



# NUTS & BOLTS

... Teachers delivering knowledge that works to North America's Farm and Ranch Families

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## Conference Packets Are Out!

By Deb Pike

Spring is less than two weeks away! By now you should have received your Conference 2004 registration packets. If you did not receive one, contact Sharon Beer, the Agriculture & Community Development Administrative Secretary at Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore, WI at (608) 822-3262 X2361 or [sbeer@swtc.edu](mailto:sbeer@swtc.edu). The materials will also be available on the web site. Although you can't submit your registration forms over the Internet, you can fill them in on the computer and print out the completed form.

A few things to call to your attention:

- ✓ The deadline for **Early Bird Conference Registration** is **May 1, 2004**. Please note that there is also a form for a one-day registration option.
- ✓ Please be sure to fill out the **Break-out Session Form** included in your packet and return with your registration form.
- ✓ The deadline for this year's **Exchange of Ideas** is **May 7, 2004**.

- ✓ Special group rates at Howard Johnson's/Antiqua Bay available for **reservations made by May 14, 2004**. After that date, reservations will be provided on a space available basis, at the hotel's stated rate.
- ✓ The 2004 NFRBMEA First Timers' Scholarship is available to five individuals attending our conference for the first time. Time is of the essence, as only the first five applicants (from five different states or provinces) are eligible. Put some wings on those stamps!! The postmark will be the tiebreaker.
- ✓ The **NFRBMEA Tax ID is #41-1829527**

Watch for more about the conference in the Spring 2004 issue of *NUTS & BOLTS*. I will also be making updates to the Conference Information web page as I receive them from the Conference Planners.

Visit [www.nfrbmea.org/conf\\_2004.htm](http://www.nfrbmea.org/conf_2004.htm).



2003 First Timers' Breakfast in Minot. L-R, First Timer Kelly Annand (CO), Gary Thome, Tom Weygandt, First Timer Tom Ackerman (OH), Jim Kelm and Ira Beckman. If you have never attended a conference before and are planning to attend this year in the Wisconsin Dells, apply for the 2004 First Timers' scholarship today!

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# Be Alert for Opportunities

## A message from Tom Weygandt, NFRBMEA President



If you're the normal FBM teacher at the end of February you're just now getting through a very busy time of year-end closing. Our program here in northeast Ohio is heavily into farms with extensive payrolls. The first three weeks of January, we're dealing with payroll issues such as filing W2s, W3s, 943s, etc...as well as issuing 1099s and making sure it all adds up in our farm records. The last week of January through February we're dealing with checking our records against 1099s received, checking year-end account balances, finalizing depreciation, recording inventory, and numerous other tasks. My wife often asks me, "What are you doing at those farms for so long?" My reply is that, "Time flies when you're having fun! The farmer and I are often amazed at the time that's passed when we're done." I'm sure most of you have the same experience.

The tasks I listed above are all focused and intense. We're dealing with specific business transactions in the past year mostly because the government requires us to do so. I recently came across a statement from Pastor Rick Warren that I felt applies directly. He said, "Most people think of 'vision' as the ability to see the future. But in today's rapidly changing world, vision is also the ability to accurately assess current changes and take advantage of them. Vision is being alert to opportunities." Wow! It is important that we don't lose sight of the bigger picture. I often feel burdened that my work be more than just meeting government regulation, that what I do really makes a difference for the farm families I have the pleasure of serving. In the next month, I'll be dealing with analysis and planning to help each farm family identify their opportunities.

Likewise, your NFRBMEA board has been asking the question for the past three years (that I've been on the board), "How can we make a positive difference to our membership?" We've spent hours and hours "visioning". The results, previously reported, are the ideas for a National Institute, the Resources Committee putting together a library of materials, and the exploration of cooperation with NAFBAS. These ideas are now in the formative stage. Please inform yourself on these initiatives. For success, we need each member to get involved. We have a vision. Now we must grab the opportunities!

## What Did You Say?

Editor's note: The following article was from a professional development session. I can't remember who contributed it, or who wrote it, but it is a clever example of miscommunication.

*Dear John;*

*I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, and thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy— will you let me be yours? Gloria.*

*Dear John*

*I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, and thoughtful people who are not like your. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be? Yours, Gloria.*

## Curriculum Minutes

By Wayne Pike

Over the past several years, your NFRBMEA Board members have included “Curriculum Minutes” in the fall Board meeting agenda. Each member brings a short teaching idea or example of other useful information that they use in their teaching or professional activities. This is one way that we can do NFRBMEA business and provide professional development at the same time.

