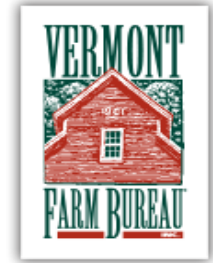


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Vermont Farm Bureau Annual Meeting Honors Top Farmers

MIDDLEBURY, Vt. -- The 104th annual meeting of the Vermont Farm Bureau (VFB) on Nov. 1-2 included awards to Vermont's top farmers; panel discussions by top agricultural experts on the future of farming and land management, and a review of the top issues facing Vermont's farming community in the coming year.



"It was amazing to see such a large turn out despite additional struggles from the Halloween storm. Farm members know how important it is to set our annual policies that guide our advocacy efforts to support all farmers in Vermont," noted VFB President Joseph Tisbert. "We had important discussions on trade tariffs, improving immigration policies to increase year-round labor, modernizing dairy pricing, and hemp regulations. These important discussions will give our team clear guidance as they represent us at the county, state and national levels for this coming year."

Vermont Farm Bureau, based in Richmond, is the state's largest non-profit trade association of 2,500-plus agricultural producers in all 14 Vermont counties.

Among the top award VFB winners this year:

- **The 2019 Century Farm Award** was presented to The Parsons' Farm in Richford, established in 1919 by William Galusha Parsons, honoring owners of a successful farm operation for 100 years or more. The Parsons' Farm was founded as a dairy farm in 1919; and since 1985, it has run a livestock operation, with a focus on lamb, beef and breeding stock. This award is given in cooperation with the Vermont State Grange.
- **The 2019 President's Award** was presented to Vt. Sen. Robert Starr of North Troy for his unwavering support and commitment to agriculture at the Statehouse. He has represented the Essex-Orleans District in the Vermont House from 1979 to 2004 and the Vermont Senate from 2005 to the present. The award will be presented to him at the VFB's Legislative Day in January 2020 by Jackie Folsom, VFB's legislative director.
- **The 2019 Wallace Award**, honoring distinguished lifetime service to agriculture, was presented to Jacques and Pauline Couture of Couture's Sugar House in Orleans County. The award, established in 1975, is named for former VFB President Keith Wallace. The Westfield couple started their dairy herd at Missisquoi Valley Farm in 1970 and built their first sugar house a year later. After raising their six children on the farm, they continue to operate a diverse farm with a success dairy, maple sugar house, and bed and breakfast for more than 50 years.

Agriculture Updates

Secretary of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets Anson Tebbetts, offered attendees an update on hemp, dairy, and water quality issues. The Agency, along with its partners, has several projects underway aimed at improving the dairy economy. The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM) was recently awarded [one of three national USDA Dairy Innovation grants](#). These important dollars will help to further develop Vermont's dairy

economy, offering farmers support for developing new products, new markets, and new practices.

Mary White, chair of the VFB Dairy Committee, moderated a panel discussion on issues facing the dairy industry. Panelists were Diane Bothfeld (dairy specialist from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture), Jen Lambert (organic farm owner from Corinth), Jane Clifford (farm owner from Starksboro and member of the Vermont Milk Commission), and Stephanie Walsh (Director of Industry and Community Affairs for Dairy Farmers of America).

Former Vt. Gov. James Douglas and lifetime VFB member was the keynote speaker at the Saturday evening dinner.

Other guests included Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman; Rep. Harvey Smith; Vicky Drew, Vermont State Conservationist of NRCS; Wendy Wilton, State Executive Director of the Vermont USDA Farm Service Agency; and representatives from Vermont Congressional team, Tom Berry of Sen. Patrick Leahy's office, Erica Campbell of Sen. Bernie Sanders's office, and Ryan MacLaren of Rep. Peter Welch's office.

Nationwide Insurance Director Daniel Kelly and agent Henry Mondschein gave a presentation on "Land as Your Legacy," a program designed to provide on-going security to farm families. Top Salesman Awards were also presented to the Jaimes L. Fewer Agency, Inc. and Kinney Pike Agency.

Attendees also heard reports from representatives from the American Farm Bureau Federation. Senior Director of Congressional Affairs David Salmonsén provided updates on agricultural discussions in Washington D.C.; Economist Michael Nepveux spoke about the Federal Milk Marketing Order Committee; Robin Kinney, Senior Director of Member Engagement worked with new VFB Promotion & Education board members Kelly Meecham, Kathy Whitman and Chairwoman Anne Tisbert about educational roundtable planning for the coming year. Tristram B. Johnson was introduced as the new Interim Business Manager.

VFB officers elected at the 2019 annual meeting

- **VFB Executive Board:** President Joseph Tisbert of Lamoille County; First Vice President Roy Folsom of Washington County; Second Vice President Ray Duquette, Sr. of Rutland County; Secretary Mary White of Orange County; and Treasurer Robert Sherwin of Windsor County.
- **Vermont Farm Bureau Service Company** (a subsidiary of VFB) elected Joseph Tisbert as President, Roy Folsom as Vice President, Mary White as Secretary, and Robert Sherwin as Treasurer.
- **VFB Board of Directors:** Young Farmer & Rancher Chair Sara Griswold; and Promotion & Education Chair Anne Tisbert.

For more information about the Vermont Farm Bureau, its county-based grassroots policy development process for state and national issues, legislative updates and benefits of membership, visit www.vfb.org or call (802) 434-5646.