



PATRON'S CHAIN

The Official Newsletter of the National Grange

Host Banquet sets tone for great week

BY LEXIE SUING

Communication Fellow

The official kick-off of the 153rd National Grange Convention was held Monday night in the form of the Host Region banquet.

The Great Lake Region - consisting of Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois -served up regional specialties including Walleye and a tater-tot hotdish.

Regional Chair Karie Blasingame stood before the 140 gathered and called upon her committee to stand and provide additional greetings of welcome.

National President Betsy Huber took a moment to thank the attendees and host committee for all their work to prepare for the event.

"If you're like me, you can't believe that it's here and we're here. And just last year flew by," Huber said. "So, on behalf of the National Grange and the National officers, and all those who will be visiting this week, thank you so much for your work in putting this all together. I know we're gonna have a great convention. It's great to be here. We're looking forward to a great week and thank you again host committee for hosting us this week."

New delegates sat with people who have attended sessions in the past, enjoying food and conversation.

Table decor created by hand from



Regional Coordinator Karie Blasingame of Illinois welcomes everyone to the 153rd Annual Convention in Minneapolis on Monday evening. | Photo by Lindsay Schroeder



Handmade centerpieces and cookies were part of the decor at the host banquet. | Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

Grange host committee members were surrounded by homemade cookies, just a start of the treats in store for attendees, according to Blasingame.



Minnesota State Grange members, serving as part of the host committee, gather after the banquet for a moment of fun. | Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

Be informed

Sign up to get text alerts from National Grange including convention updates by texting GRANGE to 24365.



Early start

Aurora Zvarick, daughter of 2020 host coordinator Gene Zvarick and his wife, Denae, checks out her room key while enjoying time with a Grange friend, Communication Fellow Lindsay Schroeder.

Challenge

Solve the puzzle and bring your answer to the Good Day! table in the Bloomington Foyer. If you get it right, you'll get a prize courtesy of the Communication Fellows!

Find the postal abbreviations of the states whose Master's last names are the following:

- A popular brand of soup
- An Old Testament Biblical Figure
- An Old Norse word meaning "red-haired"

Rearrange the letters in those abbreviations to give you a word that could be synonymous with "custodian" or "guard."

Grange expands horizons, serves as second home

BY ELIZABETH HINER

*Colorado State Grange Lecturer
and Senior Communication Fellow*

“Why the Grange?”

This organization, the Grange, gives its members who are willing to make the effort and strive to learn new things a chance to spread their wings. You can go as far as you want to go.

When my husband and I moved back to his hometown, his Aunt Lillian, the last of the family to be associated with the Florida Grange, in Durango, Colorado, convinced us to join the Grange. She was determined to have someone in her family become a member of her Grange before she passed away. To that end she got my husband Dean and his sister Jan to join, and by default, Geary and me.

For me the Grange became like a second home, a place to grow and to thrive. It was a new and wonderful experience for me.

Within a year, my husband and I held the positions of Treasurer and Secretary. It is a daunting task when you are thrown into the deep end of the pool to sink or swim like we were.

We attended our first State Convention and for fun, we were able to attend our first National Grange Convention in Sandusky, OH. We had a great time and were overwhelmed with all the work that went into running the Grange. However, we survived it all, and were not daunted by the enormity of the Grange as we did so much in such a short span of time, and had a great time.

As members of the Florida Grange we have I have been a delegate at the State Grange for the past four years, substituted for Pomona for the past two years. I am enjoying each new challenge.

We also joined the Pomona Grange and learned much more of the ritual of the Grange. It was like joining a large family who took us in, warts and all. I found that I needed the support and encouragement I received after joining the Grange. With the faith they have in me, I have done well as Secretary of the Florida Grange, I was given and still have the chance to grow as a fledgling Lecturer for our Pomona Grange over the last couple of years. I have been slowly becoming a bit more

comfortable with public speaking, which is one of my least favorite things to do.

In 2016, I had the opportunity to become a Communications Fellow for the National Grange at the 150th National Grange Convention in DC. I returned in 2017 as a Senior Fellow in Spokane, WA and again this year for the 153rd National Convention. This year Amanda Brozana Rios asked me to come to the Convention to teach a quick class on Interviewing, definitely out of my wheelhouse. I took up the challenge and seem to have done well. In addition, the Delegate body of the Colorado State Grange elected me to the office of Colorado State Lecturer and retained my position as Publicity Director.

So “Why Grange?” The Grange is a place to grow and be with a family as they will take you at any age and have programs and opportunities to grow from age four and up, with the Junior Grange, Youth Grange and regular Grange members. The Grange is a wonderful family oriented organization that you can put as much or as little into it as you would like.

For me it has been all or nothing.

