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For immediate release

**Eau Claire, WI (Dec. 28, 2023)** – Six exceptional young farmers will participate in the 70th

Wisconsin Outstanding Young Farmer (OYF) Awards Weekend Jan. 26-28, 2024 in Wisconsin Rapids, WI at Hotel Mead & Conference Center, 451 E Grand Ave, Wisconsin Rapids, WI.

The finalists include:

- Abby Driscoll, Newton
- Jacob & Jennifer Hoewisch
- Mitch & McKenzie Kappelman
- Scott & Katy Kohn, Medford
- Matt & Heather Reu, Whitewater
- Ryan & Lacey Wendt, Pound

The OYF candidates are sponsored to the state event by past OYF finalists, UW Extension County Ag Agents or other agricultural groups; sponsors can still contribute to the overall event or a specific candidate.

The Awards Weekend in Wood County allows the candidates to network on farm and family issues at the two-day event and they will participate in an Ag Forum/Workshop. The group will also have “tours” from local businesses on Saturday morning.

The 2024 state OYF winner will be named Saturday evening at the finale banquet. Also recognized will be the runners up and a “Speak up for Ag” winner, sponsored by Agri-View. The state winner will be nominated to attend the February 2025 national OYF Awards Congress, which will be held in Iowa.

The OYF award is based on 50 percent progress in ag career, 25 percent soil and water conservation and 25 percent contributions to community, state, or nation. Goals of the OYF program are:

- To foster better urban-rural relations through the understanding of farmers' challenges, as well as the appreciation of their contributions and achievements.
- To bring about a greater interest in farmers/ranchers.
- To help build an urban awareness of the farmers' importance and impact on America's economy.

The 2023 state winners, Travis & Melissa Marti, Pittsville and runners up Brody & Carolyn Stapel, Cedar Grove, are Semifinalists for the 2023 National OYF, which will be held in Ferndale, WA February 15-18, 2024. The National OYF event will be recognizing the top 10 finalists from around the US. Now in its 70th year, Wisconsin OYF has had 21 national winners. On the national level, OYF is sponsored by John Deere and the Outstanding Farmers of America Fraternity; and supported by the National Association of County Agricultural Agents.