



RMFU Cooperative Leadership Camp

March 2012

A Veteran's Perspective on 2011

by Vanessa Farnik Olmstead

I got my start with RMFU in 2004, when I won the Weld County Cooperative Speech Contest. I was offered a scholarship, and I attended the summer leadership camp. While at camp I was elected to SYAC and served on the co-op board.

The next year I returned to Senior Camp, and then I stayed on as a counselor trainee for Junior Camp.

In the next two years, I was a camp counselor, and I was active in RMFU until 2008, when I moved to Georgia with my husband. Each year when June rolled around I felt like I should be at camp in Bailey. Finally, after three years, I got my chance to come back, and it was all I remembered and more.

BACK TO CAMP!

I am writing this article from the same bunk I occupied every year at camp, while the last campers depart for home. There are still the same creaks in the floors, and the same noises coming up from the kitchen. The same camp songs and graces. It was wonderful coming back to a familiar place with familiar faces.

Jennifer Luitjens Bahr was the camp director my last two years at camp. She had an amazing curriculum this year for the campers to learn more about where their

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2012 — Another Great Year!

by Jennifer Luitjens Bahr, Camp Director

It was hard to close the book on 2011, because it was such a stellar year for the RMFU Education Center. But we know 2012 will be even more grand.

Camp is a big part of the RMFU Education program. Camp brings together young people from all sorts of backgrounds. It teaches them leadership and life skills, and we send them home with lots of new ideas. Each year we tailor the camp program to achieve these objectives.

Because the United Nations has declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives, our theme for this

year will be *Cooperative Passport: Your Destination for Fun.*

Farmers Union has always been a leader in cooperative development, from the humble agricultural beginnings of CHS, Inc. to the creation of cooperative REAs that brought electricity to rural America and the on-line food co-ops that use the Internet to make local food a marketing reality.

No other farm organization has done more for cooperative businesses than Farmers Union. Supporting the cooperative business model is a cornerstone of our organization, and

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MARK THE DATE

June 3-6: Junior Camp (grades 2-4)

June 7-11: Middle Camp (grades 5-7)

June 11-15: Senior Camp (grades 8-12)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN FARMERS UNION

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Meet Your Senior Youth Advisory Council

Each year at Senior Cooperative Leadership Camp, campers elect a group of their peers to serve on RMFU's Senior Youth Advisory Council, or SYAC.

Their primary responsibility is to represent their generation of RMFU members at local and state events, such as by assisting at the annual convention. They also help plan the next year's camps.

In 2011, campers elected four SYAC members: Julia Birgen, Jesirae Earl, Jaclyn Kopetzky and Breanna Stafford. This newsletter features messages from two of them. Look for messages from Jesirae and Jaclyn in the next issue.

JULIA BIRGEN

HELLO! I am Julia Birgen and I live in Lafayette with my parents, my cat and my dog. I play the violin in my school orchestra and am teaching myself to play piano and guitar. I love all music. I am in National Honor Society and enjoy the community service I do through it. I am a manager for my school's soccer teams. In my free time I enjoy doing art photography. I also do several projects in 4-H including archery, photography, cake decorating and global citizenship.

I grew up in Farmers Union. Every summer I go to both the South Dakota's and Rocky

Mountain's camps. My Dad, Ken Birgen, grew up in SDFU and my Mom, Cindy Domenico, in RMFU. My great-grandfather on my dad's side and my great-great grandfather on my mom's side were the first in my family to be involved in Farmers Union. Every generation since has been deeply involved. My grandmothers were both youth leaders. My father was education director in South Dakota and my mother was NFU education director.

I'm carrying on the tradition of a love of Farmers Union despite not living on a farm.

BREANNA STAFFORD

I AM Breanna Stafford from Springfield, Colorado, the daughter of Jennifer and James Bradley. In Springfield, I am in the process of recruiting new friends to attend the 2012 Farmers Union Camp.

I'm very active in my community and involved in 4-H, NHS, FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, volleyball, basketball, and track. I'm a 4.0 student with honors, and I love to do my best in school and sports. I aim high for my future and hope to get outstanding scholarships to attend CSU to study and become a successful anesthesiologist.

Farmers Union has been a big part of my life ever since second grade, when my loving grandparents introduced it to me. My grandparents are Mike and Shelly Stafford of Stafford Insurance Agency. Every year, I anticipate the great adventures I will discover in Bailey, Colorado, with my lifelong friends. I'm honored to be able to plan this year's camp and be on the Senior Youth Advisory Council. I hope to make it a year to remember!



Newly elected 2011 Senior Youth Advisory Council takes an honor lap at Senior Camp on June 16. Left to Right: Jesirae Earl, Breanna Stafford, Jaclyn Kopetzky, Julia Birgen.

Theme Nights

We have very exciting theme nights planned for our upcoming camps!

