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FARM WELL NEWSLETTER

THE BI-WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF FARM WELL WI

SUBSCRIBE

MARCH 2022, ISSUE 9



DR. BOB BERNARDONI FARMER, HUSBAND, FATHER, CARETAKER

WRITTEN BY EMMA HENNING

It's a chilly day in February when I arrive at Bob's farm. He waits at his front door warning me and the filming crew, "Don't come in through the front steps, come around this way," as he motions to the two-inch-thick ice covering the sidewalk. He welcomes the filming crew in with a smile. We're ushered inside, away from the freezing temperatures to be welcomed by family pictures and intricate crafts hung in the entryway. Peacock feathers shine in glass vases around the dining room. I walk further into the house and am greeted by two sets of wooden furniture: one set dedicated to those of retiring age and the other for those just entering 4-k, arranged in a conversation with one another, respecting those who sit in either set of chairs.

Before we all sit down for the C3 (Communities Confronting COVID-19) interview, I start asking about the farm we can see from the kitchen windows. A few barns dot the frozen landscape. It's a much larger operation than I expected. We were interviewing Bob knowing that he had been a physician for over thirty years, so I expected somewhat of a hobby farm when driving to his property. At most I expected a few cows and a chicken coop. However, I quickly realized that this farm was comprised of several beef cattle, sheep and chickens. The number varied with the seasons, as Bob allowed the animals to practice their natural cycles. The practice of farming wasn't an occupation to Bob, but truly a lifestyle. There were values ingrained within a farm. A lifecycle that you were forced to see right outside your kitchen window.

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Rural Realities Podcast

Season 2 - Episode 4 - "Identify & Reset Unhealthy Default Settings" with Penn Vieau, Professional Speaker & Coach

It is easy to overemphasize the negative and dismiss the positive things in our lives. Penn Vieau, professional speaker and coach, and Karen Endres from the Wisconsin Farm Center share how these unhealthy default settings can cause stress, fatigue, resentment, and get us off track. In this podcast, they share how and why our minds come pre-wired to focus on the negative and how identifying the positive, establishing a personal board of directors, and planning your priorities can help you overcome the negatives and maintain better focus on your farm and personal priorities. [Link to listen.](#)

If you are experiencing increased stress, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, or just need a welcoming ear to talk to, please contact the free and confidential 24/7 WI Farmer Wellness Helpline at 888-901-2558 for immediate support. In-person and tele-counseling sessions are also available by request.



You Should Know About - COMET™ (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory)

A 2-hour workshop that teaches people how to intervene when they encounter someone who is in a "vulnerable space" and help shift the person's mental health trajectory back to a place of wellness instead of proceeding towards a mental health crisis.

Developed by farmers and ranchers, COMET aligns with rural cultural values of neighbor helping neighbor and communities being their own best resource. COMET empowers friends and neighbors to be more prepared to support others' mental health needs - especially before a crisis.

COMET is a free training led by Farm Well WI. Please visit the [Farm Well WI](#) website for more information or contact s.monson@swcap.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

UW Extension - Raising Wisconsin's Children (Fathers)

- **Virtual Series - Thursdays**
- **7:00PM-8:00PM CT**
- [Link](#) to register for all topics

Farm Transition Resiliency Circle

- **Virtual - Tue, 4/5,**
- **Times 12:00PM & 8:00PM CT**
- **Learn More & [Register Here](#)**

COMET - The Education Center at Grant Regional Health Center Lancaster, WI

- **In Person - Fri, 4/13**
- **Times 9:00AM or 6:00PM CT**
- [Link](#) to register

Having Productive Farm Meetings

- **Virtual - Tue, 4/19**
- **12:00PM CT**
- **Learn More & [Register Here](#)**

COMET Catch-Up & Connect- Rapport Building with Microskills

- **Virtual - Tue, 4/26**
- **6:30PM-7:30PM CT**
- [Zoom](#) to join

Contact s.monson@swcap.org if
you have any questions

From early childhood, growing up with a dozen siblings, Bob learned from his mother the importance of growing your own food. His mother fed everyone in the family with the food she grew. Bob was always amazed with the plants in her garden; their seasonality, lifecycle, flavor, flowering buds throughout the year. The garden nourished his family; more than just through food. He knew that this is how he wanted to raise his family as well.

After thirty years of practicing medicine, he knew it was time to fully devote himself and his family to farming. He took to raising sheep first, which his wife convinced him of. She was a bit apprehensive about having young children in close proximity to large animals, but she was convinced knowing that there would be sheep roaming through their backyard. After sheep the farm branched into raising pigs, then cattle, and then some accidental peacocks.

Just as he did in his thirty years of practicing medicine, farming also became a learning process. One of Bob's main goals was to make sure the farm was self-sustaining meaning that the animals on his farm would be able to sustain themselves from grazing and harvested crops. Through years of farming he learned pigs were not fitting to this goal. They tore up the land, burrowing as pigs like to do. He learned that the landscape he wanted to cultivate couldn't include pigs, so he sold them. To Bob this was simply a part of the learning process. This wasn't something to be ashamed of, but rather proud of. Learning new information and adapting is the only way to success and Bob embodied that very process.

Throughout the years, Bob learned how to practice medicine, raise a family, where not to grow alfalfa (in a flood plain). He had the privilege of being a steward of the community by serving three small towns as a practicing physician. He also had the privilege of being a steward to his land; allowing natural parturition cycles, planting perennial crops, and encouraging rotational grazing. Bob and his family were able to see the natural beauty of a Wisconsin farm. Spring bringing new calves and lambs into the world. Fresh fields budding green waiting for the animals to start grazing once again. From Bob's perspective the natural world is something you learn from.



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