



IOTA CRESCENT

Alpha Gamma Rho University of Wisconsin-Madison June 2025 wisconsinagr.com

John Waelti's Journey Of Service

By Jordan Gaal #1616

Wisconsin Beginnings Shape A Career

Waelti's childhood followed a classic Wisconsin rhythm: "Milking cows and making hay during the day and playing polkas at night with accordion." Watching farm families work tirelessly for minimal returns sparked questions that would define his career.

At UW-Madison, Waelti found his fraternity brothers shared his curiosity about rural economic challenges. During his sophomore year, economics courses clicked revealing the framework he needed to begin to understand agriculture's complex problems.

"A fraternity gives you the opportunity to learn how to function in an organization," Waelti explains. "You learn how to assume responsibility, delegate authority and work on committees with give-and-take. That is invaluable in almost any career."

Building Agricultural Economics Leadership

This foundation carried Waelti through graduate studies at Arizona and Berkeley, then to a 23-year career at Minnesota before becoming department chair of agricultural economics at New Mexico State University (NMSU).

Despite agricultural landscapes changing dramatically since his youth, Waelti maintained his mission to improve rural communities. "Economics doesn't give you the answers to everything, but it gives you a framework to think about things," he notes.

His international assignments in Kenya and Oman reinforced a universal truth: "People generally have the same objectives to have a better life and freedom to expand their capacities."

Giving Back In Many Different Ways

Waelti's commitment to service extends beyond his career. After retiring, he established charitable gift annuities with both NMSU and UW-Madison and continues annual support to the AGR Iota Chapter.

"I owe a large part of my success to experiences in AGR," he explains. "Freshmen may not immediately realize the opportunities to develop interpersonal skills that will serve them well in later life."

His giving extends beyond financial support. Back in Monroe, Wisconsin, Waelti has served on the school board, library board, Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and many other public service organizations. He currently serves on the Green County election certification committee and the County revolving loan committee. He continues sharing expertise through a monthly economics column while entertaining with his accordion.

Legacy Of Connection

Although he splits time between Wisconsin and his adobe in Old Mesilla, New Mexico, Waelti carries AGR values everywhere. His advice to collegiate brothers reflects this lifelong perspective:

"Take advantage of that opportunity to be at a great university with a great fraternity. It's not just for yourself in your career but during your lifetime... to make it broader than yourself."

Learn more about John's life and career at alwaystanaggie.org/stories/john-waelti.



John Waelti #631 traces his success from Wisconsin dairy pastures to New Mexico's high desert back to the leadership skills he developed at Alpha Gamma Rho Iota Chapter.

From Farm Roots to Statewide Impact

Jordan Matthews #1467 is using his UW–Madison education and support from the Dairy Innovation Hub to help dairy producers thrive by collaborating on several projects aimed at improving farm efficiency and animal welfare. Discover how his work is making a real difference across Wisconsin.



Griswold Receives 2025 Dean Strauss Leadership Award

Kevin Griswold #1129, co-owner of Tag Lane Dairy in Ixonia, has been honored with the 2025 Dean Strauss Leadership Award for his visionary thinking and servant leadership in the dairy community. His dedication to sustainable farming and commitment to the industry have made a lasting impact across Wisconsin.



UW-Madison, Hoffman Shines at the 2025 National Dairy Challenge

The University of Wisconsin-Madison’s dairy students once again showcased their expertise and proficiency at the 2025 National Dairy Challenge. **Isaiah Hoffman #1744** and the UW Madison team coached by **Eric Ronk #1488** stood out among participants representing 35 colleges and universities by winning first place.



Gehin Recognized WALSAA Outstanding Sophomore Award

Derek Gehin #1775 was recognized with a WALSAA Outstanding Award. Annually, WALSAA selects several outstanding sophomores who have demonstrated excellence in academics, leadership and service to the University and their community.



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From The President's Desk

By Eric Ronk #1488 - President, Corporation Board



My name is Eric Ronk, and I am excited to serve as president of the AGR Iota Corporation board for the next year. I'm in a teaching faculty role at UW-Madison in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences where I teach animal science and dairy herd management courses.

As I write this article in mid-May, it feels good to have final grades submitted from the spring semester along with watching students and their families enjoy graduation ceremonies from UW-Madison.