- **White-Out & Black Lights Night:** Bring a white shirt you can customize with glow-in-the dark embellishments. (Junior, Middle & Senior)
- **Masquerade Ball:** Time to practice your curtsies and promenades. (Junior & Middle only)
- **Don the Duct Tape:** Create a stunning outfit from garbage bags and duct tape. (Senior only)



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Co-ops Are Everywhere in the USA

Ocean Spray, Tillamook Cheese, and Sunkist are grower-owned cooperatives. Ocean Spray has 600 cranberry and grapefruit growers. Tillamook Cheese is an Oregon-based cooperative of 110 dairy farmers, many who are third-generation members.

REI sells hiking, camping and other outdoor equipment to members. At the end of the year, members receive a patronage refund.

CoBank provides funds to local agricultural and financial cooperatives. Farm Credit Services provides operating loans to farmers and ranchers.

The Associated Press was formed in 1900 as a cooperative that allows member media outlets like newspapers to share stories.

Co-ops Come in International Flavors

The co-op movement traces its beginnings to the Rochdale Society in England, but in reality, cooperative business models evolved from economic ideas the world over. Here are some examples of how cooperation works in other countries.

In Italy, cooperatives are central to many aspects of the economy. The region around Bologna produces Ferraris, Ducatis, and Parmesan cheese. Their economy is built on 8,000 cooperative small businesses. Fifty per cent of their citizens belong to a co-op.

In Canada, cooperatives provide senior care on the principle that care for the elderly requires sincerity more than it does efficiency. Japan pioneered cooperative health care using community models hundreds of years old. The Japanese used those same neighborhood networks to create some of the first successful CSAs (community-supported agriculture).

Tea farmers in Sri Lanka are creating cooperatives to see that global trade recognizes the needs of the producers.

In Argentina, cooperatives replaced local industries to help with economic recovery after the government declared bankruptcy.

In its rise to power, the Soviet Union crushed the cooperative movement in Poland and the Ukraine. During the Industrial Revolution, the cooperative movement offered survival to skilled workers being replaced by machines.

Reach New Heights



... as an RMFU camp counselor!

To join in the fun, apply today.

Other fun summer jobs are available, such as an NFU internship in Washington, D.C. or an RMFU internship. For more information, contact Jennifer Luitjens Bahr at 303.752.5800.

How Big Are Co-ops?

The 300 top cooperatives in the world generated more than \$1.6 trillion in revenues for 2011. If they were a country, they would have the ninth-largest GDP.

COOPERATIVE PASSPORT YOUR DESTINATION FOR FUN

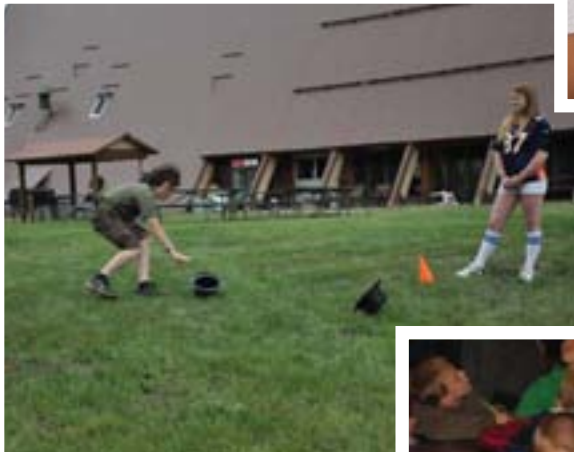
June 3-6: Junior Camp
Completed Grades 2-4

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Completed Grades 8-12

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**EVERY YEAR'S A YEAR TO REMEMBER!
WAIT TILL YOU SEE US IN 2012!**



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on Facebook
and Twitter.*



2012
International
Year of
Cooperatives



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Gala: We Did it Again!

by Jennifer Luitjens Bahr, Director of Education

We did it again, another fun-filled and successful Gala. The smiles on attendees' faces said it was a great evening for them, and more than \$40,000 was raised to benefit our education programs.

Harvest Moon Gala proceeds benefit summer camps, day camps, Fellows, scholarships, youth completions and Torchbearers.

RMFU is proud of the role our education programs play in the development of young people. We give them tools that will help them become engaged members of their communities. Our programs nurture the next generation of leaders for Farmers Union, our communities and our world. The Harvest Moon Gala helps ensure that the next generation of leaders is ready to take charge.

More than 200 people gathered at Little America to play games, celebrate our outstanding members, and spend some money on a good cause. Surrounded by silent auction

items ranging from bird seed, quilts, and seed corn to gift baskets, they took their chances on eleven challenging games. Each game had its own special prizes, including a digital camera, a KitchenAid mixer, an Xbox and a plasma TV. And for every ten entries the player got to drop their name into the drawing for the grand prize!

After a wonderful steak dinner, the live auction was launched and bidders competed for fishing trips, sports memorabilia, jewelry and a winter get-away trip.

For the highlight of the evening, 12 lucky finalists made it to the stage for the grand prize drawing. Participants could reach this final cut for the grand prize in two ways.

