



The Patrons Chain

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE

May 27, 2022

Regional conferences have something for everyone

By [Betsy Huber](#), National Grange President

June is almost here (already) and it will be a busy month for Grangers.

June 10-12 is the [Great Plains Regional Conference](#) — I hope those of you in this region have registered and are planning to attend in Manhattan, Kansas.

June 17-19 is the [Eastern Regional Conference](#) at the National Grange Headquarters building in Washington DC. The deadline for registration is June 1, so you need to act quickly! Northeastern region Grangers are also welcome to attend this conference. There are workshops for all ages; it's not just for youth and Juniors. But the Youth and Junior contests for public speaking, sign-a-song, and Grange baseball, as well as workshops on drill and parliamentary procedure, will be held here and provide great entertainment! Northeastern contestants can participate in the contests in person or virtually and will be judged against others in their own region.

June 24-26 is the [Midwest Regional Conference](#) in Muscatine, Iowa and registration will close soon for this also.

Finally, the [Western Regional Conference](#) is August 5-7 in Eugene, Oregon and registration is now open for this event.

This year National Grange staff will be presenting several workshops at each regional conference to help you serve your Grange better and advance as a leader. Some titles are Grange 101; Active Listening and Conflict Management; Connecting Programming, Membership and Fundraising. Other workshops will be presented by regional Grange leaders and are sure to be interesting and worthwhile.

If you've never attended a Regional Conference before, this is a great year to try out the experience! You'll not only learn a lot but also meet many Grangers who care as much about Grange as you do and can offer great new ideas you can use back home. [Register today!](#)

Rural Minds Collaboration puts focus on mental wellness

By [Pete Pompper](#), National Grange Community Service Director

As National President Betsy mentioned last week in her *Patrons Chain* article the National Grange is working on developing a partnership with [Rural Minds](#), a nonprofit group that was formed just six months ago to help bring to light the lack of mental health programs and facilities in rural America. One of their focus points is the stigma associated with people talking about mental health issues and needing help.

We can all agree that there is a lack of mental health (or mental wellness) professionals and facilities in our rural communities. In a short time, Rural Minds has put together a working group of professionals in the field who share their concerns. They have the ability and resources to put together informational literature and programs concerning these issues.

This where the Grange has the opportunity to step up and help Rural Minds get this information into our communities and to someone who may need that information. We have a great network of Granges in the United States that step up to help time after time. We are in the



process of working in conjunction with Rural Minds to develop the information for Granges to distribute, and we will also be working with them to suggest programming ideas for Granges to utilize. These would obviously be in conjunction with local, county or state mental health organizations. There are approximately 1500 Community Granges across the country. That gives us at least 1500 opportunities to impact and reach someone who is struggling with issues.

I encourage members to go to their website (RuralMinds.org) to get an idea of what their mission is. As we work with them to get information together, we will make sure Granges are involved and will rely on your input.

Rural Minds periodically hosts webinars that are very informative that Grange members can sign up for. They are in a format that is timely, informative, and free. I cannot stress how important this is and we as an organization need to step up and take a lead in this. Educating our communities has always been tenet of the Grange, even on things that are uncomfortable to talk about. National Grange Program Director [Ann Bercher](#) and I will be working collaboratively through our departments to get information to you as it is developed.

Register for the 156th Annual Convention

By [Samantha Wilkins](#), National Grange Operations Coordinator



The Western Host region is excited to invite Grangers and friends from across the country to the Silver State! We are just over 6 months away from the opening of the 156th National Grange Convention, set to be held in Reno-Sparks, Nevada from November 15 through 19, 2022.

Many new and exciting things are being planned by the Host region and you are sure to have a memorable experience in Reno!

This year, you are invited to kick off the 156th annual convention with a welcome reception on Monday, November 14. This reception is open to all who register for the convention. The welcome reception will be

full of entertainment and will include a large welcome from the Western States.

Nevada Grangers are excited to welcome members to their state and showcase some of the amazing things they are doing, like the Youth Fair Program, cultural art dancing and more!

Also, new this year is the 'Experience Pass!' Instead of taking a tour bus out of the hotel, we are bringing the tour to you. Those who purchase an 'Experience Pass' during their registration process will have the opportunity to stop in throughout the day on Friday, November 18th and Saturday, November 19th to participate in hands-on education and fun, with local artisans, vendors, and people connected to the agriculture industry. This is an event open to all ages and is sure to bring a ton of fun to your convention experience.

