

Contributed photos / Julie Murray

With his years of experience raising, riding, training and racing horses throughout Minnesota, Asher Murray, left, now retired, loves to share his knowledge of equine care with family members, friends and the next generation of trainers. One of those trainers includes his daughter, Bri McDaniels, who trained at Canterbury Park in 2021.

## PROVEN TRACK RECORD

Asher Murray, a record-breaking longtime horse trainer and racer from Wadena, says he's 'never really had a bad day with a horse'

**By Rebecca Mitchell**  
For Rural Living

Asher Murray has a philosophy about horses: Every horse has a story. All the horses the record-breaking trainer has worked with over the years boast a good life story. Murray himself has a good story, too, from his years of successfully raising, riding, training and racing horses throughout Minnesota — including at Canterbury Park (formerly Canterbury Downs) in Shakopee, where he fostered a winning streak and became the horse racing track's

first registered trainer in 1986. He was a successful trainer and racer for decades, and many in the Minnesota horse world came to know and respect him for his skills. What many may not know is that those skills began to develop in Murray's very early childhood, when he was a young boy living in Wadena on the Murray family farm, at SE Fifth Street. "Growing up here in Wadena on this farm, my dad was a horseman, a cowboy type. He could rope and ride," Murray says. "He loved teams of horses, too,

like offering kids a sleigh ride. He led every parade whenever they had a parade in Wadena." He recalls his dad getting together with town leaders, local business owners and friends, and says, "all they did is talk horses." And his family would invite friends of all ages to come ride their horses and learn the basics of feeding and tacking. Once he was old enough to ride, Murray would take a pony to the Wadena swimming pool, and in the 1970s he competed with a number of legends in Minnesota racing, including the Bethke brothers, Steve

Erban, the Warhol family and the McKinleys, according to an online article on Canterbury Live. He began sharing his knowledge of horses with others at a young age, and by 12 years old, people were asking him to tame their horses for them. The trick to taming and training horses, he says, is to always treat them with kindness. "My dad was very gentle and kind with horses, so I picked that up at an early age — that if you never scare a horse, they

**MURRAY:** Page 6



Asher Murray grew up riding horses on his family's farm in Wadena and became the first registered trainer at Canterbury Downs (Park) in 1986.



Longtime horse trainer Asher Murray stands with one of his horses from years ago. All the horses he's cared for boast a good story — as do many of the people who've been impacted by knowing Murray.

## Rallying around women-owned rural businesses

**Elizabeth Vierkant**  
For Rural Living

Rural areas aren't bad for business, despite what conventional wisdom may teach us. In fact, as a large number of lakes area businesswomen are proving, the community connections and support that small towns are famous for can actually be a boon. Many of these women were gathered together on March 5 for the first-ever Aspire Summit, hosted by the Wel Collective — a lakes area nonprofit created to help rural women thrive — at The Cactus in Perham. "Our zip code holds us back no more," Rebecca Udem, a motivational speaker, coach, and

rural businesswoman from Oakes, N.D. said at the summit. "The size of your town isn't the thing holding you back." The summit included a brunch and workshop with Udem, and gave participants a chance to network, develop their skills, and promote their businesses amongst each other. "It's harder to find a network of people (in big cities)," said Leona Cichy, the founder and board president of Wel Collective. "Whereas in a rural area, people have more of an ability to connect with you... If you have a desire to start a business, you can take that idea and find connections in the community and move forward with it. That's

something that happens in rural communities." In fact, that's how Wel Collective itself got started. Cichy was feeling disconnected from other businesswomen in the area, so she reached out to a couple of other women around her, and now, two years later, nearly 100 women attended the Aspire Summit to connect with one another. Udem believes events like the Aspire Summit are important because the biggest struggle of being a rural woman in business is the sense of loneliness that can come along with it. That loneliness can cause fear, and that fear can hold people back. **BUSINESSES:** Page 5



Elizabeth Vierkant / Rural Living

Leona Cichy, founder and board president of Wel Collective, and motivational speaker Rebecca Udem pose for a picture together inside The Cactus in Perham during the Aspire Summit on March 5.



# Two Perham FFA teams are advancing to state

By Rebecca Mitchell  
For Rural Living

Perham area students are set to show off their skills at the Minnesota FFA convention in April. The convention is returning to an in-person format for the first time in two years.

After months of preparation, two teams from the Perham FFA Chapter are advancing to state: the Livestock Evaluation and Fish and Wildlife Management teams. The teams include Shyanna Watercott, Macey Minten, Gary Steeke, Sarah Larson and Britney Loerzel; and Madison Tharaldson, Emily Reed, Sarah Schlosser and Avery Malone.

