



The Patrons Chain

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE

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Find the fun as a leader

By [Christine E. Hamp](#), National Grange President

If there is one, single-most important lesson, or truth, that has been reinforced in my first two months as President of the National Grange it is to make time for fun! When it feels like the weight of the entire organization is resting on my shoulders, I am fortunate to have the support of my husband, Duane, my family near and far, and a bunch of amazing and wacky friends who help me focus on the important stuff and not get bogged down in the details. A large helping of fun makes everything more enjoyable!

Leadership can be like a rollercoaster ride – ups, downs, and occasionally an upside-down loop-de-loop. Remember to celebrate victories and share in the laughs. When times get tough being able to find joy in chaos is like having a secret superpower! It sparks creativity, lights up the dark corners of problem-solving, and turns challenges into opportunities.

Enjoy the journey! Make time for fun!

Imagine the impact the Grange 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!

President Hamp in the news:

Lancaster Farming – [National Grange President Visits 2024 PA Farm Show](#)

What makes you... you?

By Garrett Phelps, National Grange Youth Ambassador



My name is Garrett Phelps, I am one of the 2024 National Grange Youth Ambassadors, and I am writing today to represent the National Grange Leadership team. It has always been a privilege to be a member of this great organization, and I am excited to be representing New York and the Northeast region, but also coming to you today representing all of the Grange Youth across the country. Today I will be letting you know what I love to do and why I love the Grange.

Grange Breakfasts are a time-honored tradition in many Granges. The reason why I enjoy going to the Grange breakfast is because of the connections with community members, and learning how systems work. Our Grange has held breakfast events for many years as a way for our local Grange to not only serve the community but also to make connections with people in the community. I started volunteering at these breakfasts early on by helping bring meals to the tables. Through that, I was able to engage with people from my community, learning their names, and sometimes I was fortunate enough to learn something about them.

As I got older, I was 'promoted' to help in the kitchen. This role was a lot different as I was helping make plates and learning how things worked in the kitchen. I didn't have the chance to interact with the public as much and had to learn how the systems worked in the back. My job was different; I didn't think I was going to like doing this because I was no longer working directly with the community members. This took time and patience and became a critical skill for me to learn. Working each breakfast, I am challenged by learning new skills and more about myself through the interactions I have, which has helped tremendously in my growth. Through a simple community breakfast, I have grown by breaking out of my shell to talk to people, learning about processes and procedures, and realizing that everyone had their place and was a connective piece of this well-oiled machine that made everything flow.

Throughout my education, I found a love for history, through the lessons my teachers taught. I learned that through learning history, we can make connections to how it affects today's world. This can connect to the Grange because we are an organization built on a rich and productive history. During one of our Grange's Breakfast events, I asked one of the older members, Bonnie Herman, if I could go explore the upstairs of the Grange Hall.

When she allowed me to go upstairs, that was the moment I remember falling in love with the Grange. I saw the inside of our old meeting room - it was filled with so much history. It was this grand room in this old building.

My father brought me to this Hall the very first time to work at a breakfast, so between my father - Melvin Phelps, and Ms. Bonnie, my passion and love for this organization was ignited. I explored parts of the Grange Hall that I wasn't sure I had permission to go into, I found boxes and boxes of our history. Things our Grange has done over the many years since its inception. After finding these things and exploring my Grange Hall, I wanted to go back and see more every time I was there. This led to me begin working with Ms. Bonnie to clean the Grange Hall and continue uncovering and learning more about our rich history. Through this work, I was able to develop a great relationship with her as she continued to teach me everything she knew about the Grange. This ignited my love for the Grange even more and inspired me to continue to grow in everything I did with the Grange.

As an ag kid, the cattle have always been there. When I was growing up and I would go outside I would also see the cows. The cattle would come up to me and be there with me. Growing up and watching the cattle and getting to work with them instilled a love of not only agriculture but also these magnificent creatures.

Between developing a love for agriculture which has always been there, to discovering a love for history, to enjoying my time serving others through community events and other activities I was able to understand that these are my core values. These are the parts that make me, me.

