singing participation, special music, remarks from Chaplain Eddie Whitworth and message from Dr. Swanberg. Returning at the piano with soothing southern gospel music and hymns is Gathan Graham.

Major Door Prizes

Several major door prizes will be drawn during Friday and Saturday general sessions, at the banquet and at the conclusion of the convention on Sunday morning following the worship service. Featured door prizes include a John Deere S160 Lawn Tractor valued at \$3,000, a John Deere 2500 Inverter Generator valued at \$1,100, a Stihl pressure washer valued at \$650, a John Deere AC-135 Kerosene Heater valued at \$600, and a John Deere HR-18R propane heater valued at \$250. Convention delegates must have submitted the entry card and be in attendance at the banquet for the grand door prize. Tickets will be distributed at the beginning of each general session where other major door prizes will be drawn, must be present to win. Major door prizes are sponsored by Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma, Oklahoma AGCredit, and P&K Equipment.

NFU Delegates Election

Contact the AFR State Secretary for a delegate card and biographical form to be considered to represent

the Oklahoma Farmers Union at the National Farmers Union Convention. Cards and biographical information (up to 175 words) must be received no later than Saturday, Feb. 22, at NOON. The NFU Convention is March 9-11, 2025, in Oklahoma City.

Trade Show

Enjoy a comprehensive trade show with more than 50 vendors where you can learn, get freebies and shop for a tractor, great crafts or other popular merchandise, as well as visit educational resource booths.

Wheat Treats

The Oklahoma Wheat Commission is back again with their famous treats! Swing by the convention trade show to enjoy a sweet treat. This is always a “something not to miss” as we celebrate the products of Oklahoma wheat farmers.

Shoe Shine

Just inside the door of the trade show, bring your boots and dress shoes to JJ’s Shoe Shine where service will be available FREE throughout the convention courtesy of BancFirst. Tips are always appreciated for a job well done!

Drawings

Be early for the general sessions to have a chance to win general door prizes sponsored by MIDCON, LegalShield, the cotton and pecan industries, Tinker Federal Credit Union, Piguets Prime Time Restaurant and Jim Pilkington, as well as trade show vendors and others. Get there early to get a major door prized ticket, one will be awarded in every session but Friday afternoon. Check-out the prizes on page 28.

2025 Convention Agenda At-A-Glance

Friday, February 21

Morning Activities

Oklahoma Certified Beef Association Annual Meeting

Coffee with the Legislature & State Issues

Rep. John Pfeiffer

Registration, Voting, AFRPAC Silent Auction Begins

Agent's Association Meeting

AFRMIC Agent Recognition Luncheon

Legislative Policy Committee

Trade Show

Afternoon Activities

General Session

Trade Show Opens

AFRMIC Annual Meeting

OFU Annual Meeting

Candidate Speeches

AFR PAC, CALF & OFU Enterprises Reports

State Legislative Report

Consideration of AFR Legislative Policy

Agent's Resource Room Opens

Evening Activities

General Session

Kase Tippens, Red Dirt Country, American Idol Contestant

Youth Program

Taylor McAdams, with Justin Boots, Formerly Cowboy Channel

Major Door Prize Drawing

Northwest Area Meeting

Saturday, February 22

Morning Activities

Registration, Voting, AFRPAC Silent Auction, Trade Show

General Session

"Sharing Our Story: An Approach to Crisis Communications Strategies"

Jayce Winter, Issues and Crisis Communications, Dairy MAX

Susan Allen, Issues and Crisis Communications, Dairy MAX

"The Packer Playbook"

Corbitt Wall, DV Auction, Feeder Flash

Agent Breakouts

Claims/Pre-Catastrophe Season Catch-up

Chad Yearwood, AFR President & CEO

Brett McGavock, AFR Property Claims Manager

How to Attract & Retain Quality Employees for Your Agency Office

Stacy Pederson, AFR Human Resources Director/General Counsel

Jaycee Simon, Attorney, Crowe & Dunlevy

Local & County Farmers Union Chapters Board Luncheon

Jeff Kippley, NFU Vice President & SDFU Vice President

AFRPAC Silent Auction Closes

Afternoon Activities

General Session

"Government Reset and the Future"

U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas, Oklahoma Third Congressional District

President Rob Larew, National Farmers Union

Registration, Voting Closes

Breakout Sessions

"Its 3 p.m., Do You Know Who is in Your Pocket? How to Keep Your Devices Safe From Cyber Attacks"

