

# NATIONAL GRANGE PRESIDENT CALLS FOR UNITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND RURAL ADVOCACY TO STRENGTHEN AMERICA'S FUTURE

#### by Samantha Wilkins

Senior Communicatios Fellow

Addressing delegates, members, and guests assembled at the 158th Annual National Grange Convention, President Christine E. Hamp laid out pressing issues impacting rural communities, the nation's agricultural sector, and the American Dream. As the leader of the oldest farm and rural advocacy organization in the country, Hamp aunity, common sense policies, and proactive measures to ensure the vitality of America's hometowns and agriculture.

"Our mission is to foster the vibrancy of rural America," said Hamp. "From food security to healthcare, infrastructure to immigration reform, we are championing policies and programs that build a sustainable future for our communities and secure the American Dream for generations to come."

"I challenge each of us to ask and to answer, 'What am I doing to ensure the American dream remains alive?'," said Hamp. Noting that times have



changed and the younger generation is struggling to find its footing compared to previous generations, Hamp proposed the establishment of a Presidential Blue-Ribbon Commission on the Preservation of the American Dream, urging lawmakers to

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### WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

- \* Stepping back: How to gracefully become a "has been"
- \* Reaching Rural Surgical Seniors
- \* Running a Grange Meeting
- \* Imagine If... Facilitating Brainstorming from a positive place
- \* Food Safety for Group Meals
- \* Science of Butter
- \* Corn & Ag/Job Industry
- \*Charcuterie Boards
- \* Fidget Building
- \* Finding Hidden Potential & Embowering Members
- \* Regional Seedballs & Pollinators
- \* Finding History in the Mystrey of the Grange
- \*Escape Rooms
- \* Bedtime & Stories & Homework time



#### WELCOME NEW DELEGATES

by Diana Echavarria

National Grange Communication Fellow

Continuing our series on Delegates new to serving the National Grange we welcome New Delegates, Brittney Pittman, Washington, and Melvin Phelps, New York.

Pittman is from Washington State, serving on an Executive Committee, and is part of Moses Lake Grange #1151. She has been an active member of the Grange since age nine(9) and has been selected to serve this year on the Labor, Judiciary, and Transportation committees. Her work experience includes being a Civil Engineer, and she was recently elected to be a city councilwoman. Brittney believes her experience will benefit the committee when working on government resolutions to help rural America nationally.





Phelps hails from New York, South Rutland Valley Grange #53, and is currently the vice president of the New York State Grange. Phelps has been an active member of Grange

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# YEAR TWO OF THE REACHING RURAL SURGICAL SENIORS PROGRAM: EXPANDING ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE

by Molly Newman

National Grange Communication Fellow

The National Grange is now in its second year of the Reaching Rural Surgical Seniors (RRSS) grant, a program designed to improve healthcare access in rural areas where options are often limited. The Senior Surgery Guides website offers resources for seniors to plan for surgical care, including a pre-surgery guide with questions for doctors and a Planning Your Future guide to assist with post-surgery and end-of-life planning. Funded partly through the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCO-RI), the program's mission is to empower informed healthcare decisions by sharing high-quality, evidence-based information.

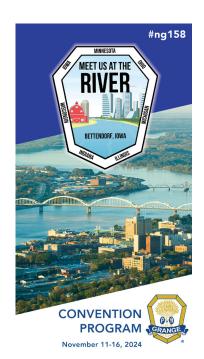
As Thanksgiving approaches, it's also a timely reminder for National Family Health History Day, encouraging families to discuss health history and care wishes. Beyond diagnosed conditions, family health includes behavioral and lifestyle patterns like exercise habits or substance use. Sharing this information with your doctor and healthcare proxy can guide preventive care and screenings, benefiting both you and future generations.

For Granges that haven't yet participated in the RRSS program, now is the perfect time to get involved! The program's website provides pre- and post-surgery guides, event flyers, presentations, social media ads, and more. "This is Grangers helping Grangers and their communities," says National Grange Project Lead Joan C. Smith, encouraging Granges to embrace this impactful work.

