

# AFR

SPRING 2025

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THE PUBLICATION OF AFR INSURANCE  
AN AFFILIATE OF OKLAHOMA FARMERS UNION

# TODAY

## FARM TO SOU

*The Stories Behind Farm Stays*

**AFR**

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# AFR

## AMERICAN FARMERS & RANCHERS

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# AFTER TODAY

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# Oklahoma STRONG

From the Desk of *Scott Blubaugh*

**G**reetings, AFR Members!

We're not quite halfway through 2025 and it's already been one for the history books!

First, we have a new president in the White House. Whichever side of the aisle you're on, I think we can all agree that Pres. Trump is certainly shaking things up in D.C. I just hope that shake up eventually gets us to a new farm bill.

Our farmers and ranchers have been waiting years for a new farm bill. As I write this, AFR staff are preparing for another trip to Washington to push legislators to get something done in support of family farms across the country.

Second, this spring's weather has been nothing short of crazy. We just set the record for the wettest April in state history, but the biggest weather story of the spring was the most structurally damaging wildfire in the state's history on March 14. The devastation touched the lives of thousands of Oklahomans.

The pain caused by that day was intensified by our governor questioning the effectiveness of Oklahoma Forestry Services. OFS plays a vital role in both emergency management and our state's expansive timber industry. It would

be a terrible idea to shutter OFS and I'm glad to see the majority of Oklahomans agree.

Third, several AFR members spent this spring fighting against the use of eminent domain by energy transmission projects. As an organization, we're continuing to engage this issue at courthouses when there's a threat of creating case law that could undermine the rights of private landowners.

This spring, we also lost an Oklahoma legend. Former Congressman Wes Watkins passed away in March. He was a great friend to rural Oklahoma and a steadfast supporter of farmers and ranchers for decades. He will be missed.

We have had some recent wins for agriculture in Oklahoma. Legislation is moving through the state capitol to ban the production and sale of cell-cultured protein, also known as lab-grown meat, in the state of Oklahoma. AFR lobbied for the effort during two events—AFR Day at the Capitol and the OCBA Rural Caucus Luncheon. We expect the bill to ultimately succeed.

Another positive for Oklahoma agriculture, especially in the eastern part of the state—The Cherokee Nation held its first ever agriculture summit in April. We were honored

to be invited and look forward to watching that conference grow.

This spring, for the first time in 35 years, we hosted the 2025 National Farmers Union Convention right here in Oklahoma City! It was an honor to bring in farmers and ranchers from across the country to learn about our great state.

On the home front, the AFR Youth Program will be holding Leadership Summit in a new location this summer! We have moved to Cedar Hills Baptist Youth Camp near Binger. The new location is a great facility with a lot more capacity, so we can grow for years to come. Summit sign-up will be happening soon!

**Have a great summer and  
God bless!**



**Scott Blubaugh**  
PRESIDENT



# Upcoming 2025 Events

## July 4

Fourth of July; Home Office Closed

## July 14-22

Ag & Historic Conference; Scotland

## July 26-29

AFR Teen Leadership Summit; Cedar Hills Baptist Youth Camp, Binger

## July 30-Aug. 2

AFR Senior Leadership Summit: Cedar Hills Baptist Youth Camp, Binger

## Sept. 1

Labor Day; Home Office Closed

## Sept. 8-10

National Farmers Union Fly-In; Washington, D.C.

## Sept. 25-Oct. 5

Tulsa State Fair; Tulsa Fairgrounds

## Nov. 10

AFR Central District Speech Contest; Tecumseh

## Nov. 11

AFR Northeast District Speech Contest; Sapulpa

## Nov. 13

AFR Southeast District Speech Contest; Wilburton

## Nov. 17

AFR Southwest District Speech Contest; Cache

## Nov. 20

AFR Northwest District Speech Contest; Enid

## Dec. 6

AFR State Speech Contest; Stillwater



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# Peace of Mind: Before and After the Storm

Oklahoma's weather can turn extreme in a minute, and living in Oklahoma means staying weather aware. Last year was crazy with 152 reported touchdown tornadoes. Kicking off 2025, Oklahoma has had 31 tornadoes as of April 24. This year's storm prediction is for 60 tornadoes, which is below Oklahoma's average, but preparation is still essential.

## **What you can do to prepare for storms:**

- Stay Informed: Sign up for emergency alerts and stay tuned to your local news, weather apps, or NOAA Radio for updates.
- Know the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning.
- Tornado Watch: Conditions are favorable for tornadoes—Stay alert!
- Tornado Warning: A tornado has been spotted or detected—Get to your safe place!
- Create an emergency plan by identifying a safe shelter. The best option is a basement or storm cellar, but if you have no basement, shelter in an interior room on the lowest floor away from the windows. Don't forget pet carriers & leashes for your furry family members.
- Build an emergency kit for your safe place that includes non-perishable food and water, flashlights, batteries, first-aid kit, cell phone charger, important documents, cash, and a whistle to signal for help if trapped.

- Conduct family tornado drills so everyone knows where to go and what to do when a warning is issued.
- After the storm has passed, wait for the "all clear" before emerging. Check for injuries and use extreme caution around debris, gas leaks and downed power lines.

## **Knowing and understanding your insurance policy can provide peace of mind when a disaster happens.**

- Review your property and automobile policies.
- Ensure your policy covers hail, wind and fire. Some policies may have exclusions or limitations, especially in high-risk areas.
- Understand your policy limits, limitations and exclusions.
- Document your personal property. Take inventory of your home with photographs or video to document details on the contents in your home prior to a loss.
- Understand your deductibles. Some policies have separate deductibles for hail and wind, which may be higher than your standard deductible.
- Stay informed on policy updates. Insurance policies can change. Look out for updates or endorsements included with your renewal documents.
- Your AFR agent is a valuable resource who can answer questions about coverage or gaps in coverage. If you sustain damage from a storm,

ensure everyone is safe before assessing damage. Be mindful of immediate hazards, such as gas leaks and exposed power lines. Contact your insurance provider or file a claim online.

If you must make emergency repairs due to broken windows or missing shingles to mitigate further damage, keep receipts, as these may be reimbursed. Document your damage by taking pictures and listing damaged items.

Be aware of scams! Be cautious of unsolicited repair offers or those demanding full payments up front. Use only licensed contractors for repairs. It is best to use contractors you know, who have been referred to you, or who can provide references.

Did you know that Oklahoma requires roofing contractors to be licensed with the Construction Industries Board (CIB) if they replace roofs in Oklahoma? Don't be afraid to ask your contractor to provide their license number; you can verify it on the CIB website.

Oklahoma weather is unpredictable, but you can have peace of mind by being prepared before the storm and knowing that AFR is ready to help you recover after the storm.

**Story by:**  
**Kim Tomlinson,**  
**AFR Director of Claims**

# When Protection Isn't in Place

## | The Real Cost of Not Having Life Insurance

Across the country, families are increasingly feeling the financial strain that often follows the loss of a loved one. According to LIMRA's 2024 Insurance Barometer Study, 42% of U.S. adults say they need life insurance, revealing a coverage gap affecting more than 100 million Americans. While many recognize its importance, too often the decision to get coverage is postponed.

