

# 2022 Growing Together Conference

FEBRUARY 18-20 | GRAND RAPIDS

## Friday, February 18

**7:30-8:30am | Take Root Registration and Breakfast** *Center Concourse*

*(separate registration required, agenda available online)*

**11:30am | Growing Together Conference Registration Opens** *Center Concourse*

**1:00pm | Tours Depart (lunch is not included)**

### 1 Grandiose Grand Rapids

Whether this is your first time in Grand Rapids or your 100<sup>th</sup>, take some time to learn about the city. From the history of the Pantlind Hotel to the Grand River, to Heritage Hill, a city tour guide will join us as we drive around town, sharing knowledge of the past and present. Then, visit Frederik Meijer Gardens for a behind the scenes tour of the on-site greenhouses that supply these majestic gardens. Hear from the horticulture staff what it takes to maintain the landscapes, sculptures and indoor exhibits. Then, take some free time to wander the indoor spaces.

### 2 Syrup, Spuds and Safety

Planning to include a maple syrup station at your next Project RED? Have you used the potato *Michigan Ag Mag* during a classroom visit? Maybe your Young Farmers are hosting a county wide farm tour for high school students. Whatever your teaching method, this tour will offer you tips and tricks when reaching audiences of all ages. Visit a sugar shack and explore maple syrup resources from the Agriculture in the Classroom website. Tour a potato farm to watch how potatoes are processed while learning how to safely provide tours for large groups on your own farm. Educating others about agriculture can get sticky, but with the right tools and techniques, it can flow pretty smooth!

### 3 Great Grilling

Two engineers go on a fishing trip and...find out how locally-owned Grilla Grills got started in the grill and pellet smoker business. Hear from their in-house chef how to perfectly smoke cuts of meat, trends in grilling and what the home-BBQ chef is looking for in locally-raised and butchered meats. Round out the tour learning more about consumer purchasing preferences and direct from farm sales at Victory Farms in Hudsonville.

**6:00pm | Tours Arrive at Grand Rapids Public Museum**

Growing Together participants at Take Root Conference join other tour attendees.

**6:00-10:00pm | Evening Reception at Grand Rapids Public Museum**

Shuttle buses will be returning to the hotel in 15-20 minute intervals throughout the evening.

## Saturday, February 19

**7:30am | Registration Opens** *Center Concourse*

**8:00-9:45am | Breakfast and Program** *Ambassador Ballroom*

Join us to kick off a day of learning, networking and recognition! Rub the sleep from your eyes and head to breakfast early to get a great seat. We'll overview the program, introduce some key people and organizations who make this conference possible and highlight leaders of our organization.

**10:00-11:00am | District Meetings**

District 1	Gerald R. Ford
District 2	Haldane
District 3	Vandenberg A
District 4	Vandenberg B
District 5	Governor's
District 6	Nelson
District 7	Winchester
District 8	Pearl
District 9	Ruby
District 10	Grand View
District 11	Kendall
District 12	Emerald

**11:00-11:15am | Break** *Center Concourse*

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## 11:15am-12:15pm | Breakout Sessions

