

# NATIONAL CANCER SURVIVORS DAY

## *A Celebration of Life*

Sunday, June 3, 2018, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Rochester International Event Center

7333 Airport View Dr. SW, Rochester, MN 55902

## Brunch on the Farm

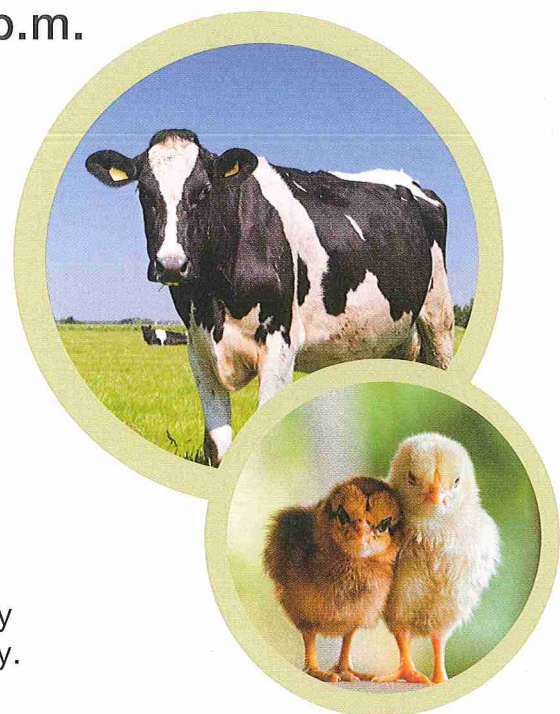
- 10:15 a.m. Doors Open
- 10:30 a.m. Registration, Music and Family Activities
- 11:00 a.m. Welcome and Announcements
- 11:15 a.m. Brunch
- 11:45 a.m. Program, Speakers and Medal Ceremony

Sponsored by the André Gauthier Foundation and hosted by  
Mayo Clinic Cancer Center and the American Cancer Society.

*Event, including meal, is free for cancer survivors and two guests.  
Additional guests welcome to attend for \$5 per person.*

**Reservations are required and open from May 1 - May 25, 2018.**

To register, call: (507) 538-6001 or email: [canceredprog@mayo.edu](mailto:canceredprog@mayo.edu)





This past Sunday in Willmar, Minn., 200 members of the Land Stewardship Project, CURE and ISAIAH came together with candidates for Minnesota Governor and had a unique and powerful conversation. The event was part of LSP's work with **Our Minnesota Future**, a group of 22 of Minnesota's strongest people's organizations.

**This Thursday, May 10, is another exciting opportunity to hear from candidates for Governor and share our values.** Join members of LSP and many partner organizations to discuss with the candidates how they will work alongside regular people to create the bold solutions our communities need.

## **Our Minnesota Future Event with Candidates for Governor**

**Thursday, May 10, in Minneapolis — Register Here**  
**6 p.m.-9 p.m.** (Doors open at 5:30 p.m.)  
**Sabathani Community Center (310 E 38<sup>th</sup> St., Minneapolis)**  
*Light supper provided.*

---

In Willmar last Sunday, both the candidates and the people who attended left the event energized and hopeful.

So, join us this Thursday for an exciting conversation with candidates, and to support LSP and our ally organizations. You can **register here**.

Let me know if you have any questions!

Thanks,

**Jonathan Maurer-Jones**  
Policy Organizer  
Land Stewardship Project  
218-213-4008  
**jmaurer-jones@landstewardshipproject.org**

*(This Our Minnesota Future event with candidates for Governor is a non-partisan event focused on our values and vision for Minnesota. Candidates for Governor from both the DFL and Republican parties were invited.)*

**PHOTO:** During an event in Willmar last Sunday, LSP farmer-member Anna Racer asks candidates for Governor what they will do to include the voices of regular people and organizations like LSP in their administration.



**PHOTO:** During the event in Willmar, candidates for Minnesota Governor respond to a panel of leaders from LSP, CURE and ISAIAH about the bold solutions our communities need.





