



The Patrons Chain

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE

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National Grange Building Sold

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

It is with mixed emotions that I let you know that I have signed the final paperwork and that our National Grange Headquarters Building at 1616 H Street NW, Washington, D.C. is sold.

The National Grange Executive Committee signed a Purchase and Sale Agreement with 1616 H Street NW LLC, a District of Columbia limited liability company, on January 17, 2024, and the sale closed on Tuesday, February 6, 2024.

This journey began in November 2021 with the difficult vote to sell our headquarters building. Since that day, there have been countless hours spent by many people making sure that we got the best deal possible based on the current economic and real estate conditions.

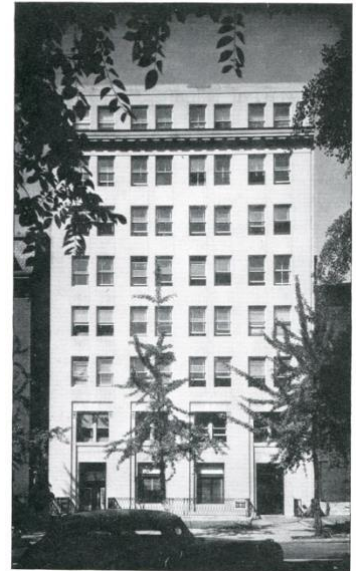
The sale price was \$10.3 million. After paying off the \$1.3 million left on our mortgage, broker commissions, title and escrow charges, local taxes and fees, and as the prorating of final rent payments, utility bills, and existing service contracts are wrapped up by the Title company over the next few weeks, we have a net \$8.12 million to invest. The investment advisory committee formed per Resolution 203 in 2021 will reengage and get a Request for Proposal (RFP) out as soon as possible to find an advisor to manage our investment funds. Please know that in the meantime the National Grange Executive Committee has opened an account to protect our proceeds in short-term U.S. Government securities. I will keep you informed of our progress as we move forward with the process laid out in Resolution 203.

The Purchase and Sale Agreement requires us to vacate our 11th floor offices and the basement levels in the next 30 days but allows us to remain in our new 1st and 2nd floor spaces free of charge for six (6) months. The National Grange Executive Committee is working to determine our needs and reviewing our options for what to do moving forward once our six (6) months run out.

Past National Grange President Kermit Richardson said it best many years ago – “The Grange does not live at 1616 H Street. The Grange lives in the many communities we serve.” I, and I fervently hope all of you as well, am excited for this next chapter of the National Grange. #GrangeStrong!

Grace and Mercy

As you can imagine, the next 30 days are going to be extremely busy and arduous (a good Grange word) for your National Grange staff. We have been pre-planning and will be doing everything humanly possible to keep up with the day-to-day operations of the National Grange. However, every workspace and the entire Grange Store must be completely moved and re-set up.



Please do not wait until the last minute to make your requests. Your grace and mercy are gratefully accepted.

National Grange in the news

Earlier this week, the National Grange wrote a letter to lawmakers in Washington State expressing concerns about proposals to remove dams along the Snake River in Washington.

[Read the article here.](#)

National Lecturer's Programming Updates

By [Tom Gwin](#), National Grange Lecturer



As I begin my term as the National Grange Lecturer, I have reviewed all current contests and programs currently being offered by the department.

The contests will remain as printed in the 2024 National Grange Program Guide with one addition. Upon recommendation of the National Junior Grange Leadership Team, we will be adding a Junior Grange Division to the Virtual Photo Contest. This division will be open to Junior Grangers, ages 5-13. We will use the age as of January 1. There will be three classes for Junior Grangers: Pets, Nature, and Scenic Photos. Contest guidelines and the entry form will be distributed at the National Grange Leaders Conference next week and then sent to State Lecturers and Junior Grange Directors.

The remaining contests: Quilt Block, Garden Design, Virtual Photo Contest, Weather Watcher Challenge, and Design-a-Program Contest will all remain as printed in the Program Guide.

We will also be continuing our partnership with the Quilts of Valor Foundation.

After a short hiatus, we will be resuming the Lecturer's publication, **A Quarters Worth**. I am looking for program ideas to share with other lecturers nationwide. All submissions should be emailed to me at lecturer@nationalgrange.org. Our first deadline will be **February 25**. Later this year, we will also have submission deadlines of April 25, July 25, and October 25.

I am also putting together a **Lecturer Advisory Team** to offer advice and suggestions for future Grange programs and activities. I am looking for Grange Lecturers at all levels, subordinate up through state, to work with me on developing effective programs that will inspire our membership, create Grange awareness, and to build the camaraderie that we all desire from our Grange membership. The Lecturer Advisory Team will meet 4-6 times per year via Zoom. Interested persons and/or nominations for the Lecturer Advisory Team should be emailed no later than February 29 to lecturer@nationalgrange.org.

