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A Hard Row to Hoe: Suicide Among Kentucky Farmers

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A HARD ROW TO HOE:
SUICIDE AMONG KENTUCKY FARMERS

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts
with Mahurin Honors College Graduate Distinction at
Western Kentucky University

By

Olivia N. Eiler

May 2020

CE/T Committee:

Professor Bradley Pfranger, Chair

Dr. Jay Gabbard

Dr. Elizabeth Gish

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2020

ABSTRACT

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, male farmers die by suicide at nearly twice the rate of the general population. My research focuses on understanding the factors contributing to this trend and identifying potential solutions, with a specific focus on the Commonwealth of Kentucky. I have collected qualitative data through video interviews with political leaders, scholars, and youth who are active in the agriculture community. These individuals have identified several key stressors, including stigma, a lack of healthcare providers in rural areas, financial insecurity, a lack of appreciation from the public, and uncertainty due to decisions made by political actors who do not understand agriculture. Among the potential solutions are the creation of public awareness campaigns, increased training for health providers about physical manifestations of stress, and the creation of a Kentucky hotline through which farmers can receive assistance for a variety of issues, such as financial planning and mental health. This research, compiled in a documentary, is significant because of its potential to educate farmers, policymakers, and the general public. Without awareness, the Commonwealth cannot adequately address this public health issue.

I dedicate this thesis to the one in five American adults living with mental illness. Together, with our allies, we can work to make stigma a thing of the past. I would like to give a special thanks to the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. As countless members of their support groups say every week, “You are not alone. We’ve been there, we can help.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the guidance provided to me by Bradley Pfranger over the past four years.

He has gone above and beyond the call of professor in helping me develop as a storyteller. From answering Facetime calls about projects at 10 p.m. to inviting me and securing the funding for the National Press Photographers Association News Video Workshop, Bradley Pfranger has shown that student development is truly his passion. Looking back at the copy I wrote and the footage I shot during my freshman year, I am embarrassed. Bradley Pfranger is the biggest factor in explaining how the quality of my work has improved into something I can be proud of.

This project would also not have been possible without the support of Dr. Jay Gabbard. As I am sure many students can relate to, my freshman year of college was not an easy one. Dr. Gabbard, along with the Bowling Green chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), supported me in my transition from a behavioral health hospital to a successful college senior. The conversations I have had in the Bowling Green NAMI group have had a life-changing impact on me.

VITA

EDUCATION

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| Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY B.A. in Broadcasting – Mahurin Honors College Graduate Honors Capstone: <i>A Hard Row to Hoe: Suicide Among Kentucky Farmers</i> | May 2020 |
| New Albany High School, New Albany, IN | May 2016 |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| News Channel 12, WKU News Director | Aug. 2018- Present |
| WHNT, Huntsville, AL Producer Intern | May 2019- July 2019 |
| WLKY, Louisville, KY Intern | May 2018- Aug. 2018 |
| Extra Point, WKU Multimedia Journalist | Aug. 2017- Present |
| News Channel 12, WKU Multimedia Journalist | Aug. 2016- Present |

AWARDS & HONORS

Summa Cum Laude, WKU, May 2020
Best Newscast: College Divison, Kentucky Associated Press, 2019
Tom Peterson Memorial Scholarship, Kentucky Associated Press, 2019
Wilma Howard Klein Scholarship, WKU, 2019
Robert Proctor Scholarship, WKU, 2019
Best Newscast: College Divison, Kentucky Associated Press, 2018
Best News Reporter: College Divison, Kentucky Associated Press, 2018
Best News Story: College Divison, Kentucky Associated Press, 2018

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Kappa Tau Alpha Honor Society

TRAINING

National Press Photographers Association
News Video Workshop

Mar. 2019

Sinclair Broadcast Group
Producer Academy

Mar. 2019

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PREFACE

In the spring of 2018, I heard a piece on NPR about Matt Peters, a farmer from Iowa who died by suicide in 2011 (Moffitt & Glenn, 2018). The piece was emotionally powerful and moving, and I immediately became curious about the scope of mental health issues among farmers in Kentucky. In my travels between my hometown in Southern Indiana and Bowling Green over the past four years, I have passed many farms. According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (2017), there are more than 77,000 farms in Kentucky. Surely, I thought, farmer mental health must be an issue on the radar of local Kentucky media outlets.

