

# Cultivate

SUMMER 2024

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL FARM MEDICINE CENTER

## Clinic adds military status to patient health record

Military experiences and exposures are well-known factors that affect individuals' health and well-being, both in the short and long term. To better diagnose and treat current military and veterans, staff and physicians at Marshfield Clinic Health System are now asking patients about having been in the military or are currently serving. "This innovation places our research team at a tremendous advantage," said Bryan Weichelt, Ph.D. "We will be one of the few health systems in the country equipped to examine health data in light of someone's work and military history."

## Auction of Champions Save the Date!

Che figata (how cool)! The annual fundraising gala will feature an Italian-inspired theme. Join us Sept. 19, 2024, at RiverEdge Golf Course, Marshfield, Wis., for 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.

## Slow Moving Vehicle sign campaign expands

To raise safety awareness and potentially save lives, Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) signs are being distributed to farmers free of charge through an expanded partnership involving Marshfield Clinic Research Institute's National Farm Medicine Center, Rural Mutual Insurance Co., H&S Manufacturing, and Nasonville Dairy. The Wisconsin SMV Program, introduced in early 2023, has been re-launched with more participating businesses including machinery repair shops, fire departments, lenders, and feed cooperatives. In addition, Rural Mutual will distribute signs at Wisconsin Farm Technology Days, August 13-15, in Cadott, Wis. For a listing of distribution sites, please visit: [www.marshfieldresearch.org/nfmc/smv](http://www.marshfieldresearch.org/nfmc/smv)



## Farm Medicine answers call from New Mexico farmer

The National Farm Medicine Center is working with Navajo farmers and New Mexico State University Extension to provide first responders and farmers with practical, lifesaving knowledge about reacting to emergencies on farms. The "Rural Firefighters Delivering Agricultural Safety and Health" (RF-DASH) project team, led by Dr. Casper Bendixsen and Jakob Hanschu, traveled to northwestern New Mexico, near Shiprock, for a training earlier this year at the request of a Diné Navajo farmer and community activist, Zachariah Ben. Ben and his wife, Mary, farm and operate Bidii Baby Foods and are working to reduce risk for farmers, law enforcement and fire/EMS in the region. The training was attended by tribal farmers and security personnel, San Juan County fire/EMS and farmers, and New Mexico State University Extension Services. The March 30 training was hosted at New Mexico State University Extension's Growing Forward Farm. Trainers and staff also included Chief Jerry Minor from Pittsville Fire Company, and two RF-DASH trainers from Utah, Amanda and Justin Norr.

The RF-DASH training schedule continued July 15 in Baldwin, Wis., with classroom-based training focused on first responders new to RF-DASH.

**Agricultural Rescue Training:** Registration is open soon for the next Agricultural Rescue Training, Oct. 25-26, in Marshfield, Wis. This combination classroom/field event prepares emergency responders for low frequency/high danger events associated with agricultural settings. This training is supported by funding from the Auction of Champions.

<https://rfdash.org/ag-rescue-training/>

## Dairy microbiome environment drives dairy farmers' health



Central Wisconsin dairy farmers share many of the same microscopic organisms as their cows, which may lead to greater protection against illnesses like allergic rhinitis, asthma, eczema and diarrheal diseases, according to a study led by Marshfield Clinic Research Institute in collaboration with the Washington University School of Medicine. Results were published in the April issue of *Nature Microbiology*. Microbiome

is the collection of all microbes, such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, and their genes that naturally live in human body or an environment. "Overall, our study demonstrates the interconnectedness of human and animal microbiomes," said Sanjay Shukla, Ph.D., director of the Center for Precision Medicine Research at Marshfield Clinic Research Institute. Co-investigators included Dr. Casper Bendixsen, director of the National Farm Medicine Center and Dr. Jeffrey VanWormer, director of the Center of Clinical Epidemiology and Population Health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health funded the study. Read the full story at <https://marshfieldresearch.org/News/dairy-microbiome-environment-drives-dairy-farmers-health>

