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Farmers Union Convention Feb. 2-4 to draw hundreds of farmers to Wisconsin Dells

Farmers from across the state will gather at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells Feb. 2-4 for the 87th annual Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention. Throughout the family-friendly weekend, attendees will join in networking, workshops, and the important work of shaping the policy that will guide WFU's work in 2018.

The weekend will kick off on Fri., Feb. 2 with Groundswell, a one-day conference that will engage attendees through sessions on Do-It-Yourself Economic Development and Engaging in Local Government. Sarah van Gelder, author of *The Revolution Where You Live: Stories from a 12,000 Mile Journey Through a New America* and cofounder of *YES! Magazine* will serve as keynote at the pre-convention event, sharing stories about communities building power and making change. Attendees will learn how business owners, cooperatives, family farmers and others are working to bring hope back to Main Street. The cost to attend is \$65 for nonmembers (includes one-year family membership) or \$35 for members.

On Friday evening from 6-9p.m., the WFU Foundation Fundraiser: A Night in The Pines, will celebrate the legacy of Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood and raise funds for facility improvements at the historic camp. Admission is \$50/person and includes a buffet dinner or \$10/person for later entry at 7:30pm to join in for dessert and the live auction. Tickets are available at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention. WFU is soliciting raffle baskets, products, art or other donations for live and silent auctions at the convention. If you are interested in donating, please contact Amanda at 715-723-5561 or akollwitz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

The official convention kicks off Saturday with workshops and a presidential address from Wisconsin Farmers Union President and Westby dairy farmer Darin Von Ruden.

Saturday's banquet keynote will be John Ikerd, who will shed light on The Economic Colonization of Rural America. Ikerd, a Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics, was raised on a small dairy farm in southwest Missouri. He worked in private industry for a time and spent 30 years in various professorial positions at state universities. Since retiring, he spends most of his time writing and speaking on issues related to sustainability with an emphasis on agriculture and economics. He is the author of six published books.

Other workshop topics and presenters will include:

- The Next Generation of Farmers with Chris Holman of Nami Moon Farms, WFU District 6 Director and member of the National Farmers Union Next Generation Advisory Council
- Farmers Union History with Tom Giessel, National Farmers Union Honorary Historian
- Funding a Value-Added Ag Enterprise with Paul Dietmann and Sai Thao of Compeer Financial
- A New Local Agri-Food System with John Ikerd, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics
- Outside Investment in Agricultural Land with Johnathan Hettinger, Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting
- *Searching for Sustainability* Screening with producer Val Dantoin Adamski



Friends of the Family Farmer and membership awards will be presented during a luncheon on Saturday. Other activities throughout the weekend include a concurrent Youth Co-op Convention, the Torchbearer's Award Presentation for youth program graduates, a silent auction and a Sunday morning interfaith service.

The convention is open to the public but only member delegates may vote on policy issues. On the final day of convention, delegates will elect or re-elect directors for the WFU Board. Up for re-election this year are District 2 Director Dennis Rosen (Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, and St. Croix counties), District 6 Director Chris Holman (Adams, Columbia, Green Lake, Juneau, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Waupaca, Waushara, and Wood counties) and District 7 Director Tina Hinchley (Dane, Jefferson, Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth counties). Rosen has announced he will not seek re-election. Two delegates will also be elected to represent WFU at the National Farmers Union Convention March 4-6 in Kansas City, Missouri.

Early bird registration discounts end Jan. 18. Visit www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention for more details and to register. For more information contact the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.

Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement. For more information visit www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

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