Jonathan Kimmitt, Chief Info. Security Officer, Alias Cybersecurity

"Transmission Lines, Private Property Rights and You"

Dr. Shannon Ferrell, Professor of Agricultural Law,

Dept. of Agricultural Economics, OSU

Trade Show Closes

Evening Activities

Banquet Reception

Banquet

Dennis Swanberg – Comedian

Retiring Director Recognition

AFRPAC Auction

Grand Door Prize Drawing

Sunday, February 23

Morning Activities

Worship Service

Dennis Swanberg - Message

The complete agenda and times can be found on the AFRMIC (www.afrmic.com) and Cooperative (www.afrcoop.org) websites.

Speakers & Entertainers



Frank Lucas
U.S. Representative
Oklahoma's Third
Congressional District



John Pfeiffer
Oklahoma State
Representative
(OK-38)



Rob Larew
NFU President



Corbitt Wall
"Feeder Flash"
Livestock Market
Analyst, DVAuction



Jayce Winters
Director of Issues and
Crisis Communications,
Dairy MAX



Susan Allen
Manager of Issues and
Crisis Communications,
Dairy MAX



Dr. Shannon Ferrell
Professor of Ag Law,
Dept. of Ag Economics
Oklahoma State University



Jonathan Kimmitt
Chief Information
Security Officer,
Alias Cybersecurity



Jeff Kippley
NFU Vice President/
South Dakota Farmers
Union Vice President



Dennis Swanberg
Comedian



Taylor McAdams
Content Manager,
Justin Boots



Kase Tippens
American Idol
Contestant

2025 Convention Candidates

District 2 Southwest Agent Director



Dustin Tackett

Dustin Tackett lives north of Fort Cobb on the farm Tackett's grandfather bought in 1913. He raises commercial Red Angus cattle and grows wheat, hay and pumpkins.

Tackett, 47, has served as an AFR/OFU insurance agent since 2004 when he purchased a business held by long time agent Dick Hodges. In 2022, he purchased an additional agency in Anadarko. He has been active in industry leadership roles, serving as the Caddo County AFR president since 2013. He also served on the National Farmers Union Policy Committee in 2018 and the AFR Policy Committee in 2007, and as the AFR Policy Committee Chair in 2011. He has served on the AFR Board of Directors since 2019.

Dustin has served on the Caddo Kiowa Technology Center Board of Education since 2004 and has been board president since 2009. He is also on the Oklahoma State School Boards Association Board of Directors and was association president in 2013. He was selected to the OSSBA All-State Board of Education in 2015.

Dustin is a two-time Oklahoma State University graduate where he holds an agricultural economics degree and an MBA. While in college, he served as an intern in the United State Senate. Dustin has obtained his Certified Insurance Counselor designation (CIC) from the National Alliance for Insurance. Tackett was also a member of Class 12 of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program and is a member of Oney Christian Church.

Statewide Independent Director



Ron Ramming

Ronald Ramming was named the 17th president of Connors State College by the Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents in April 2017 after serving as interim president for the 2016-2017 academic year. He began his career at Connors in August 1990 in the agriculture faculty. Before assuming his present responsibilities, he held several administrative positions in CSC Enrollment Management, Student Services and Academic Affairs. Ramming is 59 years old and was raised on a diversified farm in Hinton, Okla. His educational background includes an Associate of Science in agriculture from Connors State College, a Bachelor of Science in animal science from Oklahoma State University, a Master of Science in animal science from the University of Tennessee, and a doctorate in agricultural education from Oklahoma State University.

Ramming is highly active in the community, serving on various boards such as the Greater Muskogee Area Chamber of Commerce, Saint Francis Hospital-Muskogee Community Advisory Board, Warner Public Schools Board of Education, and the Muskogee County Excise/Equalization Boards.

His involvement with American Farmers & Ranchers (AFR) includes AFR Day at the Capitol, AFR convention delegate, and AFR Policy Committee presenter. He also helped organize the first AFR/OFU livestock judging contest and worked with AFR Leadership to establish the J.P. Connors American Farmers & Ranchers Endowed Scholarship Fund.

Ramming has two adult children who are both Oklahoma State University graduates. Bobby is currently working at OSU as an academic advisor and Madison is in medical school at OSU's Center of Health Sciences in Tulsa.