- A** **Raising Members' Voices** *Vandenberg A*  
*Jeremy C. Nagel, MFB Member Communications Specialist and Farm Gate Editor*  
I see you and I know you can! Join MFB Member Communications Specialist and Farm Gate Editor Jeremy C. Nagel for a quick shuttle-bus ride from No-I-Can't to Sure-Thing-Can-Do. He'll introduce you to your inner communicator and help you both share the value of Farm Bureau membership and enrich that value at the same time!
- B** **Cultivating Stories** *Vandenberg B*  
*Peggy Thomas, Author*  
Share your love of agriculture by writing a children's book. Peggy Thomas, author of Full of Beans, the American Farm Bureau Federation 2020 Book of the Year will share ten easy steps to writing engaging stories. Learn how to develop your idea, choose a plot structure, capture a reader's attention and turn your farming experiences into books kids will want to read again and again.
- C** **Sensory Inclusivity: How to Make your Event Work for Everyone** *Governor's*  
*Katelyn Thompson and Tiffany Howell, State Promotion & Education Committee members*  
Promotion & Education events reach children of all ages. Planning interactive learning activities for all abilities can be a challenge and as volunteers, sometimes we are at a loss for how to include everyone. Learn from a Potter Park Zoo docent and a pre-school teacher, tips for student management and creative activities to engage all children.
- D** **When Mind Reading is Not Enough: Communications Among Generations** *Gerald R. Ford*  
*Jolene Brown, Professional Speaker, Farmer, Family Business Consultant*  
All too often it's the unspoken words and communication behavior patterns that cause the most frustration when living or working with others. With a range of preferences from those who would rather text and tweet to those who want to talk and meet, we need some specific management tools to bridge the gap and aid positive communication. Come to this upbeat session if you're interested in less frustration, cussing and ulcers...and more interested in productive communication, cooperation and positive results.
- E** **Am I on the FSMA Hook? Continuing to Grow Safe Fresh Fruits and Vegetables without Running Afoul of the Law** *Grand View*  
*Phil Tocco, Extension Educator, Michigan State University Extension; Heather Borden, Logistics Coordinator, Michigan State University Extension; Emily Hollingsworth, Produce Safety Specialist, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development*  
Growers may not know about the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule. Still others may not know where to start or if they qualify. This workshop will give you enough background to help you ask the right questions about where to start.
- F** **Discussion Meet Demystified: For Judges, Competitors and Spectators** *Emerald*  
*Alex Schnabelrauch, MFB Director of the Center for Education and Leadership Development*  
It may be a discussion, not a debate, but many still feel like it's a mystery. Whether you have competed and judged Discussion Meets for years or can't pronounce the word disparaging, this session is for you. From opening and closing statement formulas to content package development, what judges should look for to key pieces of the scorecard, prepare for the Discussion Meet's Enigma Code. There will be hands-on activities, tangible tips and plenty of humor for Discussion Meet contestants, coaches and judges, alike.
- G** **Optimizing your Farm's Financial Recordkeeping System** *Ruby*  
*Corey Clark, Farm Business Management Educator, Saginaw County Extension*  
Are you overwhelmed with trying to keep up with your financial recordkeeping? Would you like to get more management information out of your recordkeeping efforts? During this session, we will talk about information flow, software options and maximizing the management value of your financial records.
- H** **Helping Families Manage Challenging Times** *Pearl*  
*Courtney Aldrich, Program Instructor, Child and Family Development, MSU Extension*  
There are never enough hours in the day. Managing your farm, numerous schedules and moving pieces while balancing the demands of work and life can be challenging. Join us to learn some different ways to manage stress, family dynamics and plan ahead from experts in this space.

## 12:30-1:45pm | Lunch Program *Ambassador Ballroom*

It takes a network and partnerships to make great things happen! Help us recognize our partners, volunteers and future agriculturalists over lunch. Through our partnership with the Michigan Ag Council and the Michigan GROWN, Michigan GREAT brand we're excited to bring you an insider perspective from two 2021 Agriculture Ambassadors who have become great spokespersons for Michigan Agriculture!

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## 2:00-2:30pm | Mini Breakout Sessions

- A** **From the Ground Up, Planning Valuable County Events** *Vandenberg A*  
*Hannah Meyers and Becca Gulliver, MFB Regional Managers*  
Ever find yourself at the end of the event and wonder what could have gone better? Join some event veterans to gain key event planning tips, learn how to effectively work with your fellow committee members and how to utilize the resources of the county and state Farm Bureau.
- B** **Reinvigorate your Project RED Volunteer Panel** *Vandenberg B*  
*Joe Bryant, State P&E Committee, Isabella County Farm Bureau; Loren Faist, Jackson County Farm Bureau*  
Hosting school children on a field trip is no small task! Let us lighten the Project RED planning load by providing updated templates, talking points, best practices and volunteer recruitment tips. Hear from fellow Farm Bureau members who host different style events to learn from their experiences. Grab an updated Project RED guidebook to take back to your county.
- C** **When FFA Members Hang Up Their Jackets for the Last Time** *Governor's*  
*Katie Eisenberger, MFB High School and Collegiate Programs Specialist*  
As FFA students in your county graduate, are they naturally reaching out to the Young Farmer chair and continuing their involvement in agriculture? You will receive three steps your county can take this spring to create a steady source of prospects to strengthen your membership pipeline.
- D** **Business Management for Farms** *Gerald R. Ford*  
*Steve Kluemper, CEO of AgriStrategies LLC*  
Managing a thriving business is no small feat. Check out this session to learn strategies to help your farm thrive, communicate your vision for the future of your business and make tough decisions.
- E** **Farm Bureau University Grand View**  
*Stacey Lauwers, American Farm Bureau Federation P&E Committee Chairperson*  
American Farm Bureau's online learning system provides resources for county organizations and individual members. The national P&E Committee is using this platform to provide downloadable resources as an idea sharing platform, connecting P&E programs across the nation. Learn about ways you can connect to these digital resources from Michigan's AFBF Promotion & Education Committee representative. Bring your own laptop or tablet to get yourself logged in to Farm Bureau University during this session!
- F** **Michigan Farm Bureau Legislative Update** *Emerald*  
*Matt Smego, MFB Director of the Public Policy & Commodity Division; John Kran, MFB National Legislative Counsel; Rob Anderson, Manager, MFB Government Relations Department*  
Sit-in on a state and federal legislative update from MFB's government relations staff. Learn some tips on how to build relationships with elected officials and use information and resources from Farm Bureau to be a voice for agriculture through a Young Farmer moderated panel.
- G** **So You Want to Sell Direct?** *Ruby*  
*Carla Schultz, Eight Plates Farm*  
Who is your audience? Where are they located? How do you decide what your offerings or products will be? Hear from Carla Schultz, Tuscola County farmer, as she shares her experiences selling her farm's meats through their online retail business and local in-person sales. Find out what technology worked for her payment options, website and marketing.
- H** **Dealing with Uncertain Times** *Pearl*  
*Remington Rice, MSU Extension and Farmer Panel*  
Uncertain times and stress affect us all. Join this panel to learn how they handle uncertainty and stress in their lives, who they have on their team and who they turn to when it all seems too heavy.

