



Do you want to see more Session Photos?

A huge THANK YOU to Lindsay Schroeder, owner of Little Linds Photos, for her amazing photos of Convention this week!

If you would like digital copies of photos she may have taken of you at Honors Night, Evening of Excellence, Celebration Banquet, or around Convention, please reach out at littlelindsphotos@gmail.com.



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PATRONS CHAIN

The Official Newsletter of the National Grange



Gayle Reyburn (PA, left), Garrett Phelps (NY), Asheton Medlin (NC), and Ashley Holloman (NC) were named to the National Grange Youth Leadership Team on Friday evening. They are pictured with Samantha Wilkins (right), National Grange Junior & Youth Director.
Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

New National Youth Team ready to work

STAFF REPORT

On Friday evening, November 17, during the Grange Honors Night at the National Grange Convention, a new Junior and Youth Leadership team was selected.

This year's team will consist of Gayle Reyburn (PA) - Junior Ambassador; Garrett Phelps (NY) and Asheton Medlin (NC) - Youth Ambassadors; and Ashley Holloman (NC) - Outstanding Young Patron. They will work closely with one another promoting the Junior and Youth Departments at the National Grange, in tandem with National Grange Junior & Youth Director Samantha Wilkins.

Gayle Reyburn, 14, is currently the Pennsylvania State Junior Grange Ambassador. She is one of seven siblings,

and has been involved in the Grange "since birth." She is a member of Russellville Junior Grange #550. She is a freshman in high school, and an active team member in gymnastics, 4-H, band, musicals, and her church junior youth group.

Reyburn says she is excited to represent the National Junior Grange and hopes to help bring Junior Grangers together more. "More get-togethers for the Juniors in the nation would be nice," she says. "I feel like the only time the Juniors see each other is at Nationals."

She wants Junior Grangers to get involved more, too, "I would tell the Juniors to do a lot of the contests... then also to stay active and go to the meetings, build good relationships with other Juniors, and

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President's Perspective

BY CHRISTINE E. HAMP
National Grange President

Wow! Niagara Falls and the 157th annual convention of the National Grange was amazing!

A huge shout-out to the staff and directors of the National Grange as well as the members of the Northeast Connection (New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont,

and Rhode Island) for all your efforts, as well as our thanks to each of you whose attendance and participation made the 157th one of the largest and most engaging conventions in recent memory. Let's keep the momentum rolling through 2024, and plan to "Meet Us at the River" in Bettendorf, Iowa, November 12-16, 2024.

On behalf of the officers, delegates, and members



of the National Grange, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to

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Sister Betsy Huber, immediate past President of the National Grange, for her time, effort, leadership, and vision over the past eight years. Also, for her willingness to ensure a smooth and complete transition as we move into 2024.

It is my honor to have your trust to continue the work of the National Grange, with a focus to be continually stronger tomorrow than we are today.

As we work together to set the course for our future, I will be looking forward to getting many of you involved in the process of reviewing our departments and programs, as well as our internal workings, to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our members and future members.

If you'd like to get involved, please click on my name above to send an email directly to me with your contact information and area or areas of interest.

The strength of the National Grange is dependent on the strength of our State Granges, local community Granges, and every Grange member.

It is my intention to conduct a thorough strategic planning initiative early in 2024 with Grange leaders and staff, to include a review of our mission and vision statements, an analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and to set and prioritize SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) goals. Each goal will have a Strategy Development Team Leader to bring together a Team that will develop their goal as well as strategies for implementation. These Teams will be encouraged and challenged to be inclusive, creative, and innovative. I look forward to this process, as well as the implementation and results. Please keep your eyes open for additional information on how to participate in this initiative.

Imagine the impact the Grange



Hamp and her husband, Duane, at Niagara Falls.

Photo provided

can make when we prioritize and actively work toward enhancing the experience and value we provide to each member. How awesome this country could be if every community had a strong, vibrant Grange focused on resilience and relevance. Remember also that determined people working together can do anything. Let all who desire join in serving as Caretakers of a Legacy!



AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

Helping Households Connect



ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED IN SIGNING UP, OR HAS SIGNED UP BUT HASN'T YET HEARD FROM A COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR SHOULD CONNECT WITH THE OREGON INSTITUTE FOR A BETTER WAY AT CONVENTION. IF YOU'RE NOT ATTENDING CONVENTION, CONTACT AMANDA AT MEMBERSHIP@NATIONALGRANGE.ORG FOR YOUR INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED AND FORWARDED TO THE NAVIGATORS.

2 elected, 1 appointed to Grange Foundation Board

During the Grange Foundation meeting on Monday, elections were held for two positions on the Board of Directors.

Re-elected was Anna May Nauss (PA), who had been serving a one-year appointed term. Nauss was subsequently elected as Secretary of the Foundation Board at Saturday morning's Board meeting. She brings a strong background in financials, having retired after 35 ½ years at AmeriChoice Federal Credit Union, serving as Chief Financial Officer for 28 ½ years and as CEO for seven.

Also elected to the Board was Richard Stonebraker, President of Maryland State Grange. Stonebraker has been fundamental in establishing the Maryland State Grange

Foundation, and is an ag teacher in Frederick, Maryland.

During Saturday morning's meeting, Nathan Strawder of Kansas was appointed to an at-large position. A past President of Kansas State Grange, Strawder is currently the Membership & Legislative Director in Kansas State Grange.

Also serving on the Grange Foundation Board of Directors are Joan C. Smith (NJ/FL, Chair), Chris Hamp (National Grange President), John Benedik (NJ, Treasurer), Lynette Schaeffer (IL), Buddy Overstreet (TX), Marty Billquist (MT), and Sharon Tutrone (at-large). Amanda Brozana Rios is the staff Development Associate.



New members of the Grange Foundation Board are (clockwise from top) Anna May Nauss (PA), Richard Stonebraker (MD), and Nathan Strawder (KS).

Photos by
Lindsay Schroeder



Resonating history, Sign-a-Song competition continues

BY MANDY BOSTWICK
Senior Communication Fellow

The National Grange has a long history of Deaf Awareness. In 1970, the National Grange adopted deafness as its health project. Throughout the years this program has evolved to include all levels of hearing loss. The National Grange has made legislation initiatives related to Deaf Awareness, support, technology, and protection of the language and individuals a priority in the lobbying efforts. National Grange offers many opportunities to interact with the deaf community, learn basic and advanced American Sign Language, and raise awareness about hearing loss and its causes.

One of the most prominent opportunities in the National Grange to learn and share the language is the Sign-a-Song contest. This contest is currently a regional contest housed under the Youth and Junior Departments - anyone can enter the contest, but only Youth and Juniors are eligible for Best of Show. If there are no youth or junior entries then the Best of Show will be awarded to another entry. Best of Show winners then move on to National to perform at the Evening of Excellence following a pre-judging.

This year there were four regional Best of Show winners:

Karryn Overstreet (TX), Kathy Gibson (MA), Mikayla Piers (RI), and Taylor Rogers & Asheton Medlin (NC), and one Junior Grange Best of Show winner, Cohen Piers (RI). On Saturday evening, it was announced that Piers was the winner of the National competition.

National Junior/Youth Director Samantha Wilkins has announced that in 2024 the Sign-a-Song contest will be a state-level contest only. States are encouraged to host a contest and send their winner to National Convention to perform at the Evening of Excellence. For more information please refer to the National Junior Grange or National Grange Youth program books.



Mikayla Piers (RI) showcases her sign-a-song in the 2023 Evening of Excellence at the National Grange Convention. She was awarded Best of Show.

Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

Ambassador Team continued from page 1

have fun and not go away when they get to their high school years.” One of her goals is to help bridge the gap between the Junior Grange and the Community Grange.

Garrett Phelps is a member of South Rutland Grange #53 in New York. He is enthusiastic about the Grange and its future. In the Grange, he is active in his Community and Pomona Granges, and has been serving as the New York State Grange Youth Ambassador.

A senior in high school, Phelps is active in FFA, 4-H, Jefferson County Junior Holstein Club, and Student Council, and is a member of his varsity swim and tennis teams.