# Letter: Is there a silver lining with ag tariffs on China?

To the Editor:

We cannot afford to send ag products to China. Most of the pork today is raised by corporations or absentee owners. They draw down the aquifers, destroy township roads with heavy truck traffic back and forth from these confinement buildings.

There are only a few actual farmers that raise hogs that are given access to the outdoors. The rest live in confinement over a slotted floor and inhale air from the sewage pit beneath them.

A 200-pound hog will generate approximately one gallon of waste per day and consume approximately two to four gallons of water per day. So do the math on what a barn of 2,000 to 4,000 hogs consume and generate in one day — much less for any longer period of time.

Then you take all of this waste and spread or inject it in on the ground; which puts groundwater at risk or if it makes its way into a tile line or stream, you contaminate an already-diminishing resource.

If this isn't bad enough, there is an obscure law in Minnesota that in 1967 gave an exemption to property that was used for control of air or water pollution. Then, in 1993, the legislature gave manure pits and appurtenances (such as slatted floors) exempt from property tax. So, for example, a new confinement building that can cost one million dollars only has to pay tax on the upper portion of the building — while the floors and pits are not taxed. This can amount to a tax break of \$500,000 that they are not taxed on. No wonder they are being put up all over. For the water they use and the waste they generate, it is like putting up a city on every section without any restrictions.

If a neighbor's well goes dry, this confinement down the road has no liability. So while assessments on pole buildings went up 6 percent and grain bins went

up 17 percent, these confinement enjoy their tax break — while at the same time, deplete our resources, destroy our roads and give untold pollution from these permanent sewers.

Township, county and state officials need to address this problem and put an end to their tax exemption

and stop the expansion of these factory confinement buildings, before all of rural America is destroyed. They have been given too much leeway for way too long.

Mike Handzus  
Lakefield, Minn.

## OPINION

*The Land wants to hear from you!*  
**Letters to the editor  
are always welcome.**

Send your letters to:

Editor, The Land

P.O. Box 3169

Mankato, MN 56002

e-mail: [editor@thelandonline.com](mailto:editor@thelandonline.com)

*All letters must be signed and accompanied  
by a phone number (not for publication)  
to verify authenticity.*



# 'It's better than what we have'

## Hog farm fight spills over to Goodhue County zoning ordinances

BY BRIAN TODD  
btodd@postbulletin.com

RED WING, Minn. — A request for a changing in the Goodhue County zoning ordinance is bringing a new battle over farms and farming practices in the county.

The owners of Circle K Family Farms — Yon, Jeff and Mike Kohlhof — asked the county to amend the zoning ordinance pertaining to the rights of farmers and putting limitations on how neighbors can

file nuisance complaints or lawsuits against those whose farming activities are "complying with the local, county, state and federal permits, ordinances, rules, statutes and other regulations."

Jack Perry, a Minneapolis attorney who wrote the proposed ordinance change on behalf of the Kohlhofers, said the proposed Right-to-Farm ordinance is simply meant to codify the county's commitment to the preservation of agricultural operations.

However, at the April 16 Planning Advisory Commission meeting, the county submitted its own amendment to the Right-to-Farm ordinance in the county's zoning ordinance. The commission voted 5-3 to support the county's version of the Right-to-Farm amendment.

The meeting lasted more than five hours, and about 25 people spoke — some for, some against — about the proposed change.

While the Kohlhofers' version of the amendment would have

limited the ability for neighbors to file lawsuits against farmers, the county changed the proposal to eliminate that restriction. "Staff do not believe we have legal authority to deny a party the ability to sue another party, and therefore do not agree with the applicant's suggested wording," according to the report from Land Use Director Lisa Hanni.

"There is an on-going concern at the Planning Commission that

See HOG FARM, Page A5

A4 THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018 AGRI NEWS • AgriNews.com

# Region

# Opinions

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### It's a funny thing, or maybe it's not

It's a funny thing. Try to protect your home, you're labeled. Expect to breathe clean air, you're labeled. Want a clean lake to take your kids to, you're labeled. Fight for your rights, someone calls you names, someone "warns" you about what you're doing. Ask your legislator for help, you're ignored.