## 2:30-2:45pm | Break Center Concourse

## 2:45-3:15pm | Mini Breakout Sessions Repeat

## 3:15-3:30pm | Break

## 3:30-4:30pm | Breakout Sessions

- A** **Everything COVID-19 Taught Me About the Agricultural Economy** *Vandenberg A*  
*Dr. Trey Malone, Agricultural and Food Economist in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics at MSU*  
COVID-19 positioned food access and agricultural production as a key concern for consumers across the world. Paranoia about food shortages has been particularly heightened in the US, where many consumers confronted empty grocery shelves and limited restaurant access for the first time. Consistent with "technophobia," or the fear of technological advancement, those empty shelves led to furor in the popular press about a "broken" US food system with many calls to dismantle modern agricultural systems. This talk will tell a more optimistic story of the innovation and resilience in US food systems by linking that furor with my own research into consumer psychology and food supply chain logistics. We'll focus on decisions throughout food supply chains to explain innovations throughout the modern food system.

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**B** **Unboxing the FARM Crate** *Vandenberg B*  
*Michelle Blodgett, Manager, Michigan Agriculture in the Classroom*

So what is a FARM Crate anyway? Many county Farm Bureaus have shipped these directly to schools, so now is your chance to explore all 10 crate themes. Try out a few of the hands-on activities, watch the farm videos and learn how you can engage, as a volunteer, to help teachers use crates in their classrooms. Consider how the FARM Crate fits into your county's P&E activity line up.

**C** **P&E Idea Expo** *Governor's*  
*Katie Christie, Barry County Farm Bureau; Cameron Cook, Clinton County Farm Bureau; Katelyn Packard, Washtenaw County Farm Bureau; Jason Smith, Macomb County Farm Bureau; Michelle Peel, Lapeer County Farm Bureau*

Learn from five county Farm Bureaus' successful projects! Gain an in-depth perspective on the five projects shared at MFB's State Annual Promotion & Education Showcase. Hear from the volunteer leaders on how they planned and executed these unique events. Events include a public library partnership, community festival, food donations, Halloween activities and even the construction of a learning exhibit trailer!

**D** **Grant Writing for Beginners** *Gerald R. Ford*  
*Mollie Woods, Director, MSU Product Center*

Staring at a grant application and don't know how to start? Or struggling to find grant funding in the first place? Look no further. The experts at the MSU Product Center will help you identify funding sources, get started on your grant and better understand the jargon and limits of different types of grants.

**E** **Navigating Policy Development** *Grand View*  
*Emily Reinart, Grassroots Policy Outreach Specialist*

With more than 100 different policies in the MFB Policy Book, our organization is anchored by solid policy positions crafted and voted on by you, the members, to serve as the year's navigational chart...so how can you get involved? This session will provide you with an in-depth understanding of our grassroots policy development process and immediate action steps to help you get started.

**F** **Thinking Outside the Box, Engaging with Members through New Events** *Emerald*  
*Bridget Silvernail, MFB Regional Manager; Taylor Martin, Osceola County Farm Bureau; Robyn Fogarasi, Arenac County Farm Bureau; Lane Stotler, Oceana County Farm Bureau*

Have you done the same event every year in your county? Come to this session to refresh your ideas and hear about fun and creative events that can be easily implemented. This session will encourage you to step outside the box with your next event and feature a panel of members who put on these events.

