Loyd Awarded Lewis County FB Scholarship

Anna Loyd has been awarded Lewis County Farm Bureau’s educational scholarship for 2016.

Loyd, salutatorian of her Lewis County High School graduating class, will be attending West Virginia University this fall where she plans to obtain a degree in Animal and Nutritional Sciences. She will be a part of the Honors College and the Davis-Michael Scholars Program at WVU. Anna will be a member of the Pride of West Virginia, the WVU Marching Band.

Anna has been a life-long 4-H member, annually exhibits outstanding project work, is active with community service projects and has provided leadership in the 4-H program. She is a member of the Youth Livestock Club and annually exhibits market hogs, lambs and a steer at Jamboree at the Mill. Anna has also participated on the WV Beef Expo stockman’s contest judging team.

Anna is the daughter of Bruce and Kaye Loyd of Horner. Her grandparents are Jim and Alice Leach of Parkersburg and John and Betty Loyd, Philippi.

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Annual Farm Bureau Meet the Candidate Cookout in July

The Annual West Virginia Farm Bureau Regional Cookout and Meet the Candidate Night will be held on Saturday, July 30 at the marina in St. Marys, West Virginia.

The event is a great opportunity for voters to become informed and learn where candidates stand on the issues important to families, agriculture and our state.

The Pleasants County Farm Bureau is hosting the event. Social hour starts at 5:30 pm. The meal begins at 6:30 pm.

Bring a chair and a covered dish to share. Meat and cutlery will be provided.

For more information, contact Don Fleming at (304) 464-4261 or Audra Cunningham at (304) 684-3077.

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Articles for NewsBytes must be submitted by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Time-sensitive announcements must be submitted no less than 8 weeks prior to the date of the event. Electronic submissions, including photos, are preferred. Send to joanh@wvfarm.org.
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On the cover

Finnsheep
Becky Crabtree
Tough Times Require Unity

Charles Wilfong, President, West Virginia Farm Bureau

Making a profit in farming seems to be getting harder every day. With only a few exceptions there seems to be little real profit margin regardless of what farm commodity we are producing. For our West Virginia farmers, a couple of the only exceptions thus far have been poultry and to a lesser extent, sheep.

Forecasters predict that low commodity prices will likely persist for at least the next 3-4 years. Predictions of very slow global economic growth will severely limit much help for our producers from the export markets. Input prices have reduced some, but not enough to compensate for the lower commodity prices received. Reductions in fuel and fertilizer have helped some as well, but now we are seeing fuel prices beginning to rise.

High on the list of input costs that will have to be adjusted are cash land rental rates. Many of these land rental rates were negotiated when cattle and crop prices were much better. Many farmers are now saddled with land rental rates that are not sustainable if current market trends persist. Young farmers in particular, but others as well, are starting to have more difficulty getting adequate credit.

Farm Credit and their experienced staff will be even more important through possible tough times because they understand agriculture. Their commitment to agriculture is extremely important.

When things get tight, it requires some cutting back on non-essential purchases, which means our farm supply co-ops and other businesses are being challenged as well. Many of these

see Wilfong, page 20

TPP Is a Good Deal for U.S. Agriculture

Zippy Duvall, President, American Farm Bureau Federation

Farmers and ranchers know a good deal. We know how to make every dollar, down to the penny, count. That's why Farm Bureau wasted no time in looking at what the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement would mean in dollars and cents on farms and ranches across America.

What's the bottom line for agriculture with TPP? We're looking at an expected boost in business just when farms and rural economies need it most. Farm Bureau estimates an annual increase in U.S. net farm income of $4.4 billion, compared to not passing the agreement. In spite of negative political rhetoric, the fact is that every day we wait to approve TPP we lose ground. It's like showing up at the auction barn with a load of cattle after the last gavel has fallen. We fall behind our global competitors. We give up billions in business. And we lose out on deals that other countries are ready to make without us.

Our farm and ranch businesses lose when our nation leaves trade deals on the table that would level the playing field. American-grown and -made means quality and customers around the world know this. But high tariffs and other trade barriers put in place by countries like Japan will keep shutting out American businesses and agricultural goods if we refuse to lead the way in approving trade agreements that would move us forward.

