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Roots**

Our Vision!

- Initiator of Community Action
- Facilitator of Leadership Development
- Advocate for Families
- Trusted Conveyor of Issues to Legislators

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President's Column

Sandra Green



Besides a bit on National Session, this article will be a collection of thoughts I have wanted to share but have not included in previous articles.

National was enjoyable. I have always enjoyed working on resolutions. We had many. Fellow New York Grangers in attendance helped Mom when I was busy. This made it much easier for me to concentrate on tasks at hand. Thank you! Grangers from other states helped as well. Grangers are good people. If you thought the State Grange Session this year required some walking, it was nothing compared to National Session. We all headed to the 3rd floor of the hotel, then walked the long passageway over the railroad tracks to the Convention Center. We did this 3 or 4 times a day as meals were not held there. By the end of the night, that last trek was LONG.

There were many interesting displays, some showing Grange contest entries. I enjoyed hearing NY Granges' and Grangers' names called during the recognition night. There were more Grangers from NY that received awards. Some of these were given out at other times. Congratulations to all the winners.

While it was great to have 2 Distinguished Granges from NY, we should have more. I know that at my Grange we sometimes have been slow at filling out reports or participating in programs. All Granges in our state should at least look at the Distinguished Grange Program. Your Grange may already meet the requirements. Why not get recognition for it? Check out nationalgrange.org for more information or contact Mel Phelps or myself.

One thing that is obvious when Grangers from around the country get together is that we are all the same. We enjoy people. We want to be helpful. We have the same difficulties. Grange truly is a family.

Now, for a few family tidbits: Please keep records of meetings and finances up to date. Sometimes questions arise that need quick answers. If at all possible, please keep older records in a fireproof container. Besides the Treasurer, Granges should have another officer as a signer on all Grange accounts. This is important because sometimes emergencies occur. If you have a Hall, keep a written account of who has keys to it.

As a reminder to Granges with trust funds, because the funds are invested, advance notice must be given in order to access them. Please contact me with any questions.

Please reach out if you would like a State Officer to visit. We enjoy visiting other Granges, but like you, we get busy and forget to make plans. If we are asked to come, we will do our best to be there. Having someone ask for a visit at a particular meeting spurs us to make the visit.

I wish to acknowledge the wonderful work of all the State Officers and Department Heads and Committees. Thank you for showing your love of our organization by countless hours spent to make New York State Grange thrive.

Thank you to all the Grangers across our state who love the Grange and all we stand for. Keep sharing with folks how wonderful being a Granger is.



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The National Grange is pleased to announce the Recognition Program for Distinguished Granges. This program is a way to recognize and honor the families for national recognition. Each family that is recognized will receive a certificate and a medal. The National Convention will also be held in the National Grange Building. The deadline for nominations is September 10, 2024 and should be sent to the

National Grange News CORNER



New National Grange Junior, Youth Ambassador Teams named

By Molly Newman, National Grange Communication Fellow and Philip J Vonada, National Grange Communications Director
Junior Grange Ambassadors

This year, two outstanding candidates – Laci Liles and Justin Dusko – were selected as National Junior Grange Ambassadors for the 2025 Grange year.

Laci Liles of Ellerbe, North Carolina, a member of Juniper Grange and the daughter of Joshua and Anna Liles, is a 7th grader who participates in the Beta Club and sings in her school choir.

Justin Dusko of Shoemakersville, Pennsylvania, is a member of Virgenville Junior Grange and the son of Nancy and Jason Dusko. Dusko is an 8th grader who plays trumpet in his school band. He is a fourth-generation Granger, and is also currently one of the Pennsylvania State Junior Grange Ambassadors.

When asked about the upcoming year, Dusko said, "It feels great to be selected. I'm very excited for the year to come and see where this Ambassadorship takes me." Liles added, "The thing I'm looking forward to most is going to regional [conferences] and going to different Grange camps."

Outgoing National Junior Grange Ambassador Gayle Reyburn, a member of Russellville Grange in Pennsylvania, reflected on her year, stating, "It has been such an honor to serve as the 2023-2024 National Junior Grange Ambassador. The year was filled with many amazing opportunities that I am thankful for and will always remember."

2025 Youth and Young Adult Ambassadors

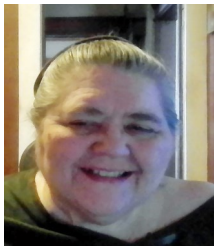
The Youth and Young Adult programs also had a strong field of candidates this year, with applicants from four states, including North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

The 2025 Youth Ambassadors are Taylor Rogers of Vanceboro, North Carolina and Shae Smith of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Ashlan Smith, also from Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania was named the Young Adult Ambassador. Rogers is a Camp Grange #1299 member, while the Smiths, who happen to be sisters, are both members of Elizabethtown Grange #2076.

Rogers is a student at Western Carolina University where she is majoring in elementary education. She has been a Grange member since 2021, after being recommended to join by her agriculture teacher. She shared, "I'm honored to be selected as the Youth Ambassador because I never thought I'd make it this far in the Grange. I didn't grow up in the Grange, and it's really cool to see my growth to a place I never thought I'd be." Rogers hopes to use the year as Ambassador to increase youth membership by advocating for the Grange outside of the organization. "I have a deep passion for the Grange and want to show others how awesome it is to be a part of it."

