



## PRESERVING TRADITION: GRANGE'S HIGHEST DEGREE FILMED FOR HISTORICAL RECORD

by Molly Newman & Karie Blasingame  
*National Grange Communication Fellows*

On March 28th and 29th, 2025, Grangers from across the country gathered at Belvidere High School in Illinois for a momentous occasion: the professional filming of the Seventh Degree, the highest Degree in the Order of Patrons of Husbandry. This is the Degree that can be obtained at National Grange Sessions, signifying a deep commitment to the Grange's principles, ideals, and legacy.

The purpose of this project, according to High Priest Roger Bostwick, was "to preserve the historic presentation of the Seventh Degree in full costume, while the costumes are still in a condition that allows them to be used."

The event was an extraordinary success, with nearly the entire

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The cast members assembled for the recording of the Grange's 7th Degree, in the historic costumes and in front of one of the large hand-painted backdrops.

*Photo by Karie Blasingame*

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# CAPE FEAR GRANGE VISITS THE VETERAN'S FARM

submitted by Ken Plummer

Cape Fear Grange #1296 (NC)

On April 3rd, [The Veteran's Farm of North Carolina](#) hosted a visit from members of the Cape Fear Grange.

Led by Robert Elliott, a proud member of the Cape Fear Grange, the VFNC provides training for military veterans so that they can become self-sufficient farmers. The training is typically done in groups of 12-20, and provides exposure to a number of different skills that would be useful to a prospective farmer.

A tour of the VFNC site included the following capabilities:

- A butchery center where poultry can be butchered and prepared for sale. Equipment includes a scalding and plucker.
- A mushroom spawning center where hardwood logs (sweet gum, oak, and maple etc.) are prepared for mushrooms. Focus is on Lion's Mane and Shitake varieties of mushrooms.
- A primary greenhouse, which is used for hosting the initial growth stages for a variety of plants to be grown on the grounds.
- A recently completed greenhouse focused on



Cape Fear Grange members with the VFNC team.

*Photo provided*

hydroponic production of bib lettuce. A third greenhouse is under construction that will increase hydroponic capacity for lettuce.

- An area where fruit trees are grafted.
- An olive grove
- A vineyard where a number of varieties of grapes will be produced.
- Bee hives to help with pollination of trees and crops
- Pastures for beef cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, and meat chickens.
- The crop production fields.

The farm follows organic production processes and uses no pesticides on the crops grown. This is achieved through a combination of insect traps, crop rotation, and trap crops to limit damage from pests. Another example of the sound practices used is the daily relocation of meat chicken houses to help fertilize the fields to be used for future crops.

The tour of the farm was quite interesting, and it was refreshing to see the committed staff focused on helping veterans develop the skills needed for successful careers in agriculture.



Buck Staples and Hannah Rueda explain crop management practices at the farm.

*Photo provided*



# INTERLAKEN GRANGE'S PILL BOTTLE PROJECT: A SMALL ITEM MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE

submitted by Philip Stannard  
*Interlaken Grange #160 (NY)*

Since April 2022, Interlaken Grange #160 in New York has been spearheading a meaningful community service project with a global impact: collecting clean, empty plastic pill bottles for reuse in underserved areas around the world. What began as a small initiative among Grange members and their families has grown into a widespread community effort involving multiple towns and organizations.

The goal is simple: gather plastic pill bottles, with or without secure lids, to be reused in overseas medical missions. These bottles, often thrown away locally, are critically needed in areas where basic medical supplies are in short supply.

Interlaken Grange sends these bottles to a nonprofit mission based in Ohio, which distributes them to health care workers abroad.

According to Philip Stannard, the project's spokesperson, the response has been overwhelming. "We started small, just within our Grange and families," he recalls. "Then we expanded to include the Interlaken Village Office and Library. Soon after, we added libraries in nearby towns, food pantries, and even listed my home address in press releases to encourage more participation."

In addition to the Grange Hall itself, several other

dropoff sites were arranged, including the Interlaken Village Office, Interlaken Public Library Edith B. Ford Library, and the Trumansburg Library, highlighting the Grange's community relations and support.

The momentum continued as local groups joined in, including one from a nearby town that generously covers the postage costs for shipping. Community interest and involvement have remained strong. "Wherever I go, people ask how many bottles we've collected this month or hand me bags of bottles," Stannard says.