Granges are encouraged to host RRSS events and complete the RRSS Report Form for compensation—\$100 per Grange and \$500 for State Granges—to recognize their efforts. Events, presentations, displays, or information booths qualify; just complete three activities to spread valuable healthcare knowledge in your community.

For easy implementation, five ready-made lessons as well as a plethora of printable resources are available on the website. By May 2025, Granges should submit their forms, helping demonstrate the program's success and preparing for potential future grants. Don't miss out on making a difference in rural healthcare! Come learn more about the PCORI Grant opportunities for your Grange Today at 8am.

### TAKE A LOOK INSIDE CONVENTION



Take a look at what is going on in the convention program. Scan the QR code below to take a look at what is going on inside the convention. This year's convention is also taking on some new and exciting things with every day loaded with workshops that chase a variety of topics from Grange initiatives to fun activities such as cookie decorating and rock painting. To take a look at what workshops are available visit <a href="http://Grange.biz/158workshops">http://Grange.biz/158workshops</a>

Join us today for our live-streamed events of the Salute to Agriculture Luncheon with guest speaker Halei Heinzel, Alice in Dairyland, with the Wisconsin Department of Agricultrue and our evening of celebrations including a roll call of states, Quilts of Valor presentations, and Celebration of Rememberance.



### GOLD SASHES UP FOR GRABS AT 158TH CONVENTION



An online silent auction and online raffle will be held for the opportunity to close the Grange at this year's National Grange Convention, on Wednesday, November 13 around 9:30 p.m.

A silent auction is being conducted for the President's sash and station, while all other officer sashes and positions are being raffled. Winners must be

on-site or select someone else present to have the honor of closing the Grange that evening. Winners of the silent auction or those whose name is drawn and select a speaking or action role for the closing should also be able to perform the duties well, either from memory or using a Manual.

For the remaining offices, an online raffle is being held, with a chance to win and select the office of your choice. Tickets, which are on sale now for \$20, can be purchased by any member in good standing. You can indicate the three offices in which you are most interested.

Winners will be drawn at 1:00 p.m. Central Time on Wednesday, November 13, at which time they will select the office of their choice.

As each is selected, the next winner will be given

the remaining options until all offices are filled. Winners should be available to be contacted to accept and select their office if necessary. If you will be flying at selection time, or otherwise unavailable, please notify Amanda Brozana to indicate your top 3 choices or provide the name and number of someone authorized to decide for you.

Groups or Granges may pool their money to purchase tickets but only one representative for the group may serve. If a winner is selected who is not on-site, they must choose someone in attendance to serve in their place.

Zeffy, the online platform chosen for this fundraiser, is free to the Grange but adds a 17% contribution by default. You can turn this off by "adding" \$0 to your ticket purchase price or silent auction bid. To eliminate the contribution to Zeffy, select the drop-down that shows a 17% contribution and choose "Other," then make your contribution \$0.

All funds raised through the sash auctions will benefit the Grange Foundation.

Note: no actual sashes are being auctioned, just the opportunity to help close the Grange at the National Convention.

SILENT AUCTION LINK for the President's office: <a href="http://grange.biz/presidentauction">http://grange.biz/presidentauction</a>

RAFFLE LINK for all other offices: <a href="http://grange.biz/officeauction">http://grange.biz/officeauction</a>

### A LIVING HISTORY: LESTER GIBBS' REMARKABLE 70-YEAR COLLECTION OF GRANGE MEMORABILIA

by Makayla Piers

National Grange Communications Fellow

Celebrating his 70th year as a Grange member, Lester Gibbs has assembled one of the most comprehensive collections of Grange memorabilia in existence. His collection, spanning from the 1870s to the present day, offers a fascinating glimpse into the organization's rich heritage and evolution.

"I joined the Grange in 1954," Gibbs shares, following in the footsteps of his great-grandparents and grandparents as a fourth-generation member. What began as casual purchases from flea markets and antique stores, including finds during his European travels, has grown into an extraordinary historical archive.