Shae Smith is a CNA at Masonic Villages in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. She expressed excitement about serving alongside her sister, Ashlan, stating, "I'm looking forward to being Youth Ambassador so much with Ash. When we were representing Pennsylvania together, it was fantastic in itself, and being able to do that again on the National level has me so excited." She is a graduate of Elizabethtown Area High School, and attends Harrisburg Area Community College to become a registered nurse. She is a lifelong Grange member, and was recently elected to be the Pennsylvania State Grange Ceres. Shae hopes to use the year to expand her knowledge of the Grange and the history that comes with it, while sharing the organization with people

Legislative Column



Cindy Benson-Pollard

The holidays are now over. We have taken down the tree, put the lights and ornaments away and started to snuggle in for the long winter months ahead. I hope that you are able to get out and enjoy your Grange activities during this time. Please don't hibernate until spring. It is good for the psyche to get out and about despite the cold and snow. By now, your Grange should have received your legislative policy handbook for 2025. The resolutions that were adopted at the 2024 State Grange session have been added and the renewals and deletions have been done. I hope that you will take a few minutes to review this updated handbook. I especially encourage you to look through to see which one of the resolutions that were forwarded to National Grange were adopted into their policies for 2025. This gives you the chance to see that our resolution process does work. Included with your handbook was a pamphlet that outlines the top Grange priorities for 2025. This is a nice handout at open meetings that can show the community the issues the Grange is working on. Please take advantage of this important information. The state legislative session will begin in January. I encourage you to take the opportunity to read the Governor's State of the State address. This will outline her priorities for the coming year.

I am hoping to start sending out weekly emails about bills that I will be following that are important to Grangers based on our handbook. If you have not signed up for our email updates, I encourage you to do so. Your help is always needed in letting our representatives know what the Grange is advocating for in our rural communities.

This is also the time to start working on the resolutions for this year. If you need help, please contact me. I am always happy to help. Please send an email to cbenson81@msn.com with the word "Grange" in the subject line.



Leadership Membership

Thomas Lawton

What can the Grange do for me? What do members get out of the Grange? Why should I join the Grange? These questions often are asked as people consider becoming a part of the Grange. So, what should you say? How can you respond to such questions?

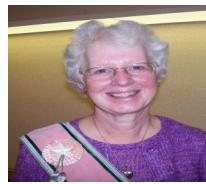
The Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, released a report in 2023 titled, "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation." The report indicated that the degree of loneliness has been increasing over the years, it has reached a level that has raised concerns of a number of professionals in a variety of fields. The effects of loneliness can greatly increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death. The impact of loneliness on mortality is comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Dr. Murphy explains, "Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling—it harms both individual and societal health." It affects learning, productivity, performance and engagement.

The report not only describes the consequences of loneliness, but it also discusses how this epidemic can and should be addressed to counter these effects. It is vital that we create more connected lives and more a connected society. We need to cultivate a culture of connections. This is where the Grange can come in. Our organization should see itself as a critical partner in creating relational connections between people that will help address the level and quality of connections. What do we have to offer people who are not members? We are in the position to offer connections with a purpose. The report from the Surgeon General emphasized the importance that the depth and quality of personal connections has as we address loneliness.

The Grange has been connecting people for more than 150 years. It has been connecting people not just for the same purposes, but also for the relational connections that come through our interpersonal connections. These connections are deepened from the fun we have but also by the work we do together.



Chaplain's Corner



Virginia L. Conner

FOUND

Thank you to the member from Rensselaer County who read my last column and claimed the sweatshirt I found at the Session Convention Center. I am happy to know the lovely warm garment is in the hands of its owner.

By the time you read this, Christmas will be past and a memory in our mind or written in our diary or journal. But in the days preparing for Christmas gatherings, I observed that the word found appeared in many ways.

As we shop and look for an item, we are elated that we finally have found it and sometimes in the least unlikely store! As we check off our gift list, we have found a renewal of energy and excitement! As the greeting cards arrive, we read news from friends and family and a new-found assurance that they are well and active.

The word found can be read in verses from the first book of the Bible: Genesis 6:8 "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" to the last book of the Bible: Revelation 20:15 "and whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire".

As I write this, it is the Christmas season. Therefore, I am focusing on the word found in the Christmas story. Luke 1:16: "the shepherds came to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph and the Babe lying in a manger". The visit of the Wise Men or Magi to baby Jesus can be read in Matthew 2:8: "and when you have found Him". When Jesus was 12 years old, "his parents found Him in the temple" Luke 2:46.

As we proceed into 2025, check your Bible Concordance for verses with the word found or find and you will gain hope, peace, joy and love in your life.

Grangers across New York State mourn with the Croucher Family the passing of their matriarch and Past First Lady of New York State Grange Sister Sharon Croucher on November 25, 2024. Well done, good and faithful Servant.



Youth



Co-Directors

Welcome to a new year. The youth department is excited to kick off a year of learning and leadership. This year two of our focuses will be membership and service. To start, we are highlighting our youth membership challenge. ***[A special award will be given to the Youth Member who brings in the most new Youth members between the age of 13 and 35 to their Grange family. Send the names and contact information of all new Youth members to the State Director by September 1st in order to be considered for the prize! The winner will receive a \$25 cash prize.]***

Why not help your local youth to win a prize? Remember, these must be new members since the end of state session 2024. If you would like more details on who is eligible please contact Sarah or Jo. Who knows, you might recruit the winner yourself since even members who join in 2025 are eligible to participate. We will also give a shout out to the winner at state session and here in the Granger.

In addition to membership, we want to put a spotlight on community service this year. Last year a few of our youth inspired us to make this more of a focus for the department. For instance, Alyvia Fuches taught all the youth at the Spring Weekend how to make dog toys, which were donated to the local Humane Society. However, she didn't stop there. She used this knowledge to teach attendees at the Wayne County Fair, simultaneously spreading the word about the Grange and helping needy animals. Jomni Tarbell paired with another local organization in Genesee County to Ring the Bell for the Salvation Army and hosted a birthday party for her local Junior Grange. These big projects aren't the end; youth from Dutchess, Wayne, Jefferson and Genesee Counties all volunteered at their county fairs as well. What exciting projects do you have planned for this coming year? Consider inviting Jomni, our young adult ambassador, and your own local youth to join in. Keep in mind, even if you don't already have youth

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members, many high school students have community service requirements. This might be a good way to connect with local youth and bring them into our historic service organization. If your Subordinate or Pomona Grange doesn't currently have a Community Service Project, I challenge you to organize one at your next meeting. Just think about these simple questions and get serving! Who will you help? When will you help? What will you do to help? For instance, we will help the local hospital by crocheting blankets for newborns there.. Or we will help the local first responders by making desserts and bringing them to the local police stations and fire houses. There are a lot of people and organizations who need our help. Let's get out there!