The impact of going without life insurance is most deeply felt in the moments immediately following a loss. Funeral homes often require upfront payment—costs that can range from \$7,000 to \$12,000 or more. Without life insurance, those funds come from savings, family, and, in some cases, crowdfunding efforts.

***"Most funeral homes won't take action until they have money in hand. That leaves grieving families with one more obstacle in an already impossible moment."***

***- Liby Hansen, Director of Business and Sales Strategy, AFR Life Insurance***

The challenges don't stop at burial costs. Outstanding debts such as mortgages, credit card balances and car loans do not disappear when a loved one passes. Even Social Security benefits stop immediately, and in some cases, beneficiaries may be asked to return payments issued in advance.

These financial pressures can have long-term

consequences. When families are forced to use retirement savings or emergency funds, they may lose not only financial stability, but also the opportunity to build generational wealth. A lack of resources may delay a surviving spouse's retirement or force difficult decisions about a child's education.

***"Life insurance give people space to grieve and determine what's next. Without it, every decision is made under stress."***

***- Mandy Coulter, Director, AFR Life Insurance***

While life insurance isn't always a comfortable topic, understanding its role in a broader financial plan can empower families to make informed decisions. It isn't just about replacing income or paying debts, it's about creating breathing room in one of life's most difficult moments.

Though premiums typically increase with age, coverage options exist for many life stages. Knowing your choices and planning early can make all the difference for short-term peace of mind and long-term financial health.

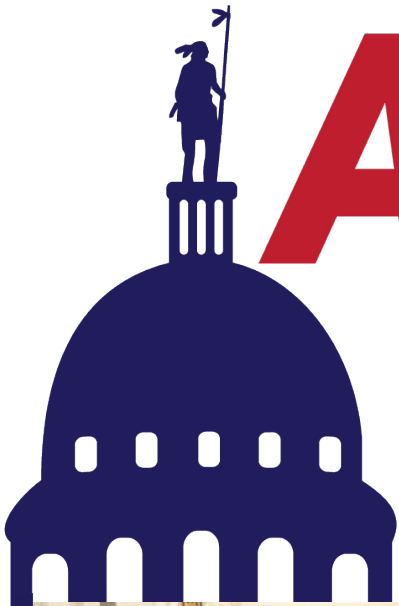
Story by:

*Liby Hansen, Director of Business and Sales Strategy*

*Mandy Coulter, Director, AFR Life Insurance*

\*LIMRA:

*Life Insurance Marketing and Research Association*



# AFR Day

at the

# Capitol



AFR brought rural issues to the Oklahoma Capitol Building April 29, when AFR members from across Oklahoma convened to discuss agriculture and issues facing their communities. They meet directly with state lawmakers and lobbied on behalf of all rural Oklahoma. Most importantly, each AFR member was encouraged to talk directly with their representatives about the issues most important to their farm, their family and their community. Thank you to all the AFR members who attended and made the day a great success. If you would like to be included in next year's event, email [laici.neumann@afrmic.com](mailto:laici.neumann@afrmic.com).



# Oklahoma

# Legislative Review

## Legislative Session Coming to Close with Plenty Undecided

By Bray Haven, AFR Cooperative Lobbyist

The closing weeks of the 60th Legislature will bring several controversial pieces of legislation and lots of negotiations around the state budget. The state board of equalization certified less revenue than the previous year and legislators have some tough decisions ahead. Gov. Stitt has increased pressure for an income tax cut and legislators continue to debate which path they'll take while also trying to pass a balanced budget.

### Wind and Renewable Energy Setbacks and Regulation

Energy policy has emerged as a central issue in this year's legislative session, with several high-profile bills advancing and generating tension between lawmakers, state agencies and industry groups. Among the most contentious are Senate Bill 998 and House Bill 2747, which would allow utilities to recover costs for new generation facilities earlier in the construction process. These bills have drawn sharp criticism from the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, which argues they would undermine OCC authority and shift financial risks to ratepayers. Despite this, utility companies and their supporters argue the reforms will ultimately lower long-term costs for consumers and support needed infrastructure growth.

Other significant legislation includes Senate Bill 480 and House Bill 1374, which formalize the legality of "behind the meter" generation for industrial users — a move widely supported by the energy sector for enabling investment in onsite power infrastructure. Meanwhile, wind farm setback proposals remain unresolved, with Senate Bill 2 advancing in the House and House Bill 2751 failing in the Senate, setting the stage for continued negotiations. Lawmakers are also weighing a \$1.6 billion bonding increase for the Grand River Dam Authority (SB 36/HB 1422), a move supported by the governor but complicated by calls for GRDA to begin contributing revenue to the state. As these energy-related issues remain unresolved, they are contributing to broader legislative gridlock.

### Cell Cultured Protein Draws Debate

Several pieces of legislation sought to ban or specifically label manufactured or cell-cultured protein during this legislative session. Two bills remain: House Bill 1126 and Senate Bill 96.

HB 1126 prohibits the misbranding of manufactured-protein food products by requiring clear labeling if meat-related terms like "burger" or "bacon" are used. The bill mandated that alternative proteins (plant-based, insect-based, or cultivated) must include a qualifying term such as "plant-based" or "lab-grown" and be stored distinctly from traditional meat. Enforcement authority is granted to the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture (ODAFF), with violations classified as misdemeanors.

SB 96 bans the manufacture, sale or distribution of cultivated meat—defined as meat produced from animal cell cultures—in Oklahoma. Violations would be treated as misdemeanors, and food seller licenses could be suspended or revoked upon conviction. The bill includes an exemption for research conducted by or in partnership with government entities or institutions of higher education.

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# 2025 AFR Convention Highlights



American Farmers & Ranchers hosted the organization's 120th annual state convention at the Embassy Suites & Conference Center – Norman Feb. 21-23. The event features educational speakers and entertainment, the annual business meeting of Oklahoma Farmers Union and American Farmers & Ranchers Mutual Insurance Company, discussion and adoption of AFR legislative policy and officer elections. This year's convention theme was "R.A.I.L.S."



"Celebrating 120 years of AFR, we proudly embrace the theme R.A.I.L.S — Responsibility, Accountability, Integrity, Loyalty, and Service — as the guiding principles that have shaped our legacy and continue to drive us forward into a future of excellence," said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh. "This year's convention theme speaks to our history as an organization, always doing what we can to help rural people during troubled times."



This year, member delegates voted on one contested seat on the AFR Board of Directors—District 3 Northeast Independent Director. Two additional seats were up for reelection, with candidates running unopposed—District 2 Southwest Agent Director and Statewide Independent Director. In addition, AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh, Tonkawa, ran unopposed and will retain his current position for a three-year term.



In the race for District 3 Northeast Independent Director, incumbent Jim Shelton, Vinita, was defeated by challenger Raymond Schiltz, Ponca City. Schiltz will begin his first three-year term.

Schiltz is a life-long farmer and rancher from Kay County, managing a diverse cow-calf operation with sheep, hay and small grains. A graduate of Ponca City High School and Oklahoma State University, he holds a degree in mechanized agriculture. Schiltz worked for Conoco Phillips in Ponca City for

30 years before retiring in 2013.

Ron Ramming, Warner, was elected AFR Statewide Independent Director and will begin his first three-year term. Ramming was raised on a diversified farm in Hinton.