Factory farms are pushing the limits. They're trying to squeeze closer to homes, businesses, and children's

play areas. They're trying to see how far they can bend the laws and which county's supervisors will let them get away with it.

Iowa was called the number one place to live; they didn't check the rural areas. Rural areas aren't so nice anymore.

A few counties are fighting back, taking it to the EPC. One county is going further, to court. Corporate pig people didn't like that and wanted their rights taken away.

The DNR was given a list of nearly 50 items they could put into place to protect our air and water; all of them were ignored. Our elected Legislature was given 15 bills to protect our homes, air and water; all were ignored. If we did not do our jobs, we would not get paid.

Maybe it's not so funny after all.

Donna Juber  
Eldora, Iowa

# Nation

---

## NATION BRIEFS

### Kansas hog farmer fined \$152,000

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas regulators have fined a northwest Kansas swine operation \$152,000 for ignoring orders to halt the construction of unauthorized facilities capable of holding tens of thousands of hogs.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reports that documents it obtained show Nelson Farms owner Terry Nelson, working with family and employee partners through limited liability companies, did not get permission from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment before starting to build unauthorized animal confinement buildings and waste-holding facilities in Phillips and Norton counties.

The Kansas chapter of the Sierra Club filed a series of complaints about KDHE's oversight of construction in a rural area near the Nebraska border. Neighbors at both locations also filed procedural and environmental objections.

### Court: Manure permit rules fall short

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York regulators will revise permitting rules for certain large dairy farms after a court ruled in favor of environmental groups claiming current rules don't comply with the federal Clean Water Act.

The lawsuit filed in state supreme court by Earthjustice said the Department of Environmental Conservation's permit rules don't include enough public input and impartial state expert review. A court ruling on April 23 agreed.



# Jury awards \$50M to neighbors

BY EMERY P. DALESIO  
Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — A federal jury awarded more than \$50 million in damages to neighbors of an industrial hog operation found responsible for intense smells, noise and other disturbances so bad people couldn't enjoy their rural homes.

Jurors on April 26 awarded the 10 neighbors of a 15,000-head swine operation a total of \$750,000 in compensation, plus \$50 million in damages designed to punish the corporation that owns the animals.

Lawyers didn't sue the Bladen County farm's owner, instead targeting the hog-production division of Virginia-based Smithfield Foods. The Chinese-owned company uses strict contracts to dictate how farm operators raise livestock that Smithfield owns.

The decision is the first in dozens of lawsuits filed by more than 500 neighbors complaining about hog operations.

Jurors decided that "the defendant owed them (neighbors) a standard of care in terms of trying to minimize the odors and other undesirable fallout from their processes," said Wake Forest University law professor Sidney Shapiro, who has followed the cases. "Apparently the jury decided they (Smithfield) knew about and disregarded all this

fallout even though they could do something positive to reduce it."

Rural residents have complained about smells, clouds of flies and excessive spraying for decades. But local and state politicians have either supported or backed down in the face of a politically powerful industry.

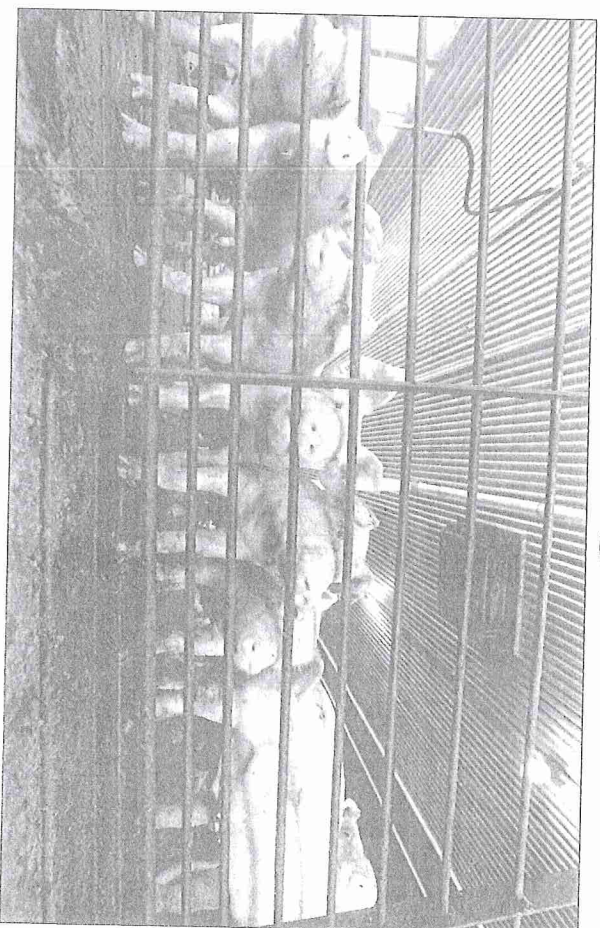
North Carolina legislators last year changed state law to make it much more difficult to replicate the string of nuisance lawsuits targeting hog operations like the one decided Thursday.