State Grange Secretary



Ryan Orton

150th Anniversary Celebrations for Granges in New York State are in full swing, and 7 more Granges will reach this incredible milestone in 2025! Congratulations to the following Granges that will celebrate 150 years of service to their communities, having been organized in 1875:
 Bath Grange #294 – Steuben County
 Enfield Valley Grange #295 – Tompkins County
 Ross Grange #305 – Chautauqua County
 Mount Pleasant Grange #349 – Oswego County
 Ellery Grange #353 - Chautauqua County
 North Cameron Grange #355 – Steuben County
 Newark Grange #366 – Wayne County

2025 also marks the 125th Anniversary of the following 4 Granges that were organized in 1900:
 Union Vale Grange #887 –

Dutchess County
 Kendrew Grange #891 – St. Lawrence County
 Oxford Grange #894 – Chenango County
 Rhinebeck Grange #896 – Dutchess County

When your Grange organizes a celebration for these wonderful occasions, please let us at State Grange know! We can order an Anniversary Plaque for your Grange Hall or meeting place, and we can arrange to have a State Officer attend to express the congratulations of the State Grange. The community should be invited to attend as well – this is a perfect occasion to talk Grange membership with potentially new members that would help keep your Grange alive and well for another 125 or 150 years.

I wish a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2025 for all our Empire State Granges and Grangers!



Junior Grange



Sherri Horner

Do you have children or grandchildren of some of your members, but not enough children to start a Junior Grange? Do not let that stop you from allowing them to participate in Junior Grange activities and events. National Grange started the 1+ Junior Grange program several years ago. This program allows children to become individual members of your Subordinate/Community Grange and participate in any Junior Grange program or event in their age group. This program helps each Subordinate/Community Grange have a

Junior Grange program with one child to begin with, with the intent on increasing the Junior Grange membership. Once your Grange has enough Junior Grange members, then you can work on starting an actual Junior Grange. Remember to have your 1+ members meet at least once a month. If you have any questions on this program, please feel free to contact me and I will gladly help you begin this program.

Be sure to make sure that your Junior Grange members are busy this winter. Plan fun activities in the snow, maybe followed by some hot chocolate and snacks. This will give the children an opportunity to be outside and enjoy some fresh air and fun with friends. If it is too cold to be outside, plan an indoor fun day at your Grange. Encourage your members to bring a friend with them to the event. By participating in the fun events at your Grange, the friends may decide to join Junior Grange.

Please remember to fill out your quarterly report for your Junior Grange. The reports are all on the New York State Grange website (www.nysgrange.org) under the Junior Grange tab. Scroll down the page until you find the report forms, print off the one for the current quarter, fill it out and submit it with your Subordinate/Community Grange's quarterly report.

Lecturer



Brenda Noble

I would like to take a moment to remember Past State Lecturer Sharon Croucher, as she has passed on to the great Grange above. She was a dedicated Granger and will be remembered for all that she has done. We all have fond memories of Sharon in the many roles she served over the years. Well done good and faithful servant.

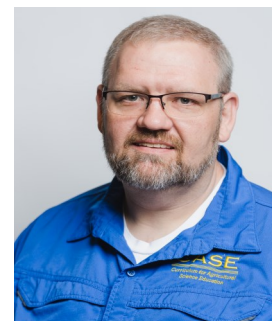
At the National Convention in November we had a number of winners in the National Grange contests. Quilt Block contest: 1st Cathy Stark; Honorable Mention Theresa Duster; HM Dorothy Rathburn. Virtual Photography contest: *Scenic* 2nd Cathy Stark. Weather Watcher Challenge: 1st Doris J.

Thayer. Design-A-Program for Children: 1st Alexandria Tarbell. Raised Bed Garden: Doris J. Thayer. Congratulations to all winners!

The program for National 2024-2025: There will not be a Weather Watcher Challenge. They will continue to support Quilts of Valor, but they will not be giving out Quilts of Valor at the 2025 National Convention due to the cruise. You can have presentations at the local, county, and/or state levels. The quilt block for 2025 will be Canning Jar. There is a quilt block pattern on the National Grange website, including a white border to make an unfinished square of 12 1/2 inches. The Virtual Photo Contest for Adults: America the Beautiful, Agriculture/Farms, Say It With Flowers, Bridges. The Virtual Photo Contest for Juniors: America the Beautiful, Animals/Pets, Water. Garden Design for Adults: Container Garden; Ground Space Garden. Garden Design for Juniors: Any Design. Design-A-Program: Internal for Grange/Event for Adults; External for Grange/Event for Adults; Program/Event for Children. Creative Writing for Adults: Essay - "The Grange Is Important Today because..." - 500 words max; Poetry - The Grange of the Future - 300 words max. Submissions are due to the National Lecturer by September 1, 2025.

New York State Grange Lecturers/Family Activities Conference will be April 26, 2025 in Cortland. Please have the Art and Photos to Cortland by April 20, 2025 for judging. The Photo Contest: Grange Halls; County or State Fairs. We are planning another great day, so please plan to attend! We will also have the Talent Contest: Vocal Solo; Vocal Group; Variety.

