ILLINOIS GRANGER

In Essentials... Unity
In Non-Essentials... Liberty
In All Things... Charity

GRANGE STRONG
ROOTED • RESILIENT • UNITED

May 2026 Vol. 6 No. 5

Lynette's Visions and Wisdoms

Hopefully this finds you all healthy. Today is sunny and a warm. We could really use the rain – it was getting a little dry. Farmers are working pretty fast and furious in the fields it is supposed to storm in the next few days.Hope you are able to plant your gardens. Rhubarb and gooseberries coming in strong. Don and I celebrated our 51 st wedding anniversary with a dinner with family.
Don and I were deeply saddened at the passing of Past State Lecturer and Chaplain, Renee O'Dell. She will be greatly missed by her family and by Grange family. A great talented, encouraging, inspirational woman. Prayers for the family.
Saddened as well as Past Family Activities Director Sophie Treser passed away, at least 30 St Clair County Grangers attended the service for her.
Thanks to all the Granges that held or will be holding Grange Month activities. I am proud to say that IL Grangers are "Growing From the Ground Up".
The Statewide Picnic will be held at the Boone County Fairgrounds in the Pavillion on May 30 th at 11:00 am. The main dish will be provided by the Youth and sides and desserts will be potluck style. The Statewide Picnic will be held at the Boone County Fairgrounds in the Pavillion on May 30 th at 11:00 am. The main dish will be provided
by the Youth and sides and desserts will be potluck style. The Midwest Grange Leaders Conference will be held in IL this year. This will be open to all Grangers in the Midwest.
I am sure that plans are being made that will be filled with workshops, information, fun and great food.
Don and I are planning to attend the National Grange Leadership Conference in Sparks, NV next weekend. Watch for information about the next few months as I share information.
IL State Grange Session will be September 11 – 13, at Northfield Inn Suites and Conference Center, 3280 Northfield Dr, Springfield, IL. At the next Executive Committee meeting we decided on menus and start a draft schedule. William "Buddy" and Karen Overstreet will be our National Grange Representatives. Buddy is on the National Grange Executive Committee and Karen is President of Texas State Grange.
Hope you all are checking out Grange Engage avail yourself and your Grange of valuable opportunities through this portal.
Next National Sessions will be in Tulsa, OK, Nov 11 -15, 2026. November 8-13, 2027 Nugget Casino Resort, Sparks, NV. November 13-18, 2028 Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Round Rock, TX. November 12-17, 2029 Renaissance St Louis Airport Hotel, St Louis, MO.

ISG Secretary Report

The countdown to the State Session is beginning - just over four months away at
Springfield, September 11-13, 2026! More details, including hotel reservation information and meal reservation forms, will be sent to the Granges later this month and will also be in the Illinois Granger. Stay tuned! Reservation deadlines for the hotel and meals will be Friday, August 7.
Are you working on State Session resolutions? I know some Granges are. Resolutions are an important part of the Sessions, but we need your help to make sure we have good ones to discuss. So, put those Grange thinking caps on and help us out with good ideas!
If possible, I'd like to have the resolutions by July 1.
As always, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.
Fraternally,
Brian Keller, Illinois State Grange Secretary
brianjkeller@gmail.com
618-410-9020

Bluff Grange

We are alive and well. Staying busy, we are now able to plan some fundraisers since we
have the parking lot that we used for sixty or seventy years back so we can host things.
We have been meeting monthly and hosted St.clair County Pomona Meeting recently.
We held our annual meatshoot in January and did well. We loss twoformer members
since the new year.
Hope everyone is enjoying the spring weather and flowers.

Membership

The National Grange Store has made some changes as of MAY 1, 2026.
The Golden Sheaf (50 yr), Silver Star (25yr) and 75yr Awards as well as the 80 and 85 yr Letters of Recognition price will now INCREASE to $15.00 plus Shipping. Shipping prices will also INCREASE at the National level.
ORDER TOTAL S& H effective May 1, 2026
Up to $10.01 $6.00
$10.01 - $19.99 $9.00
$20.00 - $49.95 $10.00
$50.00 - $74.99 $12.00
$75.00 - $99.99 $15.00
$100.00 - $124.99 $20.00
$125.00 - $249.99 $25.00
$250.00 – and above $30.00
Remember ISG Membership/Recognition Director has 25-year Certificates and Seals for 30, 35,
40, 45, 55, 60, 65, and 70 years. Prices at the State level will remain the same as they are now
until July 1, 2026, then prices will increase. Watch for more details in June newsletter.
50- and 75-year certificates MUST be purchased through National Grange (using new price
increase effective May 1, 2026) as well as the 80- and 85-year Letters of Recognition. These will
each cost $15.00 each plus shipping and handling. They must be ordered through National
Grange BUT all orders are to be sent to the ISG Membership/Recognition Director first who will
then send them onto National Grange.
Any questions contact: Robin Kindberg
ISG Membership/Recognition Director
815-978-0452

Notes from Ruth

We need a prayer list/chain going. Please pray for all these Grangers and anyone else
you know is in need of prayers.

