

Spring 2019

OFA® Spirit

The Newsletter
of the Outstanding Farmers of America

www.outstandingfarmers.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- OFA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT
- 2020 NOYF INFO
- 2019 NOYF HIGHLIGHTS
- NATIONAL AG DAY



2019 NOYF WINNERS - The four National Outstanding Young Farmers for 2019 are (from left) Brandon and Jessica Batten of North Carolina, Ben and Kate Sowers of Maryland, Derek and Renee Martin of Illinois, and Ben and Susan Albright of Iowa.

Pat & Jerry Barnes Member of Distinction Award presented



The Pat and Jerry Barnes Member of Distinction Award is a legacy award for the OFA is made possible through the hard work and dedication of Pat and Jerry Barnes. This distinction is awarded to any OFA members who have shown exemplary involvement to the overall betterment of the OFA and its programs. Receiving the award this year was Joe Gambini and Lois Armstrong, CA 1965 (pictured left).





Finalists for the National Outstanding Young Farmers award include (from left) Andy Fisher of Wisconsin, Brad and Jill McIntyre, of Idaho, Luke and Hilarie Petersen of Utah, Brandon and Jessica Batten of North Carolina, Ben and Kate Sowers of Maryland, Derek and Renee Martin of Illinois, Doty and Mary Gregory Porter of Mississippi, Marcus and Neely South of Georgia, Ben and Susan Albright of Iowa, and Jimmy and Anna Abma of New Jersey.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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



Leadership of Stapletons will be missed

Greetings from NW North Dakota. We had a brutal February, and we appreciate the arrival of spring like never before.

Wow, was the Quad-cities Congress an outstanding event. Thanks to the regional committee for a job well done. Special thanks to Sharon Page, and Rich and Debbie Norz. Our coordinators do so much work for the OFA throughout the year; unfortunately their work is all done behind the scenes so it mostly goes unnoticed, but when all is done, they are the primary reason for the success of the Congress.

We recently accompanied members of the 2018 class to Washington, DC, for Ag Day. We had a great experience, followed by our officer meeting at next years' venue in Connecticut. The Northeast region has been hard at work for over a year now making plans to give the OFA a real

New England feel for the 2020 Congress.

"We always appreciate input from all OFA members on ideas to improve and expand the program."

It is never too early to think about nominating a young farmer for next year's Congress. Our deadline is August 1 for applications, so right after planting time would be a good time to approach a potential nominee. The NACAA has been a great re-

source for finding nominees, so if you do not know of a local person to nominate, ask your county agent or a county agent from a neighboring county, or across the state line. Working together they may be able to recommend a potential applicant for you to nominate.

I would like to thank Dana and Julie Stapleton for all the time they have put into the OFA over the past six years. We have had a lot of fun working together, and their leadership will be missed. Going forward I feel we have a good officer team to keep the program on track. We always appreciate input from all OFA members on ideas to improve and expand the program.



VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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

Many forms of giving make OFA and NOYF successful

Greetings from the OFA as spring arrives. It was a great Congress in Moline this year. Thank you to John Deere for their great hospitality, including all the tours and the wonderful meals we shared on tour and at the headquarters Friday evening. Thank you to the region for all their hard work and effort in planning to make this Congress so special.

As we move forward this year, Erin and I move from OFA board Treasurer to Vice President. We would like to thank our outgoing President Dana and Julie Stapleton for all their hard work on the board. We now welcome Greg and Carmen Bendixson to lead the board and Don and Cheryl Hartman to take over as Treasurer. We are already busy planning for next year's Congress in Connecticut at the Water's Edge resort. It looks like we will be able to see a very different side of agriculture there and the tours are looking to be very informative as well.

I would like to express thanks to all who donate and give to the OFA. Each type of giving is unique, but equally essential to help maintain many aspects of our organization. Being a Spirit of Giving donor allows you to be recognized for your contributions and allows us to cover additional costs incurred for each year's Congress.

If you choose to donate to the One Hundred Dollar Challenge,

you help eliminate registration costs for returning candidates for the following year's Congress. It is a specific gift to allow us to offer the candidates paid registration for next year's Congress and a chance to come back to the following year's Congress without the pressures of a candidate and enjoy the Congress with their classmates they met a year before. If all 10 couples return, registration costs would be \$6,500. This year we received about \$3,500 dollars toward this effort. Let's show our candidates how important they are to us and continue to support them with this effort!