Community Involvement



Melvin Phelps

The winter time is the perfect time to start setting goals for the 2025 Community Service Year. What is needed by your community and get things prepared to get rolling when spring hits. In this issue I wanted to announce some changes in the Community Service Department. I have asked for a committee to assist in developing the program and to help facilitate the programs. The State President and Executive Committee has appointed the following

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members to the State Grange Community Involvement Committee; Heidi Henderson – Onondaga County, Carol Staffehl – Erie County and Mark Kratts – Allegany County. **I am also pleased to announce that Joan Phelps from Genesee County will be stepping up to be a Co-Chair with me for the department.** I am looking forward to working with this dream team of devoted Grange members to continue bringing changes to our department.

I had the opportunity to attend the National Grange Convention in Bettendorf Iowa and it was exciting to hear them announce that Butternut Valley Grange #1533 of Otsego County placed third in the Nation for their Community Service Yearbook. Congratulations to Butternut Valley and all their hard work supporting their community. It is certainly nice to receive national recognition for all your hard work.



Sports

Director
Bruce Dehner



The new year is here and we have a change in the sports department. Matt Horton is now co-director. He will be running the dart ball and corn hole tournaments. I will be running the bowling and Golf tournaments. Matt's email is matthewhorton14870@yahoo.com and his phone # is in the directory as he is state steward. Matt or myself will sign you up for any event and answer any questions you may have. The next event on the schedule is dart ball on April 27th at state headquarters. There is one rule change I added to this event only (If there is a 3-way tie for first or second place, the total runs scored will be used to determine the winner. If there is still a tie with 2 teams, a 1 game play-off will be used to determine the winner). State Bowling is June 1st at Cort Lanes Cortland, NY., Golf is July 13th at Orchard Valley golf course in Lafayette NY and corn hole is August 2nd at state headquarters.

Hi, everyone. Matthew here. Earlier this year I was asked if I would be willing to help with the Sports department. Of Course I would be delighted. It is a privilege and honor to be named

Sports Committee co-director. State Grange has a great history of hosting friendly sports competitions for our members, and I am pleased to be asked to help continue this tradition. I will take over the Dartball and Cornhole tournaments, while Bruce will still run the Bowling and Golf tournaments.

The first tournament of the year will be Dartball. It is scheduled for Sunday, April 27, 2025 at the Headquarters Building. Teams consist of at least 7 people, must have at least 2 men and at least 2 women on the team. Please inform me by April 15 if you intend to send a team so I can make sure trophies are ordered. Due to our 3-way tie last year, an extra rule was added concerning scoring if there is a tie.

Bowling is June 1, Golf is July 13. Please contact Bruce for more details on those events. Cornhole will be Saturday, August 2, 2025 at the Headquarters building. A team consists of 2 people. Please inform me by July 25 if you will be attending so I can make sure everything is ready.

If you have any questions, concerns, or need the rules for these tournaments, feel free to contact me at (607) 346-3316 or email me at matthewhorton14870@yahoo.com.

Hopefully this article finds everyone doing well and I hope to see you all at a State sporting event. Fraternally Bruce and Matt



Family Activities

Maryanne Campbell

I hope everyone had great holidays. It is always a very busy time of the year. Now we begin a new year to think about our crafts and all the contests that will take place.

The pumpkin bread state contest was at our State Conference in October. There was a total of 15 entries for the regular bread and 5 entries for the diabetic bread. The following people placed in this contest in the regular bread: 1st -Betty Wakefield, Chautauqua, 2nd - Sue Drake, Otsego, 3rd - Mary Gates, Columbia, Honorable Mention- Jeanette Moore, Onondaga and Noel Clawson, Seneca. Diabetic bread: 1st - Charles Straley, Dutchess, 2nd - John Buchanan, Cortland, 3rd - Pat Vanlare, Wayne, Honorable

Mention-Julia Thomas, Delaware. Congratulations to all of those who participated in this contest.

All Subordinate and Pomona Family Activities Chairpersons have been mailed the 2025 Northeast Needlework Contest and included in the pamphlets are some official entry forms for the Big E. As I indicated at our State Conference in October, there would be some changes. The teacup contest has been discontinued. In its place for the Big E is Class M. This class indicates there can be any other needlework that is not included in Classes A-L. There are some measurement changes as well. Class D, the three-piece baby set does not include a baby blanket. It must consist of a sweater plus your choice of booties, bonnets, skirt, mittens or pants to make a three-piece set. As usual it can be knit or crocheted, using any suitable pattern and product. Please check with your Activities Chairperson for specifics on the Big E contest or give me a call/text.

Our State Contest will be held at our April conference the 24th-26th. The contest itself will be held on Friday, April 25th. Please have the Pomona Contest winning items mailed to our State Grange Headquarters in Cortland or have them mailed to me by April 20th, to be sure they arrive on time for the contest. Just a reminder that no professional people may enter the contest, and a community member may enter the contest for one (1) year, but then must become a Grange member prior to entering subsequent years. Please look at our Family Activities Program for specifics on items for the contest.

The contest items specific for 2025 are: the quilted wall hanging, baby size quilt that must be machine quilted or hand quilted and plastic canvas. Items that are not included for 2025 are the following: latch hook, bed size quilt, quilted table topper or runner. These three items are rotated every 2 years. The decorated teacup and saucer has been discontinued. We had a total of 68 craft entries for 2024, lets try for 80 for this year.

Dawn Percoski, Craft Manager of the Big E has requested the following item be donated to for the store, if possible: quilted place mats, chef hats, potato bags, scrubbies, aprons, handmade oven mitts, large shawls, wide long scarfs, mittens, fingerless gloves, quilts, quilted lap robes, pillow cases, all baby items, stuffed animals, quilted bowl cozy for warm . teacup and bowls, kitchen towels (full towels), half towels, plastic canvas tissue box holder, doilies and Christmas items, especially Christmas ornaments. She thanks everyone very much for all the items that were sent in. So, if you or you know someone

that could make some of these items, it would be greatly appreciated by our Patrons. 2024 we donated a total of 326 items submitted for the store.