## High school students learn about TICS study



Researchers from Marshfield Clinic Research Institute's Integrated Research & Development Lab joined 20 other vendors and approximately 350 high school sophomores this past spring at the Power of Ag Career Fair at H&S Manufacturing, Marshfield, Wis. The event was sponsored by the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry Agribusiness Committee. Dr. Alexandra Linz, Dr. Jennifer Meece and Charles Payant talked to students about TICS (Tick Inventory

via Citizen Science). Their interactive activity featured two mannequins with actual ticks glued to them. After an initial, "Eww... are they real?" the students conducted tick searches. "We also had students take surveys about their tickborne disease knowledge, and handed out our tick collection kits for them to mail us ticks that they find on themselves or their pets," Linz said. "It was great to discuss research outside of the institute and to enlist more citizen scientists!" Melissa Ploeckelman and Scott Heiberger, who represent Farm Medicine on the Agribusiness Committee, helped conduct the April 26 event. Students came from 10 central Wisconsin high schools.

## Skin cancer screening conducted at growers' conference



The National Farm Medicine Center, with philanthropic support from the Auction of Champions, partnered with Marshfield Clinic Dermatology to provide skin cancer screening at the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) conference at the Stevens Point Holiday Inn. The best part of the day was hearing stories from grateful patients! One man said he participated in the

screening at this very conference seven years ago, which led to diagnosis of a rare form of skin cancer that he has successfully managed ever since. The February event screened 76 people and continued a tradition of screening at farmer-focused events that dates to the 1990s. Since 2011, Farm Medicine has facilitated skin cancer screening at 12 events across Wisconsin, examining approximately 2,400 people, finding more than 200 presumed cancers and generating more than 700 referrals for additional examination of suspicious moles or patches of skin.

## Child injuries on farms not 'accidents'



Headlines such as, "Toddler killed in tractor accident," or, "Boy dies in farm accident," grab our attention and sympathy, but they also prevent us from addressing the root causes of those tragedies. "An 'accident' suggests that the situation could not have been anticipated or prevented," said Barbara Lee, Ph.D., National Children's Center. Using "accident" avoids a serious investigation

of the event, and hampers efforts to alter unsafe environments or conditions in which children are present, wrote Lee in an open-access commentary published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Agromedicine*. Lee and colleagues at the National Farm Medicine Center have conducted research indicating that most news media professionals are open to using words to replace "accident" such as "incident."

## Miller Endowment to Dr. Bryan Weichelt

We are thrilled to announce that Dr. Bryan Weichelt has been selected as the recipient of the Steve J. Miller Distinguished Physician/Scientist Endowment. The Steve J. Miller endowment was established for the purpose of conducting rural and agricultural health and safety research.

The Miller Endowment will support Dr. Weichelt's continued efforts to improve the lives of farmers, workers, children, and military veterans. On a national level, Dr. Weichelt is currently serving as a fellow with the National Rural Health Association. The endowment was named through a gift from Marbeth Spreyer, a Marshfield native, to Marshfield Clinic Health System and Marshfield Clinic Research Institute in memory of her father, Steve J. Miller, who was a cheese wholesaler in Marshfield.

## Furthermore

Farm Medicine Director **Casper Bendixsen, Ph.D.**, has been named to the board of the Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America. Farm Medicine was instrumental in establishing the industry-led not-for-profit group in 2008. ... **Marsha Salzwedel, Ed.D.**, who embodies the core values of a child farm safety advocate, wrapped up a 35-year career with Marshfield Clinic Health System effective June 6, 2024. For the past 12 years, Marsha worked within the National Farm Medicine Center and the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, moving from research specialist, to project manager, and after completing her doctorate, to project scientist. Marsha plans to enjoy summer and then pursue her deep enjoyment of teaching students. ...

**Somi Panday, Ph.D.**, has joined the National Children's Center as part of Dr. Andrea Swenson's research team. Dr. Panday has a doctorate in nursing science from Florida Atlantic University, and a master's in public health from North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. She has completed training programs in mental health, recovery and community inclusion, and is experienced in qualitative and quantitative research methods. ... **Roger Aby, Ph.D.**, has joined Farm Medicine as a research specialist, and will be working primarily with **Dr. Bryan Weichelt**. Aby recently passed his dissertation defense at the University of Illinois. He is well-versed in agricultural safety and health, including research to improve the safety of agricultural autonomous machines. ...

**Dr. Andrea Swenson** and Marshfield Clinic Health System Director of Federal Government Relations **Brad Wolters** met with several legislative offices in Washington, D.C., during a February visit, sharing research and dissemination activities led by the National Children's Center and National Farm Medicine Center.

## 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."