NC Grange hosts Southern Farm Show vaccine clinic

North Carolina State Grange, in partnership with the National Grange, held a vaccine clinic at the Southern Farm Show in Raleigh, North Carolina, from January 31-February 2.

In addition to offering COVID, influenza, and RSV vaccines, the Grange also collected more than 1,300 survey results about vaccines and distributed gift cards to participants.

"As Grange members, it is important to us that our fellow rural Americans have access to all options to protect and improve their health. During these winter months, what better way to serve our community than by offering access to vaccines that protect against respiratory illness," said North Carolina Grange President Jimmy Gentry.

This clinic was held in partnership with McUlsky Health Force, the American Society of Consulting Pharmacists, and PharMerica, supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)) through USAging as part of a financial assistance award to USAging.



"Vaccines are an important option for rural Americans to preserve our health and long-term well-being. We are proud to see how our North Carolina members are continuing to serve their communities and offering resources that they may not otherwise have access to," said National Grange President Christine Hamp.

The National Grange is grateful to the North Carolina State Grange for their support of this program.



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must purchase by February 23!
delivery by mid-March

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- Women's V-Neck - \$22* (Steel)
- Long-Sleeve T-Shirt - \$28* (Navy)
- 3/4 Sleeve Raglan T-Shirt - \$20* (Gray/Blue)
- Hoodie - \$40* (Royal)

*plus applicable taxes and shipping

grange.biz/grangestrongshirt

Are you **Grange Strong?**

If so, support the National Grange's #GrangeStrong fundraiser by purchasing a shirt!

MUST ORDER by February 23, with delivery by mid-March for Grange Month.

[Click here to order today!](http://grange.biz/grangestrongshirt)

Happy Chinese New Year!

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



If you weren't able to make last week's Fellowship First Friday where Chinese New Year was the subject of our lecturer's-style program and provided a base for the theme of our conversation and fellowship rooms, you may be interested to learn a few things about this holiday.

US Air Force linguist Tyler Weller, brother of National Grange Membership and Leadership Development Director Amanda Brozana Rios, was the featured speaker for the evening. He talked about how he learned both the language and about the Chinese culture, then shared some interesting facts about Chinese New Year.

For example, did you know in China, the holiday is based on a lunar calendar and would mark the end of winter and the beginning of spring for farmers? The holiday was declared as a way to celebrate agriculture. Today, most people travel to their hometowns to be with family, spending days preparing by making special dishes, cleaning their homes, and exchanging seasonal greetings. Older family members give younger relatives red envelopes with money, a wish and symbol of prosperity they hope will follow the receiver the year through. Some people even give to neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances to show their status as wealthy.

Individuals who RSVP'd for the event through the JotForm link provided in a January Patron's Chain and on the National Grange social media all received a virtual red envelope and a \$2 Amazon gift card. Each attendee was entered into a chance to win a door prize and those who had RSVP'd doubled their winnings. Prizes were sponsored by Dragonfly Collective.

After the presentation and questions, attendees were invited to go to breakout rooms themed around Chinese New Year – "cleaning and organizing tips," "Chinese words and phrases," and "all things Dragon" were a few. Our breakout rooms are set with a theme to get discussions rolling and hopefully bring different people together to make new friends during the evening, and they're informal so people can jump between them or cut out whenever they wish. Past National Lecturer Ann Bercher hosted a room where she taught attendees how to make dumplings – and she's [shared the recipe](#) so you can try it at home, too.



Fellowship First Friday returns on March 1st with a look at one of the most instrumental but less discussed figures in the initial start-up of the Grange. RSVP using this link: <http://grange.biz/FridayRSVP>. You need not RSVP to join, but those who do will receive a special gift. Anyone who attends will be entered into a door prize drawing but those who RSVP will double their prize.



National FFA Week is coming soon, and we want your pictures!

The Grange Youth Team is seeking pictures of Grange members in their FFA Jackets for a fun project during FFA week.

Please [email them to Phil](mailto:pvnada@nationalgrange.org) (pvnada@nationalgrange.org) by February 16.

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.

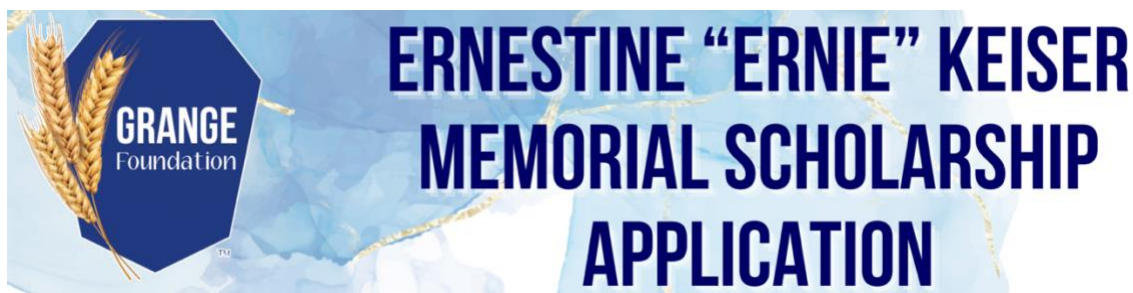
If your Grange has not yet signed up, do so today at <https://forms.office.com/r/ZwZ72RVmaq>. If your Grange has already signed up to participate, and you've completed a project, don't forget to report your work at <https://forms.office.com/r/X6M51U2mG1>.