Our baking contest for 2025 is chocolate cake with peanut butter frosting. I know there have been some concerns regarding those with allergies. All baked items will be clearly marked. We are trying to find different baked items to have in our contest. If anyone has suggestions for future baking contests, please let us know.

Please give me a call or send an e-mail if you have questions. Our committee is looking forward to seeing the items to be judged at our April contest. Land line 607-847-6639, cell 607-226-4441 and e-mail, kmcampbell@citlin.net. Thank you all for a great 2025.



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around the country.

Ashlan Smith is a graduate of the Harrisburg Area Community College welding program, now working for Osage Piping & Fabricating, Inc. She is a lifelong Grange member, having previously served as the Pennsylvania State Grange Youth Ambassador and Young Patron, and is currently the State Grange Pomona. She said, "I am very excited to be named Young Adult Ambassador. I'm looking forward to traveling and the opportunity to connect with new members and see how other Granges and other states work." Ashlan hopes to have multiple opportunities to travel and make connections with new members and new people she meets along the way.

As a part of the evening, the outgoing Junior, Youth, and Young Adult Ambassador teams passed off their sashes to the newly named team.

2023-2024 Young Adult Ambassador Ashley Holloman of Selma, North Carolina, said, "It has been an honor this past year to serve as the National Outstanding Young Patron. I have talked about Grange in my classroom and community and to new people all around the US. When I began this year, my goal was to advocate for Grange and to share the Grange story. It has been an honor to do that this year!"

Outgoing Youth Ambassador Asheton Medlin of Roxboro, North Carolina, advised the incoming team: "I hope you guys

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National Grange Convention 2025

Paradise Awaits: Convention to set sail in 2025

by Makayla Piers, National Grange Communication Fellow



Prepare for the voyage of a lifetime as the National Grange's 159th annual convention takes to the seas. From November 8-16, 2025, members will experience an extraordinary blend of fellowship and tropical paradise aboard the magnificent *Carnival Horizon*.

Imagine spending eight sun-soaked days exploring the breathtaking ABC islands - Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. These southern Caribbean gems are renowned for their pristine beaches, crystal-clear waters, and vibrant culture. Whether you're hoping to snorkel in some of the world's most beautiful coral reefs, go on fun-filled island tours, or unwind on powder-soft beaches, this itinerary offers something for everyone.

What makes this cruise truly special is the unique opportunity to combine Grange business with pleasure. As National officers and delegates conduct the critical work of the National Grange during sea days, all members will have abundant opportunities to strengthen fraternal bonds through special events planned by the Eastern Host Region. With Grange members potentially making up over 25% of the ship's passengers, the sense of community will be extraordinary!

The *Carnival Horizon* itself is a destination to behold. This modern cruise ship offers world-class dining options, entertainment venues, and comfortable accommodations. Whether seeking adventure at the water park, relaxation at the spa, or engaging in conversations with fellow Grangers over dinner, each day brings new possibilities.

Beyond the stunning destinations, your cruise experience includes countless on-board amenities and activities. Commemorate your journey with exclusive Grange merchandise, including custom shirts, cups, bags, and beach towels, which can be purchased in advance through the host committee.

While all world-class dining options are included in your fare, separate beverage packages are available to suit your preferences. At each port, choose from exciting excursions like swimming with dolphins or turtles, or exploring on land - all best booked through the cruise line for peace of mind.

Between ports, enjoy state-specific activities, Eastern Region-hosted events, movies under the stars, and endless entertainment options. Whether you're seeking relaxation at the spa or adventure at the water park, each day brings new opportunities for fellowship and fun. Booking is refreshingly simple - a \$250 per person deposit reserves your spot, with no additional payments required until August 2025. Even better, roommates can book and pay separately for the same cabin, making planning more manageable for everyone.

Don't miss this chance to be part of Grange history while creating unforgettable memories in one of the world's most beautiful regions. Reserve your stateroom today and join us as we sail from Miami for this once-in-a-lifetime Caribbean adventure.

More information will be coming from the Eastern Host Region as we get closer to setting sail, including a potential Grange members-only excursion, youth and Junior activities, on-board gatherings, and more. Stay tuned to *Good Day!* magazine and the *Grange Today!* newsletter for the most up-to-date information.

Contact information and the group booking number are available for those ready to secure their spot on this extraordinary journey. You can also ask for accessibility accommodations to ensure everyone can participate comfortably in this remarkable convention at sea.

To Book Your Cruise, Call Carnival Group Department at 866-721-3225

Group Booking Number: D7TC22

Learn more about the 2025 National Grange Convention at <http://www.nationalgrange.org/159ngconvention>

National Master

National Grange President lays out agenda for coming year

By Samantha Wilkins, Senior Communication Fellow
and Philip J Voanda, National Grange Communications Director

The National Grange Session opened on Tuesday, November 12 in Bettendorf, Iowa. During this time, National Grange President Christine E. Hamp addressed delegates, members, and guests assembled. She 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 called for unity, 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 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 easy 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.

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 that 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 within 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.

Contact Information

Net gains seen in all regions of the country

By Amanda Brozana, National Grange Membership & Leadership Development Director

Thirteen State Granges as well as the sole Granges in Washington, DC, and South Carolina were recognized during the 158th Annual National Grange Convention in November as having posted a net gain in members for the 2023-24 membership year.

“It’s awesome to be able to celebrate so many Granges where growth is happening,” National Grange President Chris Hamp said. “Nearly half of all the State Granges in the nation are adding to their rolls and welcoming new members into the Grange.”

North Carolina stole the show with a total net gain of 145 members. California also posted a triple-digit gain with 108 net new members. Pennsylvania (+88), Oregon (+74), Washington (+67) and Montana (+53) also had notable gains.

Virginia netted 11 new members, Idaho added 10, Massachusetts and West Virginia added four each, Minnesota added three, and Connecticut and Indiana both added two members.

Potomac Grange #1 in Washington, DC, doubled its membership by adding 20 members, and the only Grange in South Carolina, Brittons Neck #629 in Marion County, rose from 8 to 11 members.

