



NATIONAL GRANGE RECOGNIZES RECORD 58 DISTINGUISHED GRANGES

by Philip J Vonada
National Grange Communications Director

The National Grange is proud to announce that a record-breaking **58 Granges** nationwide have been recognized as Distinguished Granges for the 2025–2026 year. This includes 4 State Granges, 8 Pomona Granges, 45 Community Granges, and 1 Junior Grange that demonstrated exceptional leadership, service, and dedication to the values of the Order.

In its 17th year, the Distinguished Grange program recognizes Granges at all levels that actively put the organization’s values into practice. These Granges serve their communities, communicate with members and neighbors, develop meaningful programs, take part in advocacy, welcome new people, and find meaningful ways to contribute to the places they call home. Earning the distinction reflects a full year of steady work, thoughtful planning, and members coming together to make their Grange stronger and more effective.

“Congratulations to all 58 Granges recognized as Distinguished this year,” said National Grange



President Christine Hamp. “This is an accomplishment each of them should be incredibly proud of because it represents the work their members have put in throughout the year to strengthen their Grange and serve their communities. These Granges are showing what can happen when members bring their ideas, talents, and commitment together.”

The 2026 Distinguished Granges are:

STATE GRANGES

- 17 Years – Maryland State Grange
- 15 Years – Pennsylvania State Grange
- 9 Years – New York State Grange
- 8 Years – Idaho State Grange

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**CONVENTION
COUNTDOWN:
44 DAYS**

RURAL WOMEN SHAPING HEALTH RESEARCH WELCOMES ITS COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPIONS

This year, the National Grange was awarded a Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Award from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) to support **Rural Women Shaping Health Research (RWSHR)**, a two-year project to help rural women become partners in patient-centered comparative clinical effectiveness research (CER). This summer, we invited all community Granges to apply and join.

When project lead Dr. Laurie Anne Ferguson and the team began receiving applications and talking with Grange women from across the country about becoming Community Health Champions for RWSHR, we knew we would meet some extraordinary people. What we didn't anticipate was how difficult it would be to choose among them. Twenty-five Granges applied, but we had only 10 slots.

One of the best things about **Rural Women Shaping Health Research** has also turned out to be one of the hardest. We carefully reviewed every application, and each woman brought her own perspective, shaped by years of managing her own health and her family's, helping neighbors, navigating health systems, and understanding what it really means to live in a rural community. Their stories reflected remarkable resilience, but also an eagerness to participate, to learn, and to make sure the experiences of women in their communities are part of this work.

Just as striking was their curiosity about the program itself. Applicant after applicant asked thoughtful questions about how the research would be used and offered a grounded view of what it would take to make the roundtables work in practice, not just on paper.

Due to the strength of applications, we expanded the

WE'RE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE OUR COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPIONS

- Mad River Grange #590, California
- Marvel Grange #479, Colorado
- Smyrna Grange #21, Delaware
- Emerald Mound Grange #1813 and Shiloh Valley Grange #1807, Illinois
- Lake Hubert Grange #735, Minnesota
- Divide Grange #142, Montana
- Corriher Grange #627, North Carolina
- Riverview Grange #392, Nebraska
- Copake Grange #935, New York
- East Pembroke Grange #1157, New York
- Chetco Grange #765, Oregon
- Spencer Creek Grange #855, Oregon
- Goldendale Grange #49, Washington
- Ralston Grange #943 and Rimrock Grange #941, Washington
- Oxford Community Grange #526, West Virginia



availability of slots, and after much deliberation, Dr. Ferguson and the team selected 15 participants and have been holding onboarding calls with the women chosen. President Christine Hamp joined to personally encourage the incoming Community Health Champions and has been an enthusiastic supporter of the program from the start. As she put it, "Grangers are practical people who want to help. This is an opportunity for us to make a difference, and I'm so impressed by the enthusiasm shown by all the participants."

Now the hard work begins as our Community Health Champions start their training. Over the coming months, they'll prepare to professionally lead roundtable conversations with women in their own communities, creating a comfortable space to talk about the health questions, challenges, and decisions that matter most to rural women.