Unfortunately, when this project began in the spring of 2019, local media had largely ignored the mental health of farmers in Kentucky. At that time, a quick Google search of the phrase “Kentucky farmer suicide” only returned a television package from NewsChannel 5 in Nashville and a broken link to an article published by the *Lexington Herald Leader*. Thankfully, local media outlets have increased their awareness and coverage in the past year. Now, WHAS, a television station in Louisville, has two two-minute pieces on farmer suicide. Several other outlets provided coverage of Farmer Suicide Awareness Day in Kentucky, which occurred for the first time on September 18, 2019; several of my interview subjects were instrumental in organizing the event, which is discussed at length in my documentary. What sets my documentary apart from this coverage is its depth; the format of a 20-minute documentary allows viewers to connect more personally with the subjects than a standard 90-second television broadcast package.

When I started this process, I did not know much about agriculture. My experience with livestock was limited to petting some animals at a 4-H Fair in New Albany and helping name one of my great uncle's horses. Throughout the past year, I have learned a lot about the technical aspects of agriculture. Joe Michael Moore and Dr. Andy Joe Moore can attest to this; they graciously spent five hours one Sunday afternoon showing me around their farm, explaining everything they could and answering every question I could think of.

It may seem odd that someone who grew up in a Louisville suburb would be drawn to a project about farming. The thing is, this project is not really about agriculture; it is about the emotional connection that everyone can share, regardless of occupation, geographic location, or age. I spoke with people whose lives are vastly different from mine, from a 64-year-old pig farmer turned government official to three high school students already making an impact in world of agriculture. Although our life experiences are incredibly varied, I emotionally connected with every single person I interviewed for this project. One of the biggest lessons I learned, and one I hope viewers take away from my documentary, is that emotions can tie us all together, regardless of external life circumstances.

I also hope my viewers learn the scope of this issue. One of the most personally moving moments of this project for me occurred as I interviewed Madison Wilmoth, a student at LaRue County High School. I scheduled the interview on the recommendation of the LaRue County FFA advisor. Madison and I spent the majority of our time discussing her role with FFA and the essay she wrote for the contest mentioned in the documentary. When I felt the interview was coming to a close, I did what the majority of

reporters do; I asked, “Is there anything I didn’t ask about that you want to mention?” Madison thought for a minute before saying, “No, I think you pretty much hit it all.” That’s when her mother, who was watching from off-camera, said, “Madison, do you want to tell her about your great-grandpa?” I do not want to spoil what I consider to be the greatest ‘reveal’ of my piece; in broadcasting, revealing surprises along the way is one thing that separates average writing from great writing. That being said, this is the reveal that moved me. This is the reveal I immediately spoke about with my family members, my advisor, and my friends who knew about my project. This is also the reveal I hope sticks with my viewers. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2019), one in five American adults live with mental illness. Statistically, this means everyone knows someone living with mental illness, whether they are aware of it or not. We could all benefit from recognizing this, being mindful about comments that could be stigmatizing, and treating each other with kindness and understanding.

Professionally, this project also emphasized the importance of a major broadcasting mantra: you do whatever it takes to meet your deadline, no matter what. I completed this documentary despite the technical challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. I started editing my documentary in a brand new, state-of-the-art newsroom in Jody Richards Hall, with iMacs with giant monitors and impressive processing power. I finished editing in my apartment on my tiny MacBook Pro, after deleting the majority of my files and applications to make room for downloading my favorite video editing software, Avid, and the massive video file I would need to export. I had planned to create my graphics in the studio in the Academic Complex using XPression, the same graphics

software used by ESPN and the software I had been using since my freshman year; the process would have taken less than an hour to complete. Instead, I spent roughly twelve hours one weekend learning how to use a different program, Adobe After Effects, and creating fourteen graphics. I planned to set aside a full day to export my project in Jody Richards Hall and upload it to YouTube. Instead, I spent four days troubleshooting in my apartment; once again, my tiny MacBook Pro, with its weak processing power and lack of storage space, was most likely the problem. Eventually, I found a method that would work; I used Screenflick, a software program that allows you to record your screen and system audio, which was offering a free temporary educational license due to COVID-19. Screen recording my playback window in Avid is something I have never done before, but new problems require new solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how broadcasting works. Currently, anchors deliver the news from home, reporters rely on video chatting for interviews, producers try their best to call shows from outside of the control room, and, in many cases, only engineers remain in the station. My experience with this documentary has enhanced my confidence in my ability to overcome new challenges and continue to provide quality coverage in the face of constantly evolving limitations.

