

# OFA Spirit

The Newsletter  
of the Outstanding Farmers of America

[www.outstandingfarmers.com](http://www.outstandingfarmers.com)

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The winners named at the 2016 National Outstanding Young Farmers Awards Congress are (from left) Joe and Ida DeFrancesco, CT; Nate Youngquist and Brooke Loisel, WA; Jess Niederer and Kevin Riley, NJ; and Jennifer and Kevin Wolsky, ND.

*Photo by Debbie Norz*

## OFA Ag Outreach

By Julie Stapleton

Vice Presidents Dana and Julie Stapleton (SD 2002) and Treasurers Greg and Carmen Bendixson (ND 2002) promoted agriculture by presenting an OFA Ag Outreach Program. While in Cincinnati, they went to the Great Oaks Career Campus and promoted a positive voice in agriculture. Dana and Greg each brought crop samples from their farms to show the students. They spoke a bit about the diversity on their farms.



Dana showed a video of some of his farming operations and then they showed a YouTube video "Farming on the Edge" by Riley Slivka of Montana. The students were juniors in high school, and they were in the equine program. After the officers' presentation, the students shared their knowledge of equine with the OFA members. It is always great for everyone to learn a bit about each other and great to be a positive voice in agriculture. There are plans for the officers to continue this program in South Carolina. The hopes are to grow the program every year and get more OFA members involved.





The 2016 National Outstanding Young Farmer finalists were (from left), David & Greta Liskey, VA; James & Brooke Hitchcock, GA; Nate Youngquist & Brooke Loisel, WA; Caleb & Leanne Ragland, KY; Kevin & Jennifer Wolsky, ND; Nathan & Erica Mowrer, PA; Aaron & Tara Helmick, WV; Joe & Ida DeFrancesco, CT; Aaron Ceroll & Jenna Bucklin, SD; Jess Niederer & Kevin Riley, NJ.

*Photo by Debbie Norz*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Jeff and Elaine Thomson (CA 1981)  
Jeflain2@aol.com



## NOYF winners headed for Washington, D.C.

OFA Stakeholders: Out West it seems like spring...almonds in full bloom now and starting to leaf out. Our fall potatoes are almost harvested and we can prepare the field for watermelon planting in March... onions showing green across the fields... new season coming on!

Great Congress in Cincinnati, OH...a little cold the first few days but perfect for our tours on Friday. The OFA East Midwest Region did a great job on all fronts hosting the National Outstanding Young Farmer Awards Program! Shawhan and Rosenboom and committee did such a wonderful job! We look forward to Greenville, SC, next February 2017 with Danette and Danny and their South Region Committee hosting. The new city under review out west in 2018 is Sacramento as other options are very expensive and/or too far from a major airport; standby for updates as Sharon, our event planner, does her research.

OFA "Spirit of Giving" continues to grow

and offer a challenge to all members to participate! Past OFA President Buck Teeter, Tennessee, is leading the charge; Buck, after contributing \$5,000 to the pre-foundation account last year, pledged/invested \$25,000 to the OFA "Donor Advised Fund" which will eventually lead to the OFA Foundation when we approach the \$1 million dollar amount necessary for a full fledged, self supporting foundation. All OFA members and others who enjoy investing in and/or supporting the National Outstanding Young Farmer Awards Program and tax deductible 501(c) 3 non-profit Outstanding Farmers Of America please join in!

The OFA Board and coordinators have been working hard on streamlining the NOYF nomination and application process. Changes to the nomination and application forms should make it an easier process for the nominees to navigate.

Past presidents and OFA members: Next February the OFA will elect a new secretary to serve on the OFA Board of Directors. Remember the secretary

needs to be very proficient in email receiving and sending; as treasurer they will need the ability to learn Quick-Books Pro to do the OFA books; and all else equal, no one on the board now is from the South region. Good luck in an important search!

Elaine and I along with Sharon and Kevin Page look forward to hosting the four national winners from the 2015 NOYF Awards Congress in Cherry Hill, NJ, to National Ag Week in Washington, D.C., right after the site visit to Greenville, SC, in a few weeks. The Department of Agriculture, Congressional representatives, and John Deere will move the national winners to many venues and special meetings and meals. I hope the weather is pleasant; this celebration of agriculture will be long remembered by all. The OFA really appreciates the investment John Deere makes in sponsoring our group during Ag Week. See everyone in Greenville, SC, next February. Best of wishes farming/ranching in 2016!

# VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dana and Julie Stapleton (SD 2002)  
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## Successful Congress in Ohio leads to plans for NOYF 2017

Greetings from South Dakota! We really enjoyed the NOYF Congress in Cincinnati! Hats off to the East Midwest Region for putting on a great Congress!

Congratulations to all 10 candidates and to the four National winners! You are now all members of the Outstanding Farmers of America. We would like to see all 10 couples back next year in Greenville, SC. We hope your Class has bonded like our class (2002) and the Class of 2005. We enjoy coming back to each Congress to be with great friends and we enjoy meeting new friends each year also!

We enjoyed working with the "Ag in the Classroom" Project. This year was a success at Great Oak Career Campus where we shared our knowledge of Agriculture and the students shared their knowledge of equine. It is always great when we learn something too!

We are headed to South Carolina to meet with the regional committee to plan the 2017 Congress. The region sounds like they have great things in store for the 2017 Congress.

We ask you to look for candidates; as OFA members we need to reach out and nominate candidates for 2017.



Think about getting your class together or as an individual and donate to the Spirit of Giving. This helps defray costs of the hospitality room and helps in paying the registration fees for the 10 candidates for the following year.

A couple of reminders: Please send in your dues to Treasurer, Greg Bendixsen, either for \$25 or a full life membership for \$250. And please send in your photos to Erin Slivka if you want to be in the SPIRIT.

We would like to thank our fellow officers and coordinators for all the hard work they have been doing. We would like to thank Sharon Page for all of her efforts as coordinator! She did an excellent job!

Again, congratulations to all 10 candidates and the national winners! Welcome to a great organization. It has been a great experience for us!

We are hoping for an early spring. We have had such a mild winter. It's hard not to wish we were already in the field! Everyone please have a safe calving season and spring planting season! We hope you all have a successful year!



# 2016 NOYF



Class of 2016 at the Air Force Museum



Farm Pride - Ken & Marilyn Bush



Kevin & Krissy Albert

Photos by Debbie Norz



# SECRETARY'S REPORT

Andrew & Erin Kimmel (PA 2007)  
ackimmel@windstream.net



## Consider nominating a young producer

Greetings to everyone from Western Pennsylvania! We have gotten back to our farm schedule following our busy week in Cincinnati, OH. What a special year it was too fellowship with friends at our annual congress.

We appreciated acknowledging our 60th OFA anniversary, our 50th year with Orion Samuelson's work as our banquet emcee, and our 40th with our corporate sponsor John Deere! Quite a time of celebration!

We congratulate the class of 2016 for your outstanding operations and its four National winners! You were all terrific! We welcome you back for next year's congress in 2017 in Greenville, N.C. It is always so much fun to come back and catch up with everyone each year.

We wanted to express many thanks to our fellow OFA officers for teaching us the ropes with our first year on the board and we also wished to

thank all the hard work from our candidate coordinators Rich and Debbie Norz and to Sharon Page our OFA coordinator. Special thanks goes to our '07 class member and newsletter editor Erin Slivka for all her hard work with the Spirit newsletter and the website! If you have any special OFA news or pictures you can send them to her and she can share them with everyone through the newsletter!

As you all begin your preparations for spring planting and work on your farms, we encourage you to consider nominating an outstanding producer in your region for next year's congress. You can find the nomination form on the OFA website ([www.outstandingfarmers.com](http://www.outstandingfarmers.com)). If you aren't familiar with a special operator, your local county extension agent may be. You could reach out to them to see if they have someone special in mind and get the ball rolling for a future candidate!

We are excited to begin our work with our friends in the southern region as we develop plans for next year's congress in Greenville, S.C. in March. They have been hard at work planning events for us for next year. We appreciate their work and look forward to the interesting and busy things they have in store for us! Many thanks to you all!

We wish you a very safe and successful spring planting season. I know we are eager to get underway with our work here too as soon as we dry out and warm up a bit. Best of luck to everyone for a productive and blessed 2016!