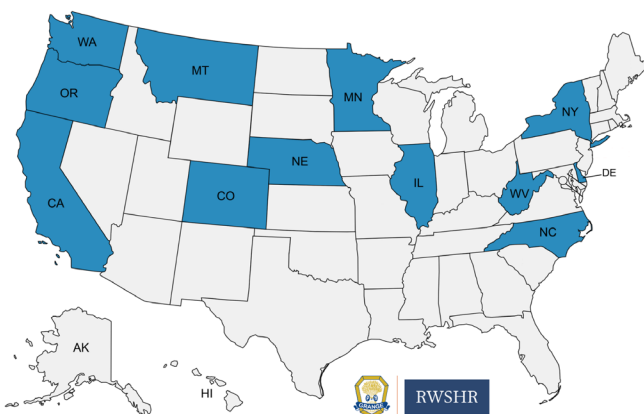
Once training is complete, the conversations move into the communities themselves. Our first local roundtables will take place in participating Granges in February and March 2027, where rural women can share their experiences, priorities, and ideas about health and health research.

Those conversations will help us identify what women in different regions have in common, where their experiences differ, and, ultimately, the questions rural women believe researchers should be asking.

So, stay tuned. The training is beginning, the roundtables are coming, and the real conversations are just getting started.

Before then, we hope many of you will come see this work for yourselves. Heading to the National Grange Convention in Tulsa? Join us for a workshop on November 13th at 4 PM local time, where you can learn more about Rural Women Shaping Health Research, meet Dr. Ferguson, hear what we're learning, and see demonstrations of how the roundtable process will work. We'll also talk about ways Grangers can get involved as the project moves forward. Everyone is welcome.

Rural Women Shaping Health Research Across the Country



DISTINGUISHED GRANGE

continued from page 1

POMONA GRANGES

3 Years

Clackamas County #1 (OR)

2 Years

Jefferson County #5 (NY)

Mid-Michigan #61 (MI)

Treasure Valley #1 (ID)

First Year

Boone County #78 (IL)

Chelan County #23 (WA)

Chester-Delaware #3 (PA)

Pierce County #16 (WA)

COMMUNITY GRANGES

17 Years

Five Mile Prairie #905 (WA)

Redland #796 (OR)

Stanford #808 (NY)

16 Years

Burns #160 (MI)

Grantham #968 (NC)

15 Years

Gratiot #1898 (MI)

14 Years

Prairie #1832 (IL)

Turkey Hill #1370 (IL)

Valley #1360 (PA)

13 Years

Harveys-Aleppo #1444 (PA)

11 Years

Mica Flats #436 (ID)

Russellville #91 (PA)

Springwater #263 (OR)

St. John's #729 (NC)

10 Years

Hookstown #1980 (PA)

Linganore #410 (MD)s

9 Years

Central Union #559 (CA)

Marys River #685 (OR)

8 Years

Creswell #496 (OR)

7 Years

Hamburg #2103 (PA)

6 Years

Eagle #1 (PA)

4 Years

Rio Linda #403 (CA)

3 Years

Big Knob #2008 (PA)

Progress #96 (PA)

2 Years

Brogden #967 (NC)

East Chatham #1066 (NY)

Jefferson #1384 (PA)

Lorane #54 (OR)

Montague #140 (NJ)

Penns Valley #158 (PA)

Pleasant Ridge #135 (ID)

Poteet #1576 (TX)

South Rutland Valley #53 (NY)

Vaca Valley #298 (CA)

First Year

Aromas Community #361 (CA)

Avon #125 (MT)

Beaver Falls #554 (NY)

Bee Hive #385 (WA)

Elk Plain #782 (WA)

Fruitland #999 (WA)

Greenhorn Community #384 (CA)

Lamson #588 (NY)

Mill Stream #574 (ME)

Terrace Heights #586 (WA)

Whelan-Ewartsville #114 (WA)

JUNIOR GRANGES

First Year

Prairie Junior #20 (IL)

Among this year's honorees are sixteen first-time Distinguished Granges - Pomona, Community, and the first-ever Distinguished Junior Grange, a sign of growth and enthusiasm across the organization. These Granges took on new challenges, deepened local partnerships, and found ways to better serve their communities while upholding the Grange's traditions and values.

