



Spirit of Farm Aid Prize Winner
Benny Bunting



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Mona Lee Brock

Farm Aid Farmers Breakfast

On Friday September 20th at Farm Aid we began with farmer breakfast. Great stories were told of many of the brave people who gave much to promote a safe healthy future in agriculture by promoting food sovereignty . I announced that our Tractorcade to Farm Aid would begin at 10am and asked if people wanted to join in. Well, the answer was yes! Soon we made a quick trip to get lumber and built a people hauler to accommodate our extra guests.

We finally set out for Alpine Valley, leading the way with my 1935 Allis Chalmers WC and Rikki Jean Davis at my side flying the US flag and the La Via Campesina flag in tow and a full police escort.

It is a moving experience to get so much support along the way. People honking and waving. People asking where we were going. Lots of people taking pictures, not to mention the beautiful backdrop of rural Wisconsin.

Big shout Out to the Tractor Drivers:

Randy Jasper on my Mom and Dad's 1947 Allis Chalmers WC; Zena Mc Fadden on Randy's International Harvester (IH) ; David Senter on

Randy's IH 1466 and flying the original American Agriculture Movement (AAM) flag that rode into DC in 1979. Gretchen Kruse on her own AC 180 along with Jason Fuller in his Fendt.

New Friends Made

It was inspiring how many new friends were made through our Farm Aid 2019 Tractorcade including Stephanie Stevens and Johnny Fishmonger. We made other friends at the gas station where I coasted in after I almost ran out of gasoline. We returned to the gas station the next day with FFD Farm Aid Tractorcade t-shirts so they could remember our day. (We still have a few FFD 2019 Farm Aid Tractorcade t-shirts available - \$15 each - contact us if you would like one!)

We rolled into the Alpine Valley venue for Farm Aid 2019 with the La Via Campesina and American Agriculture Movement flags flying high. We were welcomed by people setting up booths for the concert. Some of the tractors were then placed around the venue. After much reflecting on the day's trip, we were off to Farm Aid Eve - a gathering of movement dignitaries and veterans, co-mingling over good food, some sourced through Lake Geneva's own mayor, Tom Hartz

and building the spirit of Farm Aid.

Among the prize winners that night was Benny Bunting,

Benny is a veteran case worker for RAFL. Since the 1980's Benny has helped hundreds of farmers navigate the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) policy, saving many farmers from bankruptcy or foreclosure - a real champion in saving family farms, a true hero and my friend.

Also receiving the Spirit of Farm Aid Award - Posthumously - was Mona Lee Brock.

Mona Lee Brock is maker of the American Agriculture Movement (AAM) flag, Mona Lee stood large in the fight to save family farms. During the 1980's farm crisis where half of our nation's farmers in every sector went under, Mona Lee gave out her personal phone number to help farmers in trouble. It's said her phone never stopped ringing for the next 40 yrs. Truly a person well deserving of the Spirit of Farm Aid Award. Other winners included Mike Wanchic, John Mellencamp's guitarist and band leader, and Karl Adams, Live Nation Midwest senior vice president.

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FFD President Joel Greeno receiving The Spirit of Farm Aid Award! with Bruce Dankman (left) and Paul & Lana Rozwadowski (right)

The final recipient of the award this year was myself

This was an emotional moment to think that my peers felt I deserved to be put at such a level. I realized that the only reason I got to where I am was thanks to many mentors that came before me - the likes of John Kinsman, founder of Family Farm Defenders, who always inspired me to keep going and to always do what was right. Kathy Ozer, executive director of National Family Farm Coalition, was another incredibly positive influence, along with Ralph Paige, leader of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, who was able to pull together a large part of the southern US for common good. I also thought of the amazing activist, Berta Carceres, who's life was brutally taken in 2016 simply for daring to protect the environment and the rights of farmers in Honduras.

One day hope I hope to achieve a fraction of the great things these inspiring people have achieved in their lives. A great big shout out to

all those at Farm Aid who made this year's event possible. A simple thank you does not begin to do justice for the honor that this award bestows.

2019 Farm Aid Concert!

On Sat. Sept. 21st the Farm Aid Concert began with overcast skies and looming storms. We made it through the press event with light drizzle, inspired By Carolyn Mugar, Jen Fahy, local farmers and - of course - Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp, Neil Young, and Dave Matthews. Uplifted by all the great stories of local food and local farmers, we were set to kick-off the 34th edition of Farm Aid.

Mother Nature had to intervene in our festivities

The call went out to take shelter due to oncoming storms. Concert goers were not daunted by the rain, though, and many took advantage of the break to go to the Home Grown Village to meet all those staffing booths, including Family Farm Defenders, National Family Farm Coalition, Northwest Atlantic

Marine Alliance, WI Farmers Union, and many others. Despite the rain, 30,000+ concert goers had a great time listening to music, meeting farmers, and eating great food - some supplied by our friends from Missouri Rural Crisis Center and Patchwork Farms.

Willie Roadhouse Interview

I got to go on Willie's Roadhouse on Sirius XM satellite radio and was joined by long time activist, Don Teske, as well as singer/songwriter, Yola. Yola gave a stunning performance! I also did a session for Wisconsin Foodie program which will air sometime in January on Wisconsin Public Television.

Farm Aid is a Family Reunion

For many of us, Farm Aid has become a family reunion instead of just another concert. I have made and kept so many friends there over the years. it is a joy to participate in such a community, and hopefully this mutual solidarity will be able to carry many folks into the New Year.