Phelps says his big focus is “connectivity.” He says he has a strong desire to connect and communicate with other local youth organizations at the high school and middle school levels.

“Family, meals, history, compassion and tradition - they are all connected,” says Phelps. He wants to highlight how each of these things can connect our Grangers to one another to keep the traditions alive.

Phelps’ father, Melvin, is incredibly proud of his son, “I think it’s absolutely amazing. Anything students can do makes organizations better,” he said.

The other half of the Youth

Ambassador team is Asheton Medlin, a member of Bushy Fork Grange #1093 in North Carolina. She’s a Junior at UNC-Chapel Hill where she is studying biology to become a veterinarian.

Medlin has been a Grange member since she was 8 years old and first attended North Carolina’s State Grange camp; now, she is heavily involved in her local, county, and State Granges. In addition to her Grange work, she is a volunteer at the Orange County Animal Shelter, a member of the UNC Helping Paws and Pre-Vet Clubs, and plays intramural sand volleyball and soccer.

Medlin hopes to tackle challenges that stem from the 2020 COVID pandemic. She feels that “many youths do not want to go out and do things, especially if they do not have friends there with them,” and, like Phelps, hopes to connect with groups like the FFA. “In-person outreach is more effective than consistent social media posts,” she said.

The final member of the four-person Youth Leadership Team is Ashley Holloman, who was selected as Outstanding Young Patron. Holloman is a 14-year member of Southern Wake Grange #1295 in North Carolina. She and her husband Chad live on the family farm in Micro.

Holloman earned her Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education and has been teaching for a decade, while also serving as an FFA advisor at Corinth Holders High School. She aims to create a happy, safe, and fun classroom by listening, learning, teaching, and loving.

She and her husband own and operate H&P Farms, where they raise cattle, sheep, and goats, and are co-leaders of the Batten Farm 4-H Club.

Holloman looks forward to having the opportunity to represent North Carolina and the National Grange while networking with Grange members from across the country.

“This role will give me the opportunity to see the Grange from a new perspective and to help inspire Grangers to look toward the future of their Grange,” Holloman said. She believes that the National Grange could rebrand programming to get Community and Pomona Granges excited to encourage their younger members to get involved.

Congratulations to these four incredible young members. To invite them to be a part of your Grange events, please contact National Grange Junior and Youth Director Samantha Wilkins at samantha@nationalgrange.org.

Opinion: Easiest path may not be the best

BY KARIE BLASINGAME
Senior Communication Fellow



How often are we given a choice, and we choose the easiest road, the road we have always gone down instead of the road that is a little rough, different from what we are used to, we instead take the easy way out.

We find excuses, blame those who are better off than we are, that it is not fair, and we should get the same

advantage they have.

I am positive that the Founders of our Order, and our nation if you think about it, did not choose the easiest path. They were the underdogs, the rebels, they were the ones “in the wrong,” those who were not necessarily the ones to follow, until they found a leader, a cause and their purpose.

What is our cause, what is our purpose, who will our leader be? What will make our members leave their homes and travel for days on end for an idea? That the work that will be done is the best work not only for those left behind at home but also for the entire nation, the entire Grange membership? What today is as important to us as those things we talk about having done? I don’t want to continue to say we had a hand in rural free delivery over 100 years ago, what are we changing today? How are we making the world a better place now?

We worked together to fight the railroad monopolies, to get rural mail delivery into every home in the country ensuring that our message could get to our members. We partnered with businesses who created the first catalog shopping experiences which have since die out and grown into your online shopping experience. I think we have lost more partnerships through simply forgetting that they exist more than anything else. How did we become forgettable?

I am positive that the National Grange did not pay to put members in up in hotels so they could have their early National Sessions. Their meeting was held in a Grange Hall, or other community building, they stayed in their wagons and buggies in the beginning to begin this great organization for weeks on end, they worked together to provide meals for everyone. How have we come so far that we feel it is not a privilege to have our rooms paid for but the National Grange’s responsibility to do it. Why do we expect the National Grange to foot the bill for programming, education, training and where we lay our head at the National Grange convention?