Among the collection's oldest treasures is a sheaf dating back to the 1870s, alongside early officer emblems that once hung from the sashes worn by Grange officers. These emblems tell the story of Grange symbolism: crossed gavels, scrolls, the steward's spud, the assistant steward's shepherd's crook, the chaplain's Bible, the treasurer's crossed keys, and the secretary's crossed quills.

The collection features an impressive array of badges, including the only known Canadian Grange badges, acquired from a deceased member's estate. Gibbs' military service enriched his collection as he attended Grange meetings across the country, from playing piano at Potomac Grange No. 1 in Washington, DC, to taking his seventh degree in San Antonio.

One of the collection's most fascinating aspects involves Gibbs' work with Bainbridge, an original





badge manufacturer from Syracuse, New York. When Vermont hosted the 2003 National Session, Gibbs obtained permission to reproduce historical badge designs for fundraising. Working with Pin Source near Burlington, they created smaller versions of the original designs, including special editions for different degrees: pink for state sessions, green for Pomona, and blue for subordinate Granges.

The collection includes remarkable pieces from various eras of Grange history, such as original 1920s pins still wrapped in their tissue paper, discovered in a New York Grange Hall. Through eBay, Gibbs has rescued numerous historical items, including a poignant memorial plate that led him to connect with the great-great-grandson of a lifelong Grange member from Claremont, New Hampshire.

Gibbs has thoughtfully organized his display to educate visitors about Grange traditions. Each farm implement used in degree work is accompanied by an explanation of its symbolism, dispelling misconceptions about these important ceremonial items. The collection includes everything from past office pins and grave markers to historical photographs, including a striking 1890 Vermont Grange image featuring a

### WELCOME NEW DELEGATES....CONTINUED FROM PG 2

since childhood and has been selected to serve on the Agriculture Committee, which deals with government bills that may influence the agricultural industry. He is a high school and middle school teacher of agriculture and its various fields; Phelps hopes to utilize his experience and knowledge in the agriculture industry to help the committee and Grange with government bills that come to their attention.

When asked if they had any tips on how a new or seasoned Granger could be selected for a committee, Pittman and Phelps said to say yes and participate in Grange activities and community services, like many delegates can attest to, these two agree and said, "You get out of it what you put into it."

They both agree that you must not be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and say yes!

### NEW TECHNOLOGY REACHES NATIONAL GRANGE CONVENTION

by Eugene Fletcher

Communication Assistant

The National Grange is entering the technological era. This year's 158th annual convention is more digital than ever. As we move forward in the digital age, you will notice there are several new uses of technology being used throughout the week.

One key use of technology this year is the use of Sharepoint by the delegate body. For many years the delegates and officers of the National Grange would carry around heavy binders full of resolutions and reports. This year for the first time, no binders were printed and every delegate and officer will be using Sharepoint for important documents used during the session. This includes committee reports, proposed

resolutions, minutes of the previous day (instead of the daily reading on the floor), speeches, and more.

These documents will also be projected on the two big screens on either side of the session room. This will allow members sitting in, to follow along with ease.

These projection screens will also be used to display various video streams of special events such as the President's internal address or the Quilts of Valor (QOV) presentation, allowing for a better view for those sitting in the back.

Next, you will notice QR Codes around the session rooms, exhibits, and more. These offer a quick and easy way for members to look up more information about workshops, complete quick comment forms, or learn more about National Grange programs, right from their smartphones.

If you've signed up for an activity or wish to attend a workshop, or are just curious to see what workshops are available you can scan this QR code or visit: **Grange. biz/158workshops** for more information.





### 158TH NATIONAL GRANGE CONVENTION: TUESDAY WORKSHOP RECAP

by Molly Newman

National Grange Communication Fellow

The 158th National Grange Convention launched with engaging workshops for attendees to learn, connect, and bring fresh ideas back to their Granges. Presented by ShipMATES and Grange members, the sessions covered leadership skills, fun activities, and practical strategies for Grange success. A selection of workshops throughout the week will be recorded and later available on the National Grange YouTube channel.