He began his career at Connors State College in 1990 in the agriculture faculty and is currently serving as CSC President.

District 2 Southwest Agent Director Dustin Tackett, Fort Cobb, was reelected for a three-year term. Tackett has been an AFR Insurance agent since 2004, raises commercial Red Angus cattle and grows wheat, hay and pumpkins. Tackett holds an agricultural economics degree and an MBA from Oklahoma State University.



In addition to elections, 2025 AFR State Convention attendees learned about rural economic and environmental issues, connected with the next generation of AFR members during the youth program, learned about new opportunities available through the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association and much more. This year's three-day event features speakers like Oklahoma Rep. Frank Lucas (R-03); Rep. John Pfeiffer (R-Mulhall); Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Glen Mulready; National Farmers Union President Rob Larew; DVAuction Livestock Market Analyst Corbitt Wall; National Farmers Union Vice President Jeff Kippley; OSU Department of Agriculture Economics Professor of Agriculture Law Dr. Shannon Ferrell; Justin Boots Content Manager Taylor McAdams; and more. Convention attendees also learned about timely legislative issues, such as inflation in agriculture and industry economic trends.

During this year's convention banquet, AFR Youth Advisory Council member and National FFA Prepared Speech winner Coy Davidson addressed the crowd with his speech titled "Securing the Future of American Agriculture."



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**CELEBRATING 120 YEARS OF AFR**



Picture left to right: AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh, President and CEO Chad Yearwood, retired AFR Board Member Mason Mungle, Congressman, NFU President Rob Larew, AFR Youth Advisory Council, Jarred Campbell, AFR State Speech Winner Heath Laubach, AFR State Secretary Paul Jackson, AFR Youth Talent Kase Tippens and AFR Poticial Actions Committee member Clay Pope.

# National Farmers Union Convention Comes to Oklahoma City

National Farmers Union held the 123rd Anniversary NFU Convention in Oklahoma City March 9-11. The gathering was attended by more than 450

family farmers and ranchers. AFR was well represented with a full roster of delegates pushing for legislative priorities important to Oklahoma.

Apache Seed Farms in Apache for seed production and cleaning; Farmers Coop Mill and Elevator in Carnegie for cotton ginning; Lasley Family Farm in Eakley for value-added peanut production; and Ross Honey Company in Minco for honey production.



## **AFR Hosts Farm Tour**

NFU convention was held in OKC for the first time in 35 years, so AFR staff took full advantage of the opportunity to introduce visiting farmers to Oklahoma and showcase some of AFR's members on a farm tour. Featured member businesses included

## **Sheperd Wins Hake Award**

Oklahoma's own KC Sheperd of Radio Oklahoma Ag Network was awarded the 2025 Milt Hake Award for Excellence in Agricultural Journalism at this year's NFU convention. Sheperd is the farm director for Radio Oklahoma Ag Network, bringing agriculture updates, market updates, and farm to listeners in Oklahoma.



# FARMERS GATHER IN



Sheperd often partners with, covers, and conducts interviews at AFR events, bringing the latest and most relevant issues for AFR members and in the agriculture industry to the ears of a larger audience.

"KC has dedicated her on-air career to informing Oklahoma residents about important issues that impact their livelihoods, and it's an honor to present her with this award," said NFU President Rob Larew. "Radio networks in rural areas serve as a lifeline for our farming and ranching communities and KC brings the issues dominating

the agricultural sphere to the fields and homes of Oklahoma farmers and ranchers."

NFU presents the Milt Hakel Award for Excellence in Agricultural Journalism to reporters or news outlets that demonstrate exceptional coverage of agricultural issues. The award is named in honor of Milton D. Hakel, a highly respected Farmers Union communicator in Agricultural Journalism.

### **AFR Policy Committee Completes Term**

A new AFR Policy Committee is selected each year, with special consideration given to equal

representation across the state. Policy members serve from mid-fall through AFR state convention, where they present their changes to the AFR Policy Book on stage. Several members of this year's committee also represented AFR at the NFU convention in Oklahoma City. Members of the 2024-2025 committee were: Chairwoman Lora Unruh, Elk City; Vice Chair Lance Coffey, Hinton; Chris Ruhl, Greenfield; Nick Abernathy, Quapaw; Jason Carr, Frederick; Jason Keck, Sulphur; Rick Shelby, Webbers Falls; and David Spears, Hartshorne.

# OKC

# OKLAHOMA WILDFIRES

On March 14, 2025, in what emergency officials are calling one of the most intense fire events in Oklahoma history, wildfires ravaged communities across Oklahoma, scorching more than 170,000 acres and leaving behind a trail of destruction and heartbreak.

Fueled by dry conditions and high winds, more than 130 fires were reported across 44 counties. The devastation was widespread with at least 520 homes and businesses destroyed or damaged.

The National Weather Service, Oklahoma Forestry Services, Oklahoma Department

of Emergency Management, Department of Public Safety, and local authorities worked together to coordinate evacuations and help residents get to safety. Ultimately, four Oklahomans lost their lives and 142 people were injured.

**What is the Home Ignition Zone?** The home ignition zone (HIZ) is divided into three zones.

## ZONE 1

### 0-5 FEET AROUND YOUR HOME

- Use hardscape such as concrete or noncombustible rock mulch around your home.
- Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles.
- Store firewood and other combustible materials away from your home, garage or attached deck.
- Prune touching or over-hanging branches from roof to a distance of at least 10 feet.
- Replace or repair loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
- Rake and remove flammable vegetation, such as leaves, needles or wood mulch, from underneath your deck and away from your home.
- Use non-wood, low-growing vegetation. Succulents, or other fire-resistant plants, are recommended.

## ZONE 2

### 5-30 FEET AROUND YOUR HOME

- Create vegetation groups or islands to break up continuous fuels around your home.
- Remove ladder fuels to create a separation between low-level vegetation and tree canopies to keep fire from climbing into trees.
- Remove lead and needle debris from the yard.
- Keep lawns, native grasses and wildflowers less than four inches in height.
- Store firewood and other combustible materials away from outbuilding such as sheds or barns.
- Move trailers, recreational vehicles, storage sheds, and other combustible structures out of this zone and into Zone 3. If unable to move, create defensible space around them as if they were a part of your home.

## ZONE 3

### 30-200 FEET AROUND YOUR HOME

- Create and maintain a minimum of 10 feet between the tops of trees.
- Safely remove ladder fuels up to a height of 10 feet, while retaining at least 75% of the foliage to create separation between ground and tree branches. This keeps fire from climbing into tree canopies.
- Store firewood in this zone, keeping it a safe distance from your structure.
- Create space between shrubs and trees to eliminate a continuous fuel bed at ground level.
- Remove dead trees, shrubs and all other dead or dry vegetation.
- Create separation between your property and neighboring properties. Consider that your trees may pose a greater risk to your neighbor's home than your own.

## REMEMBER THE EMBER ZONE

Embers are burning pieces of airborne material that can be carried more than a mile by the wind. Research points to embers and small flames as the main ways homes ignite in wildland fires.

*\*Materials provided by the International Fire Chiefs Association (IFCA)*



## Ready, Set, Go!

Do you see clouds of smoke, flying embers and billowing flames on the horizon? You're in an active fire situation. Be on high alert and ready to evacuate.