"One of the best parts of administering the Distinguished Grange program is getting to see the incredible variety of work happening in Granges all across the country," said program administrator Connie Johnston. "Every Grange serves a different community, so the projects and programs may look very different, but the commitment behind them is the same. What I hope is that these Distinguished Granges continue to share what they are doing and inspire others, whether that is the Grange down the road, one in the next state, or one hundreds of miles away. A good idea in one community can spark something great somewhere else."

Johnston also emphasized that there's no one-size-fits-all model for success. There are more than three dozen options to help earn the required minimum number of points on the Community Grange application, allowing hundreds of combinations - no two Granges will become 'Distinguished' in the same way.

"Every Grange is unique," Johnston said. "We don't want anyone to change what's working for them. The Distinguished Grange program isn't about making every Grange look the same;

it's about recognizing and celebrating what each Grange does best while encouraging continued growth."

Distinguished Granges will be honored both at the National Grange Convention in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, in November, as well as in the National Grange Honors Night on November 20. This event will be livestreamed on the National Grange's Facebook and YouTube pages, allowing everyone to participate. All Granges are encouraged to host watch parties and join in on the celebration. The livestream will begin at 8:30 p.m. Eastern Time / 5:30 p.m. Pacific Time and will also include the Grange Hall of Fame induction and departmental awards for the 2025-2026 Grange year.

"And the wonderful thing about this program is that every Grange has the capability to be Distinguished," Hamp added. "It starts with members working together, finding ways to make a difference, and building a Grange that is active, welcoming, and connected to its community. I hope this year's honorees celebrate what they have accomplished and inspire even more Granges to reach for that distinction in the year ahead."

The 2027 Distinguished Grange applications will be available soon at <http://www.nationalgrange.org/distinguished>, giving Granges an opportunity to begin tracking their progress and building toward the next year of recognition. Johnston encourages every Grange—whether new, revitalizing, or long-established—to review the application and start now.

"Even small steps can add up," Hamp said. "You might be surprised how close you already are to qualifying."

PAVE THE “ROUTE TO THE FUTURE” AT THE 160TH ANNUAL NATIONAL GRANGE CONVENTION



Registration for the **160th Annual National Grange Convention** is now open and ALL Grange members from every corner of the country are invited and encouraged to join us in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, November 9-14, 2026.

Whether you're attending your first National Convention or returning as a longtime delegate, this year's event promises an unforgettable week of learning, fellowship, and celebration. Convention is where the Grange comes together to conduct the business of the organization, exchange ideas, recognize outstanding achievements, and build friendships that span the country.

Registration includes daily breakfasts, the Welcome

Dinner, Celebration Banquet, a convention tour, workshops, limited-edition Convention swag, and access to a full week of programming, workshops, activities, and events.

Attendees will hear inspiring speakers, explore Oklahoma hospitality, and help kick off the National Grange's year-long celebration of its 160th anniversary.

Don't wait to reserve your place. Hotel rooms and special activities are expected to fill quickly, so registering early is the best way to ensure you don't miss out.

Visit the [National Grange Convention webpage](https://www.nationalgrange.org/160thconvention) to register, review the schedule, make hotel reservations, and stay up to date as additional speakers, workshops, and activities are announced. We can't wait to welcome you to Broken Arrow this November.

Head to www.nationalgrange.org/160thconvention to learn more and register today!

Help Shape the Future of National Grange Conventions

The future of our National Grange Convention starts with YOU!

Do you have experience in event planning, budgeting, member engagement, marketing, promotions, or program evaluation? Or do you have great ideas and a passion for creating meaningful experiences?

The Convention Management Team (CMT) is looking for Grange members from across the country to help design not only this year's convention in Broken Arrow, but the future of National Grange Conventions for years to come.

If you're ready to make an impact, we'd love to hear from you!

Interested? Contact CMT Chairpersons Jody and Jodi Ann Cameron at convention@nationalgrange.org to learn more.

Join Us for a Veterans Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony

The National Grange invites all convention attendees to participate in a special **Veterans Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony** during this year's National Grange Convention in Broken Arrow.