“Most of our students pick their CDEs (career development events) in the fall, and then in December there’s the University of Minnesota Crookston invite so they get to go and have, like, a practice,” explained Shell Tumberg, Perham FFA advisor. “Then they can find out what categories they need to study for or didn’t do well on, and then they spend the next two months until our competition season working on those categories.”

The Livestock Evaluation team followed the path of the Loerzel sisters, who helped grow the team into strong competitors. The team judges beef cattle, sheep, pigs and goats in separate classes. The animals are placed from best to worst by appearance and parts, like rib and leg structure.

At regionals, students are placed both individually and as a team. Avery Malone and Britney Loerzel placed second, Madison Tharaldson



Contributed / Britney Loerzel

Senior Britney Loerzel has been a Perham FFA member for four years. She shows cattle and pigs, including her heifer Lizzy, with whom she earned a purple ribbon Merit Award at the 2021 Minnesota State Fair.

*“We just worked at it.”*  
-FFA sophomore Emily Reed

placed twelfth and Trish Crews placed eighth in their CDEs.

“I do a lot of cattle showing and I show pigs too, so when I go to these shows, I’ll watch these classes and just kind of practice judging on my own,” Loerzel said. “And maybe I’ll have the right placing as that judge there.”

Their studying also includes analyzing diagrams and pictures of the animals, and learning terminology. Sophomore Gary Steeke followed helpful tips from his uncle and cousin to earn a 50 out of 50 in the goat judging class. Sophomore Shyanna Watercott also earned a 50 out of 50.

Tumberg noted the work and preparations that go into these events

make FFA a 12-month program.

“I was terrible at goats, but then we have ‘Mr. Goat Man’ over here (Steeke), who’s like, ‘Just judge them like cows,’” Watercott said.

After trying the event online last year, she also enjoys the beef cattle and pig classes.

With the attitude of, ‘Let’s try this,’ sophomores Sarah Schlosser and Emily Reed joined the Fish and Wildlife team for the first time. The team analyzes a current issue, identifies a vast variety of species and completes a written test. The current issue is wildlife diseases.

“Wildlife is probably the most academic career development event just because it’s a lot of the



Contributed / Perham FFA Chapter

The Perham FFA Livestock Evaluation team includes Shyanna Watercott, Macey Minten, Gary Steeke, Sarah Larson and Britney Loerzel. The team will compete at state in April 2022.



Contributed / Perham FFA Chapter

The Perham FFA Fish and Wildlife Management team includes Madison Tharaldson, Emily Reed, Sarah Schlosser and Avery Malone. The team will advance to the state competition in April 2022.

biology,” Tumberg said. “That list is like 200 species long.”

The bus ride to the competition, the night before and months prior are key studying times.

“We just worked at it,” Reed noted.

Schlosser added that the team is “lucky” to have study materials from Malone, who is the team’s captain following her move from Thief

River Falls, where she competed for the past four years. They also do practice tests and memorize fact after fact.

“We weren’t really planning on doing wildlife, so we just threw ourselves in and learned basically all of it in the months that we went to it,” Reed said. “It was a lot to learn.”

Throughout this year, Reed said she “realized

how great this group of people really is and just was able to create a bond with this group of people.”

With excitement and nerves, the students are preparing to compete at state April 24-26.

For more information about the Perham FFA Chapter, contact Tumberg at stumberg@perham.k12.mn.us.

## Perham dairy farmers honored as East Otter Tail County emerging leaders

News Staff

Dave and Jen Schwantes are East Otter Tail County’s representatives in the 2022 Red River Valley Emerging Leadership Program.

The couple operates a 90-cow dairy farm outside of Perham. Along with their cows, they raise corn, alfalfa, sorghum and barley on 300 acres for feed.

They, along with individuals from 16 other counties in northwestern and west central Minnesota, are being honored for their participation in the emerging leadership program and for their commitment to leadership in their community.

While meeting in Detroit Lakes, Thief River Falls and Mahanomen, the Schwanteses have networked with leaders from across the region and gained insight on personal leadership styles, communication, rural issues and facilitating effective meetings, according to a University of Minnesota Extension news release. The group members set goals for how they will lead and follow in their work and community roles.

The theme for the Class of 2022, “Be,” has served as a reminder that it isn’t what we accomplish, but rather how we will be in our relationships and in our leadership roles.

University of Minnesota Extension coordinates the Emerging Leadership Program and provides educational content. Local partners include the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, Red River Valley Development Association and many regional donors.

The Perham couple will be honored for their commitment to leadership and their community during a recognition event on March 26, which will be broadcast on Facebook Live at 6:30 p.m. The public is invited to join the event online at facebook.com/groups/RRVELP/.