If you would consider paying your lifetime dues, that money gets set aside and invested for the long term sustainability of the OFA.



We are planning to make space on the registration form for these extra donations so you can consider giving when you register for Congress next fall.

We are all passionate about the OFA and honoring the Young Outstanding Farmers of America. Thank you for all your support and dedication. Please consider nominating a young farmer from your state for next year. It doesn't take any more effort than to go to the website and print an application and ask a young farmer to consider filling it out. Please tell them about your experience with the OFA.

Have a safe and prosperous spring and summer.

Dues

Annual: \$25

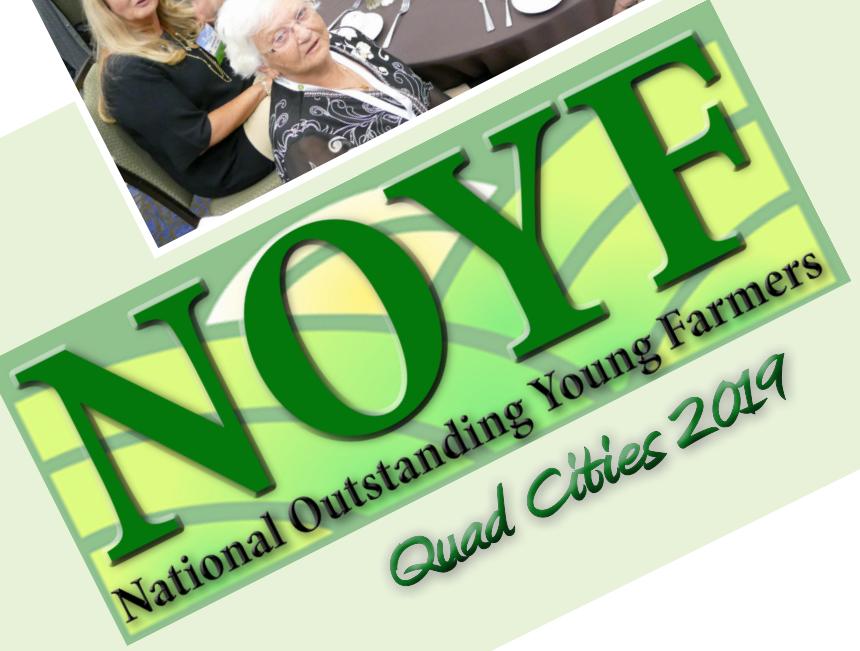
Lifetime: \$250

Submit to:
Don & Cheryl Hartman
6495 HWY 418 SW
Deming, NM 88030

Quad Cities 2019 NOYF

National Outstanding Young Farmers





Class of 2018 attends Ag Day in Washington, D.C.



OFA SPIRIT OF GIVING

OFA DONOR FUND

Buck Teeter	1975	TN
ONEOK	2017	ND
Jack & Mary Lou Thomson Foundation	1955	CA
John & Delores Brown	1965	FL
Wisner H Buckbee	1965	NY
PLATINUM \$5000+		
Joe Gambini & Lois Armstrong	1965	CA
Gerald Barnes & Neoma Loehr	1970	OR
DIAMOND \$1000+		
Kevin & Sharon Page	1991	MI
Marlan & Mary Johnson	1989	NE
Dana & Julie Stapleton	2002	SD
Rod & Janelle Holth	Honorary	ND
Russ & Marilyn Rosenboom	1972	IL
Dave & Jeanne Endres	2001	WI
Tim & Sara Sullivan	2005	MN
David & Bernie Shriver	1970	IL
Ralph & Cleo Thompson	1970	ND
John & Marge Walchli	1969	OR
Andy & Hilde Burger	1966	DE
Ken & Audrey Mason	1970	SD
Robert & Roberta Call	1960	NY
Ken & Marilyn Bush	1966	IL
Robert Sakata	1956	CO
Bob & Ella Mae Wade	1969	KY
John & Gail Kautz	1966	CA
Dan & Sheila White	1970	TX
Kevin & Krissy Albert	2005	NE