Master's Message by Betsy E. Huber

Off and running on the road to make history

Today the important work of the National Grange is on display as we open our 153rd Annual Session and delegates get to work on resolutions and budget discussions on the floor. It truly is empowering when you think that a resolution written at a local Grange has now made its way through discussion and debate at various levels and come to be acted on at the National level - grassroots in action!

I hope you'll take time to join us and listen to how seriously the elected leaders of the State Granges take their work.

The variety of subjects our committees cover is vast, but it shows the values and concerns of rural Americans.

Don't forget, of course, to visit the hospitality room and take time to enjoy socializing with other members and meeting new people.

You may see some Communication Fellows wandering through the halls seeking out Grange stories. We often forget just how powerful it is to hear people speak with passion about our organization - not just for potential members, but to reignite the fire for the organization for those who already are part of our Grange family. Please take the time to share your stories with them.

Tonight, I encourage you to sit with people you may not know and learn what makes the Grange special in communities across the country while attending the Fellowship dinner this evening. These opportunities allow you to get new ideas for your Grange, and you'll be amazed how much you have in common with one another.



With this ring, I ... become an honorary delegate?

BY TROY BEHNKE

*Minnesota State Grange
Membership Director and
Communication Fellow*

Royal Vine of Milton Grange #670, Executive Committee member of the Wisconsin State Grange, is a first time delegate this year.

Vine has been a member of the Executive Committee of the Wisconsin State Grange for two months. While a Granger for a relatively short period of time, he was in search of the right fraternal organization for a long time.

A native of Edgerton, WI, where he grew up on a dairy farm, Vine now owns a 43-acre farm outside of Stoughton, WI. He was enlisted in the Marines “right off the farm” for 11 ½ years, during which time he traveled through at least forty different countries.

He has now been back in Wisconsin, and currently works for Sub-Zero, Wolf, and Cove, but owns a farm and works there when he can. He is engaged to Debbie Gegare, Master of the Wisconsin State Grange, and a former National Convention Commu-



Royal Vine recently proposed to Wisconsin State Grange Master Debbie Gegare and is now serving as an honorary delegate from the state. | Photo courtesy of Debbie Gegare

nication Fellow, in December of this year. They both have their own adult children, and will be soon adopting Kedrick, who has been with them for three years.

As this is his first National Convention in any capacity he is, in his words, “excited and nervous” and is looking forward to observing the workings of the convention.

Newly elected Minnesota Master serving as honorary delegate

BY PHILIP VONADA

*Chairman of Pennsylvania State Grange Suggestions
Committee and Communication Fellow*

Among the new Delegates at the 153rd Annual Session of the National Grange is Ann Bercher, who was recently elected as President of the Minnesota State Grange. Bercher may be familiar to Session attendees, as she worked for 25 years at the Oliver Hudson Kelley Farm and the Minnesota Historical Society and was a Kelley Farm representative to National Session, and she also served as a Communication Fellow at the 2018 session.

Through her work at the Kelley Farm, Bercher joined the Sunbeam Grange #2 in Elk River, Minnesota in 2002. This year, she will serve as an honorary delegate to session, as she succeeds John Crippen, who is Chairperson of the Education & Health Committee.

As Minnesota State Grange President, Bercher’s motto is “we, not me,” emphasizing teamwork and communication as being key to a successful organization. She brings enthusiasm and energy to her office, and is full of ideas on how to help continue the growth of Minnesota Granges, particularly in currently under-served communities. She is especially excited to work with Troy Behnke, Minnesota State Grange’s Membership Director.

According to past President John Crippen, “Ann is exactly who the Minnesota Grange needs at this moment in time. She has a passion for increasing our viability through the creation of new Granges, and she is a wonderful ambas-



Ann Bercher was elected State Master in October but will serve as an honorary delegate allowing immediate past master and current Overseer John Crippen to complete his responsibilities as committee chair and be the voting delegate for the state. | Photo courtesy of...

sador to Grange members around the country. I am excited to see where we can go under her leadership.”

At this year’s session, Bercher states that she wants to grow her contacts and connections, to learn how Granges are different, and how Granges can make the most of those differences to utilize everyone’s strengths. When asked if she has anything else to add, Bercher notes that she is an avid gardener, and a classically trained chef through Le Cordon Bleu.



On the town

A team of touring Grangers took to the town a few days before convention lead by National Lecturer Chris Hamp. The tour included 10 stops, including what Hamp noted as her favorite: the largest bale of twine. However, when they all saw the Peanut character statues, they had smiles on their faces, she said.

Minnehaha Falls

The group with the Capitol building in St. Paul

Peanuts Characters Statues

The group with Hermann the German

The Glockenspiel in New Ulm

Bonnie the Big Cow at the Bongards Creamery.

The World's Largest Boot at the Red Wing store in Red Wing, Minnesota

SPAM Museum

The World's Largest Raspberry in Hopkins

World's Largest Twine Bale

| Photos courtesy of Chris Hamp