Contributed / University of Minnesota Extension

Dave and Jen Schwantes of Perham are the 2022 East Otter Tail County representatives for the Red River Valley Emerging Leadership Program.

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Michael Johnson / Pioneer Journal  
Deana and Bill Malone, with two of their granddaughters, enjoy a day at the Wadena County Grandstand in June 2021. The Malones were recognized as the 2020 Wadena County Farm Family of the Year; they were celebrated during the 2021 fair since the previous year's fair was canceled due to COVID-19.



# ‘Going on 39 years, and I’m still learning’

## Dry wells cause Wadena County farm family to pivot and adapt

**Michael Johnson**  
For Rural Living

**W**hen the well ran dry at the Bill and Deana Malone dairy farm, it seemed easy enough to just drill a new well.

But when drill site after drill site came up empty, the sickening feeling set in that the immense amount of water needed to hydrate

the dairy herd was not going to be found. It was this foul ball that sent the 2020 Wadena County Farm Family of the Year recipients reeling for answers and pivoting into a way of life that seemed foreign.

Bill was hit hardest as the primary dairy farmer; he cared for the cows’ every need for over 38 years. It was the job he loved most, milking out of the 45-cow tie-

stall barn. He loved his daily work schedule with “the girls,” and being able to walk to work every day was a dream.

The Malones had two wells. One was damaged after being struck by lightning and the other just wasn’t keeping up. So in November 2020, the drilling began.

“We got 4,000 feet of dry holes,” Bill said. They drilled 11 wells and

each failed to find a good vein.

The Malones explained that everyone living along that ridge on Rockwood Township has trouble getting water. With one well at 465 feet and another at 435 feet, and “blue clay all the way” to that point, there just wasn’t a great water source.

**MALONE:** Page 4

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# Farm Service Agency announces new flexibilities for farm loans

**Agweek Staff Report**  
The U.S. Department of Agriculture says it is updating its farm loan programs to better support current borrowers, including historically underserved producers. “USDA remains committed to examining barriers faced by all borrowers, especially those in economic distress, new and beginning, socially disadvantaged or otherwise underserved producers,” said Zach Ducheneaux, administrator of USDA’s Farm Service Agency. “We recognize loan making and servicing activities are critical for producers, especially in tough times. This improvement to our farm loan programs recognizes the needs of producers and

more importantly enacts equitable relief provisions to ensure they get a fair shake.” The 2018 Farm Bill authorized FSA to provide equitable relief to certain direct loan borrowers, who are non-compliant with program requirements due to good faith reliance on a material action of, advice of, or non-action from an FSA official. Previously, borrowers may have been required to immediately repay the loan or convert it to a non-program loan with higher interest rates, less favorable terms, and limited loan servicing. Now, FSA says it has additional flexibilities to assist borrowers in such situations. If the agency provided incorrect guid-

ance to an existing direct loan borrower, the agency may provide equitable relief to that borrower. FSA may assist the borrower by allowing the borrower to keep their loans at current rates or other terms received in association with the loan which was determined to be noncompliant or the borrower may receive other equitable relief for the loan as the Agency determines to be appropriate. USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local loan officials to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available that can assist them in starting, expanding or maintaining their operation.



Erin Brown / Grand Vale Creative  
Farm Service Agency has announced new loan flexibilities.

*“If you’re gonna do this farming and ranching, you need to have faith.”*  
-Deana Malone

## MALONE

From Page 3

“The last hole they drilled was the shocker,” Bill said. That’s when it set in that he may not be doing what he loved anymore. “Two more years I was going to milk, before I retired,” he said. Instead, the Malones sold off their dairy herd to brothers in the Perham and Dent area. That transition went smoothly, and Bill remains busy with other farm work, along with making time for fishing and hunting excursions. The couple has even had time to enjoy some meals together with the change. He said his water supply could have sustained a smaller dairy herd, but it would have been too small to be worth the time. “The mornings are when I miss it the most,” Bill said of dairy farming. Milking offered him time to plan out his day as he went through the motions. As an added hit, not long after the well dried up, the 2021 season brought a drought that impacted other parts of the farm operation. A lack of hay from their hay ground and cattle in need of feed was a strain made worse as hay prices skyrocketed. But a lack of water and a drought are just bumps in the road for a farming family that lives for the ranching way of life. “It’s in your blood,” Deana said. Every animal on their farm has been hand-

## What does it take to live the farm life?

**It takes faith.**  
“You got to have a deep faith and you got to have a partner that gets it,” Deana said. Deana is sharp with her handling of the beef operation and Bill is smart enough to recognize her smarts. They both say their Christian faith gives a lot of reassurance in this line of work. “If you’re gonna do this farming and ranching, you need to have faith,” Deana said.