I don’t feel that when it comes to our local Granges, we have the same feeling. I don’t think we expect our local Grange to foot the bill for fellowship after the meeting, members voluntarily bring what they can afford to share and provide. If your Grange can pay them back that is a bonus but not a requirement.

That is ultimately what we are asking you to do. What can you afford to provide for your State and your National Grange? Time, knowledge, experience, money. Can you share your wealth of knowledge with others to make it worthwhile to attend training to learn more? Can you take the time and fundraise the money it would take to get you to the National Grange Session to pay for the hotels and the meals?

We ask our Youth to do it every year. We ask them to leave school and attend on their own dime, possibly with some help. Why are we not willing to do for ourselves something that we require of them?

You are only as small as you choose to be, how big can your Grange grow if you change your mindset? How large can your State Grange become when you start making the ask? Look around your Grange, who are the people ready to take up the flag and be the change you need? It starts with one person, YOU. Who was the one person who got you started in the Grange? Can you be that person for someone else? Why would you not want to be?

Midwest Region invites you to “Meet Us at the River”

On Saturday, November 18, the Midwest Region officially invited all National Grange members to Quad Cities, Iowa, for the 158th National Grange Convention!

Co-Chair Kathy Baldwin (IA) said it will be an impressive Convention, right on the banks of the Mississippi River.

The Quad Cities, comprised of Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, and Rock Island, Moline, and East Moline, Illinois, will be the home of our Convention, with the Convention hotel at the Isle Casino Hotel in Bettendorf.

Mark your calendars now for November 12-16, 2024. Plans will be released soon, and registration will open in mid-2024.



Join the Birthday Club!

BY KATIE SQUIRE
Communication Fellow

Did you know that over 58% of the greeting cards sold annually are birthday wishes? How many of us take advantage of a “birthday month” discount or free dessert? Even those of us who have sworn off counting years still like to be remembered on our birthday.

To that end, National Grange Membership & Leadership Director Amanda Brozana-Rios introduced **The Birthday Club** to those in attendance at the 157th National Grange Session this year in Niagara Falls, New York.

“We’re a family, and in families standard practice is to acknowledge birthdays and other milestones, so this just makes sense,” Brozana Rios said.

Members were encouraged to join by providing their name, email address, and birthdate. During the year an electronic birthday card will be sent, in time for their birthday, to participants wishing them a happy birthday and to remind them they are valued as a member by the National Grange.

If you were not present at the session, or neglected to sign up, you still have the opportunity to join The Birthday Club. Our members of all ages from the highest to the lowest degree are valued and should be recognized. Even better, Granges can submit the information for members to receive their card as a surprise. Don’t forget when people are asked for Grange values that drew them to our hall, family is always on the list.

Families celebrate each other, so let’s get started celebrating our birthdays. Imagine the joy

of opening an unexpected greeting and finding birthday wishes directly from the National Grange.

With so many State Granges celebrating or nearing milestone “birthdays,” The Birthday Club is a great way to keep the party going and remind everyone of the importance of our individual members.

If you would like to join or submit names for The Birthday Club, please visit: <http://grange.biz/birthdayclub> or scan the QR code above. Most importantly we wish you a very happy birthday and many more.



NATIONAL GRANGE CALENDAR



2024
NATIONAL GRANGE
CALENDAR

featuring the
Heirloom Program

\$10

There are fewer than 100 National Grange Calendars (featuring the Heirloom Program) still available for purchase. They are \$10 each, plus \$2 shipping per calendar. All proceeds benefit the Communication Fellows Fund at the Grange Foundation. Please contact Philip Vonada at pvonada@nationalgrange.org to place an order!

Grangers give generously



Throughout the Convention, a table of socks, mittens, hats, scarves, and more was overflowing in the lobby of the Niagara Falls Convention Center. A total of 2,568 items and over \$1,000 were collected and donated to the Community Missions of Niagara Frontier, Inc., a local organization that helps with housing and more for the underserved populations in and around Niagara Falls. They were overwhelmed with appreciation.

Photo by Lindsay Schroeder

More sights from Convention



This handmade quilt was presented by the National Grange to Arnie Eby, Executive Director of the National Foster Parents' Association. They will auction it off to raise funds in support of their programs.

Photo by Lindsay Schroeder