The script for my documentary begins on the following page. However, I recommend viewing the project on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/JgwKuC5ppvY> instead of simply reading the script. One of the strengths of broadcasting as a form of media is connecting more personally with the subjects by seeing emotions in their facial expressions and hearing emotions in their voices.

SCRIPT

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| <p>Eiler Spring 2020 19:58</p> | |
| <p>WS foliage and cattle MS tractor</p> | <p>(take sot Pruitt :02) “Farmer suicide is becoming an epidemic.” (take sot Beeler :06) “It’s absolutely one of the biggest issues we’ve got. It’s just off the charts high risk.” (take sot Reed :07) “If the farming... if the family farm ever gets to that spot where you think you’re worth more dead than alive to us, please think again.” (take sot Beeler :15) “How do we make that farmer sitting at the table 3 o’clock in the morning just think, ‘Everything is going to be alright. It’s going to get better?’ I don’t know the</p> |

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| <p>WS cattle and fence</p> | <p>answer, but it's not that simple. If it was, we'd already have it figured out.”</p> <p>(take sot Pruitt :03)</p> <p>“Our policy makers are not visiting farms enough.”</p> <p>(take sot Wilmoth :05)</p> <p>“We must find a way to reach out and save the lives of farmers who feed us every day.”</p> <p>(take sot Pruitt :06)</p> <p>“Am I doing enough to make people know that they're not alone in the fight that stress brings?”</p> <p>(take sot Reed :09)</p> <p>“If all we're doing... you know, Farmer Suicide Prevention Day, bringing awareness to it... if it just saves one life, then everything is worth it.”</p> |
| <p>WS cow and fence</p> | <p>(take sot Beeler :05)</p> <p>“It's never the end of the world. There's always another opportunity around the corner.”</p> |

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| WS grain bin | (take animation :05) |
| CG: A Hard Row to Hoe | |
| Suicide Among Kentucky Farmers | |
| MS rooster | (take animation :06) |
| CG: In 2016, the suicide rate for non-veteran adults was 16.4 per 100,000. | |
| -Veterans Affairs National Suicide Data Report | |
| CG: In 2016, the suicide rate for veterans was 30.1 per 100,000. | (take animation :06) |
| -Veterans Affairs National Suicide Data Report | |
| CG: In 2016, the suicide rate for farmers and ranchers was 43.2 per 100,000. | (take animation :07) |
| -CDC National Violent Death Reporting System | |
| CG: Madison Wilmoth | (take sot Wilmoth :13) |
| LaRue County FFA Secretary | “I just never heard about it, which... it just kind of made me sad and mad that no one was talking about it. Because it is like all around me. So, how... why hadn't I heard this before?” |

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| <p>CG: Warren Beeler</p> <p>Governor’s Office of Ag. Policy</p> | <p>(take sot Beeler :15)</p> <p>“Farmers are the most independent, sometimes the most hard-headed people in the world. And very, very proud. And talking about your problems is typically not at the top of the list of anything that a lot of them would do.”</p> |
| <p>CG: Dr. Myra Susan Jones</p> <p>WKU Professor Emerita</p> | <p>(take sot Jones :16)</p> <p>“If we have a physical condition, if someone is a diabetic, you talk about their diabetes. If they have heart failure, you talk about their heart condition and the ramifications of that. But unfortunately, when people are under stress, we don’t talk about it.”</p> |
| <p>MS cattle</p> <p>CG: Sydney Pepper</p> <p>LaRue County FFA President</p> | <p>(take sot Pepper :18)</p> <p>“We are such a tight knit community. We know everybody and everybody knows everybody. And so, just thinking that someone you know so well could have those thoughts floating around, just is really... it hurts to think about. So, it’s</p> |