Our farmers and ranchers need market expansion

see Duvall, page ?
A unanimous decision by the U.S. Supreme Court ruled landowners may challenge the federal government whenever the Army Corps of Engineers tries improperly to regulate land with regulations designed to protect water.

Landowners have attempted many times to challenge Corps rulings known as jurisdictional determinations, but the government successfully argued that those determinations were not "final agency actions" and the lawsuits were dismissed. Now, when the Corps asserts jurisdiction over low spots that look more like land than water, it will have to do so with the knowledge that its jurisdictional determination can be tested in court.

"Today's decision removes a huge roadblock that has prevented landowners from obtaining relief from the courts when the Corps illegally claims their land is federally regulated water," AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. "Now, farmers and ranchers can have their day in court when the government tells them they cannot plow a field or improve a ditch without a federal permit."

AFBF filed amicus curiae briefs in the lower court and the Supreme Court in support of the plaintiffs who were represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation. The case was titled United States Army Corps of Engineers v. Hawkes Co., Inc.

West Virginia’s Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, in cooperation with Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, led 21 other states in filing a friend-of-the-court brief, arguing property owners are entitled to immediately challenge the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers in court anytime its officials label someone’s property as a protected wetland.

“Today’s ruling marks an important victory for every West Virginian,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It yet again prohibits the federal government from using regulation to exceed its authority.”

The ruling builds on another unanimous ruling, Sackett v. EPA. The Court recognized that once the Corps finds that a landscape feature is a "water of the United States," there are immediate and often dire legal consequences to the landowner. A farmer can continue a farming activity that results in an unlawful discharge and face an enforcement action with civil fines up to $37,500 a day per discharge, or even criminal penalties. Or, the farmer can spend tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars seeking federal Clean Water Act permits over several years only to have the permit ultimately denied.
Recreational Terrain Vehicle (RTV) Accidents Pose Serious Risk for Children

Recreational Terrain Vehicles (RTVs) are frequently used on farms and ranches to haul feed, equipment and people. RTVs are also used for fun by both children and adults. Unfortunately, kids are often the victims of RTV and ATV accidents.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, there were an estimated 93,700 ATV-related, emergency department-treated injuries in the United States in 2014. An estimated 26 percent of these involved children younger than 16 years of age.

Don’t think this can happen to you or members of your family? Consider the following accident that was reported as a claim a few years ago: A farmer’s 14-year-old son got permission from his dad to use the farm’s RTV to transport two 14-year-old friends and camera equipment to a field to film a documentary for a school project. The young men were properly seat-belted when they left.

Instead of coming straight home following filming, the young men rode to a public gravel parking lot to horseplay and do donuts. While the farmer’s son was driving, the RTV tipped over—trapping the passengers’ legs under the unit.
Personal injury
Both passengers suffered serious injury. One passenger sustained a degloving leg injury—resulting in extensive nerve and muscle damage. The second passenger sustained a fractured arm, multiple leg breaks and a degloving leg injury. Due to the severity of the injuries, both passengers will require treatment throughout their lives.

Personal responsibility
Police came to the scene of the accident and interviewed several witnesses who reported seeing the driver operating the unit in a reckless manner. As a result, the farmer’s son received several tickets, including reckless driving, operating a motor vehicle without a license and parental permission to operate a motor vehicle without a license.

Financial consequences
All of the families were friends, but due to the severity of the injuries both sets of parents immediately sought legal counsel. The farmer had a farm policy with a $1 million limit and an umbrella policy with $1,000,000 limit. The full limits of both policies were paid to resolve this claim.

Accident prevention
Parents should determine each family member’s readiness to operate an RTV or ATV based on physical size, coordination, balance, ability to judge distances, willingness to follow rules and peripheral vision. Visitors to your farm should never be allowed to ride or operate your RTV or ATV.

Careful operation is your best protection against an accident. All operators should read and understand the vehicle operator's manual and other related manuals before operating the vehicle or any implement attached to it. It is the owner's obligation to instruct all operators in safe operation.