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 the upcoming issues of the Patrons Chain, we will be highlighting some of the application requirements for the scholarship – we hope you'll apply!

This scholarship fund was established in 2023 by friends and family of Ernestine "Ernie" Keiser. Ernie was a long-time Grange member in Virginia and was a charter member of Beach Community Grange #958 (VA) in 1959. She was very supportive of the Youth program at the local, state and national levels. Ernie was a firm believer in the importance of education and her family and friends desired to continue her legacy by establishing this scholarship program. For 2024, the value of the scholarship is \$1,000.

- Applications must be typed, printed, and signed
- Be sure to send a complete application packet: application, 2-letters of recommendation, essay
- Emailed to ngfb@grange.org, completed online, or mailed.
- Must be received by March 1
- If mailing, must be received by March 1 to:
Grange Foundation
Ernestine Keiser Memorial Scholarship Fund
c/o Joan C. Smith, Chair
39 Clubhouse Road
Rotonda West, FL 33947

Find all requirements for the application at: www.grangefoundation.org

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>.

Granger celebrates 80 years of membership

Submitted by Walter Boomsma, Maine State Grange Communications Director

Corinth and Castine – "That's a lot of years," Basil Clements said when he received his certificate from Maine State Grange Communications Director Walter Boomsma in a "sort of" Grange Meeting held at Emilio Estates in Corinth. While distance has prevented active involvement, Basil speaks of his Grange membership daily, and his room is decorated with certificates and Grange memorabilia.

The "sort of" meeting was attended by a support team from Valley Grange, several of Basil's nurses and Emilio staff, a niece and her husband, and at least one resident of Emilio Estates. Boomsma explained that since circumstances have put some distance between Basil and his home Grange in Castine, Valley Grange has adopted him. "But we aren't charging you dues." Basil proudly noted that, as a Golden Sheaf (50-year) member, he hasn't paid dues for some years, but recalled when he did pay them, the charge was \$1.25 per year. He also wasn't sure when he last attended a meeting.

"We brought a meeting to you," Boomsma explained, conducting some of the opening and closing ritual, including the familiar Grange Salutation. During the meeting, Basil's nurse, Breanna Bowman, was also presented with a special Certificate of Appreciation for her assistance with the meeting preparations and support. "You demonstrate Grange Values, and we are now considering you an 'almost' Granger."

In good Grange fashion, the event included some socializing. When the event ended, Boomsma noted, "We're Grangers. This is what we do. We take care of our communities, and we take care of each other."

Those who would like to send Basil a card of congratulations may do so by addressing it to Basil Clements, Emilio Estates, 65 W Corinth Road, Corinth, ME 04427. He first joined the Grange on March 20, 1943 and will begin his 81st year soon!

Did you know? It's been reported that many 50-year (or greater) members have been "forgotten" by Grangers due to the exemption of not paying dues. Some Golden Sheaf members report that they haven't heard from their Granges for years, due to not having email addresses, or not receiving dues notices. We encourage you to follow up with your Golden Sheaf (or higher!) members today to let them know they're still valued members of your Grange!

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.



Front Row: RN Breanna, Basil Clements.
Back Row: Walter Boomsma, with Valley Grange Members Janice Boomsma, Mary Annis, and Jim Annis *Photo provided*

Commentary: Broadband Subsidy Enrollment Ends Today; Millions Are at Risk of Losing Internet

By Chhaya Kapadia and Chris Sadler for [The Daily Yonder](https://www.thedailyyonder.com)

The Affordable Connectivity Program is helping close the digital divide for one in six American families. The program is ceasing enrollment February 7, 2024, and will run out of money completely in April unless Congress acts. This is a problem we can – and must – fix.

FEBRUARY 7 - The [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) will freeze enrollment today (February 7, 2024) because [funds are running out](#) for this enormously effective federal program that helps people pay their internet bills. Already, roughly 23 million low-income households across America have received notices that the price of their internet service will go up by as much as \$30 in a few months—and that includes more than 8.7 million households in the United States' heartland region.