**It takes wisdom and humbleness.**  
Both say they are picky people, ready to improve their operation

when they see something not up to par. The couple said they’ve reached an age where the younger generations are asking them for advice. They are happy to give back. Both continue to learn about the new technologies. “I’m going on 39 years, and I’m still learning,” Bill said.

**It takes perseverance and planning.**  
Bill recalls he got his start in farming in 1987 and the next year was a horrible drought, where the second cutting didn’t come until September. Even so, he kept at it. He said he didn’t have to have a feed truck in the yard since 1988,

making sure he stored up enough to last the year. If they had an abundance, they were able to share it with those in need. Bill said somewhere along the journey of farming it’s important to get good breaks or opportunities. He was able to buy land when it was affordable. He found good cattle at the right time. He knew the right people. Deana said newcomers should be open to listening to those who have been doing this for a while. Don’t spend all your money on new equipment. Be prepared to struggle and “you better love what you’re doing.”

vests all his own feed cattle, and his brother, Dan, and cousin, John, help him out at harvest. Logan and his wife, Whitney, have off-farm employment but provide extra help. Bill’s three daughters, Megan Woodard, Kristen Ahlers and Rebecca Groft, all learned to milk cows in their youth. Bill is a past board member of the Wadena County Dairy Herd Improvement Association and American Dairy Association. Deana is involved in several organizations including the Minnesota State Cattlemen’s Association, Nimrod Community Hall Association, and Sebe-ka United Methodist Church.

raised. The family knows them all well, and the animals know them. Deana said she looks forward to the different seasons of raising cattle — preparing the land, planting, harvest, calving. The work. “Bill and I would quite possibly go nuts if we didn’t have things to do. We’re just busy people,” she said. They have days where they want to pull their hair out, she added, “But then there are the 360 other days a year that... there is just so much about it that you enjoy.” Bill and Deana have a unique family history. Bill began his career in the dairy industry as a child, working on his parents’ farm in Rockwood Township. After high school graduation and living out west for a few years, he realized he missed farming and returned to Rockwood Township to start his own farm. Today, the farm comprises 240 owned acres and 190 rented acres of

land. The farm is home to a dairy cow barn and Cross Four River Ranch, with Hereford and Black Angus cattle. Bill raised three daughters on the farm and he and Deana still live there today. Deana and her late husband, Tinker Skov, entered the livestock industry around 1990, when they purchased his grandparents’ farm north of Nimrod. In 2009, Tinker died in a ranch accident. Deana and their son, Logan, decided to continue the operation. They reduced the number of bred cows so Deana could continue working off the ranch as the Wadena County Planning and Zoning administrator, and Logan could devote time to school. In 2013, Bill and Deana were married. It was deemed the “joining of two herds.” “We just get along so good and we’re a good support system for each other,” Deana said. Bill is now primarily in charge of the crops

side of the operation helping the other when and Deana takes care of and wherever needed. Bill plants and har-



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**BUSINESSES**

From Page 1

“That’s why the Wel Collective is super important for this community,” Undem said. “It’s impressive. I work in a lot of small towns, and I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Undem believes fear, jealousy and other negatives of running a business are universal and can affect business owners wherever they are. But the positives that come with being a rural business owner are exclusive to small towns: an enhanced sense of pride, community support, and the ability to make a big impact on the community.

“On the whole, people want to support people who get into a business in a small community,” Undem said. “We rally around each other. That’s what we do.”

Undem’s hometown of Oakes had a population of about 2,000, and in her youth she always believed she had to move to the “big city” in order to fulfill her dreams and “live big.” But that was in the early 1990s, before the internet became a part of everyday life. And that’s changed the game.

“The internet allows us to be connected with all sorts of people,” Undem said. “The way we are now didn’t exist when I graduated, so I couldn’t imagine myself living in Oakes.”

Undem moved back to her hometown 13 years ago — and she’s found success through her Oakes business, her book, her podcast, speaking engagements, coaching, and more.

“I feel like my life is so much bigger than I ever dreamed it could be, and it’s because of where I’m at,” she said. “Living big is fluid because our lives are fluid.”

Cichy, who lives in New York Mills, owns Roots and Wings Yoga and founded the Roots and Wings Wildlings Forest School, in addition to her work with Wel Collective. She grew up in a city with a population of about 56,000.

“In a rural area, you’re able to look at your passions and strengths and how you want to make an impact on your community,” Cichy said. “Once you have an idea or identify your passion, just start. You’re never going to feel ready. Start before you’re ready. The connections and opportunities will come to you if you just start and put yourself out there.”

Perham’s Angela Quam, a manager at The



Contributed / Wel Collective

Wel Collective’s first Lady Boss Pop-Up Shop in March 2020 was well attended.