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EPA Disparages Farmers, Hinders Progress, Farm Bureau Tells Congress

Three Farm Bureau members called on the federal government to use more carrots and fewer sticks with farmers who care for land that has often been in their families for generations. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau President Richard Ebert, former Ohio Farm Bureau President Terry McClure and Florida Farm Bureau member Kate English testified before the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry.

Ebert (pictured above) told the subcommittee that the Environmental Protection Agency has failed to explain its expectations in the ongoing Chesapeake Bay cleanup.

“Despite my four-year degree in animal science from a well-known and respected university and 34 years of farming while implementing modern technologies, I don’t understand EPA’s science,” Ebert said. “And no farmer can legitimately comprehend and respond to the reams of academic analyses that have been produced through these meetings and continue to perform the tasks needed to run his or her farm business.”

Ebert chided EPA for spreading false information about family farms.

“EPA and its cohorts point fingers and paint agriculture – farmers just like me – as a villain that impairs water quality in the Bay,” Ebert said. “But their accusations are in direct conflict with U.S. Geological Survey data – which showed pretty positive gains on water quality in tributaries throughout the Bay Watershed. These gains are not because of our revised Bay strategy or EPA’s model. It merely demonstrates what agriculture has been doing for decades through increased knowledge, additional opportunities, technology and time.”
A farmer shouldn’t have to have a lawyer and an engineer on staff to grow food

McClure noted that Ohio farmers work hard to reduce runoff of excess phosphorous and nitrogen from their farms.

“Farmers have invested tens of millions of dollars of their own money in establishing conservation practices on their farms,” McClure said. “Between 2006 and 2012, they have voluntarily reduced phosphorous applications in the Western Lake Erie Basin by more than 13 million pounds. As farmers are stepping up to implement conservation practices now, they are committed to finding additional solutions in the future.”

English warned that federal regulations have become unworkably complex.

“A farmer shouldn’t have to have a lawyer and an engineer on staff to grow food,” she said.

English singled out the EPA’s controversial Waters of the United States rule as an example of bad science.

“The rule not only expands the regulatory footprint for farming and increases the uncertainty we battle daily, but it also lacks peer-reviewed sound science,” English said. “These regulations appear instead to be based on public opinion and social media trends rather than facts and science. The result is a highly unpredictable regulatory environment and uncontrolled costs when faced with compliance based on a moving target rather than a rational, science-based goal.”
Variety is the Spice of Life

With help from programs offered by NRCS, Dan Foglesong is able to produce a number of commodities on his Mason County farm.

Tabby Bennett

We have all heard that farming is not an easy job, and in today’s economy, the importance of a strong, functioning farm is even greater than before. Buying or renting land is not as easy financially as it once was, and the prices of all of the tools and resources needed to grow and produce food is continually rising. Some farmers, however, have found creative ways to accomplish their personal goals for their farms while providing quality commodities to their communities.

Dan Foglesong is a farmer in Gallipolis Ferry, West Virginia who has utilized various NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) conservation practices to help him improve his diverse and industrious farm. Foglesong owns 1155 acres and rents 542 acres, for a total of 1697 acres of farmland.

Dan produces a wide variety of commodities. He raises beef cattle, cow and calf pairs, finish calves, sows and chickens. His daughter, Danielle, an Animal Science and Nutrition major at WVU, shows calves in local, regional and state competitions when she is home from college.

Foglesong also plants corn, beans and wheat as row crops, and grows various types of vegetables and strawberries in his four high tunnels for the Farm to School program. The Farm to School program allows schools to purchase food from local farmers to use in their cafeterias.

Currently, Dan has four high tunnels, and he is approved to build two more through EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) with the assistance and expertise of NRCS. His high tunnels extend his growing season by allowing him to start planting earlier, and give him the ability grow more crops than he would if he had to wait for good weather to do all of his planting outside. Dan also takes advantage of EQIP by using grassland, animal waste and cover crop techniques he learned through the program.
Another way Foglesong improves his land and resource use through NRCS is by building fences along his streams through the AgEP (Agriculture Enhancement Plan) program. By building fence to block cattle from entering his natural water source, Dan is able to keep his water cleaner and avoid erosion issues along the banks.

