Survey Aids Research on Cover Crops

Farmers are invited to share their thoughts on cover crops—whether or not they use cover crops themselves—in a national survey, now in its third year of collecting valuable data on the increasingly popular management practice. The results, which will be released this summer, will help growers, researchers, agricultural advisors, ag retailers and policymakers more effectively address questions about cover crops and learn about best practices.

The online survey at http://2014-2015covercropsurvey.questionpro.com takes a short time to complete. Farmers who complete the questionnaire are eligible for a drawing for one of two $100 Visa gift cards.

Data from this year’s survey will be compared to information from the two previous years in an effort to identify trends in cover crop practices and/or attitudes toward cover crops. Other questions will help conservation leaders zero in on details of cover crop practices. SARE, ASTA and scientists from Purdue University helped develop the questionnaire and will also help analyze the results. The editors of Corn+Soybean Digest are distributing the release to their subscribers, inviting a broad base of farmers to participate.

All answers are anonymous; respondents will be directed to another website at the end of the survey to enter the $100 Visa gift card drawing.

Food Check-Out Donations Help Families of Sick Children

American families spend less on food than families in any other nation. To celebrate that each year, West Virginia Farm Bureau holds “Food Check Out” events across the state. Dates for this year are March 26, Huntington; March 28, Morgantown; and April 17, Charleston.

Farm Bureau Food Check Out volunteers spend weeks collecting food and monetary donations to purchase meats, canned goods, paper goods and other non-perishable items to donate to the three Ronald McDonald Houses in Charleston, Huntington and Morgantown. Families of children being treated at nearby hospitals can stay at Ronald McDonald Houses free or at minimal cost, and have nutritious food to eat and a warm bed to sleep in, along with laundry and shower facilities. This allows them to concentrate on what’s most important, and removes some financial worries from their shoulders.

Would you like to help? Call the Farm Bureau office at 800-398-4630 and we’ll tell you how! Any donation is appreciated.

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
Spring Valley Farm
Joan Harman
Advocacy Is Important

Charles Wilfong, President, West Virginia Farm Bureau

Several of your WVFB leaders were in Washington, D.C. February 23-26 to take part in American Farm Bureau’s Advocacy Conference. The main focus of the conference was how to successfully promote Farm Bureau’s position on issues of concern. On the 25th, we had the opportunity to make visits to Capitol Hill. We met with Senator Capito, Representative McKinley, Representative Mooney, Representative Jenkins, and staff members of Senator Joe Manchin. It was very encouraging that our entire Congressional delegation was in agreement with us on most all of our issues. Some of the issues we discussed with them were:

• EPA overreach – the adverse impacts of EPA regulations on agriculture, coal, oil and gas and other industries, especially EPA’s attempt to redefine ‘Waters of the U.S.’ under the Clean Water Act.
• Estate taxes – we must have total repeal of this tax, so farmers and other small business owners don’t have to worry about losing family businesses when they die.
• Section 179 Expensing – farms and small businesses will be held to a $25,000 expensing limit unless action is taken to reinstate the previous $500,000 limit. In 2014, the extension was not passed until December, which allowed little time for farmers and small businesses to plan equipment purchases and other improvements for the 2014 year. The same will be true this year, unless the limit is again extended, or better still, made permanent.
• Predator Control funding
• Reforming Endangered Species regulations

see Wilfong, page 19

Is the Tide Turning on GMOs?

Bob Stallman, President, American Farm Bureau Federation

Consumers are tiring of anti-GMO rhetoric: They want facts. You don’t have to put those claims under the microscope to see how shaky the anti-GMO platform is. That’s no surprise to those of us who know the benefits of GM products firsthand, of course. Now, more than ever, is a prime time for us to be sharing our stories about the environmental benefits of biotechnology and the safety of GM foods we feed to our own families without hesitation.

Research and common sense back up what farmers and ranchers have long known about GMOs, and others are taking notice. Last October, the Journal of Animal Science released the findings of a new trillion-meal study, the most comprehensive GMO study yet. Animal geneticist Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam analyzed about three decades of livestock data to compare the health of nearly 1 billion animals. Her goal: to see what effect feeding livestock GMOs for over a decade now has had. The answer? None. No difference in the health of the animals, and no effect on the humans who eat those animals. Although this isn’t news to agriculture, the size of the study makes it a game-changer.

GMO opponents have used misinformation for too long to muddle the conversation. And the push for mandatory labeling has only confused things more. The call for GMO labels sure isn’t coming from the Food and Drug Administration, the nation’s top authority on food safety. FDA officials have declared GMOs safe and are standing their ground. In fact, GM crops have long withstood intense scrutiny, with not one documented food-safety case.

