

# OFA<sup>®</sup> Spirit

The Newsletter  
of the Outstanding Farmers of America

www.ofafraternity.org

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The winners named at the 2015 National Outstanding Young Farmers Awards Congress are (from left) Ryan & Misty Bivens, KY; Randal & Kristi Melvin, ND; Chad & Ravelle Garone, CA; Christopher & Ginger Martin, GA.

## With Gratitude

Rodney and Mary Birchen were honored at the OFA Annual Meeting for their tenure as OFA President. Incoming President Jeff Thomson presented them with a gift in appreciation for their years of service and especially their leadership in the transition of the OFA acquisition of the NOYF program.



# National Ag Day



Brian Harbage (OH 2014) speaks at the Ag Day Luncheon.



(From left) Christian and Julie Richard (LA), Brian and Jennifer Harbage (OH), Orion Samuelson, Ali and Scott Ferry (MI), and Patrick Zimmerer (WY) represent the OFA in Washington, D.C.



Jerry Barnes leads the tour group at the White House.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Jeff and Elaine Thomson (CA 1981)

Jeflain2@aol.com



## NOYF changes decided upon

Fellow OFA Stakeholders: Your OFA Board completed eight hours of intense board meetings in Cincinnati, Ohio, a couple of weeks ago. I would like to report to all several of the important decisions we made which are important to all of the OFA stakeholders.

1. Specifically, our organization is the Outstanding Farmers of America (OFA) without any other descriptive word/words! Many of you had input, and the OFA board appreciates this involvement.

2. Our annual Outstanding Young Farmer program will be judged 40 percent on the paper presentation and 60 percent on the interview of the candidates at the Congress by the judges.

3. The Board is actively encouraging the past presidents to recruit a new secretary for the OFA Board in 2017 at the Greenville, South Carolina, Awards Congress. All regions except the South are represented on the current OFA Board. Keep in mind the ideal board member/couple has their children out of the house, has been attending the annual Awards Banquet/Congress and must be VERY email literate. We have some time to search for a 2017 OFA new Board Member.

4. Your board set up a new Wells Fargo Bank Account, the "OFA Pre-Foundation Account." After exten-

sive research by your OFA Board and past presidents, it was universally determined that we need a \$1 million fund to initiate a foundation. The OFA really appreciates Buck Teeter stepping up with \$5,000 to initiate the OFA Foundation process! Buck became the first individual to become a Platinum Contributor to the OFA Spirit of Giving! Thank you, Buck Teeter!

Elaine and I had a great trip to Washington, D.C., with the 2014 National Winners of the OYF Awards Program during Ag Week. The USDA and John Deere did an outstanding job! Thank you, John Deere and Amy Allen!

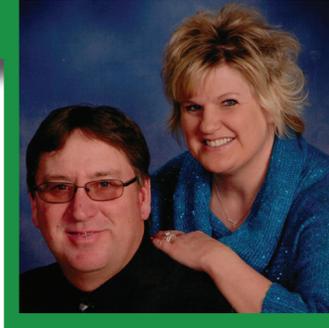
See all of you in 2016 in Cincinnati, Ohio, right downtown at the Hyatt Hotel. Also, mark your 2017 February calendars for Greenville, South Carolina, a delightful town where we will stay at the Marriott Hotel.

If any OFA volunteer would enjoy researching/finding the email addresses for OFA members from 1955 to 2015, kindly let me know. I have maybe 10 percent on my 5 Regional Groups altogether. We have a roster with contact info for many. We need someone who would take this on. Let me know and I'll provide the materials I have and other leads. Best Regards for the 2015 growing season!

# VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dana and Julie Stapleton (SD 2002)  
stapletn@venturecomm.net • (605) 880-9371

## OFA strives to be a positive voice for agriculture



Greetings from South Dakota!

Congratulations to the Class of 2015! This is another great group of outstanding young agriculturists. We welcome you into our organization. It was a pleasure to meet everyone! We are glad to have connected on social media to keep in touch!

Thank you to the Eastern Region for the great congress they put on for us. The tours were great and so was the Congress and the fellowship!

Thanks to all the sponsors who placed ads in our book. We enjoyed our night on the Boardwalk! Great job!

The region planning is working very well; we will have it perfected by the time it gets through all the regions.

Your officer team met in Cincinnati, Ohio April 10-13. We had our board meeting and finalized site tours and oriented new officers. We are excited for all we can help and do for the OFA Organization. We defined several areas that we need to work on and have set goals. We are thrilled for all the new possibilities! We are excited to work with Sharon Page, our upcoming new coordinator.

