

## Lewis County Farm Bureau Attends State Annual Meeting

Lewis County Farm Bureau joined farmer members from across the state at New York Farm Bureau's State Annual Meeting on Dec. 5-6 in Albany to set the public policy priorities for the coming year. Delegates from the county Farm Bureau were also recognized for their achievements on behalf of the more than 200 farm families they represent.

"It is a truly energizing experience to be in a room with a diverse group of farmers, working together to advance our industry through this unique grassroots process", said Lewis County Farm Bureau President Jen Karelus. "We are looking ahead to another tough year; the policy agenda we set will go a long way in keeping our farms innovative and viable."

Five Silver Key awards were presented to the county Farm Bureau for exhibiting excellence in the following categories: Membership Agricultural Education & Promotion; County Financial Management; Information and Public Relations; Leadership Development and Policy Implementation— State and National. The county Farm Bureau was awarded a \$600 check from New York Farm Bureau for its efforts.



Through Nov. 2017, nine million pounds of fresh food and farm products have been donated by farmers to regional food banks. That translates into nearly seven million meals being provided to New Yorkers in need.

"New York farmers come through year after year with generous donations of fresh food to help feed people in their communities who may be struggling. This effort remains a priority for New York Farm Bureau", said David Fisher, New York Farm Bureau President.

## Willits Shined on National Stage

*Ashley Willits believes that it is important to live with passion, love for others and a desire to be secretly incredible.*



Ashley Willits, Class of 2014 from Lowville Academy and Central School, has had a unique opportunity to serve 650,000 members of the National FFA Organization. As most of her classmates have continued with their higher education opportunities or entered the working world, Willits saw an opportunity to make a difference in the organization that has taught her about passion, dedication and leadership.

In October 2016, Willits was elected at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, as the Eastern Region Vice President. There are only six national officers that travel over 100,000 miles and visit over 25 states in a year of service to the members of FFA and the agriculture industry. Willits is among

a few select people that have held the title of National FFA Officer. She is the 13<sup>th</sup> New Yorker to be selected to serve in this role and the first female from New York and the first northern New Yorker to be selected to serve.


After high school Willits received her Associates Degree in agricultural business from SUNY Morrisville and started toward her Bachelors Degree in agricultural education at Tarleton State in Stephenville, TX in the fall of 2016. As a national FFA officer she had to put her education on hold for a full year to travel for the national organization and will be returning to Tarleton in the spring of 2018 to complete her degree.

Keep an eye on your mailbox or check NYFB.org for a host of issues that you can easily advocate for.

***Your voice truly makes a difference!***

Here are a few of the priority issues that NYFB will be fighting for in 2018:

- Double the minimum wage tax credit for farmers starting in 2018.
- Oppose unworkable farm labor mandates and make much needed updates and reforms to New York State labor laws and regulations.
- Increase school meal reimbursements to incentivize the purchase of fresh and minimally processed local food.
- Support the removal of an acreage requirement for farms in the agricultural assessment program as long as they meet income eligibility requirements.



**To Serve And Strengthen Agriculture**  
As a member of New York Farm Bureau, your voice is valued.

**Member Login**

[eLobby - Take Action!](#) [Events](#) [Become a Member!](#)

**How to E-Lobby—It's fast and easy:**

- Go to [www.nyfb.org](http://www.nyfb.org) and click on the green "eLobby-Take Action!" button on the left side of the page under the banner photos, or by clicking the green "Take Action! Advocacy" button.
- Find the letter you want to send and click "Take Action."
- The action alert description will appear followed by the recipients and the letter text. Type in your name and address and press "Send Message" at the bottom of the page.
- Your letter is sent directly to lawmakers and you are helping to impact farm public policy! Encourage your friends to E-Lobby by typing in their e-mail addresses.