Fortunately, this charged rhetoric isn’t enough to convince most voters. Ballot initiatives to require

see Stallman, page 18
Chicago Doctor Invents Affordable Hearing Aid
Outperforms Many Expensive Hearing Aids

Reported by J. Page

CHICAGO: A local board-certified Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) physician, Dr. S. Cherukuri, has just shaken up the hearing aid industry with the invention of a medical-grade, affordable hearing aid. This revolutionary hearing aid is designed to help millions of people with hearing loss who cannot afford—or do not wish to pay—the much higher cost of traditional hearing aids.

Dr. Cherukuri knew that untreated hearing loss could lead to depression, social isolation, anxiety, and symptoms consistent with Alzheimer’s dementia. He could not understand why the cost for hearing aids was so high when the prices on so many consumer electronics like TVs, DVD players, cell phones and digital cameras had fallen.

Since Medicare and most private insurance do not cover the costs of hearing aids, which traditionally run between $2,000-$6,000 for a pair, many of the doctor’s patients could not afford the expense. Dr. Cherukuri’s goal was to find a reasonable solution that would help with the most common types of hearing loss at an affordable price, not unlike the “one-size-fits-most” reading glasses available at drug stores.

He evaluated numerous hearing devices and sound amplifiers, including those seen on television. Without fail, almost all of these were found to amplify bass/low frequencies (below 1000 Hz) and not useful in amplifying the frequencies related to the human voice.

Inspiration From a Surprising Source

The doctor’s inspiration to defeat the powers-that-be that kept inexpensive hearing aids out of the hands of the public actually came from a new cell phone he had just purchased. “I felt that if someone could devise an affordable device like an iPhone® for about $200 that could do all sorts of things, I could create a hearing aid at a similar price.”

Affordable Hearing Aid With Superb Performance

The high cost of hearing aids is a result of layers of middlemen and expensive unnecessary features. Dr. Cherukuri concluded that it would be possible to develop a medical grade hearing aid without sacrificing the quality of components. The result is the MDHearingAid® PRO, well under $200 each when buying a pair. It has been declared to be the best low-cost hearing aid that does not overly amplify background noise.

Tested By Leading Doctors and Audiologists

The MDHearingAid® PRO has been rigorously tested by leading ENT physicians and audiologists who have unanimously agreed that the sound quality and output in many cases exceeds more expensive hearing aids.

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As of this writing there are two weeks to go in the 2015 Regular Legislative Session. Good things continue to happen that bode well for Farm Bureau members, with perhaps more to come – all thanks to leadership, our friends on both sides of the aisle, and member involvement. Last month I reported on swift action by both the Senate and House in completing legislation (Senate Bill #3) to protect our state’s longstanding trespass liability laws. The legislation was approved by Governor Tomblin and becomes effective April 29, 2015.

Legislation has also been completed on Senate Bill #13 – seeking to reinstate West Virginia’s “open and obvious” doctrine of common law – and awaits approval by the Governor. Governor Tomblin also gave his approval to legislation completed on Senate Bill #237 – the Captive Cervid Farming Act (commonly called the deer farming bill), effective from passage on February 13, 2015. Many other positive pieces of legislation have been completed, with two significant bills impacting the agriculture community hanging in the balance at this writing – Committee Substitute for Senate Bill #423 amending the Aboveground Storage Tank (AST) Act, and the Committee Substitute for House Bill #2688 dealing with unitization on interests in drilling units (more commonly referenced as lease integration or forced pooling). Senate Bill #423 maintains the AST definition as a device to contain an accumulation of more than 1320 gallons, but provides an exemption for “a device located on a farm, the contents of which are used exclusively for farm purposes and not for commercial purposes.” This exemption does not apply to devices over 1320 gallons in a zone of critical concern. But the exemption does go a long way to help to reduce the unintended consequences of the AST act to agriculture. The Senate has passed the Committee Substitute and we are hopeful the House will concur.

House Bill #2688 has generated much discussion, with Farm Bureau members on both sides of the issue. Scheduled for 2nd Reading on the House floor, the legislation was consistent with policy developed and approved by members at our Annual Meeting in November. Farm Bureau leadership discussed the legislation at great length, and felt it created significant opportunities for members, while providing protection for their rights: no surface disturbance on any area subject to a unit order unless an agreement is approved by the surface owner; opportunity to reunite surface and subsurface estates in the case of lost and unlocatable mineral owners; no deductions from royalty payments; maintaining at least an 80% threshold/control of the unit (previous legislation called for 67%) before forced pooling/a unit order could be pursued on any horizontal well, irrespective of depth (represents a major gain – deep wells can presently be forced with little protection or concern for the needs and wants of the mineral or surface owner); expansion of the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