The sights, sounds and smells of an oncoming wildfire can be intense. Remain calm and make sure everyone in your household is aware of the situation. Keep your pets close by.

If you feel there is a possible threat to your home or evacuation route, leave early. If you're advised by local authorities to leave, do so immediately. Do not hesitate.

### Get Set!

- Maintain situational awareness through weather reports and local news.
- Refer to your Wildfire Action Plan (see below).
- Have a go-bag ready at the door for each person in your household. Include necessary items for your pets, too.
- If you have a smartphone, sign up for emergency alerts in your area. Your local fire department can help you sign up.

- Make sure cell phones are charged, always turned on and within hearing distance.
- Close exterior doors and windows. Leave doors unlocked. Leave lights on inside and outside of your house.
- Help firefighters access your roof by leaving a ladder outside next to the house.
- Prevent the penetration of embers by closing and protecting any openings to your home. Don't forget the attic and basement doors and vents, windows, garage doors and pet doors.
- Make sure your cars have plenty of gas and are parked outside. Ensure your garage door is capable of manual operation.
- If appropriate, shut off the gas supply line at the meter.
- Time permitting, consider taking valuables, family photos, irreplaceable items, personal computer information on hard drives and electronic chargers.

### Be Ready!

- Know your evacuation zone.

- Leave as soon as evacuation is recommended by fire officials to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. Do not hesitate.
- Law enforcement agencies are typically responsible for implementing or carrying out an evacuation order. Follow their directions promptly.
- Protect yourself against heat and embers by covering your nose and mouth. Protect your pets as best you can.
- If you have trailer on your vehicle, make sure the chains don't drag on the ground while driving. They could spark a fire.
- Go to a predetermined location. This should be a low-risk area like a relative's house, Red Cross shelter, evacuation center or motel.

### Go!

If you feel it is unsafe to stay at any time, go ahead and evacuate immediately. DO NOT WAIT to receive an emergency notification.

## WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

Having a detailed wildfire action plan is essential for ensuring your safety and the safety of loved ones during an emergency. Important phone numbers, such as emergency services and local authorities, provide immediate access to help and critical updates. An out-of-area contact is vital because local phone lines may be down or overloaded, and having someone outside the affected area ensures communication can still occur. Knowing your own phone number, as well as work, school and other important contact numbers, allows emergency responders or family members to reach you and coordinate reunification. Pre-planned evacuation routes—ideally at least three—offer alternative options if roads are closed or traffic is heavy, increasing your chances of a safe escape. Identifying where to go, such as shelters or out-of-town family homes, helps prevent confusion and saves time when every second counts. Keeping your go-bags in a known, accessible location ensures you have essential supplies like medications, food, water and documents ready to take with you. Lastly, notes such as reminders to maintain a full gas tank or update the plan regularly ensure that you stay prepared and can act quickly and effectively in a fast-changing wildfire situation. For more information about preparing a Wildfire Action Plan, visit [www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org).



# FARM TO SOUL

## The Stories Behind Farm Stays

Open landscapes, starry nights, a rooster's crow, moving cattle, hauling hay—the everyday life of farmers and ranchers is appealing, and often unavailable, to city folk. That's why farm stays—overnight lodging on a working farm—are growing in popularity. The arrangement offers guests a chance to experience rural life, connect with nature, and maybe learn something about agriculture in the process.

The country's \$4.5 billion agritourism industry is thriving. Farm stays specifically have grown in popularity as urban dwellers seek to reconnect with nature and find experiences, rather than just hotel stays.

Farm stays have grown to more than 13,000 listings nationwide, and some of Oklahoma's own are offering accommodations on their farms or ranches. Three AFR member families have taken the leap and are already hosting guests from far and wide.

### **Cedar & Stone Bed and Breakfast: Vicki & Luther Harbert**

Luther and Vicki Harbert own Cedar & Stone Bed and Breakfast, located near Blue River Public Fishing & Hunting Area in Tishomingo. Geared toward couples, the cabin is an intimate place for rest and relaxation.

The rustic-chic cabin sits on a corner of Luther's family land, Harbert Ranch, which has been in the family since the 1950s. Luther moved to the ranch when he was three; he and Vicki still live there today.

The Harberts built the cabin in 2015 and hosted their first guests in early 2016. The timing of the cabin was no accident. Luther needed to slow down, so they reduced the

size of their cow herd.

"The Lord took care of us," said Luther. "The market was the highest it had ever been, so we had some capital. I told Vic, 'We can build this and, if it works, good. If it doesn't work, we'll have a nice place for relatives to stay. Either way, it works out.'"

With the decision made, Luther sketched out the cabin plans on paper.

"We didn't want the cabin too big, but we did want big windows," said Vicki. "I wanted to lean up against the headboard, drink coffee, and look out at the pond."

The cabin boasts a beautiful view of the Harberts' bull pasture and pond. "We decided to put the cabin in the corner of the place out of the way," said Luther. "It's just a real quiet area down here by the pond. It's quite serene."

Much of the cabin was built with salvaged materials from the area, including Johnston County cedars and native granite harvested from the property. The bedroom ceiling tin was saved from an old Tishomingo boot shop. The kitchen wall paneling is salvaged wood from the old barn where Luther's older sister taught him how to smoke.

Cedar & Stone is the only true bed and breakfast in Johnston County. Vicki cooks her guests a complete country-style breakfast that often includes Harbert beef, Blue & Gold sausage and bacon, homemade



*Cedar & Stone Bed and Breakfast*



buttermilk biscuits, country gravy, scrambled eggs from the Harberts' chickens, and homemade cinnamon rolls.

"They don't go away hungry," said Luther.

Guests don't go thirsty either. Luther's signature drink is a strong ranch beverage called "Let Her Buck."

Occasionally, the Harberts will rent the cabin out when they're not available to cook for the guests. When that happens, they just send them down the road a mile to Scotty's Blue River One Stop.

"Somebody will call or text and want to rent it," said Vicki. "I tell them it's ready. Leave the money in the guest book and have breakfast at Scotty's."

The Harberts' typical guest is from the Dallas Metroplex. "They just want to get away from all that," said Luther.

Some guests don't even know about the Blue River running near the cabin, or about nearby attractions like Old Red in Tishomingo.

"They're just coming here to be under the stars, to not hear the traffic," said Vicki.

The Blue River can be heard from the property and guests often mistake the sound for freeway traffic. "That's the river running over the rocks," said Luther. "They've probably never heard it, not in any real sense."

The Harberts try to accommodate their guests as best they can, but they do have four cabin rules: No smoke, no pets, no kids, no stress.

Some cabin guests get more than they bargained for. Vicki invited two female guests to attend a ranch rodeo and fish fry that just happened to be the same day as their stay.

"They thought we did it just for them," said Vicki. "They were really impressed."

There is plenty to be impressed by at the Harbert Ranch. The Harberts offer UTV tours for guests interested in seeing the most picturesque areas of the ranch. The tour is an absolute showstopper—stocked ponds, grassy meadows, wooded trails and impressive granite outcroppings.

"Guests are amazed at the terrain," said Luther. They can't believe the rocks, especially if they're from another state. They think Oklahoma's just flat."