Contributed / Wel Collective

Leona Cichy is the founder and board president of Wel Collective and owner of Roots and Wings Yoga, and Roots and Wings Wildlings Forest School, in New York Mills.



Elizabeth Vierkant / Rural Living

Nearly 100 businesswomen attended the Aspire Summit.

Title Team, agreed that any woman interested in getting into business should just jump in. While Quam has faced some challenges along the way, she said at the summit that she’s enjoyed it.

Another attendee at the Aspire Summit, Julie Bloom, a plant director at Shearer’s, moved to the Perham area about 10 years ago. Since then, she said, she’s loved being a part of the community. She emphasized how



Elizabeth Vierkant / Rural Living

Businesswomen from throughout the Perham networked during brunch at the first-ever Aspire Summit, held March 5 at The Cactus.



Elizabeth Vierkant / Rural Living

Rebecca Undem speaks to attendees at the summit.

many different opportunities there are for young women in lakes country, from science to math to engineering to hair-dressing to more.

“For all the women that came (to the Aspire Summit) today, I hope they’re really proud of themselves,” Undem said. “To all the women

“Wel Collective is super important for this community. It’s impressive. I work in a lot of small towns, and I’ve never seen anything like it.”

—Rebecca Undem, motivational speaker

who didn’t, look for the next opportunity and follow along with Wel Collective... Whatever fears you may have about attending the next thing, put them aside and take a chance on yourself.”

Next year’s Aspire Summit will be held March 4 — the summits will always be held the Saturday before International Women’s Day.

For more information on Wel Collective, visit [welcollective.org](http://welcollective.org) or email [hello@welcollective.org](mailto:hello@welcollective.org).



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MURRAY

From Page 1

will never do nothing wrong. They only do something wrong when they're scared," Murray explains. "When I started training, everything I did with the horse was not to make them scared. And they came around really good that way."

The Murray family's history with horses stretches back generations. The family has long been an influential farming and land-owning force in the region — Murray's great-great-grandpa, Judge Asher Murray, was once one of the largest landowners in this part of the state. The family even gave Wadena its name, naming the town after Chief Wadena, a Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe tribal nation leader.

While Murray learned to love horses alongside his family, it was a race track in northern California that opened his eyes to his calling. He visited the Bay Meadows track there with some friends, and knew then that, "something about that (horse racing) was in my life."

After that, he started soaring into winning races in Minnesota. He rode a long winning streak as a horse trainer while living near Canterbury Park. He raced at bush tracks and challenged himself with bigger and bigger races as he made his mark by breaking horses for Bonnie Howard, whose family partnered with D. Wayne Lukas, a leading quarterhorse and thoroughbred trainer. With this strong start, Murray brought horses to Wadena's fairgrounds in 1974, where he made his first \$1,800.

He was never just in it for the money, though, especially with the low purse money back then. More important to him than that were the wins. He loved seeing pictures of his horses in the winning circle after all the hours he had poured into exercising, training and caring for them.

"Like I always tell the kids, every horse has a story," he says. "I could tell a story about every horse that I trained; how good they were right off the bat, or how bad they were and how I had to change them."

Many people at the race tracks in the '70s were searching for wins to pay their bills, but that was never the case for Murray. He worked a full-time job in addition to training horses, and he encouraged others to do the same so that feeding their family didn't depend on their horse winning. He'd work at Verizon during the day, train horses in



While competing at different race tracks, Asher Murray displayed his racing stable sign outside each barn stall for four years. He started horse racing in the 1970s and officially retired as a trainer in 2012.

Rebecca Mitchell / Rural Living

the morning and evening, and head to races — and his kids' activities — on weekends.

"It got to be like 3 hours of sleep a night most of the time. But I was winning. I won a lot of races and I had a lot of good horses," he says.

At the peak of his training days, Murray was training 10-15 horses at the request of person after person. He knew how to win, and won more stake races than any other trainer until 2008 — and his brother, Jim Murray, as the owner of the horses, earned the most wins as owner in Minnesota.

"We had a lot of records we broke," Murray says.

After Canterbury Park re-opened with its new name and under new ownership in 1995, Murray continued his strong winning streak, with his Hy Whistlin Willie winning the '95 Minnesota Quarter Horse Futurity. He and his brother again won in 1999, with Cracklin Cash, and in 2002 with The Grindstone. Cracklin Cash also won the 2000 Minnesota Derby and



Contributed / Julie Murray

While wearing her new cowboy hat from her grandpa Asher Murray, Arlie poses for a photo with his horse Trippin Guns at Canterbury Park.

the Quarter Horse of the Meet for the season.