The results speak for themselves. In 2024 alone, the Grange collected and shipped **6,900 bottles**. As of May 2025, this year's total already stands at 2,754, with April 2025 marking the busiest month to date—**1,215 bottles** shipped.

Community members are asked to remove all labels from the bottles, wash them in very hot water and dish soap, rinse them thoroughly, and let them dry completely.

Every bottle is carefully sorted by size and type, and packaged in plastic bags for shipping. While the work is time-consuming (Stannard makes weekly trips to collection sites), it's deeply rewarding. "We always make it clear: this is a community service project of the Interlaken Grange. I'm just the spokesman."

The project not only helps those in need abroad but also fosters a strong sense of unity and purpose locally. "Any Grange can do something like this," says Stannard. "The key is finding an organization that will accept the bottles... and being ready to put in the time."

**Help us help others**—one pill bottle at a time.



The April 2025 shipment, ready to head to the post office. April was Interlaken Grange's busiest collection month to date - with 1,215 bottles. Photo provided



308 pill bottles were collected from the town office in this pickup, from December 2024. Photo provided

# GET ON BOARD FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE CONVENTION



If you haven't heard the exciting news yet, this year's National Grange Convention is breaking new ground—and sailing into uncharted waters! For the first time ever, we're taking the Convention to the high seas, aboard the stunning *Carnival Horizon*, November 8-16, 2025.

While you can book your cabins now, **general registration for Grange members will open on May 15.** The registration fee for Grange members (including Youth members) will be \$50.00, and \$25.00 for Juniors.

## What's On Deck

All registered attendees will be welcomed with a private reception and Convention kickoff as we set sail from Miami. Upon boarding, you'll receive a special Grange lanyard and some fun swag to get you into the spirit.

The general business meeting of the National Grange will happen on Sunday/Monday and Friday/Saturday (the "at sea" days) from 8:00am - 4:00pm in the Limelight Lounge. Saturday morning will feature the traditional Youth opening by the National Grange Youth Officer Team.

On Tuesday morning (Aruba) at 8:00am, the Assembly of Demeter will hold their business meeting.

On Wednesday morning (Bonaire) at 8:00am, the **Conferral of the Seventh Degree and Convocation** of the Assembly will take place in the Liquid Lounge. This will be the premiere the recently filmed and preserved version of the Seventh Degree. Attending this premiere event is FREE, but standard fees for obtaining your Seventh Degree will apply.

On these days, we recommend not booking any excursions before 11:00am, so you can be sure to take part in the events and still be off the ship in time.

Additionally, Youth and Young Adults in attendance will be able to (and are encouraged to) participate in the Youth Leadership Academy on the At Sea days.

## Looking for more "swag?"

When you register, you'll also have the opportunity to purchase some special Convention "swag" items that will be ready to pick up on board. Items include a beach towel, an insulated tumbler, a tote, and a special Convention t-shirt, all featuring the 159th Convention

At Sea logo.

Proceeds help support onboard events and activities—so it's swag with a cause!

## While you're Aboard...

This cruise is as much about connection as it is about business. While National Grange won't be coordinating formal meals or excursions, we encourage you to gather with your Grange family—old friends and new—for dinners, shore trips, and shared adventures in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao!

In the next few weeks, we will release more information about this year's convention, including onboard workshops and special events. We will also be creating a list of recommended hotels in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area, highlighting hotels that offer free shuttles to the port.

We will also create and release more FAQs – perfect for first-time cruisers or those who are apprehensive about what the cruise may be like.

Do you have questions about this year's Convention or what to expect on board? Email [convention@nationalgrange.org](mailto:convention@nationalgrange.org) with whatever questions you have.

Please be sure to join the convention Facebook event at <https://grange.biz/159convention> and stay tuned to the website for updates at <http://www.nationalgrange.org/159ngconvention>.

## Miami Hotel update:

A VERY limited number of rooms have been secured at the Hyatt Place Miami Airport East, for Thursday, November 6 and Friday, November 7 before the cruise, and Sunday, November 16 following the cruise.

You will be responsible for your transportation to/from the airports, but a group shuttle may be available for \$15 per person.

If you are driving, you can remain parked for just \$10/day - cheaper than anywhere else you might find in the Miami area.

It is recommended you book as soon as possible. Call 1-888-492-8847 and use group code G-GRNG.