## TREASURER'S REPORT

Greg and Carmen Bendixson (ND 2002)  
bendixsn@nccray.com

## Treasurer reminds members: dues are due

Hello from Northwest North Dakota. We are back into our routine after spending a great week in Cincinnati enjoying the city and meeting the new class of Outstanding Young Farmers. The tours and speakers helped make the weekend a very educational experience. The Class of 2016 is such a wonderful and diverse group, what a strong class of great young farmers! They are great additions to the Outstanding Farmers of America.

The East Midwest Region did a fantastic job putting on this congress and we all appreciate all of their hard work. We are next heading to Greenville, South Carolina in 2017, and the South Region has been very busy planning for our arrival next February. It will hopefully also be a warm event for us northern farmers next year.

The Stapletons and ourselves enjoyed putting on our ag in the classroom event at a vocational high school in Cincinnati. We showed the students a video of practices used on our farms, and brought samples of the various crops that we grow, explaining how each is produced and what they are used for. The students then showed us the projects that they are working on in their equine program. We hope to continue to build on this program during congress's in the future.

I would like to thank all those that paid their dues or lifetime memberships at the congress and would like to remind all OFA members to send their dues to me at 8905 140th Ave NW, Zahl, ND 58856, or just drop them off as we all are looking for a good excuse to visit Zahl. Annual dues are \$25 and lifetime memberships are \$250 per couple. Hope all is well with you and yours and hope to see you in South Carolina in 2017.

# EVENT COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Sharon and Kevin Page (MI 1991)  
pageeboy@yahoo.com



## South Carolina is next stop for NOYF Awards Congress

Hopefully those of you who traveled to Ohio are now rested up after a wonderful event. It was so good to see so many familiar faces in Cincinnati and welcome our newest members the class of ..... 2016. They are truly amazing individuals with very intriguing personal stories, which you can view on the OFA website.

This year we marked some memorial anniversaries: John Deere for supporting the NOYF for the last 40 years, Orion Samuelson for emceeing for 50 years and 60 years of acknowledging leaders in agriculture through the NOYF program. My hat's off to these networks of people that make this an exem-

plary program.

There are so many people to whom I wish extend my gratitude for making this a smooth running event being my first year as the event Coordinator, but do not wish to exclude anyone. So, I will just say a big thank you!!! However, I do need to recognize the Midwest region's great team of workers for all the lovely decorations

and working the registration booth. Everything was beautiful and well organized.

Now, mark your calendars for next year's NOYF in Greenville, SC, February 9-12.

**“Mark your calendars for next year’s NOYF in Greenville, SC, February 9-12.”**



Spring  
2016

### PLATINUM (\$5,000 +)

Buck Teeter

Class of 2002 & 2005

### DIAMOND (\$1,000 +)

Joe Gambini & Lois Armstrong\*\*\*\*\*

- CA 1965
- Andy & Hilde Burger\*\*\* DE 1966
- John & Marge Walchli OR 1969
- Ken & Audrey Mason SD 1970
- David & Bernie Shiver IL 1970
- Ralph & Cleo Thompson ND 1970
- Russ & Marilyn Rosenboom\*\* IL 1972
- Marlan & Mary Johnson\* NE 1989
- Kevin & Sharon Page\*\* MI 1991
- Rod & Janell Holth\* ND
- Robert & Roberta Call NY 1960
- Jerry & Pat Barnes\*\* OR 1970
- Robert Y. Sakata\* CO 1956
- David & Jeanne Endres WI 2001

### GOLD (\$500 +)

- Dale & Joanna Koester ID 1959
- Willard & Pat Hennings WA 1965
- Richard & Juanalee Alden NE 1966
- Willard & Ruth Pederson ND 1967
- Eric & Marlene Haberer KS 1972
- Max & Connie Peterson IL 1974
- Bryce & Cheryl Chamberlain IL 1982
- Steve & Dee Gordon OR 2012
- Mike & Judy Hennenfent IL 1981
- Sandy & Peggy Ludeman MN 1982
- Lloyd & Daphne Holterman WI 1994
- Rody & Mary Birchen IL 1993
- Jay & Kristi Richardson WI 2004
- Steve & Janeen Moest IL 1994
- Dennis & Doris Tuburgen MI 1994

### SILVER

- Tim & Sarah Sullivan\* MN 2005
- Mark & Trudy Peterson MO 2002
- Memorial for Leo Sebek SD 2002

OFA is a 501(c) 3 Tax Deductible Non-Profit Organization.