At the close of June 2024, which ended the 2023-24 membership year, there were 1,385 Granges open across the country in 37 states. Over the year, 11 Granges were organized or reorganized.

“Our community Granges are where each of our journeys begin, and every community in the nation deserves to have a Grange,” Hamp said. “Let’s double-down. Let’s pull out all the stops. Let’s commit to maintaining and strengthening every Grange. People all over the country are seeking an organization like ours – let’s share it and ensure we are living up to our founders’ vision: *Esto Perpetua* – may it live forever.”

Sandra M. Green, President
100 Grange Place
Cortland, NY 13045
607-756-7553
president@nysGrange.org

Ryan Orton, Secretary
218 Attlebury Hill Road
Stanfordville, NY 12581
845-868-7869
secretary@nysGrange.org

Brenda Noble, Lecturer
7973 Telephone Road
LeRoy, NY 14482
585-768-6632
bnoble195@gmail.com

Cindy Benson Pollard
Legislative Director
401 Charles Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13209
315-413-9335
Cbenson81@msn.com

Virginia L. Conner, Chaplain
918 Bartnick Road
Genoa, NY 13071
315-246-7330
vlconner48@yahoo.com

Maryanne Campbell
Family Activities
PO Box 294
Norwich, NY 13815
607-847-6639 Res.
607-226-4441 Cell
kmcampbell@citlink.net

Thomas Lawton
Leadership Membership
4763 State Hwy 12
Oxford, NY 13830
607244-7799
lawtont4@yahoo.com

Melvin Phelps
Community Involvement
PO Box 493
Copenhagen, NY 13626
318-778-6712
northerngracefarm@gmail.com

Youth
Johannah Stewart
211 Roe Avenue, 2nd Floor
Elmira, NY 14901
585-880-6460
barringer.johannah@gmail.com

Sarah Barber
34 Timberee Lane
Valatie, NY 12184
518-698-1811
Sarahbarber22@gmail.com

Bruce Dehner, Sports
PO Box 372
DeRuyter, NY 13052
315-852-6460
bed221@yahoo.com

Carol Bailey, Historian
3033 Middle Sodus Road
Lyons, NY 14489
315-946-4379
barnlady38@yahoo.com

Sherri Horner, Jr. Director
164 County Route 14
Fulton, NY, 13069
kidsbreak@yahoo.com

Cindy Benson-Pollard
NYS Fair
Grange Building Superintendent
315-413-9335
Cbenson81@msn.com
Steve@nysGrange.org

Sherri Horner
Ryan Orton
Camp Directors
kidsbreak1@yahoo.com
secretary@nysGrange.org

New and Reorganized Granges in the 2023-24 Grange Year			
Grange	State	Date Organized	
Grassroots #2112	PA	8/4/23	Organized
Scott Valley #386	CA	10/2/23	Reorganized
Lompoc #646	CA	10/18/23	Reorganized
San Luis Obispo #639	CA	10/19/23	Reorganized
Van Duzen River #517	CA	1/10/24	Reorganized
WCC #1303	NC	2/14/24	Organized
Manchester #676	CA	3/24/24	Reorganized
Coalinga #779	CA	4/11/24	Reorganized
Riverdale Rural Community #868	CA	4/20/24	Organized
JoCo #1304	NC	5/16/24	Organized
Western Star #309	OR	5/21/24	Reorganized

“I am excited by Bonnie and Randee’s passion for community service,” Hamp said, “They are amazing representatives of what it means to have the community at the heart of all we do. I know they will work as idea-generators and connectors for Granges as we continue to highlight the great work being done by our members nationwide.”

Bonnie Mitson is a member of Mica Flats Grange #435 in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, where she has served in many capacities, and Bellgrove Grange #369, which she helped reorganize in 2019. She is currently on the Executive Board of the Idaho State Grange as well as the State Community Service Director.

“What I love about Grange is community,” Mitson says. “When I meet Grangers, the first thing I notice is that they naturally serve others. Granges get excited to start community projects, and it’s contagious.”

In addition to her work with the Grange, Mitson is active in her local church, the county elections board, and Quilts of Valor. She is a longarm quilter and seamstress and enjoys building, remodeling, and electrical work (*but she’s not fond of plumbing!*).

Randee Farmer has been a lifelong Granger, first joining as a Junior member and now as a Bayneville Grange #1810 member in Kansas. She and her husband, Michael, have been heavily involved in the Grange, including as State Grange Young Couple in 1991. She has been on many committees and held many offices at the local and State levels of the Grange. Randee is currently the Kansas State Grange Community Service Director.

In the past few years, Farmer has helped implement a Quilts of Valor Program and C.A.R.D.S Program (homemade greeting cards for servicemembers) at the State Grange level.

She says one of her proudest experiences in the Grange was reorganiz-

(Continued on page 7)

National Grange Community Service



New Co-Directors Encourage Granges to serve communities

by Philip J Vonada

National Grange Communications Director

The National Grange is pleased to announce the appointment of new Co-Directors for the National Grange Community Service Department. President

Christine E. Hamp has tapped Bonnie Mitson (ID) and Randee Farmer (KS) to lead the department after serving on the Community Service Team through 2024.

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(Continued from page 6) Nations Community Service

ing Otter Creek Junior Grange with her sisters when their kids were Junior age, being recognized for 10 years in the Community Service and Help Save the Earth programs on the National level. “Instilling community service into youngsters is so important and remains good memories for all the children involved,” she says.

Farmer says that community service is an excellent avenue for interacting with people, which she loves. “I’m a firm believer that service is not a competition but a celebration of who we are,” she added. “Grangers have been and continue to be instrumental to both the growth of individuals and the betterment of our communities.”

Mitson says that the 2024 Community Service books helped reveal what Grangers are doing across the country. “We hope that these ideas are encouraging to you, and perhaps you might like to try some of these ideas in your Grange to be Grange Strong,” she says.