We are also in process of securing a group rate at a hotel in Fort Lauderdale. More information will be released as soon as we have it.

# SEVENTH DEGREE

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current cast present. In cases where cast members could not attend, spouses of cast members graciously stepped in, helping to maintain the continuity and integrity of the presentation. The recording will serve as a historical preservation project and is planned to be shown for the first time at the 159th Annual National Grange Convention this November aboard the *Carnival Horizon*.

This is the first time the Seventh Degree has been filmed in full. In 1938, **LIFE Magazine** documented the work under the leadership of High Priest Charles Gardner, but only in photos and an article. Over eight decades later, this modern effort reaffirms the importance of documenting the rituals and traditions that define the Grange.

Discussions about filming and preserving the Degree have been ongoing for many years. Behind the scenes, this current project was over a year in the making. Directors Gene and Maria Edelen of Iowa, High Priest Roger Bostwick and his wife Melanie, National President Christine Hamp, and the Lexica Communications, Inc. film crew led by Tami Wendt collaborated across Zoom meetings, phone calls, and in-person visits to bring the production to life.

Many of the costumes used in the Seventh Degree production are between 40 and 80 years old, and have become too delicate for continued use at National Sessions. Filming the Degree work not only captures the rich visual history of these garments but ensures their legacy—and the essence of



**Rehearsal for preservation: In the foreground, Maria Edelen (Co-Director) and Tami Wendt (filmographer) work through stage directions with High Priest Roger Bostwick and James Taylor, while other cast members relax in the background.**

*Photo by Christine Hamp*

the ritual—is preserved for future generations. As the Seventh Degree undergoes thoughtful modernization to remain relevant to today's Grangers, the traditional costumes will eventually be retired. However, the core lessons and values of the ritual will remain unchanged. "The lessons of the ritual will remain the same," said High Priest Roger Bostwick, "and while the costumes may be nearing retirement, this recording ensures their story and symbolism continue to live on."

Cast members and crew took time to reflect on the significance of the weekend. Sara Ellwanger of Prairie Grange #1832 (IL), who had the special experience of participating alongside her daughter, shared, "It's been awesome—such a great atmosphere. I'm excited and honored to help document this aspect of the Grange, especially with my daughter in the cast."

National Grange Pomona, Barb Foster of West Virginia, echoed the sentiment, saying, "[The experience has been] great. I'm excited to be part of it for posterity's sake."

The weekend would not have been possible without the incredible hospitality of Illinois Grangers, who stepped up in every way: hosting cast members, preparing meals, managing transportation, and making all feel welcome. Mary Brubach of Prairie Grange #1832 (IL), who helped coordinate hospitality, humbly noted: "We are excited and proud to have been able to host everyone here this weekend. Feeding and cooking for a few people is no problem while they are working hard too."

"I'm incredibly pleased with the Seventh Degree video project," reflected National Grange

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# GRANTHAM GRANGE HOLDS AWARDS NIGHT, HOSTS SPECIAL VISITORS

submitted by Sherwood Williford  
Grantham Grange #968 (NC)

Under the direction of President John Crawford, on Monday night, April 28, the Grantham Grange held its thirteenth annual community service awards banquet. It is debatable which was better: the captivating presentation or the fine southern cuisine served to the guests.

To the delight of more than 150 attendees, at Selah Christian Church, thirteen individuals or organizations were recognized for their outstanding contributions to the betterment of life in the local rural community. Selections included the Active-Duty Military Person and the Youth of the Year. Also cited and honored were the Farm Family, Fire Department, and local Granger of the Year, among others.

There were serious moments as a memorial tribute was made by Mark Hood on behalf of a member who passed since last year's honors were announced.

Jimmy Martin, President of nearby Brogden Grange, acted as the master of ceremonies. From notes, he read of the well-deserved accomplishments of those receiving awards. Smiles and hand-clapping appreciation filled the audience as names were revealed. Solemn as it was, presenter Jimmy's wit made sure that no one ended the evening with a sad countenance.

A special award was presented to the father of former National President Edward Luttrell, Leonard Luttrell, as Veteran of

the Year. Leonard entered the military on April 27, 1953. With time served on active duty and with the reserves, he served his country for eight years. He has been a proud Granger for over fifty-four years, most of those years in Oregon. Today, Leonard lives with Ed and his wife Denise near Benson, NC. All are members of the Grantham Grange.

