



## 2027 Outstanding Farmers of America Convention

February 11 - 13, 2027

**Perdido Beach Resort**  
27200 Perdido Beach Blvd.  
Orange Beach, AL 36561

**Booking Number (800)634-8001**

**Booking ID #22400**

**Online Reservations:**  
[perdidobeachresort.com/](http://perdidobeachresort.com/)

Attendees should identify themselves as participants of Outstanding Farmers of America, Booking ID #22400 to receive their special group rate.

### Officer Team

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# SPIRIT NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2026



Visit [outstandingfarmers.com](http://outstandingfarmers.com) for updates and information.

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## 2026 National Outstanding Young Farmer of the Year Award



**Class of 2026:** from left back row, John Bearden, Todd Selvik, Brandon Raso, Wade Walters, Eric Baneck, Preston Cave, Mitchell Henry, Adam Bunker.  
**Front row:** Rachel Bearden, Meghan Selvik, Tanner Hento, Nicole Raso, Knapp Boddiford, Abby Walters, Lindsay Baneck, Emily Cave, Rebecca Henry, Amanda Bunker

**Hershey, PA** – The 2026 National Outstanding Young Farmers (NOYF) of the Year finalists were recognized in Hershey, Pennsylvania at the 71st Annual Outstanding Farmers of America National Convention, February 4–7, 2026 at The Hotel Hershey. These farmers are active leaders in their communities, championing innovation, stewardship, and sustainable agricultural practices while creating bright futures for the next generation of agriculture.

More than 30 nominations from across the nation were received from agricultural extension agents, family members, business owners, and other agricultural professionals. The quality of nominations continues to grow more impressive each year, reflecting the strength, dedication, and impact of young farmers across the country.

Once nominations closed on September 1, 2025, materials were coordinated and sent to a panel of independent judges with detailed scoring sheets. After the scoring process was completed, the top ten finalists were determined and notified of their recognition.

The ten finalists making up the Class of 2026 include Brandon and Nicole Raso of New Jersey; Todd and Meghan Selvik of Minnesota; J. Knapp Boddiford, III of

Georgia; Tanner Hento of South Dakota; Mitchell and Rebecca Henry of Alabama; John and Rachel Bearden of Arkansas; Preston and Emily Cave of North Carolina; Wade and Abby Walters of Nebraska; Lindsay and Eric Baneck of Wisconsin; and Adam and Amanda Bunker of Wyoming.

Finalists arrived in Hershey on an expense-paid trip to the convention, where they completed in-person judging and met other long-standing members of the OFA. The judging panel included the Officers of the OFA in addition to Scott Jensen, the Immediate Past President of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and Samantha Gehrett, a Senior Extension Education in Dairy with Penn State.

NOYF Coordinators Mary and Marlan Johnson work tirelessly throughout the year to promote applications, secure nominations and coordinate the judging process. Their efforts were recognized and acknowledged from the stage during the final banquet.

**Information about nominating and applying for the National Outstanding Young Farmer of the Year can be found on the OFA website at: [www.OutstandingFarmers.com/NOYF-Awards](http://www.OutstandingFarmers.com/NOYF-Awards). If you have questions, email [nominations@outstandingfarmers.com](mailto:nominations@outstandingfarmers.com) or call 918-477-7497.**

## Meet the Class of 2026 NOYF Winners

Four winners were selected as National Outstanding Young Farmers of the Year out of ten incredible finalists.

### Brandon & Nicole Raso – Hammonton, New Jersey Variety Farms, Inc.

Variety Farms, Inc. is a multi-generational, family-owned blueberry operation that began in 1928 when an Italian immigrant planted 150 blueberry bushes. Brandon Raso, leads the business that employs dozens of full-time and hundreds of seasonal employees during harvest. Spanning more than 2,000 acres, the farm has embraced mechanical harvesting, advanced cold storage and packing technology and sustainable practices that reduce water and herbicide use.

Brandon serves as a national advocate for farmers, bridging the gap between food producers and consumers while ensuring the Raso family's farming story continues for generations to come.