Veterans Day - November 11 - 7:30 a.m. (0730 hours) CST
Veterans Park, 1111 S. Main St, Broken Arrow, OK

This meaningful ceremony is open to everyone attending the convention, and we encourage all members and guests to join us as we honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans.

Veterans Needed for Ceremony Participation

We are seeking veterans representing all six branches of the U.S. Armed Forces to assist with the wreath-laying ceremony. If you are a veteran and will be attending the convention, please contact Mark Gibbons at mark@retiresafe.org.

When responding, please include:

- Your branch of service
- Your rank at the time of separation or retirement

One representative from each branch will be selected to participate in the ceremony.

This year's Veterans Day observance is proudly sponsored by Potomac Grange #1.

NATIONAL GRANGE HONORS NIGHT

Friday, November 20
8:30 pm ET / 5:30 PM PT
streamed live on Facebook & YouTube





160th National Grange Convention

November 2026 - Broken Arrow, OK



Sun. 8

- Officer & Delegate Meeting
- Welcome Dinner - Speaker: Dr. Bill Chapman, NREA

Mon. 9

- Official Opening of the Convention
- President's Addresses
- Workshops & Activities
- Game Night: Bunco

Tue. 10

- Workshops & Activities
- Cherokee Nation Chief Hoskin
- Oklahoma State Poet Laureate: The Cowboy Poet

Wed. 11

- Veterans Day Wreath-Laying & Tour
- Youth & Guest Officers Closing
- Project Sustenance Workshops
- Karaoke for All

Thur. 12

- DO-ers Circuit
- Philbrook Museum of Art Tour
- Memorial Program & Installation of Officers
- Movie Night

Fri. 13

- Group Tour: Route 66 Historical Village
- COMET Training
- Conferral of Seventh Degree
- Workshops & Activities

Sat. 14

- Leadership Lab & Grange Academy
- Tour: Woody Guthrie & Bob Dylan
- Celebration Banquet

Junior Activities

- Workshops & Activities starting Monday afternoon
 - Come and go as you and your Juniors are able to!
- **Junior Tour** on Saturday



Register:
nationalgrange.org/160thconvention



NATIONAL GRANGE

OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

View from the Hill



NATIONAL GRANGE POLICY UPDATES & ISSUE NEWS

September 2026

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Farm bill clears Senate Ag Committee

The Senate Agriculture Committee passed the farm bill September 16 on a vote of 12-11 along party lines. The legislation now heads to the full chamber for consideration as farmers and ranchers continue to press for passage of critical ag policy. The bill stalled in committee 11-11 before the August recess, but Kentucky Senator McConnell's return from illness in mid-September allowed Republicans to muster the 12 votes for passage. Friction erupted among committee members who objected to keeping the bill closed to new amendments following the earlier August markup. Chairman Boozman (R-AR) stressed the need to move forward on the farm bill because time is running out to pass it in the current congressional session. He said additional amendments should be pursued on the Senate floor. Once the bill clears the Senate, it will go to a Senate-House conference committee to reach a compromise on the differences between the House and Senate versions. Both houses must then adopt the conference report.

President Trump creates beef firestorm

The administration raised the ire of beef and dairy producers when President Trump signed an executive order to allow an additional 300,000 metric tons of beef to be imported from September-November above current tariffs and quotas from Brazil and Argentina. The goal is to lower high retail ground beef prices by 25 percent. Producer reaction was swift as the White House and Congress were deluged with calls and social media posts of protests from producers.

Judge clears way for USDA reorganization

U.S. District Judge Susan Illston has allowed USDA's reorganization plans to move forward, denying a request from federal employees and other interested parties for an injunction to block it. The reorganization involves moving employees from the Washington, D.C., area to regional hubs across the country, including Kansas City, Missouri; Raleigh, North Carolina; Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Fort Collins, Colorado.