Murray fondly describes the race track as a place where "everything went good." He often traveled to different tracks on open weekends, watched as people across the nation bet on his horses, and connected with the horse racing community. The race track was mostly good people, he says, and they spent a lot of time together, eating, chatting and listening to music.

"That's the way my whole life at the race

"My dad was very gentle and kind with horses, so I picked that up at an early age — that if you never scare a horse, they will never do nothing wrong. They only do something wrong when they're scared."

-Asher Murray

together at Canterbury Park in 2021, and Murray has determined, "he'll come back tougher next year."

The horse, Trippin Guns, won about \$10,000 in his starting races.

Trippin Guns drew Murray back to the world of racing after he stepped away a few years ago to battle stage four cancer. He was really sick in 2018 and now takes it "day to day," he says.

He doesn't ride much anymore, but still loves seeing the delight on the faces of those who do.

"People around me want to get into the sport, once they are around me," he says.

He's passed his love for horses onto his family, his friends, his children's friends, and people like their neighbor, Bob Morehouse, who enjoyed a winning horse racing partnership with Murray (Morehouse is a quarter horse breeder, Western actor and Canterbury Park Hall of Famer).

"Everything I ever did with horses, I enjoyed," Murray said with a smile. "I never really had a bad day with a horse."



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# New Minnesota license plate celebrates agriculture, 4-H, FFA

**News Staff**  
A new Minnesota license plate is benefiting 4-H and FFA programs in the state. The plate's design was unveiled in early February, and is a celebration of agriculture.

"We're excited to have this new license plate that highlights the diversity of Minnesota's ag economy," said Thom Petersen, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, in a news release. "This is an opportunity for Minnesotans to show their commitment to agriculture while supporting our young leaders in FFA and 4-H."

Inspired by nearly 100 sketches from 4-H'ers and FFA members, the plate draws upon imagery of both organizations. The hands holding seedlings symbolize the 4-H pledge of "my hands to larger service," while the rising sun is a "token of a new era in agriculture" honored in FFA ceremonies.

Leaders of both groups acknowledged their appreciation for legislation passed in 2021 that created the new plate. The plate is available to Minnesotans at a cost of \$15.50. A minimum \$20 contribution is due with plate purchase and each year afterward at vehicle registration renewal.

The plates can be ordered at local DMV offices or online with the special plates application form.

"The Minnesota FFA Foundation ensures that students enrolled in agriculture, food and natural resource classes have access to premier leadership, personal growth, and career suc-



A new Minnesota license plate honors agriculture while supporting 4-H and FFA. People have been able to purchase the license plates since February.

cess, regardless of their economic situation," said Val Aarsvold, executive director, Minnesota FFA Foundation.

FFA is in 220 rural, urban and suburban schools statewide. Both organizations expressed their gratitude for support for young people with a license plate honoring agriculture.

"Agriculture is woven into 4-H's past, present and future and it's open to all youth in Minnesota," said Jennifer Skuza, associate dean for Youth Development at University of Minnesota Extension and Minnesota 4-H State Director. "We plan to broaden and deepen young people's knowledge and involvement in agriculture so that they act on their ability as agricultural learners, leaders, innovators, global citizens and agents of change."



In February 2022, Minnesota introduced a new license plate celebrating agriculture. The hands holding seedlings symbolize the 4-H pledge of "my hands to larger service," while the rising sun is a "token of a new era in agriculture" honored in FFA ceremonies.

# Kerry Lindgren of Staples honored in Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame

**News Staff**  
After 35 years of dedication to the FFA organization, Kerry Lindgren of Staples will shine in the Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame. He is one of eight inductees this year.

Lindgren served as the Staples-Motley FFA adviser for 32 years before his retirement. He has been an FFA adviser for 36 years total, starting with his career at Foley High School.

He went on to complete a fellowship at the University of Minnesota to help create an urban agriculture high school, and after completing his groundwork and development of the Academy for Sciences and Agriculture in Vadnais Heights, he began teaching at Staples-Motley. The FFA chapter and members there have achieved numerous awards and accomplishments, focusing on growing leaders, strengthening agriculture



**Contributed / Minnesota Farm Bureau Foundation**  
Kerry Lindgren, left, is a 2022 Minnesota Hall of Fame inductee and was named FFA Advisor of the Year in November 2019. He stands alongside fellow 2019 award winners including Agriculture Communicator of the Year Carolyn Lange, Post-Secondary Agricultural Educator of the Year Kim Lippert and Extension Faculty and Staff of the Year Brad Rugg.

and building communities.

Lindgren also had several leadership roles in the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators and has received the Outstanding Agricultural Educator Award, Agri-science Teacher Award and has served as the Region 2 FFA ad-

sor. He was named FFA Advisor of the Year in 2019, and has received an honorary American FFA Degree.