Heidi Henderson, a SHIPmate from New York, led The Heart of Our Grassroots Structure, diving into the Grange resolution process to help members understand how to write and submit resolutions that shape Grange policies. Participants explored each part of a resolution, from the title and background to the action items, learning how grassroots ideas travel up to National Delegates.

Other sessions brought hands-on activities and new techniques to Grangers. Sarah Meyers from Illinois led a festive cookie decorating session, teaching participants icing skills, while a rock-painting workshop invited attendees to create a "rock chain" around the convention hall. All attendees are encouraged to take time to paint a rock to place around the hall. If you haven't painted a rock yet, you'll be able to do so in the registration area of the convention center. Audrey Trowbridge from Kansas and Melanie Hudson from North Carolina co-led How to Teach/Lead a Workshop, emphasizing designing engaging presentations, pacing content, and using "brain breaks" to boost focus.

The community spirit continued in the Wreaths Across America workshop led by Connie Johnston from Michigan and Bonnie Mitson from Idaho, where Grangers learned about this year's national service project honoring fallen heroes by sponsoring and laying wreaths on graves. "We would like to be a part of the 2.7 million sponsored wreath placements," Johnston shared, inviting Grangers to donate towards this goal and participate in the December 14 event.

To close out the evening, the Communications Fellows hosted the second-ever Story Slam, an event first held in 2019 and brought back this year. Participants chose between two prompts: the first,



"Describe a moment when you saw the Grange's motto, 'In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity,' come to life," and the second, "Share a story about a younger Grange member who surprised you with their wisdom or a senior member who taught you something unexpected." Seven storytellers joined in, and the event was judged by Ann Bercher (MN) and Communications Director Philip Vonada. In the Grange Motto category, 1st Place went to Amanda Brozana (National Grange) and 2nd Place to Dave Roberts (CT). In the Across Generations category, 1st Place was awarded to Jonny Pittman (WA), with Maria Edelen (IA) taking 2nd Place. A big thank you to all who participated and shared their stories!

Youth and Junior-focused activities also brought special moments for younger Grangers, from Homework Time with Emma Edelen from Iowa to Bedtime & Pajamas hosted by Marisa O'Dell from Illinois, offering a storytelling wind-down for children. For those looking to unwind, the Hospitality Room offered a lively game night, fostering camaraderie and fellowship among Grange members.

Be sure to check out the exciting lineup of workshops and activities happening throughout the week!



### GRANGE FOUNDATION ELECTS TWO NEW ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

by Molly Newman

National Grange Communications Fellow

The National Grange Foundation held its annual meeting on Monday night at the 158th National Grange Convention. Marty Billquist (MT) was re-elected for a second term on the Advisory Board, and Mark Gibbons (D.C.) was elected to the position previously held by Joan C. Smith, who retired after nearly a decade of dedicated service. Congratulations to Marty and Mark, and a heartfelt thank you to Joan for her years of commitment to the Foundation!







Mark Gibbons, DC



### **CHECK OUT THINGS IN THE SHOWCASE:**



Don't miss out! National Grange Showcase Store, supporting the Kansas State Grange Youth Department has a limited supply of t-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies (S-5X), tumblers, hats, and license plates. Every purchase helps fund Youth & Young Adult programs and our upcoming 2026 Great Plains Regional Conference!

Be among the first to place your order for shirts starting Wednesday evening—each shirt will be made on the spot! Visit us in the Showcase Room or find Molly Newman in the Fellows Room to snag yours before they're gone

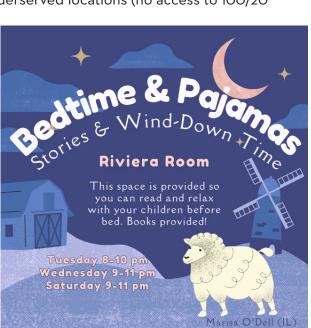
### NTIA HIGHTLIGHTS SUCCESSES IN SECURING 'INTERNET FOR ALL'

by Debbie Vine

National Grange Communications Fellow Alumni Wisconsin State Grange, President

The Advocacy Luncheon on Tuesday welcomed Philip Lehmkuhler, Midwest Regional Director, of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), at the US Department of Commerce. Mr. Lehmkuhler's team is in charge of implementing the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia. The BEAD program is part of the broader Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which aims to improve internet infrastructure and bridge the digital divide.