A proud moment came with the introduction of National Grange President Chris Hamp and her husband, "First Dude" Duane. After introductions by the State Grange President, Jimmy Gentry, Chris gave a worthy and interesting address related to the Grange. The notion of inviting the Hamps originated with Mark Hood's wife, Joyce, a Nebraska native turned southerner.

Following the Monday night awards banquet, the Hamps remained through week's end. They were virtually worn out by attending the many events and venues on the schedule, including several for which local Wayne County citizens are very proud.

Among them was the Holly Grove goat farm owned by Grantham Granger Debbie Craig. Special? If one calls milking more than one thousand goats twice daily as Special, then it qualifies. All that milk is made into cheese.

From the north side of the county, more time was well spent. A guided tour was given through the Nahunta Pork Center, the largest pork-only retail business in the eastern portion of the nation, and possibly from coast to coast. Its owners Larry Pierce and his



**Grantham Grange President, John Crawford presents veteran of the year award to Leonard Luttrell. To John's Left is master of ceremonies, Jimmy Martin. Leonard's son Ed is seated to his right.**

*Photo provided*

son Jason conducted a fascinating guided tour for the Hamps along with several members of the Grantham and Brogden Granges. Larry is also Wayne County's elected and beloved Sherrieff.

Another pride of the county on the must-see schedule was the Mount Olive Pickle Company. Dilled or Sweet, their cucumber pickles are the best money can buy. The company was established in 1926 at the corner of Cucumber and Vine. It is the largest privately-held pickle company in the nation, with operations encompassing 1.5 million square feet of production and warehouse space spread over 250 acres. The company employs over 1,200 people.

Mount Olive University proved to be an interesting venue as

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# SEVENTH DEGREE

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**Filming in progress: The film crew (at right) worked hard to capture several angles and takes of each scene for optimal preservation and record.**

*Photo by Christine Hamp*

President Christine Hamp. “The amazing local support, the cast’s deep commitment to travel and participate, the ease of working with the talented videographer team, and the use of a fabulous facility that could lift our treasured backdrops all came together to honor the traditions of our Order in a truly inspiring way.”

The full cast includes: Roger Bostwick (High Priest),

William “Chip” Narvel (Priest Archon), Martha Stefenoni (Priestess Annalist), Christine E. Hamp (National Grange President), Cindy L. Greer (Ceres), Barb Foster (Pomona), Welina Shufeldt (Flora), Nan Barnes, Alyssa Brickweg, Emma Edelen, Rachel Edelen, Ethan Edwards, Heather Ellwanger, Sara Ellwanger, Scarlett Ellwanger, Manny Fabela, Glenn P. Gibson, Joseph L. Goodrich, Harry G. Greer, Duane J. Hamp, Walter J. Hartley, Mary Innis, Chris Johnston, Jamie Klenklen, Kevin Klenklen, Lana Korte, Sammantha Meyers, Mark Noah, Brian O’Dell, Marisa L. O’Dell, Lynette Schaeffer, James “Jimmy” Taylor, Rev. Jennifer L. Tobin-Tinch, Leroy Watson, and the voice of Joseph Stefenoni. Additional assistance was provided by Karie Blasingame, Melanie Bostwick, Kevin Brubach, Mary Brubach, Gene Edelen, Maria Edelen, Adam Ellwanger, Emilie Ellwanger, Connie Johnston, Don Schaeffer, and Billy Shufeldt.

This recording will serve as a historical record and a testament to the enduring spirit of the Grange, connecting generations, preserving traditions, and strengthening the foundation for future growth.

## JOIN US FOR NATIONAL GRANGE ZOOM NIGHT

Join the National Grange for our next **National Grange Night** on May 13 at 8:30pm ET / 5:30pm PT.

This month’s topic is “Product Standards: Why they matter & how you can be involved.”

Product standards help reduce injuries and make the products we rely on safer. Developed by thousands of volunteers, including past Grange members, these standards are critical to our safety. But we need more consumer involvement to improve the safety of everyday products. You don’t need to be an expert—just a consumer who cares.

Join this membership webinar to learn about standards development, the need for consumer participants, and ways to get involved and make a difference.