In addition to his many NRCS programs and all of his daily work on the farm, Foglesong finds time to serve as the Mason county president of West Virginia Farm Bureau, volunteer at 4-H, judge local fairs, stay heavily involved in church and spend time with his wife, Sharon and his two kids, Drew and Danielle. “The NRCS programs help me get things accomplished on the farm and financially faster than I would do it otherwise,” said Foglesong. “I would recommend them.”
Farming is a business of uncertainty, but here’s something you can count on.

Chevrolet presents this exclusive $500 private offer toward the purchase or lease of an all-new Chevy Silverado — the 2014 North American Truck of the Year. From the family of the most dependable, longest-lasting full-size pickup in America, rest assured your Silverado will keep you working without skipping a beat.

1 Offer available through 4/1/17. Available on qualified 2015 and 2016 Chevrolet vehicles. This offer is not available with some other offers. Only customers who have been active members of an eligible Farm Bureau for a minimum of 30 days will be eligible to receive a certificate. Customers can obtain certificates at www.fbverify.com/gm. Farm Bureau and the FB logos are registered service marks of the American Farm Bureau Federation and are used herein under license by General Motors. 2 Dependability based on longevity: 1987–April 2013 full-size pickup registrations.
Outside Counsel Policy Ends Cronyism, Saves Millions

Lawmakers’ adoption makes good government policy permanent
West Virginia taxpayers deserve transparency, competitive bidding and millions of dollars in cost savings, all of which my administration delivered with its implementation of an outside counsel policy.

This initiative, already responsible for saving taxpayers more than $4.3 million since 2013, revolutionized the process by which my office selects private law firms to represent West Virginia whenever such assistance is determined to be cost effective and in the state’s best interest.

My policy immediately ended the “friends and family plan” and set into motion a new day for West Virginia. Its effectiveness garnered national attention and just this session the state Legislature codified the policy into law with passage of House Bill 4007.

The Legislature’s bipartisan support permanently ends decades of cronyism. It blocks future attorneys general from reverting to the days of inflated attorney fees and little transparency, which unnecessarily cost millions of dollars and harmed the legal reputation in West Virginia.

One big expense cut lies with a 25-percent cap on legal fees for the first tier of monies recovered. Significantly, we are pushing to even lower that amount and recently awarded a contract at a 20-percent level – all of this to spend as little as possible on outside counsel, while still relying on outside help when our office lacks resources or expertise to pursue a matter.

Fewer dollars expended on outside counsel means more money for consumers and the state of West Virginia, which in turn eases the financial burden of state taxpayers.

The policy utilizes a combination of transparency and competitive bidding to end cronyism. It requires written determination that a need exists, followed by public advertisement and an objective review of the proposed bids.

In certain instances, exemptions to bidding may be appropriate, but the public will always know the reason for such an exemption.

The written determination outlines specific findings as to the need for outside counsel. It also examines the time, expertise and geographic area involved with litigating the case.

A public advertisement then appears on the Attorney General’s Office website. The policy sets forth wide distribution of the request to ensure broad inclusion in the bidding process for an array of qualified firms.

The bidding process ends with the attorney general evaluating the bids based upon factors outlined in the policy. If the received proposals prove insufficient, the policy further outlines a process by which the office can solicit a second round of bids.

Our policy, as now codified into law, provides a blueprint for hiring outside counsel, but it remains my desire to handle cases in house as much as possible. Doing so only adds to the costs savings realized by taxpayers

For instance, the state expended no funds for outside counsel in its case against Frontier Communications.

The Frontier matter settled out of court for $160 million in promised infrastructure improvements, consumer fee reductions and payments to the state. Handing all legal work in house easily saved hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars, which strengthened the settlement by ensuring consumers realize more of its benefit.

Again, one of my top priorities is to save West Virginia money. I believe we can accomplish this by limiting the use of private law firms and strictly adhering to our policy in those instances where their assistance is required.

Together I believe these initiatives will be yet another way to help West Virginia reach her potential.

Patrick Morrisey serves as attorney general for West Virginia.
Funnsheep - oops - Finnsheep

Becky Crabtree
Our friend, Bill Kersey, had retirement plans that included raising sheep. He researched breeds extensively and traveled to out-of-state farms before deciding that Finnsheep were for him. He purchased a small herd and moved them to his farm just outside Peterstown in Monroe County. Then he had to retire from the sheep business because of a foot ailment that limited his time with the animals. Rather than sell them at the market, he let me have four pregnant ewes, an unrelated ram and a wether (a castrated male sheep) to keep the ram company.

