



## Strong rural communities start with you

By Sarah Bakker

Recently I attended, one of our climate change kitchen table meetings where we sat around an actual kitchen table. As we were talking about the effects of climate change, one participant shared about the stress, anger, and fear that farmers were feeling in his community. The uncertainty around weather, planting, and harvesting is taking its toll on farmers mental health. When we couple that with the loss of rural schools and local services, we can see why rural communities are struggling.

I think farmers, more than any other group, understand the value of community. Many of us have borrowed a piece of equipment when

one unexpectedly breaks down, helped a neighbour shear their sheep, or chatted best practices at the coffee shop. In fact, I would say farming is almost impossible without a strong community backing you up. Whether big or small, direct marketer or commodity producer, we can't work in isolation from our neighbours.

We are stronger together. In fact, the NFU has accomplished so many things by gathering together such as reopening the prison farms, the implementation of supply management, or keeping bovine growth hormone out of milk. In fact, that's the point of the organization; we gather together to amplify farmers' voices.

As harvests finish up and we move

into a slower time of the year, I encourage you to think about how you can strengthen your community. Can you come to a Local meeting, encourage a friend to join the NFU, or ask a neighbour if they need help? As Elizabeth Stocking Local 345 President said at the climate change kitchen table meeting, "Our strength is community." – Sarah Bakker is the NFU-O General Manager and farms in Bobcaygeon.

## Local 316 NFU Fall Feast – another huge success!

For the fourth year in a row, the Local 316 Fabulous Farmers Fall Feast sold out ahead of the event and provided a delicious local food meal for 100 happy diners.

A team of volunteers, many of them local young farmers, prepared and served a three course meal featuring foods in season; Sharon and Will Freeman, of Freedom Farm, Battersea, led the team, with Sharon the self-described "chief cook and bottle-washer".

About \$4,000 was raised for Local 316's fund that supports learning opportunities for new and young farmers and helps fund climate change mitigation projects by area farmers.

Examples of funding for learning opportunities include assistance in attending conferences and workshops, and sponsorship of an annual scholarship in each of Frontenac and Lennox-Addington Counties for a 4-H member attending university or college for an agriculture or environment-related program.

This summer, members of Local 316 formed a sub-committee to

organize climate change mitigation initiatives for area farmers. The group is working with the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario on a soil carbon bench-marking research project. Thirteen area farmers have signed up through the Local 316 committee to submit soil samples for testing various measures of soil carbon. The Local 316 grants fund is covering the lab testing costs for these farmers.

During the Feast, short presentations were made about NFU Ontario's climate action project, the Local 316 soil carbon initiative and the Fields of Hope photography book that is a fundraiser for three food and farm organizations. As well, NFU national president Katie Ward-Chiasson, and the newly appointed NFU national executive director Mara Shaw briefly spoke to the crowd.

A big thank you to the Fall Feast organizers, volunteers, contributors and attendees for a wonderful evening of good food, socializing, and raising money to support farmers and farming in this area.

## Coming Events

**Local 330 Renfrew** – Next meeting is Monday, December 2, 7:30 p.m. at the Barr Line Community Centre. For more information, contact Connie Tabbert at [rcnfu330@gmail.com](mailto:rcnfu330@gmail.com) or 613-646-7753.

**Local 330 Bruce** – Our AGM and Social is Wednesday, December 4, 7:30 p.m. at Marty's Bar & Grill, 526 Queen Street, Paisley. Dave Gordon with the Ontario Soil Network will speak about soil health and cover cropping. Finger foods and drinks will be provided. Please RSVP to [nfuont320@gmail.com](mailto:nfuont320@gmail.com) by December 1.

### Save the Date!

With support from the Gosling Foundation and the McLean Foundation, the NFU-O and the Ontario Farmland Trust will be holding a series of land-matching workshops that will allow young farmers to access land and retiring farmers to identify possible successors as well as provide legal resources, conservation information and other support.

**Saturday, January 25**  
Guelph Organic Conference

**Monday, January 27**  
Ottawa/Lanark

**Tuesday, January 28**  
Kingston

**Wednesday, January 29**  
Prince Edward County

**Thursday, January 30**  
Durham/Peterborough

For times and registration, visit:  
[farm-workshops.eventbrite.ca](http://farm-workshops.eventbrite.ca)