



THE Loop

OCTOBER 2009

NEWSLETTER

If the name fits: Famous Michigan steer now known as Mighty Mitt

(More than 2,500 people enter contest to name farm mascot)

Contact: Luke Schafer, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2753

LANSING, Sept. 17, 2009 - Michigan's agricultural mascot now has a name. More than 2,500 Michigan residents entered a statewide contest, sponsored by Farm Bureau Insurance, to find a name for the Saginaw-born steer whose natural hide sports what looks like the Michigan mitten on one side and a large letter U, a reference to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, on the other.

The winning name, selected by Farm Bureau Insurance and Michigan Farm Bureau officials, is Mighty Mitt, described by contest entrants as being appropriate because "Michigan is a mighty state with mighty people, so we need a mighty mascot that shows we are strong and can survive difficult times."

Five different entrants submitted the winning name, but contest rules stated that the earliest entry would take priority. The first entrant to submit the winning name was Maryann Kruszewski, of Greenwood, who won the first-place prize of \$250.

The second place name was Atlas, submitted by two entrants. The first entrant to submit the name was Iris Rodak, of Benton Harbor, who won the second-place prize of \$100. The entrants said the name suggested strength, like Atlas of mythology. They also pointed out that every atlas of the United States features Michigan prominently, just as this steer does.

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Membership Standings

	2010	SEPTEMBER 22, 2009	
GOAL	189,958	7,937	4.18%
TARGET	47,736	1,238	2.59%

A look ahead....

November

18-19 Campaign Management Workshop

December

1 - 4 MFB Annual Meeting

***** County Annual Meetings Continue through November *** Membership Schools run 11/5 - 12/17 *****

REMINDERS

- **"FB Update" DVDs are mailed out quarterly. Your next version will be in November, 2009.**
- **Annual CAG Supply Packets were mailed out by September 4, 2009 to all CAG secretaries that are currently updated in our database.**
- **CAG's have online resources available. The Loop, Discussion Topics, Discussion Response Form, Report Form, Questions and the Fun Page are all available to view and print by visiting www.michfb.com/cag**
- **Any suggestions or ideas for future articles, discussion topics or fun pages can be E-mailed to apline@michfb.com or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy, PO Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909-8460 Attention: Amy Pline**



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For questions, comments and suggestions, please contact Mike Wenkel at Ext. 3232.

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In third place was the name Trooper, entered by three separate Michigan residents. The first to submit the name was Scott Mires, of Roscommon, who earned the third-place prize of \$100. Entrants said the name was a combination of the nicknames for Lower Peninsula residents, "trolls," and Upper Peninsula residents, "Yoopers," so this name signifies trolls and Yoopers coming together.



"We had a lot of fun with this contest and want to thank all the people who entered," said Jim Robinson, executive vice president of Farm Bureau Insurance. "Agriculture is a very important industry in Michigan and Mighty Mitt helps bring attention to that fact. He will help promote agri-tourism and agricultural education in this state."

The steer was born in 2006 on the Jacob Kessler Farm in Spaulding Township and purchased by Farm Bureau Insurance last July. The celebrity animal is on permanent loan to the Wolcott Mill Metropark Farm Center in Macomb County, where he is seen by thousands of visitors every year. Farm Bureau Insurance also plans to use Mighty Mitt in company promotions in the years ahead.

"We're called Michigan's Insurance Company because we are committed to serving only Michigan residents," Robinson said. "We've got Michigan under our skin and we wear it with pride, just like Mighty Mitt."

MFB emphasizes Agriculture Dept. should remain single state agency

Contact: Tonia Ritter, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2048 or Sarah Black, ext. 2040

LANSING, Sept. 17, 2009 - Merging the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) with other state agencies, by executive order or other action, would do little to help solve the state's budget deficit and, in general, would be a huge mistake for Michigan's struggling economy.

That's the message of the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB), the state's largest general farm organization, in response to intensified rumblings about consolidating MDA and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

In a letter sent this week to Lt. Gov. John Cherry, head of a state workgroup on streamlining Michigan government, MFB reiterated that member-developed Farm Bureau policy "strongly supports the individual existence of the Department of Agriculture within State government" and opposes "any attempt to dilute the effectiveness of the MDA by merging it with any other government agency or department."

"We believe the current structure and focus of MDA is a major reason why agricultural output, food manufacturing and ethanol production is a \$71 billion and growing business with over 1 million jobs in Michigan," wrote MFB President Wayne H. Wood in the letter.