I challenge you to think about what you love and what makes you, **you**. Through my love for the Grange, history, and agriculture, I was able to discover things about myself that I was unaware of. I was able to learn who I was as a person, and what makes me unique; through that, I have been able to learn the valuable things I can bring to the table not only in my day-to-day routines but also as a leader in the Grange.

So what makes you - **you**? What skills and personality traits can you bring to the table to continue to help you grow as a leader or future leader in this organization? How could the skills you may already have an impact and help mold the next generations of the Grange - like me, like previous ambassadors, like each young member across the county?

Grant money still available for raising awareness about ACP

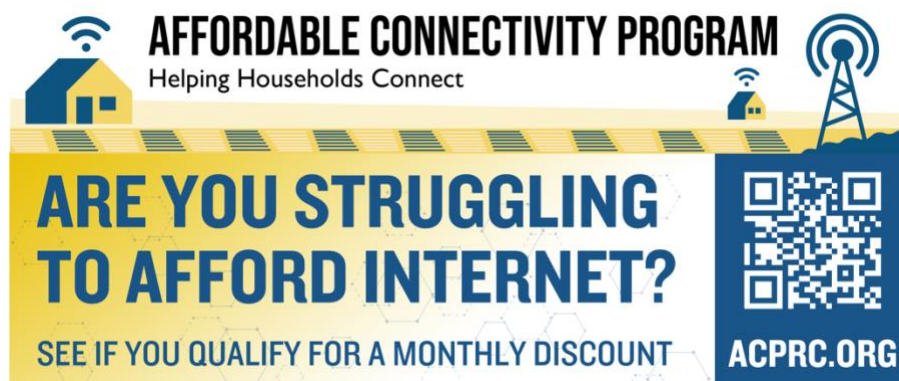
The Affordable Connectivity Program outreach grant action is still taking place and Granges are encouraged to take part in order to raise awareness about the ACP and receive incentive funds for their work. These funds come from the Roots of Connectivity grant won by the Oregon Institute for a Better Way and the National Grange in 2023.

More than 80 Granges have qualified so far for incentive payments with more qualifying each week.

For Granges who have already signed up, it's time to report your work so you, too, can receive your incentive check.

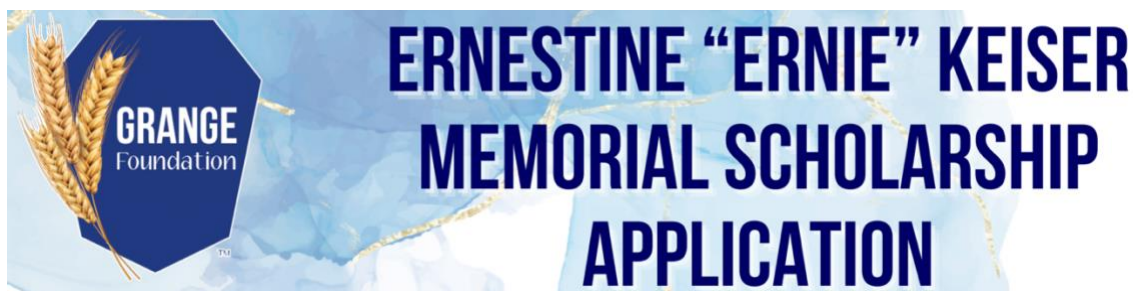
If your Grange has not yet signed up, do so today at <https://forms.office.com/r/ZwZ72RVmaq>. If your Grange has already signed up to participate, and you've completed a project, don't forget to report your work at <https://forms.office.com/r/X6M51U2mG1>.

Are you signed up and you need more cards, signs, placemats or other items to promote ACP? Order free materials from the product order form here: <https://forms.office.com/r/eYxbhBSwfs>. If you have any issues or have not heard back from a Navigator, please email connect@acprc.org.



Grange Foundation's Ernestine Keiser Memorial Scholarship

By [Joan C. Smith](#), Grange Foundation Chairperson



In November, the [Grange Foundation](#) announced the creation of a new scholarship in memory of Ernestine "Ernie" Keiser, a long-time Grange member and youth supporter from Virginia. In the upcoming issues of the Patrons Chain, we will be highlighting some of the application requirements for the scholarship – we hope you'll apply!

