

State Farm Bureaus honored for growth, programs

State Farm Bureaus were recognized Jan. 10 for outstanding membership achievement and for implementing stellar programs to serve Farm Bureau members in 2004. American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman and AFBF Vice President Steve Appel presented the awards during AFBF's 86th annual meeting in Charlotte, N.C.

Navigator Awards were presented to state Farm Bureaus for outstanding membership achievement. The award winners were Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Missis-

sippi, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.

In addition, Awards for Excellence were presented in five program areas: Education and Agricultural Promotion; Leadership Development; Member Services; Policy Implementation; and Public Relations and Information.

Listed below are the state winners and the number of categories in which they won:

Alabama (1), Arizona (4), Arkansas (5), California (3), Connecticut (3), Florida (5), Georgia (2), Idaho (5), Illinois (5), Indiana (5), Kansas (4), Kentucky (4), Louisiana (5), Maryland (2), Michigan (5), Minnesota (3), Mississippi (3), Missouri (5), Montana (5), Nebraska (4), New Mexico (5), New York (5), North Carolina (4), Ohio (5), Oklahoma (3), Oregon (2), Pennsylvania (3), Rhode Island (2), South Carolina (4), South Dakota (2), Tennessee (5), Texas (5), Utah (3), Virginia (5), Washington (5), West

Virginia (2), Wisconsin (5) and Wyoming (3).

A total of 24 President's Awards were presented. These are the "best of the best" awards presented for excellence in each of the five program areas to states by membership category and by size. Winning states and the number of President's Awards won were:

Tennessee (1), Illinois (4), Connecticut (1), Louisiana (1), Michigan (2), Missouri (3), Montana (3), New York (2), Ohio (3), Virginia (1) and Washington (3).

Oklahoma FB inventor wins top farmer idea award

A loading chute that attaches to livestock trucks and quickly converts from ground level to different loading dock heights earned LeRoy Stotts of Seiling, Okla., grand prize in the Farmer Idea Exchange competition at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting in Charlotte, N.C.

Stotts won a year's use of a New Holland TV-140 Bidirectional tractor. This was the 17th year of the annual contest, and the 16th year that New Holland provided free use of a tractor to the grand prize winner.

Stotts' loading chute was selected because of its one-size-fits-all efficiency for loading and unloading livestock almost anywhere. It eliminates the need for pull-behind vehicles, including trailers and loading chutes, because it attaches to most livestock transports, straight trucks and pot-belly trailers.

Three other top awards of \$250 were

selected by the 15 category winners and presented by AFBF during the award ceremonies held Jan. 9.

Russell Myers of Battle Creek, Mich., won the "Most Likely to Improve An Individual Farmer's Net Income" award. His double-cropping of soybeans and clover after a wheat harvest results in the equivalent of \$15 to \$20 per acre of nitrogen fertilizer replaced in the soil.

The soybeans stabilize nitrogen in the soil, which can then be utilized by corn planted the following year. If the soybeans mature soon enough, they can be harvested as grain, but if the soybeans don't fully mature, the clover and soybean combination can be cut for feed.

The "Most Innovative" idea award went to Robert Barnett of Burlington, Okla. He invented what he calls "Barn On the Move," which is a 32' x 50'

roof on wheels that can be moved behind a pickup truck from spot to spot for various uses. The roof can be easily elevated for use as a cover for hay bales or to provide shade and shelter for livestock.

The "Most Widely Usable" award went to Richard Layden of Hoopston, Ill. His "Cord Lock" device helps keep two power cords plugged together even when one or both of the power cords are strongly pulled.

In total, 30 entries in eight categories were entered in the AFBF Farmer Idea Exchange.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau member LeRoy Stotts won top prize in the Farmer Idea Exchange for his adjustable loading dock invention. Thirty Farm Bureau members competed in this year's exchange.



Stallman urges commitment to nation's farm program

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president of the nation's largest farm group, said farm planning is not done just one year at a time and that it would be wrong to shift policy halfway through the current farm bill.

"We should not be changing rules in the middle of the game," Stallman said. "Today's farm program is working. Its cost is comparatively small—less than seven-tenths of 1 percent of our federal budget—and our government's return on that investment in rural America is hard for any farm bill critic to refute."

While net farm income looked good in 2004, according to Stallman, that "does not mean 2005 is the time to chop holes in our countercyclical safety net."

According to Stallman, gutting the U.S. farm program would "tie the hands of our trade negotiators during world trade talks."

"At the very time they are trying to negotiate a bigger and fairer share of the world market for our farm exports, why should we be willing to throw our

bargaining power straight out the window?" Stallman asked.

Stallman said America's farmers and ranchers should be able to sell their products without having to compete against the unfair subsidies and barriers of foreign governments. While a successful conclusion to World Trade Organization talks is key to increasing market access for U.S. producers, "the devil is always in the details," Stallman said and AFBF will be watching those details closely.

Another top priority for AFBF in 2005 is passage of a comprehensive energy bill. Stallman said that higher energy expenses during the past two growing seasons cost farmers and ranchers an added \$6 billion.

"Skyrocketing energy costs are clearly a problem, but your farms are offering a clear solution," Stallman said. "This past year, we secured new tax incentives for renewable fuels such as farm-grown ethanol and biodiesel."

According to Stallman, AFBF will continue to push this year for comprehensive energy "legislation that sets re-

alistic standards for the use of home-grown fuels and substantially increases our supply of domestic energy.

"This country is way too dependent on foreign sources of energy from unstable and politically unreliable countries," he said. "We must have a comprehensive, national energy policy, and we believe America is strongest when it is fueled by Americans."

Stallman said AFBF will also continue its effort to "drive the final nail into the coffin of the death tax."

"The death tax cripples family businesses such as farms and ranches," he said. "Effects of the death tax on farm and ranch families are not often black and white. But they can be measured in dark, dismal shades of gray."

"As it sits today, farmers pay a disproportionate amount of death taxes. Hard-earned farm capital that should be reinvested in our farms and ranches instead goes to line the pockets of lawyers and accountants."

In addition, Stallman announced two organizational initiatives. Participants in the Farm Bureau Women and

Young Farmer and Rancher programs will spearhead a nationwide fund-raising effort to provide targeted aid to farm families who were hit by the tsunami disaster. Farm Bureau members were also asked to donate to the USO "Beef Up Our Troops" campaign, through which U.S. troops serving overseas will receive packets of American beef jerky, which Stallman called "a little taste of home."

In closing, Stallman told Farm Bureau members that the grassroots public policy positions they "develop, debate and implement are Farm Bureau's foundation." He said AFBF would continue to work on their behalf.

"We will tell your stories of success, and we will not allow any meaningful challenge to our policies—or our profession—to go unanswered," he said. "We will never hesitate to share the message that it is because of you and your work that people around the world are better fed, better clothed and better housed. And, that because of you and your families, your nation is better off."