“House Bill #2688 has generated much discussion, with Farm Bureau members on both sides of the issue...is the bill perfect? It is not, but it is a step in the right direction.”
to include two new members, representing agriculture/forestry and mineral owners; etc. Is the bill perfect? It is not, but it IS a step in the right direction. I would remind readers legislation introduced during previous years – forced pooling, followed by lease integration – offered none of the aforementioned perks, which were made possible by a year-long process culminating with focused efforts involving all major stakeholders “eye-to-eye” around the same table to discuss needs and find common ground. House Energy Chair, Delegate “Woody” Ireland, is certainly to be commended for spearheading this effort. I am reminded of comments made during the past year by some of our strongest protectors of private property rights. In summary they’ve said – We’ve been able to help fortify the wall against forced pooling in the past, but it is gaining strength. If Farm Bureau doesn’t leverage its position to find compromise and gain for its members, that wall will be bulldozed down and “you’ll become a speed bump in the process!” Many truly feel HB 2688 represents a major net gain for our members. Others feel it is a disaster. The disaster will be if nothing is done and we find ourselves at some point in the future as that speed bump in the process! Until our trails cross in political circles, at an agricultural event, or in your corner of Almost Heaven, West Virginia – KEEP SMILING FRIENDS, God bless you and your loves ones, and God bless America.

Delegate Linwood “Woody” Ireland, Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, explains the fine points of HB 2688 at a recent meeting of the Rural Caucus. The Caucus provides lawmakers an opportunity to explore issues more deeply over lunch, making more efficient use of their time.

Ireland addressed concerns over specifics of the bill, including the addition of members representing surface and mineral owners on the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

Ireland added that financial concerns would be addressed in separate legislation.
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Driving defensively is important for all drivers, but is especially critical for farm machinery operators. According to the National Ag Safety Database, crash fatality rates in the most rural counties are almost double what they are in urban counties.

Here are some more surprising facts about rural driving that come from the database:

- Rural crashes are more frequent, more severe and more likely to result in death than urban crashes
- Tractors are involved in the majority of crashes on roadways
- Tractors are getting faster; some travel up to 45 mph
- Most farmers believe driving their tractors on rural roads is more dangerous now than it was a few years ago

Stay safe on public roads

Especially during planting and harvest seasons, more farm vehicles share roadways with other vehicles. That includes planters, combines and other farm equipment moving from one field to another, and trucks and tractors transporting produce or farm supplies.

To help ensure your safety:

1. Display the Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblem on all off-road vehicles.

2. Make sure emblems are in good condition and properly mounted.

3. Use proper vehicle lighting.

4. Use flashers anytime you use public roads. The American Society of Agricultural Engineers (ASAE) recommends 2 flashing amber lights, mounted at least 42 inches high, in both the front and rear.

5. Comply with your state laws. For headlights and tail lights:

- Most state laws require using headlights 30 minutes before sunset, until 30 minutes after sunrise.

- Also use headlights whenever insufficient light or unfavorable weather conditions exist. ASAE recommends 2 headlights on the front, at the same level, positioned as far apart as possible. They also recommend 1 rear-left and 1 rear-right red tail light mounted as far apart as possible, and 2 red reflectors visible from the rear.

6. Inspect hitches to verify they are sturdy and properly mounted before towing equipment or using wagons.

7. Always use safety chains, if equipped.

This information was obtained from sources believed to be reliable. Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company and its employees make no guarantee of results and assume no liability in connection with any suggestions or information contained herein. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that every acceptable safety method is included in this article or that specific circumstances may not require additional methods or alternative safety suggestions. Also, nothing contained herein is meant to represent or indicate compliance with applicable standards or requirements mandated by federal, state or local jurisdictions.
Farming is a business of uncertainty, but here’s something you can count on.

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1 Offer available through 4/1/17. Available on qualified 2014 and 2015 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. Certificates are included with the purchase or lease of a eligible, new qualifying GM vehicle in a participating state. This offer can be combined with most GM offers. Certificates are available at www.farmbureau.com/silverado. Visit dealer for complete details.

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Young Farmer and Rancher Update

Susan Wilkins, YF&R Chair

Being West Virginians, we are accustomed to occasional feelings of cabin fever during the winter when the snow is piled up, the electricity is out, and there’s no one to talk to but your family and the cows outside. I learned last month, however, that cabin fever isn’t something you only get when you’re isolated in the mountains. You can also experience cabin fever while staying in one of the world’s largest resorts, surrounded by a 1000 other people, with restaurants and shopping just steps away.

