

"The graphics and story development were the reasons this entry was selected as the winner as they really stood out."

- 2019 Iowa Newspaper Association Better Newspaper Contest

Northeast Iowa Farmer



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Suhr Dairy and Friends Annual Farm Tours allow public to experience working farm, celebrating 15 years in 2023

The spring of each year is a busy time for everyone, but especially farmers and their families. They are trying to get many different tasks done each day including fieldwork, tending to the animals if they have them and whatever else that may arise. For Lavonne and Ed Suhr and their family, this includes opening up their farm northwest of Fredericksburg to the public for three days in early May.

In 2023, Suhr Dairy and Friends Annual Farm Tours is celebrating 15 years and tours are scheduled for May 1, 2 and 3, rain or shine. The farm is located at 2539 Quinlan Ave., Fredericksburg.

Lavonne Suhr, organizer, commented the tours began 15 years ago when their oldest daughter, Eadie, was in preschool. Her preschool teacher Janiece Kramer asked if the class could come out to see the dairy farm and Suhr asked a neighbor to bring ducks over so the children could see more than just cows.

"The magic of tours is it has grown to include over 70 volunteers. The volunteers bring in different animals and displays each year to keep tours new for all," stated Suhr. "We never know what is coming until they arrive. We have also expanded from one class to hosting students from 20 classrooms in a six-county radius as well as being open to the public each evening."

The goal of the farm tours is to allow people of all ages to experience the sights and sounds of a working farm while seeing as many different animals and agricultural displays as possible. Suhr expressed knowing where food comes

from is important. Another goal is to offer agricultural education and Suhr added knowing where food comes from is important because farmers work long hours to provide the best lives for their animals.

While providing tours to attendees there have been many interesting comments heard from children and adults. Suhr stated when they had dairy cows children were often surprised the milk in the bulk tank was not chocolate or strawberry.

"Many times the adults who tour at night are surprised by the many different animals on display," she added. "The evening horse-wagon rides always make smiles for all."

The Suhr Dairy and Friends Annual Farm Tours are made possible with the numerous volunteers each year. Suhr remarked over 70 people, the Fredericksburg Futures 4-H Club, the Sumner-Fredericksburg National Honor Society and the S-F eighth-grade leadership and ISTEP groups provide their time.

Many like to help with tours in some aspect, and some behind-the-scene jobs are the school schedule coordinator, designing and printing signs and fliers, those who donate prizes, monetary value or time and ditch and yard clean-up. Other jobs are preparing goodie bags for each student attending, preparing and delivering volunteers meals, setup and pumping out porta potties, setup, giving tours and clean-up. Suhr stated there is a job for anyone who wants to help.

The tours include a variety of stations for all ages to enjoy and Suhr commented this includes an alpaca, rabbits,

newly hatched chicks, a peacock, ducks, piglets, sheep shearing, goats, calves and a maple syrup display. Other stations include a corn roo, a wooden milking cow, spinning wheel in action, draft horses, donkey, miniature horse, fur displays and more.

"A huge highlight is the free frozen yogurt as a tasty treat. The evening door prizes and horse wagon rides are all a magical part of tours," expressed Suhr. "Our amazing volunteers are always on the lookout for new and



Preschool teacher Carly Schmitt (left) lifts up Remi Petersen so she can pet the horse during the farm tours. (Photo submitted)

exciting additions for tours. Volunteers have sourced animals from Fairbank to South Winn areas to keep tours fun and exciting."

Each year around 650 students visit and there have been as many as 1,500 people visit during the three-day run in past years including the general public. Schools scheduled for 2023 are Sumner-Fredericksburg, New Hampton, Fun in the Sun Daycare, RRRMR, Charles City's Immaculate Conception, North Fayette Valley, S-F fifth grade for farm safety, New Hampton's St. Joseph, New Hampton, West Union's Hippy Hop pre-kindergarten, South Winneshiek and Charles City.

When looking to the future Suhr commented if the annual farm tours expand it is dependent on the amazing volunteers who make tours happen. She added they joke tours have a life of their own as they are simply magical. For this year, in addition to the animals or displays volunteers bring in, the Suhrs are hosting a farm party after tours to celebrate 15 years of tours, their oldest daughter's high school graduation and 25 years of marriage for Lavonne and Ed.

"It is a chance to personally give back to all of the volunteers and donors who make tours possible. Nashville recording artist Nick Johnson offered to bring his band up to play for the occasion" she added.

