

IAA Annual Meeting Held in Early December



CHICAGO – Delegates and members attending the 107th Illinois Farm Bureau® (IFB) Annual Meeting witnessed the power of ‘tradition and transition’ as the organization’s traditional grassroots process carried on seamlessly amidst a transition to a hybrid format for its 2021 annual meeting. Delegates gathered in-person at the historic Palmer House hotel in Chicago over a four-day period, Dec. 4-7, to conduct annual business, introduce new policy and celebrate the year’s successes.

The meeting kicked off with the president’s address, in which IFB President Richard Guebert, Jr. acknowledged the many ways Illinois agriculture has pivoted during periods of uncertainty while remaining resilient and keeping a steady stream of food on America’s tables. "More than ever, the impacts of the pandemic have reminded us what a privilege it is to gather in person, to share perspective face-to-face with your neighbors and fellow farmers across the state," Guebert said. "These challenging events have also reinforced the need for relationships, working together and helping others. I believe in our small communities; farm families and Farm Bureau are especially good at coming together to help one another."

On Sunday morning, the Young Leader Awards program was held. Noteworthy awards and recognition were handed out to several Warren-Henderson young leaders:

Tyler and Cassie Schleich of rural Monmouth were presented with their Excellence in Agriculture Award, which recognizes members who are outstanding leaders and actively contributing to Farm Bureau, other agricultural organizations, and their communities. Applicants of this state-wide award may also be actively farming, but their primary source of income is not production ag. Cassie works from home in crop insurance and is pursuing her real estate appraiser license. Tyler is a Territory Sales Manager with Kent Feeds.

The Schleichs own and operate their own cattle service company. As distributors for Genex Beef, they sell semen and custom artificially inseminate (AI) beef cows and heifers. Tyler started selling semen and breeding cattle in 2007. After they met, Cassie completed the Artificial Insemination course in the spring of 2010 and they started breeding cattle together. The Schleichs cover the entire state and what started as custom AIing a few hundred head of cattle each year has grown to servicing well over 1,000 head today and selling around 2,000 semen units annually.

In addition to their cattle service company, they also own and operate a separate cattle entity which consists of selling show cattle and bulls to commercial cattlemen. They blended each of their small herds when they married in 2012 and have grown to include 30 head of Angus and Simmental genetics. They recently started selling freezer beef as part of this business (quarters, halves, and whole sides of beef cuts).

Cassie serves on the Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau® and W-HFB Foundation board of directors and both Cassie and Tyler are involved with W-HFB young leaders, various cattlemen organizations, and church and pre-school committees. Their daughters, Scarlett and Sutton, were on hand in Chicago to help them accept the 2021 Excellence in Agriculture Award. Moving on from the state-level, Tyler & Cassie will present and participate on the national stage at the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in Atlanta in January.

Jake Armstrong, also of rural Monmouth, won the Young Leader FB Act Award. This award recognizes a member who responded to all legislative action requests by the Farm Bureau Agricultural Contact Team. Young Leaders who responded to all action requests this past year were entered into a drawing to win.

FB ACT (Farm Bureau Agricultural Contact Team) is a program designed to help you take back your influence in Washington, Springfield and even your own backyard. FB ACT is a tool to contact your elected official and ask them to vote in support of Illinois farmers. When legislation arises, you will be contacted by email or a text message on your cell phone with the opportunity to respond to the action request at hand. To learn more or to sign-up for FB ACT, visit: [FB ACT | Illinois Farm Bureau \(ilfb.org\)](https://www.ilfb.org) .

Also announced was the 2022 IFB Young Leader Committee executive team. The executive committee members, which include Chairman Aaron Mitchell of Winnebago County, Vice Chair Gracelynn Dale of Bureau County, Secretary Gayle Baker of Warren County, Education and Recruitment Subcommittee Chair Jenna Severs of Vermilion County, Achievement Subcommittee Chair Katie King of Sangamon County and Governmental Affairs and Commodities Subcommittee Chair Scott Brummel of Kendall County, assumed their 2022 positions immediately.