Just like past conventions, Grangers will also have the opportunity to watch the Delegates of the National Grange debate policies and resolutions, discuss important changes, and make decisions for the future of the Order. The Western States are working together to bring the exemplification of the 6th Degree to the session on Saturday morning and, following that exemplification, the Assembly of Demeter will exemplify the historic 7th Degree.

If you have never been to the Silver State or had the opportunity to obtain your 7th Degree, now is the time! Also throughout the week, you will have the opportunity to join in on workshops from different departments that could benefit you and your local Grange. There will also be time to meet with the National Grange leadership, learn about programming, and participate in contests and activities for Youth and Junior Grange members alike.

Don't take too long to decide; catch the **early bird registration** and make plans to attend today by registering for the National Grange Convention at this link: [156th Annual National Grange Convention - The National Grange](#).

Early Bird Registration - \$32 is open until 9/9/2022

General Registration - \$37 is open until 10/19/22

Late Registration - \$42 closes for meal options on 11/1/22

Registration on Site - will be available at the late registration cost, *however, you will not be able to obtain tickets to any meals*



Submit your videos here: <https://bit.ly/2022TelethonSubmissions>

The Grange Foundation Virtual Telethon is seeking sponsorships!

Granges, individuals, and companies are being sought to become sponsors of this 2nd annual Virtual Telethon for the National Grange Junior and Youth Departments. Sponsors can choose from several levels of support and will be recognized during our virtual telethon, on our website and social media, and in [our weekly newsletter](#) and quarterly *Good Day!* magazine. For as low as \$25 (individuals/Granges) or \$500 (companies), you can help ensure that children, youth, and young adults have access to educational opportunities and more from the National Grange.

You can learn more about becoming a telethon sponsor by visiting [this link](#) or by emailing [Samantha Wilkins](#).

Applications open for 2022 Communication Fellows

We invite you to apply to be part of the 2022 class of Communication Fellows at the 156th Annual National Grange Convention in Sparks, Nevada. This opportunity is made possible thanks to generous funders, but there are VERY limited spots available. Those who become Fellows are expected to make time for at least three hour-long orientation/training teleconferences that will be

held at least once a month starting in August and running through October, as well as a few brief assignments or projects prior to the start of the National Convention.

Fellows will hear and learn from the National Grange President, Staff and Officers, former Communications Fellows, other communications professionals, and more. Fellows will produce content for the daily convention newsletter, interviews and content for our social media channels, stories/elements for *Good Day!* magazine, live stream events - and much more. This is hands-on training with support from many of the previous Fellows who have participated in the program since 2012. Former Fellows now hold many significant offices and jobs in their State and National Grange and often credit the program with providing them insight into the differences across State Granges and the opportunities and challenges to the organization, as well as great motivation for being part of our next 155+ years of service.

[The application is available here.](#) Completed applications including nomination letters must be received by the start of business on July 8, 2022.

Slight Change to Grange in Action program

By [Loretta Washington](#), National Grange Sales, Benefits, and Program Director

The **Grange in Action** program has grown every year, showcasing the many wonderful projects Granges are participating in nationwide.

This year, Granges are invited to submit a letter-sized one-page entry of *at least three but no more than six pictures and captions of various events/activities that the Grange sponsored or assisted with between September 1, 2021 and Sept 1, 2022.*

All entries must be received by September 25th. [Click here for full rules and entry information.](#)

Granges who submit will be recognized at the 156th National Grange Session in Sparks, Nevada.

A promotional graphic for Regional Leadership Conferences. The background is a gradient from blue at the top to orange at the bottom. At the top, it says 'Register today!' in large white letters. Below that, it says 'The summer is approaching, and so are the Regional Leadership Conferences!' in smaller white text. There are four conference listings arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each listing includes a region name in yellow, dates, and location. At the bottom, it says 'For Grange members of all ages' and provides a website link for registration information. The National Grange logo is in the bottom right corner.

