

For Immediate Release
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Oregon Farm Bureau Women Attend National Leadership Conference

THE DALLES, OR, May 7, 2008 – Oregon Farm Bureau members Karen Polehn and Mary Grimes recently attended a National Women’s Leadership Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Nearly 700 farm and ranch women from 38 states attended to sharpen their leadership skills, network with one another, and hear a challenge from President of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The conference included sessions on family business dynamics, grassroots political advocacy, adapting to change, challenges and opportunities in animal agriculture, educating consumers about agriculture, tips for marketing farm products, women’s health issues, and more.

For Polehn, a fresh cherry and pear producer in Wasco County, the most impressive conference session was “Educating About Agriculture --- More Important Than Ever!” by Betty Wolanyk, Director Education & Research AFB Foundation for Agriculture.

“As educators and members of the farming and ranching community, it is important to impress upon the public that not everything on the news, in print, and on the Internet is accurate or has a scientific basis,” said Polehn.

Grimes, a retired Tennessee walker horse rancher in Linn County, most enjoyed the conference session on “Face Time: Political Influence on YOUR Turf” by Cody Lyon, Director and Policy Advocacy for the American Farm Bureau Federation.

“It focused on the importance of face time with lawmakers and staff, with emphasis on meetings within the state, such as town hall meetings or site visits,” said Grimes. “Farm Bureau women are vital voices in agriculture policy and this session will help make the impact even greater.”

Terry Gilbert, a Kentucky native and chair of the AFB National Women’s Leadership Committee, welcomed attendees to the conference, which was open to all farm and ranch women.

“Interest in helping women in agriculture improve their leadership skills is so great, we are planning to host this conference every two years, rather than every four years,” Gilbert said.

AFBF President Bob Stallman and Farm Bureau need’s strong women leaders, both within Women’s Leadership programs and elsewhere in the organization.

Stallman issued a challenge to the women attendees: “Crash through the perception of Farm Bureau as a good ol’ boys club. Make this organization one that people think of first when the words women, agriculture, and opportunity are linked in a sentence,” he said

The next National Leadership Conference will be held in the spring of 2010.

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