

PERSPECTIVE

January 1, 2021

Educators receive bushels for books from OKFB Foundation for Agriculture, WLC



Left to right: David VonTunglen, OKFB Foundation for Agriculture chair; Sherri Biggs, Edmond Public Schools; and Karen Dodson, District 3 WLC member.



Left to right: Mignon Bolay, WLC chair; Karee Grim, Perry Lower Elementary School librarian; Jennifer Shields, Perry Lower Elementary School principal; and Terry Pederson, District Seven WLC member.



Left to right: Sharon Park of Sequoyah Middle School accepts a bushel basket on behalf of Lori Hotfelt from Mignon Bolay, OKFB WLC chair.



Left to right: Sharon Lantelme, Shattuck High School librarian, accepts a bushel basket of accurate agriculture books from Linda Fox, former District One WLC member

Twelve Oklahoma educators from across the state were recently presented with a basket of agriculture books for their classrooms or libraries.

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, along with the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee, sponsored this year's

Bushels for Books program. The program takes donated bushels of any commodity crop, as well as monetary donations from farmers and ranchers, and provides bushel baskets of accurate agriculture books to Oklahoma educators.

Applications were accepted from teachers across the state, and winners

were chosen by the WLC committee. The books cover various agriculture topics and were picked from the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's list.

For the full list of bushels for books recipients, visit okfb.news/bushelsforbooks20.



Five takeaways from OKFB's conversation with Congresswoman-elect Stephanie Bice

Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel recently hosted Congresswoman-elect Stephanie Bice for a conversation on her preparations to serve Oklahoma's 5th Congressional District in Congress.

Elected on Nov. 3, she will be sworn into the 117th United States Congress on Jan. 3, 2021.

Below are five things we learned from our visit with Bice.

1. She has ties to agriculture.

Although Bice did not grow up on a farm or ranch, she is not too far removed from the agriculture industry. Her husband's family continues to farm near the Okarche area in central Oklahoma. Through her conversations with family, she has learned more about the agriculture industry.

Through a friend, Bice learned about extreme disruptions in the supply chain throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. She hopes to address the issues facing the supply chain by leaning on farmers and ranchers for solutions.

2. She's taking on leadership roles.

Out of more than 40 newly-elected Republican members of Congress, Bice was chosen to serve as the Republican freshman class president. The role will allow her an opportunity to be a leader and influencer in her freshman class early on in her congressional career, and will help elevate the issues of Oklahomans in the nation's capital.

3. She's committed to improving technology and rural broadband.

For many years, rural communities across Oklahoma have faced a lack of reliable broadband access. This year more than ever, challenges with internet connectivity in rural parts of the state were underscored as the pandemic moved many people toward working and completing school from home.

Bice shared her understanding of the issue and is hopeful

work may be done by Congress to bring high-speed internet to more rural Americans.

"If they (children learning from home) are having to download material at slow speeds, it can be cumbersome and ineffective," Bice said. "It affects outcomes. We need to be mindful on the federal level of what we can do to spur innovation, develop technologies, and implement them into communities that truly need (better access to internet)."

4. She knows agriculture's commitment to the environment and conservation.

As the new administration begins a renewed focus on environmental issues, Bice reiterated her trust in farmers and ranchers to lead the way.

"Farmers have proven themselves to be the original environmentalists," Bice said during the interview. "Farmers and ranchers know how to take care of the land and environment better than anyone."

Bice said she will lean on agriculturalists to help her understand how certain policies will affect the environment and agricultural practices.

5. She has experience working across the aisle.

After serving in the state Senate since 2014, Bice has learned how to work across party lines –even in a Republican supermajority Senate. She worked with her Democrat colleagues on a number of issues in the state Legislature including alcohol modernization and criminal justice reform.

Heading into Congress in the minority party, Bice will be able to lean on that experience.

"I have my conservative values and champion conservative ideas, but I also know how to get things done in a very bi-partisan way," Bice said.

View the full conversation at okfb.news/meetbice.