HEALTH CARE

National Grange touts rural healthcare on Capitol Hill

The Grange's Chris Hamp and Burton Eller walked the halls of Congress in mid-September to present seven members of the House (Buchanan R-FL, Tonko D-NY, Hudson R-NC, Joyce R-PA, McCellan D-VA, Smith R-MO, Thompson D-CA) with the National Grange Rural Health Champion

Award. The seven have been stalwarts with their focus on rural health disparities, particularly the Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention Act (ASAP). The bipartisan bill would create a clear pathway for Medicare coverage of FDA-cleared blood tests that screen for Alzheimer's disease and markers. Rural residents face a disproportionate and growing burden from Alzheimer's disease driven by structural barriers that delay diagnosis, limit access to emerging therapies, and impose staggering costs on patients, caregivers, and rural health systems. While Hamp and Eller were on the Hill, the ASAP Act passed both the House Energy and Commerce and the House Ways and Means Committees.

National Grange testifies before FDA

National Grange President Christine Hamp presented testimony to the Food and Drug Administration's Molecular and Clinical Genetics Panel of the Medical Devices Advisory Committee on September 23. The purpose of the panel is to provide independent expert advice and recommendations to FDA to help the agency make sound decisions. Hamp spoke in support of the premarket approval application for the Galleri test, which can detect dozens of cancers at an early stage with a simple blood draw. Hamp emphasized the Galleri test would mean, "Fewer cancers discovered later. More opportunities to treat them earlier. More options for patients. More birthdays. More anniversaries. More time with the people they love. Multi-cancer early detection tests can help lead us there."

National Grange gives input to Senate 340B legislation

National Grange president Christine Hamp responded to a request from the Senate Committee on Health, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) for comments on his legislative draft for 340B program reform. She stressed that the National Grange did not want to repeal 340B, but that total reform of 340B was necessary to protect rural healthcare systems and rural hospitals. Large urban hospitals that dual-register as a rural site are siphoning program funds away from authentic rural facilities. In 2018, 109 hospitals were dually classified; in just five years, that number rose to 521 in 2023. Annual spending on 340B drugs was \$6.6 billion in 2010. By 2025, the amount had exploded to over \$100 billion because of large urban hospital participation. Hamp urged Chairman Cassidy to include language in his legislation to close the dual-classification loophole so resources can reach the rural patients and communities the 340B program was intended to serve.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Much of rural America is still waiting for broadband

According to USTelecom, broadband providers deployed \$92.6 billion last year to expand, upgrade, and modernize the nation's communications infrastructure. Yet much of the rural countryside is still waiting for reliable internet, and they're asking when that investment will reach them. The answer too often depends on how long it takes to issue required government permits. In too many cases, that may mean months, if not years. The broadband industry is pushing modern broadband networks, led by high-capacity fiber and wireless, deeper into rural communities. But too many projects face months or years of permitting delays before construction can begin. Congress may need to step in to make the approval process faster and more predictable, set more reasonable timelines for decisions, tie fees to the actual cost of reviewing applications, and reduce duplicative efforts. The National Grange is staying in close contact with several members of Congress and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) on shortening permitting reform.

OF INTEREST

Growing concerns about data centers

As data centers break ground in communities across the country, more residents are concerned about the electrical power, water, noise, and environmental impact. A recent survey by The Associated Press NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that roughly one quarter of U.S. adults surveyed said data centers are "extremely" or "very" beneficial when it comes to technological advancement. However, only two in ten say the same about job creation, and a quarter of respondents say data centers are not beneficial. These survey results come as a growing number of jurisdictions are placing moratoriums on data center growth.

PERSPECTIVES - ON FAMILY

"Family is not an important thing, it is the only thing."
- Michael J. Fox, actor and activist

"I don't think quantity time is as special as quality time with your family."
- Reba McEntire, country singer, actor, and entrepreneur

"Peace in society depends upon peace in the family."
- Saint Augustine, theologian and philosopher

"You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them."
- Desmond Tutu, South African bishop and theologian

"In family life, love is the oil that greases friction, the cement that binds closer together, and the music that brings harmony."
- Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher and writer



VIEW FROM THE HILL

is written and compiled by

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ARE YOU
ENGAGED
YET?

JOIN OUR NEW MEMBER PLATFORM
THROUGH THE NATIONAL GRANGE WEBSITE

- Manage your Grange, instantly contact members, and post updates in your Digital Hall
- Connect with Grangers nationwide on "the Porch" or at "the Potluck"
- Post your Grange Fundraisers for members across the country
- Access member-only materials
- and more!