Dubbed “Atlanta 2.0”, this year’s FUSION Conference in Nashville, Tennessee continued the tradition of bad weather following the Farm Bureau family. We thought it would be a year for the history books as weather forecasters were calling for the storm to be among the top three biggest Nashville had ever had. That did not turn out to be the case, but we did get a nasty ice storm. As the ice encased Opryland, our farm tours were cancelled and the schedule shuffled to entertain the folks who hadn’t fled the conference ahead of the storm. While we were disappointed to miss out on the tours, seeing the fantastic documentary “Farmland” more than made up for it! The Grand Finale Event at the Wildhorse Saloon was a much needed distraction from the weather worries; although I’m not sure the stressful bus trip across town was really worth it!

By Tuesday, with more storms forecasted for that night and the next day, we were all ready to get out. Despite the ice still on the roads, the State of Emergency called by Tennessee’s Governor, and the inevitable travel delays facing us, we packed up and hit the road before the next storm hit.

West Virginia’s Young Farmers were represented by Mariah Hatton, Silas Sattler, Nicole Sattler, and myself. We had a terrific time attending sessions and meeting young farmers from across the country. It was also a good opportunity to build our relationship with our state Women’s Leadership Committee who were also in attendance.

A recurring theme in the speakers at this year’s event particularly spoke to me. From Keni Thomas, a combat veteran of the 75th Ranger Regiment and Bronze Star recipient, to Dr. Dale Henry, an educator and former Marine, to presenters of breakout sessions; we were encouraged to make the most of the gifts we have been given.

Keni Thomas reminded us of the scripture from Romans 12:6-8 – “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

A breakout session presenter on advocacy encouraged us to find the things we are good at and that we enjoy, and excel at those. We don’t have to try to be great at everything we do. Some of us might be better county leaders, while others are better at teaching kids and doing ag lessons, and others may be better bloggers and speakers. And that’s ok. We have all been given gifts and we need to embrace those gifts.

So, as we shake off the last of our cabin fever and prepare for a new season of spring, give some thought to the unique gifts God has blessed you with. How can you use those gifts to help grow and strengthen this great industry that we all love?
The phrase “he was born to do this” has never been more true than when applied to Eli Cook. Cook and his wife, Misty, are the owners of Spring Valley Farm and Orchards in Slanesville, just outside of Romney, West Virginia.

Eli’s path into farming began at twelve years of age, when he and his brother sold produce from their parents’ garden at a local farm market. Tasting success, they moved to planting an acre garden on a neighbor’s property, and continued to expand from there. “We just kept trying to grow a few new things and do a little more each year,” he said.

At age 17, Eli began selling at a farmer’s market in Manassas, Virginia, along with three or four other markets in northern Virginia and West Virginia. At that point, he was growing about 15 acres of produce.

In 1999, Cook entered West Virginia University, where he met Misty. Majoring in business and economics, Eli would continue selling his produce at markets on the weekends. Following graduation, he and Misty married and decided to settle in Hampshire County, where land was more affordable. And that was the beginning of Spring Valley.
It became clear early on that to support his family without getting an off-the-farm job, Eli would have to sell his produce to an ever-expanding area. So, in 2005 he began selling at markets in Silver Springs, Maryland and at Dupont Circle in D.C. That, in turn, opened up opportunities to sell year-round, as hundreds of customers flock to the farmers markets in winter. His initial goal was to sell year-round in six markets, so the Cooks began adding greenhouses and high tunnels to accommodate demand. “It was a challenge,” said Cook. “There wasn’t much research on winter growing. We felt like pioneers. We’ve learned a lot.” Presently, Spring Valley Farm’s winter produce includes apples, potatoes, kale, collards, leeks, carrots, beets, lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard, Brussels sprouts and more.

Expanding his business into the D.C. area has opened up other opportunities as well. Spring Valley Farm has been able to take part in the Farm-to-School program, and also to sell to some D.C. restaurants. And perhaps the most notable experience was participating in the Congressional State Fair on the South Lawn of the White House in 2011, where they met Michelle Obama.

Today, Spring Valley Farm is comprised of 255 acres in Slanesville, and an orchard in Romney. The Cooks employ 15 full-time workers, with an additional 65 or so during peak production. Misty takes on the task of scheduling markets, and their three children pitch in, too. The Cooks try to use high school and FFA students as much as they can, as Eli himself was in FFA. Many of their other workers are migrants, and Eli is fiercely protective of them. “I love my guys,” he says passionately. “They would do anything for me. They will pick for twelve hours and then come and ask, ‘what else can I do?’” Cook would like to see a solution to the immigration issue that makes a way for workers to stay here. “There’s got to be a better way.”

Despite the challenges of meeting ever-increasing demands with ever-increasing regulations, Spring Valley will continue its upward trajectory. The Cooks are constantly on the lookout for ways to expand their operations and offerings, because it’s all about the customer. Even in frigid temperatures, they show up to buy Spring Valley’s produce. With that kind of loyalty, the sky’s the limit.