Here is a summary of the “Curriculum Minutes” that we talked about at last fall’s meeting at the Dells. They are condensed here for space, but you can contact the author for more details if you are interested.

President Tom Weygandt shared an information sheet summarizing and highlighting 2003 income tax changes. He also told us about his Monday Morning Client Advisory which is a short e-mail that goes out to each of the people that he works with. His topics range from technical to inspirational. Either way, he has made another contact with the people that he works with and they know he is out there thinking and doing.

Jim Kelm demonstrated the usefulness of Finbin from the University of Minnesota’s Center for Farm Financial Management. Finbin is the on-line database containing huge amounts of ag financial and production information plus a new Graphics Library. Everyone has access to Finbin at [www.finbin.umn.edu](http://www.finbin.umn.edu). You can use it free of charge.

Ed Ruff handed out a crop production budget that he was using with some of his producers. His example included a detailed corn budget and a detailed corn following soybean budget. It included information on both fixed and variable costs related to rotational differences and tillage required. The budget operates out of Excel and is complete enough to be useful while being simple enough for almost anyone to operate.

Deb Pike presented a short lesson on Communication as it applies to our Listening Skills. She pointed out that we all need to be more conscious of the messages we send when we are not talking. (See “*Communication: Listening Skills*”, page 9.)

Rich Baumann handed out an “Assessment Record for Farm Business Management” that the instructors at South Central Technical College at Mankato, Minnesota

use. It is an attempt to measure and improve instructor effectiveness by measuring student achievement in four program core competencies. Students are assessed after their first, third and sixth years in the program.

Laurie Morris also related her experience with program evaluation at Morgan Community College in Colorado. The assessment process was similar to that mentioned by Rich Baumann above, but was somewhat more detailed in its approach.

Tom Ackerman presented a paper that showed an EXCEL chart of the financial position of one of his farmer/clients that ranged from 1991 thru 2002. He does this kind of EXCEL chart on any farm operation that has kept records with him for more than three years. His example was a crop farm consisting of 900 acres of corn and soybeans with about 24 head of show horses thrown in as a hobby. This chart showed a consistently negative net cash income. He then discussed with the family the reasons for the negative income and tried to get them to come up with causes and solutions.

Charles Duell gave each of us a CD with the “Open Office” program on it. Open Office is free software that emulates the Microsoft Office suite of products. You can download your free copy from [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org). He also told us about free “screen dump software” that can print whatever appears on your computer screen with the push of your “print screen” button just like it used to do in the old DOS days. Go to [Google](http://www.google.com) and search for “print screen software.”



**Members of the Conference Planning Committee presented a preliminary sketch of 2004 events during the Fall Board Meeting.**

## National Survey – What We Know Now

By Wayne Pike

NFRBMEA is constantly working to be more useful and effective in our mission to deliver quality education to our members. The idea of an NFRBMEA National Educational Institute that would serve our needs is being pursued within our organization. To that end, the NFRBMEA commissioned an online survey conducted by Dr. Richard Joerger of the University of Minnesota. His project assistant is Randi Nelson. The survey is intended to determine the pre-service and in-service professional development needs of farm and ranch business management educators.

Dr. Joerger reported the survey's preliminary findings to the NFRBMEA Board at the fall meeting in the Dells. Each Board member received a 31-page report on the results of the survey as compiled up to the end of October. Although there were a few complaints from among the respondents concerning the length of the survey, the survey results would indicate that the effort was well worth our time completing it.

143 instructors and administrators from 15 states responded to the survey. We now know that we, as a group, are 91% male, and our median age is just over 53 years. Almost 80% of us are working towards either a

Masters or Doctoral degree. These facts alone are revealing as to the type of education we might be seeking.

Dr. Joerger explained the early findings of the study to the Board. He also explained that there was still much work to be done to wring all the useful information from the raw data. With the application of Randi Nelson's and his own time, Dr. Joerger felt that the survey would yield the following useful information to guide the National Institute concept. He thought that the survey would help us target needs by tenure, educational level, years until retirement and the type of program taught. It may also tell us who has the greatest likelihood of participating and it would help us prioritize in-service educational needs. All of this information would help the Institute plan a program and then secure the major funding that it would require. Individual states will also find that they can provide their own professional development programs based on the data from this survey.

