

Congratulations New WATA Board Members

Malorie Paine

Malorie Paine is the Executive Director of the Plover Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Paine, appointed in 2024 to serve a one year term, has been elected to serve a full three-year term with the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association Board of Directors. She will serve as the Chair of WATA's Education Committee. Paine will also continue to serve on the WATA Marketing Committee.



Shawn Lehman

Shawn Lehman is a Digital Marketing Specialist and owner of Bon Sens Media, LLC, a Milwaukee-based marketing agency specializing in agritourism. She has been helping family farms across America promote and grow their agritourism events and agriculture programs for 9+ years. Lehman is a partner of StudioSR, LLC, an award-winning marketing agency with 30+ years of experience in the agritourism industry. Services offered include social media marketing, email campaigns, paid ads management, website development, collateral materials, brand development, and more. Lehman will serve as the Chair of WATA's Marketing Committee.

Thank You!

Thank you to Sarah Schuster for her service to the WATA Board of Directors.

Sarah's talents helped to moved WATA's Marketing Forward.



Skelly's Farm Market awarded the Governor's Tourism Innovation Award

Scott Skelly's use of internet technology whereby Wisconsin farmers can design unique corn mazes, and boost visitor traffic to family farms. Skelly also pioneered an innovative mobile app that integrates the corn mazes on his Century Farm with the smart-phone skills of 21st century visitors. Skelly's corn mazes are some of the oldest in the country operating continuously since 1998 when Scott Skelly designed Skelly's first maze at age 9. Additionally, from 2004-2019, Scott used his technology skills to operate Corn Mazes America (CMA), a business that designed corn mazes for other farms across Wisconsin and the country.



Scott helped support other farms enter the tourism industry through corn mazes as his services went well beyond designing and cutting a corn maze. Scott and his wife's Laura's wrote *The Corn Maze Owner's Guidebook: Lose Your Customers, Not Yourself* and *Agritourism: A Beginner's Guide* to help others enter the field of agricultural tourism. In 2022, he pushed the tech envelope further by creating a mobile app to incorporate smart phone gaming into their corn maze attractions. In 2024, the Skelly's advanced the application further on their two mazes; the 6-acre family-friendly maze, and the more challenging 9-acre maze. The app is available as visitors make their way through the network of paths and dead-ends, bringing elaborate video-like games and adventures. It allows players to navigate the mazes and advance from one level of play to the next. Their labyrinths also include the only known escape room within a corn maze.

Corn mazes attract tens of thousands of visitors to Wisconsin working farms every fall. Skelly's Farm Market launched its first corn maze in 1998, and today attracts thousands of maze visitors every year. This not only supports the farm's financial sustainability, but also contributes to the economic vitality of its rural community. For example, Skelly's Market Farm employs numerous students and adults to support its pick-your-own strawberry patch, sunflower maze, pumpkin patches, 8 off-farm stand locations, and two corn mazes. This innovation is also distinctive because its multiplier effect. It demonstrates how other Wisconsin farmers might consider cutting-edge technologies to attract visitors to their agricultural tourism activities, including corn mazes. In addition to focusing on their home farm, Scott and Laura continue to be leaders for what a Wisconsin agricultural tourism destination can be. They host and produce *Digging Deeper in Agritourism*, a NAFDMA members-only podcast for the International Agritourism Association to help other farmers expand their thinking and, thereby, their opportunities to build revenue through agricultural tourism. Laura also serves on the NAFDMA Board of Directors, involvement that elevates the state's profile providing Laura access to out-of-state insights that can help our farmers.