VISIT NATIONALGRANGE.ORG
AND CLICK "MEMBER LOGIN" TO GET STARTED.



NATIONAL GRANGE PRESENTS RURAL HEALTH CHAMPION AWARDS TO BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS FOR ALZHEIMER'S POLICY LEADERSHIP

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Grange is proud to present its Rural Health Champion Award to members of Congress who have demonstrated leadership in addressing the unique healthcare challenges facing rural communities. This year's honorees have worked to promote brain health and expand access to innovative Alzheimer's diagnostics in rural communities.

"Alzheimer's has touched families in every corner of rural America, and for too long those families have been left to face it with fewer resources, fewer specialists, and fewer options," said Christine Hamp, President of the National Grange. "Geography should never determine whether someone receives a diagnosis in time to benefit from treatment – and right now, for too many rural Americans, it does. We are grateful to these champions for advocating for rural communities."

This year's honorees are:

- Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL-16)
- Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY-20)
- Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC-09)
- Rep. John Joyce, M.D. (R-PA-13)
- Rep. Jennifer McClellan (D-VA-04)
- Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA-04)
- Rep. Jason Smith (R-MO-08)

The National Grange recently released a report, [*Leveraging Innovation to Improve Alzheimer's Diagnosis and Care in Rural America*](#), which examines how rural Americans face a

disproportionate and growing burden from Alzheimer's disease – driven by structural barriers that delay diagnosis, limit access to emerging therapies, and impose staggering costs on patients, caregivers, and rural health systems.

The report recommends practical policy solutions that lawmakers implement, including passing the bipartisan [*Alzheimer's Screening and Prevention \(ASAP\) Act*](#) – led by Reps. Buchanan (R-FL) and Tonko (D-NY) – which would create a clear pathway for Medicare coverage of FDA-cleared blood tests for Alzheimer's screening. Earlier detection can help individuals and families plan for the future, connect with care and support services, consider available treatment options, participate in clinical trials, and pursue strategies to reduce their risk. The National Grange is proud to recognize lawmakers who have championed this legislation and the broader policy agenda needed to bring rural communities fully into the future of Alzheimer's care.

The tools to change outcomes for rural Alzheimer's patients are within reach. The National Grange is proud to stand alongside the members of Congress who are working to ensure that no rural family is left behind.

More information about the Alzheimer's crisis in rural America and what the Grange is doing to address the disparities, as well as more photos and information about the Rural Health Champion Awards, can be found at <https://www.nationalgrange.org/alzheimers-crisis>.



Top: National Grange President Christine Hamp presents a Rural Health Champion Award to Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL-16); Top Right: President Hamp presents the award to Rep. John Joyce, M.D. (R-PA-13) with First Dude Duane Hamp (left), and Carrie Nace and Michele Rudloff of the Pennsylvania State Grange Legislative Team); Right: President Hamp presents the award to Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY-20) with First Dude Hamp and National Grange Government Affairs Director Burton Eller.

Photos Provided

TAKE IT OUTSIDE THE HALL

by Amanda Brozana

National Grange Membership & Leadership Development Director

The Grange hall is an important gathering place, but fellowship does not have to stay inside it.

Sometimes relationships grow differently when we leave the meeting room behind.

Go to a minor-league baseball game. Meet at the county fair. Attend community theater, visit a museum, go bowling, walk through Christmas lights, or meet for breakfast. Try a farmers' market, hiking trail, concert, festival, or picnic. The activity itself matters less than creating another opportunity for members to spend time together.

These outings can be especially helpful for newer members who are still finding their place in the Grange. A business meeting comes with officers, procedure, reports, and people who already know how everything works. Sitting beside someone at a baseball game is different. So is spending an afternoon walking through the fair.

You learn things about people, like Margaret keeping score at every baseball game, John knowing an astonishing amount about antique tractors, and the new member who hardly speaks during meetings becoming very animated when someone mentions local history.

Those little discoveries are how acquaintances begin becoming friends.

Don't assume every outing needs to involve the entire membership. Five Grangers going to breakfast counts. So do four members meeting at a concert and eight families gathering at the fair.