Smithfield Foods said it would appeal the decision.

"The lawsuits are a serious threat to a major industry to North Carolina's entire economy and to the jobs and livelihoods of tens of thousands of North Carolinians," Senior Vice President Keira Lombardo said in a statement.

Smithfield Foods hasn't changed the locally dominant method of hog waste disposal since intensive hog operations multiplied in North Carolina in the 1980s and '90s. The practice involves housing thousands of hogs together, flushing their waste into holding pits, allowing bacteria to break down the material, then spraying the effluent onto fields with agricultural spray guns.

Neighbors say the spraying sends the smells and animal waste airborne,



Industrial-scale hog producers in Farmville, N.C., knew for decades that noxious smells from open-air sewage pits tormented neighbors, but didn't change their livestock-raising methods or manure disposal methods, creating a smelly and unhealthy environment. Jurors have awarded \$50 million in damages to neighbors.

allowing it to drift into their homes and sometimes coat outdoor surfaces on their properties.

"We are pleased with the verdict. These cases are about North Carolina family property rights and a clean environment," said Mona Lisa Wal-

lace, a Salisbury attorney whose firm teamed with two Texas-based firms to prepare the series of trials covering similar ground. "We are now preparing for the next, which is scheduled for the end of May."

Associated Press



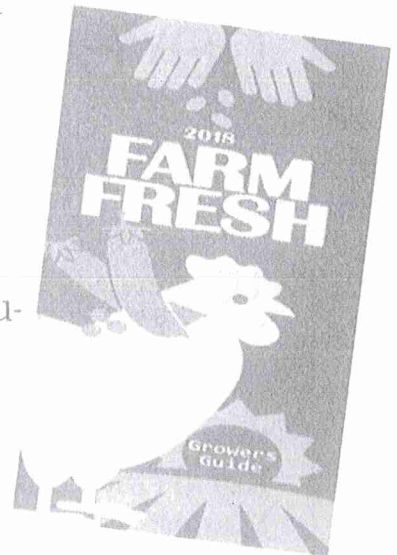
# MIDWEST BRIEFS

---

## Growers guide is available

ST. PAUL —  
Wondering  
where to find  
nearby farm-  
fresh food?

The Min-  
nesota Farm  
Bureau's annu-  
al directory  
of growers  
is available  
online at  
[www.fbmn.org](http://www.fbmn.org).



The “Farm Fresh” directory lists farmers who sell their fresh, processed or value-added products to directly to consumers. Its categories include dairy products, eggs, farm tours, fruits, vegetables, popcorn, wool and wool products, wine, fresh cut flowers and meat products.

Farmers are listed by county and then community. The name of the farm, general directions on how to get there, contact information, and a short description of products available are included.



## DFL Politics in Southern Minnesota



**Brad Trom** <trom.brad@gmail.com> 11:40 AM (0 minutes ago)

Dear Progressives:

At the upcoming DFL Endorsement Conventions across southern Minnesota, we'll be selecting someone to fill the spot of Congressman Tim Walz, who's running for Governor. Being a current resident of Steele County the past 12 years, you might think that I'd automatically want to back former State Senator Vicki Jensen of Owatonna, but I'm not.

