

AAW President's Message - *LEAN IN*

Lean in. An expression I've heard a lot and used a few times. In the context of women in the workplace, it's been used to encourage us to seek the title and command the salary we deserve. In the context of Agri-Women, I'd like to think of it as leaning into our whole selves.

We have so many talented members. It is inspiring. Many of them farm or ranch full-time. Many of them work full-time jobs in the food and ag. sector. Many of them work full-time jobs in the food and ag sector while also farming.

As I write this, I'm picturing those who are preparing to climb in the cab to haul grain, combine crops, seed fall covers within the next few days or weeks. Many of our members will take their children or grandchildren up in those cabs with them. Teaching, nurturing, modeling safe and hard-working behavior the entire time.

I hope all our members will think about bringing their children and grandchildren to Agri-Women events as well. It's beneficial for the members to remember aspects of our humanity that we share. It's beneficial for the children to learn either directly through conversations or by soaking in the surroundings that food and agriculture is everywhere and it takes a lot of people with knowledge and skill to put food on our plates, drinks on the table, clothes on our backs, fuel in our cars.

Our oldest son turned 20 in September. When he was two months old, my husband and I drove 24 hours one way to Maine where I was installed as Secretary for American Agri-Women. [Note to members with young children: if it is more than a 6-hour drive, book the flight.

In the photos below, you see us on one of our many pitstops and you see the installed officers. The image I was not able to find was when our son LIT UP as AAW President Kathy Reavis talked with him after one of the meeting sessions. Arms and legs waving wildly, gurgling, giggling. It looked like love at first sight.



He attended countless state meetings, at least four AAW Fly-Ins and numerous Mid-Years and Conventions with me. Then 16 years after Maine we hosted the post-Convention tour at our house and it was touching to see him look forward to greeting and visiting with members from around the country.

He's now at college, still farming with us, and working a part-time job for a farmer as well as running his water hauling business. He's also having more meaningful conversations about what we do, how and why we do it with people of different backgrounds and worldviews. When we as Agri-Women lean in, we bring our whole selves and our families with us. And that's how we ultimately change the world – one meeting, one smile, one conversation at a time.

Keep leaning in,
Heather Hampton+Knodle, President
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