Also, don't overlook opportunities already happening in your community. Instead of creating another event that someone must plan, find something on the calendar and say, "Who wants to go or will be at...?"

Whenever possible, make the invitation personal. Someone who ignores a newsletter announcement may happily accept when another member says, "We're going to the play Saturday. Why don't you come with us?"

Fellowship depends partly on having places to gather, but sometimes strengthening fellowship means realizing the Grange can gather almost anywhere.

Start an Outings List

Ask members to suggest one local thing they would enjoy doing with other Grangers. Keep the list and choose several throughout the year. The suggestions themselves will also tell you something about your members' interests.

You can also keep a shared calendar that includes local events and allow others to note where they will be if they would welcome company.

OPINION: THE GRANGE - NON-PARTISAN AND PROUD OF IT

submitted by Matt Espenshade

President, Pennsylvania State Grange

Originally published in the Pennsylvania Grange News

It's election season, and the signs are everywhere... literally.

In front yards, roadsides, and even in your own mailbox, bold and colorful imagery announces your opportunity to select who will represent you and your neighbors in various levels of government. This November, Pennsylvanians will take to the polls to select mayors, local officials, state legislators, and other public servants, including the Governor.

Many of us have noticed during our lifetimes that politics, for better or worse, has become a more prominent aspect of our lives. Sadly, we have watched as traditional civil discourse devolved into shouting matches and personal attacks. In our personal lives, many of us have seen friendships strained by the political divide, or now find that an uneasy tension underlies family holiday gatherings. The situation is exacerbated by the almost relentless hammering of social media and perceived slanted news coverage. For me, in this time of division, the non-partisan nature of the Grange has been a welcome respite.

Since its establishment more than 150 years ago, one of the Grange's defining principles has been its commitment to non-partisanship. Adopted in 1874, the National Grange's

Declaration of Purposes outlines the Order's function within our society. Among them, it states the Grange will not call political conventions, nor endorse candidates for public office. Rather, the Grange will "seek the greatest good to the greatest number."

But we must also remember that in the following paragraph it states that "no one, by becoming a Patron of Husbandry, gives up that inalienable right and duty that belongs to every American citizen, to take a proper interest in the politics of their country."

So how do these two critical points align? I would offer that it is somewhat similar to the sentiment of being "in the world, yet not of it". Though the Grange does not endorse candidates, it desires a well-informed electorate. In fact, as rural community hubs, Grange Halls often serve as polling places or locations to host a candidates' forum. During our Grange meetings, respectful dialogue among fraternal members is not only expected; it is required.

Rather than aligning itself with a specific political party or ideology, the Grange has focused on advocating for policies that benefit agriculture, rural communities, and the public regardless of which party supports them.

While other groups may extoll their financial contributions to elected officials, with possible unspoken expectations attached, our non-partisan nature

continued on page 10

NON-PARTISAN

continued from page 9

has allowed the Grange to work with elected officials from all political backgrounds. The respect and admiration given to the Grange was garnered not by a checkbook, but instead by our longstanding history of working for the betterment of our friends and neighbors.

Instead of endorsing political candidates or promoting party platforms, this organization evaluates issues based on how they affect farmers and rural families. This approach has enabled the Grange to remain focused on its mission rather than becoming divided by party politics. Members with different backgrounds and political beliefs can work together because they share common interests in strengthening agriculture, improving rural life, and supporting local communities.

Throughout its history, the Grange has influenced important public policies without becoming mere political party apparatus. As you know, during the late nineteenth century, Grange members campaigned for fair railroad rates, reasonable grain storage fees, and protections against unfair business practices that harmed farmers. These efforts led to the passage of “Granger Laws” in

several states, which regulated railroad and warehouse charges. Although these reforms certainly had political consequences and ramifications, the Grange itself remained dedicated to advocating for issues rather than promoting partisan agendas.

Instead of shying away, the Grange encourages civic participation, leadership development, and public discussion of community concerns. By providing educational programs and forums for respectful debate, the Grange helps members better understand public policy while maintaining an atmosphere that welcomes people with diverse viewpoints. This commitment reflects our steadfast belief that informed citizens can work together to solve problems without allowing political divisions to overshadow shared goals.