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| <p>MS calf</p> | <p>something that a lot of people just don't talk about.”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :15)</p> <p>“I think rural communities, I mean... everybody knows everybody. When I was a kid growing up, we had a barn burn. The whole county came out. We built the barn back in three days. It's that kind of selflessness that is wonderful.”</p> <p>(take sot Reed :12)</p> |
| <p>MS three cattle</p> | <p>“When you go to someone's house, it's not a ten second conversation at someone's door. It's a two-hour conversation sitting at their dinner table eating a piece of apple pie, drinking a cup of coffee. Rural Kentucky is about building relationships.”</p> <p>(take sot Joe Moore :12)</p> |
| <p>CG: Joe Michael Moore</p> <p>Moore's Family Farm</p> | <p>“How you have such a tight community is everybody swapped the work. And I've eaten dinner in every house up and down</p> |

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| <p>CG: Rep. Brandon Reed (R) 24th District</p> <p>WS tractor</p> <p>CU cow</p> <p>ECU cow</p> <p>CU lamb</p> <p>MS hogs</p> <p>WS lambs</p> | <p>both of these roads because you swap work every year with someone different.”</p> <p>(take sot Reed :11)</p> <p>“If you’re sick, you can expect 3000 casserole dishes to show up at your house. That’s just the way it is. Everybody tries to watch out for each other. Everybody tries to help everybody.”</p> <p>(take sot Jones :15)</p> <p>“I have a colleague that said that in the communities when someone dies from suicide, it’s a non-casserole disorder. In other words, the people do not want to reach out and talk to those individuals. And I think that is so sad.”</p> <p>(take nat rooster :04)</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :22)</p> <p>“We’ve never done it so good. I’m telling you... in terms of producing more with less, in terms of managing the land, taking care of the land, taking care of the animals, keeping the water clean. All the</p> |
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| <p>WS flooded field</p> <p>CU tractor</p> | <p>things that are required to be sustainable, we do every day and do it the best we've ever done it. The problem is we don't have very good control over what we produce, what it's worth. And that's the very stressful part.”</p> <p>(take sot Wilmoth :06)</p> <p>“Their livelihood can be wiped out with a single drought, infestation, or 15-minute hailstorm.”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :10)</p> <p>“How many people would go to work on Monday if it was going to rain, knowing that they wouldn't get paid on Friday? Or if it rained too much, they wouldn't get paid?”</p> <p>(take sot Pruitt :02)</p> <p>“There's so much stress in the harvest.”</p> <p>(take sot Pepper :19)</p> <p>“My dad, he'll wake up at like 7, be out of the house by 8, and then he sometimes doesn't come in until like 1 in the</p> |
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| <p>CU horse</p> <p>CG: Isaiah Pruitt</p> <p>LaRue County FFA Reporter</p> <p>CU packaged beef</p> | <p>morning. So, he'll be out countless hours just working. Sometimes during harvest season, he doesn't come in until... or he doesn't. He just doesn't come in.”</p> <p>(take sot Pruitt :14)</p> <p>“I've always thought that farming is just a hard job, physical wise. But mentally... it's even harder. Your life depends on that one soybean. How is it going to be able to be harvested well? How is it going to be able to get on the market well?”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :19)</p> <p>“There's so many things that you just cannot control. Whether it rains or doesn't rain. Whether President Trump decides one day to say something about trade and the market goes down the limit. Or he says something else and it goes up the limit. It's just... it's really high risk in almost every category.”</p> <p>(take sot Jones :12)</p> |
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| <p>MS foliage, equipment, field</p> | <p>“I lived this when I was growing up, because you live from paycheck to paycheck. And the cash crop was tobacco which came in, the income, at the end of the year. And how did you stretch that?”</p> <p>(take sot Joe Moore :19)</p> |
| <p>MS lambs</p> | <p>“It hasn’t been easy. It’s really been tough. I had to buy it all. I had to pay for it all. I hope I don’t lose it. Farming’s tough... you never know. It’s just a real hard life. And it’s not always for money. It’s a way of life. Still, you can’t stay here if you don’t make a profit.”</p> |
| <p>CG: Dr. Andy Joe Moore Moore’s Family Farm</p> | <p>(take sot Andy Moore :06)</p> <p>“I know it’s cliché. People say it’s in your blood, but I do think it’s in your blood. I think it’s a lifestyle.”</p> <p>(take sot Reed :28)</p> |
| <p>CU cow</p> | <p>“The farm is not only what they do, but it’s their livelihood, it’s who they are, it’s the reflection, its who they are as a person. So, when the local farm takes a hit and a</p> |