Sheep farming was new to us. We’d never even heard of Finnsheep. While we didn’t expect them to be terribly difficult, we were not prepared for how much fun these sheep can be.

Finnsheep are a little smaller than other breeds, very docile, and generally excellent, nurturing mothers. Adding to the ease of care, they are naturally polled (no horns) and have short tails, so no tail docking. Multiple births are common. In two lambing seasons, we’ve never had a birth of just one lamb.

Our first delivery was on a sunny Sunday afternoon. Big Mama had four babies. That was when we first realized that sheep have only two teats. The third and fourth lambs have to be pretty aggressive to win a place at the dinner table. Also, if a lamb can’t stand up to nurse, mom walks away. It doesn’t seem very compassionate, but it is the way of sheep and Mother Nature. After four months of bottle-feeding three rejected lambs who grew up not knowing how to be sheep, we figured out that Mother Nature knows best.

We took the bottle babies to school one day that first year, diaper bag, bottles and all, and kindergarten students enjoyed feeding them and rubbing their new fleeces. True to the old saying, “Gentle as a lamb,” they lay in the arms of older students who let the 5-year-olds hold the bottle to feed the young sheep.

This breed forages well and doesn’t limit their diet to grass. Ours eat leaves in the woods and brush about as well as goats.

Finnsheep come in five main colors: white, grey, brown, black, and fawn. Although some experts say that black sheep always have black sheep, our Queenie had two black, a brown, and a white lamb in the same litter this spring. Last year she had three girls black at birth who grew up with white fleeces and black legs and heads. The genetics are fascinating.

Observing the personalities in the sheep field is quite captivating as well, certainly better entertainment than on TV. While Queenie, who is the leader, was in “confinement” waiting for delivery, another sheep, Crazy Aunt Champagne, became the chosen leader. She seemed to really relish the job. When Queenie brought her lambs back to the field, the others remembered that she was really the leader and followed her. Crazy Aunt Champagne pouted and sulked for a week.

The sheep clearly have friends and regularly eat with them in the field. It is easy to imagine that the girls are chatting about the kids and where to eat dinner as they graze. On the other hand, the sheep have some less than pleasant interactions. They even butt heads on occasion to make some unknown point. We
watch some ewes maneuver to stay between their lambs and Crazy Aunt Champagne, for example, which seems to show that they are particular who they let play with the children.

Those babies playing are a welcome springtime sight. They race and jump and frolic and then pile up in the sunshine and all sleep together. Sometimes, it looks like they are springing on all four feet. We can't help but smile at their antics as there is nothing much cuter than a lamb at play. Finnsheep babies mature earlier than other breeds and the ram lambs can impregnate their mothers at four months old, so their childhood is short. We separate the ram lambs from the others at four months old.

We also make time to sit and watch the lambs just after shearing. The new haircuts change the appearances of the mama sheep so dramatically that sometimes their own lambs don't know them. The little things run from sheep to sheep bleating in search of a familiar body. They always find their mother, but it is quite a chaotic situation for a while.

Our enjoyment doesn't change the fact that we are still novices with a great deal to learn. We belong to the Finnsheep Breeders Association and get the helpful “Short Tales” newsletter they publish. Their website is also excellent: http://finnsheep.org.

Updates on his sheep are sent along to Bill, but the stories are not as good as being there. We'll always be grateful for the opportunity he provided to us to add this remarkable breed to our little farm.
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Wilfong, continued

suppliers were already experiencing various degrees of financial stress.

Current market conditions will require both farmers and suppliers to cut costs out of our operations.

The position that we in agriculture find ourselves makes it more important than ever to have a strong Farm Bureau organization to support pro-ag policies at all levels. In our state, West Virginia Farm Bureau is the only organization that is out there every day working on behalf of farmers and rural issues.

