

NewsWatch

2009 Fairest of the Fairs crowned

THE 43rd annual Wisconsin Fairest of the Fairs, Melissa Ploeckelman, was selected from a record 42 young women currently representing their counties as Fairest. Ploeckelman was selected Jan. 14 during the 86th Annual Wisconsin Association of Fairs Convention in the Wisconsin Dells.

Ploeckelman will represent the 76 Wisconsin county, district and state fairs in 2009. Her one-year term concludes at the close of the Wisconsin Association of Fairs Convention in January 2010.

Fairest's responsibilities include traveling to the county, district and state fairs throughout the state as the spokeswoman for the Wisconsin Association of Fairs, and serving as the official hostess of the 2009 Wisconsin State Fair, presented by U.S. Cellular, Aug. 6-16.

Throughout her term, the Fairest of the Fairs promotes educational, agricultural, social, cultural and commercial opportunities offered at Wisconsin's county, district and state fairs.

Ploeckelman, 21, represents Marathon County. She is the daughter of James and Cheryl Ploeckelman of Stetsonville. She attends the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, where she is majoring in agriculture education. She is



MELISSA PLOECKELMAN

actively involved in her school's agriculture education society, has served as the national student president of Alpha Tau Alpha and is a former state FFA officer. Ploeckelman also serves as a resident assistant and is a Wisconsin FFA Alumni member.

Wisconsin author Perry keynotes Farm Bureau women's conference

WISCONSIN author and humorist Michael Perry will headline the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation's Women's Leadership Conference March 20-22 in downtown La Crosse. The author of "Population 485" will serve as keynote speaker on the Sunday morning session at the Radisson Hotel.

"Our annual leadership seminar is a fun way for Farm Bureau women to network, gain skills to improve their businesses and lives, and get away for a few days," says Dale Beaty, FB director of training and leadership development.

An optional bus tour of La Crosse's City Brewery and Our Lady of Guadalupe is offered for \$10 on Friday afternoon, March 20. The conference officially kicks off that evening with a welcome dinner at 6 p.m. with greetings from WFBF Women's Chairwoman Rosie Lisowe and La Crosse Mayor Mark Johnsrud. WFBF President Bill Bruins

then will address members.

Saturday afternoon's workshops will feature information on gardening, nutrition, estate planning and new materials for the Ag in the Classroom program. Saturday evening, attendees will be treated to entertainment by the Rince Mo Chroi (Dance My Love) Irish Dancers.

Cost for the entire weekend is \$125 per person and includes five meals, entertainment, refreshment breaks, conference workshops and materials. There are single-day registrations, as well. Friday (welcome dinner) is \$40 per person. Saturday (lunch and dinner) is \$90. Registration deadline is Feb. 18.

Make room reservations with the Radisson Hotel La Crosse at 608-784-6680. Let them know you are with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Seminar. For more information, call Dale Beaty at 608-828-5714 or visit www.wfbf.com.

Deadline for Ag Day essays nears

The Agriculture Council of America is calling on 7th- to 12th-grade students to submit an original essay of 450 words about the importance of agriculture. This year's theme is "Agriculture — Every Day in Every Way," and the deadline is Feb. 9. Teachers are asked to encourage their students to participate.

The theme highlights the importance of agriculture in everyone's lives. From the clothes we wear to the food we eat, agriculture is a part of every day for everyone. Though row crops and livestock are still very much a part of the industry's foundation, agriculture today has multiple touch points in our daily lives and offers many career opportunities.

This year's national winner will receive a \$1,000 prize and round-trip ticket to Washington, D.C., to be recognized at

the March 12 Celebration of Ag Dinner held at the Whitten Patio. At the dinner, the winner will have the opportunity to join with industry representatives, members of Congress, federal agency representatives, media and other friends in a celebration of agriculture. Statewide winners of the contest also will be selected. Each state winner will receive a \$100 prize.

The goal of the ACA is to provide a spotlight on agriculture and the food and fiber industry the first of each spring (National Ag Day).

Send entries to: Ag Day Essay Contest, Agriculture Council of America, 11020 King Street, Suite 205, Overland Park, KS 66210, or e-mail them to: essay@agday.org. For entry applications and rules, see www.hpj.com/agdayessay.

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