**Take Action!**

**Advocacy**

*If you have any problems using the E-Lobby feature, call the NYFB office at 1-800-342-4143.*

## LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



New York Farm Bureau  
Young Farmers & Ranchers

**YOUNG FARMERS -  
AGRICULTURE'S LINK TO THE FUTURE**

**MARCH 16-17, 2018**  
HOLIDAY INN, AUBURN



Keynote Speaker - Matt Lohr

All Young Farmers are invited to attend:

- Agricultural Tours
- Motivational Keynote Speaker
- Workshops to benefit you and your business
- Networking with other young agriculturalists
- Updates on State & National issues affecting Agriculture

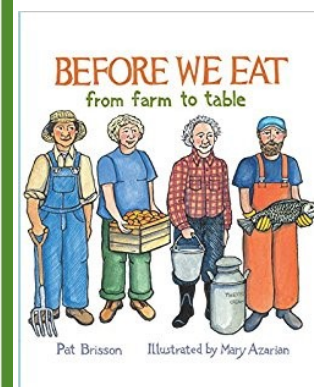
More details coming soon

800-342-4143

[NYFB.org](http://NYFB.org)

**There are a limited number of special discounts available to cover \$100 in costs. Contact John Wagner at 315-761-9770 or [jwagner@nyfb.org](mailto:jwagner@nyfb.org) for more information.**

## 2018 Agricultural Literacy Week



In celebration of agriculture, we are once again taking an active role in **Ag Literacy Week**. We had such a wonderful time last year and the children loved it.

It is such a rewarding program to be involved in and we hope you will join

us. During the week of **March 19-23**, we are looking for volunteers to read *Before We Eat*, by Pat Brisson, to elementary school children. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jen Karelus at [jen.karelus@millerspraying.com](mailto:jen.karelus@millerspraying.com) or 315-486-8820.



159 Wolf Road  
Albany, NY 12205



Lewis County  
Farm Bureau News

Save the Date

4th Annual Lewis County FFA Farmers Challenge  
Sat., Apr. 7 at 6 p.m.  
More information, contact Melvin Phelps at  
315-688-2508

This issue of the Lewis County Farm Bureau newsletter  
is sponsored by:



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*Lewis County Farm Bureau meets on the second  
Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the  
Cornell Cooperative Extension Offices of Lewis  
County, 5274 Outer Stowe Street, Lowville, N.Y.*

# Lewis County Farm Bureau News



## January 2018

### President’s Report



*Jen Karelus*

Happy New Year! We are off to a cold and snowy start, but things are heating up as we get ready to advocate for you, our members, on the state and national level. A delegation of Farm Bureau volunteers will be traveling to Washington, D.C. this winter to address national priorities including a revamped safety net for dairy farms and improved protection for specialty crops grown in New York. In March, Lewis County Farm Bureau volunteers will head to Albany for New York Farm Bureau’s annual Lobby Day and Taste of New York Reception to push for sound policies, adequate funding and attention to the issues, mandates and burdensome regulations facing our rural communities. Keep up to date with our advocacy efforts and learn how you can make a difference at NYFB.org.

**New York Farm Bureau’s Taste of New York Reception is Monday, March 5, in Albany. If you have a farm product you would like to showcase in the Lewis County Farm Bureau booth, please contact Jen Karelus at 315-486-8820 or John Wagner at 315-761-9770. This is a great opportunity to show elected officials from across the state the diversity and importance of Lewis County agriculture.**

### Hidden Pastures Dairy Wins AFBF Award for Innovation



From left to right, NYFB District 6 Director Jake Schieferstine, Andrew and Blake Place along with their children, LCFB President Jen Karelus and NYFB President David Fisher. They were recognized for their achievement in November at Taste of Lewis County and again at NYFB’s State Annual Meeting in December in Albany.

Lewis County Farm Bureau members and owners of Hidden Pastures Dairy, Blake and Andrew Place, are turning their dreams into a sweet reality through hard work, dedication and a \$10,000 boost from the American Farm Bureau Federation’s Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge.

Hidden Pastures was among ten farms recognized in AFBF’s Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge out of nearly 500 applicants. They won their category of Best Local Product Startup and \$10,000 for their plans to produce goat milk gelato.

“I was so overcome with joy”, said Blake. “Life is all about taking a chance and putting your heart on the line for something you believe in. We are so grateful that Farm Bureau and the Rural Entrepreneurship Judges took a chance on us and we are forever thankful for the generous award.” “We are excited to see what lies ahead for our farm and our family”, added Andrew.