These strategies illustrate how a Century Farm adjusts for sustainability by using its time-honored strengths while pioneering technology innovations and staying attuned to consumer demand. The State of Wisconsin loses hundreds of farms every year. At the same time, more and more farmers are searching for ways to diversify and increase revenue. The Skelly family has farmed in the Janesville area since the mid-1880s. Designated a Century Farm in 2018, there has not been a cow on the 350-acre farm since 2000, and huge field tractors have left the field. In response to market changes, Skelly's now cultivates over 100 acres of fresh, hand-picked produce — an approach for solvency. Over the years, Skelly's have invested in changes to keep their farm financial healthy and an asset to their community. The first corn maze was cut in 1998, an annual event makes Skelly's one of the oldest corn mazes in the country. They renovated the cow barn and other buildings to expand opportunities for learning, fun and great food. They added kitchen areas, a bakery, and retail space to provide convenience while preserving the farm atmosphere. Their aim is to farm successfully today, and for future generations. They do that by preserving their history, protecting their assets, growing real food, and by offering unique and authentic family-friendly adventures — something visitors cannot find anywhere else.

Skelly's Farm Market is considered one of Janesville's top family-friendly tourist destinations. This farm drives tens-of-thousands of guests to the area from Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin, recording year-after-year economic impact gains for the local economy. As active members past and present of The Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association (WATA), Wisconsin Berry Growers, Wisconsin Vegetable Growers, and North America Farmers Direct Marketing association, Laura and Scott, Joe, and Tom and Cheryl have served as board members, conference speakers, webinar and round table hosts, and even hosted agritourism podcasts.



Scott and Laura Skelly with Tim Bremel-
WCLD 1230 am 92.7 fm

They have also hosted field days for Wisconsin growers numerous times in the past three decades to help them push their own agritourism locations to be as best as possible. To continue to serve Wisconsin, WATA provides farmers with marketing, education, networking and public policy service. Agricultural tourism is a growing economic engine for farmers and rural communities while providing on-farm educational and recreational experiences for visitors. <https://wiagtourism.com>

Winners of WIGCOT Raffle Drawings

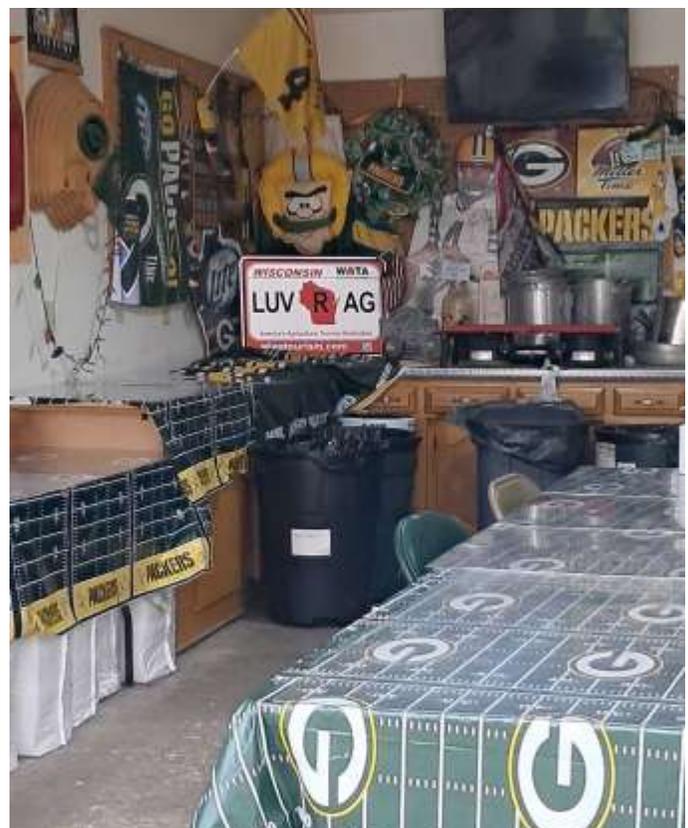


Deborah Briggs, Executive Director of the National Historical Cheesemaking Center



Farmer Danika Wehling - Hidden Valleys

Luv R Ag signs being shown off at the NFL 2025 Draft!





Just in time for Travel and Tourism Week planning!

Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association in conjunction with

Classic Green Reunion is offering two tours to Explore Wisconsin's Agricultural Tourism!