Far left: Eli Cook is constantly busy, checking lists and keeping an eye on things during our interview. Left, workers pack produce in Cook’s recently constructed warehouse, built to GAP standards. Below, far left: one of Spring Valley’s many greenhouses – this one chock full of tomatoes. Below left, tubs of produce await transportation to a market in the D.C. area.
South Branch Valley Livestock Exchange

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Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action Employer
Amy Summers is often described as “bubbly” and “vivacious.” Her charming smile and sparkling eyes can be disarming. But don’t let those adjectives fool you. Amy Summers is a woman on a mission.

Summers, from Taylor County, didn’t like the direction she saw the Mountain State headed in. The state’s unfriendly business climate bothered her. Years ago, she and her husband, Rod, had to leave the state themselves to find work. Job opportunities for people in her home county were few and far between, presently with only two major employers - Arch Coal and Wal-Mart. Many of those employed in the mines come from outside her district. Infrastructure was crumbling everywhere. And the state placed dead last or near the bottom on every significant achievement list. Amy often heard her dad say, “If you don’t like the way things are, do something about it.” When Summers’ youngest child left for college, she decided to do just that.

So, now she finds herself in Charleston as Delegate Amy Summers, representing the 49th district. “This is a good time to get here,” she says. Summers was pleasantly surprised with the unity she saw among the House leadership. “They have a vision, a plan to move the state forward.” Summers was also impressed with the work ethic of her fellow delegates – “a lot of people here work very long hours.” Another surprise for Summers was to see the many areas of expertise represented by her fellow lawmakers. She feels it’s an advantage to have a wealth of experience available when making decisions. Summers, too, was able to bring her own expertise to the table recently regarding legislation which addressed liability issues for hospitals when treating trauma patients. A paramedic and nurse with 29 years of experience, Summers understood the very real danger of hospitals refusing to treat trauma patients if they could not have some protection from unreasonable lawsuits.

When Amy is not walking the halls of the capitol, she’s at home in Grafton where she and her husband, who works for the Department of Justice, have an Angus operation. The Summers are parents to three children – Sarah, a teacher at Ripley High School; Molly, who works for Mylan Pharmaceuticals; and Zac, a freshman majoring in Engineering at WVU.

Amy knows the changes she is seeking for West Virginia won’t happen overnight. Among other things, she believes that tort reform is needed and, if passed, will help the state become much more competitive with surrounding states and create more jobs for West Virginians. She is very vocal about increasing employment prospects so that people don’t have to leave the state to find work, as she and her husband did. Amy knocked on a lot of doors to get where she is today. And now she’s hoping to open doors for greater opportunities in the state she loves.

photo: WV House Photographer Perry Bennett
Getting the Ag Lab Where it’s Gotta Go

Jimmy Suttle, owner of Suttle’s Hot Shot Service, is a welcome addition to the Mobile Ag Ed Science Lab program. While Suttle assumed the duties as hauler for the Lab in August of 2014, he has yet to be introduced to the entire WVFB community.

Transporting the Lab is much more than simply pulling and parking the Lab at schools all over West Virginia. Jimmy meets and corresponds with individual school contacts, communicates by cell and email with our Farm Bureau office, levels and preps the lab, keeps the onboard generator’s diesel tank filled, washes the exterior and performs routine maintenance and special repairs as needed. His mantra, when we ask if he can do something for the program, is always “We can make it happen.”

Jimmy ‘makes it happen’ for the youth of West Virginia. Thanks for being such a responsible, reliable, and giving new team member. Now, if we could only get you to pose for a picture…?

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Since my last article I traveled to California in January for the very first time to attend the AFBF Annual Convention. In February, I attended Ag & Forestry Day at the Legislature in Charleston and the AFBF Fusion Conference in Nashville just 10 days later. I enjoyed every minute but it’s nice to have some time to spend at home, and I’m needed at my full-time job too.

**AFBF ANNUAL CONVENTION:** If you’ve never been to San Diego, it is beautiful and the weather is wonderful, especially since it was below zero back home. I didn’t get to experience an earthquake, thank goodness, but it is much different than West Virginia. They are really very health conscious and concerned about their environment. There are lots of “green spaces” in the city for residents to walk their dogs – everyone must have at least one dog. And lots of runners everywhere! It made me exhausted and my knees hurt just watching them.

Our hotel was located right beside the huge convention center on the bay with a marina. There was a boardwalk that we walked and shops just up the boardwalk from us. Further on was the USS Midway, now a floating museum. We spent time there covering every aspect from the Captain’s chair to the laundry and multiple galleys. I gained even more respect for the men and women who serve on aircraft carriers with the dangers they face.