I have been on the corporation board for the past 5 years and recently completed a year as the vice president. My role has mostly focused on membership development, chapter programming and providing a key connection to the UW-Madison CALS campus. The new member education process has undergone significant changes with a mix of on-line modules provided by the AGR Home Office and the creation of new quizzes. Chapter programming and individual development are key areas of opportunity that were noted by a recent AGR chapter consultant visit. These are two key pillars of our 5-year strategic plan for the Iota chapter.

My goal is to make sure we continue to make progress in these areas of the strategic plan. For example, in 2025 we plan to establish and launch brotherhood expectations

and identify gaps in academic improvement plans for the Iota chapter. This takes coordination and a combined effort between some of the collegiate officers and members of the alumni boards. We have identified some activities and key performance indicators to track our progress in these areas.

In addition, recruitment of high-quality brothers to AGR continues to be a challenge for the chapter as the percentage of male CALS students has declined to approximately 30 percent. I hope to leverage some of my recruitment connections at the department and college levels to provide the chapter with additional recruitment opportunities. Overall, CALS student numbers have increased over the past two years, and the launch of our Animal and Veterinary Bioscience major has almost tripled in enrollment from 3 years ago. As the old saying goes, it takes a shared responsibility along with time, effort and resources to make progress. I hope as a chapter and a college we can continue to increase our efforts to recruit the next generation of skilled leaders.

Feel free to reach out if you have any feedback or connections with students interested in attending UW-Madison.

Fraternally,
Eric Ronk
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Thrivent Choice Dollars Supports AGR Iota Educational Foundation

Thrivent Financial is helping to underwrite the Sustain Iota initiative outlined in this edition of the Crescent. Since 2023, Thrivent has also supported the AGR Iota Educational Foundation through its Choice Dollars program. We appreciate their continued support.

For those not familiar with Thrivent Financial, it is a member-owned fraternal benefit society that provides diversified financial services. Because Thrivent is owned by its member-clients, not investor stockholders, it is required to carry out charitable and other programs for the benefit of its members and the public. It is Thrivent's goal to get the greatest number of members involved in directing its

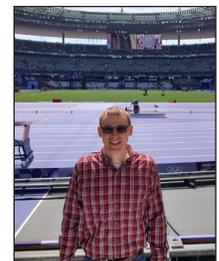
extensive Choice Dollars charitable donations.

If you are a Thrivent member, you can make an online directed distribution. Go to www.Thrivent.com. **Log in.** Click on **Membership Overview**. Scroll down to **Thrivent Choice**. Click on **Direct Choice Dollars**. You will see funds available to you. Follow the steps related to **Direct a New Organization**. The entire process should take less than 10 minutes.

Questions? Your personal Thrivent financial advisor can assist you. Or contact Brother Keith Kuehn #829 at keith.kuehn@yahoo.com with your specific questions.

Better Know Your Board: Derek Donnelly

Hello, my name is **Derek Donnelly #1580**. I live in Middleton, Wisc., and work for the UW-Madison Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences as a research program manager in the corn program. I graduated from UW-Madison with bachelor's degrees in agricultural and applied economics and dairy science in December 2015. In 2018, I completed a master's degree from UW-Madison in dairy science, focusing on forage digestibility. I decided to become a board member of the AGR Iota Educational Foundation to help give back to an organization that means a lot to me and to help the next generation have a great experience.



Anson's Analysis

By Anson Goldade #1245 - President, Educational Foundation

It's an honor to serve as your president of the AGR Iota Educational Foundation. It would be difficult to overstate the positive impact that AGR has made in my life, and I'm looking forward to continued contributions to the organization that has given so much to me.

For those who don't know me, my name is Anson Goldade #1245. My journey began on a dairy farm outside of Eldridge, North Dakota, winding through UW Madison and AGR Iota to currently residing north of Sun Prairie, Wisc. My professional career started in the dairy industry and then forked into the tech sector. I'm a software engineer and President of StreamText.Net, Inc., a company I founded in 2003. Additionally, I do software consulting, and since 2011 I've been serving that role with Best Buy.



AGR Iota is a healthy chapter with impressive collegiate membership and strong alumni support. In the last year alone approximately \$80,000 in scholarships were awarded to our collegiate members. While we are proud of this, there are challenges and opportunities that we must collectively meet to maintain an aging chapter house, grow our membership and increase our effectiveness. For some context, the chapter house that many of us called home for some of the best years of our lives needs maintenance. A \$250,000 project is underway to repair the effects of decades of enduring Lake Mendota's weather. This is one of a number of projects identified to keep the chapter house properly maintained for future generations.