\$1,000 Continuing Education Scholarship Information

- Application Packet Due March 1 – Required
- Two (2) Recommendation Letters
 - 1 from a member of the applicant's Community Grange
 - 1 from a teacher/guidance counselor/mentor on school letterhead or organizational letterhead
 - Writers of the letters of recommendation must be unrelated to the applicant
- Get the Letters started now, only 6 weeks until the packet is due
- See full requirements and application form: www.grangefoundation.org

Left Hand Grange Rings in the New Year

Submitted by Vicky Dorvee, Left Hand Grange

Photos by Noah Katz of Katz Photography



The main hall of Left Hand Grange #9 was transformed into its most elegant ambiance yet, as a team of volunteers and vendors decorated the room for New Year's 2024. The result was sophisticated black tablecloths and chair coverings, lovely vintage cocktail glasses, top hats, party horns, and detailed programs of the evening's events all intended to set the mood in anticipation of a very special evening. A corner of the hall was dedicated to the event's musicians who entertained the group of nearly 40 attendees with a bit of everything from folk to rock to Auld Lang Syne.

Thanks to a committee of Niwot business owners, along with Grange board members, what started as a fun concept several months in advance came to fruition in beautiful fashion. The intent was to share the warmth and sense of community that is the Grange while ringing in the New Year in a ritzy format. Arriving guests were handed an original cocktail concoction dubbed the Niwot Caboose while being serenaded with music by a local musician. As the evening progressed they were treated to a lengthy lineup of international cuisine.

Following dinner, the sounds of a full band brought guests to the dance floor where they properly celebrated the approaching New Year with smiles and the sentiment of being part of a happy crowd. A newly installed audio-visual system enhanced the evening's experience with a speaker system and large television that transported guests to Times Square's annual dropping of the ball. The evening went off so smoothly, there's already talk of doing it all again.

Do you want to see your Grange in the Spotlight? Send a brief write-up of an event at your Grange with a few pictures to Philip Vonada, Communications Director, at pvonada@nationalgrange.org. It may be printed immediately or may be held for a future Patrons Chain or Good Day! magazine.

Register for National Grange/Rural Minds introduction to "Rural Mental Health Resilience" program



The National Grange and Rural Minds are pleased to present the

"National Grange Introduction to the Mental Health Rural Resilience Program" Webinar

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

6:00 pm ET; 5:00 pm CT; 4:00 pm MT; 3:00 pm PT

This **free** 30-minute webinar on Zoom is being offered **only** to members of the National Grange. As a follow-up to the launch of the [**Rural Mental Health Resilience Program**](#) at the Annual National Grange Convention on November 16, 2023, this webinar will provide:

- An introduction of the 'Rural Resilience' program
- Online tour of the program webpage (Host will share his screen.)

- Demonstration of accessing and printing program documents
- Explanation on the value of program materials
- Suggestions for how to use the 'Rural Resilience' program to help improve rural mental health

In recognition of the self-reliance and a do-it-yourself mindset that are common among many people living in rural communities, the Rural Mental Health Resilience Program elevates these attributes to help empower rural Americans to become part of the solution to improving rural mental health. It provides Grangers and others across the country with free online access to relevant information, content, and action items so they can help themselves and serve as a trusted source of mental health information for their families, friends, and members of rural communities.

[CLICK HERE](#) or scan the QR code for more information about the webinar and a link to free webinar registration.



Register for the Virtual Legislative Fly-In



This year's National Grange Legislative Fly-In will be held virtually on **March 18**.

We hope you'll join National Grange staff, federal legislators, and issues partners for this educational afternoon. You'll learn what the National Grange is working on, how it affects all of rural America, and how you can get involved.

This is a **FREE** offering from the National Grange for all members and friends of the

Grange. Feel free to share this information and invitation with potential Grange members.

Register today at <http://grange.biz/flyin2024>.