The convention was very good and I attended several outstanding sessions. At our Northeast Region WLC caucus, we elected Debbi Tanner from Connecticut to serve another two year term and at the AFBF WLC meeting, Sherry Saylor from Arizona was elected the new AFB WLC Chair with Isabella Chism from Indiana elected as the new Vice Chair. These ladies are excellent and will continue the focus on telling our story, education, and leadership. A reception sponsored by Nationwide was excellent and I even got to pet a real, live alligator and meet Jack Hannah. What more can this girl ask?

**AG AND FORESTRY DAY:** We had a great turnout at the Capitol visiting with our legislators but the highlight each year is definitely our Taste of West Virginia Reception. It has always been well-attended by our legislators and the food never disappoints. I got a chance to meet with all my representatives and many who serve from other districts here in the Eastern Panhandle. I also got to witness voting on two Senate bills that were passed on to the House. Things were definitely busy in Charleston.

**AFBF FUSION CONFERENCE:** Ten days later, I’m off and running again, this time with nine ladies and Bill Aiken in a 15-passenger van headed for Nashville. So, how long does it really take to drive through West Virginia? That day it took us almost 6 hours to drive from Buckhannon to the Kentucky border, because a truck overturned on I-64 between Charleston and Huntington. Both lanes were detoured but it still took us over 3 hours to go maybe 20 miles. Despite the delay, it was a great way to spend extra time getting to know each other. While we were in Nashville, the area experienced its worst ice storm in 20 years. The mall, restaurants, gas stations and all the honky tonks were closed. Our van had no ice scraper, so it took poor Bill a long time, in really cold temperatures to get the van “de-iced” so we could drive home. The Tennessee State Highway Department has far less snow equipment than Kentucky and West Virginia. Needless to say, their roads were horrible but by the time we crossed into Kentucky on our way back to WV, the roads were much better.

Despite our transportation experiences, the conference was probably one of the best ones I’ve been to in the 18+ years on the WLC. The speakers and sessions were outstanding. This was the first time “fusing” the WLC, YF&R, and the new P&E (Promotion & Education) Committees into one conference. There may be some slight tweaking before the next one in two years but all in all it was a great learning experience to have the three together. The young farmers from all across the country who attended so impressed me with their ideas and knowledge. The future truly is in great hands!

*see Ladies, page 18*
Stallman, continued

labeling in Colorado and Oregon both failed last fall. Policymakers on Capitol Hill are taking notice and starting to question the “need” for labels also. Former Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) noted at a House hearing this fall that labeling would mislead the public and send the message that GMOs are dangerous. Mr. Waxman made a good point. We should allow the FDA to continue doing its job setting standards for food safety and labeling.

Consumers are more and more interested in the story of their food. This is good news for farmers and ranchers. We’re proud of the work we do and are eager to share how food gets from the farm to the table. Feeding a growing population is a popular topic now, and “sustainability” is the buzzword. GM crops will play a big role here. Farmers and ranchers have their work cut out for them, but they are ready for the challenge and to lead this conversation.

The U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance brought farmers and ranchers to the table for this discussion recently at the New York Times’ “Food for Tomorrow” event. While most of the conference pushed for administrative action, a few farmers and ranchers broadened the conversation to help attendees see what sustainability in action looks like. Julie Maschhoff, Bruce Rominger and Joan Ruskamp closed the event by explaining the hard work and careful planning that go into providing healthy food for our families, and for the generations to come.

Panels like this are just a slice of the conversation that thousands of farmers and ranchers around the country are ready for. Consumers want to know the truth about what’s in their food – and who better to inform them than the very people who grow it?

Ladies, continued

AG IN WEST VIRGINIA POSTER CONTEST UPDATE: For those counties who are participating in the poster contest, the deadline is fast approaching. Remember to have your first place poster judged and sent into the state office by April 1st. I can’t wait to see all the works of art from these 4th grade students.

FOOD CHECK-OUT WEEK CHANGE: By the time you receive this edition, it will probably be the week that Huntington and Morgantown shop and deliver their food and items to their respective Ronald McDonald Houses. Those counties that shop for the Charleston Ronald McDonald House will have several additional weeks to collect food and money, as that date has been changed to Friday, April 17th.

Here’s hoping that when we all receive this March edition, spring has finally arrived. I am so ready to see buds and hear and see robins. Remember, I’m just a phone call or email away if you need help on activities or projects in your county.

Blessings from my home to yours!
Pam
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Wilfong, continued

- General fiscal responsibility
- Illegal immigrants – this continues to be a troubling issue, with protection for the President’s Executive Order for amnesty having been tied to funding for Homeland Security. If the Executive Order is allowed to stand, illegal immigrants will become eligible to receive a Social Security number, as well as qualify for the Earned Income Tax credit for the current year and three years prior. Individuals could collect up to $24,000 through this process, and also qualify for an additional $6000 per year going forward. Also, employers would receive a $3000 incentive per year by not having to pay Obamacare penalties for such employees. Hopefully, the courts will strike down the Executive Order. It is discouraging for working Americans to see their taxes used to support such efforts, in what many say is essentially buying votes.

