

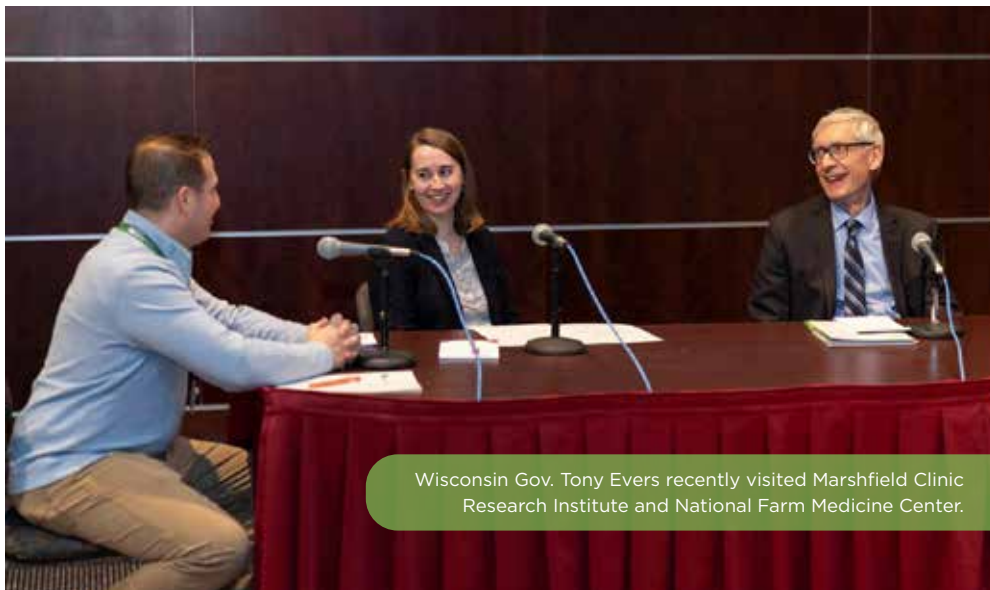
Cultivate

SUMMER 2023

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL FARM MEDICINE CENTER

Slow Moving Vehicle signs available to Wisconsin farmers

Wisconsin farmers are eligible to receive a free [Slow Moving Vehicle \(SMV\)](#) sign through a partnership of the National Farm Medicine Center, Rural Mutual Insurance Company, University of Wisconsin – Extension, the Marathon County Sheriff's Office, the family of Mike Biadasz and the Auction of Champions. The signs are being distributed free of cost to Wisconsin farmers in hopes that the improved visibility will save lives on public roadways, said Bryan Weichelt, Ph.D., an associate research scientist with Farm Medicine and program director of [AgInjuryNews.org](#). Limited quantities of signs are available now at Marathon Feed in Marathon, and ProVision Partners in Stratford, Auburndale and Hixton. In addition, Rural Mutual will distribute signs at Wisconsin Farm Technology Days, July 18-20, in Baraboo. The [Wisconsin Farm Related Fatalities Reports](#) for 2019 and 2020 show farm fatality numbers remain high, and incidents on public roadways continue to be deadly.



Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers recently visited Marshfield Clinic Research Institute and National Farm Medicine Center.

Gov. Evers visits Farm Medicine to discuss rural mental health

Gov. Tony Evers met Feb. 7 with National Farm Medicine Center scientists and staff during a visit to Marshfield Medical Center in Marshfield.

The discussion focused on the Evers Administration's investments in farmer and rural mental health, and the research Farm Medicine is conducting around mental health.

Participating in the discussion were Casper "Cap" Bendixsen, Ph.D., director, National Farm Medicine Center; Florence Becot, Ph.D., rural sociologist at Farm Medicine; and Julie Kaprelian, Ph.D., child psychologist, Marshfield Children's Hospital.

"We appreciate the governor's emphasis on this issue, and his taking the time to come to Marshfield," said Bendixsen. "Mental health care is a major concern for Wisconsin and the U.S. more generally. Within these challenges, there are those that are uniquely detrimental to rural areas."

Becot said insurance costs and child care are two of the largest stressors impacting farmer's mental health. Becot said two-thirds of the

farmers they surveyed said they had concerns about cost, access and quality of childcare.

Farm Medicine has a history of mental health research and outreach dating to a study on suicide among Upper Midwest farm residents and farm workers during the 1980s. In 2019, Farm Medicine hosted state legislators of the Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention, who conducted a public hearing at Marshfield Medical Center. Also in 2019, Farm

Medicine organized the Mental Health First Aid for Rural Wisconsin education series and provided expertise to the US Veterans Affairs veteran-to-farmer wellness program, both with philanthropic support from the Auction of Champions. The three workshops provided training for farm communities to recognize, react to and prevent mental health emergencies.

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Casper "Cap" Bendixsen, Ph.D.