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

GOLD \$500+

Bill Richards	1967	OH
Lloyd & Daphne Holterman	1994	WI
Rod & Mary Birchen	1993	IL
Greg & Carmen Bendixson	2002	ND
Scott & Peggy Hildebrandt	2002	MN
Willard & Ruth Pederson	1967	ND
Memory of Pat Barnes (class of 2007)	2007	
Willard & Pat Hennings	1965	WA
Eric & Marlene Haberer	1972	KS
Max & Connie Peterson	1974	IL
Bryce & Cheryl Chamberlain	1982	IL
Richard & Jauanalee Alden	1966	NE
Sandy & Peggy Ludeman	1982	MN
Dale & Joanna Koester	1959	ID
Mike & Judy Hennenfent	1981	IL
Steve & Janeen Moest	1994	IL
Dennis & Doris Tubergen	1994	MI
Jay & Kristin Richardson	2004	WI
Mary Ann Brown	1965	GA
Steve & Dee Gordon	2012	OR
Glen & Angie Walters	2002	GA
SILVER		
Leo Sebek Memorial	2002	SD
Mark & Angie Ullness	2017	WI
Rufus & Mary Sharard	1967	SC
Ruth Pederson Memorial (Uglem)	2012	ND
Joe & Ida DeFrancesco	2016	CT
Mark & Trudy Peterson	2002	MO

Special thanks to the 2019 NOYF Congress Sponsors!



JOHN DEERE



Class of 1994
Class of 2016

**Jerry Barnes
& Neoma Loehr**

Anniversary classes to be honored at NOYF 2020:

55 years: 1965 25 years: 1995

50 years: 1970 20 years: 2000

45 years: 1975 15 years: 2005

40 years: 1980 10 years: 2010

35 years: 1985 5 years: 2015

30 years: 1990 1 year: 2019

In Remembrance

**Ben (Kathryn) Littlepage (LA 1965)
John (Carol) Fisher (OH 1987)
John (Marge) Walchi (OR 1969)**

Join us for NOYF 2020 in Westbrook, Connecticut



1525 Boston Post Road | 800.222.5901

February 6-9, 2020

tour Boston (pre)
tour New York City (post)

\$100 Challenge extended to OFA members

A tradition started by a group of OFA Alumni to "Welcome Back" the returning class to the NOYF Awards Congress is to cover registration costs was established. This was a very generous donation. However, this was not a long term commitment. So, to continue in their footsteps, the OFA Board has implemented the \$100 Challenge. The

money raised is earmarked for the new OFA Alumni to return and to be used for this purpose only. The goal is to raise \$6,500 (current registration \$325.00/person if all were to attend). Anyone who wishes to make a donation or If you have any questions please contact either Sharon Page or Don and Cheryl Hartman.

Please send donations by sending a

check or credit card payment:

Sharon Page
4946 Reeder Rd
Lyons, MI 48851
pageeboy@yahoo.com
517-881-6945

Don & Cheryl Hartman
6495 Highway 418 SW
Derning, NM 88030
outstangingfarmers@gmail.com

A special thanks extended to OFA

from Lois Armstrong

What an honor it was to receive the Jerry and Pat Barnes Member of Distinction Award. Jerry and Pat have done so much for the OFA over the years, always bringing the top 10 couples back and also visiting all the farms. Pat did an outstanding job as OFA Congress coordinator and was always helpful to all of us. We have enjoyed the OFA so much. Joe was chosen as the Outstanding Young Farmer from California in 1965 and had not returned as an alumni since then. They contacted him for his 25th reunion in 1990 and we have only missed 2 years since then. The OFA couples we have met over the years are truly family to us and we have enjoyed visiting the different states that the Congress chooses to have the

Congress take place in.

Also the farms of the OFA couples that we have visited on the tours are just wonderful. We also have gone on several OFA tours. The farms that we toured in Australia, New Zealand, Alaska, Germany, Minnesota, Vermont, Quebec City and Montreal were just so great. We would never had been to any of these farms had we toured on our own.

When we meet in Connecticut next year; it will be Joe's class 55th year reunion. We are looking forward to seeing everyone in Connecticut and going on the tours. Thank you so very much for contacting Joe to come back to his 25th reunion. Also thanks again for the honor of receiving the Jerry and Pat Barnes Member of Distinction Award.

Serving Others

At NOYF 2019, OFA members, led by Dana and Julie Stapleton, gathered supplies for care packages and prepared the items to be sent to deployed military personnel.