On the tour, guests also get to see some of the Harberts'



*Luther and Vicki Harbert*

100 or so cows, which are a mixture of purebred Angus and Longhorn cross.

"A few guests really haven't seen a live cow," said Vicki. "They think the bulls have this bad connotation like rodeo bulls, that they'll chase you and try to get you down. They're surprised that they aren't just wanting to charge all the time."

Guests sometimes want to participate in farm activities. Luther and Vicki have had numerous guests help move cows and gather eggs. They've even had someone want to watch Luther artificially inseminate cows.

"For some, it's just like reconnecting with their roots," said Vicki. "They did it growing up, but then left. They enjoy reconnecting with their raising. When they come down to our house for breakfast, if I'm still finishing it up, they say it's like being at their grandmas."

*Find and follow Luther and Vicki at [www.facebook.com/cedarandstonebb](http://www.facebook.com/cedarandstonebb).*



## *Wild Blackberry Blossom Country Stay: Rhyner & Jerri Arthur*

Rhyner and Jerri Arthur live on a 160-acre farm that has been in Jerri's family since the 1940s. Conveniently located just a few miles from both Perkins and Stillwater, Wild Blackberry Blossom Country Farm Stay opened in April 2019.

The guest house, which is adjacent to the Arthurs' own home, got its name from the several acres of wild blackberries Jerri picks every year for jam and cobblers.

The Arthurs run a mixed commercial cow herd and have additional acreage just a few miles away, but the guest house overlooks a picturesque cow pasture of about 40 acres.

"A lot of our guests just want a clean, comfortable place to rest before moving onto other plans," said Jerri. "A view of the meadow may be the only part of the farm they engage with."

Visitors come to Wild Blackberry Blossom for many reasons—Oklahoma State University events, weddings, visiting family, or just stopping for a rest on their way across the country.

The farm hosts a lot of guests for just one night, but allowing for single night stays is a rarity in the vacation rental world.

"I want to get people here," said Jerri. "I want them to see what it's like out in the country."

All Wild Blackberry Blossom guests receive a sample jar of Jerri's wild blackberry jam. Guests on the farm during



season are also welcome to pick blackberries.

"I always tell them these aren't the kind of berries you can just pick," said Jerri. "They've got stickers. It's a full-on experience."

Jerri's blackberry patches keep her busy for several months out of the year.

"I tell everybody this is my therapy.

I go out at six a.m. and pick until I can't pick anymore. The berries come on best when it's 110 degrees outside. It's insufferable; by 10 o'clock, you can't do anything. But, there's beautiful sunrises, and you hear the birds, and there's plump berries. There's nothing like it."

The Arthurs didn't plant the blackberries; they're truly wild. There were some planted as an FFA project in the 1950s; the blackberries on the farm now could be descended from that original crop.

"We'll never know," said Jerri.

"They are all over the place," said Rhyner. "They're really a weed."

The Arthurs offer their guests a UTV tour of their cow/calf operation. The farm also features a timber trail, stocked ponds, and cattle broke to hand feeding.

Guests often participate in or observe daily activities on the farm, including working and sorting cattle, pulling and weaning calves, and more.

"We had a young vet student who wanted to be hands on. We had a cow in the shoot that needed to be milked with milking needles, and she wanted to do it. She'd never worked on a farm, but we talked her through it. She was just beside herself; she had that experience she could take into her classroom."

Another special moment happened when Rhyner and Jerri were pulling a calf. Two older couples staying in the guest house had been raised on farms, but had been living in town for decades.

"It was like taking them back. They hadn't done that in 30 years or so. They said 'Thank you, thank you, thank you for the opportunity to go back.'"

All in, the Arthurs' herd is about 80 head. "We're just a hobby farm," said Rhyner. "That's what I tell guests."



*Rhyner and Jerri Arthur*





**Wild Blackberry Blossom Country Farm Stay**

"People are so excited to see the animals," said Jerri. "They aren't expecting to see the cattle when they come here. And, our cattle know when there are guests. The treat bucket is right there at the front door."

The Arthurs' cattle are relatively tame, so guests can hand feed them. "Our daughter-in-law likes to make pets of everything, so just about everything here is handleable," said Jerri.

A favorite on the farm is a steer named LD. "When he was born, he couldn't stay upright; it was about three days before he could stand," said Rhyner.

"He's a little different, but he's got a loving home here; he'll never go anywhere else," said Jerri. "It'll be hard for some of the guests when he's not here anymore."

Rhyner and Jerri try not to wean calves when guests are booked. "It usually takes about four days before they quit bawling."

Jerri tries to warn guests about the noise and includes a reminder on the booking site that it's a working farm.

"We try to share what we know about how we raise cattle, while also making sure they understand there are many ways other farmers and larger operators do things," said Jerri. "It's a chance to educate, connect and invite people into something they may not see every day."

The Arthurs don't plan activities for their guests, but sometimes they happen organically.

One of their favorite examples happened last Fourth of July. Rhyner and Jerri had their grandchildren over and were also hosting a guest couple with two young sons.

"We had the yard full of firecrackers and we were having water gun fights," said

Jerri. "I told the little boys they were welcome to join us; they had the biggest time. Even the mom and dad got in on the water fights. I think they lived in Dallas, someplace they could never light their own firecrackers. It was all spur of the moment. We didn't plan any of it."

The guests told Jerri they wanted to book again to be here for this year's July 4th celebration. "That's really special to hear," said Jerri. "When I can tell someone is leaving with a set of memories they didn't have before, it means a lot."

"I remember a single father who brought his four kids. They were full of energy, just all over the place. They were climbing hay bales, running wild, no fear at all. When they left, the youngest one hugged my legs and said, 'Bye, we'll miss you.' Moments like that leave an impression—especially when the kids are the right age. They'll carry that memory with them."

"It can be a bit of a shock for parents, realizing how much freedom—and risk—there is out here. But, the kids love it. That sense of freedom, a little danger, being able to explore and use their imaginations—that's part of what makes it magical. They dig in the dirt, find sticks and rocks to play with, make up their own games—it's not screen time, it's real life."

*Find and follow Rhyner and Jerri at [www.facebook.com/WildBlackberryBlossomCountryFarmStay](http://www.facebook.com/WildBlackberryBlossomCountryFarmStay).*

*(Jerri's family has a long history with AFR. Her grandfather Herbert Milton Shoup, Sr., was head of the Oklahoma Farmers Union automobile division in the 1960s and was an OFU agent in the 1960s and 1970s. Both of her parents—Herbert Milton and Viola Shoup—were Payne County agents for many years.*



### 3J Farms OK: Luis and Jennifer Hernandez

Whether guests are seeking a peaceful retreat or a bit of adventure, Luis and Jennifer Hernandez have created the perfect getaway at 3J Farms OK near Blanchard. Their unique grain bin rentals bring guests directly into their farm experience, which includes regenerative agriculture, direct-to-consumer beef, and a thriving greenhouse business.

The grain bins were left over from the farm's dairy days. The farm was purchased by Jennifer's parents in 1977 and functioned as a dairy for more than a decade. Jennifer grew up milking cows.

"At our height, we milked around 200 cows a day," said Jennifer. "It was a lot, especially for one family to try to manage."