We think a positive voice in agriculture is a great goal to work on.

During and after the Congress, our OFA Facebook page was utilized and did provide a positive voice in ag. We need to tell our story! Send pictures for the website of your spring planting!

We would also like to implement a project called "Ag in the Classroom." Hopefully in the next few years, we can make that happen.

Now is the time to make sure you nominate a candidate in your area. Please use the letter that was provided at the annual meeting and nominate a candidate! This is so important for the success of the program! The officers' goal is to have a candidate from each state. If you need copies of the letter, please contact an officer!

We would like to mention to pay your annual dues also; that helps with the Congress and the publication of our newsletter. Please see the attached form to pay your dues. Your support is greatly appreciated!

"Save the Date" for next year's Congress in Cincinnati! We will be celebrating our 60 years of the OFA, 50 Years with Orion Samuelson, and 40 years with John Deere!

# 2015 NOV 7



MC Tom Steever of Brownfield Ag



NJ Secretary of Ag Doug Fisher



Greg Jaffe, CSPI



## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Andrew & Erin Kimmell (PA 2007)  
ackimmell@windstream.net



### New officers learn about OFA operations

Greetings to everyone from western Pennsylvania! We come to you as fourth generation producers on our family beef and grain farm in western Pennsylvania. Over the past several years, our weather prognosticator and

blessed groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil, has dealt us some long, harsh winters. So we were more than pleased to see green growth emerging all around us as spring finally arrived after the dreary days of winter.

**“We look forward to serving as officers of the OFA and thank everyone for welcoming us to the board this year.”**

We started planting corn the last week of April, followed by soybeans and right into summer harvest of hay and barley.

We traveled to Cincinnati for the OFA board meeting and learned a lot about how the board functions and all the planning and hard work that makes a great Congress. We had helped with the Eastern Region doing some planning for the New Jersey Congress. We had reports from Sharon Page and the regional planning committee. Plans are coming together very well for our 2016 congress in Cincinnati.

We look forward to serving as officers of the OFA and thank everyone for welcoming us to the board this year. We have enjoyed getting to know so many good friends and learn about how their operations impact agriculture in their areas.

Being a member of the OFA has afforded us many opportunities to learn more about how agriculture is ever changing. We also can see how producers are working to find ways to improve and grow, to better their operations, and to educate people on understanding how as producers, we work to safely and successfully feed the world.



## TREASURER'S REPORT

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

### Deadline for new candidates is Aug. 1

Things have been busy in northwest North Dakota. Calving is wound down just as canola and peas were planted in April, then on to the durum and flax.

We attended the site visit in Cincinnati; what a great city to hold an OFA Congress. The downtown hotel is ideal for walking to many restaurants, and there is no need to pack much as there is a lot of shopping nearby. Keep in mind that we all need to be looking for new candidates to nominate for our program, and the deadline for them to get their application in is August 1.

Having regional committees to help put on the Congress has

been a real benefit. We especially enjoyed the Wright Point Air Force Museum they scheduled for a tour stop. I think I could spend an entire weekend there.

We welcome Andrew and Erin Kimmell to the board in the new Secretary position. They are a great addition. Carmen and myself were recently added as well so we are learning together; very exciting.

I would like to encourage all of our members to pay your yearly dues or become Lifetime Members of the OFA. You can send your dues to: Greg and Carmen Bendixson, 8905 140th Ave NW, Zahl, ND 58856 or just drop them off when you are passing through. We look forward to hearing from you.

# EVENT COORDINATOR'S REPORT

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



## Ohio NOYF Awards Congress will be worth attending



Spring 2015

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

Buck Teeter

Class of 2002 & 2005

(Stapleton, Albert, Walters, Bendixson, Hildebrandt, Sullivan, Peterson, McAlhaney)

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

Joe Gambini	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 Call		

### GOLD (\$500 +)

Dale & Joanna Koester	ID	1959
Willard & Pat Hennings	WA	1965
Richard and Juanalee Alden	NE	1966
Willard & Ruth Pederson	ND	1967
Jerry & Pat Barnes	OR	1970
Eric & Marlene Haberer	KS	1972
Max & Connie Peterson	IL	1974
Bryce & Cheryl Chamberlain	IL	1982
Steve & Dee Gordon	OR	2012
Ben & Kathryn Littlepage	LA	1965
Denny & Judy Crum	MD	1981
John & Martha Hubschmidt	NJ	1966
Mike Hennenfent		
Dale & Joanna Koester		
Sandy Ludeman		

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

Hello OFA friends. The cold winter blast of 2015 is now history for Michigan and summer has arrived. Although we did set a record of the coldest temps for February since 1968, this did not stop us from setting off to Cherry Hill, NJ, for a wonderful NOYF Congress. Thanks to all the hard work and dedication of the Eastern Region and John Deere!