Al Henninger	Dave Geske	Ellis and Dawn Mundy
Charlotte Mehrtens	Robin Kindberg	Charles Treser
Donna Ellwanger	Jim Langendorf	Brian Smith
Heather Ellwanger	Mary Beth Lee	Kim Robin

I would like to start a list of members who are currently in Nursing Homes, Assisted Living, homebound, etc. Please send name of member, name and address of home.
We could then send cards to let them know they are in our thoughts and prayers.

lAl Henninger
Northwoods Care Center
2250 Pearl St room 163.
Belvidere, IL 61008

Rollin Greenland
Heritage Woods
202 N Showplace Dr
Apt 390
Rockford, IL61107-5360

Gobbles from Turkey Hill

Repairs on our building are coming along. The window is installed and the brickwork is completed. Interior wall repair will be done this week. Remaining jobs are repairing the ceiling, installing the electrical outlet and replacing the flooring.
Our team made 150 jars of jams and jellies in preparation of the Chicken Dinner.
Our quilters finished 4 throws for a fundraising raffle. The winner gets all four. The response to both sales was good.
Our Chicken Dinner was a successful day as we served 415 meals. We had 2 pieces of chicken left at the end of the dinner. We had a great crowd and lots of new diners. Our next fundraiser will be our Yard Sale in early May. Our Program for April was an inspiring guest speaker from a local non-profit organization called “Moms on a Mission”. This group has a monthly activity or giveaway to people facing economic problems. They provide everything from food to clothing items like prom dresses and suits for high school students in a program called “Don’t Miss the Dance”., and even Halloween costumes for the younger kids. The compassion, enthusiasm, energy, and innovative programs of this group are incredible. We collected food items and cash donations to help with their service to the community. We will hold an event on Sunday, April 26 th to honor our Scholarship winners, Community Service Awards and our membership Longevity Awards. The ceremony will be followed by a dessert reception.

Union Grange

At our February meeting thank you notes were received from Noah’s Arc and Haven Network for our monetary donations in December.
Valentine cards were sent to our shut-in members.
Vivian told about a 1926 wheat penny she recently found in her change and told the group wheat pennies were first minted in 1909 to celebrate President Abraham Lincoln’s 100 th birthday. The wheat penny ended being made in 1958.
We are celebrating America’s 250 th anniversary by telling about something or some person from the past. Ron told about Camp Fuller in Rockford being a training camp in 1862. Sally told us about Camp Grant training center in Rockford during WWI and WWII. Then in March we visited Midway Village to see their Camp Grant display.
Eight of us attended Flora Grange March roast beef dinner and then had pie at Ron and Nancy’s.
Our 990N was inputted and our Not-for-Profit paperwork was completed and paid.
Rollie Greenland was presented his 55 years of membership seal and Darl Diehl received a letter for 50 years of membership.
In April for US history we learned about the Mormon people moving westward and their stay in Nauvoo, Illinois.
December 31, 1899: A ship was on the Equator and the International Date Line, which put it half in the northern hemisphere and half in the southern hemisphere and half in one century and half in the next century at midnight of January 1, 1900.

Beaver Valley

Hi everyone! Spring is here, bringing fresh energy and plenty of ways to stay connected as a Grange community!

Steve Paulson reported on safety and agriculture.

Wind erosion continues to impact soil health, but simple practices—like leaving crop residue, reducing tillage, and planting cover crops—can help protect our land for the future. With no mosquito spraying planned in Roscoe this year, prevention starts at home. Be sure to eliminate standing water, use repellents, and cover up outdoors to reduce risk. Fair planning is underway! Volunteers are still needed, especially for the ticket office and bathrooms. Marisa O'Dell reported Spring Fling was a success! The next picnic is May 30th with an "Outer Space" theme. Don't forget—blanket donations are still being collected for the state Grange.