"I believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life and that I can exert an influence in my home and community which

will stand solid for my part in that inspiring task," the last paragraph of the FFA Creed reads.

Lindgren carries on the community torch with projects like delivering Central Minnesota Barn Quilts and as a member of the Lions Club and Minnesota Deer Hunters Association.

Other 2022 Hall of Fame inductees include Pat Dingels of Redwood Falls; Charles Krause of Buffalo; Becky Meyer of Vadnais Heights; Ronald Sommers of Northfield; Dave Swanson of Hawley; Erman Ueland of Fertile; and Stan Vander Kooi of Buffalo. A selection committee consisting of FFA members, alumni, agricultural educators and foundation representatives selected the final inductees.

"We were looking for individuals who have been influential and supportive of Minnesota FFA and who have demon-

strated a high level of service and longstanding commitment to agriculture, agribusiness, and/or education in agriculture," said Steve Olson, co-chair of the Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame Committee.

Inductees were introduced at the 2022 Minnesota FFA Alumni and Supporters Annual Meeting on March 5, and will

be recognized at the Minnesota FFA State Convention during the opening general session on Sunday, April 24.

The Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame has included 222 members since 2004. The Hall of Fame is a collaborative effort between the Minnesota FFA Association, Alumni and Foundation

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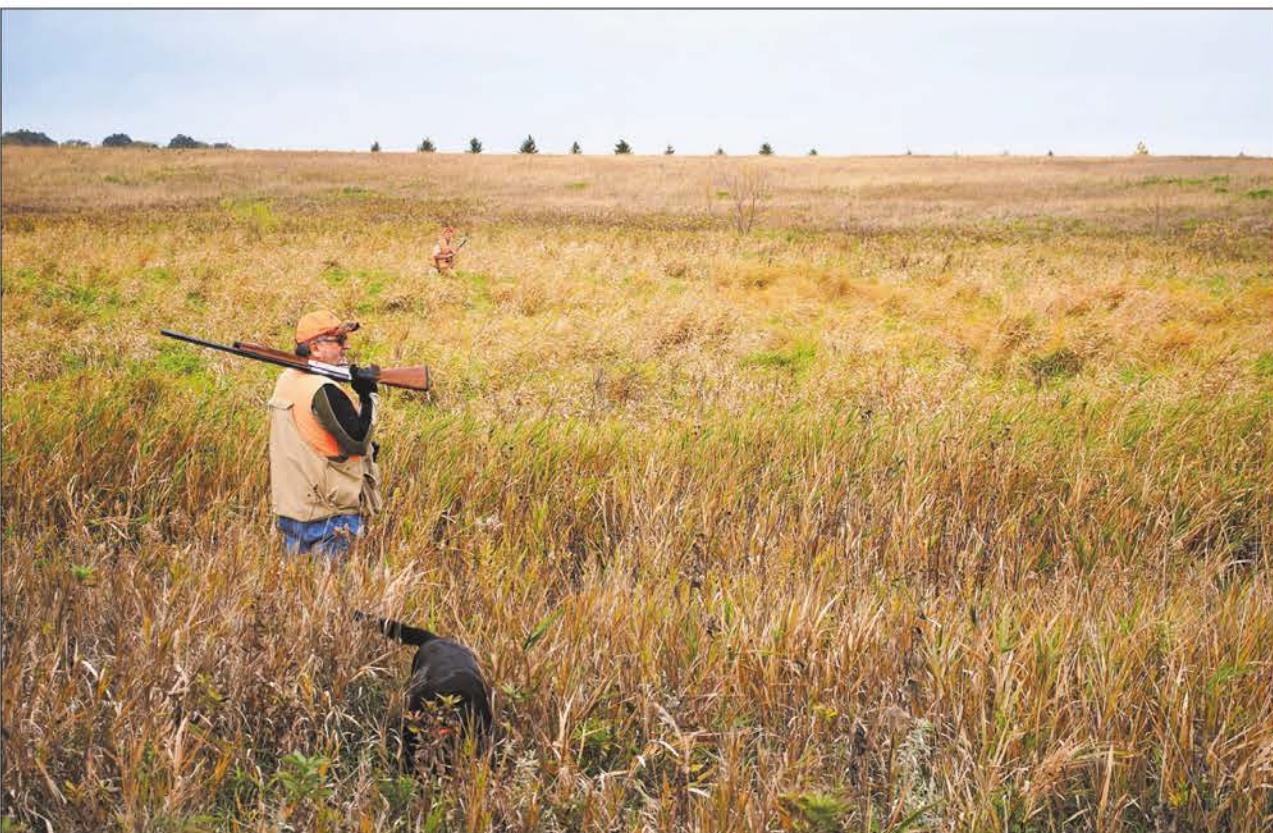
# Walk-In Access offering more opportunities

**By Tom Cherveney**  
Forum News Service

If you're planning to scout public lands for your spring turkey hunt, you might want to put some Walk-In Access lands on your checklist.

