

Seymour Scholarship To Wisconsin Youth

Becky Ponick, Stanley, Wis., is the recipient of the National Farmers Union Foundation Hubert K. Seymour Scholarship. She is the daughter of Joan and Chad Verbeten.

Ponick will use the scholarship money to attend the University of Wisconsin-River Falls where she will pursue a degree in physical education. She would like to become a physical education teacher and volleyball coach.

The \$2,000 award, which has been given annually since 1995, honors Hubert K. Seymour, a Farmers Union leader and rural activist from Illinois. This year, 20 students, representing nine states, applied for the scholarship.

Selection is based on academics, a written essay and an interview with Seymour family members and others on the selection committee.

The Hubert K. Seymour Scholarship is open to any Farmers Union member who is a high school senior planning to continue his or her education at a two- or four-year accredited institution.

Each applicant must also submit an essay in which they are asked to identify and discuss the significance of rural values in America on their lives.

Small Town — Big Family

By Becky Ponick

Growing up on a small family farm was an amazing experience that no one can ever take away from me. Just imagine the fresh dew on the grass and the smell of silage as you walk into the barn at 5:30, or the bright sun shining on a brand new day.



Becky Ponick

Every morning I could hear the cows mooing from the house and the sound of the milk house to start a day of hard work and sweat. I was always up and ready to help my dad with chores. Playing with kittens and mixing milk for the calves was my usual routine at night and sometimes in the morning. Working on the farm with my dad was a dream come true. Whether it was on the tractor or right by his side while milking cows, I was always with him. It was on the farm where I learned what family truly meant.

It was just a basic, average day on the farm. We always woke up early to help in the barn and then get ready for school. One thing we always did before heading out to the bus was to say goodbye to our dad who was hard at work in the barn. We never thought that day would be the last goodbye we said to our dad.

When I was 10 years old a tragic thing happened on our farm. My dad passed away. It was a sudden thing that no one knew until later that day. Every person in my community became part of my family that day. There were people at our house, by our side. Many people were there for us, though I never thought about it before. They were at my house that day. All of

them truly stepped up to help a family in their community at such a painful time. Many people offered to help with chores, supper and many other tasks that needed to be done. The town truly helped out one of their families during this time.

Living in a small community has had many influences on me over the years. Only in small communities does everyone know each other, and then their second cousin. There is this unique community-family bond that no one really understands how it ever came about. Besides having a family of blood relation, there is also a community family. No matter what happens in a community, everyone comes together to help another family get through any problems or celebrate any achievements.

During the fall, the varsity volleyball team had an amazing season. In the beginning, a lot of community members did follow the team. It wasn't until half-way through the season until the community realized the volleyball team had their goals set high and was on their way to winning a conference title. I was part of this team, or volleyball family. Toward the end of the season I noticed a change in the community as a whole. The community became part of the volleyball family. If it wasn't for the community and all the support, the volleyball team never would have won the state title. Winning the state title changed the community.

Two years ago, our family decided to move into a different house. The farm we lived on hadn't been farmed for over four years. When we moved, we wanted to sell our place in hopes it would once again have a barn full of cows and fields of corn. The couple that bought our farm had been really supportive of our family for many years. The father, who bought the farm for

his son, helped my family on the farm by selling us feed, growing crops and with many other things. Sure enough, within a couple of months, the barn was full of cattle and the fields were full of crops. A family farm was created by support and compassion for one another.

My community is different from most other communities around the area. Something unique about our town is the support and the compassion we have for one another. Whether it is at a rodeo in town or a sporting event, the community always gives support.

Through my community I have learned rural values that will always be with me.

NFU Staff Updates

Liz Friedlander has been promoted to director of communications for the National Farmers Union in Washington, D.C. For the past two years Friedlander has worked as communications coordinator. Friedlander replaces Emily Eisenberg who left NFU to pursue a career in the medical field.

Josh Tonsager recently joined National Farmers Union as a government relations fellow. Tonsager is a South Dakota native and attends the University of South Dakota in Vermillion where he is majoring in political science and economics. He completed a government relations internship at NFU last summer and interned with the South Dakota legislature earlier this year. Tonsager will return to South Dakota in September to complete his final year of undergraduate study.