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| <p>WS fence and cattle</p> | <p>local farm goes out of business, a lot of times that farmer takes it upon themselves. 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock in the morning, they're sitting at the supper table. Everybody else is going to bed. They're looking at the bills. They're looking at the market. They're looking at what they can do this year, what they can't do this year. And sometimes that just hits them hard." (take sot Beeler :48)</p> |
| <p>MS hogs</p> | <p>"I farmed for 20 years in the pig business. I love the pig business. And then in December of '98 it got so difficult; hogs got to 10 cents a pound- breakeven was 35 cents- and I'm one of those guys that sat at the table at 3 o'clock in the morning wondering how in the world am I going to pay my bills. Couldn't sleep. Stress was overwhelming. I mean... I never thought about suicide, but I had to start over at 43</p> |
| <p>MS hogs CU hog</p> | <p>years old. I was embarrassed. I was ashamed. And I will tell you, 20 years</p> |

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| <p>MS hogs</p> <p>WS fence, cattle, foliage</p> <p>MS cattle drinking</p> <p>WS fence and field</p> <p>WS field</p> | <p>later, I sit here as the connection between the governor of Kentucky and agriculture. What looks so bad 20 years ago turned out to be a blessing.”</p> <p>(take nat pig :04)</p> <p>(take sot Wilmoth :45)</p> <p>“In 2010, Dean Pearson, a 59-year-old dairy farmer, shot all 51 of his milking cows and then turned the weapon on himself, leaving suicide notes on cow tag cards, stating that he was overwhelmed by personal and financial issues. Farmer Matt Peters left a letter to his wife on May 12, 2011, before committing suicide. That morning, standing in their kitchen, he had told his wife that he couldn’t think and that he felt paralyzed. It was planting season, and Matt was working around the clock to get the crop planted on time. He hadn’t slept in three nights, and stress was high with decisions to be made.</p> |
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| <p>WS hogs</p> | <p>Unfortunately, Matt and Dean’s stories are not all too uncommon.”</p> <p>(take sot Jones :20)</p> <p>“I was surprised at the study I did. We did three focus groups of farmers- groups of farmers and their family members. One in Tennessee, two in Kentucky. There were 27 people I think, 26 or 27, and 7 of those individuals said that they knew someone personally who had committed suicide.”</p> |
| <p>WS cattle being fed</p> | <p>(take sot Reed :33)</p> |
| <p>WS cattle being fed</p> | <p>“There was a story about a farmer down in Georgia here recently. He was a dairy farmer. He was early 60s, close to retirement age but not ready. You know,</p> |
| <p>CU cattle</p> | <p>farmers never really retire. And he kind of got all his personal things in order, sold the farm, got the will ready, and</p> |
| <p>WS cattle being fed</p> | <p>everybody just thought he was retiring. When he got everything done, he woke up the next morning and committed suicide. And it was a shock to everybody, and</p> |