An [estimated](#) 20+ million people lack access to [broadband internet](#) in the diverse landscape of small towns, urban centers, and rural areas that comprise America's [heartland](#) (an area that comprises 20 states in the central divisions of the southern and midwestern Census regions). For many millions more, the monthly costs of broadband can be high due to infrastructure costs and [lack of competition](#), which leaves families struggling to choose between spending on internet service and putting food on the table. Unequal broadband access profoundly impacts [all regions](#) of the country. It is a technological and economic problem with effects that [cut across political divides](#).

The ACP is an extension of the Emergency Broadband Benefit from the Covid-19 pandemic's early stages, which has helped [narrow this digital divide](#) by providing participating households a subsidy of \$30 per month (\$75 on Tribal lands) for their internet bill if their income level is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or they participate in certain other assistance programs. Despite a [bipartisan majority of voters](#) supporting the ACP (62% of Republicans and 96% of Democrats), millions of households in the heartland will be at risk of no longer being able to pay for broadband internet service if Congress allows funding to run out.

Low population density and high deployment costs have limited the availability of broadband internet service in the smaller towns and rural areas of this swath of the country. Congress recently addressed the need to bring broadband to unserved and underserved areas through \$42.45 billion in funding via the Broadband, Equity, Accessibility and Deployment (BEAD) Program. Half of the 10 largest allocations [will go to states considered part of the heartland](#)—Missouri, Michigan, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas—with the largest state allocation overall of \$3.3 billion going to Texas.

While investments like BEAD will help increase availability of connectivity and choice through infrastructure investments, the other side of the broadband adoption equation is affordability of service. Simply put, [internet insecurity is real](#), so people can only be said to have meaningful access to the internet if they can afford to pay the bill month after month.

Nationwide, [43% of eligible households](#) are enrolled in the ACP, while half of those eligible had not even [heard of the program](#) a year ago. To spur more awareness and enrollment in the ACP, the FCC launched the ACP Outreach Grant Program to support community outreach efforts.

Across heartland states, enrollment rates vary from 14-17% in the more rural states of North and South Dakota (where network scarcity and population density issues [can inhibit enrollment](#)) to 57-59% in Ohio and Louisiana, respectively. Organizations and Native American groups in heartland states have been granted [\\$25.2 million of the \\$66 million](#) planned for ACP Outreach Grants but would lose access to that money if the ACP runs out of funding.

This would also jeopardize the jobs of digital navigators who were employed by that funding. Working through local community organizations and institutions to spread the word about the ACP and help sign up people via digital navigators has been an enormously successful outreach practice in the heartland, as in other parts of the country. Many communities have worked tirelessly to connect residents to ACP benefits, and an interruption in the benefit will harm their trust in those institutions and in their government, which once lost is even harder to regain.

Organizations like [Heartland Forward](#), the [American Connection Corps](#), and the [League of United Latin American Citizens \(LULAC\)](#) have been helping address disparities in internet affordability that can improve the lives of millions in the heartland. However, the ACP is set to [run out of funding](#) in April. This program is a [social and economic investment](#) that will allow *all* residents of the heartland to fully participate in life in the digital age. Failure to extend the ACP with new funding will reduce the efficacy of the huge connectivity investments made in the heartland through BEAD and leave a large digital equity gap in the center of our country.



A lack of reliable, affordable connectivity doesn't need to be endemic or inevitable to the heartland or any other region of America; the digital divide is a solvable public problem. With one in every six American households set to have the cost of their internet service go up, Congress can and must renew the ACP. We have the tools to solve this 21st century challenge, if we can find the political will to make it so.

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These patches feature the Grange emblem in Junior (maroon/dark red) and Youth (green) colors. Perfect for sewing onto jackets, totes, or more.

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

Grange Member Benefit: American Income Life Insurance



Through a partnership with **American Income Life Insurance Company**, an Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) benefit and other no-cost offers are being provided to all members of National Grange.

Since 1990, American Income is proud to have paid over \$1.5 million in life, health, and no-cost AD&D benefits to Grange

Members and their families.

The policy covers Accidental Death (Death certificate is marked "accident") and Dismemberment (Loss of a hand, arm, foot, leg, eye). Please [review this brochure](#) for the AIL Plus program for review.

Learn more at MyBenefits.AILife.com and use the access code to sign up

Enter access code: **SGLHD**



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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Editor Philip J Vonada, National Grange Communications Director. Contact to submit a story idea for Patrons Chain or *Good Day!* magazine, request assistance with publicity, business cards, social media, and more. Email pvonada@nationalgrange.org or call/text (814) 404-7985

Leadership Training and Membership Development

Amanda Brozana Rios, National Grange Membership and Leadership Development Director. Contact to learn more about membership recruitment or how to start or reorganize a Grange, leadership training and more. Email at abrozana@nationalgrange.org or call/text (301) 943-1090

Legislative and Policy Issues Burton Eller, Legislative Director. *National HQ*, ext. 114 or email beller@nationalgrange.org

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