Jerry Paulson reports Planting dates are shifting—mark your calendars for May 7th this year.

We are saddened to share the passing of Past President, Renee O'Dell, a dedicated member of Beaver Valley Grange for more than 36 years. Renee's kindness, commitment, and bright presence touched many lives over the years. She will be remembered for her generosity, warm spirit, and the lasting impact she made on our Grange. We will miss her very much.

Fraternally submitted,
Micah Schlie
Publicity

Prairie Grange

April 20, 2026, meeting of Prairie Grange started with a presentation to Officer Michelle Schwartz from the Belvidere Police Department. She was nominated by Prairie Grange as the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, and she was chosen at Illinois State Grange Law Enforcement Officer of the year as well. She was presented a certificate by President Don Ellwanger. Congratulations Officer Michelle Schwartz.

Following that presentation Illinois State Grange Junior Ambassador Scarlett Ellwanger gave a presentation on the 3 ABC Islands Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao where she visited while on the National Grange cruise. She explained the key challenges for Agriculture at all 3 islands including land, climate, soil and water. Then we got to play ABC Bingo where we had to find all the vegetables and fruits that were grown on the islands. Great presentation Scarlett.

Prairie meeting was called to order in full form at 7:34 PM by President Don Ellwanger. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved as presented and committee reports were given.

Agriculture – Sister Mary Brubach reported that 50-75% of the fields were planted in southern Illinois and she reminded us to be aware of farm equipment being out on the roads and have patience when you are behind them.

FAC – Sister Ann Johnson reported there are many contests available for everyone to enter this year so start working on your projects now for State Session, it will be here before we know it.

Juniors – Sister Sara Ellwanger reported that a junior Day was held on March 20 th where the kids tried to balance an egg, they made crafts and watched a movie. The next Junior Day is set for May 15th at 5;00PM Everyone is welcome to join them.

Youth – Sister Karie Blasingame reported the Statewide Grange Picnic will be Saturday May 30, 2026 at Boone County Fairgrounds Pavillion beginning at 12 noon. Meat, chips and paper goods will be provided. Also, there will be an auction so bring items to donate to be auctioned off to help support the Illinois State Grange Youth Department.

Grange Activities – Sister Karrie Kindberg is setting up a trip to the Beloit Skycarps Baseball game on July 5th or 25th . She will have more details at the next meeting.

Also, on May 31 st the members of Prairie Grange are going Bowling at Concordia Lanes in Belvidere at 1:00PM. Come join us.

Sunshine – Sister Robin Kindberg reported she sent flowers to Heather Ellwanger (hospital), Sheri Bochmann (surgery) and Dawn and Ellis Mundy (hospitalized). It was also reported that Brother Dave Geske has been fitted for his prosthetic leg and he is anxious to get up and get moving again. Continue to pray for Dawn and Ellis Mundy.
Auction Committee – Sister Mary Brubach reported the number of Consigners and Bidders was down this year. We didn't have much stuff, but we still did OK. 4momz2momz Consignment sale – Set up is Wednesday April 30, Consigners come in Thursday night April 31 from 4-7 and Sale is Friday May1 from 4-7 and Saturday May 2 from 9-4PM. Need anything come visit us at the Boone County Fairground.
Grange Open House/Craft Fair – will be Saturday May 2 from 10-2PM in which Prairie Grange will have a booth to welcome new Grangers this is at the Community Grange hall.
Communications were read from the Belvidere North FFA for the basket we provided for their silent auction and also for all the support we offer them. Another thank you was read from the Boone County Fair Association for helping to clear the Grange Hall so the new floor in the basement could be laid and the new windows upstairs could be put in.
Meeting adjourned at 8:45PM.
Robin Kindberg Publicity Chairman

