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GCDC Fall Breakfast Wrap Up

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The Future of Agriculture Topic of GCDC’s Fall Breakfast

The future of agriculture was the topic of focus at Green County Development Corporation’s (GCDC) fall breakfast, held at Wegmueller Dairy Farm in Monroe. Sponsorship by Woodford State Bank, milk and ice cream from Farm First Dairy Cooperative, and a locally sourced breakfast provided by Kimmee’s Kitchen kicked off the event that included 80 state and local leaders, educators, and those with personal interest in preserving the rural lifestyle of Green County.

It is documented that the amount of family farms and farmland continues to decline. By 2040 it is estimated that only five (5) percent of farms will be owned and run by independent farmers. The inability to stay competitive as a small family farm and shifting family careers have contributed to this decline. Survival depends on creativity and willingness to shift. Dan and Ashley Wegmueller created an agritourism destination with Wegmueller Dairy Farm & “The Diary” Farm Stay for this reason. Their unique solution allows people to experience life on the farm with an experiential farmhouse stay surrounded by cows, horses, and incredible countryside views.

Agritourism is an avenue to the survivability of medium and small-scale Wisconsin family farms. The last week of September has been designated by the state as Agricultural Tourism Week, and Sheila Everhart, Executive Director of Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association (WATA) shared that WATA is celebrating 30 years in service, with Monroe and Green County being an instrumental leader in the growth and development of agricultural tourism in the state.

WATA honored the late Dave Kamholz, former Green County Ag Chest President & founding Board Member of WATA presenting an award to Mrs. Dave Kamholz of Monroe in his memory. Dan and Ashley Wegmueller were also presented with a certificate of appreciation for their efforts in agritourism and protecting the future of agriculture. Ms. Everhart encourages people to support and enjoy agritourism throughout the state. Information and year-round events can be found at [www.wiagtourism.com](http://www.wiagtourism.com).

Dusty Williams, Ag Instructor at Blackhawk Tech shared that the fastest growing farms are greater than 1,000 acres or less than 50 acres. He emphasized that exposing young people to all careers is instrumental in many fields, but especially agriculture. From an educational perspective, "Young people gain interest in careers when they are exposed to them, that is why we (Blackhawk) partner with Ag organizations and employers to educate and reach students of all ages. It's going to take partnerships and investments in time, people, and resources to get students engaged in the agriculture industry at an earlier age. We must think outside the box to be able to provide future leaders in agriculture.”  Kalee Schaefer, a former student of Williams, and Herd Manager at Wegmueller Farm agreed, and shared her insights about her education and career path in the ag field.

Agriculture is a top economic driver in Wisconsin. 49.3% of our county’s total economic activity and generates over $2B. The mission of GCDC is to promote and encourage economic growth while maintaining the quality of life that makes Green County a great place to live and work. Events such as these create awareness and connection for continued conversation and action.

GCDC is a 501c3 non-profit organization dependent upon local investors and partners and can be reached through their social pages, their website at greencountydevelopment.com or by phone at 608-328-9452

Image (left to right): Dusty Williams (Blackhawk Tech), Ashley & Dan Wegmueller (Wegmueller Dairy Farm), Olivia Otte (GCDC Executive Director), Kalee Schafer (Herd Manager), Sheila Everhart (WATA Director).