Over the past year, I've collaborated with several board members on strategic approaches to achieve financial strength and stability and increase alumni engagement. The result of those sessions is the Sustain Iota initiative. You'll be seeing a mailing shortly explaining the initiative and the ways that we are hoping you'll consider contributing to sustaining the Iota chapter.

When you receive the Sustain Iota mailing, I'd like to call on each of you to reflect on the impact AGR Iota has had on your life, ask what kind of commitment you'd be willing to make, and then commit the time, talent or treasure you see fit that will ensure future generations have the same opportunities we've enjoyed.

Founders' Day in Photos



Iota Educational Foundation Awards Many Generous Scholarships

Rick Daluge #787 - Treasurer, Educational Foundation

This past academic year, the AGR Iota Educational Foundation was able to support many students and the collegiate chapter with scholarships, awards and educational opportunities. Thank you to all donors for your continued generosity, and congratulations to our brothers who received scholarships and awards!

When totaled up, students received \$51,300 in scholarships this year and another \$25,750 was awarded for students for use in the next school year from endowed scholarships.

Fall 2024 Scholarship Dinner

Mark Arndt, sponsored by Zachary Simons
Thomas Schroeder, sponsored by Frank Kooistra
Jackson Banks, sponsored by Jerry Steiner
Jacob Roden, sponsored by John Deininger
Derek Gehin, sponsored by Paul Hagen
Sabeel AbuHakmeh, sponsored by Garrett Germain

Spring 2025 Scholarship Dinner

Competitive Edge Awards, sponsored by Chris and Susan Salm
Sam Mell and Brian Styer
Competitive Advantage Awards, sponsored by Chris and Susan Salm
Jackson Nesbit, sponsored by Bryce Lambert and Malachi Guzman
Frederick Blair, sponsored by Zach Simons
Derek Gehin, sponsored by John Deininger
Jackson Banks, sponsored by Garrett Germain
Sabeel Abu-hameh, sponsored by Robert Schwert
Jacob Knigge, sponsored by Chris and Kevin Griswold
Brian Styer, sponsored by Robert Venable
Mark Arndt, sponsored by Cary Scott
Jackson Banks, sponsored by Al and Debra Gunderson
Jacob Roden, sponsored by John Damm

Founders' Day 2025 Awards

Nate Sorenson, Hamm Bruhn Award supported by National AGR Educational Foundation
Garrison Korn, Waller Carson Scholarship via National AGR Educational Foundation
Conner Timm, Waller Carson Scholarship via National AGR Educational Foundation
Tyler Hansen, Waller Carson Scholarship via National AGR Educational Foundation
Jacob Roden, Outstanding Senior Award sponsored by Al and Wendy Schultz
Ben Laukasek, Outstanding Junior Award sponsored by the Skullplates initiate class
Derek Gehin, Outstanding Sophomore Award sponsored by Bernie and Marty Staller
Brian Styer, Outstanding Freshman Award sponsored by Oren and Patti Hammes
Jacob Roden, Noble Ruler Award sponsored by Larry Ford and the Class of '65
Conner Schyvinck, Mulrooney Recruitment Award sponsored by Andy Mulrooney
Garrett Ulness, Al Koepke Memorial Award sponsored by the Koepke Family and friends
Jackson Banks, Paul Hartman Memorial Award sponsored by Ann Hartman
Mark Arndt, Pit Scholarship sponsored by alumni from the Pit
Nick Needham, scholarship in memory of Al Koepke sponsored by Lloyd and Daphne Holterman
Marcus Schroepfer, Housefellow Award sponsored by AGR Iota Educational Foundation

Kaedyn Peterson-Rucker, sponsored by Taylor Fritsch
Tommy Schroeder, sponsored by Dennis and Sandy Meulemans
Drew Dettman, sponsored by Scott Kurzer
Brandon Boyd, sponsored by Vern and Judy Dougherty
Frederick Blair, sponsored by Charles Sattler
Sam Mell, sponsored by James Karpinsky
Gage Sanderson, sponsored by Randy Torgerson
Nathan Sorenson, sponsored by Bill Gnatzig
Jacob Knigge, sponsored by Tom Breunig
Sabeel AbuHakmeh, sponsored by Paul Hagen
Samuel Thompson, sponsored by Dale and Linda Emshoff