Successful kick-off to Fellowship First Friday includes soup-er recipe swap

By [Amanda Brozana Rios](#), National Grange Membership & Leadership Development Director

On Friday, Jan. 5, the inaugural Fellowship First Friday was held at 8:30 p.m. Eastern via Zoom, hosted by National Grange Membership and Leadership Development Director Amanda Brozana Rios with several special guests. The concept of the once-a-month event is to bring what Granges might call "activity night" to life online, allowing us to include members of all ages and abilities, including those who typically cannot make it to their local Grange meetings and e-members.

"While we can't do business, we can still open the evening in a semi-traditional format of a Grange and focus most of our time on a short Lecturer's-style program and break-out rooms where people can learn more or join for general fellowship, or come discuss some specific issues in their Grange that they would like feedback on," Brozana Rios said. "The first part of the event gives those who might be considering joining a local Grange or an e-member a sense of what a Grange meeting might look like – informative, engaging and full of fellowship opportunities – but a sense that if they were to attend a chartered Grange they would find so much more."

Past National Grange Lecturer Ann Bercher provided the main course for the evening with her program on making homemade soups. She offered a recipe for delicious homemade cream of mushroom soup and gave tips that everyone could follow. Many in the audience brought their own bowl to the virtual table and enjoyed soup while listening. Several others shared their soup recipes, too. [Download all of their recipes here.](#)

A special break-out room hosted by SHIPmate Scott Lyle, of Washington State, who is a health coach, focused on making healthier choices in the new year. Each participant was able to decide which room they would like to join, and some visited more than one during the evening.

National Grange Vice President John Benedik helped chair the “Claims and Grievances” room, which allowed members to ask questions specific to their Grange and get advice, get encouragement about who to talk to at the State level and what to look for in documents such as the manual or bylaws, or to establish a time to discuss the issue further with their regional SHIPmate or a member of the National leadership team.

Current National Lecturer Tom Gwin was also in attendance and will co-host several of the upcoming editions, each held on the first Friday of each month, kicking off at 8:30 p.m. On Friday, Feb. 2, Fellowship First Friday will give a look at Lunar New Year and some insight into Chinese culture, including the link between the holiday celebration and agriculture and food. Individuals are encouraged to attend and should pre-register for the event in order to receive a special prize upon RSVP and attendance. Go to <http://grange.biz/FridayRSVP> today to register and expect a surprise in your inbox by the end of January.

Nearly 21 Million Children Expected to Receive New Grocery Benefit This Summer

Courtesy of the USDA

44 States, U.S. Territories, Tribes Intend to Launch Permanent Summer EBT Program in 2024; Even More Expected in 2025

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10, 2024 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that [35 states, all five U.S. territories, and four tribes plan](#) to be the first to launch the new, permanent summer grocery benefits program for children – known as Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer – in summer 2024. They include:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • American Samoa | • Kansas | • North Carolina |
| • Arizona | • Kentucky | • North Dakota |
| • Arkansas | • Maine | • Ohio |
| • California | • Maryland | • Oregon |
| • Cherokee Nation | • Massachusetts | • Osage Nation |
| • Chickasaw Nation | • Michigan | • Pennsylvania |
| • Colorado | • Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians | • Puerto Rico |
| • Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands | • Minnesota | • Rhode Island |
| • Connecticut | • Missouri | • Tennessee |
| • Delaware | • Montana | • Utah |
| • Guam | • Nevada | • U.S. Virgin Islands |
| • Hawaii | • New Hampshire | • Virginia |
| • Illinois | • New Jersey | • Washington |
| • Indiana | • New Mexico | • West Virginia |
| | • New York | • Wisconsin |

The USDA estimates that, in total, the states, U.S. territories, and tribes that have committed to launching the Summer EBT program in summer 2024 will serve close to 21 million children, providing a total of nearly \$2.5 billion in grocery benefits. This is around 70% of the total population of children eligible for Summer EBT. USDA expects additional states and tribes will provide Summer EBT in 2025.

Through this new program, states will provide families with \$120 per eligible child for the summer to buy food at grocery stores, farmers markets or other authorized retailers – similar to how SNAP benefits are used. Participating tribes will provide a benefit of the same amount that can be used to buy food at WIC-authorized retailers.