The program provides \$42.45 billion, to support high-speed internet access projects across all 50 states, including Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The program focuses on planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption to ensure more people have access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet. It targets unserved locations (no access to 25/3 Mbps) and underserved locations (no access to 100/20

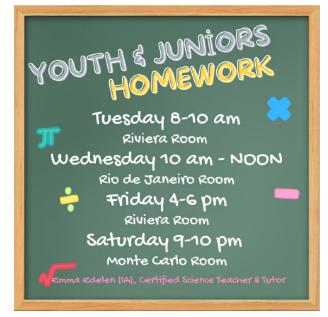




Burton Eller, National Grange Legislative Director; Christine E. Hamp, National Grange President; Phil Lehmkuhler, Midwest Regional Director for the NTIA; and Leroy Watson, Chairperson of Grange Advocacy, pose together after the Advocacy Lunch.

Mbps) and involves several key steps, including planning, submitting action plans, and final proposals.

We know the internet is not a luxury. It's a necessity for Americans to participate in the 21st-century economy and society, including education, workforce, and healthcare. High-quality, high-speed internet services strengthen our educational system, ensuring no student is left behind. It connects businesses to customers, increases sales creates jobs, and takes business to the global marketplace.



### PRESIDENTS ADDRESS CONTINUED

preserve opportunities for all Americans amidst rising challenges in homeownership, education, and workforce stability. "It is a fitting tribute to our nation... that such a commission be formed and work to ensure... that our country is stronger tomorrow than it is today."

Hamp expressed disappointment and exasperation that the farm bill has expired, even following a yearlong extension, and rural America is hanging in limbo. She emphasized its crucial role in supporting America's farmers, food security programs, and rural economies. She called for bipartisan commitment to ensure the timely passage of this essential legislation. Impacting more than farmers, Hamp urged lawmakers to act and remember that the most vulnerable populations, including children and older Americans, are at risk of losing much-needed benefits.

Acknowledging the healthcare disparities and connectivity gaps facing rural America, Hamp advocated for enhanced access to healthcare services, including critical treatments, and the completion of broadband infrastructure to close the digital divide. "The Grange strongly advocates for the availability of new and lifesaving treatment options, such as diagnostic tests and vaccines," said Hamp. Nothing the lack of access to healthcare in rural America, "We must also find ways to encourage practicing medicine in smaller communities... we know just how challenging it can be to live and maintain our health or treat our ailments in rural America."

With access to healthcare in rural America being inextricably linked to broadband access, and the Grange's decades-long history of advocating for broadband in rural America, Hamp also urged the FCC to continue robust efforts "to ensure every American household has adequate access to basic cellular service," and that they must work quickly to find access to permits for new towers.

#### "The Grange's Role in National Unity"

Reflecting on the Grange's founding mission during a deeply divided period in American history, Hamp reiterated that the organization remains a bridge-builder across political and social divides. She underscored the Grange's commitment to nonpartisan advocacy, emphasizing solutions-oriented dialogue on issues affecting both rural and urban communities.

"We are more than an organization; we are a

movement," Hamp stated. "A movement united by shared values and a vision for a stronger, more equitable America."

In a second address later in the day, Hamp spoke directly to Grangers, calling for action in hometowns, rallying the grassroots members to advocate for their communities and to be the strong leaders America needs now.

"I am proposing that each Grange... take part in Project Sustenance," Hamp said, announcing the launch of a new initiative aimed at addressing food security and promoting personal sustainability. By empowering members to contribute to these goals in their communities, Project Sustenance hopes to enhance personal sustainability for communities across rural and small-town America. Hamp also underscored the Grange's commitment to nonpartisan advocacy, emphasizing that this approach enables the organization to remain a trusted voice for civility and collaboration, even in today's polarized climate.