Flora Grange

Flora Grange held their April meeting at their Grange Hall on April 14th with some 22 members in attendance before the bad weather hit our area as we were leaving.
Meeting was opened in full form with Grange Salutation and Pledge to American Flag. Roll Call was taken by Secretary Laurel Ratcliffe and minutes of March 10,2026 were approved.
Reports of Committees followed: Community Service: Lindakay Ebel thanked Emalee Colver for her many hours on quilting and various other community hours, and Lindakay reminded everyone to get their hours turned in.
Agriculture: Roger Miller stated we have had a lot of good rain, farms in the SW have been out in the fields, hopefully we will be there soon. Fair Board: Still looking for someone to take the task of garbage at the Boone County Fair this year, also need someone to clean the bathrooms.
Farmland Protection: Jack Ratcliffe reported they had their annual meeting, need new members to keep it going. The Farm Breakfast this year is June 27 at Fitzgerald Farm.
Legislative, Marion Thornberry stated the primary election went pretty good, thanks for getting out and voting. Membership:
Lindakay Ebel stated we will have a booth at the Boone County Community Grange Hall in Belvidere on Saturday, May 2nd from 10 am until 2 pm promoting Grange to the public and will have members there to talk with people attending.
Quilting: Emalee Colver announced her group will be meeting at the Flora
Grange Hall on Friday and working on their Linus projects and Debbie Silvers stated her group will be working on the National quilt block on Saturday and Sunday. Building & Grounds: Jack Ratcliffe reported they have been cutting bushes and trees and working in the basement at the Grange Hall.
Treasurer Lindakay Ebel gave a detailed report on the roast beef dinner held on March 29th. She also gave a report on all income and expenses and balances on all accounts; motion was made to approve.
We discussed whether we wanted to work at the food stand at the Boone County Fair this year. A motion was made and seconded we would like to work at the breakfast stand on Tuesday and Saturday and the lunch stand on Thursday, as usual, motion carried.
Laurel stated the Flora Grange Hall will be rented out on April 24,25, & 26th .
Emalee Colver collected $19.00 in 'G' Bills this evening.
Birthdays include Amber Fidder, April 30, Jack Ratcliffe & Al Ebel on May 2nd .

Suggestions for the Good of the Order, Deputy Brian O'Dell, guest this
evening, when asked if he had anything to say to Flora Grange, said
"Respect your Grange" and "Respect Your Fellow Grangers".
The Grange was closed in full form.
Refreshments were served at the lower level. Some Grangers chose to leave as the weatherman said severe storms were headed our way.
The next Flora Grange meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 7 pm. Serving committee will be Myrna Hodgson, Bob Dix, Barb Trevathan and Debbie Silvers.
Lindakay Ebel

Broad Hollow Grange

Broad Hollow Grange's next event, will be Friday, May 1st. Everyone is welcome to join us for the 6:30 p.m. potluck followed by a short program. The Grange is located at 6733 Robinson School Road. Please provide a side dish or dessert or main dish. For any questions, call 539-6113 or 444-2018.
Due to the first Friday in April being Good Friday, Broad Hollow Grange met on Monday, April 6th. The evening started with a potluck followed by a short program. The hall was decorated for Easter with bunnies, Easter eggs, and everything Easter. Tips were provided for spring cleaning followed by an Easter Quiz. Since taxes were due in April, a humorous poem was read on what you're all taxed on. April begins gardening season so participants shared April Gardening Tasks. Since April was Grange Month, information was provided about the Grange and participants gave information about the Seven Founders of the Grange. The program closed with what the jelly bean colors stand for Easter.
Since Broad Hollow Grange's 100th birthday occurred during the year of Covid, the Grange was unable to celebrate the milestone. This year the Grange will be celebrating its 105th birthday on Saturday evening, May 30th. Everyone in the community is invited to help us celebrate. The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a potluck. A large group will present special musical entertainment. Some awards will be presented and a brief history of Broad Hollow Grange will take place. Come help us celebrate!

Blast from the Past

To verify exactly where the Prairie View Grange hall was located, I picked up my second cousin, Linda and we drove on E. Fifth Street in Pecatonica, IL. Yes, it was the house that I picked out from the photo I had. So, the exact address is 215 E. 5th Street.
One day I was looking through my books on a bookshelf in my craft room, and came across what you could say is a vintage Grange song book. "Grange Melodies" published and printed by Geo. S. Ferguson Co. in Philadelphia, PA in 1917 copyrighted from 1891 issue. There are 197 pages of great old songs that I bet you never heard of or sang. Here are some titles: "Keep Politics Off Your Farm, The Farmer Feeds Us All, Who Will Reap?, 'Tis Better To Stay On The Farm, Lightly Laugh And Gaily Sing, The Model Grange, The Patron's Standard, Do Not Mortgage The Farm, A Song To The Good Old Plow," and there are so many more. "Because He Joined The Grange-" I remember our Grange performed this song as a play. Lucy the daughter, Mother, and Father sing separate verses about Lucy asking to be the wife of Rufus Brown because he's joined the Grange.
I purchased a new book "Women Of The Grange"- Mutuality and Sisterhood in Rural America, 1866- 1920 by Donald B. Marti. Our Order's diversity originated with the collaboration between Oliver Hudson Kelley and his niece Caroline Hall. Women were to have full membership in the Grange. Kelley wanted women to have a place in the Order. Anson Bartlett, first Overseer of the National Grange, encouraged The Grange to embrace women's full and equal membership, also. In the beginning when Grange ritual ceremonies were being written, women would be flattered by the language used. In particular, reference to mythology and declaring women's finer

qualities. Ceres, Flora, Pomona and Lady Assistance Steward were formed for strictly women to hold office, but as the years went on women began filling other Grange offices.
How time does fly! As of April, I will be celebrating 60 years of Grange membership. I joined as a teenager in April 1966.

