

# NIAGARA COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE PRESENTATION

FEBRUARY 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2020

# CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

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- John King – President  
Nutrien Ag Solutions  
Fancher, NY
- Jeremy Silsby – Vice President  
Silsby Settlement Farms  
Gasport, NY
- Jeannette Miller – Board Secretary/Treasurer  
The Eclectic Farmstead  
Newfane, NY
- Elaine Barnett – Office Manager  
Heartland Organics  
Hartland, NY
- Jim Bittner  
Bittner Orchards  
Burt, NY
- Kevin Bittner  
Bittner Orchards  
Burt, NY
- Pete Russell  
Russell Farms, Inc.  
Appleton, NY
- Julie Blackman  
Blackman Farms  
Town of Cambria
- Clayton Johnt  
C&H Farms  
Wolcottsville/Akron, NY
- John Ohol  
Loho Farms, Inc.  
Town of Cambria
- Rich Woodbridge  
McCollum Orchards  
City of Lockport
- Kassie Voelpel  
Voelpel Farms, Inc.  
Newfane, NY
- Jeff Freatman  
Freatman Farms  
Town of Cambria

# ABOUT US

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- We are a grass roots organization that develops policy and promotes agricultural across the state, protecting our communities and further enhancing our economic, social and physical impacts with our communities
- Policy development begins at the county level from individual member growers and culminates at the NY Farm Bureau Annual Meeting with resolutions addressing the issues
- Farm Bureau is the voice of NY agriculture
- Beliefs
  - Individual freedom & opportunity must not be sacrificed in a quest for guaranteed “security”
  - We believe in government by legislative & constitutional law, impartially administered, without special privilege
  - Property rights are among the human rights essential to the preservation of individual freedom
  - We believe that legislation & regulatory policy should prioritize the self-employed farmers & businesses that are critical to our state’s economy
- Agricultural in Niagara County contributes approximately \$122,000,000 as a whole and \$30,000,000 in annual wages
- Approximately 42% of the land in Niagara County is actively farmed
- County leadership and boards are all volunteer
- 95% of our farms are family owned and cover approximately 140,259 acres in the county



# WHAT DO WE DO

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- Farm Safety Night
  - Education & training on common safety protocols such as eye/ear protection, PTO safety, ROPS safety, etc
- Lobby Days
  - Annual trip to Albany to inform & educate adopted legislators about agriculture in NYS
- Annual Meeting
  - Annual policy development meeting where our members propose policy and adopt those approved as resolutions for our policy book
- Clay Shoot Fundraiser
  - Strengthen & improve our support to our members and our county organization
- Local Issues
  - Provide advice & guidance when dealing with ag issues across our townships within Niagara County as needed
- Advocacy
  - Continue to work towards public support for our causes or policies



# PAST ACTIVITIES

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- Labor Bill Activities
  - Participated heavily in regards to new legislation surrounding the Farmworkers Fair Labor Act
- Various Farm to Table Events, Niagara County Fair & other various promotional events
  - Support our county fair and educate fair goers about agriculture
  - Partake in local Taste NY events
  - Given tours to legislators to various farming operations and the challenges we face on a daily basis
  - Work with other WNY counties to help them resolve issues and support our policies as whole

# MOVING FORWARD & FUTURE ISSUES

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- Labor issues both state and federal
  - Economic impact on farms, a path & need for a stable workforce
- Dairy Industry – local companies promoting
  - Setting a standard for all companies to buy local – restaurants, Tim Hortons, Schools, grocery chains, etc.
- Apple Industry
  - Apples in schools
  - YMCA or other youth groups
- Hemp Industry
  - The need to attract a processor, possibly right here in Niagara County
- Re-newable Energy
- Protecting our Farms from negative publicity & misinformation
  - PETA
  - Pesticide Use
  - GMO vs Non-GMO, The real story
- Promotion
  - Working together with the county to enhance and further promote our vast agricultural landscape here in Niagara County

# HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER?

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- One on one
  - Softening the impact of agriculture on the community
- Telling our story
  - Interviews
  - Dual promotion events
  - Newspaper Articles – Margo Bittner's column
- Broadband
  - Importance of technology in Ag, its not your father's farm anymore
- Drainage
  - Farms are tiling more & more but need the county's help clearing ditches and other waterways so the drainage works properly
- Re-newable Energy
  - How do we balance the interest in it, the low farmgate commodity prices & general public
  - Special Committees – require an Ag person possibly

# MARCH IS AG MONTH

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- Thank you
  - Chairwoman Rebecca Wydysz
  - Rest of the Legislature Board