**G** **Speaking Ag through Social: How to Become an Agfluencer** *Ruby*  
*Tony Hansen and Katie Eisenberger, MFB*

Using social to tell your agriculture story? Join this session to help take your social to the next level. Learn about the latest trends, creating Instagram stories, visualizing a weekly content calendar and what apps will help you create engaging content.

**H** **What to Do on Your Farm's Worst Day** *Pearl*  
*Craig Anderson, MFB*

Life is unpredictable and sometimes unforeseen circumstances put us in the driver's seat on our farm's worst day. Learn from a safety expert about how to mitigate risk, who to call and what to do when challenges or tragedy strike.

**I** **Young Farmer Award Workshop** *Atrium Room*

Thinking about applying for a Young Farmer Award and don't know where to start? Have one started and need time to hone your answers? Use this session to work with both State Young Farmer Committee members and MFB staff who are excited to help you get your application submitted.

**5:00pm | Reception** *Center Concourse*

**5:00pm | County Leader Reception** *Pantlind Ballroom, Invitation Only*

**5:45pm | Evening Banquet** *Ambassador Ballroom*

After a busy day of learning, we hope you'll enjoy the levity provided by our keynote speaker, Scott Siepker, the Iowa Nice Guy as he explores what it's like to be Made in the Midwest. This is going to be a little corny if you know what we mean! We will also hear from our Michigan Farm Bureau President, Carl Bednarski and round out the evening with our live auction and some well-deserved recognition.

**8:30-11:00pm | Casino Night** *Vandenberg A & B and Governor's*

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## Sunday, February 20

7:30am | Morning Devotions Pearl

8:00am | Breakfast and Closing Session *Ambassador Ballroom*

You'll want to digest our in-depth closing workshops on a full stomach, so join us for breakfast and some final, closing thoughts from our state Young Farmer and Promotion & Education leaders. **WEAR YOUR CONFERENCE T-SHIRT** on Sunday and snap some pictures with your long-held or new-found friends. After breakfast, select from one of five workshops that will take a deeper dive on topics we can't do justice to in our hour breakout sessions.

9:15–11:00am | Morning Workshops

**A** **Ways to Tell Your Story** *Vandenberg A*  
Scott Siepkner, Keynote Speaker

What are the elements of a good story? How do you capture an experience and retell it in a way that engages your audience and helps them root for you as the protagonist? Once you have a great story, how do you use the many communication tools available to connect with the audiences? Join Scott Siepkner for a session on storytelling. Learn from a master storyteller how you outline a story and give it life with humor and relatable ideas that draw your audience in. Scott will discuss how he uses social media and video to expand his reach. He will guide you with the basics of shooting video with your phone to more advanced concepts related to marketing and placement to reach a larger audience.

**B** **US Farmers and Ranchers: Leaders in Action for the Decade of Ag** *Vandenberg B*  
Chris Chaffee, Senior Manager of Engagement, US Farmers and Ranchers in Action

Today's farmers face the largest challenge of this generation—creating sustainable food systems to feed a growing global population. It's never easy and farmers and ranchers can't do it alone. During this session, USFRA will share our latest docudrama, featuring the story of Marlowe Ivey, who's passionate about educating others about pig farming and is working to make her farm carbon neutral.

**C** **P&E County Chairperson Networking** *Governor's*  
Tonia Ritter and Amelia Miller, MFB

Whether you are brand new to leading your county P&E efforts or you have served your county Farm Bureau for many years, this workshop is for you. Learn about new resources, share ideas with other P&E volunteers and help shape future resources with your ideas. Build your network of likeminded leaders to share Michigan agriculture's story!

**D** **Business and Financial Planning 101** *Gerald R. Ford*  
Matt Alt, Financial Services Officer, GreenStone Farm Credit Services

Looking to boost your business plan? Interested in taking a deeper dive into farm financials? Join a GreenStone Farm Credit Services expert to walk through farm business management practices and opportunities in detail at this hands-on workshop!

**F** **Money, Markets and Me: Hedging and Management Tips** *Emerald*  
Roger Betz, Farm Business Management Educator, Michigan State University Extension

Navigating fluctuating markets, global demand and on-farm decisions is a tall order for any farmer. Join this workshop to hear from commodity and hedging pros about navigating these tenuous spaces for your farm and family.

11:00am | Adjourn

## Influencer

**(noun)** One who is eager to share their passion with others. Seeks common ground, shared values and a path forward together.