Consumer Product Safety Commission Consumer Ombudsman Jonathan Midgett and ANSI Consumer Outreach Manager Cleo Stamatos will be joined by two of the largest standards developers, ASTM and UL, to talk about standards development; why it matters, what it is, and how you can participate!

Join us: <http://grange.biz/nationalzoom>

### NATIONAL GRANGE NIGHT

A MONTHLY ZOOM PROGRAM



**May 13, 2025**

**Product Standards:**  
*Why they matter  
& how you can be involved*

**2ND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH**  
**8:30PM ET / 5:30PM PT**

Join us:  
<http://grange.biz/nationalzoom>



# HAMPS VISIT NC

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well which showcases a thriving agriculture program under the direction of Dr. Jason Davis. Jason is also President of nearby Westbrook Grange.

A special thanks is extended to Macon Massey and Joseph Beaman who served as escorts for the Hamps on behalf of Grantham and Brogden Granges. Many others unnamed were crucial in making the week one to remember.

It cannot be verified, but certainly it must have been a rare occasion to have both a former National President, Ed Luttrell, and the current one, Chris Hamp, together in our one-stoplight agriculture community. We trust that bits of our southern hospitality made them feel welcome.

As mentioned earlier, the Hamps remained till week's end. Thursday night a send-off banquet was held in their honor. They boarded a North Carolina invention, the airplane, and headed west on Friday. We

would have insisted that they take along other delicacies that had their birth in the Old North State, but there was no use in overloading their baggage. Surely, even way out west where they live, they'll be able to find Pepsi Cola, Texas Pete, Krispy Kreme donuts and for their ailments, anything carrying the label Vicks, as in the classic 'VapoRub'.

Hopefully, however, in their luggage was a pickle or two, a morsel from a Nahunta Pork pig, and a sample of Holly Grove goat cheese. After all, a hero-farmer's hands created them all. And proudly we, as Grangers, are his most loyal supporters.



Visiting Mount Pickle Company are National, State, and local Grange Presidents. Left to right: Grantham Grange President, John Crawford, N. C. State President Jimmy Gentry, Mount Olive University Assistant Dean of the School of Agriculture and Biological Sciences, Dr. Jason Davis, Chris Hamp, National Grange President with husband Duane.

Photo provided

## GRANGE STORE



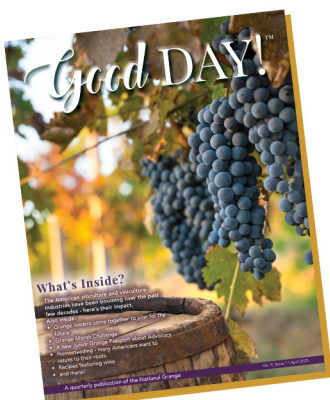
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or subscribe at [nationalgrange.org/goodday](http://nationalgrange.org/goodday)

### GOOD DAY!™ APRIL 2025

The April 2025 issue highlights viticulture and viniculture and their impacts in the agricultural sector of the the United States. Also inside: Grange leaders come together in two unique retreats, Grange Month materials - including the Grange Month Challenge, and recipes featuring wine.

Order online through the Grange Supply Store at [grangestore.org](http://grangestore.org) or call Loretta at (202) 628-3507 ext. 109.



### GRANGE PROMOTION KIT

With Fair and Convention season upon us, it's time to think about promoting the Grange to the public.

This kit includes multiple brochures and pamphlets about the Grange and how you can inform potential members about what the Grange has to offer, from Juniors and Youth to e-members and more!

Get your kit by ordering online through the Grange Supply Store at [grangestore.com](http://grangestore.com) or by calling Loretta at (202) 628-3507 ext. 109.