The farm milked its last cows in early 1993 and, after a stint in west Texas, Luis and Jennifer moved back to the farm in the early 2000s to raise their children. Today, they have two grown children—a son serving his country in the Army and a daughter and son-in-law who gave them the best gift of all, their granddaughter. Jada is the boss in training and spends all of her days on the farm learning about agriculture.

The idea to convert the farm's grain bins into vacation rentals came gradually. It started with a banner year.

"2020 was a rough year for a lot of folks, but it was a really great one for our farm," said Jennifer. "Pretty much everything we tried was a winner. We took all that we earned and put it back into our infrastructure. We thought we needed a farm store. We already had all these facilities, so we just renovated."

It turned out a farm store wasn't a long-term solution for the needs of the farm, so Luis and Jennifer put the newly-renovated grain bins to good use as vacation rentals.

They started first with the Peacock Room, now going on its fifth year in operation. The room—with its king-size bed and romantic plumage—is preferred by couples and rents often. The décor was inspired by the farm's resident peacock, Dwayne.

The newer rental space, The Chicken Coop, has been operating for a little more than three years. The Coop is geared more toward singles or friends traveling together. Its décor was inspired by the farm's elusive rooster, Foghorn Leghorn.

When asked if the grain bins have air conditioning,

Jennifer says "yes" and adds, "I don't know anyone that would want to stay here if they weren't."

In addition to the two original grain bins, Luis and Jennifer converted a smaller overhead bin into a covered sitting area. The rental space also features a shared open-air, yet modern, bathroom, which is perfect for the summer season. For cooler temperatures, guests use the indoor bathroom in the milk barn.

The renovations took a lot of time and happened over several years. Luis and Jennifer did much of the work themselves, hiring out only for the "big stuff" like HVAC, electrical and spray foam.

Most guests are weekend renters, especially during wedding season. There are a lot of wedding venues in the area, but not a lot of lodging available.

Often the bins are rented by separate parties. When the groups don't know each other, they may end up spending time together or may not talk at all.

"Sometimes, they pal up and play games and just have a little party," said Jennifer. "Then we've had guests that probably didn't even see each other. It just depends on the person and what they're after."

3J Farms' grain bins were at one time used as actual grain storage. The structures are in excellent condition, but they're not perfect.

"I try to just set the expectations," said Jennifer. "They really are grain bins."

Jennifer's sister, Jillian, manages the marketing for the farm. She's tailored descriptions of the grain bin rentals to help guests understand what they're signing up for, including the potential for sharing the farm's common spaces with other guests.



Luis and Jennifer Hernandez



So far, they've experienced very few problems, with one notable exception involving weaning calves. If guests book during a potential weaning time, Jennifer warns them that a fresh crop of bawling calves can get noisy. A guest couple was excited about the experience, until about 1:30 in the morning.

"They didn't think weaning calves was nearly as cool after that," said Jennifer, laughing. "We've made sure to start weaning in the middle of the week since then. You don't want people to be annoyed by what you're doing, but at the same time, you do also set the expectation that it's a working farm, and we do work all the time."

Sometimes, guests want to participate in farm work. Both Luis and Jennifer remember a group of kids from Kansas who were begging to work. Some friends of the farm just happened to need help loading alfalfa hay out of the field.

"They came with us and hauled hay," said Jennifer. "They loved it. You just never know what people are wanting to do and what they'll get out of it."

The farm offers diverse outdoor experiences, including private fishing on an eight-acre lake stocked with bass, crappie, perch and catfish. They also offer self-guided seasonal duck and deer hunting, birdwatching, and wildlife viewing.

"The space is overwhelming; people aren't used to it," said Jennifer. "There's so much space, it kind of freaks people out."

For guests interested in sustainable agriculture, Luis and Jennifer offer a personalized farm tour to learn about the farm's regenerative farming practices.

The farm has come a long way from serving as dairy dry lots in the 1990s. "This was all dry cow lots," said Jennifer. "When we first started, it was like concrete."

All of 3J Farms, including the 300 acres where the grain bins are located, is managed through regenerative practices. The Hernandez cattle are 100% grassfed through an intense rotational grazing system. Luis and Jennifer move the cattle nearly daily by creating small paddocks with single-strand hotwire.

The Hernandezes market direct-to-consumer beef through farmers markets year-round. Their cow herd is primarily South Poll, a breed they chose for its high fertility, heat tolerance, and tender carcass qualities.

Farmers markets aren't the only thing that keeps Luis and Jennifer busy. The 3J Farms greenhouse business is thriving. On a typical weekend during season, the greenhouse staff expect to sell flowers and vegetable plant starts to about 100 customers. During their annual 99-cent sale, 3J Farms processes about 1500 transactions in four days.

Through all their endeavors, Luis's and Jennifer's goal remains the same. "Our goal, at this point, is to keep the family farm in the family," said Jennifer. "Hopefully, we can keep it together."

Jennifer also has a goal for the people who visit them at 3J Farms. "My hope, and my expectation, is that I grow you in some way, whether that be possibilities of things you could do on your own property, or seeing a baby calf feed for the first time on a bottle," said Jennifer.

"I'm in the business of growing people. I like growing food, but I love growing people. And I think when you can get people out on the farm, they can grow in all kinds of ways, whether that's growing plants or just possibilities. So that's our ultimate goal, beyond keeping the farm in the family, it's growing people."

Find and follow Luis and Jennifer at [www.facebook.com/3JFarmsOK](https://www.facebook.com/3JFarmsOK).

All information provided by: [reuters.com](https://reuters.com), [airdna.co](https://airdna.co).



# AMERICAN FARMERS & RANCHERS... IN THE FIELD



AFR Cooperative staff have been engaging with communities across the state in recent weeks, participating in a series of farm shows and agricultural events.

Among the highlights were the Oklahoma City Farm Show, held April 3-5, and the Southwest Farm & Expo in Elk City April 12-13. At both events, the AFR booth was staffed by a team of dedicated AFR Insurance agents and staff members, connecting with attendees and showcasing AFR's ongoing support for Oklahoma agriculture.

Additionally, AFR Cooperative Field Representatives Jim Pilkington and Katie Whitfield represented the organization at the Oklahoma Beef Cattle Summit (above).



AFR Cooperative joined other agriculture organizations from across the state at the 2025 Ag Day at the Capitol. The theme of this year's event was "Year of Youth in Agriculture." The event, held in the rotunda of the Oklahoma Capitol Building, hosted more than 200 producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities and government agencies. People from across Oklahoma gathered to acknowledge agriculture's significant contributions to the economy. Pictured above are AFR Youth Council members Coy Davidson, Addyson Schneberger and Taryn McCaa, with AFR staff members Katie Whitfield and Jim Pilkington.