Tour #1 - Fond du Lac Area

When: Thursday, June 12 and Friday, June 13, 2025, 8 AM (Bus Departure Times)

Departure Location: Ziegler Family Expo Center, 3000 Hwy PV, West Bend, WI 53095

Price: \$65 per person **All bus tour ticket sales are final**

Prepare for a day of flavor, fun, and fresh country air! The Discovering Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Motorcoach Tour is your chance to explore some of Wisconsin's top agritourism destinations in one easygoing day trip. Hosted by the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association, this curated tour is perfect for those who love food, flowers, and a little farm-fresh adventure. [Register here.](#)

Tour #2 - Manitowoc

When: Thursday, June 12 and Friday, June 13, 2025, 8 AM (Bus Departure Times)

Departure Location: Ziegler Family Expo Center, 3000 Hwy PV, West Bend, WI 53095

Price: \$65 per person **All bus tour ticket sales are final**

Looking for a unique way to explore Wisconsin's thriving agricultural scene this summer? Climb aboard the Discovering Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Motorcoach Tour for a full-day, immersive experience hosted by the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association! This guided bus tour blends farm-fresh flavors, Wisconsin's scenic countryside, and behind-the-scenes access to some of the state's most innovative and charming agricultural destinations. Whether you're a farm enthusiast, food lover, or just craving a one-of-a-kind adventure, this tour is for you! [Register here.](#)

WATA's Marketing Campaign continues to Drive Visitors to Your Farm

The Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association continues with our statewide push to get more visitors to members' farms, event barns, vineyards, petting zoos, and tree farms.

Large, easy-to-read signs boasting LUV-R-AG and smart-phone friendly QR codes were placed at highway rest stops and visitor centers from Hurley to Kenosha, Ashland to Beloit, Superior to Platteville, and Menominee to La Crosse. Travelers will be able to see the signs, use the QR code, and find their next ag-venture. Take a minute to view the videos created:

[LUV R AG scan the QR code](#) [Family Fun on the Farm](#)

[Plan your Ag-Venture Today](#) [Napa Valley of the Midwest](#) [Wisconsin Farm Weddings](#)

Enhancing and Growing your Agricultural Tourism Business

-Educational Series-

This online Educational Series is a free membership benefit.

~Available 24/7

~Members Only Page

~Member Generated

~ 23 new Podcasts

[GoWIAgTourism SCBG23-10 Podcasts](#)

Educational Webinar Series



WIAGTOURISM.COM

Owning your own Agricultural Tourism Destination can be challenging and rewarding at the same time. Join WATA and spend the off season exploring, planning, rejuvenating, networking and boosting your creative entrepreneurial spirit. Production is happening now; check wiagtourism.com for updates.



Picture Collage from WIGCOT and WATA Lunch & Learn





News to Know...

- 2025 Membership Renewal Campaign — [2025 WATA Membership Renewal Form](#)
- Here is a great [Facebook Reel](#) advertising the two Discovering Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism tours mentioned above. Please share on your own Facebook page!
- Marketing Webinar hosted by Travel Wisconsin on May 14 from Noon-1pm.
 - ~Join Travel Wisconsin on Wednesday, May 14th from Noon-1pm for a [Google Lunch + Learn](#). We will hear directly from Google on how to maximize your online presence with their free business tools and cover free and low-cost Travel Wisconsin resources available to industry partners.
 - ~This event is open to all industry partners. Feel free to [share this invite](#) with your local partners and members!
 - ~[Register here](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. If you are unable to attend the live webinar, please register for exclusive access to a video recording on the webinar which will be shared afterward.

Here's to helping travelers make memories in Wisconsin!

-Travel Wisconsin Team

Upcoming WATA Events ...

~June 12-14 2025 Classic Green Reunion - West Bend

~June 13-15, 2025 International Peony Festival - Beaver Dam

~August 4, 2025 Wisconsin State Fair - Milwaukee

~August 5-7, 2025 Farm Technology Days - Bear Creek

~August 15, 2025 WI Christmas Tree Producers Summer Conference- Merrill

~September 18 – October 31, Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Fall Season



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