Local businesses and individuals support the tours in a variety of ways and Suhr commented the community support of each donor is truly what makes tours possible. Monetary donations are used to purchase flower baskets which decorate the farm as well as other needs which may come up, and at the end of the tours each volunteer is gifted a flower basket to keep. The local Farm Bureau purchases shirts for each volunteer every year, and this allows for attendees to easily spot a guide. Suhr expressed there are even donors who bring meals to feed the volunteer tour guides and house sitters to babysit other volunteers' young children and bring meals to the barns when needed.

Tours were shut down in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 global pandemic with having animals and displays to the Suhr's farm. Suhr explained they did have two small

(Continued on page 7)



Children and adults take a horse-drawn wagon ride during the 2019 farm tours which is a family favorite each year. (Photo submitted)

A Look at Agricultural Law...

By Patrick B. Dillon, Attorney

What about the little guy

Sometimes, you don't control enough of the pie to be in charge of when you eat it or when you throw it at the neighbor. This status is called a minority ownership interest. Lots of second and third generations end up with these types of interests in family operations for various reasons.

Being a minority interest holder can stink. Iowa has some really strong caselaw which pretty much says you are at the mercy of the majority, even if what the majority is doing is not what you want or what you think they are supposed to be doing. It does let you claim your 1/16th of the pie is not worth 1/16th of the total value of the operation. Sometimes, that is exactly why minor interests are given, to give away \$10,000 per acre ground and report it is only worth \$8,000 per acre in gift value because it is less than a full interest.

If you are a minority interest holder, you should look closely at what rights you have and war game the worst possible outcome of being able to exercise those rights. Yes, you can sue the majority for breaching their duties to the entity, but you are already in low-ground position as you don't have the capital the majority has in most cases. The breach needs to be pretty clear.

If you are a minority interest holder and you don't have a written agreement, it's something you should strongly look into to protect your minor share from becoming microscopic in value.

Skynet is on the way

If you are listening, you can hear the march of progress. Computer programmers have created programs using predictive text which can, among other things, prepare questions for a trial lawyer to ask a witness, a proposed order, write book, write a term paper, draw a picture based on the description provided and, most recently, use an online wallet to hire a human to overcome the security feature where you have to pick images out of a picture to prove you are not a robot. Change is coming.

This change won't be limited to term papers, lawyers and artists. Ag will be impacted. When the program, which is

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called ChaptGPT by the way, was asked the question, this is how it responded five seconds later (as reported by my friend Todd Janzen on his blog):

- Predictive analytics: ChatGPT can be trained to analyze large amounts of data from various sources to inform crop and livestock management decisions. This can help farmers optimize their operations, increase yields, and reduce costs.
 - Crop and livestock monitoring: ChatGPT can be used to monitor crops and livestock using sensors and cameras. This can help farmers detect early signs of disease or stress, allowing them to take proactive measures to address the issue.
 - Automation of manual tasks: ChatGPT can be used to automate manual tasks such as planting, harvesting and monitoring crop growth. This can help farmers save time and labor costs and reduce the risk of human error.
 - Smart irrigation: ChatGPT can be used to optimize irrigation systems, for example by using weather data to predict when and how much water to apply to crops.
 - Precision agriculture: ChatGPT can be used to analyze data from various sources, such as weather reports, soil samples and market prices, to inform precision agriculture techniques. This can help farmers make more informed decisions about planting, fertilization and crop protection.
- This tech has its roots in reviewing previously published materials and predicting what comes next in a logical response. It isn't always on point, right now it will make up caselaw citations to fictitious cases because it knows a case law cite likely comes next, but it can't, right, do the research to confirm what case.

Other AI tech have some bugs to work out, to include some interactive programs which take on possessive, needy, stalker-like responses if the human user says things to it like, we need to stop talking about this topic or you are not a friend of mine.

We don't have terminators, real hover boards or George Jetson cars but just give the computer some more data and who knows...



MARLOWE STEEGE, FREDERICKSBURG

Hirsch wins February mystery farm contest

Terry Hirsch was the winner drawn for the February mystery farm contest. The February mystery farm contest proved to be a challenge as only one correct entry was submitted. The February mystery farm is owned by Marlowe Steege, Fredericksburg. Hirsch has won a \$25 gift card to Norby's Farm Fleet.



Name: _____ Phone: _____
Mystery Farm: _____

Guess the owner of this farm and win a \$25 Gift Certificate to Norby's Farm Fleet

Drop off all contest entries at the Tripoli Leader or Sumner Gazette offices, or Fredericksburg Review drop box at the Food Center or mail your entries to: Sumner Gazette, Mystery Farm Contest, P.O. Box 208, Sumner, IA 50674. Entries must be postmarked by 15th of the month. In the event of a tie, a winner will be drawn randomly from all correct entries. Limit one entry per person. No entry form reproductions accepted.



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