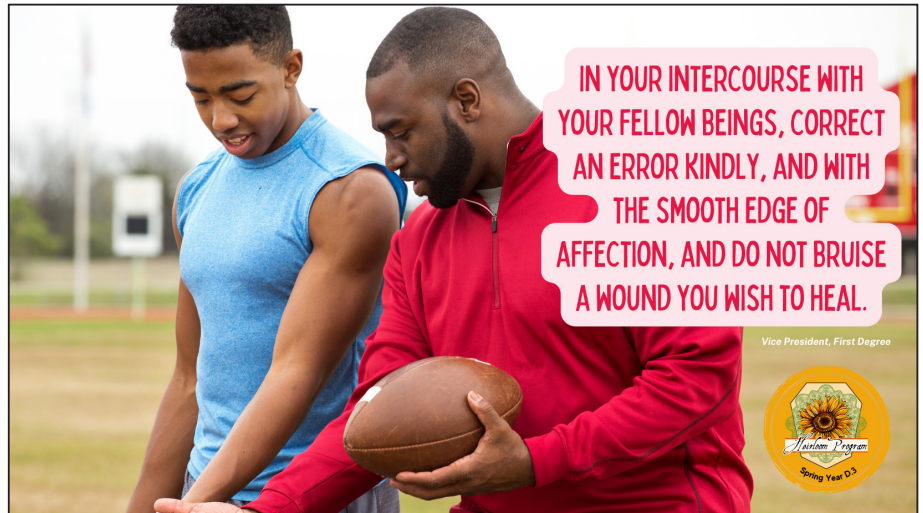


# GRANGE HEIRLOOM FOR MAY

Use the **Grange Heirloom Program** to teach your members and the community about some of the key cornerstones of the Grange. Materials are available at <http://www.nationalgrange.org/heirloom-program>.

You are welcome to choose any of the **Grange Heirlooms** at any time.

Use the hashtag #GrangeHeirloom when you share these important pieces of our Order on social media.



## REGISTER FOR SPECIAL WEBINAR ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG YOUTH IN RURAL AMERICA



**Rural Minds** & the National Grange will present the webinar “Mental Health Challenges Confronting Youth in Rural America” on Tuesday, May 27, 2025 at 7:00pm ET / 4:00pm PT.

There is a mental health emergency in rural America that puts youth, teens, and young adults at a higher risk for mental health challenges and suicide based on the following facts:

Compared with their urban counterparts, rural Americans have higher depression and suicide rates but are less likely to access mental health care services.

According to the latest information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), suicide rates among people living in rural areas are 64 to 68 percent higher than those in large urban areas.

The rate of suicide among teens and young adults in the U.S. has increased over the last decade.

Youth living in rural areas are at greater risk of suicide than those living in urban areas.

Suicide rates are growing at a faster pace among rural youth.

While about 64% of all U.S. counties have at least one mental health facility serving youth, only about

30% of highly rural counties have such facilities.

This one-hour webinar will feature Dr. Eric Arzubi, CEO and Co-Founder of Frontier Psychiatry in Billings MT. He

will speak about his observations as a psychiatrist treating adolescents living in rural communities throughout Montana.

The presentation will also feature Grange member Asheton Medlin sharing her personal experience with stigma surrounding mental illness and barriers to mental health that are unique to growing up in a rural community. In addition, Adriel McMahan, Rural Minds’ lead on the Rural Teen & Young Adult Mental Health pilot program, will provide an update on the initiative and plans for the program’s national launch. The presentation will conclude with a moderated Q&A session.

The webinar will be moderated by Rural Minds Vice President of Communications Julie Lux and presented live via Zoom with the option to hear audio as listen-only.

Register by visiting:  
[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_YLslqEveRFi2ncGP2s9kWQ#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_YLslqEveRFi2ncGP2s9kWQ#/registration)

To honor the confidentiality and privacy of those attending this webinar, attendees will only be able to see the webinar presenters and no one watching the webinar will be able to see the name or image of any other person who is watching the webinar.

# GRANGE MEMBER BENEFIT: AFLAC



The National Grange now offers Aflac. Staying fully informed about these benefits, how they work, and what to expect is the best way to help you choose the right plan for you and your family. Contact the dedicated advisor and representative, Theon Karabatsos, to schedule a time with him at your convenience to learn about your options!

Theon Karabatsos, Aflac Advisor and Representative  
Phone: (561) 398-1204

Email: [theon.karabatsos@us.aflac.com](mailto:theon.karabatsos@us.aflac.com)

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the Aflac insurance policies you are eligible to apply for/enroll in.

We're here when you need us, ask about:

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- Changing beneficiaries
- Adding/deleting family members from your coverage
- Going on a leave of absence
- Submitting a claim
- Updating Information
- Wellness Benefit - Payable for routine medical exams to encourage early detection and prevention.
- Maternity Coverage
- Covid-19 (Protection during treatment and recovery)

Keeping your coverage when you retire or change job

## NATIONAL GRANGE

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