

## Future trip plans taking shape

Every year the county Farm Bureaus in northwest Illinois collaborate with Tri-State Travel to organize one or two longer trips for Farm Bureau members, usually with somewhat of an agricultural flavor. These trips have been very popular over the years and have included Alaska, Hawaii, California, Washington/Oregon, Panama Canal, Niagara Falls, Minnesota's North Woods, and more. Our group met last week and identified target destinations for the next few years, and I'd like to share what potentially lies ahead. We begin with a mid-September 2012 6-day trip to the Black Hills, followed by our most ambitious journey yet in early 2013 to New Zealand and Australia (probably 16-18 days with options for extending on your own). We'll follow that with a September 2013 excursion to Michigan (6-7 days) and then two trips that will be integrated with American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meetings – January 2014 in San Antonio, Texas and January 2015 in San Diego, California. A Nova Scotia/Maine trip in late summer or early fall is also being considered somewhere in the near future. More details will be forthcoming on the Black Hills trip, so stay tuned for information and preview meeting dates; in the meantime, feel free to call me at (815) 232-3186 with any questions.

### Agricultural classified ads

We're going to try a new experiment for our Farm Bureau members by offering free 2-week classified ads for agricultural items for sale or services offered (custom baling, harvesting, trucking, etc.) on our SCFB website. All you have to do is e-mail your ag classified ad (along with your name, phone, and SCFB membership number), to [stephfb@aeroinc.net](mailto:stephfb@aeroinc.net), or you can send it via fax at (815) 232-0016 or by snail mail at Stephenson County Farm Bureau, 210 W. Spring Street, Freeport IL 61032-4346. Ads will be posted on our website with a start and end date, and you can call to cancel if the item is sold or to renew if not. We hope that this opportunity will provide some additional exposure for our members who have ag-related products or services to offer. SCFB makes no claims of validity or condition of any items offered; call (815) 232-3186 for more information.

### Upcoming dates of interest

Be sure to mark these upcoming dates on your calendar, beginning with October 28 as the deadline for ordering those delicious Terri Lynn holiday nuts and candies for delivery the week of Thanksgiving. November 9-10 is our next Defensive Driving class taught by veteran instructor Doug Sommer, and November 12-13 is our Family Portrait Program for our SCFB members, with Katie Lynn Photography returning to provide great portrait opportunities. We're also getting ready to set dates for computer classes and another CPR class, so stay tuned here and check [www.stephensoncfb.org](http://www.stephensoncfb.org) for details as they're finalized; call (815) 232-3186 to sign up for these programs..

### Barn Tour just around the corner!

Sunday October 9 is the annual Stephenson County Barn Tour, the primary fundraising event for the Conservation and Agricultural Partners (CAP) Foundation which provides our Agriculture-in-the-Classroom efforts in the area. Five great barns in the German Valley area are featured this year, with activities and special promotions at most locations. Tickets are available here at the Farm Bureau office, and more information can be obtained by calling Martha Ebbesmeyer at (815) 235-2165. I look forward to seeing you there!

### Hawaii trip filled, Branson nearly full

Our January 8-17, 2012 trip to Hawaii is now full, with any additional names being placed on standby in case of cancellations. The November 7-11 Branson trip is also nearing capacity, so don't procrastinate if you want to participate in that outing. Information is available at [www.stephensoncfb.org](http://www.stephensoncfb.org) or by calling (815) 232-3186.

### “Prospering Together” forges ahead

I've enjoyed being part of the Staff Committee, representing a number of local entities, which has been coordinating the project known as “Prospering Together”, which is shaping public input and ideas into a collective county-wide vision for our county's future. The basic framework of the project is rapidly taking shape, with some exciting near-term and long-range initiatives identified. Watch for news on the public forums coming up in early October that will unveil the plan as it stands and the developing vision for the road ahead!

### New MVP partners

We've added two more new partners to our SCFB Membership Value Program as the list continues to grow. Engel's Jewelry and Gifts in Lena and The Cheese Market in Freeport are now offering exclusive discounts to Stephenson County FB members, so be sure to visit them and our nearly 100 local businesses in the program. The complete list is online at [www.stephensoncfb.org](http://www.stephensoncfb.org) under the “Membership” tab, and we're in the process of updating our brochures. One of our new members called last week to tell me that he'd recouped his entire dues payment (in this case, \$65 as a voting member) in just 23 days by patronizing several local businesses – pretty impressive!

### Be watching for farm traffic

Full-scale harvest activity is just around the corner, and that means increased agricultural equipment traffic on the roadways. The machines are large, move slower, and their visibility is often somewhat limited, so please slow down and allow a little extra room when you encounter farm equipment.