2025 Convention Candidates

State District 3 Northeast Independent Director



Raymond Schiltz

Raymond Schiltz, 70, is a life-long farmer and rancher from Kay County. He currently runs a diverse cow-calf operation with sheep, hay and small grains.

Schiltz is a graduate of Ponca City High School. He continued his education at Oklahoma State University, where

he graduated with a Bachelor of Agriculture in mechanized agriculture.

Schiltz worked for Conoco in Ponca City as a research and development technician. He retired after 30 years in 2013.

Schiltz is a lifetime member of the St. Mary's Catholic Church. He has served his community in various ways, including as a director of the Farmers' Cooperative Association Board of Directors, the Ranch Drive Fire Department Board of Directors and the Northern Oklahoma College's Agricultural Advisory Board. He currently

serves as secretary for the Farmers' Cooperative Association.

As a life-long policyholder and member, Schiltz is deeply rooted in the AFR/OFU organization. His relatives, the Bellinghausen and Schiltz families, were instrumental in founding the Kay County OFU locals. Raymond's uncle, Mike Schiltz, and father, Ray Schiltz, served on the OFU Board of Directors, followed by his father serving as the OFU State Secretary. Schiltz has judged several district and county speech contests, served as a delegate to the AFR State Convention, and been a member of the filing committee. His involvement continues as he is currently serving as the vice president for Kay County Farmers Union.

Raymond currently resides on the family farm in Ponca City. He has one daughter, Ashley, and two grandchildren.



Jim Shelton

Jim Shelton, 74, and his wife, Sara, are lifelong residents of Craig County and live near Vinita, Okla. They operate a commercial cow-calf and stocker cattle operation. Their four children hold degrees from Oklahoma State University, Principia College, University of Tulsa Law School and Oklahoma State University

Institute of Technology. They have 12 grandchildren.

Jim holds a Bachelor of Science in animal science from Oklahoma State University and is a graduate of the Southwestern Graduate School of Banking, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. Both proved useful in his 35-year banking career with Oklahoma State Bank of Vinita. He left the bank in January 2010 to expand the cattle operation.

Jim's civic involvement includes serving on the Vinita Public Schools Board of Education and Vinita Public Schools Education Foundation. He is a member of Vinita Lions Club and the Ottawa/

Craig Counties Cattlemen's Association. In 2012, Jim received the Honorary State FFA Degree at the Oklahoma FFA State Convention. He is an elder of the Pilgrim Presbyterian Church. He is also a director for Holistic Management International, Albuquerque, N.M, and the Oklahoma Grazing Lands Coalition.

Jim participated in Class I of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program and Class XIV of Leadership Oklahoma. He served on the Long-Range Capital Planning Commission for the State of Oklahoma, and was a director of the Oklahoma State University Alumni Association and Leadership Council and the OSU Animal Science Alumni Association. Jim served on the AFR/OFU Board from 2013-2016 and is presently a director.

2025 Convention Candidates

Cooperative President



Scott Blubaugh

Scott Blubaugh, 59, serves as president of American Farmers & Ranchers (AFR) Cooperative, where he represents the organization's 61,000 farmers, ranchers and rural citizens. In addition to his position at AFR, Blubaugh operates a diversified 3,500-acre family farm and ranch.

As president of AFR Cooperative, Blubaugh leads the organization in all legislative efforts, including serving as president of the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association. Blubaugh was integral to the development of the program and continues to facilitate its growth. He also manages a full roster of rural education and agricultural programs and serves as a spokesman for rural issues. Blubaugh is the chairman of the AFR PAC and serves as the president for the OFU Foundation and OFU Enterprises for Profit

corporation.

In addition to his AFR involvement, he serves on the NFU Executive Board of Directors and chair of the NFU Education Committee. He has also testified before the U.S. House of Representatives. Blubaugh currently serves a vice president of the Royalty Owners Coalition of Oklahoma. He is a graduate of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program and Leadership Oklahoma Class 35.

Blubaugh and his wife, Lisa, own two AFR Insurance agency and manage the family farming operation in northern Oklahoma. He and his family host an annual Angus production sale.

Blubaugh is a fifth-generation farmer and rancher and a lifelong resident of Kay County, Okla. He and Lisa have been married 38 years; they have two sons, Zach and Zane, and three granddaughters.

CONVENTION DOOR PRIZES

Friday Evening

AC 135 Portable Kerosene Heater
Valued at \$600!



Saturday A.M.