The Grange’s non-partisan philosophy may seem old-fashioned, but it continues to be relevant today. Modern issues such as broadband access, rural healthcare availability, agricultural stewardship, rural infrastructure, and support for family farms require cooperation among leaders from different political parties. The Grange advocates for practical solutions rather than ideological positions, allowing it to build relationships with lawmakers across the political spectrum. This approach helps ensure that rural voices are heard regardless of either slow or sudden changes in political leadership.

In today’s increasingly polarized political environment, the Grange serves as an example of how organizations can promote civic engagement while remaining independent of party politics. Our emphasis continues to be on cooperation, respect, and service. Through our actions, the Grange demonstrates that people can disagree on political matters while still working together for the common good. By focusing on shared interests instead of partisan loyalties, the Grange has maintained its credibility and effectiveness for generations.

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the Founders of the Grange for their foresight in making non-partisanship a key tenet of our Order. An enduring commitment to non-partisanship has strengthened our ability to advocate for agriculture and rural communities, while at the same time fostering unity among its members and encouraging constructive participation in our cherished American democracy.



Political signs line roads and sidewalks all over the United States in the leadup to the midterm elections. *Photo Provided*

ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR FOUNDATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Grange Foundation will accept nominations for members of the Foundation Advisory Board through Close of Business on October 16.

Interested persons should submit a letter of intent, bio, and a headshot to ngfb@grange.org and champ@nationalgrange.org.

Election will occur on November 8 at the National Grange Convention in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.



Recipes from the Heartland

The America's 250th Grange Workgroup is celebrating our country's 250th Anniversary by "throwing back" to some classic recipes from Grange cookbooks. Do you have favorite recipes that evoke the American spirit which you would like to see published again? Send them to Lew Gaskill at olgaskill@comcast.net. Please include which Grange cookbook your recipes come from.

This week's recipes are from
What's Cookin' in the Grange? (2000)

Lew says these
recipes will be great
for football-watching
parties!

Happy Horseradish + Beef Dip

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1 cup sour cream
1/2 cup chopped green onions
1 (2 ounce) package dried beef,
finely chopped
1 Tablespoon creamy horseradish
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Courtesy of Rodney Brown
Bayard Grange #1878, Ohio

Combine the cream cheese, sour cream, green onions, dried beef, horseradish, lemon juice, garlic powder and pepper in a bowl and mix well. Chill, covered, for 1 to 2 hours. Serve with assorted party crackers.
Yield: 8 to 10 servings.

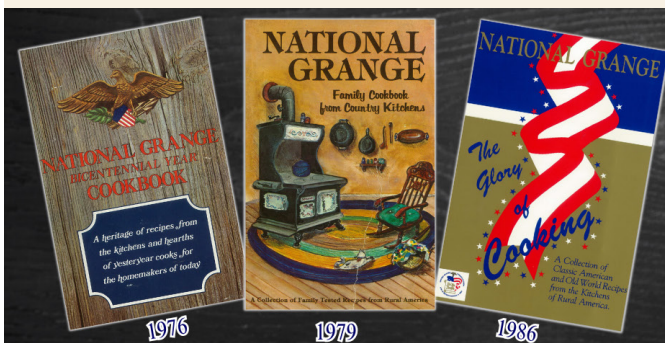


Potato Chip Cookies

Courtesy of Beatrice DeFino
Kendrew Grange #891, New York

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups flour
1/2 cup crushed potato chips
1/2 cup chopped nuts
1/2 cup chocolate chips

Beat the butter, sugar, egg yolk, and vanilla in a mixer bowl until light and fluffy. Add the flour 1/2 cup at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the potato chips and nuts. Shape the dough into small balls. Arrange 2 inches apart on a greased cookie sheet. Make an indentation in each cookie with the back of a spoon or your thumb. Fill the indentation with chocolate pieces.
Bake at 325 degrees for 25 minutes. Cool on cookie sheet for 2 minutes. Remove to a wire rack to cool completely.
Yield: 2 to 3 dozen cookies



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NATIONAL GRANGE

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

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

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Grange Youth Fair Program - grangeyouthfairs@grange.org

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