Often thought of as primarily for pheasant hunting, Walk-In Access lands are playing an increasingly larger role in providing hunter access to more opportunities. As privately owned lands, Walk-In Access sites can sometimes offer a mix of habitats with an agricultural component that make them ideal grounds for turkey. Hunters have told John Maile, who is the coordinator for the Walk-In Access program for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, that there are cases where these lands offer better hunting opportunities than the Wildlife Management Areas they sometimes border, thanks to the mix of habitat types. Don't overlook Walk-In Access lands when looking for hunting opportunities is also the advice of Eran Sandquist, Minnesota coordinator, Pheasants Forever. "There are some hidden gems out there in some agricultural areas," he told the Tribune. Launched in 2011, the state's WIA began with about 9,100 acres in nine counties in the southwestern corner of the state. "It wasn't explicitly stated, but everyone kind of understood it as a pheasant program," said Greg Hoch, wildlife prairie team leader with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. As the program has expanded to include more counties north and east,

hunting opportunities have increased in diversity. "We've really been excited to see over the years the amount of turkey, waterfowl and deer hunting that we've seen on these lands," said Hoch. Today, there are more than 29,000 acres enrolled in the Walk-In Access program in 47 counties. Hoch said the goal is to eventually enroll around 40,000 acres in the program. The intent is to expand the program both north and east. He said they'd like to see the counties bordering the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers part of the program. The program recently added Hubbard County this year. A new site near Bemidji should offer some fabulous waterfowl and deer hunting opportunities, said Maile. He said much of his attention is focused on including more lands in the agriculture-to-forest transition zone in the state. Hunters gain access to the nearly 30,000 acres available in the program for the cost of a \$3 validation on their small game or other hunting license. Last year, 30,627 validations were sold, down slightly from 30,925 in the prior year. "That's a pretty good bang for your buck," said Hoch of the \$3 validation fee. Hunters also have the option of a \$5 contribution in place of the \$3 fee. Landowners are compensated at a flat rate of \$18 an acre for enrolling lands in the program. Most of the lands are conservation lands. Once land is enrolled, the program takes responsibility for legally



Tom Cherveney / Forum News Service

Minnesota's Walk-In Access program provides nearly 30,000 acres of additional hunting opportunities. While often thought of as a pheasant hunting program, its expansion since its start has opened opportunities for pursuing a wide variety of game. Pheasant hunters walk public lands in this photo.

posting signs delineating the property. Last year, there were 251 contracts for the lands enrolled in the program. Maile said the program has generally gone well with landowners. He's not had any landowners pull land out of the program because of problems. As the name makes clear, the lands are to be accessed only by foot. Hunters cannot use horses or drive ATV's when hunting them. The majority of funding for the program is provided through the National Resources and Conservation Service as part of the Conservation title of the farm bill. Hoch said they are optimistic that the program will continue to enjoy support in Congress in future farm bills. He likes to say it is a program that fires on all cylinders. It provides hunter access, keeps lands in private ownership and helps promote conservation. It's certainly another tool in the conservation tool box, according to Sandquist. "There are a lot of landowners who have seen this as a great tool to not only protect wildlife habitat, but to allow the public to enjoy it," he said. Its start in the state's heavy agricultural counties provides public access in an area of the state where there is otherwise limited public lands. Maile said the program complements the hunter access that the state's system of Wildlife Management Areas and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Pro-

duction Areas provide. He noted that the Walk-In Access lands can be especially valuable during busy times of the hunting season. He knows of hunters who intended to walk a specific WMA on a Saturday morning, only to arrive and find a couple of vehicles belonging to parties already walking it. They've moved on down the road to a Walk-In Access site and had it to themselves. "It's a really nice pressure valve in those situations," said Hoch. Minnesota is fortunate for the public lands it protects. Hoch said we have one of the premier Wildlife Management systems dedicated to wildlife in the Midwest, if not the nation. "No way, is the Walk-In Access replacing in any shape or form our

public land system, but it sure does complement and add to the public land system," he said. Landowner enrollment in the system is currently open from Feb.15 through April 15. Those interested in enrolling lands are encouraged to visit their county's Soil and Water Conservation District office to learn about the program and options available to them. For hunters, the Walk-In Access lands are open from Sept. 1 through May 29. Hoch said there is also some discussion about changing the statute for the program to allow non-consumptive activities, such as bird watching or photography, on the lands. Currently, the statute allows the use of the lands only for hunting.



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