In my position as CIT (coordinator in training) I have had some great opportunities to meet with new people and travel to new places.

As Pat's sidekick, she has guided me and given me great insight as how to fulfill the duties that goes on behind the scenes to make the NOYF run smoothly. She is a gem to the organization and is a wealth of information; hopefully, now she can now sit back and relax.

January started my travels to New Jersey to finalize some last minute duties before coming back in February for the NOYF, for which we had an amazing turnout! We welcomed the class of 2015 to the OFA and renewed old friendships.

Every March in Washington, D.C. our nation recognizes the talents and strengths of the agricultural

industry during National Ag Week. What better place to acknowledge and salute the class of 2014 NOYF winners for their accomplishments in agriculture than amongst their peers.

With 2015 NOYF Congress only weeks prior, it was off to Greenville, SC, to visit this beautiful city and see what it has to offer for 2017. It was southern hospitality at its finest, and you will not be disappointed when they host our convention. Never experiencing a dull moment, Jeff, Elaine, and I flew

from there to join the remainder of the board in Cincinnati, Ohio, for our annual meeting and get an update of 2016 Congress from the Midwest Region chairs Shawhans and Rosebooms.

Yes, I am racking up the frequent flyer miles, but from my seat it is all worth it. Where else would I have the opportunity to interact with such a fine group of individuals that welcome you into their lives? The motto I follow from the Girl Scouts is, "Make new friends, but keep the old, one is silver and the other gold!" So mark your calendars my friends for Cincinnati, OH, February 11-13; it will be amazing!

**"As Pat's sidekick, she has guided me and given me great insight as how to fulfill the duties that goes on behind the scenes to make the NOYF run smoothly."**



# *Cincinnati* February 10-14, 2016 Hyatt Regency Hotel

# OHIO

## 2016 NOYF AWARDS CONGRESS

### **By the East Midwest Region Congress Committee**

As you know, Cincinnati has been chosen to host the 2016 OYF Congress. John and Mary Shawhan from Ohio are working hard to make this a memorable event. We are excited to go to the National Air Force Museum, which you will never forget. You will experience everything aviation including the Wright Brothers plane to an Air Force One. We have some great speakers lined up that will inform and entertain you.

The theme for 2016 is "Farm Pride." Friday night, proudly wear your farm pride T-shirt, cap, jacket, or whatever you create.

Since the Louisville Farm Show starts February 10 and the Congress starts on the 11th, some of you may want to stop there on the way to Cincinnati. Be sure to secure rooms early!

We will be looking for about a dozen quality items for the auction. A quilt has already been promised.

Watch the OFA website for registration details this fall. Hope to see you all in Cincinnati!



The 2015 NOYF Finalists were David & Cheryl Correll (North Carolina); Randal & Kristi Melvin (North Dakota); Andy & Cassy Stock (Nebraska); Jay & Amanda Ferguson (Michigan); HR & Christine Byma (New Jersey); Chad & Ravelle Garone (California); Ryan & Misty Bivens (Kentucky); Matthew & Patricia Erickson (Minnesota); Christopher & Ginger Martin (Georgia).

# 2015 NOYF



OFA Celebrity Guest Speaker,  
David Schiver



VP Dana Stapleton gets some help  
from Krissy Albert and Sarah Sullivan



Al Murray, Assistant Ag Secretary,  
is introduced by OFA President  
Birchen

## OFA<sup>®</sup> Dues

- Annual: \$25
- Lifetime: \$250

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



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Sisseton, SD 57262

[www.ofafraternity.org](http://www.ofafraternity.org)

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## NOYF COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Rich and Debbie Norz (NJ 2010)  
[noyfprogram@gmail.com](mailto:noyfprogram@gmail.com)



# Nominations due soon for 2016 NOYF Awards

August 1, 2015, is the deadline to submit nominations for the 2016 National Outstanding Young Farmer Awards. All OFA members are encouraged to submit nominations. Forms and submission instructions can be found on the OFA website, and more information about the program is available to send to prospective nominees. Consider nominating a young agriculturalist in your area for recognition at the 2016 NOYF Awards Congress in Cincinnati!

## *In Remembrance*

Dick Alden (NE 1966) passed away New Years Day watching the Rose Parade.



The Newsletter  
of the Outstanding  
Farmers of America

**Send submissions or comments to:**

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