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| <p>CU rooster</p> <p>MS cow</p> <p>WS donkey</p> | <p>nobody knew about it or saw it coming.</p> <p>And the question was man if he just opened up to somebody, if he just had that conversation with somebody, a friend or a family member, you know... we could have stopped that.”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :05)</p> <p>“How do you convince people you don’t have to farm? There’s other things you can do.”</p> <p>(take nat chickens :03)</p> <p>(take sot Pruitt :28)</p> <p>“I’m on a little team called the Dixie Ag Safety Team, which serves the LaRue County and Hardin County areas through youth in FFA. And we kind of combine and make a symposium every year, and we focus on something. Last year, it was farmer suicide. And so, every year they have a scholarship contest, and this year it was write a letter or an essay to a farmer, explaining to them that... what suicide</p> |
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| <p>WS fence, cattle, foliage</p> | <p>meant to them and what losing them would mean to them.”</p> |
| <p>MS calf</p> | <p>(take sot Wilmoth :51)</p> |
| <p>CU hog</p> | <p>“So actually, after I wrote this essay, and me and my mom were kind of talking about this... my great-grandfather actually committed suicide. And I had no idea until</p> |
| <p>MS rooster</p> | <p>like a few weeks ago, which is completely shocking, you know. I had no idea. And I was just raised not knowing this at all.</p> |
| <p>MS rooster</p> | <p>And in my family, it’s just completely... like no one talks about it, which is</p> |
| <p>MS rooster</p> | <p>shocking. So, whenever I found this out, I was completely shocked, because I</p> |
| <p>MS rooster</p> | <p>thought, like, this just happens in other families and it’s a problem. But to just know that I’m so connected to it, without even realizing until just a few weeks ago, literally, is just sad.”</p> |
| <p>Image: LaRue County FFA at capitol</p> | <p>(take sot Reed :05)</p> |

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| <p>Image: Pepper speaking</p> | <p>“At the capitol, September 18th, we had farmer suicide prevention day at the capitol.”</p> <p>(take sot Pepper :02)</p> <p>“Dear dad...”</p> <p>(take sot Reed :04)</p> <p>“She read that letter and I don’t think there was a dry eye in the crowd.”</p> |
| <p>Image: Pepper, Pruitt, Reed, Beeler, and others at capitol</p> | <p>(take sot Pepper 2:38)</p> <p>“Dear dad, I know the past year has been tough. I’ve seen it all firsthand. I’ve seen</p> |
| <p>Image: Reed speaking</p> | <p>the falling rain and the falling prices making you and countless other farmers in the agricultural community feel like you too are falling, deeper and deeper into countless blackholes. You’re falling into the belief that it will never get any better.</p> |
| <p>Image: Pruitt speaking</p> | <p>You’re falling into situations where it’s getting tougher and tougher to pay the</p> |
| <p>Image: leaders at capitol</p> | <p>never-ending pile of bills. You’re falling into levels of stress and depression that you didn’t even know existed, and that has</p> |

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| <p>Image: LaRue County FFA at capitol</p> | <p>become the life of the American farmer.</p> |
| <p>Image: Pruitt speaking</p> | <p>January 1st, everyone outside of the agricultural community celebrated the new year. But for you, it's not a new year and it's definitely not worth celebrating. Sure, it's January. But last year's crops still aren't in and it's getting to be too late to do anything about it. They'll soon be way too far gone. This makes you feel like you're falling even deeper. I know that it is situations like these that have caused the suicide rate of American farmers to</p> |
| <p>Image: LaRue County FFA in capitol</p> | <p>continuously climb. I know that the world needs farmers. I know that I need farmers, and I know that I need you. I however don't know the thoughts that are floating around in your head. I don't know if you're one of the many farmers who, every day, think that suicide might just be the answer. I don't know if you think that doing the unthinkable is the only way to stop that falling. But I know for a fact that</p> |
| <p>Image: Pruitt and Pepper at capitol</p> | |
| <p>Image: LaRue County FFA in capitol</p> | |

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| <p>Image: leaders at capitol</p> | <p>it's not the answer to anything. As your daughter, I have grown to love farming just like you. You established our family farm by yourself. You are a first-generation farmer and that in itself is a huge accomplishment. You have worked your entire life for this. You did it, and as you did, you helped raise four kids who love it just like you do. Think of us, we think of you. Nothing is worth losing you. The farm may be struggling, and money may be tight, but dad, suicide is never and never will be the answer. Think of me, I think of you. At the end of the day, I would much rather come home to my whole family and a struggling or even non-existent farm than a broken and</p> |
| <p>Image: LaRue County FFA at capitol</p> | <p>hurting family and the whole farm. To be totally honest with you, if I lived knowing that the farm was the reason I was without a dad, my vision of the farm would be</p> |
| <p>Image: LaRue County FFA in capitol</p> | <p>permanently scared for eternity. I would</p> |