## AFR AG & HISTORIC CONFERENCE

### *Scenic Minnesota & Wisconsin*

## INCLUDING THE GREAT RIVER ROAD

## October 4-9, 2025

*Discover Midwest hospitality in southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin! Begin in the Twin Cities, where General Mills started on the Mighty Mississippi and where the Honeycrisp Apple was born. Experience the Mississippi River on the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, one of America's most beautiful routes. Stop in Red Wing, Minn., home of Red Wing shoes. Visit the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, Minn., to learn about the majestic bird that symbolizes the strength and freedom of America. Continue to Warrens, Wisc., to learn about cranberry harvest. Visit the world's largest grower and producer of horseradish in Eau Claire, Wisc., and sample cheese curds in the heart of Wisconsin's Dairyland. All this and more awaits you on this fall's AFR Ag & Historic Conference!*

**Contact Jamie Goodson for more information at (405) 218-5665.  
Must be an AFR member to attend.**

# Behind THE Banner



## AFR GROWS AG ACHIEVEMENT CONTEST TO TWENTY SCHOLARSHIPS

As part of its commitment to the youth of Oklahoma, AFR Cooperative expanded its 2025 Ag Achievement Contest to award an additional 10 students.

Twenty agricultural youth from across Oklahoma earned top placings in the 2025 AFR Agricultural Achievement Contest. The contest was conducted in conjunction with the Oklahoma Youth Expo (OYE) March 11-21. This year, AFR presented \$15,000 in prizes to contestants.

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

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

us to support the future of Oklahoma agriculture."

Participation in the AFR Agricultural Achievement Contest is limited to Oklahoma junior and senior high school students who exhibit an animal at OYE. Contestants show their OYE animal and take a written test about the livestock industry. The top 20 finalists were individually assessed on their showmanship skills. The combined scores from the test and showmanship determined the Top Ten contestants, who then advanced to a panel interview about their livestock project and overall knowledge of the livestock industry. Contestants ranked 11th through 20th were determined based solely on their test and showmanship scores.

The 2025 AFR Ag Achievement Top Twenty are:

- 1st: Taryn McCaa, Elmore City-Pernell
- 2nd: Claire Janssen, Amber-Pocasset
- 3rd: Addyson Schneberger, Hydro-Eakly
- 4th: Poplyn Robinson, Dale

- 5th: Paisley Beshear, Wister
- 6th: Charli Paneque, Norman
- 7th: Kyriana Beard, Stillwater
- 8th: Lauren Crosthwait, Stillwater
- 9th: Kylee Bell, Dover
- 10th: Allison Criner, Porter
- 11th: Ella Allen, Konawa
- 12th: Taylor Marrs, Tecumseh
- 13th: Heath Laubach, Mooreland
- 14th: Brea Sargent, Norman
- 15th: Dade DeLozier, Adair
- 16th: Darla Fesmire, Okla. Union
- 17th: Abbiegail Shobe, Grove
- 18th: Kynseth Zubrod, Guthrie
- 19th: Katlin Adams, Amber-Pocasset
- 20th: Hailey Helmke, Fox

*American Farmers & Ranchers is a proud platinum sponsor of the Oklahoma Youth Expo, awarding \$30,000 to AFR members who made the OYE Sale of Champions. AFR also sponsors the reserve grand champion trophies for each species and ag mechanic projects.*

# YOUTH CHAMPION

## LOYD STEWARD



AFR Cooperative is honored to present Loyd Steward with the fourth annual AFR Youth Champion Award.

For the past four years, AFR Cooperative has honored individuals who have donated their time and energy to the AFR Youth Program with the AFR Youth Champion Award.

This year, at the 120th AFR State Convention, Loyd Steward was honored for his years of service and dedication to the youth of our organization. Loyd has generously cooked and donated meat for the AFR Leadership Summit for several years and has consistently gone above and beyond to support the AFR Youth Program.

“As we move through our life’s journey, we should set out to be more like Loyd,” said AFR Cooperative President Scott Blubaugh during the award presentation. “We should seek out individuals who are more like him. Those who set good examples, who invest in people, who give. That is what the AFR Youth Champion Award is all about—honoring those who give selflessly to our young people and who set an example for all those who come after them.”

A longtime member of AFR, Loyd has served as Pottawatomie County AFR President for more than 20 years and currently serving on the AFR Board of Directos.

# AFR Speech CONTESTS

- Central District Speech Contest - Monday, November 10, 2025
- NE District Speech Contest - Tuesday, November 11, 2025
- SE District Speech Contest - Thursday, November 13, 2025
- SW District Speech Contest - Monday, November 17, 2025
- NW District Speech Contest - Thursday, November 20, 2025
- State Speech Contest - Saturday, December 6, 2025



# AFR YOUTH Leadership Summit

JULY 26- AUG 2

Register now  
for the 2025  
Leadership Summit!

Teen Session:  
July 26-29  
Grades 7-9

Senior Session:  
July 30- August 2  
Grades 10 - 12

Cedar Hills Baptist Youth Camp  
Binger, OK

**FIND YOUR REGISTRATION FORMS AT [AFRCOOP.ORG](https://afrcoop.org).**

## Are you interested in running for the Youth Advisory Council?

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

### **Election Process:**

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

### **Requirements:**

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



# Incoming Freshman *Scholarship Recipients*



**Abbigail Shobe**  
Northern Oklahoma College



**Abby Pettijohn**  
Oklahoma State University



**Addyson Schneberger**  
Redlands Community College



**Callen Veit**  
Oklahoma State University



**Coy Davidson**  
Oklahoma State University



**Dade Delozier**  
Blinn College



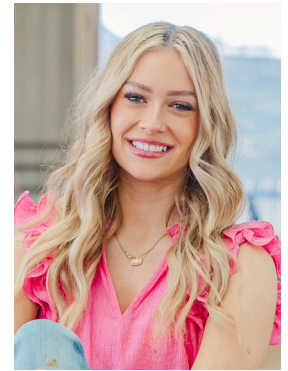
**Darla Fesmire**  
Oklahoma State University



**Emma Lynn**  
Oklahoma State University



**LeAundre Delonia**  
Oklahoma State University



**Morgan Matheson**  
Oklahoma State University

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



**Neely Norman**  
Oklahoma State University

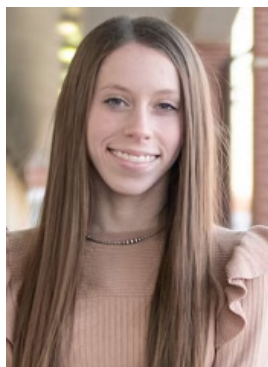


**Raegan Wilbourn**  
Redlands Community College



**Taryn McCaa**  
Oklahoma State University

# Continuing Education *Scholarship Recipients*



**Baylee Wilbourn**  
Oklahoma State University



**Cooper Kline**  
Oklahoma State University



**Halle Pullen**  
Oklahoma State University



**Jordan Jones**  
Texas Tech University



**Kaden Brunker**  
Oklahoma State University



**Kadence Gatz**  
Redlands Community College



**Kelby Ott**  
Oklahoma State University



**Kennedy Clark**  
Redlands Community College



**Kinley Bratcher**  
Oklahoma State University



**Konnor Shebester**  
Oklahoma State University



**Lexi Lane**  
Redlands Community College



**Morley Griffith**  
Oklahoma State University



**Mylee Sims**  
Northwestern Okla. State Unvi.



**Titus Montgomery**  
Oklahoma State University

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## OCBA RANCH MEMBERS: BOEDEKER FARMS



*Jeff Boedeker and his son, Jack, spray fungicide on their wheat crop to boost yields and protect against disease.*

### *Story by Katie Whitfield, OCBA Coordinator*

The Boedeker Farm is truly a family operation. After graduating from Northwestern Oklahoma State University and gaining experience as a sales manager with a newly launched business, Nutrition Plus, Jeff Boedeker felt it was time to return to his roots. He and his wife, Dede, moved back to Waukomis with their three small children in 2000 to begin farming on legacy family land. That leap of faith laid the foundation for what has become a thriving, multi-generational farming operation.