Members of the IFB Young Leaders are 18–35-year-old men and women who are passionate about agriculture. It is a member-created, member-driven program of the IFB that allows members to promote agriculture, attend conferences and compete in events, including the Young Leader Achievement Award, Excellence in Agriculture Award and discussion meets. Giving back is also a priority for Young Leaders. Through their Harvest for All program, Young Leaders raise funds, donate food and contribute their time to help fight food insecurity throughout the state.

In addition to listening to keynote speaker Cheryl Mitchell and receiving county and Young Leader awards, members also enjoyed a visit from American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. Duvall encouraged the audience of Illinois farmers to continue telling their story and forging relationships with those ‘outside their fence rows.’ "I encourage all of you to get outside the fencerows ... and show (people who have never seen a farm) what agriculture is all about," Duvall said. "Getting our story told starts with you, and you're the best person to tell that story."

Voting delegates for the meeting, totaling 337, considered 30 policy submittals on a range of topics such as government farm policy, energy policy, farm equipment, climate change, healthcare and urban agriculture. (FarmWeek write-up: [IFB delegates adopt policies on upcoming farm bill, carbon markets | National | farmweeknow.com](https://www.farmweeknow.com), [Renewable energy development sparks IFB policy adoption | State | farmweeknow.com](https://www.farmweeknow.com)). The language of these approved policies will be forwarded to American Farm Bureau Federation for consideration during its upcoming annual meeting. “The annual meeting is a culmination of the years’ efforts to support and expand our policy book, which are our guiding principles as we navigate Illinois’ agricultural landscape each year,” said Executive Director of Governmental Affairs and Commodities Mark Gebhards. “We had a very good debate on several big-ticket items during this year’s delegate session. Our organization and its members are focusing efforts and resources on the state’s renewable energy policy, the 2023 Farm Bill and what farmers need to see in that, ways to continue to bridge the rural-urban divide, how farmers can best partake in reducing carbon emissions and associated incentives for doing so and more. Our members certainly remain passionate and engaged in their counties and on their farms to make their voices heard.”

Approximately 1,434 IFB members and staff registered to attend the annual meeting, with 132 of those registrations being virtual attendees. Several annual awards and honors were also announced. To finish up the day, delegates confirmed the re-election of Richard Guebert, Jr. as president and the reelection of Brian Duncan as vice president. Both leaders will serve two-year terms, with Guebert serving his final term as president.

This article was pieced together and added to from press releases by Andrea Casali, Media Relations Specialist for IFB, and a previous FarmWeek article by Tammie Sloup.



Tyler & Cassie Schleich were presented with their Excellence in Agriculture Award at the IFB Young Leaders Award Program on December 5th in Chicago. Back row from L to R: IFB President Richard Guebert, Cassie Schleich, Tyler Schleich, Tim Ekberg, VP of Commercial Agribusiness for COUNTRY Financial. Front row from L to R: Sutton & Scarlett Schleich.



Jake Armstrong, left, was recognized at the IFB Young Leader Awards Program for being the recipient of the Young Leader FB Act Award. 2021 IFB Young Leader Chair Wayne Gehrke of Kane County thanked Jake on stage during the program. To learn how you can participate in FB Act, visit ilfb.org and search for 'FB ACT'.



W-HFB attendees posed for a photo with 93rd District IL State Representative Norine Hammond and 47th District IL State Senator Jil Tracy after the IFB District 8 Meeting on the evening of December 5th. From L to R: Jared Kunkle, Tyler Schleich, Cassie Schleich, Representative Hammond, Senator Tracy, Gayle Baker, Kate Armstrong, Jake Armstrong, Ken McMillan.



From L to R: Jake Armstrong, W-HFB President, Jared Kunkle, W-HFB Board Director, Cassie Schleich, W-HFB Treasurer, and Gayle Baker, IFB Young Leader Committee Secretary and District 8 Representative, served as delegates for Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau at the 2021 IAA Annual Meeting in Chicago.



The 2021 Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leader Executive Team.

Back row, from left: Jenna Severs, Education and Recruitment Subcommittee Chair; Scott Brummel, Governmental Affairs and Commodities Subcommittee Chair; Katie King, Achievement Subcommittee Chair.

Front row, from left: Gayle Baker, Secretary; Aaron Mitchell, Chairman; Gracelynn Dale, Vice Chair.

(Photo by Catrina Rawson)