MFB agrees that state government must operate as efficiently and effectively as possible, and acknowledges that MDA should not be immune to reductions. But the organization contends that state budget deficits "indicate

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a real and urgent need to address fundamental changes and reform within state government.” “A combination of departments will negligibly contribute to Michigan’s economic recovery and distract decision makers from making necessary reforms,” said Wood. “Our state needs real reform in the face of a projected \$1.8 billion general fund deficit in the coming fiscal year and in the wake of the loss of over 400,000 manufacturing jobs in the past eight years-not just some new department names with the same lineup of players and programs.

“Michigan must focus on tackling big issues dealing with corrections, human services and education spending that represents nearly 85.6 percent of general fund spending, while at the same fostering growing economic sectors.”

MFB points out that Michigan’s economic condition is not a function of the number of state departments, as other states comparable in population to Michigan have the same number of departments, or more, yet fare far better than Michigan in unemployment rates and per capita income growth. (Virginia, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Tennessee all have more than 15 state departments; Virginia has over 30. These states all enjoy unemployment rates less than 10.3 percent, and per capita income growth that is either flat or growing in 2009.

“Reshuffling the number of state departments may eliminate a few administrative jobs, but it will not have any meaningful resolution of Michigan’s budget deficit,” said Wood.

In lieu of merging multiple state departments, MFB believes all departments “must continue to analyze every service and cost to best meet the

most critical program needs with limited funds,” and says the “agriculture and food industry stands ready to cooperate with MDA in a full review of programs and services.”

MFB also points out that beyond MDA’s regulatory role, the department is a “facilitator and promoter of agriculture,” and agriculture is a “vibrant, diverse economic driver that will advance a new Michigan.”

“A strong MDA will continue to help grow investment in Michigan agriculture, food manufacturing and renewable energy at a time when Michigan needs all the economic growth it can get,” said Wood.

In addition, the letter states that while the working relationship between MDA and Michigan’s agriculture industry is very strong and mutually beneficial, “there is more work to do.”

“In fact, we believe that the MDA should be even more encompassing, like the U.S. Department of Agriculture with greater authority of such programs as food safety, consumer protection, conservation, forestry and renewable energy,” wrote Wood.



<http://www.michigan.gov/mda/>



USDA Launches 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' Initiative to Connect Consumers with Local Producers to Create New Economic Opportunities for Communities

Release No. 0440.09 / Contact:
Office of Communications (202) 720-462

WASHINGTON, September 15, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today announced a new initiative - 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' - to begin a national conversation to help develop local and regional food systems and spur economic opportunity. To launch the initiative, Secretary Vilsack recorded a video to invite Americans to join the discussion and share their ideas for ways to support local agriculture.



The video, one of many means by which USDA will engage in this conversation, can be viewed at USDA's YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/usda. Producers and consumers

can comment on the 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' YouTube playlist, as well as submit videos or provide comments on this initiative by e-mailing KnowYourFarmer@usda.gov.

"Americans are more interested in food and agriculture than at any other time since most families left the farm," said Merrigan. "'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' seeks to focus that conversation on supporting local and regional food systems to strengthen American agriculture by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and spurring economic opportunity in rural communities."

In the months to come, cross-cutting efforts at USDA will seek to use existing USDA programs to break down structural barriers that have inhibited local food systems from thriving. Today, USDA announced a small initial group of moves that seek to connect local production and consumption and promote local-scale sustainable operations:

USDA's Risk Management Agency announced \$3.4 million in funding for collaborative outreach and assistance programs to socially disadvantaged and under-served farmers. These

programs will support 'Know Your Farmer' goals by helping producers adopt new and direct marketing practices. For example, nearly \$10,000 in funding for the University of Minnesota will bring together experts on food safety and regulations for a discussion of marketing to institutions like K-12 schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and other health care facilities.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service proposed regulations to implement a new voluntary cooperative program under which select state-inspected establishments will be eligible to ship meat and poultry products in interstate commerce. The new program was created in the 2008 Farm Bill and will provide new economic opportunities for small meat and poultry establishments, whose markets are currently limited.

USDA's Rural Development announced \$4.4 million in grants to help 23 local business cooperatives in 19 states. The member-driven and member-owned cooperative business model has been successful for rural enterprises, and bring rural communities closer to the process of moving from production-to-consumption as they work to improve their products and expand their appeal in the marketplace.

USDA's Rural Development will also announce a Rural Business Opportunity Grant in the amount of \$150,000 to the Northwest Food Processors Association. The grant will strengthen the relationship between local food processors and customers in parts of Idaho, Oregon and Washington, and will also help the group reduce energy consumption, a major cost for food processors.

As the 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiative evolves, USDA will continue to build on the momentum and ideas from the 2008 Farm Bill and target its existing programs and develop new ones to pursue sustainable agriculture and support for local and regional food systems.

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