Annual: \$25

Lifetime: \$250

Submit to:  
Gregory & Carmen Bendixsen  
8950 140th Ave NW  
Zahl, ND 58856

# NOYF COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Rich and Debbie Norz (NJ 2010)  
noyfprogram@gmail.com



## Nominations open for NOYF

Hello from New Jersey. It has been an interesting winter where we have had quite a bit of warm weather with small bits of very cold temperatures. We also have not had many snow days, but got one real big shot of snow in January with 30 inches in one 24 hour period. Now we are looking forward to spring and finally getting in the fields and another great Jersey Fresh season for our vegetable and pumpkins.

We are really excited about the direction the NOYF program is headed. We just had an awesome group of national finalists in Cincinnati that again certainly showed us what great diversity we have in our young farmers in the USA! We are also very encouraged with the participation with members of the 2014 and 2015 NOYF classes in this year's Congress.

Last year we also had a good year with getting in new NOYF nominations but would have liked to see more nominations from the OFA. The National Outstanding Young Farmer program has been getting great support from the NACAA and we would like to see just as many new nominations come from the ranks of the OFA.

This year the OFA has come up with a simpler NOYF Nomination form that any nominee should be able to fill out in 30 to 60 minutes. The OFA also has a brief letter that also can be attached to the nomination form for you to give a little more information to the prospective nominee. You can find the 2017 Nomination Forms on the OFA website at [www.outstandingfarmers.com](http://www.outstandingfarmers.com). When on the site, slide over to the NOYF Awards tab then click on the Nominations tab and all the infor-

mation they will need is there. Yes, it is that easy! Please keep in mind that the deadline for NOYF Nominations is August 1, but we will certainly accept nominations before that.

Now we would like to give you all a challenge! We know you all have that great young farmer that is doing some amazing things right around the corner or in the next town from you. So please go out and tell them about our wonderful program and get them an application to fill out.

We are excited at the direction the NOYF Program is headed and we are looking forward to making the National Outstanding Young Farmer Program even better.

## 2017 National Outstanding Young Farmers *Awards Congress*



February 9-12, 2017 • Greenville, South Carolina  
Greenville Marriott

One Parkway East • Greenville, SC 29615 • 864-297-0300

## OFA holds annual meeting in Cincinnati

### Class of 2015 Wins Attendance Award

The Class of 2015 won the award for best attendance at the annual OFA meeting in Cincinnati. They had 16 people in attendance, followed by 2002 with 10 and 2007 with nine. The class of 1970 had eight in attendance. The challenge is on for 2017!

### Alumni Encouraged to Contribute

Jerry Barnes noted that for the past several years, he has worked through the Spirit of Giving to pay registrations for all returning candidates the following year. The OFA Board has agreed to make sure that this practice continues. Please consider making a contribution to the Spirit of Giving or call a board member if you would like to participate in this program.

### Future Trips and Congress Discussed

Plans are underway for future trips (see page 8) as well as the 2017 Congress to be held in Greenville, S.C. Danny and Danette McAlhaney reported that the plans are being made to go to Clemson University to tour their new packing and canning facility and to also tour their new technology building on campus. There are also plans to visit a moonshine production facility and a bearing facility as well. Plans are also being worked on to tour a local BMW plant that produces SUVs and a museum on site as well.

### OFA Asked to Nominate Candidates

Rich Norz, NOYF Coordinator, reported that the NACAA had nominated a majority of the candidates this year. Rich passed out a new nomination form and blind letter to all OFA Alumni and encouraged all to take them home and nominate a candidate.

### Orion Samuelson Honored

At Saturday night's awards ceremony, Orion Samuelson was honored for his 50 years as the NOYF Emcee.

