

PERSPECTIVE

December 1, 2023



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OKFB recognizes nine farm and ranch families with 2023 Farm & Ranch Family Recognition program

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee recognized nine outstanding farm and ranch families on Saturday, Nov. 11 during the awards session at OKFB's 2023 annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

OKFB's Farm and Ranch Family Recognition program celebrates nine farm and ranch families from around the state who carry on the best traditions of Oklahoma agriculture and our rural communities.

"Our Farm Bureau women are proud to show the important role these nine farm and ranch families play in Oklahoma

agriculture and our local communities," said Mignon Bolay, chair of the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee, which sponsors the recognition program. "The work these families do both on and off the farm each and every day is inspiring, and we are excited to honor the effort, dedication and legacies these families represent."

Each family received a cash award and a custom sign to hang at their farm gate. The families were also recognized at the 2023 OKFB convention with a two-minute video sharing their agricultural operations and heritage.

Meet OKFB's 2023 Farm & Ranch Families and watch their feature videos on our website:
okfb.news/FarmFam23

Noble, Kay County Farm Bureau members win OKFB YF&R Achievement Award



Jake and Kelly Decker (center, with family), are recognized as OKFB's 2023 YF&R Achievement Award winners at the 2023 OKFB Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City Saturday, Nov. 11.



Garrett Haskins (third from left) is recognized as OKFB's 2024 YF&R Achievement Award winner at the 2023 OKFB Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City Saturday, Nov. 11.

Jake and Kelly Decker of Noble County and Garrett Haskins of Kay County were honored with the 2023 and 2024 Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Achievement Awards, respectively, on Saturday, Nov. 11 during the organization's 82nd annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

The Achievement Award recognizes Young Farmers and Ranchers who have excelled in their farming or ranching operation and have honed their leadership abilities through Farm Bureau and other activities and organizations.

"This is really a huge honor," said Jake Decker of winning the 2023 award. "We are first-generation, so that is another part to our story that makes it even better. It is difficult to make it in agriculture, but we have worked hard to

make it work. Being first-generation, we didn't have anything holding us back – we just went after it."

The Deckers and their three children raise cattle and hair sheep on their ranch near Orlando.

"Looking back now, I'm not sure how we did it, but being first-generation really helped us because we didn't know exactly what we were getting into," Jake said. "We just started doing it, and we looked up and had made a lot of progress."

This year, OKFB named both the 2023 and 2024 award winners in an effort to better align the state-level competition cycle to American Farm Bureau's national competitions.

The 2024 winner, Garrett Haskins, runs a cow-calf operation and raises wheat, soybeans and grain sorghum in Kay County.

"Winning this award means a lot to me," Haskins said. "I was elected to the Kay County Farm Bureau board nine years ago, and I worked really hard, got more involved and got to meet all of these people that all became like family, and to receive something like this is just icing on the cake for me to move forward with my Farm Bureau career and better agriculture in any way I can."

As Achievement Award winners, the Deckers and Haskins received John Deere gators, courtesy of P&K Equipment. The Deckers received an expense-paid trip to the 2024 AFBF Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Haskins received an expense-paid trip to the 2025 AFBF Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, where they will compete on a national level for the AFBF YF&R Achievement Award.

Join OKFB for ag defense fundraiser Dec. 9 in Tulsa

Oklahoma Farm Bureau invites OKFB members and agriculture community friends to attend the 2023 OKFB Ag Defense Fundraiser at the Mayo Hotel in Tulsa Saturday, Dec. 9.

The event begins with a cocktail hour at 6 p.m. with dinner starting at 7 p.m. in the Mayo Hotel Parlor Room featuring author Ray Starling, who will discuss his book "Farmers Versus Foodies," which looks into modern food systems and the future of farming.

After dinner, Starling will be available for a VIP meet-and-greet for \$50 per person where attendees can meet the author and get a signed copy of his book.

Tickets for the ag defense fundraiser are \$250 per person. Table sponsorships of \$2,500 are also available, which includes eight seats and two books autographed by Starling. Payment can be made at the door, or Farm Bureau members can be choose to be invoiced for the amount after the event.

Space for the fundraiser is limited to 90 people. Individuals, groups or organizations wishing to attend must **RSVP to OKFB's Kinsey Westwood at kinsey.westwood@okfb.org** as long as seats are available.

Funds raised during the evening will support involvement in the political sphere to defend production agriculture from threats that seek to limit the ability of Oklahoma's farm and ranch families to produce food, fiber and fuel in our state.

Ottawa, Coal County Farm Bureau members win OKFB YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award



Jake and Meggie Gibbs (second and third from right), are recognized as OKFB's 2023 YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award winners at the 2023 OKFB Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City Saturday, Nov. 11.