What Vicki Jensen doesn't want you to know and why: Vicki doesn't always have a good track record of standing up for the family farmer. For example, back in 2002-2006, when Ripley Township in Dodge County was confronted with what might have been the largest dairy in the state at that time...Vicki and her husband Trevor were often showing up at our township meetings, not taking a stand for Minnesota's family farmers, but carrying water for Big Ag. They did NOT live in Ripley Township and not even Dodge County and yet she was an advocate for a large-scale confined animal feeding operation. In the long run, local residents joined forces with the Land Stewardship Project, and we were able to fend off this type of factory farming development...with no thanks to Vicki.

Vicki Jensen prides herself on being a member of both the Farm Bureau (the Republican arm of Big Ag) and Farmers Union (the Democratic arm of Family Farming). So, what's up with Farm Bureau - see for yourself what "60 Minutes" had to share with all of America:

60 Minutes: Farm Bureau (Part 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4iiV8e0Y6A&t=3s>

60 Minutes: Farm Bureau (Part 2)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehDfBl\\_VKEQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehDfBl_VKEQ)

In addition, here are two bills that Vicki Jensen authored or coauthored when she was a legislator. Some pretty bad ones include:

Senate SF0830 2 --- 02/16/2015 --- Minimum wage inflation escalator elimination - gets rid of built in increases to minimum wage to account for inflation.

Senate SF0565 4 --- 03/23/2016 --- Statewide uniform minimum wage establishment; uniformity for employment mandates on private employers requirement – gets rid of local control from setting minimum wage.

Most DFL delegates would not agree with this. Neither passed. Her legislative history is here:



<https://www.leg.state.mn.us/legdb/fulldetail?id=15383>

The process of selecting of our next Congressman continues.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Trom

PO Box 757

Blooming Prairie MN 55917-0757

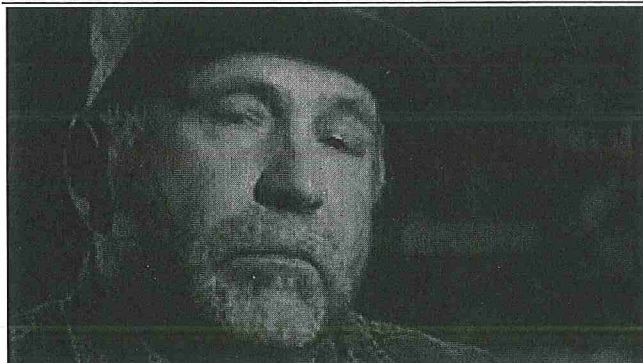
507-583-7718

[trom.brad@gmail.com](mailto:trom.brad@gmail.com)

\*\*\*

Attachments area

Preview YouTube video 60 Minutes: Farm Bureau (Part 1)



Preview YouTube video 60 Minutes: Farm Bureau (Part 2)





# SELCO Vetted Performer



## Celebrate Syttende Mai with Arna Rennan

Featuring Ballads from the Middle Ages, folk tales and dance tunes, Arna brings to life the sound and sentiment of Nordic people as they lived hundreds of years ago. From the fantastic world of spells cast, justice served, powerful kings, underground elves, love and longing, Arna sings, plays the "langeleik" a northern European dulcimer and the overtone flute. These are beautiful and captivating stories and songs for young and old alike.



THIS PROGRAM IS MADE POSSIBLE BY A LIBRARY LEGACY GRANT. ALL PROGRAMS ARE FREE.

**Thursday, May 17, 2018 2:00 p.m. City Council Room**

Includes Norwegian craft demonstrations and treats



## World War II Correspondents

Experience the stories of these brave Americans who shared the trials and victories of our armed forces. Learn more about Ernie Pyle, Walter Cronkite, Martha Gellhorn, and Edward R. Murrow.