### Member of Distinction Award Created

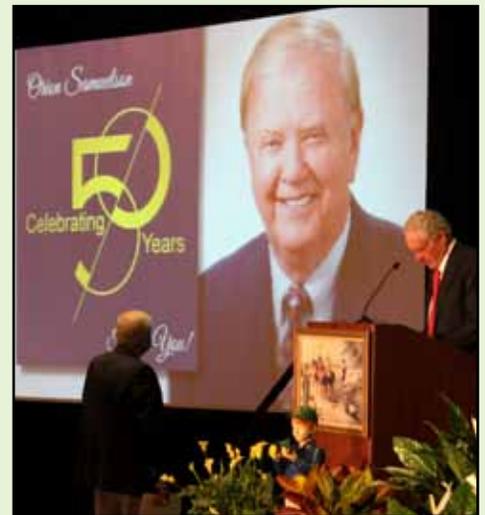
Rod and Mary Birchen announced the

Pat and Jerry Barnes Member of Distinction Award, a legacy award for the OFA made possible through the hard work and dedication of Pat and Jerry Barnes. Jerry and Pat's daughters were on hand for the award announcement on Saturday night.

This distinction will be awarded to any OFA member(s) who has shown exemplary involvement to the overall betterment of the OFA and its programs.

Guidelines:

1. Be an OFA member
2. Nominated to the board by any OFA member
3. Recipient to be chosen by the current board and the OFA Coordinator
4. Recognized and presented at the OFA annual meeting
5. Award to be a plaque
6. Running list of past recipients in the program book
7. Award may or may not be given every year.



Orion Samuelson celebrates 50 years as NOYF Emcee



Rod and Mary Birchen announce the Pat and Jerry Barnes Member of Distinction Award



Photos by  
Debbie Norz



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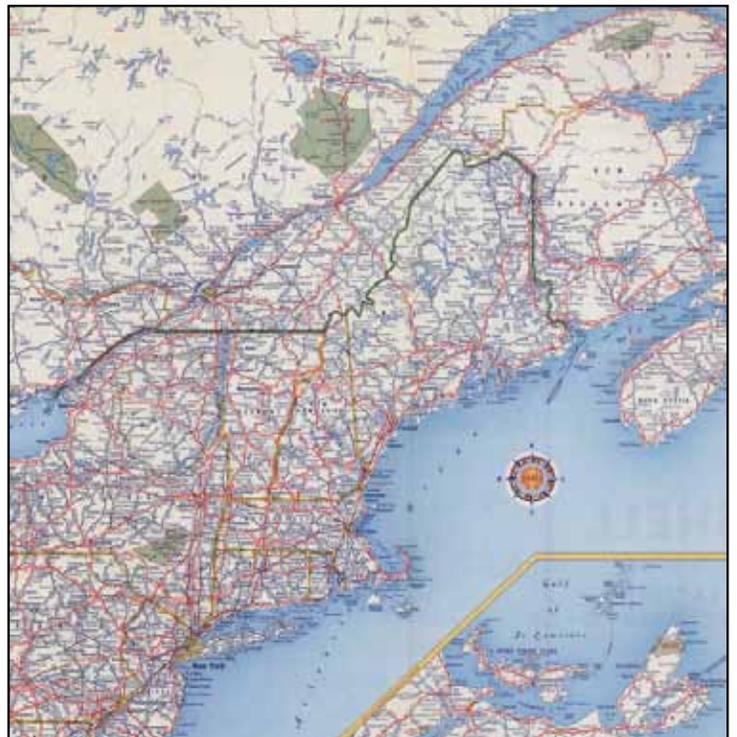
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*Join Us! Travel with the* **OFA**

## OFA plans Summer 2016 trip, considers international travel

For the summer of 2016, a trip to New England/Vermont and Eastern Canada is being planned. Jerry Barnes is leading this trip. You will need a passport if you wish to make this trip. Please contact Jerry Barnes at (541) 954-9989 if you are interested in going.

In addition to the summer trip, the OFA is considering coordinating an international trip. If you are interested in organizing a trip overseas, please contact Jerry Barnes.



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Send submissions or comments to: Erin Slivka  
6074 PN Bridge Rd • Winifred, MT 59489 • [slivka.erin@gmail.com](mailto:slivka.erin@gmail.com)