New COVID package helps farmers previously left out of aid

Congress agreed on a \$900 billion COVID stimulus package, which will include up to \$13 billion in funding that directly benefits agriculture. Nearly \$1 billion will support a dairy donation program and supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage payments for small and medium-sized producers. More help will be made available to specialty and non-specialty crop growers, and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) will be expanded, which will allow small farmers to continue operating and paying their employees.

Many farmers and ranchers who were previously left out of aid will now qualify for assistance, including growers who were forced to euthanize livestock during the initial wave of the pandemic.

The American Farm Bureau

Federation worked for several months to ensure the needs of America's farmers and ranchers were brought forward to lawmakers as they considered the latest stimulus package.

"We're pleased that Congress understands the toll the pandemic continues to take on farmers, ranchers and rural Americans," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "Farmers who were left out of previous aid packages or whose losses were far more devastating than recognized in initial aid are grateful that their families will be helped, too. We recognize the need is great across our entire economy and farm families will join the rest of America in our determination to recover from the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Highlights of the coronavirus stimulus bill include:

- **80% reimbursement for losses due to premature euthanization or canceled orders.**
- **\$20 per planted acre for non-specialty crops.**
- **Crop insurance payments and disaster payments may be used to calculate 2019 sales.**
- **\$7 billion is allocated for broadband, including \$300 million for rural broadband and \$250 million for telehealth.**
- **PPP funding may be used for COVID mitigation expenses.**
- **Expenses paid with PPP loans will now be allowed as a tax deduction.**
- **15% increase in SNAP benefits.**

Singers Sara Evans and Phil Vassar to headline AFBF Foundation Night In

Country singers Sara Evans and Phil Vassar will perform at the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's Foundation Night In on Jan. 11 at 5 p.m. Eastern. As with all the American Farm Bureau's Virtual Convention events, the online Foundation Night In is free and open to the public.

The first 1,200 people to register for Foundation Night In will receive a free copy of the Foundation's 2021 Book of the Year, which will be revealed at the event. The Book of the Year author and illustrator will be virtually on hand to receive their recognition.

"Each Book of the Year is unique in its audience or its approach to storytelling or teaching about farming and ranching, but each and every book does a great job of educating people about agriculture and how it affects everyone's lives," said Foundation Executive Director Daniel Meloy. "The next Book of the Year, which has already been selected but won't be announced until Foundation Night In,

will continue the Foundation's tradition of introducing readers to something they probably didn't know about agriculture."

Also during the event, the 2021 Farm Dog of the Year will be announced, as will the top 16 competitors in the AFB Young Farmers & Ranchers Discussion Meet.

"We're really excited to pair Sara Evans' and Phil Vassar's talent with the excitement of revealing the Foundation's Book of the Year, as well as the Farm Dog of the Year," Meloy said. "Even better, because it's a free virtual event, we can throw the 'doors' open to all Farm Bureau members and anyone else who's interested."

Evans' and Vassar's performances, as well as the 2021 Farm Dog of the Year contest, are sponsored by Purina. Farm Bureau Bank is providing for the Book of the Year to be mailed home to the first 1,200 registrants.

To register for the 2021 AFBF Virtual Convention, visit annualconvention.fb.org.

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Perspective
P.O. Box 53332,
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STAFF DIRECTORY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thad Doye
(405) 523-2438

**VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Dustin Mielke
(405) 530-2640

DIRECTOR OF MEDIA RELATIONS

Hannah Davis
(405) 523-2346

PUBLICATIONS SPECIALIST

Brianne Schwabauer
(405) 523-2325

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Rebekah Nash
(405) 523-2457

Oklahoma Farm Bureau
2501 N. Stiles
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3126

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OKFB 2021 wall calendars now at county offices

The 2021 Oklahoma Farm Bureau calendars are currently being distributed to county offices across the state. Each county Farm Bureau office will be receive 10 copies to distribute. Below are a few photos from the 2021 calendar.