Congratulations

Lyle Lee, owner of Lee Auction, was inducted into the Illinois State Auctioneer's Association Hall of Fame on Friday, Feb. 6.

Lyle Lee inducted in to auctioneer's hall of fame

Lyle Lee, owner of Lee Auction, was inducted into the Illinois State Auctioneer's Association Hall of Fame on Friday, Feb. 6.

Lee was raised on a farm and loved to attend the local auction barn. He was always working for other farmers baling hay etc. His grandmother gave him LeRoy VanDyke's record when he was young and listening to it gave him the desire to be an auctioneer.

Lee served in the army and is a Vietnam veteran. He got to attend the Army-Navy football game in Boston in 2023 compliments of his son Brian.

He started out auctioning in Arkansas while living there for a short time. He moved back to Illinois and got asked to help out by a seasoned auctioneer, Al Henninger, who had double booked auctions. His career just took off from there.

Lee attended Missouri Auction School in 1992 and started Lee Auction Service in 1979. At the time he still owned Lyle Lee & Sons Tree Service so only had a few auctions on some weekends. He married his wife Patti in 1995 and Lee Auction Service took off from there.

Lee is very community-minded and offers his services to numerous organizations. He has done the Rockford Ice Hogs jersey auction for over 20 years, raising several thousand dollars for different non profits. He has auctioned for Ducks, Unlimited; Delta Waterfowl; Wild Turkey Federation; Belvidere Special Education (his favorite); Immanuel Lutheran School; and Manchester School.

Lee has served on the Boone County Fairboard for 33 years, serving as president for 13 of those years. He continues to be on the board as a director and sponsorship chairman. The fair is owned and operated by the Grange of Boone County on which he served as president of Prairie Grange, Boone County Pomona Grange and the Illinois State Grange.

He served as a governor on the ISAA for six years and promotes the ISAA to all upcoming auctioneers.

Lee was the youngest governor of the local Moose lodge and served on the ritual team for several years. He served on the 4-H Extension committee, currently serves on the Financial Committee at Zion Lutheran Church in Belvidere and helps Patti with a monthly Pioneer Potluck at church. He is a life member of the VFW and a member of the American Legion.

He enjoys, fishing, golfing, bowling, attending grandchildren's sports and band functions, visiting casinos and most of all auctioneering. He has traveled a lot lately before time runs out, checking a few things off his bucket list: Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Niagara Falls and most recently the Rose Bowl Parade! (Of course on one of the rare years that it rained.) He says retirement is not in his vocab-

Renee O'Dell (1953-2026)
Beaver Valley Grange
Past ISG Chaplain
Past ISG Lecturer

Renee Christine O'Dell (72) 1953-2026 of Machesney Park, IL passed away on April 24, 2026. Renee was born October 18, 1953, in Rockford, IL, the daughter of Donald L Paulson and Betty J Paulson. She married the love of her life, Burdette Rick O'Dell on July 1, 1972, and they celebrated 54 years together. Renee was a loving & devoted mother of two children, Michele Lynn O'Dell and Brian Richard O'Dell (Marisa). She was Grandma to Sarah Renee Goebel (Bradley) of Janesville, WI; Bryson Richard O'Dell of Caledonia, IL; Athena-Marie C.M. O'Dell of Caledonia, IL; Brandon Rhett O'Dell, Caledonia, IL, great Grandma to: Chase S. Goebel & Eleanora Ray Goebel, and an aunt to numerous nieces and nephews.
Renee was a long-time employee of Rockford Mercantile Agency and a loyal and faithful member of the Grange for 36 years, including Beaver Valley Grange where she was past president. She was also past Illinois State Grange Chaplin and Lecturer.
Renee spent most of her life singing in various choirs and cherished her time and involvement with the Sweet Adelines group River City Sound for over 30 years, competing internationally. She loved to entertain, and sing a song for any occasion, or any person when asked. A lifelong, volunteer, and past director and Superintendent of the Boone County Fair. She was a faithful member, Elder, and Deacon of Willow Creek Presbyterian Church in Argyle.
She is survived by her husband Rick O'Dell and her brothers, Donald L Paulson Jr. (Margaret); Steven E Paulson (Dayle); Gerald A. Paulson (Dodie); Rodney A. Paulson (Linda); and Thomas F. Paulson (Brenda). Renee was pre-deceased by her parents Donald and Betty Paulson and her daughter Michele O'Dell, Benjamin R. O'Dell, and Margaret Paulson.
A Celebration of Life will be held on June 6, 2026, at Willow Creek Presbyterian Church of Argyle in Argyle, IL at 11:00 a.m. (There is no visitation). Memorials in Renee's name can be made to Willow Creek Presbyterian Church of Argyle, and Beaver Valley Grange.