Eastern Region is making big plans for NOYF 2020

By Dawn and Joey Geremia (CT 2011)

The Eastern Region couldn't be more excited! For the first time, the National Outstanding Young Farmers Congress will be held in beautiful Connecticut at the Water's Edge Hotel located in Westbrook, CT from February 6-9. If you attend every year or haven't been in a while, this is the year you don't want to miss!

The OFA tours on Friday will bring you around the state and give you a taste of Connecticut! When not touring, your days with us will be spent nestled within a portion of Connecticut's beautiful coastline, on a property with stunning waterfront views and classic Connecticut charm.

The Eastern Region, consisting of 14 states from Maine down to Virginia, is home to tens of thousands of farms, with an incredibly diverse amount of farming techniques. Field farming, livestock production, greenhouse and nursery farming, aquatic farming and orchards are a few of the techniques used throughout this region. These farming techniques produce a wide variety of items such as fruits and vegetables, hay, potatoes, dairy, cranberries, meat, poultry, maple syrup, honey and so much more!

Connecticut alone is home to nearly 6,000 farms, containing half a million acres of farmland and over 70,000 acres of shellfish farms. Nursery and greenhouse products are the top crops in the state, accounting for almost half of the receipts in the state.



Some of the crops include trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials, ground cover, vegetables, herbs and a large assortment of potted flowers.

At our own wholesale greenhouse operations, we grow and ship 52 weeks a year, to over 200 stores and family-owned retail operations. Currently our main greenhouse is filled with thousands of stunning, blooming orchids of all colors and sizes. We have acres of Easter flowers including lilies, tulips, hydrangeas and daffodils that will be in full bloom for the holiday. We are also focusing on our hundreds of varieties of spring flowers, vegetables and herbs that will fill our local stores and garden centers when the weather finally warms up!

After a few months of being closed for the season, our retail farm stand is in the process of being swept out, wiped down and stocked up with beautiful flowers, herb, veggies and native produce. We're proud to have our 4th generation helping us now and each of our 4 children are excited to help with the baking, stocking, organizing, running the register and chatting



with customers!

We're very excited to give a tour of our family farm, as well as joining other Connecticut OFA members giving Congress tours of their farms! Each farm on the tour will provide a look into the unique agricultural experiences and some of the different farming options within the state. You'll enjoy the taste of freshly baked doughnuts and fruit wines that were produced on a 5th generation orchard that is now a local cornerstone of the community. You'll also get to see what it takes to raise hops and brew a local beer! And finally, we'll expose you to some of the most advances and efficient greenhouse operations in the state. We're thrilled to be able to share all of this with you!

As you can see, the Eastern Region is a diverse hotspot for farming and farmers! Our families look forward to reuniting with old friends and making new friends at the 2020 Congress. See you there!



NOYF WINNER'S SPOTLIGHT

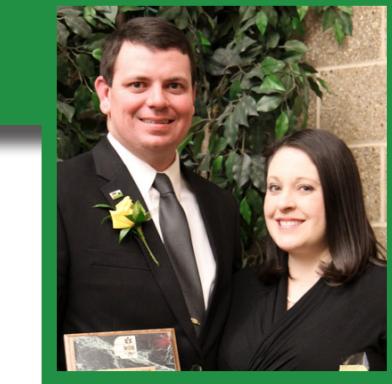
Brandon and Jessica Batten (NC 2019)

We are Brandon and Jessica Batten from eastern North Carolina, and we are part of the class of 2019. We produce flue-cured tobacco, corn, soybeans, winter wheat, hay, and beef cattle. I farm with my father and uncle as Triple B Farms, Inc. I am the third generation on our operation and the sixth generation in my family to farm. Jessica currently works for our county as an engineer, providing plan review for erosion control, stormwater management, and development. We have a 3-year-old son, Camden, and will welcome twin girls to our family any day now! I also operate a small drone service business called Flying Farmer LLC providing aerial imagery and analysis to area farmers. Our operation is very diversified out of necessity. We have a wide variety of soil types from deep sand to black organic soils. We use many different conservation practices, such as no-till, grassed waterways, field borders, and cover crops to prevent our soils from being eroded by wind and water. I see myself as a conservationist, trying to preserve and improve what my dad, uncle and grandfather have worked to establish for our farm. I hope to grow and improve our operation so that my children will have a chance to farm if they so choose.