We are privileged to have Dr. Joerger on our summer conference program when he will detail all of the survey findings and we will be able to ask questions

## Communication: Listening Skills

By Deb Pike

*“Listening is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well.” – John Marshall*

There is a growing realization of the importance of good listening and communication skills. Inattention and a lack of respectful listening can lead to mistakes, misaligned goals, wasted time and lack of teamwork with students and colleagues. We need to listen to help a student define his or her goals and develop a plan to achieve them or gain team consensus by understanding team members' feelings about a particular issue.



Listening is less important than *how* you listen. By listening in a way that conveys interest, understanding

and respect, you develop rapport with your students and colleagues.

Once we understand where the other person is coming from it's important to communicate our support, although that does not necessarily require that we agree with them. Support is expressed in a number of ways, such as saying that we understand the difficulty of the other person's position or decision, or make it clear that we understand their feelings. Just listening mindfully shows that we care enough about them to give them our full attention.

Listening to and acknowledging people fully may seem like a simple thing, but doing it well, especially in times of disagreement, takes talent. Like any other skill, it takes plenty of practice to listen well.

# NFRBMEA 2003 Fall Board Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Dells, WI • October 30—November 1, 2003

*(Condensed for space by Wayne Pike. The full version of these minutes are available on the Web at [nfrbmea.org](http://nfrbmea.org))*

Members present: Tom Weygandt, Ed Ruff, Jim Kelm, Ron Dvergsten, Rich Baumann, Laurie Morris, Tom Ackerman, Charles Duell, Wayne Pike, and Deb Pike.

Wayne reported paid membership as of 10-30-03 at 122 total members: 116 regular members, 1 honorary member, and 5 associate members.

Deb reported on Web site activity.

Laurie asked all members to forward historical items to her.

The Board agreed that we should request full membership on the Adult Council. We will send a letter to the Council requesting membership.

The Board agreed to hire Vic Richardson to prepare the tax return and audit the NFRBMEA books. The Board also agreed that the NFRBMEA is in compliance with the requirements of a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Ed Ruff introduced the 2004 Conference planners. Mark Alden, Bryce Larson, Doug Marshall, Mike Sabel and Jim Gibson, Wisconsin state director of technical education, reported on the 2004 conference planning progress.

Charles Duell reported on the survey developed by Ron Van Nurden and the Resource Committee. The Board felt that the committee should go ahead with a request for submissions to the membership at large.

Ron Dvergsten reported on the Membership Committee. Brochure update, collegiate student membership and closer affiliation to high school instructors as a source of potential adult instructors.

Tom Weygandt appointed a committee consisting of Jim Kelm, Ron Dvergsten, Laurie Morris, and Tom Weygandt to serve as a bylaws committee.

Dr. Dick Joerger, University of Minnesota, presented a draft of the preliminary findings of the National FBM/FPM In-service Assessment Project. Following the presentation discussion centered on what the next step

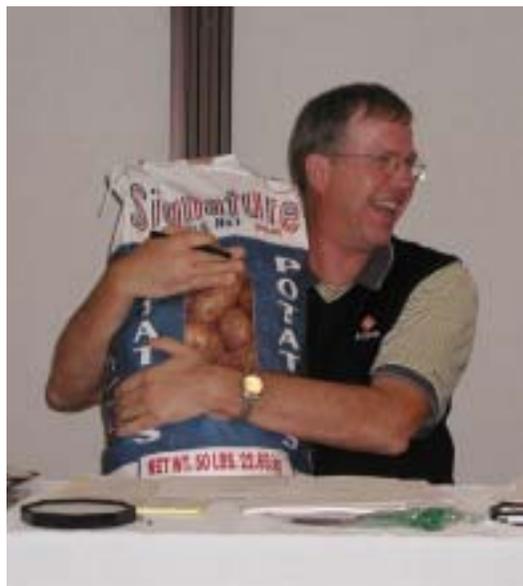
should be. The survey is not yet complete. Jim moved to authorize an additional \$2,000 to complete the assessment.

Ron Dvergsten passed out an email from John Caster asking for more specifics on the Institute idea before going out and trying to mount a major fundraising effort. He said that he had not had any responses from members indicating persons or organizations that had been sponsors.

We had a conference call with Bob Rhea, executive director of NAFBAS. The NFRBMEA Board decided to join NAFBAS for the 2006 conference in Omaha. An NFRBMEA member will be chosen to be on the 2006 conference committee.