Some of their ideas include:

Meals – Feeding people was an overwhelming passion of Grangers this year. Ideas include supporting food baskets, creating food baskets to be distributed in the community, hosting dinners or preparing full meals for various events and needs, and collecting for food pantries or food drives.

Life Skills/Self-Sustainability – Busy Grangers taught classes and workshops in cooking, sewing, quilting, painting, carpentry, animal husbandry, defensive driving, pie making, crocheting, dancing, archery, and gardening, among many others. Granges held debates to teach younger generations speaking skills.

Veterans – Grangers wrote cards, made holiday stockings, adopted a soldier and sent care packages, hosted appreciation dinners, honored veterans with Quilts of Valor, and laid wreaths and flags in cemeteries for the holidays. In addition, Grangers cleaned cemeteries, made cookies for the military and VFWs, and much more, and really stepped up to the plate with the National Grange’s Wreaths Across America sponsorships.

Schools – Granges supported schools in so many capacities, from collecting school supplies, volunteering at schools and community centers, donating to school closets and food pantries, making mittens, scarves, and hats, and giving directly to teachers to thank them.

Senior Centers – Many Granges found ways to support senior and assisted living centers, from donating toiletries and non-skid stocks, creating gift bags and holiday cards and ornaments, and volunteering time visiting those who live there. Other Granges adopted people who live in nursing homes, who may not have had family who visited or helped them.

Supporting Grangers in need – Whether donating to a Grange member or family after a disaster, driving members to appointments, or making sure they make it to fun Grange events, supporting the volunteers who make you events happen is essential.

Community Support – Granges cleaned highways, streams, parks, and cemeteries, donated the use of their Halls to community events, supported various community events and projects, served as an information hub for their towns on bulletin boards and social media, and hosted legislative forums and debates for candidates for various local positions.

The co-directors encourage Granges to try new things and really get out into their communities and local areas, raise the visibility of the Grange, and give back to the people who support their programs and events.

Bonnie and Randee can be reached at communityservice@grange.org. More information on the 2025 programs will be released soon through the *Grange*

Burton Eller *National Grange Legislative Director*
beller@nationalgrange.org



National Grange

Policy Updates & Issue

News

Agriculture and Food

Ag groups stall year-end funding package

Negotiations on an end of year Continuing Resolution spending package to avoid a government shutdown December 20 were set to be announced last weekend. The deal included a one-year extension of the 2018 farm bill. Ag groups and members of Congress were confident the massive funding package would include economic and disaster aid for farmers and climate funding for farm conservation programs. But it didn’t. Several bipartisan members threatened to vote against the entire package if commodity price adjustments and disaster relief was not included in the deal. By Tuesday night, Senate and House leaders had hammered out a compromise package that brought agriculture interests on board. The new agreement extended the 2018 farm bill, allocated \$21 billion for disaster relief for farmers, set aside \$10 billion in market relief for row crop farmers, and allows E15 ethanol to be used year around. Then Wednesday evening, Elon Musk, President-elect Trump’s nominee to co-lead his new Department of Government Efficiency, came out against the latest package. Musk indicated he wanted Congress to replace the legislation with a relatively

“clean” continuing resolution to fund the government into 2025. Unclear Wednesday evening was what such a stripped-down bill might include. We will see by Friday’s shutdown deadline.

Meet your new Secretary of Agriculture

Brooke Rollins is President Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Agriculture. Rollins, a native of Glen Rose, Texas, a small town southwest of Fort Worth, has a degree in agricultural development from Texas A&M University, a law degree from the University of Texas, was active in FFA and 4-H, and grew up raising horses and showing goats. She was the first female student body president at A&M. Her career includes stints as President of America First Policy Institute and running the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Conservation & Environment

Most farmers got nothing from record conservation funding

About two-thirds of applicants for the USDA’s climate programs were rejected despite record investment from the Inflation Reduction Act as demand continues to outstrip available resources. USDA supported more than 23,000 climate-focused contracts that covered more than 11 million acres with \$3 billion in fiscal 2024. Despite record investment, strong demand for conservation programs meant a majority of farmers who applied received no funding.

Health Care

Employer insurance should cover obesity care

The National Grange joined the Alliance for Women’s Health and Prevention and numerous patient groups to ask employers for their support in ensuring that obesity is covered by their health plans just like other chronic diseases. Comprehensive obesity coverage should include the full range of evidence-based obesity options, including medical nutrition, therapy, intensive behavioral therapy, surgery, and medications. Obesity is associated with health complications such as heart disease, diabetes, breast cancer, fertility issues and more.

Immigration & Labor

Immigration overhaul could threaten agricultural economies

Immigrants make up about two-thirds of the nation’s farmworkers, and two in five of those are not legally authorized to work in the United States, according to the Department of Labor. Industries such as meat processing, dairy farms, poultry growers, and livestock farms also rely heavily on immigrants. Agriculture strongly supports agriculture labor reform that provides permanent legal status to current workers and their families and gives farmers and ranchers access to a workable guestworker program. Until then, however, agriculture has adopted a wait-and-see stance on President-elect Trump’s vow to invoke mass deportations.

H-2A wage rates increasing

The minimum wage rate farmers are required to pay H-2A (temporary agriculture) workers is rising an average of 4.47% nationally to \$17.74 per hour for 2025. The new adverse effect wage rates for temporary employment of foreign workers in agriculture vary from a low of \$14.83 an hour in Arkansas to a high of \$20.08 per hour in Hawaii. The adverse effect wage rate is supposed to prevent employment of H-2A from depressing wage rates for domestic labor.