Hamp's vision for the Grange encourages leaders to inspire through their actions and dedication. "We need leaders at every level to put their foot to the pedal," she said. This spirit of proactive leadership, she argued, is what will propel the Grange into a new era of growth, innovation, and community impact. Leadership, for Hamp, is about embodying the Grange's values while paving the way for future generations who will carry the organization forward. She called on leaders to not only protect the Grange's legacy but to "charge ahead," actively shaping the Grange's place in today's world.

The National Grange invites Americans to join in its mission of community service and advocacy. Those interested are encouraged to become members, support the work of local Granges, and participate in efforts to foster unity, sustainability, and the American Dream.

### NTIA HIGHTLIGHTS SUCCESSES CONTINUED

Hospitals with high-speed internet save money due to lower administrative costs. Offering telehealth, reduces hospital visits, cuts down hospital stay time, and improves patient health. We need the internet to connect to the services we need. First responders save lives, it lets us connect with our elected officials and it strengthens ties to our neighbors. One in four Americans get online alerts about local issues and one in five use digital tools to stay in touch with their community.

But, according to the USDA, only 85% of farms in the United States have access to the internet. In rural communities, access to high-speed internet is imperative for farmers to manage their businesses. It allows them to access market information, information about crop production, and farm financial management. They use data to make decisions about irrigation and pest management. They can remotely monitor livestock, crops, and machinery. They use the Internet to comply with regulations and communicate with customers. That's why reaching the last mile is so important.

In order to know where the unserved and underserved locations exist across America, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had to develop maps to show who had internet and who didn't. Mr. Lehmkuhler credited Grangers from across the country for being advocates of getting the map accurate. The map didn't exist before and that's what was needed to start the program.

He stated the program has come a long way with the help of Grangers, but they still have a lot to do. By working together to get this across the finish line, broadband equity will reach the last mile. "You should be really proud of all the work that you do" he told the Grangers in attendance. "Your advocacy helped your neighbors, it helped your communities, and it helped you."

Visit <u>internetforall.gov</u> for additional information on federal funding programs and review the FCC National Broadband Map at broadbandmap.fcc. gov to find out what internet provider services your address.

## OFFICERS AND DELEGATES OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE POSE TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF THE 158TH NATIONAL GRANGE CONVENTION



### LIVING HISTORY CONTINUED

stuffed barn owl - symbolizing the transition from the gatekeeper's key to the owl as a Grange emblem.

The archive extends beyond physical artifacts to include bound volumes of National Grange digests from the organization's earliest days through 1887, preserving the official record of the organization's development. Each piece in the collection, from handmade badges to intricately engraved memorial plates, tells a story of the Grange's impact on American agricultural communities.

As he continues to expand and share his collection, Gibbs remains committed to preserving and explaining the rich traditions of the Grange. His carefully curated artifacts serve not just as historical records, but as teaching tools that help new generations understand the deep roots and evolving traditions of this venerable agricultural organization one pin, badge, and memorial plate at a time.



National Grange members toured the Rock Island Arsenal on Tuesday afternoon, and placed a wreath at the POW-MIA memorial as a part of the Wreaths Across America community service project.



Bid during the live auction to win this one-of-a-kind 158th National Grange Convention Emblem made by Gene Fletcher of California.





Visit the Quilts of Valor
Showcase on the concourse of
the Conference Center! Take a
moment to sign a quilt block
that will be included in a
future Quilt of Valor, or pick up
a block-to-build kit to create
your own contribution. Feel
free to grab a few kits to share
with friends! Fabric panels are
also available for purchase at
the display for \$10.

### INDRODUCING NATIONAL GRANGE COMMUNICATIONS FELLOWS HOST 2ND 'GRANGE STORY SLAM' WINNERS







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ITEMS FROM THE
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