Most importantly, it is essential that Farm Bureau members communicate regularly with their Congressional representatives, to make their feelings known on issues critical to the well-being of our families and our businesses.

Herbal Formula Eases Farmers’ Aches And Pains

“I read about Steuart’s Pain Formula in a farm magazine,” says Rickey D. Snow, Hood, California. “I hurt my shoulder January 18th 2013, and had constant pain until the middle of March. My doctors could do nothing, within 10 minutes of applying pain formula, the pain was completely gone!”

Jack Zimmerman from Elysian, Minnesota is a disabled Afghanistan war veteran. He stepped on an IED in 2011 & lost both of his legs. “After I spend a day in my wheel chair I end up with a lot of back, neck, & shoulder pain. Within a half hour of applying Steuart’s Pain Formula I am pain free. Now, I can tolerate a whole day in my wheel chair.”

Warren Ward of Pemberton, Minnesota says his knees ached so terrible at night that he couldn’t get to sleep without taking pain killers. “An orthopedic surgeon told me both my knees were shot, I had bone rubbing on bone, and I needed knee replacement surgery. Then someone told me about Steuart’s Pain Formula. I started using it and in 3 days I had no pain in my knees. I went right to sleep at night and I haven’t taken a pain killer since.”

The cream contains extracts of the herbs comfrey and arnica in a liposome base that penetrates the skin rapidly, says Gary Steuart, who founded the company in 1982. “People use the product to relieve joint and muscle pain associated with arthritis and injuries,” Steuart says.

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Farm Bureau leaders visit Capitol Hill to discuss issues important to the Mountain State
West Virginia Farm Bureau board and staff members attended a three-day conference February 23-26 in Washington, D.C., which addressed issues of critical concern to agriculture. The first annual American Farm Bureau Advocacy Conference featured a number of dynamic speakers, including Dana Perino, Donna Brazile and Dr. Ben Carson. A series of workshops at the conference concentrated on specific topics such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act and their effects on farmers and ranchers, along with discussions on immigration, tax reform, biotechnology and trade. Attendees could also choose from a number of offerings that addressed strategies for successful visits with Congressional representatives.

Following Wednesday’s presentation by Carson, Farm Bureau members fanned out across Capitol Hill to meet with legislators. WVFB staff met with Representatives McKinley, Mooney and Jenkins and Senator Capito. Joe Manchin was unavailable, but staff members met for a brief discussion.
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Electronic Licensing System and Game Check Comes of Age in West Virginia

Faced with an antiquated mix of electronic and paper hunting and fishing license systems, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources has been working the last few years to come up with a state-of-the-art system that will be more efficient and convenient for both the public and DNR personnel.

Online Licensing System
The goWILD licensing system was developed in-house by the DNR in 2002. Obviously, computer software has improved by leaps and bounds since that time, and old programs are no longer sustainable. The old saying goes -- if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. Well, in this case, it was broken, and it had to be fixed.

The new licensing system began January 1, 2015. The only folks who should notice much of a difference are those who bought an old paper license with affixed stamps at a license agent, which accounted for only 20 percent of license buyers. Licenses will still be sold at approximately 180 license agents around the state, but the agent will enter your information on a computer and print out your license, just as if you were doing it at home. For the first time all agents will be using the same system.

The process for hunters and anglers who have purchased their license online will be the same, although they will have to navigate a new home page on www.wvhunt.com.

Lifetime license holders who need to buy additional stamps will be able to go online, access their existing account, and buy what they need. The computer will recognize the approximately 92,000 lifetime license holders as they have already been entered into the system.

One benefit of the new system for license buyers is that once they have an account, they will be able to make and review purchases, check game, enter drawings for limited hunting seasons, and see their history of checking game. A benefit to DNR is that now all license purchases will be recorded on the same system, allowing the agency to more easily account for purchases, making the process more efficient. It will also make the collection of license fees by the DNR more efficient. In addition, the DNR will no longer have to print licenses and stamps such as the Class A license, and Class N and RG stamps, which will save the time and cost of printing, packaging and shipping the stamps and licenses.

Electronic Game Check
The BIG change for hunters, and for trappers of beaver, bobcat, fisher and otter will be the ability to check in game by phone or computer starting April 1, 2015. Those who still like to talk in-person about their hunting experiences will be able to stop by one of the approximately 180 official license agents and check in their game. However, unlike past years, they won’t have to bring the animal in with them. Hunters and trappers will still have to follow the time and transportation restrictions as listed in the regulations. To check game in by phone, hunters will have to know their unique DNR ID number which is valid for their lifetime. That number will be printed on the top of the license for those folks who buy a license each year. Lifetime license holders will need to log in to the system to obtain their DNR ID number, which has already been assigned to them. Landowners and those who don’t need a license (such as residents under the age of 15, resident hunters who turned 65 before January 1, 2012, former POWs) can log on to the system and obtain their number.