2500 Watt Inverter Generator
Valued at \$1,100!



Saturday P.M.

RB 200
Pressure Washer
Valued at \$650!



Banquet Grand Prize

John Deere S160 Lawn Tractor
48" Deck
Valued at \$3,000!



Sunday A.M.

HR 18R Propane Heater
Valued at \$250!



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TIER 5 (\$0 - \$249)



Jim Pilkington

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IT'S TIME TO RENEW!

*Oklahoma Certified
Beef Association*

2025 RENEWAL BEGINS JANUARY 1.

BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR YOUR
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79th Annual AFR State Speech Contest

The AFR statewide speech contest celebrated its 79th year of fostering agricultural education and leadership among Oklahoma youth. Throughout its history, the contest has evolved while staying true to its agricultural roots.

This year, students from grades three through 12 competed in categories tailored to their age groups: AFR/OFU, Agricultural Policy, Agribusiness, Natural Resources, Agriscience, and Extemporaneous Speaking. The contest hosted nearly 500 participants in district competitions, with more than 160 finalists advancing to the state finals on December 7 at Oklahoma State University

(OSU) in Stillwater. This event highlights the commitment to developing communication skills and agricultural awareness among students statewide.

“Public speaking is one of the most valuable skills young people can gain for their future

careers,” said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. “We are honored to host the 79th Annual AFR Speech Contest, which has a long-standing tradition of fostering professionalism and confidence in Oklahoma’s youth.”



Novice AFR/OFU

- 1st: Charlie Johnson, Drummond
- 2nd: Haddie Roller, Cashion
- 3rd: Saige Glover, Wetumka



Junior AFR/OFU

- 1st: Kreed Campbell, Jet
- 2nd: Carson Ebert, Broken Bow
- 3rd: Jeryn Lundry, Haworth



Junior Agriscience

- 1st: Kortney Campbell, Jet
- 2nd: Jalyn Lundry, Haworth
- 3rd: Fletcher Inman, Mulhall-Orl.



Intermediate AFR/OFU

- 1st: Gracey Rich, Strother
- 2nd: Shaylee Davis, Silo
- 3rd: Emma Haken, Morrison



Intermediate Agriscience

- 1st: Layla Senters, Chattanooga
- 2nd: Jade McPeak, Checotah
- 3rd: Hannah Hays, Chisholm



Intermediate Agribusiness
 1st: Emma Carter, Seiling
 2nd: Kaydence Staude, Meeker
 3rd: Addison Swift, Adair



Intermediate Ag Policy
 1st: Madilyn Norvell, Amber-Poc.
 2nd: Kinna Turner, Owasso
 3rd: Audrey Warner, Cache



Inter. Nat. Resources
 1st: Lincoln Stafford, Altus
 2nd: Rylan Compston, Mooreland
 3rd: Georgia Dobson, Turner



Senior AFR/OFU
 1st: Denver McBride, Silo
 2nd: Taylor Rose, Springer
 3rd: Adasyn Haynes, Nowata



Senior Agriscience
 1st: Bonham Eslick, Elgin
 2nd: Karsyn Pendegraft, Fairview
 3rd: Faith Wright, Stratford



Senior Agribusiness
 1st: Jake Vulgamore, El Reno
 2nd: Colby Rogers, Owasso
 3rd: Hadlee Bryan, Dover



Senior Ag Policy
 1st: Heath Laubach, Mooreland
 2nd: Callen Veit, Morrison
 3rd: Gage Grimes, Fletcher



Senior Nat. Resources
 1st: Carli Thomas, Purcell
 2nd: Luke Lundry, Idabel
 3rd: Tylor Aary, Miami



Senior Extemporaneous
 1st: Lynlee McCurry, Salina
 2nd: Kelton Arthur, Ripley
 3rd: Laela Begley, Elgin

Congratulations to this year's winners!

2024-2025

Youth Advisory Council

LeAndre Debonia



Deming

"I am most excited to serve on the AFR YAC because I want to create a community where everyone feels they belong, and their contributions are recognized. My mission is to foster a culture of support and leave a lasting legacy that encourages future generations to continue nurturing and uplifting one another!"



The AFR Youth Advisory Council is an opportunity for high school seniors who are active in the AFR Youth Program to further their leadership and program management skills. Council members assist in planning many AFR Youth Program events, help facilitate general AFR events and act as mentors for younger Oklahoma youth. Council members also participate in agriculture-based service projects throughout the year.