The first was to have their name drawn from the completed game cards. Some participants completed their ten games and then kept on going, with multiple cards in the drawing. The second way to reach the finals was to acquire the

highest total value in donations and sponsorships. Phillips/Sedgwick President Mike Poe and FUSA Insurance agent Chris Montgomery each secured over \$1200 in sponsorships from local businesses, to earn their way to the stage.

After a reverse raffle, Mike Poe was the last one standing and winner of the grand prize, a seven-night stay at a private residence in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, airfare for two and \$500 in spending cash.

When Mike accepted his prize, he said that RMFU education has always been an important part of his life, growing up with day camps and state camps. Then he offered his grand prize to the highest bidder with proceeds to go back into the education program. Our auctioneer came back on stage to lead a lively bidding war, and thanks to Mike's generosity, another \$2,150 was captured for RMFU education programs.

Thank you to everyone who helped secure auction items, helped sponsor the event, volunteered for the games, played the games or contributed to the auctions. Your smiles will be reflected back to you from the young people who have new experiences and opportunities, thanks to your generosity. Thank you for believing in what our education program has to offer and ensuring that our program continues. Thank you for all you do!

Come back next year for more fun. The 2012 Harvest Moon Gala will be held on November 16 at the Embassy Suites in Loveland, Colorado.

Mark it on your calendar.



SYAC member Jesirae Earl shows off the Troy Tulowitzki bat that was among the hottest items in the Gala auction.

food comes from. They made bread and butter, tasted a variety of fruits and vegetables, and toured a Whole Foods supermarket. Jen organizes a wonderful camp and then hands everything over to the counselors to give camp their own “flavor.” It is great to work with her!

Barb Marty took over cooking the year before I left. The food at camp has always been delicious, but with Barb and her friend Karen in the kitchen this year, it was exceptional. They take great pride in what they cook. They both have their own ideas. They combined them to create something wonderful at every meal.

I met Patti Poe in the summer of 2005. She is an inspiring woman. I will miss the early morning walks we took before the campers woke up. My first year as a counselor, I had Patti’s son, Brian Logan, in my KP. This year, he is a counselor trainee. Now he has his own job as a DJ. He’s doing what he loves!

MANY FAMILIAR FACES

Some of the other counselors are old friends too. Samantha Schuller was a camper when I was a counselor trainee, and I really got to know her my last year at camp. She is in college now, and she is the same organized and fun-loving girl. She would like to have a motorcycle, and I’ll bet it happens someday.

Darla Rosenbrock and Ramon Portuese were middle campers when I was a counselor, and now they are both at Northeastern Junior College. Darla was elected to NYAC in 2010, and Ramon has been elected in 2011. They are good workers and have great careers ahead of them.

Colter Herreid was a middle camper when I met him. Now he’s graduated from high school and grown into a talented young man.

AND SOME NEW ONES

Camp gained some talented new counselors since I’ve been gone. Lea Steinhoff is here for her second year. She is in college, studying communications. With her outgoing personality, she will do great in a communications career.

Chelsea Chapman is quiet, but she is a great listener with inner strength and a caring heart.

Zach DeVoy comes from Illinois, but he is attending CSU. He’s always ready to have fun. He is willing to do whatever needs done and is not afraid of work.

Forest Carpenter attended Metro State on the baseball

team. He has many talents besides baseball: fishing, duck calling, and photography, for instance.

Maya Benko is in her second year at camp, but she takes charge like she has been there many years. She is a great leader, and the campers love her.

This was Conor Kokes’ first year at camp, but he fit right in. He has great acting skills, with a persona and voice for every character. Acting is not his only skill. Patti summed Conor up when she said, “Is there anything he can’t do?”

A WONDERFUL SUMMER

Working with wonderful and talented individuals was inspiring. Everyone added their own flavor to camp. I feel blessed to have had the chance to return to camp and work with such gifted staff.

Not only was the staff great, but the campers were as well. There were more campers attending this year than there were a few years ago. Many of the returning campers have grown a lot, some so much that I almost didn’t recognize them. It was fun to see the young men and women that they have grown into. Even though we only spend a few days with each age group, it is easy to get attached to the campers.

I’m grateful for being able to return to camp and work for RMFU again. I grow each time I attend camp, by learning from the staff and by observing the campers. I will often think of the individuals that I got to spend time with at camp, and I hope that I get the chance to return to camp again in the future.

From the Director

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educating our young people on cooperative principles is a mainstay of our efforts.

This year at camp, we will hear from members of various cooperatives, tour a local coop, and build our own camp cooperatives. Even if you are not looking for a business model or a cooperative profession, you can use the cooperativer basics in your everyday life.

Camp registrations and staff applications can be found at www.rmfu.org/education. We are offering a special incentive for those who register prior to April 2: \$5 credit at the Camp Coop Store! Help us recruit new campers by telling your friends and neighbors, or let me know and I will send them a special camp packet.

See you in Bailey!