Endowed Scholarships Awarded Via UW Foundations (2025-26 Academic Year)

Malachi Guzman, sponsored by Cary Scott Fund
Drew Dettman, sponsored by Dale Bruhn Fund
Sam Mell, Ben Lukasek and Gage Anderson, sponsored by John And Wendy Damm Fund
Conner Timm, sponsored by Roger Broege Memorial Fund
Isaiah Hoffman, sponsored by Karl and Ruth Drye Fund
Nathan Sorenson, sponsored by Grateful Badger Fund (Corey Geiger and Krista Knigge)
Brandon Boyd, sponsored by Tom and Gail Schomisch Fund
Garrett Ulness and Kaedyn Peterson-Rucker, sponsored by Russel Schuler Fund
Mark Arndt and Derek Gehin, sponsored by Robert Miller Fund
Jackson Banks, sponsored by Rick and Peggy Daluge Fund
Garrison Korn, Bryce Lambert, Frederick Blair, Mark Kendall, Daniel Zhu, Sabeel AbuHakmeh, sponsored by AGR Alumni Fund



State Of The Chapter

By Derek Gehin #1775 - Noble Ruler

It feels like just yesterday that the executive team was gathered at Chris Salm's home planning for the semester ahead—and just like that, it's already over. Even though the time flew by, the chapter has been anything but idle.

As always, the semester was packed with a variety of events, from spring formal in Wisconsin Rapids and club trips across the country to Founders' Day and an extremely successful Competitive Edge program hosted by Nathan Sorensen #1770 and Ben Lukasek #1757.

As mentioned, Nathan and Ben—along with the support of the entire chapter—organized the most successful Competitive Edge program in recent years. On March 15, 17 students participated in interviews and heard from Professor Paul Mitchell and Mrs. Sheri Sorensen. Following the in-person event, several additional interviews were conducted online, ultimately resulting in five new housing contracts signed for the 2025–26 academic year.

On the topic of recruitment, we've established a Summer Recruitment Committee of eight brothers from across the state. After connecting with so many promising young men during Competitive Edge, our goal is to maintain those relationships and further grow their interest in AGR over the summer. The committee plans to meet with potential members and broaden our search by representing AGR at events like the Wisconsin State FFA Convention in early June. I could not be more proud of the effort our brothers are putting into building the future of AGR. We are, truly, building better men every day.

As I sit and write this, I realize I'm only scratching the surface of what's happened within the chapter this semester. From weekly movie nights to braving the icy waters of Lake Mendota to be the first house to put our dock in, there's always something happening. The late-night shenanigans and shared experiences continue to strengthen the brotherhood that has defined the Iota Chapter for the past 109 years—and this past spring has been no exception.



Spring Formal Brings Brotherhood And Celebration To Nekoosa

By Connor Timm #1779 - VNR Activities

This spring, the chapter headed to Nekoosa, Wisc., for our spring formal. Unlike in years past, a Formal Committee was formed to have a broader range of ideas to make our formal the best it could be. Consisting of myself, **Jacob Roden #1756**, **Connor Rennie #1785**, **Mason Vilbrandt #1753** and **Kaedyln Peterson-Rucker #1766**, the Formal Committee looked into venues and lodging, decided the cost of tickets for each brother, and decorated the venue. This year, we decided to hold Spring Formal at the Nekoosa Community Center in Nekoosa, Wisc.

We socialized, played games and recognized Hope Connolly as our 2025 Chapter Sweetheart. After the formalities ended, we headed over to our Airbnbs for further festivities. These homes were next-door neighbors and had table games such as ping pong and pool, which we utilized fully. They were in very good condition and comfortably housed all 30+ brothers and dates. Overall, I really enjoyed my time at Spring Formal, and the brothers agree.

Looking towards the future, we will be hosting a 4th of July event on Thursday, July 3rd. Last year, we held a similar event, and even with poor weather, it was a great time. We are hoping for a good turnout, clear skies and a good time for this 4th of July.