Nearly 25 years later, the Boedekers have grown their operation to include 4,000 acres of wheat, soybeans and milo and a growing cow-calf and stocker operation.

Today, Jeff and Dede work side-by-side with their children, Jalyn, Caisha and Jack. Jeff continues to pursue new business opportunities. In addition to maintaining ownership of Nutrition Plus, he is also a dealer for Swanson

Ag Wraps and- is working toward selling certified seed wheat, and markets their home-raised beef.

Their oldest daughter, Jalyn Schapansky, has taken a leading role in elevating the family's direct-to-consumer beef business. As Oklahoma Certified Beef Association members, they have hit the ground running. Jalyn has expanded their retail footprint by successfully tapping into new markets, including participation in the Oklahoma Local Food for Schools Program. They also continue to serve their local community through bulk beef sales, offering halves and wholes.

The Boedekers will stack their beef up against any competition. Jalyn says their commitment to animal health and a high-quality nutrition is what sets them apart. "We pride ourselves in our strong mineral program. Our priority is keeping our cattle healthy, maintaining optimal weight, and producing flavorful, well marbled carcasses."



*Jalyn Schapansky pictured with the family's home-raised heifers.*

## OCBA Members Tour FAPC

In March, members of the Oklahoma Certified Beef Association participated in a behind-the-scenes tour of the Robert M. Kerr Food and Agricultural Products Center (FAPC) on the campus of Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. The tour was led by Joel Jackson, FAPC Meat Pilot Plant Manager, who offered an in-depth look at the facility's state-of-the-art meat processing operations and its role in supporting Oklahoma's agricultural community.

Jackson guided the group through the stages of the processing plant, showcasing how FAPC works closely with producers to bring innovation, quality and added value to their products. He also highlighted the technological upgrades that are occurring in the plant and discussed how FAPC assists with product development, food safety, research and business planning.



*Meat Pilot Plant Manager, Joel Jackson, explains the butchering process at FAPC.*

# In Memoriam



## Robert Swanda

Robert Lewis Swanda, 69, passed away Feb. 3, 2025, at his home in Apache, surrounded by his wife and children.

Rob was born Aug. 4, 1955, in Anadarko to Danny and Mary Joyce (Claborn) Swanda. He graduated from Apache High

School in 1973 and earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from Cameron University in 1977.

Rob was an avid hunter, collector of history and musician. He hunted many things from deer, elk and caribou to pheasant and quail with his Llewellyn Setter Hattie. Rain or shine, sleet or snow, those two traveled far and wide for birds to hunt. Rob instilled the same passion for the great outdoors in his children.

Rob loved history and had a passion for preservation that he inherited from his mother and father. He was a member and later the president of the Apache Historical Society. He helped raise money for the museum's restoration, which is still under renovation.

Rob was a member of the bands Pegasus, The Actors, and finally The Grissleheads. He received his first guitar at 17 and taught himself to play by listening to his records over and over until it sounded right. He and his bandmates played all over the United States. He passed his love of music to the many students he taught over the years.

Rob was a member of the First Christian Church of Apache for 61

years and served as a deacon for some of that time.

Rob bought his father's insurance business in 1994, where he continued the family business for the next 28 years. He retired in 2024.

Rob married his longtime girlfriend Lea Ann Washburn on Sept. 7, 2024. Lea Ann lovingly and diligently cared for Rob, not only in his last months, but for the 11.5 years they were together.

Rob is survived by his wife, of the home; father, Danny Swanda of Apache; son, Dylan Swanda and wife, Carly, of Oklahoma City; daughter, Sierra Williams and husband, Kolby, of Anadarko; daughter, Emma Swanda and fiancé, Ethan Ellis, of Snyder; stepdaughter, Shelby Washburn of Apache; stepdaughter, Bethany Washburn of Tulsa; and grandchildren, Wrenlee Williams and "Baby" Swanda, who will be born in April; brother Kent Swanda and wife, Tamey, of Apache; brother, Dayne Swanda and wife, Nina, of Apache; nephew, Bryan Swanda and wife, Deanna, of Apache; niece, Samantha Noethlich and husband, Bill, of Raymond, S.D.; niece, Kassie Pettit of Apache; and great nieces and nephews, Owen Noethlich, Danny Swanda, Claire Noethlich, Elsie Noethlich, Parker Pettit, and Maeve Noethlich; and a whole host of family and friends whom he loved dearly.

Rob was preceded in death by his nephew, Chandler Pettit; mother, Mary Joyce Swanda; niece, Summer Swanda; maternal grandparents, Robert and Roberta Claborn, and paternal grandparents, Louis and Dollie Swanda; and many other beloved family members.

Interment was in the Fairview Cemetery in Apache.



## Barbara Shorman

Barbara Ann Shorman, 82, passed away Nov. 26, 2024, in Ada.

Barbara was born Aug. 31, 1942, in Waukegan, Ill., to James and Ann Robertson Jones. She married Al Shorman Sept. 19, 1962.

She worked as an AFR/OFU

insurance agent and retired with the Harry Jordan Insurance in Ada.

Survivors include her son, Ray Shorman, and wife, Alenna; sister, Diane Rudd; two grandchildren, Amanda Brechtel, and husband, Andrew, and Courtney Shorman; and one great-grandchild, Raelin Brechtel.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Al Shorman; father, James Jones; mother, Ann Jones; daughter, Jeanette Shorman; father-in-law, Albert Shorman; and mother-in-law, Pearl Shorman.

Interment was at Memorial Park Cemetery.



## Patsy Lane

Patsy Lane, passed away on April 19, 2025, in Konawa. She was born on Dec. 1, 1938, in Konawa, in what was known as the River Bend.

Patsy (Finch) married Ervin "Leo" Lane Dec. 23, 1956, at the First Baptist Church in Konawa. Following Patsy's graduation from high school, they moved to Vernal, Utah, where Leo worked in construction. In 1966, they moved back to Konawa with their young family. They had two sons and were married 65 years until Leo's death in 2022.

Patsy worked as an AFR/OFU Insurance Agent for 47 years, including owning and operating Lane Insurance Agency in

Konawa for nearly 35 years. She also served as the secretary of AFR Local #209 Chapter in Seminole County.

Patsy was a talented artist, excelling at both painting and sculpting. She was featured on the OETA (PBS) show Gallery in 2004 and participated in shows both locally and nationally. She was a member of the Oklahoma Sculpture Society, Holdenville Society of Painters and Sculptors, and Oklahoma Lady Artist.

Patsy made many contributions to her community and surrounding areas, as well as contributing several sculptures and paintings for AFRPAC auctions. She played an integral role in the 2023 AFR event honoring farming mental health champion Mona Lee Brock by sculpting a likeness of Brock that is currently displayed in the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture.

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A close-up photograph of a raspberry and blackberry branch. The branch is covered in green leaves and clusters of berries. Some berries are bright red, some are dark purple/black, and some are a mix of red and orange. The background is a soft-focus green field.

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