Chaplains Corner

By: Charlotte Mehrtens

So as we look at the month of May we have many things to celebrate. Many farmers are working in the field getting crops planted. Many graduations, ball games, picnics and etc. Though I believe there is one family holiday that is celebrated by many families.

We ask ourselves why Mother's Day is so important, just like Father's Day. We ask ourselves what is a Mother. I found many different definitions about a mother. To be a mother is the greatest gift a woman can have. She makes an imprint on our hearts and becomes an example to follow. Mother is the noblest title on earth.

She dedicates her soul to make sure that her children have everything they need; she is a friend who we never have to tell we are hurting, sad or worried, she already knows. Mother is one who can ground us with roots, yet is able to give us the wings to fly. She makes us feel like the most exceptional and precious person in the world. She holds our hand and protects our hearts. She ignores her weariness and her pain; she soothes our sorrows, cures our woes and rejoices in our success. She is one person who does the of twenty; FOR FREE that's what a mother is. Many of us have loss our beloved mothers, but our children help to fill that void in our life. We celebrate the greatest person in the world.

As we celebrate these holidays let us remember those who have lost their homes businesses, and face the huge challenges of cleaning up. We pray for all of them as they are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Blessings to each of you. OUR FAITH AND HOPE SHOULD REST IN GOD 1 Peter 1:21. Until next time enjoy each day to the fullest, we never know what tomorrow brings.

Calendar of Grange Events

2026

5/1-2 4 MOMZ2MOMZ Consignment Auction Boone County Fairgrounds

5/2 Open House Boone County Pomona Grange All Granges can sign up,
Contact Marisa O'Dell

5/30 Illinois State Grange Picnic Boone County Fairgrounds

5/30 Broad Hollow 105 th Anniversary 6:30 pm potluck

6/26-28 Midwest Grange Leadership Conference

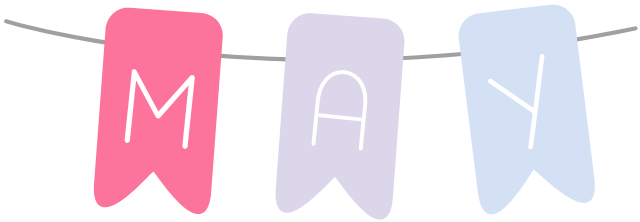
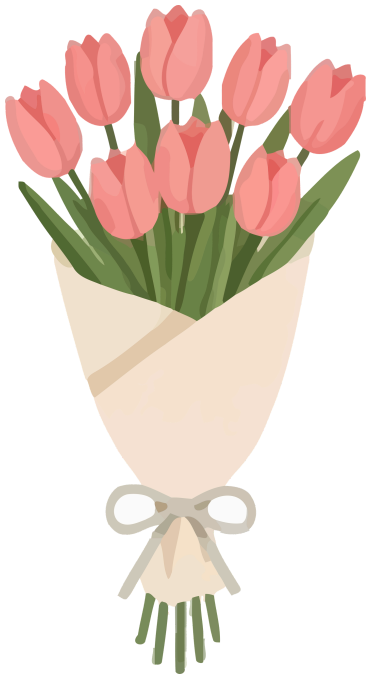
7/1 Deadline for Resolutions

8/7 Deadline for Rooms and Meals for State Session

8/11-16 Boone County Fair Belvidere IL

9/11-13 Illinois State Grange Session

11/11-15 National Grange Session Tulsa OK

2027

7/18-25 Grange Revival/Smoky Mtns Edition Bryson City, NC