In five years, I hope to be doing some direct sales to consumers from our farm. I would like to further diversify our operation to include some educational and direct marketing opportunities in the future. We strive to be an advocate for agriculture on social media

and in our community and this is just another way that I feel we can engage the growing non-farm population in our county and in North Carolina. Farming in North Carolina has its challenges. In 2016 and 2018 we were impacted by two devastating hurricanes. Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Hurricane Florence in 2018 both brought flooding like our state has never experienced. These storms both came during harvest season and devastated our crops that remained in the field and impacted communities across the state. Many consider the flooding and damage from these storms to be "once in a lifetime" events but we have had two in the past three years. Recovering from these storms, both financially and physically, takes years. Combine this with the trade war and tariffs with China, our number one customer for our tobacco we produce, and 2018 was a tough year. However, we are resilient. We will weather this storm and overcome adversity just as all of those that came before us have done.

It was really refreshing and encouraging to meet the other finalists in the NOYF and see that no matter where in the country we come from or what we produce, our struggles and prob-



lems are similar. We all had a connection through agriculture that grew into friendships throughout the week of the OFA congress. It was a great experience to get to meet so many of the past recipients and members of the OFA and make connections with them. Their stories about friends from North Carolina, travels with the organization, and the encouragement they offered were truly amazing. Being selected as a National Winner has meant so much more to us than we could have imagined. It has been a humbling experience to be selected as winners from among the great operations and families that were represented at the OFA Congress in Bettendorf, Iowa. We have always been a part of a farming community and through the OFA, our community has gotten a whole lot bigger. We are thankful for the sponsors that made the event possible including John Deere, the NACAA, and the OFA. We are grateful to the good Lord for all of the opportunities and blessings he has afforded us. Jessica and I look forward to traveling to future OFA events and continuing to be involved with this awesome organization!



NOYF WINNER'S SPOTLIGHT

Ben and Kate Sowers (MD 2019)

Kate and I would like to first thank everyone that is a part of the OYF program for being so welcoming to us since this journey has begun. It has been a pleasure to have met so many wonderful people with the same goals, struggles, and blessings that we have this year. My parents, Randy and Karen Sowers, have been a part of the OYF family since 1987. I grew up meeting many of you throughout my life. I can't say enough that the other members of the 2019 class are so deserving to be OYF winners and will be friends of ours for life.

Kate and I have four children, Samuel (15), Jeremiah (12), Elijah (9), and Ruth (2). We farm in the Middletown Valley of Maryland with my sister Abby Brusco, her husband Tony, and their two children Gabe and Sophia. Mom and Dad still do a tremendous amount to make this farm successful. My parents taught me to be gracious and trust in the Lord, and they are my heroes.

Our farm consists of around 3,000 acres of corn, soybeans, barley, alfalfa, hay, and pastures. We try to plant around 1,300 acres of cover crops a year. We milk 550 dairy cows, raise many of the bull calves for meat, 150 cow-calf beef operations, 18,000 laying hens, and we finish around 200

fat cattle a year. Approximately half of our corn and soybean acres go to feeding our animals and the rest is sold on the commodity market. We run our soybeans through an extruder and press to make our own soymeal. In 2001 we started South Mountain Creamery. We bottle our milk and home deliver it. As of today, we have well over 10,000 customers that we deliver to weekly or bi-weekly. We deliver over 500 products including milk, eggs, meats, yogurt, ice cream, and readymade meals that we produce, as well as products from many other farmers and small businesses. In May 2019 we are opening the first farmer owned restaurant in our area using our products and many other local ingredients. With the restaurant opening soon we now have about 100 employees that are amazing and are the heartbeat of the operation.

Our goals moving forward are to stay relevant in an ever-changing food climate, with the Washington, D.C. area always on the forefront of the food movement. With all the moving parts of the operation and family events, we



will continue to strive to be 100% in every aspect of our world. Ag education is important in all agriculture to show the public what agriculture is all about. Around 50,000 visitors come to the farm every year to experience what dairy farming is all about. If ever there was a far-reaching long-term goal, it would be to inform an ever-increasing population of neighbors that agriculture is what make this country great!





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Quad Cities Ag in the Classroom



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



DUES

\$25 Annual

\$250 Lifetime
(per couple)

Submit to:

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