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Dr. Becot awarded Miller Endowment



Rural sociologist Florence Becot, Ph.D., was awarded the Steve J. Miller Distinguished Physician/Scientist Endowment in Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety Research. The endowment recognizes excellence in medical research, education and clinical care. The endowment will aid Becot in continuing her research, which explores the availability and types of social supports, including health insurance, child care and mental health and crisis support, as well

as the role of these support systems in supporting farm households and their farm business.

Farm Medicine part of UMASH center grant

The Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH), a collaboration involving the National Farm Medicine Center, was one of 11 centers selected by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to receive funding for a new five-year cycle. The announcement marked the third consecutive cycle that UMASH has been successful in its competitive bid for funding. Included is Dr. Florence Becot's project, "Identifying individual and contextual determinants underpinning farmers' help-seeking behaviors and their role in shaping mental health outcomes," and Dr. Casper Bendixsen's, "Rural Firefighters Delivering Agricultural Safety and Health (RF-DASH)."

National Children's Center director testifies before Congress

In perhaps the National Children's Center's deepest push into public policy, center director Barbara Lee, Ph.D., testified before Congress on Sept. 7, 2022, as one of three invited witnesses in support of the Children's Act for Responsible Employment and Farm Safety of 2022, or CARE Act. The fully remote hearing covered the current state of federal child labor laws and protections and policy proposals to improve them. Lee said changes in public policy can improve protections for youth working in agriculture, but that any changes should, "account for our nation's agricultural landscape because traditions, values and expectations differ from urban settings." Despite considerable progress in the past 30 years, "far too many young people are still impacted by health conditions, injuries and death associated with agriculture," Lee said.

Remembering Dr. Gunderson



It was with heavy hearts that we learned of the passing of Paul Gunderson, Ph.D., former director of the National Farm Medicine Center (1992-96) and Marshfield Clinic Research Institute (1994-2000), who died on Dec. 17, 2022, while clearing snow at his farm in Harvey, N.D. He was 82. Gunderson led Farm Medicine to national prominence, beginning with its establishment as one of the first National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) agricultural research centers. He helped

broaden the scope of Farm Medicine's research to include not only farm-related injury and exposure, but also medical illnesses related to farm exposures, particularly cancer. Gunderson published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles. Some believe his greatest contribution was in

farmer mental health. He led a [study on suicide among farm residents and farm workers](#) during the 1980s that is still cited today. "He was such an accomplished scientist and advocate for the health and safety of American farmers and the value of farm medicine research," said John Howard, director, NIOSH. "He will be greatly missed."

One of Dr. Gunderson's last projects was a microbiome study involving central Wisconsin dairies and Drs. Sanjay Shukla and Casper Bendixsen. "Working with Paul was like getting a glimpse into the future," Bendixsen said. "And, personally, it's always nice to have another cowboy hat in the room."

Child care as Farm Bill priority

The nation's two largest farmer advocacy groups, American Farm Bureau Federation and National Farmers Union, have voted to include child care/early childhood education in their Farm Bill policy priorities. That's gratifying news for Florence Becot, Ph.D., and her colleagues, whose research is being used to develop solutions to support the health, safety and economic viability of the farm population. Congress will debate the Farm Bill in the coming months. "As rural researchers, our conversations with policymakers suggest that there may be bipartisan support to help increase access to affordable quality rural child care as lawmakers hear from families," said Becot, an investigator with the National Children's Center.



Congratulations, Dr. Swenson

Andrea Swenson, Ph.D., has accepted the position of associate research scientist in Farm Medicine and will assume the role of associate director for the National Children's Center.

Swenson, who grew up on a dairy farm in central Wisconsin, joined Farm Medicine in 2019 as a project scientist-program evaluator.

Auction of Champions

Save the Date! The annual fundraising gala is set for Sept. 21, 2023, at RiverEdge Golf Course, Marshfield, Wis. Auction of Champions will feature exciting raffles, exclusive auction packages and locally-raised meat, all to support the National Farm Medicine Center and its agricultural initiatives dedicated to keeping farmers healthy, happy and safe.

Furthermore

Farm Medicine welcomes three newcomers: Stephanie Lull, an experienced administrative assistant; Jakob Hanschu, M.A., a socio-cultural anthropologist who is working on the Farm Kid Paradox study; and Juan Saucedo, a Doctor of Medicine graduate pursuing a career in research and public health. Saucedo is assisting with AgInjuryNews and the National Children's Center. ... "Going Full Circle" is the theme of the National Farm Medicine Center/National Children's Center [2022 Year in Review](#), reflecting Farm Medicine's approach to improving the lives of the agricultural populations we serve. Year in Review Editor Melissa Ploekelman has packaged our best of 2022 into stories, highlights and infographics. ... The Farm Medicine Outreach Team was proud to participate in the "Power of Ag" day hosted by the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry at H&S Manufacturing. More than 350 students from 11 central Wisconsin high schools learned about agriculture-related careers.

Our Mission

"With the ultimate goal of improving human health, wellbeing and safety of rural and agricultural communities, the National Farm Medicine Center acts as a national resource by conducting high quality research, developing and delivering health and safety information, exploring innovative intervention models, and leading initiatives and networks."

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