### Todd & Meghan Selvik – Waseca, Minnesota Selvik Farms

Todd and Meghan Selvik have built a diversified farming operation grounded in resilience, innovation, and stewardship. From their early start farming 90 acres in high school to navigating pivotal family and financial challenges, The Selviks balance family, leadership, and service—giving back through, community involvement, and agricultural advocacy—while remaining deeply committed to ensuring the farm is strong and sustainable for generations to come.



### J. Knapp Boddiford, III – Sylvania, Georgia Boddiford Farms

Knapp Boddiford is a third-generation farmer whose childhood days with his father and uncle evolved into a full-scale farming operation spanning 650 acres of corn, peanuts and cotton. A graduate of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Knapp combines hands-on experience with data-driven decision-making and innovative technologies that protect yields and natural resources. He is co-owner of Sylvania Peanut, founder of JKB Farm Services, and involved in local FFA programs.



### Tanner Hento – Avon, South Dakota Hento Farms

Tanner Hento is a fifth-generation farmer who farms 2,400 acres of corn, soybeans, and alfalfa alongside his brother, Scott. Raised on land his family worked for generations, Tanner learned early that agriculture carries both opportunity and uncertainty. After leaving the farm to pursue a career in medicine, loss of both parents led him back home, where farming became not an obligation, but a calling. With limited experience, modest equipment, and little margin for error, the brothers rebuilt their operation through trial, discipline, and determination. Technology is applied with intention, and success is measured by consistency, care for the land, and the strength of the partnership.



## Stop Drawing Lines. Start Planting.

For a large-scale operation, acreage reporting is often a bottleneck of paper maps, mismatched field boundaries, and redundant trips to the FSA office. You know the drill: what your monitor says you planted rarely matches the CLU paper maps at the office.

While the USDA recently announced the 'One Farmer, One File' initiative to unify records by 2028, MyAgData delivers that reality today.

As the only USDA-authorized third-party vendor, MyAgData allows you to report once and sync simultaneously to both the FSA and RMA. No more entering the same data twice or driving between offices to fix discrepancies.



Michelle Tressel

- **Precision Integration:** We pull GPS-verified data directly from **John Deere, Case IH, and Climate FieldView**. Your "actual planted acres" become your "reported acres" automatically.
- **Audit Protection:** By using your equipment's data, you reduce the risk of reporting errors that lead to insurance headaches later.
- **The Bottom Line:** On average, a 1,700-acre farm saves **\$3,600+ in premiums** and cuts **12 hours** of paperwork by using MyAgData's precision reporting.

With a **100% submission success** rate and 12 years in the field, we are helping growers increase their APH by up to 7% simply by capturing every real acre planted acres that often go missing on old government maps.

Claim your 2026 season and don't wait for 2028. Take control of your data, protect your APH, and get back to the field.

*Michelle Tressel and Catherine Clower were speakers at the 2026 OFA Convention in Hershey, PA. To learn more visit [MyAgData.com](http://MyAgData.com) or email [Cclower@myAgData.com](mailto:Cclower@myAgData.com).*

### Finalists from the classes of 2024 & 2025 were invited to travel to Washington DC to celebrate National Ag Day.

*The group was able to engage in conversations about policy and legislation that affects agriculture, meeting FSA Administrator Bill Beam and Deputy Administrator Jared Hagert and hearing House Ag Chair Glenn "GT" Thompson speak at the Taste of Ag Reception.*

*We are very proud of our own Brody Stapel who took the stage as a guest speaker at the USDA building alongside Secretary of Ag Brooke Rollins.*

*The group enjoyed a bird's eye view of the White House during the Rooftop Reception at the John Deere office.*

*It was a pleasure to spend time with some of our newest members, learn more about each of their operations, and how exceptional they are.*

*Thank you to John Deere for sponsoring this trip and making this experience possible!*



## Cybersecurity Basics Every Farmer Should Know

Chris Sherman, Tech Support Farm

### Modern farms run on technology.

GPS-guided equipment, grain marketing platforms, online banking, irrigation systems, and farm management software are now part of daily operations. These tools help farms run more efficiently, but they also create new risks.

Agriculture is now considered part of the U.S. critical infrastructure, which means farms and agribusinesses are increasingly targets for cybercrime.

The good news is that protecting your operation doesn't require complicated technology. A few simple habits can go a long way.