“Summer grocery benefits are becoming a reality for many communities across the nation and for tens of millions of children who will receive the nutrition they need to grow, learn, and thrive,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “We applaud all the leaders and partners who are stepping up to

make the program's inaugural year a success. Together we're making progress in closing the summer hunger gap and ensuring children are nourished and healthy year-round."

[Rigorous evaluations](#) of a multi-year demonstration project showed that providing Summer EBT reduced child hunger and improved diet quality. Summer grocery benefits decreased the number of kids with very low food security by about one-third and supported healthier diets featuring more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

The new, permanent Summer EBT program advances the goals of the Biden-Harris Administration's White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health to enhance food and nutrition security and improve food access and affordability. It was enacted on a bipartisan basis by Congress just over one year ago.

This is the inaugural year of the program, meaning states and tribes that do not launch the program this summer will have future opportunities to opt-in. USDA's goal is for Summer EBT to be available nationwide as soon as possible. The Department is providing extensive assistance, trainings, tools and more to the states, U.S. territories and tribes targeting a 2024 roll-out as well as to those planning for 2025 and beyond. Working with future implementers is a top priority.

Later this month, USDA Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small will join state, U.S. territory and tribal leaders, and partners from across the country in Baltimore to celebrate the positive difference this program will make for millions of children.

"No kid should have to spend their summer hungry, or without nutritious food," said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Torres Small. "Summer EBT is a giant step forward in meeting the needs of our nation's children and families throughout the year, and especially in the summer months."

Summer EBT is one of three key mechanisms that USDA is now using to tackle child hunger during the summer months. Families are encouraged to participate in all [summer nutrition programs](#) available to them. Summer meal sites provide free meals to families across the country, and many rural communities now [offer to-go or home-delivered summer meals](#) to increase access to this vital nutrition support.

For More Information

Webpage: [Summer EBT](#)

Webpage: [Summer Nutrition Programs](#)

Webpage: [Estimated Number of Eligible Children](#) and Total Summer EBT Benefit Amounts

Fact Sheet: [Summer EBT – A Tested and Effective Strategy for Ending Summer Hunger](#)

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service works to end hunger and improve food and [nutrition security](#) through a suite of 16 nutrition assistance programs, such as the school breakfast and lunch programs, WIC and SNAP. Together, these programs serve 1 in 4 Americans over the course of a year, promoting consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe and affordable food essentials to optimal health and well-being. FNS also provides science-based nutrition recommendations through the co-development of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. FNS's report, "[Leveraging the White House Conference to Promote and Elevate Nutrition Security: The Role of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service](#)," highlights ways the agency will support the Biden-Harris Administration's [National Strategy](#), released in conjunction with the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022. To learn more about FNS, visit www.fns.usda.gov and follow [@USDANutrition](#).

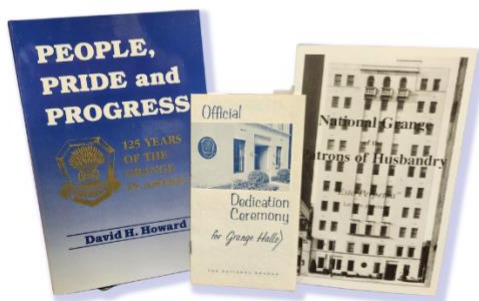
USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.



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www.grangestore.org

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Grange Member Benefit: Nationwide Pet Insurance



Because pets are family too.
Members can save more on pet insurance!



Nationwide Pet Insurance provides affordable pet health coverage from preventive care to significant medical incidents.

National Grange members are eligible for a 5% discount (or more for multiple pets) which makes this peace-of-mind protection even more affordable. Find out why Nationwide is the #1 choice in America for pet insurance.

Click on the link to enroll or get more information:
<https://benefits.petinsurance.com/national-grange>



GRANGE JEWELRY



Grange Jewelry is now in stock at the Grange Store. Pins include years of service and member recognition pins from 5-80 years, past officer pins, Degree recognition pins, and much more!

Some jewelry is now on clearance!

Prices vary

Order online through the Grange Supply Store at grangestore.org or by calling Loretta at (202) 628-3507 ext. 109.

www.grangestore.org

NATIONAL GRANGE

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