



APRIL 2026

THE PEOPLES PRESS: AG EDITION

THE OFFICIAL AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER OF PEOPLES STATE BANK

2026 WINTER AG SESSION – FARM SUCCESSION

Peoples State Bank's annual ag event, held on Wednesday, February 25 at The Barn in Prairie du Chien, was a tremendous success, bringing together farmers, families, and agricultural professionals from across the region for a morning of insight and connection.

The event featured award-winning speaker Jolene Brown, who delivered an engaging and thought-provoking presentation on farm succession, family business transitions, and protecting agricultural legacies. Her relatable stories, practical advice, and heartfelt approach resonated with attendees navigating the challenges of passing operations from one generation to the next.



"THE FARMING GAME" CHALLENGE

To kick off the spring season, Peoples State Bank hosted its 2nd annual "Farming Game Challenge." This competition is open to surrounding FFA chapters, where students compete within their own chapters. The winning senior from each FFA chapter is then invited to the main office for an ultimate showdown, with scholarships up for grabs.

This year, 11 FFA chapters participated, and seven winning seniors advanced to the final showdown at the main office. The Farming Game is a Monopoly-style game that allows students to strategize farm expenses and manage a line of credit. The Ag Promotion team plans to continue expanding this event as it gains traction, fostering friendly competition among FFA chapters.

Congratulations to our three scholarship winners from this year's event: Grace Bennett of Lancaster FFA (1st place), Conner Durst of North Crawford FFA (2nd place), and Brock Bunge of River Ridge FFA

(3rd place). We encourage any FFA chapters interested in participating to reach out to the Ag Promotion team. Save the date for next year's event:

Wednesday, April 7th, 2027.

By: Chad Achenbach



Jay Long, Commercial Agronomist at Pivot Bio

As we enter into the final week of March, farmers around the tri-state area are getting anxious to start the planting season. Farmers are facing increased pressure this year, especially. The conflict that is happening in the Middle East is affecting farmers with extremely volatile nitrogen fertilizer prices. Roughly 15% of the US nitrogen fertilizer comes from the Middle East and through the Strait of Hormuz. Not only does the conflict affect the pricing when it comes to nitrogen fertilizer, but it also affects the transportation. It takes 30-45 days to move fertilizer from the Middle East to the port in NOLA. There is much uncertainty with the supply of N this year, and it does not look like there will be relief until the conflict is settled.

This past winter has been fairly mild with a few snow events. The weather is changing, and farmers around the area are preparing to start spring anhydrous ammonia applications. With the recent snowfall/ precipitation, field conditions will become "fit" in the coming days. Last year's growing season was complicated, but bountiful. Many farms faced droughty conditions and heavy disease pressure. Southern Rust came in this past year pretty heavily in spots. Southern Rust is more of a concern than Common Rust, because it is more aggressive and can impact yield. For the past few growing seasons, I haven't seen Southern Rust locally, but 2025 was an outlier. Luckily, Southern Rust cannot overwinter, so there will not be a buildup in the soil for this year's crop.

It's a good reminder that diseases can come in many different ways and at different times in the growing season. Some key management strategies to control disease like Southern Rust are to scout your crop regularly, assess what stage your crop is in, and determine how a disease outbreak would affect yields. If disease sets pre-tassel, the potential for yield loss is high. Understand what the economic threshold is and if it has an ROI to spray a fungicide. It is important to scout your crops often and make management decisions in a timely manner.

AI Data Centers and the Impact on Farmland

You may be wondering why an ag newsletter is talking about data centers. These multi-billion-dollar facilities are increasingly being proposed in rural areas across southwest Wisconsin and northeast Iowa, bringing real implications for farmland and local communities.

Many data centers require 250-500 acres, often converting productive agricultural land into large industrial sites. With large concrete footprints, these facilities reduce water infiltration and increase runoff—an important consideration for drainage and surrounding farmland.

Water use is another key factor. Data centers require significant amounts of water for cooling, with estimates in the millions of gallons annually. While much of this water can be recycled, it still places demand on local water resources.

This raises an important question: why are these facilities being built in areas with high-quality farmland rather than less productive regions? One of the main reasons Wisconsin has become a focal point is its access to abundant fresh water—something only a few regions globally can offer at this scale. In addition, reliable power infrastructure and proximity to population centers make these areas attractive for development, even when they overlap with prime agricultural land.

At the same time, these projects can bring economic opportunities, including construction activity, an expanded tax base, and future jobs. Schools like the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire are already preparing students for careers tied to AI and data infrastructure.

Projects are being discussed in communities such as Mount Pleasant, Beaver Dam, Kenosha, and Cassville. To learn more, an informational meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 22, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grant County Fairgrounds (Eckstein Building), hosted by the Grant County Farm Bureau.



Name: Abby Bockenstedt

FFA Chapter: Edgewood-Colesburg

Upcoming Fundraisers: Fruit Sales

Positions Held: President

If you live on a farm, what type of farming operation is it (or any other farm connections you have)? I don't live on a farm but a lot of my friends have always had animals. I kinda just grew into showing animals and being involved around farms.

What made you decide to join FFA? I decided to join FFA because I have always loved animals but I never grew up on a farm but FFA has taught me you do not have to grow up on a farm to be able to show livestock or be involved in FFA.

What is the best experience you have had with FFA so far? The best experience I have had in FFA is either getting to show livestock or getting to go to the national FFA Convention and getting to meet a lot of new people as well as just more about agriculture.

What are your plans after high school and how will your experience in FFA help you in your future? My future plans after high school is to attend the NICC for Nursing. My experience in FFA will not necessarily help me in my future career but I always knew from a young age that I wanted to live on my own farm. My FFA experience will help me be prepared on how to start my own farming business as well as do and don't in the ag industry.



FFA CORNER SPOTLIGHT