Iota Chapter Welcomes Two This Spring



Nicholas Needham (left) with big brother Connor Rennie

Nicholas Needham #1800 from Fennimore, Wisc., is the son of Chris and Deanna Needham. Nicholas is studying dairy science on the pre-veterinary track. After joining AGR in February 2025, he knew that it was the place for him. He enjoys everything AGR has to offer, including the scholarships, brotherhood, family-style meals and much more. Not only

is Nicholas gotten involved in Alpha Gamma Rho, but he is also involved across campus with Badger Track Club, Euchre Club, Badger Dairy Club and soon to be Collegiate Farm Bureau and the Dairy Judging team. Needham has enjoyed his first year at UW-Madison and AGR thoroughly, as he spends time with the brothers, running and lifting, and hanging out with animals.



Tyler Hanson (left) with big brother Gage Anderson

Tyler Hanson #1801 is a biological systems engineering major from Sammamish, Washington. He just completed his freshman year and was involved in the UW-Madison Badger pulling team, ASABE, as well as intramural badminton and softball. He grew up on a small hobby farm in the suburbs of Seattle and has always had a passion for

agriculture and the overall crop production system. Tyler came to UW-Madison to pursue agricultural engineering and couldn't be happier with his decision. He has loved the campus, the people and the cheese, but getting to join AGR has certainly been the highlight of his year. He is living in the chapter house next year and is very excited to become more of an active participant in all the activities the fraternity offers.

Congrats, Graduates!

Camron Cafferty #1745 is the son of Dan and Tammy Remington. Camron is graduating with a degree in agricultural business management. Soon after graduation, Camron is starting a job as a soil conservationist with the USDA-NRCS located in Mauston, Wisc. As a member of AGR, Camron served as the VNR Planning. While in college he was also involved in Badger Dairy Club and the Badger Meat Science Club. Most of his favorite memories were created at AGR, whether being outside on the dock, hanging out with the brothers or going out on a Monday night to Sconnies.

Sabeel Abuhakmeh #1746 is the son of Raed and Iman Abuhakmeh. Sabeel is graduating with a degree in agronomy. After graduation, Sabeel is beginning his master's degree in agronomy at UW-Madison. As a member of the collegiate chapter, Sabeel served as the VNR Scholarship for one term and was involved in numerous clubs on campus. Some of his favorite AGR memories include the brotherhood retreats, Brewer's games and spending late nights in the chapter room.

Jacob Roden #1756 is the son of Joe and Jodie Roden. Jacob is graduating with a degree in agricultural business management and a certificate in entrepreneurship. After graduation, Roden will be a Credit Officer at Compeer Financial in the Fond du Lac office. Jacob has served as Noble Ruler and VNR Recruitment as well as house steward. Outside of AGR, Jacob was involved in Badger Dairy Club as the activities officer and World Dairy Expo general chairman, a member of the Badger Crops Judging team and Collegiate Farm Bureau. Some of Roden's best memories include trips through AGR, BDC and CFB, playing sheephead and spending time around the house with the brothers.

Jacob Knigge #1760 is the son of Charlie Knigge and Megan Wilson. Jacob is graduating with a degree in economics and a certificate in digital media production. After graduation, Jacob is starting a job as a retail relationship banker with BMO Bank N.A. located in Brookfield, Wisc. As a member of AGR, Jacob served as the VNR Alumni Relations and house steward. Some of his favorite AGR memories are Tuesday movie nights, days on the dock, going out on Monday nights to Sconnies, playing sheephead and late nights at the house.

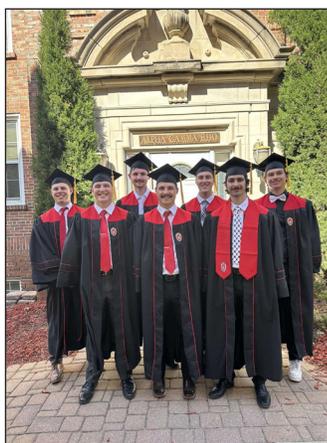
Kaedyn Peterson-Rucker #1766 is the son of Ron and Karen Peterson-Rucker. Kaedyn is graduating with a degree in biological systems engineering. Shortly after graduation, Kaedyn is beginning his master's degree program in biological systems engineering at UW-Madison. As a member of the chapter, he served as the VNR Finance and held positions on numerous committees. He will also be continuing his involvement in AGR by staying in the house as the Resident Advisor for the Iota Chapter. While in college, Kaedyn was heavily involved in Badger Pulling, the quarter-scale tractor team on campus. He was

also involved in the Collegiate Farm Bureau. Some of his fondest memories include the National BBQ Competition, days on the dock, late nights at the house and intramural sports.