We have many accomplishments legislatively but there is much more to do. As I am writing this, the state legislature is in its third week working to close a 270 million budget hole. We don’t know what effect the eventual budget will have on our agricultural issues. What is evident is that we have more government than we can afford. The legislature needs to downsize state government considerably. There are whole agencies that we would not miss if they were eliminated. Personally, I want to see realistic cut-backs before there is any talk of raising taxes.

One back-door method the state is already using to raise taxes on farmers is the School Building Authority (SBA). They pressure counties to pass excess levies on property in order to qualify for SBA funds. SBA is a very poorly run agency. Their solution often is to tear down and build new buildings when repairs and ordinary maintenance are all that is required.

But most of the financial woes of our state government are due to the over-reach of the EPA and its war on coal. EPA has an anti-business agenda. We must mount a strong defense against them. Thank goodness we have an Attorney General (Patrick Morrisey) who stands up to the EPA. We should all appreciate his work.

There has never been a time when we needed more to be unified and have a strong organization to work on our behalf. We need every farmer, business owner, homeowner, landowner and consumer who cares about the future of our state and country to be a part of our Farm Bureau organization. You don’t have to be a farmer to join - we represent the interests of anyone who cares about our food supply.

Please encourage your friends and neighbors who are not members to join us so we can do an even better job standing up for agriculture, rural and consumer issues.

Duvall, continued

like never before. I hear this when I visit with them. Thanks to good weather and improved technology, we expect an abundant grain harvest. But this won't yield good prices for farmers already struggling to get by. It's no secret that farm incomes took a nosedive this year--what's worse, incomes are expected to drop further still. TPP would increase cash receipts for a variety of farm products, including rice, corn, cotton, beef, pork, poultry, dairy, fruits and nuts, vegetables, soybeans and wheat. Overall U.S. exports would increase by $5.3 billion per year with this deal.

But those numbers don't mean much if we hand economic leadership over to other countries like China. "Other countries should play by the rules that America and our partners set, and not the other way around," President Obama wrote recently. "The world has changed. The rules are changing with it. The United States, not countries like China, should write them." What's more, other countries won't keep waiting on us for enhanced trade rules. In fact, 15 Asian countries, including China, met recently to start working out their own trade deal. And we can bet their trade deal won't look out for American agriculture.

We live and work in a global economy today--and that's good news for U.S. agriculture. We're in a growth business, but if we want to keep that up into the future, we need good deals like TPP to remove trade barriers and open up new markets Today, our auction barn is global, and when the opening gavel echoes, our lawmakers need to make sure our goods are in the arena.
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Roane County Extension Hosts Youth Agriculture Field Day

WVU Extension Service in Roane County coordinated a Youth Agricultural Field Day for 168 third grade students in the county. The event was held at Jim and Freida Wood’s farm in May. Schools participating were Geary Elementary, Reedy Elementary, Spencer Elementary and Walton Elementary.

Approximately forty Roane County FFA members assisted with the event. The FFA members taught at each of the thirteen stations which incorporated educational hands-on activities about agriculture and natural resources. The stations included goats, guardian animals, swine, dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep, soils, water quality, insect collection and identification, corn and agronomy (plant identification), horticulture, beekeeping, small pets and chickens and tractor and ATV safety.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) provided literature and hand washing stations for participants to use after handling the animals. A highlight of the day included a sheep shearing demonstration.

A new element at the event this year was the West Virginia Farm to School Program, which provided a 100% locally-sourced menu for lunch, to highlight the program benefits for our farmers, children, and communities. The menu consisted of hamburgers, roasted potatoes, salad, and cookies made by the Pro-Start program at the Roane-Jackson Technical Center.

Local farmers who sold food to area schools were on hand to help with the meal and be available to discuss their experiences with the FFA members and their advisors.

Roane County Farm Bureau supported the event by assisting with lunch. At the conclusion of the event, each child was given a coloring book about agriculture and a vegetable plant to take home.
Patriot Project Connects Mentor Farmers and Vets

The Farm Bureau® Patriot Project facilitates an educational and professional relationship between military veteran farmers and experienced farmers and ranchers. An ideal mentorship lasts at least six months.

The Patriot Project is partnership between the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and committed state Farm Bureau staff. State Farm Bureau staff members play a critical role in identifying mentors and facilitating mentorship relationships between the mentors and military veteran farmers.