LC and Jaclyn Darling (second and third from right), are recognized as OKFB's 2024 YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award winners at the 2023 OKFB Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City Saturday, Nov. 11.

Jake and Meggie Gibbs of Ottawa County and LC and Jaclyn Darling of Coal County were honored with the 2023 and 2024 Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Awards, respectively, at the organization's 82nd annual meeting Nov. 10-12 in Oklahoma City.

The award is presented to young farmers and ranchers who do not derive a majority of their income from a farming or ranching operation for excellence in agriculture and Farm Bureau.

"We are so grateful for the opportunity to share our story," said Meggie Gibbs of receiving the 2023

award. "We have moved several times in our careers, so we have gotten to share the resources we had through USDA that we have used to improve our operation, and we are just so thankful for YF&R. My only regret is not joining sooner."

This year, OKFB named both the 2023 and 2024 award winners in an effort to better align the state-level competition cycle to American Farm Bureau's national competitions.

"We are so honored to receive the Excellence in Agriculture Award," said 2024 award winner Jaclyn Darling. "What we do as agriculturists is challenging work, and receiving this award makes the hard and long days

all worth it. I remember my first county board meeting where the board members were encouraging us to get involved. They told us about the YF&R awards, and I remember thinking we didn't have a big enough operation to win, but we did it."

Each couple received a Polaris Sportsman 450 HO ATV, courtesy of Oklahoma Ag Credit and Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma. The Gibbs family earned a trip to the 2024 AFBF Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Darling Family earned a trip to the 2025 AFBF Annual Meeting in San Antonio where the couples will compete for the AFBF Excellence in Agriculture Award.

Our next issue of *Perspective* will feature our final round of 2023 OKFB convention award winners. In the meantime, you can check out all the award winners on our website at okfb.news/Awards23.

Plan to join OKFB in Tulsa Dec. 7-9 for the Tulsa Farm Show

Make plans to join Oklahoma Farm Bureau in Tulsa for the 2023 Tulsa Farm Show.

OKFB is proud to once again be a show sponsor, and OKFB will have a booth where members can learn about the latest programs and projects of the state's largest general farm organization, and where members of the Oklahoma agriculture community can become Farm Bureau members.

OKFB will also host a special lunch-

and-learn session for OKFB members at noon on Friday, Dec. 8. OKFB members interested in attending can RSVP by call or text message to Gage Milliman at (918) 559-2208, or by stopping by the OKFB booth at the farm show before noon on Friday.

The show will run Dec. 7-9 at the SageNet Center at the Tulsa State Fairgrounds. The show is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.



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OKFB Legal Foundation files court protest to protect Oklahoma's agricultural and rural economies

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Legal Foundation joined efforts with The State Chamber to file a protest with the state's highest court Monday, Nov. 20 against Initiative Petition 446, which would establish a state question to raise Oklahoma's minimum wage.

The initiative seeks to double the minimum wage by 2029 and increase it annually beginning in 2030 based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers. This change would remove the responsibility of determining a minimum wage from the Oklahoma legislature and instead tie it to national economic projections that do not accurately reflect Oklahoma's economy.

"Taking a closer look at the CPI reveals it excludes all of rural Oklahoma," said Steve Thompson, OKFB vice president of public policy. "One of our primary concerns is how the buying power of rural Oklahomans could be affected by an index that does not

consider the unique needs of rural life."

Statistics show many employers in rural Oklahoma already pay above the state's minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour with an average hourly wage of \$16.41. By tying the minimum wage to the urban CPI, around 1.3 million rural Oklahomans could experience a major negative impact, not only themselves but also in the communities in which they live and work.

If the minimum wage increases, the value of what employees currently make decreases, causing all wages to lose value. When agricultural producers are forced to increase pay, it leads to higher input costs for producers, thus increasing costs for all consumers.

"Farm Bureau members understand the importance of fair compensation for honest work as farmers and ranchers rely on dependable, hardworking individuals to ensure their agricultural operations run smoothly and efficiently," Thompson said. "This initiative opens

the door for burdensome government mandates that will only intensify the inflationary pressures Oklahomans are already facing."

Initiative Petition 446 also takes away the exemptions Congress provided to agriculture in the Fair Labor Standards Act and instead gives unaccountable discretion to federal bureaucrats to set Oklahoma's wages. These exemptions were put in place to address the unique nature of agricultural operations and ensure national food security.

"Production agriculture doesn't happen on concrete and blacktop," Thompson said. "It happens in remote areas. Removing the agricultural exemptions could lead to significant challenges to agricultural producers across the state. These farmers and ranchers not only provide the nation's food supply but also keep local communities alive. Without them, the communities empty and so do grocery store shelves."