Coy Davidson



Lawton

"I am very excited for the opportunity to serve on the Youth Advisory Council and I look forward to making an impact on the youth of this organization and promoting the opportunities agriculture has for each and every student!"

Darla Fesmire



Delaware

"During my time as a council member, I am excited to learn more about all that AFR offers, share opportunities with others and get more youth involved in the organization."

Addyson Schreberger



Carnegie

"This year being on the council, I am most excited to interact with students who have a passion for agriculture and to serve alongside the other four council members!"

Taryn McCaa



Elmore City

"This year on the Youth Advisory Council, I hope to impact the younger generation of agriculturalists, while growing as a leader and investing in my future."

2025 AFR State Scholarships

Applications Open

February 1

Applications Close

April 1

For more information visit afrcoop.org/youth-program
Contact Michelle.Battaglia@afrmic.com with any questions.



2025 AFR Youth Leadership Summit

Junior Session

July 18-20

Teen Session

July 20-22

Senior Session

July 23-26

2025 *Ag Achievement* CONTEST



Contest open to 11th and 12th grade 4-H and FFA members exhibiting breeding or market animals at the 2024 OYE.

SHOWMANSHIP • WRITTEN ANIMAL SCIENCE EXAM • INTERVIEW

Entries due by Friday, March 7, 2025.

This year's contest will be bigger & better than ever before!

20 EXHIBITORS WILL BE AWARDED IN 2025!



For more information: michelle.battaglia@afrmic.com | 405-218-5566 | www.afrcoop.org



Amish Country & GETTYSBURG PENNSYLVANIA

AFR Cooperative members enjoyed an agriculture-focused fall conference Oct. 8-14, 2024. "Amish Country and Gettysburg" focused on agriculture in Pennsylvania.

VALLEY FORGE NATIONAL PARK

AFR members explored the 1777-1778 winter encampment of the Continental Army led by George Washington during the American Revolutionary War.

LANCASTER

AFR members toured the New Holland Machinery factory, established in 1895 in Lancaster County, one of the nation's richest agricultural regions. Afterward, they participated in a hands-on pretzel twisting lesson at the first commercial pretzel bakery in the U.S., founded in 1861 in Lititz.

AMISH FARMLANDS

AFR members ventured along the "Roads Less Traveled" through the heart of the Amish Farmlands, taking in the picturesque scenery, including one-room schoolhouses, windwheels, Amish "phone booths," and farmers working with mule-drawn plows.

LONGWOOD GARDENS – SIGHT & SOUND THEATRE

AFR members explored local mushroom farming, which produces over a million pounds of mushrooms daily. At Longwood Gardens, they explored one of the world's greatest gardens, featuring 1,077 acres of meadows, gardens and woodlands, including a 4-acre conservatory.

They returned to Lancaster to take their reserved seats at the state-of-the-art Sight & Sound Theatre for the spectacular production of Daniel.

HICKORY BRIDGE FARM – GETTYSBURG

AFR members explored a family-owned fruit and vegetable farm spanning 500 acres, nestled in the Historic South Mountain Fruit Belt—one of the premier fruit-growing regions in the country.

EISENHOWER FARM – NATIONAL PARK & BATTLEFIELD

AFR members explored the Eisenhower National Historic Site, the only home that Ike and Mamie ever owned. Their cherished farmhouse is set in the tranquility of their 690-acre Gettysburg Farm. Then, the group visited the Gettysburg Museum of the Civil War and embarked on a guided tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield with a licensed battlefield guide.

BALTIMORE – FORT MCKINLEY

Before heading home, AFR members visited the site of the Battle of Baltimore, which inspired Francis Scott Key to write the words in 1814 that would become the U.S. National Anthem.

The "Amish County & Gettysburg" adventure was just one of many memorable AFR Ag & Historic Conferences. For future Ag & Historic Conferences, contact Jamie Goodson (405-218-5665) or Paul Jackson (405-218-5559).



In Memoriam



JoAnn Ogden

JoAnn (Parker) Ogden, 80, of Oktaha, passed away peacefully at home on Aug. 30, 2024. JoAnn was born in Charleston, Ark., as the favorite (only) child of Russell and Hazel (Wilson) Parker.

JoAnn met John Ogden in the sixth grade at Wainwright

Elementary School. They were friends throughout childhood and married on Dec. 7, 1962. They had two children, Doug and Marla. JoAnn was a dedicated wife, supporting John through many business and leadership endeavors throughout their 61 years of marriage.