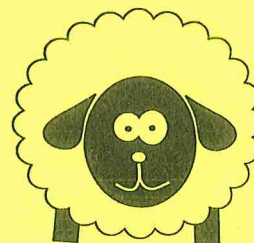
The Blooming Prairie Branch Library welcomes back

## Author Mike Eckers

**7 p.m. Wednesday, May 16,**

In the City Council Chambers, 138 Highway Ave. South

Michael Eckers is an author, historian and speaker. He has presented informative talks on American military history for nearly two decades in addition to writing many books, both fiction and non-fiction. Following retirement Mike recently began traveling the country, speaking and writing. He is an active supporter of numerous historical and veterans groups in the Midwest and Florida.



## Baa, Baa, Black Sheep Family Fun Night Thursday, May 17 6:30 p.m.

Join us at the library for stories, songs, and crafts all about sheep. For all preschool children, friends, and families.

Blooming Prairie Branch Library  
138 Highway Avenue South  
Presented by staff from ECFE  
and the Blooming Prairie Branch Library.





**A One Stop Shop for Minnesota Seniors**

**1-800-333-2433**

**This is the place to:**

-  **Arrange for services for an aging parent**
-  **Plan for long-term care**
-  **Get help with government agencies to solve your problems**
-  **Find out how to get involved in your local community**
-  **Fight fraud**
-  **Get health insurance counseling**
-  **Learn what is available to help you remain independent in your community**

**MinnesotaHelp.info**

is the website for resources connected to the Senior LinkAge Line®: A one stop shop for Minnesota seniors.



Attention. If you want free help translating this information, call Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433.

ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية في ترجمة هذه المعلومات، فاتصل على الرقم

.Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433

កំណត់សំគាល់ បើអ្នកចង់បានជំនួយបកប្រែព័ត៌មាននេះដោយមិនគិតថ្លៃ សូមទូរស័ព្ទទៅ Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433 ។

Pažnja. Ako vam je potrebna besplatna pomoć za prevod ove informacije, nazovite Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433.

Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433.

ໂປດຊາບ. ຖ້າຫາກທ່ານຕ້ອງການ ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປຂໍ້ຄວາມດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ຟຣີ, ຈົ່ງ ໂທຫາ Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433.

Hubaddhu. Yoo akka odeeffannoon kun sii hiikamu gargaarsa tolaa feeta ta'e, lakkoofsi bilbiltu Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в переводе этой информации, позвоните Senior LinkAge Lin

Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaal-meeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la'aan ah, wac Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame a Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433.

Chú Ý. Nếu quý vị cần dịch thông-tin này miễn phí, xin gọi Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433.

LB #4 (11-03)





# READING SKILLS AND SPEED READING PROGRAMS

This Summer for Children and Adults

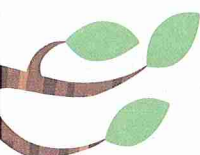


Individualized programs include engaging online instruction, independent reading in great books, and a skilled and encouraging teacher.



MINNESOTA CENTER for  
Reading Research

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>



Phonics  
Fluency

Comprehension

Love of Reading

Textbook Skills

Speed Reading



## Program for 4-Year-Olds and Entering Kindergartners

In this fun summer program, your child will learn to read. Children learn letter recognition, beginning phonics, and easy sight words. Your child will learn to read simple words and short sentences and will be excited about books and reading.

## Program for Entering 1st Graders

In this fun summer program, your child will learn to read independently. Children learn phonics and sight words, build fluency and comprehension, and develop a love of books and reading. Your child will be excited about reading and get off to a great start in first grade.

## Program for Entering 2nd Graders

In this fun summer program, your child will become a fluent, confident reader. Children build solid phonics and word-attack skills and develop reading fluency and strong comprehension. Your child will gain confidence, be excited about books and reading, and get off to a great start in second grade.

## Program for Entering 3rd Graders

In this fun summer program, your child will become a strong, fluent reader. Children develop long-word decoding skills, reading fluency, and excellent comprehension. Your child will gain confidence, develop a lifelong love of books and reading, and get off to a great start in third grade.

## Program for Entering 4th Graders

## Program for Entering 5th Graders

In these fun and effective programs, your child will become a skilled, enthusiastic reader. Students develop strong comprehension skills in fiction, non-fiction, and textbooks. They build long-word decoding skills and learn to read more fluently and rapidly. Your child will complete homework more quickly and easily, be more successful in school, and develop a lifelong love of reading.