West Virginia Farm Bureau’s Patriot Project Coordinator is Tabby Bennett.

Are you a vet interesting in participating? Are you a farmer interested in mentoring? If so, call Tabby at 800-398-4630 x. 302 or email her at tabbyb@wvfarm.org.
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This Fourth of July, take your backyard barbecue staples from basic to bold with knock-out burgers, grilled fruit “steaks” and festive red, white and blue-colored desserts.

Opt for burgers with a brazen rub that creates a caramelized outer layer. Make the meal an epic Fourth of July feast with a side of grilled watermelon steaks, marinated in white balsamic vinegar, lemon juice and rosemary, and topped with walnuts, lemon zest and fresh parsley.

“Burgers are an Independence Day mainstay, but that doesn’t mean they have to be boring,” said McCormick Executive Chef Kevan Vetter. “Pick a flavor combo that packs a real punch for the rub, then build out the burger with toppings and condiments to match that taste. For example, use Smoky Montreal Steak Seasoning, chili powder and brown sugar to make a sweet and smoky rub, then top with a rich BBQ mayonnaise, melty cheddar, grilled pickle slices and crispy onion straws.”

For more tips and recipes for unforgettable Fourth of July fare, check out McCormick.com and visit McCormick Spice on Facebook and Pinterest.
Cowboy Burger with Grilled Pickles and Crispy Onion Straws
Prep time: 20 minutes
Cook time: 20 minutes
Servings: 4

BBQ Mayonnaise
1/4 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons Stubbs Original Bar-B-Q Sauce

Crispy Onion Straws
1/2 cup flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon McCormick Ground Black Pepper
1 medium onion, very thinly sliced and separated into rings
vegetable oil, for frying

Cowboy Burgers
4 teaspoons McCormick Grill Mates Smoky Montreal Steak Seasoning
1 tablespoon McCormick Chili Powder
1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
1 1/4 pounds ground beef
4 slices mild Cheddar cheese
1 dill pickle, sliced lengthwise 1/4-inch thick
4 Kaiser rolls
4 lettuce leaves

For the BBQ Mayonnaise, mix mayonnaise and Bar-B-Q Sauce in small bowl until well blended. Cover. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

For the Onions, mix flour, salt and pepper in large resealable plastic bag. Add onion; toss to coat well. Pour oil into deep fryer, large heavy skillet or saucepan, filling no more than 1/3 full. Heat oil on medium-high heat. Carefully add onion rings to hot oil. Fry 4 to 5 minutes, turning once to brown evenly, until onions rings are golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Set aside.

For the Burgers, mix Seasoning, chili powder and brown sugar in small bowl. Shape ground beef into 4 patties. Coat surface of each patty evenly with the rub mixture. Grill over medium heat 4 to 6 minutes per side or until burgers are cooked through (internal temperature = 160°F). Add cheese slices to burgers 1 minute before cooking is completed. Grill pickle slices 2 to 3 minutes per side or until grill marks appear. Toast rolls on the grill, open-side down, about 30 seconds, if desired.

Serve burgers on rolls topped with grilled pickles, Crispy Onion Straws and lettuce. Serve with BBQ Mayonnaise.

Red, White and Blue Mousse Parfaits
Prep time: 30 minutes
Servings: 12
Serving size: 1 parfait

3 1/2 cups heavy cream, divided
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar, divided
2 teaspoons McCormick Extra Rich Pure Vanilla Extract
2 teaspoons McCormick Red Food Color
1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Lemon Extract
McCormick Assorted NEON! Food Colors & Egg Dye
2 tablespoons white chocolate chips

Beat 1 1/2 cups of the heavy cream, cocoa powder, 2 tablespoons of the sugar and vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until stiff peaks form. Add red food color; stir gently with spatula until evenly tinted.

Beat remaining 2 cups heavy cream, remaining 1/2 cup sugar and lemon extract in large bowl with electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form. Remove 1 cup. Add 3/4 teaspoon neon blue and 5 drops neon purple food colors; stir gently with spatula until evenly tinted.

To assemble parfait, alternately layer red and white mousses in dessert glasses. Top with blue mousse and white chocolate chips. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
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