JoAnn was also a keen businesswoman, working at Commercial Bank until she and John acquired Ogden Insurance in 1976. She managed Ogden Insurance for 47 years, retiring in late 2023 to spend more time with John.

In her free time, JoAnn loved to read novels and watch Hallmark

movies. But, she loved nothing more than to spend time with her family, particularly her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. After her daughter-in-law suffered a tragic car accident, she took up the role of mother figure for her grandchildren. She guided them through many years of school and marriage. She was the glue that held the family together.

JoAnn was preceded in death by her husband; her parents; her in-laws, Buet and Ruth Ogden; her sister-in-law, Sandra Kaye Smalley; daughter-in-law, Stephanie (Breashears) Ogden; brother-in-law, Rev. Leo Guthrie; sister-in-law, Carolyn (Bowden) Ogden; nephew, Bart Guthrie; and niece, Amy Ogden.

JoAnn is survived by her son, Doug and Brenda Ogden of Oktaha; daughter, Marla and Rocky Mosley of Oktaha; grandsons, Jace and Grace Ogden of Sulphur Springs, Texas, Rocky Joe Mosley of Indiana, Daniel and Jennifer Mosley of Broken Arrow; granddaughters, Rachel and Trea Milne of Oktaha, and Caroline Lacie and Mike Hering of Port Lavaca, Texas; great-grandchildren, Jack, Amelia, Cinch, Aiden, Logan, Adriel, McKynlee, Brody, Addilyn, and Jaxon; and lifelong friend, Bonnie Boyer.

Golf Tournament Raises Funds for AFR Foundation



The eighth annual AFR Foundation Golf Tournament took place Oct. 17 at FireLake Golf Course in Shawnee. The AFR Foundation is a non-profit focused on the betterment of farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

Through the event, the Foundation raised more than \$13,000. All tournament proceeds will support future AFR Foundation youth and community outreach.

"The Foundation does important and necessary work throughout the year," said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. "Golf tournament funds make needs-based grants, special and local



county projects and certain youth events possible."

In the last year, the Foundation has given to several worthy causes, including donating wire to farmers and ranchers affected by the wildfires in Western Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Panhandle, the Carter County Special Needs Livestock Show, the National Farmers Union Fairness for Farmers Campaign, and the Alpha Gamma Rho Heart of a Champion Livestock Show.

The winning teams of the 2024 AFR Golf Tournament were Landon Timmons in first, Pfaff Insurance in second, and Cliff Staude Insurance in third.



Ida Kilburn

Ida (Neely) Kilburn passed away peacefully after a brief illness on Oct. 29, 2024, at Clarehouse in Tulsa. She was born May 19, 1934, in Ada, to William and Maud Neely. One of seven siblings, she grew up on a farm and attended Latta High School, where she starred on the girls' basketball

team alongside her sisters, Maxine and Wilma.

Ida attended business college in Oklahoma City, then met and married Samuel Edward Kilburn in 1955. The couple started a family and worked for several years in Oklahoma City. In 1970,

they moved to Siloam Springs, Ark., and purchased an insurance agency in eastern Oklahoma. They operated the agency for five decades; it is now managed by their son, Greg Kilburn.

Ida was preceded in death by her husband, Samuel, and five siblings. She leaves behind a sister, Wilma LaFevers of Sapulpa; two sons—Greg Kilburn of Siloam Springs and Jay Kilburn and Maryann Donahue of Tulsa; three grandchildren—Annie and Scott Ferris of Tulsa, Connor and Johannah Kilburn of Springdale, Ark., and Samuel Kilburn of Tulsa; six great-grandchildren—Bea, Ashlyn, Kayne, Aizlynn, Nya and Rowan; and many nieces and nephews. She will be remembered with love for her strength, generosity, and kind spirit.

AFR AG & HISTORIC CONFERENCE “Wonders of Scotland”

There's a reason the unicorn is the symbol of Scotland... it's a land of pure magic! Discover stunning natural vistas, from the heather-covered Highlands to the depths of the famous Loch Ness. Explore enchanting castles, visit working farms and experience landscapes seemingly untouched by time. If Scotland is on your bucket list, it's time to experience this magical place!

Contact Jamie Goodson for more information at (405)218-5665.

Must be an AFR member to attend.





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