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| <p>Image: Beeler Facebook post</p> <p>Image: Beeler Facebook post</p> <p>Image: Facebook comment</p> | <p>never be able to look at it the same, with the same passion or with the same love that I do right now. Think of me, I think of you dad. There is nothing worth losing you. Nothing is worth losing an American hero, an American farmer. Think of me, I think of all of you. Love, your number one fan.”</p> <p>(take sot Reed 1:06)</p> <p>“Just having that event at the capitol... there were people in the audience, there were people on Facebook, once that went out. Warren Beeler... he’s the governor of agriculture policy, he’s the director... and he was there that day to help us with the proclamation on behalf of Governor Matt Bevin, and he posted on his Facebook that night. Almost- I haven’t checked the latest, but I- a couple days after he posted, there were like 600, almost 700, likes. But the comments below... that just led to other conversations. And I’ve already</p> |
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| <p>Image: Facebook comment</p> <p>WS cow</p> <p>MS hog</p> <p>MS calf</p> | <p>gotten phone calls. Dale Dobson has already gotten phone calls of people saying, ‘Man we’re glad you all are doing this. Here’s my story.’ And once you start that conversation of here’s my story, and people like that post something on Facebook like that... that breaks the barrier down. That breaks the wall down. Then someone else is like, ‘Oh, you mean someone else is having trouble with that? Well, maybe I need to talk to somebody because I’m having that same trouble right now.’ Once that conversation starts like that... once those barriers come down, once that brick wall comes down, and conversations can start... that’s when people are helped.”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :23)</p> <p>“My wife always has a rule when somebody sends me an ugly email. The two-day rule, we call it. Give it two days and it’s never as bad. And that’s kind of</p> |
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| CU cow | the same way with the stress and the |
| CU goat | farming deal. We live on hope. And if we |
| CU cattle | <p>don't let it get us down and we just know</p> <p>it's going to get better, and it will... the</p> <p>market goes up and down.”</p> <p>(take nat cows :03)</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :14)</p> <p>“They said at our meeting the other day,</p> <p>the thing that a lot of people who</p> <p>contemplate suicide as farmers just do not</p> <p>feel appreciated. So how do we change</p> <p>that? What do we do and how do we do it?</p> <p>That's the question.”</p> <p>(take sot Reed :26)</p> <p>“When you go to the grocery store, and</p> <p>you see the potatoes, and you see the</p> <p>lettuce, and you see the green beans, and</p> <p>you see the meat, and you see the beef and</p> |
| CU packaged meats | the pork and the chicken... that came from |
| WS cattle | <p>somewhere. We're sitting right here- my</p> <p>family farm- we're about 40, maybe 45</p> <p>miles from Louisville, downtown</p> |

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| <p>WS cattle</p> <p>MS goats</p> | <p>Louisville. But that 45 miles- it's a huge separation from the family farm to the store shelves.”</p> <p>(take sot Joe Moore :06)</p> <p>“We need to be a nation that's more thankful. We need to really think about thanksgiving and what it means.”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :04)</p> <p>“Next time you pick up that fork, I said, thank a farmer.”</p> <p>(take sot Reed :08)</p> <p>“When you see a need in public service, things that you wish could happen but it's not yet happening, it's either complain about it or step up and do something about it.”</p> <p>(take sot Pruitt :18)</p> <p>“Suicide has been a big issue in my life. I had a friend recently, a few years back, that committed suicide. And once I heard about that, I really wanted to start making a change. And when I heard of the</p> |
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| <p>WS cow</p> | <p>opportunity to work with farmer suicide and mental health awareness and farmers, it really was a big thing for me. So, I did that through FFA and the Department of Agriculture.”</p> <p>(take sot Reed 1:00)</p> <p>“Farmers... they’re very prideful about their land, their operations. They’re proud about what they have. At the same time, they’re very humble. A lot of times, you know, they’re not going to pick up the phone to call a suicide hotline. But if we can get something in place to where they</p> |
| <p>MS American and Kentucky flags</p> | <p>might call a universal center... you’re talking about extension services, you’re talking about Kentucky Farm Bureau, you’re talking about the Department of</p> |
| <p>WS Kentucky capitol</p> | <p>Agriculture... if everybody kind of works together, if we can kind of get a center in place where they might call about one</p> |
| <p>WS Kentucky House floor</p> | <p>subject matter, but what we’re hoping is on the other end of that phone line... when</p> |