Region	Dates	Location
Great Plains	June 10-12	Manhattan, Kansas
Midwest	June 24-26	Muscatine, Iowa
Eastern Mid-Atlantic & Southeastern	June 17-19	Washington, DC
Western	August 5-7	Eugene, Oregon

Registration information for conferences is [available on the National Grange website.](#)

Initiative to Support Rural Pastors Could Be Helping Save Farmers' Lives

By Russell Lackey and Trisha Wheelock

Courtesy of [The Daily Yonder](#)

In the 1960s sitcom “Green Acres,” wealthy New Yorkers leave the city for rural life. As the show’s twangy theme song says, “Farm living is the life for me.” It’s a funny, lighthearted show — but in reality, many farmers’ lives are far from idyllic.

In January 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a report on suicide rates by occupation. Farmers landed in the top five. Along with workers in construction, mining, transportation, and services such as auto repair, workers in agriculture die by suicide at disproportionately high rates. The complexity of farming, along with isolation, shame over economic distress, and a lack of mental health resources is fueling this epidemic.

Four years ago, we launched The Moses Project, a program to equip rural pastors with resources for congregational leadership, connect them to peers and support them with mentors. Our hope was to inspire innovative thinking among those serving in rural settings. The effort is funded by a Thriving in Ministry grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The name for the project came from Deuteronomy 34:7: “Moses was 120 years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated” (NRSV). The idea is that where there is vision, there is passion. We hoped to inspire vision among pastors. We didn’t know that this work would also help improve mental health among farmers.

One of the program’s exemplars is the Rev. Grant Woodley, a fourth-generation farmer and a Lutheran pastor. Woodley’s bivocational work places him in a unique position to inform and inspire his colleagues. Speaking to a group of pastors, Woodley said, “Farmers face tremendous pressure, as global dynamics, the weather, economic markets — both domestic and global — and politics all factor into the business of farming.”

That pressure can kill. We have pastors who’ve buried high school students and farmers in their 20s and 30s who feel overwhelmed at not being able to continue the family legacy. These deaths take a heavy toll on the local community — including the pastors themselves.

Yet farmers can serve as positive models, Woodley said. To survive, farmers need to be flexible in their business; they also need to be empathetic to care for themselves and loved ones in their community.

Woodley then challenged his colleagues to be pastors who “think like farmers”: to be flexible and empathetic with the long game in mind. In other words, to practice traditioned innovation.

This challenge resonated for the Rev. Stephen Zeller, a project participant, who serves a rural congregation at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Cole Camp, Missouri. Zeller began thinking about the mental health of farmers in his church and community. He realized that no one talked about mental health. With empathy for the community, Zeller and his church decided to act.

The church hosted a concert at a family farm featuring the Peterson Farm Brothers band. Funded by a grant, it was touted as a “We love our farmers” event and included family activities and food. Zeller also invited participation from the local University of Missouri Extension Office.

The outdoor event was attended by 150-200 people and included eight representatives from the extension office — and lots of resources on suicide awareness for rural communities. Some farmers quietly grabbed pamphlets and avoided making eye contact. Others connected with church members, extension representatives and others.

The success of the concert led to further collaboration. Zeller’s church partnered with a clinic for farmers. This free event included students completing a rural-track internship through the University of Missouri School of Medicine, who provided mental health screenings, a presentation on mental health and suicide awareness, and a free lunch.

By thinking like a farmer, Zeller identified needs in the community and sought collaboration partners who were already active in mental health support for rural communities. Such work not only helps the congregation flourish; it also brings an awareness that can save lives.

One thing is clear: Pastors and church leaders stand in a crucial space within rural America. Their buildings are often the nicest ones in town, and everyone has passed through those spaces for

weddings, funerals, baptisms and other life events. When pastors and churches take the time to be flexible and creative, many blessings arise.

Zeller explains: "Being able to notice what we were doing well, what didn't need to be done, and what the needs around us were at that time allowed us to create new partnerships and offer God's love where it was really needed."

The church has an important role to play in facilitating conversations about suicide, mental health and other needs faced by rural communities. Unlike Moses, who watched a generation of his community die in the wilderness, we as rural pastors can work to help a generation of farmers live.

If we commit to thinking like farmers, with empathy and creativity, lives can be changed. And maybe over time, we might help more people in our communities say, "Farm living is the life for me."



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National Grange Member Benefit – Lenovo

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Some jewelry is now on clearance!

Prices vary

Order online through the Grange Supply Store at grangestore.com or by calling Loretta at (202) 628-3507 ext. 109.

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