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For immediate release

Eau Claire, WI (Dec. 17, 2019) – Six exceptional young farmers will participate in the 66th

Wisconsin Outstanding Young Farmer (OYF) Awards Weekend Jan. 24-26, 2020, in Chippewa Falls,

WI at the Avalon Hotel & Conference Center. The finalists include:

- Philip and Laura Finger, Oconto
- Kelly and Rachel Fruit, Viola
- Jeremy and Heather Natzke, Greenleaf
- John (JJ) and Chase Pagel, Kewaunee
- Laura and Tyler Raatz, Cecil
- Katy Schultz, Fox Lake

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 public is invited to attend the Saturday banquet. For tickets, contact Harold or Cindy Matton at 715-833-9649.

The Awards Weekend in Chippewa 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 tour Seibel's Organic Dairy, Bloomer (2019 WI OYF State Winner's Farm), and Leinenkugel's Brewery, Chippewa Falls.

The 2020 state OYF winner will be named Saturday evening at the finale banquet. Also recognized will be two runners-up and a "Speak up for Ag" winner. The state winner will be nominated to attend the February 2021 national OYF Awards Congress, which will be held in Green Bay, WI.

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 2019 state winners, Adam and Chrissy Seibel, Bloomer, were just named to the top 10 National finalists. The Seibels will attend national OYF Awards Congress held February 6-9, 2020, in Connecticut. Now in its 66th year, Wisconsin OYF has had 18 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.