Chris Sherman

### Use Strong Passwords

Weak passwords remain one of the easiest ways attackers gain access to accounts. Strong passwords should:

- Be at least 12 characters long
- Use letters, numbers, and symbols
- Avoid names, birthdays, or simple patterns
- Never be reused across multiple accounts
- Password managers like Bitwarden or 1Password can securely generate and store strong passwords.

### Turn on Multi-Factor Authentication

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) adds another layer of protection. Even if someone gets your password, they still can't log in without a second verification step, usually a code sent to your phone or an authentication app. Whenever possible, enable MFA for email, banking, grain marketing accounts, and farm management platforms.

### Be Careful with Suspicious Messages

Many cyberattacks begin with messages designed to trick someone into clicking a malicious link. If an email, text, or phone call seems unusual even if it appears to come from a bank or supplier pause and verify before responding.

### Don't Ignore Updates

Software updates fix security vulnerabilities. Turning on automatic updates helps ensure those protections are installed quickly.

### Final Thought

Many farms are running multi-million-dollar operations on home networks and consumer grade hardware.

*Chris Sherman with Tech Support Farm was a breakout session speaker at the 2026 OFA Convention in Hershey, PA. Chris helps farms identify weak points through Fence Check cybersecurity assessment found here: [TechSupport.Farm](http://TechSupport.Farm) Email Chris at [info@techsupport.farm](mailto:info@techsupport.farm) for additional information.*

# OFA Members Gather in Hershey

Approximately 150 Outstanding Farmers of America (OFA) members from 22 different States gathered in Hershey, Pennsylvania for the 71st Annual OFA Convention at The Hotel Hershey. Three full days of networking, education and immersive agricultural tours led to new connections and experiences. The convention truly embodied the theme Rooted in Legacy. Growing the Future.

Attendees explored Pennsylvania area sites through a variety of curated tour experiences, including visits to respected farming operations, the Milton Hershey School of Agricultural and Environmental Education and a historical tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield. A pre-convention trolley tour drove through community points of interest to learn about the legacy of Milton Hershey. A stop to The Hershey Story Museum complete with a chocolate tasting made for a sweet day.



The convention also featured a dynamic lineup of educational speakers and breakout sessions covering resilience, grain marketing, cybersecurity, rural leadership for women, and USDA acreage reporting. Members gathered for a fun-filled evening at Troeg's Brewery, while the Welcome Party hosted by the East Region set a warm and engaging tone for the week with trivia hosted by sponsor Horizon Farm Credit and additional support from Joe and Ida DeFrancesco.

From the opening welcome to the closing awards banquet, the convention was filled with moments that strengthened connections, celebrated agricultural excellence, and reinforced lasting friendships that make OFA a unique and enduring community.

## Pictures from Hershey



Farmers playing dress up at the opening welcome party!



NOYF finalists Mitchell and Rebecca Henry seeing the cows at Nissley Brothers Farm.



OFA Secretaries, Carl and Betsy Long thank Pennsylvania Secretary of Ag, Russell Redding for attending the convention.



Members learning about the impressive potato operation at Sterman Masser.



More barnyard dress up at the Welcome party with the Class of 2026 finalists and NOYF coordinators, Mary and Marlan Johnson.



Students from the Milton Hershey School, a private residential school, telling OFA members about their 4-H clubs and FFA chapter.



Officers Carl and Betsy Long, along with Past President Don and Cheryl Hartman, enjoyed a fun and memorable visit to Hershey's Chocolate World.

## 2026 Pat & Jerry Barnes Living Legacy Award



A special highlight of the NOYF Awards Banquet was the presentation of the 2026 Pat and Jerry Barnes Member of Distinction (Legacy Award) to Chris Wallace.

This award recognizes individuals whose contributions to the OFA go above and beyond. For more than two decades, Chris Wallace has developed convention programs, produced more than 265 NOYF finalist videos, and strengthened the OFA brand through creative leadership and dedication.

His quiet commitment, creativity, and belief in the mission of OFA have made a lasting impact on the organization and its members.

Chris was presented with a large wooden bowl to support one of his favorite hobbies—bread making—as a token of gratitude for his commitment and contributions.