



Top performers: Central Wisconsin’s top HS outings

SPORTS, 5B

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American farmers feeling squeezed



Arkansas farmer Heath Donner says he and other farmers face challenging headwinds in 2025. PROVIDED BY ARKANSAS FARM BUREAU

Production costs high as commodity prices fall

Bailey Schulz
USA TODAY

It’s been a tough year for Heath Donner’s family farm. Located in the northeast corner of Arkansas in Mississippi County, the roughly 3,300 acres of land managed by Donner and his father produce cotton, corn, soybeans and peanuts. Donner already anticipated chal-

lenges heading into the year amid inflated operating costs and weaker crop prices. Historic flooding in the first half of 2025 only made matters worse, wiping out as much as 25% of his corn yield. Donner, a fifth-generation farmer, is no stranger to the business’s ups and downs but said this year is hitting farmers especially hard. One trade group is calling it an economic crisis hitting rural America. “I’ve been around this my whole life, but it is as dark as I can remember,” Donner, 44, told USA TODAY. The challenge for corn and soybean producers like Donner is tied to recent years’ abundant harvests, which have driven down commodity prices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is expecting record soybean yields this year, and prices are down roughly 40% from their most recent peak in 2022. As for corn, prices are down about 50%, with the USDA anticipating record production this year. Meanwhile, the National Corn Growers Association reports that production costs – including expenses for seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and machinery – remain near record highs. “The squeeze is real from both sides of the equation,” said Brian Duncan, an Illinois farmer and president of the Illinois Farm Bureau.

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Kirk’s widow vows to carry on mission

Jonathan Limehouse
USA TODAY

Erika Kirk, the wife of slain conservative activist Charlie Kirk, vowed to continue her late husband’s work and mission, saying during a recent speech, “You have no idea what you have unleashed across this country and this world.” Charlie Kirk, 31, was fatally shot in what officials called a “political assassination” while speaking at Utah Valley University’s campus on Sept. 10. Authorities identified Tyler Robinson, 22, as the alleged shooter and arrested him on Sept. 12. On the same day as Robinson’s arrest, Erika Kirk gave a speech, marking her first public appearance since the death of her husband.

“The evil-doers for my husband’s assassination have no idea what they have done,” she said in a livestream on the YouTube page of Turning Point USA, the conservative movement her husband started in high school in Illinois that has since swept into U.S. college campuses. The mother of two delivered the speech from her late husband’s studio, where he produced “The Charlie Kirk Show.” Wearing a beige blazer, She stood behind a desk outfitted with white hats featuring a gold number “47,” a reference to President Donald Trump, of whom her husband was a strong supporter. “They killed Charlie because he preached a message of patriotism, faith and of God’s love,” Kirk said. “They should all know this. If you thought my husband’s mission was powerful before, you have no idea.” Erika Kirk, 36, met Charlie Kirk in 2018, according to Fox News, and the two had a “very long dinner,” the conservative activist says in a video shared on Turning Point’s YouTube page.

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Court says ex-surgeon can sue CNN


Julius Whigham II
Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

A former pediatric surgeon for St. Mary’s Medical Center in West Palm Beach, Florida, has won an appeal in his nearly decadelong defamation lawsuit against CNN and employees involved in its reporting on pediatric deaths at a now-closed children’s cardiac surgery center at the hospital. The Fourth District Court of Appeal on Sept. 10 overturned a 2023 summary judgment issued in CNN’s favor, finding that Dr. Michael Black had presented enough evidence to take the defamation lawsuit to trial. Black was the leader of St. Mary’s Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery Program. He became the

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Dr. Michael Black was the leader of St. Mary’s Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery Program. ALLEN EYESTONE/PALM BEACH POST



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