Hunters and trappers can also check their game in by computer. Those logging in for the first time can set up an account, get their DNR ID number if they don’t have it already, and then check in their game.

When a hunter or trapper has completed the electronic game check process, they will be assigned a 13-digit number that confirms that the game has been checked in properly. That game check confirmation number must be written down on a field tag or a sheet of paper along with the other information required in the regulations.

Few people embrace change, especially when the current system has been in effect since game checking was required. But the Electronic Game Check System is designed to be more efficient than the hand-written check tag system and more convenient for all concerned.
A hot new dessert trend is here — cookies are getting a makeover. As identified in the McCormick Flavor Forecast 2015, favorite cookie flavors — like snickerdoodles and gingersnaps — are being reimagined in new decadent desserts. From peanut butter mousse tarts to chocolate chip biscotti with a creamy dipping sauce, these desserts redefine “milk and cookies.”

“Here in the kitchens, we looked at the distinctive flavors of popular cookies for inspiration,” said Mary Beth Harrington of the McCormick Kitchens. “Cinnamon sugar is the signature flavor in snickerdoodles, so we reimagined that cinnamon sweetness into a peanut butter mousse and peanut crust, resulting in a delicious tart.”

Chocolate Chip Cookie Biscotti with White Chocolate Dipping Sauce

Prep time: 20 minutes
Cook time: 45 minutes
Servings: 16 servings (2 cookies and 2 1/2 tablespoons sauce each)

Biscotti:
2 1/2 cups flour
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/4 cup instant nonfat dry milk
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
1 teaspoon McCormick Extra Rich Pure Vanilla Extract

White Chocolate Dipping Sauce:
2 cups half-and-half
8 ounces white chocolate chips
1/4 cup Irish cream liqueur
2 teaspoons McCormick Extra Rich Pure Vanilla Extract

For the biscotti, mix flour, sugar, dry milk, baking powder and salt in large bowl with electric mixer on low speed until well blended. Mix eggs and vanilla in medium bowl until well blended. Gradually add to flour mixture, beating on low speed until well mixed. Stir in chocolate chips.

Divide dough in half. Shape each half into a 12-inch long log. Transfer logs to parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Flatten logs to 1-inch thickness.

Bake in preheated 350°F oven 20 to 25 minutes or until slightly risen and firm to touch. Cool logs on wire rack 10 minutes or until cool enough to handle. Transfer to cutting board. Using a sharp serrated knife, cut logs diagonally into 3/4-inch thick slices. Place slices, cut sides down, in single layer on parchment paper-lined baking sheets.

Bake 10 to 15 minutes or until crisp and golden, turning biscotti over halfway through cook time. Transfer biscotti to wire racks; cool completely.

For the dipping sauce, place all ingredients in medium saucepan on medium heat. Simmer 5 minutes or until heated through, stirring constantly. Serve with biscotti.

Peanut Butter Snickerdoodle Tart with Cinnamon Peanut Crust

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 8 minutes
Refrigerate: 1 hour
Servings: 8 (1/2 tart) servings

1 1/2 cups lightly salted roasted peanuts, lightly crushed
3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
3 tablespoons butter, melted
1 teaspoon McCormick Ground Cinnamon, divided
3 tablespoons chocolate milk
4 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
2 tablespoons sweetened condensed milk
1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Vanilla Extract
1/2 cup heavy cream

Mix peanuts, sugar, butter and 1/2 teaspoon of the cinnamon in medium bowl. Remove 1/4 cup and spread on small baking sheet. Divide remaining peanut mixture among 4 (4-inch) tart pans with removable bottoms. Press firmly onto bottom and up sides of each tart pan.

Bake tart crusts and peanut crumble mixture together in preheated 350°F oven 8 minutes. Cool on wire racks.

Meanwhile, microwave chocolate milk in medium microwavable bowl on high 45 seconds. Add chocolate; stir until chocolate is completely melted and mixture is smooth. Set aside.

Beat peanut butter, sweetened condensed milk, vanilla and remaining 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. Add heavy cream; beat until soft peaks form. Spread in prepared tart crusts. Spread chocolate mixture over top.

Refrigerate at least 1 hour or until ready to serve. Cut each tart in half. Sprinkle with toasted peanut crumble. Serve immediately.

Note: To crush peanuts, place peanuts in large resealable plastic bag. Pound with a rolling pin, mallet or heavy skillet until lightly crushed.
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