Connor Schyvinck #1769 is the son of Bart and Janice Schyvinck. Connor is graduating with a degree in animal science. Connor is continuing to work at Trans Ova Genetics as well as his family's beef cattle operation in Reedsburg, Wisc. Connor has served as the VNR Recruitment. Outside of AGR Connor was involved in Badger Dairy Club, Collegiate Farm Bureau, National Agriculture Marketing Association (NAMA) and worked part time at Trans Ova Genetics. Connor's favorite memories are with fellow AGR members. He enjoyed playing sheephead, hanging out in the chapter room, intramural sports, club trips and throwing darts on Monday nights.

Miles Giebtbrock #1781 is the son of David Giebtbrock and Jennifer Hauxwell. Miles is graduating with a degree in genetics and genomics. Immediately after graduation, Miles is starting his bioengineering internship at Ball Horticulture in West Chicago, Ill. Miles spent most of his time in the lab and was a part of the Ane, Dawson, Atucha, Barak/Koch labs, and finished off at the Wisconsin Crop Innovation Center. These labs helped Miles understand the science of agriculture and apply his degree to real-world issues. Miles was also a part of Crops Club and the Undergraduate Genetics Association. Some of his best memories were from pits and random late nights in the chapter room.

Leith Hamad #1748 and **Mason Vilbrandt #1752** also graduated this spring semester.



Back row (left to right): Connor Schyvinck, Miles Giebtbrock, Jacob Knigge, Mason Vilbrandt
Front Row: Jacob Roden, Kaedyn Peterson-Rucker, Sabeel Abuhakmeh



Left to right: Miles Giebtbrock, Mason Vilbrandt, Connor Schyvinck, Jacob Knigge, Jacob Roden, Sabeel Abuhakmeh, Camron Cafferty, Kaedyn Peterson-Rucker

Rennicke Joins Officer Team As VNR Recruitment

Connor Rennicke #1784 of Fredonia, Wisc., is the son of Michael and Peggy Rennicke. Connor is studying economics and political science and has a strong interest in wealth management. As the newly elected VNR Recruitment, Connor plans to recruit potential new members from all different backgrounds and focus on building strong relationships with all potential members. Connor, who grew up in rural Wisconsin, knows what it takes to connect to potential members who don't come from an agricultural background. Rennicke has been involved in the chapter through intramural sports, as the mental health chair and as a member of the Spring Formal Committee.

“Return Service Requested”

Calendar of Events

August

- 23** House Work Day
26 AGR Board Meetings

September

- 1** Labor Day
3 First Day of Classes
20 WALSAA Fire-Up @ 1848
University Avenue
Start time 2 hours before the
announced kick-off
30 World Dairy Expo

October

- 1-3** World Dairy Expo
11 Homecoming (UW vs. Iowa)

November

- 11** AGR Board Meetings
27-28 Thanksgiving Recess

December

- 10** Last Day of Classes
12-18 Final Exams
14 Commencement

Celebrate Homecoming 2025 With Us: Rekindle the UW Spirit

As autumn colors sweep across Madison and the energy of campus builds, it's time to come home—to friends, family and Badger football! Join us for an unforgettable Homecoming tailgate as the Wisconsin Badgers take on the Iowa Hawkeyes.

Date: Saturday, October 11, 2025

Time: Kickoff TBD – Tailgate continues for at least 2 hours after the game

Location: Budget Bike Center, 1124 Regent Street

What to Expect:

- **Food & Drinks:** A classic spread of tailgate favorites—brats, brisket, pork loin, cheesy potatoes, mac ‘n’ cheese, nachos, popcorn, cookies and more. Beer, soda and water will be available.
- **Comfort & Entertainment:** Tented areas with seating and TVs streaming games all day, including the Badger game. Rain or shine, we've got you covered—with heaters if the weather turns cold.
- **Badger Spirit:** Rock your red and white and get loud for Bucky!
- **Parking:** A limited number of spots are available at the tailgate site. First come, first served—contact Zach to reserve in advance.
- **Cost:** Attendance is free. Donations are appreciated and help support tailgate costs. All proceeds benefit the AGR Iota Educational Foundation.

We can't wait to celebrate Homecoming 2025 with you!
Questions? Contact Zach Lieven at lieven721@hotmail.com.