## Program for Entering 6th-8th Graders

## Program for Entering 9th-12th Graders

In these effective and enjoyable programs, your son or daughter will make substantial gains in comprehension and learn to read twice as fast. Students learn the best way to take notes, study for tests, and read fiction, non-fiction, and textbooks. Your student will complete homework more quickly and easily, get better grades, and enjoy reading more.

## Program for College Students and Adults

Transform your reading skills with our speed reading program! You will learn to read twice as fast in difficult material, such as textbooks and other challenging non-fiction, and triple your speed in easier reading. The comprehension, concentration, and retention techniques you learn will enable you to save time and get more out of everything you read.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER

**Call 1-800-903-0942**

Monday-Friday 7am-8pm and Saturday 7am-4pm





## Teachers

Programs are offered through the College of Education and Human Development, Minnesota Center for Reading Research. Programs are taught by instructors from the Institute of Reading Development. Tuition varies by program level. Please ask about our family discount.



## Exciting Results!

"My daughter is sounding out words on her own, and she is so excited about reading to us! She loved this program, and I was very impressed with the books and materials."

— Parent of kindergartner

"Thanks to this program, my son is now reading independently and his confidence is through the roof. I cannot express enough how grateful I am for this program."

— Parent of 1st grader

"Allison loved doing the long-word decoding lessons. Her reading skills have improved tremendously, and she is reading more challenging chapter books."

— Parent of 3rd grader

"Patrick's comprehension has really improved, and he loved the books. I've recommended this to other parents."

— Parent of 5th grader

"The lessons were fun and easy to follow. It is much easier for me to study and take notes now. I don't put off studying until the last day because I know I can get through it fast."

— 7th-grade student

"I liked tracking my reading speed and seeing it go up from week to week. I used to not like to read because it was too time-consuming, but now it's easier to finish."

— 9th-grade student

Reading programs begin every week  
throughout the summer.



MINNESOTA CENTER for  
Reading Research

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to Discover™



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER

**Call 1-800-903-0942**

Monday-Friday 7am–8pm and Saturday 7am–4pm

**INQUIRE EARLY! ENROLLMENT IS LIMITED.**





# Business

## Minn. company has plans for Wis. hog farm

BY CHRIS VETTER  
Tribune News Service

CHIPPEWA FALLS, Wis. — A large hog farm is planned for the Chippewa County town of Cleveland, west of Cornell.

Four Mile LLP, based in Fairmont, Minn., filed its plans with the Chippewa County Land Conservation and Forest Management Department last month to build a five-barn facility on a 51-acre parcel just north of Highway 64.

"The proposed sow unit will con-

sist of approximately 6,500 breeding females and 1,800 developing gilts (female hogs not quite old enough to become pregnant) as replacements," wrote Bill Crawford of Four Mile in a letter filed with the county. "These animals will be housed in five buildings with engineered below-barn concrete manure storage pits."

Crawford wrote that the hogs would produce 10 million gallons of manure annually.

"Using the manure from sows, we would aim to apply 13,600 gallons of manure per acre (on fields)," he

wrote.

Paul Ruen, a veterinarian in Fairmont who is working with the investors, described it as an \$18 million project that would employ 12 to 15 full-time workers.

Ruen attended the University of Minnesota, where he met his wife, who is from Cornell. Ruen said he travels with her to Cornell frequently and that is one of the reasons he and the investors began looking in Chippewa County.

"I saw a good fit for this type of thing," Ruen said. "About a year ago,

I started looking for a site in that area. Finding good sites isn't an easy job. You want a setback from people. (This location) is on a dead-end road with lots of woods around it."

One reason for picking an area far from other hog farms is for biosecurity protection, he explained. It is better to have a hog farm have distance from other pigs to reduce the possibility of spreading diseases.

Town Chairman Mike Beighley said he was caught off-guard by the application. The town doesn't have its own zoning ordinances, and the prop-

erty is already zoned for agricultural use, so Beighley isn't sure if the town can stop the proposed hog facility.