Telecommunications

DOGE spending cuts could endanger broadband funding

The \$42 billion Broadband Equity Access and Deployment “Internet for All” (BEAD) program funded by the bipartisan infrastructure law has reached a milestone. Plans from all 56 states and territories have been approved, which outline how they will use their grant money to ensure no resident is without high-speed internet. The next step will be for states to request access to their allocated BEAD funding and select the providers who will build and upgrade the high-speed networks of the future. However, the new Trump administration’s so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is poised to take a close look at the BEAD program costs, timelines, and efficiencies. Some recent criticism of the BEAD program has been the requirement that alternate technologies, such as unlicensed fixed wireless access and low-earth satellites, would not be eligible for deployment funding. Gladly, that requirement is moving toward the Grange’s long-term policy that calls for approval of all technologies that can effectively, efficiently, and rapidly reach the last mile of country road. The statute calls for the BEAD

Trade

Agriculture anxious about trade wars

Agriculture, in general, and the Midwest in particular, would bear the brunt of new trade conflicts. President-elect Trump has floated an across-the-board tariff that would increase duties on U. S. imports from every trading partner and specific tariffs on China, Canada, and Mexico. If this actually occurs, retaliatory tariffs from trade partners

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 4) Family Activities

have the best year and take our youth program to new heights.” Reflecting on her term, she said, “It has been an honor to represent our youth during this year of change, progress, and growth!”

The other Outgoing Youth Ambassador, Garrett Phelps of Copenhagen, New York, reflected on his experience, saying, “It’s been an honor to serve the National Grange and interact with the members. Thank you for allowing me to make a difference.”

National Grange President Christine Hamp spoke highly of the new team, “I believe this Ambassador Team has the passion and determination to make 2025 a year to remember. As we all continue to work together to be Grange Strong, they will be in a perfect position to show a new generation of rural and small-town Americans that working for what you believe in, for the sustainability of our communities and hometowns, is something to be admired and emulated. I have full faith that Justin, Laci, Shae, Taylor, and Ashlan will represent themselves and the Grange with honor and pride.”



Youth Ambassador Taylor Rogers, Young Adult Ambassador Ashlan Smith, Youth Ambassador Shae Smith, National Grange President Christine E. Hamp, and Junior Ambassadors Laci Liles & Justin Dusko pose together just after the announcement at the National Grange Recognition Night in Bettendorf, Iowa. Photo by Lindsay Haggerty

(Continued from page 7) Policy Updates

could rock the agriculture industries in states heavily dependent on agricultural exports. North Dakota and Illinois are both reliant on export markets for more than 45% of agricultural revenues. So are Louisiana and Hawaii. During the first Trump term, China’s response to tariff escalations was targeted to hit Republican states that made up Trump’s electoral base.

Generosity, new fundraisers boost Foundation in 2024

by Amanda Brozana

Grange Foundation Development Associate

Fundraising is as much about the cause as it is about an organization’s creativity in encouraging donors to contribute, and the Grange Foundation proved to be rather creative in 2024.

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From raffles to auctions to opening a treasure trove of Grange memorabilia and artifacts to be rehomed by donation, the Foundation provided numerous opportunities for individuals interested in donating to do just that. National Grange President and President of the Grange Foundation Chris Hamp said, “Our Grange Foundation can be an incredibly powerful and useful resource for building the capacity of the Grange at every level.”

As part of the 158th Annual Convention, a series of “Oldies but Goodies” tables had heaps of artifacts from the common to the one-of-a-kind that were brought from the National Grange Headquarters after the sale of the building. Convention-goers could peruse and select items of interest to be part of their own Grange history collection. Items ranged from gavels to pins to old issues of Grange Monthly, and so much more. Items were “sold” by free-will donation, and special items were put up for silent auction. Even more select items were up for bid at the live auction at the Grange Strong Banquet on Saturday evening.

“The ‘Oldies but Goodies’ idea was a fabulous way to share left-over, one-of-a-kind items with our members and Granges across the country and make some money for our Foundation at the same time,” Hamp

said.

Dozens of members tried their luck to have the opportunity to don a National Officer sash and close the Grange on Wednesday of the convention by purchasing a raffle ticket. The honor of serving as President for closing was reserved for an online auction. This fundraiser netted \$1,300 for the community and leadership development fund.

An online auction with a wide variety of items, held through December 4th, closed with more than \$7,200 in bids, with proceeds going to the Foundation’s General Fund. Over 30 items donated by Grange members, including quilts, a Montana fly-fishing trip for two, a week stay in a Florida home, handmade kitchen items, and one-of-a-kind art were part of the auction.

The several events throughout the year raised more than \$35,000 for various funds.

“These funds, along with funds raised from other projects during 2024, will allow the Foundation to continue to support programs in the Youth and Junior area as well as the Communication Fellows and SHIPmates programs in the Communications and Membership areas, respectively,” said Grange Foundation Board Chair John Benedik. “Our goal for 2025 is to continue to increase the visibility of and relevance of the Grange Foundation and broaden our support outside the Grange.”

He encouraged everyone to watch the National Grange’s Good Day! magazine and Grange Today! e-newsletter for more opportunities to support the Grange Foundation, while Hamp added, “Please consider donating to our 501(c)3 to ensure that the Grange is strong and vibrant for all the tomorrows to come,” Hamp said.

Salvation Army Red Kettle



Shirley Ellis



Andrew Croucher

The Salvation Army Kettle Campaign in Clifton Springs is directed by Doris Hunter a local volunteer. She arranges volunteers from many different organizations in the community to cover a shift from 1:00 PM until 6:00 PM each day during the campaign. Clifton Springs Grange, Rotary, School Groups and Family Groups are among those who ring the bell. The money is all kept to assist local people who have had a unfortunate circumstance.

The local “Tops” supermarket has allowed the bell ringers be inside the vestibule of the store to help protect them from the winter elements. The Grange has been volunteering for this project for more than 20 years. Shirley Ellis and Andrew Croucher (pictured), Victor Coon and his Son Josh, Peter Croucher and Bruce Croucher also participated