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| CU Kentucky House floor | someone is trained in getting those |
| WS Kentucky House floor | avenues of support out to that farmer, but they're also trained in suicide prevention and they can pick up on the conversation. |
| WS Kentucky capitol | And then maybe they can open the door to that conversation while they have that |
| MS Kentucky capitol | farmer on the line. And then they can get that farmer to the avenues they need to go. |
| MS Kentucky capitol | If we can link those two worlds together, we're going to save a lot of lives. So |
| MS Kentucky capitol | hopefully coming up in the budget cycle this year, we can kind of put those things |
| MS Kentucky capitol | together and make that whole project a reality.” |
| MS Kentucky capitol | (take sot Joe Moore :43) |
| MS Kentucky capitol | “I would always think you had to be big, and I couldn't borrow so many million |
| MS Kentucky capitol | dollars to start a sausage company or I couldn't do this or that. But when I |
| MS Kentucky capitol | realized that I could stay very small and sell to my neighbors, is when things |
| MS cow | started clicking. And in about that time |

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| <p>MS hogs</p> | <p>that I was involved in that, then the state of Kentucky came up with Kentucky Proud products, and I was... I joined all of</p> |
| <p>WS lambs</p> | <p>that, got some promotions. But the little farmers markets that have been popping up in every county, every county seat in the state of Kentucky, and now across the county, it's been phenomenal.”</p> |
| | <p>(take sot Jones :38)</p> |
| <p>CU goat</p> | <p>“I also think that we need to focus on healthcare providers understanding more about farming and the stress associated with farmers, because the literature tells us</p> |
| <p>CU cattle</p> | <p>that many times when farmers seek help, if they're depressed and they're having</p> |
| <p>CU hog</p> | <p>stress, they will have physical symptoms when they go to that healthcare provider. And I think it's very important, whether it be physicians or nurse practitioners, that they realize that the stress that these farmers could be under and perhaps the</p> |

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| <p>CU hog</p> | <p>physical symptoms they're having could be a manifestation of the stress.”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :18)</p> <p>“We're talking about a ribbon campaign, like breast cancer has. We're talking about these challenge coins, where we can give you a challenge coin and you take it, and we challenge them to get one in a farmer's pocket where they can reach down and [realize] it's gonna be alright.”</p> |
| <p>CU hog</p> | <p>(take nat pigs :03)</p> <p>(take sot Joe Moore :07)</p> <p>“The young people, I'm telling you, the young people are really on track with a lot of this.”</p> |
| <p>Image: LaRue County FFA at capitol</p> | <p>(take sot Pruitt :32)</p> <p>“I believe with what we're doing... the kids you've spoken to, me and Sydney and Madison... I believe the kids you've spoken to, I believe we're the future of agriculture. I believe we're the future of this country. And I have a strong belief in</p> |

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| <p>MS lambs</p> <p>WS fence and cattle</p> <p>CG: A Hard Row to Hoe</p> <p>Olivia Eiler, Producer</p> <p>Bradley Pfranger, Faculty Mentor, First Readers</p> <p>Dr. Jay Gabbard, Second Reader</p> <p>Dr. Elizabeth Gish, Third Reader</p> <p>Special Thanks</p> <p>Moore's Family Farm</p> <p>Travis Newton, WKU Film</p> | <p>the future, and I think that will lead to change. I think a lot of us are passionate about our world, about our community. All of us participate in a lot of community service and we care about people, and I believe that's what our world needs. I believe that's what we as youth have, and I think that will lead to a lot of change in our future.”</p> <p>(take sot Beeler :05)</p> <p>“The biggest thing in agriculture isn't crops or livestock- it's people. We need people.”</p> <p>(take animation :18)</p> |
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| WKU Agriculture Research and Education Center CG: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 | (take animation :22) |
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