"There have been a lot of negatives," Beighley said. "It's something we didn't know was coming. The biggest issues are the odor and (possible) groundwater contamination. And there is a cemetery right there too."

About 60 people attended a Cleveland Town Board meeting last week, and Beighley said most of the crowd spoke against the hog farm.



# What's the matter with Kansas?

For more than 100 years, some Kansans have either built or added to their journalism reputation by asking this simple question: What's the matter with Kansas? The answer, however, is far from simple.

The first to ask was William Allen White, the publisher and editor of the Emporia Gazette. White, a mainstream Republican, posed the question as the headline to his sarcasm-filled, 1896 editorial that linked Kansas' rising populist movement with its flagging economic future.

Progressive Republicans — a young Theodore Roosevelt was one — were elated by the biting analysis and anointed White a party sage. Later, he became a party kingmaker.

More than a century later, another Kansan, historian and political analyst Thomas Frank, used White's famous question as the title for his 2004 book that examined why the state's "political conservatism" thrived despite "economic policies that do not benefit the majority of people" there.

The answer, Frank discovered, was that Kansas Republicans represented an "archetype for the future of politics in which fiscal conservatism becomes the universal norm and political war is waged over a handful of hot-button cultural issues."

That 14-year-old forecast is fulfilled in today's culturally conservative, deeply fractured Republican House caucus. It has chewed up two of its own Speakers in the last three years and is now pointlessly politicalizing a bland, place-holding farm bill over SNAP, the nation's already shrinking, principle food aid program.

Now arrives a third Kansas author, Corie Brown, whose 5,500-word story, "Rural Kansas is dying. I drove 1,800 miles to find out why" was published April 26 by [newfoodeconomy.org](http://newfoodeconomy.org). It is



ALAN GUEBERT

"That's the thing about rural Kansas. No one lives there, not anymore."

CORIE BROWN

a deeply sourced, on-the-ground report detailing the state's fast-emptying — or, in fact, already empty — rural communities and counties.

Brown isn't a freelance rookie; she's an experienced, fourth-generation Kansan who has worked for the Los Angeles Times, Newsweek and BusinessWeek. She knows her craft and has a readable style that weaves facts, ideas, and place into a balanced examination of the state's weak rural economy and even weaker rural future.

She gets to the nub of her tale in the story's second paragraph. "That's the thing about rural Kansas," she shrewdly observes. "No one lives there, not anymore. The small towns that epitomize America's heartland are cut off from the rest of the world by miles and miles of grain, casualties of a vast commodity agriculture system that has less and less use for living, breathing farmers."

To support this thesis, Brown quotes 21 farmers, Land Grant University experts, local food activists, and farm group leaders on the state's rural decline and what can be done to slow or reverse it. Few offer much

hope. Some, like Kansas State ag economist John Leatherman, who Brown cites, even see the rural drying up as a good thing.

"Under-utilized human infrastructure" — schools and hospitals serving depopulated areas — is a burden on urban taxpayers, he said. "It is good for society and the world as a whole, to move to a more robotic 'factory floor' model for agriculture."

Sure, if you're a tenured professor with a guaranteed pension. If you're a farmer, rancher or rural resident, however, making a living in Kansas is as hard now as anytime in its long, bloody history.

"Kansas farmers are very good, very efficient," Nancy Landon Kassebaum, the former U.S. senator who still ranches in the state's famed Flint Hills region, tells Brown.

What that really means, though, is that "Kansans will cling to commodity agriculture even if it destroys them."

That's brutally true for commodity agriculture everywhere: it's an unwinnable argument with economic reality, a zero-sum game where the unending chase for ever-lower costs fuels today's race to the bottom. The game, once fun, now ends with everyone losing.

That's what's the matter with Kansas: its "blind faith in outdated agricultural orthodoxy and a failure to imagine a new way forward for farmers still dominates rural policy," Brown deftly explains.

Maybe the worst part of that diagnosis is that nearly everyone in commodity agriculture, from Connecticut to Kansas to California, already knows it. But all have convinced themselves they will be the final winner in a game designed to have none.

Guebert lives in Delavan, Ill.