The Board decided to meet with the NAFBAS Board in the fall of 2004.

The Board agreed to include membership dues increases on the agenda for the 2004 business meeting.



**Jim Kelm went home from the Fall Board Meeting with a bag of potatoes, supplied by Jim Gibson, supervisor of Farm Management programs of the Wisconsin Technical Colleges.**



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## Getting Together – NAFBAS & NFRBMEA

By Wayne Pike

You just got done reading the fall Board meeting minutes on page 5. Maybe your eyes widened when you read about the NFRBMEA sharing a summer conference date with NAFBAS (National Association of Farm Business Analysis Specialists).

To put a few more details in your hands, this is not an attempt to merge organizations, only an attempt to conduct an even better summer educational conference. During the combined summer conference each organization will have its own separate business meetings and do much of what we have always done. Some things will be together, but some things will be separate.

There is a lot of planning to do before our first conference in 2006. NAFBAS had the site picked out

already and has a planning committee hard at work. NFRBMEA has been invited to add a conference planner to represent NFRBMEA interests. There are a lot of details to work out, but the NFRBMEA Board is confident that this is a good plan.

Bob Rhea, executive director of NAFBAS, and the rest of the NAFBAS leadership team have made an impressive effort to reach out to the NFRBMEA. The similarities of our organizations is almost uncanny. The major difference is that almost all NFRBMEA members are employed by public institutions while NAFBAS members are either self-employed or employed by private associations.

Go to the NAFBAS web site at [www.nafbas.org](http://www.nafbas.org). They look a lot like us... a lot like teammates.

## Cliff Vrieze Honored as ACTE's "Teacher of the Year" in Orlando

Clifford Vrieze has instructed farm business management (FBM) courses at Minnesota West College at Jackson, Minnesota, since 1986. The program, with an annual enrollment of 50 students, is based on a comprehensive educational curriculum for adult farmer entrepreneurs. The mission of the program is to provide student-focused education to assist them in meeting their family and farm business goals.



Mr. Vrieze designs a "case study" for each individual student where the farm family's actual personal, family, business and financial situation and goals determine the instruction plan. The student's study concentrates on accurate computerized accounting, income tax optimization and budgeting. The students use state-of-the-art software specially designed and set up for their specific farming requirements.

At the FBM program, Mr. Vrieze has cooperated with area banks, farm service agencies, local school districts and the University of Minnesota in order to better meet his students' needs. During his tenure at the college, three area banks have awarded over \$30,000 in annual scholarships to his students within the FBM program. He has also worked with the Center for Farm Financial Management over the years to beta test new software programs and improve existing programs.

In addition to his duties as an instructor, Mr. Vrieze is also active in his community. He has served on the local school board and he is a past president of the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators as well as the Minnesota ACTE.

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## Recommended Reading: Suggested by Dr. David Kohl

Reported as a "Curriculum Minute" by Wayne Pike

*"The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference"*, by Malcolm Gladwell. (Little, Brown 2000, 270 pages.)

At a recent conference in Minnesota, Dr. David Kohl recommended that we read this book. In general, the book tries to explain how fads and trends develop. It also gives some insight into why some good ideas never catch on but some become very popular.

The author writes about what he calls the "tipping point". It is the point at which an idea takes hold and its adaptation within our society reaches epidemic proportion. Gladwell uses the analogy of epidemics to make his point throughout this easily read book. Examples involve skateboarding shoes, New York crime, suicide and smoking. Although none of these issues may affect you, it is up to you to extrapolate the theory into your own experience.

Gladwell condenses the tipping point theory down into three basic ideas. The first he calls the Law of the Few. This law dictates that it only takes a few influential people to make an idea fly or fail. He divides these people

into three categories: Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen. The famed Paul Revere is Gladwell's prime example throughout the book. Do you know the name of the other man who rode from the same town with the same message on the same night as did Paul Revere? He was not a Connector, Maven or Salesman. His message was largely ignored at the time and his name has faded into history.

The Stickiness Factor is another tenet of a tipping point. That is, ideas have to be memorable and somehow inspire us to act.

The Power of Context is the third principle of the tipping point. This theorizes that any idea must exist in the right time and the right place to reach a tipping point.

As the title suggests, there are many little things that make ideas and the people who have them successful. Most examples are far removed from the rural scene, but there is enough here that a person could use the ideas for improving a farm and ranch business management education program.

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