

Illinois **Field & Bean**

JANUARY 2023

A PUBLICATION OF THE ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION



**Growing Audiences:
The Young Farmer
and Influencer Issue**



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Visit us online at
www.ilsoy.org/magazine/illinois-field-bean.



COVER: ISA is meeting next-gen growers where they are by leveraging ag influencers and leaders to grow audiences across our communications channels and networks, and make Illinois soy accessible and relevant to younger generations.



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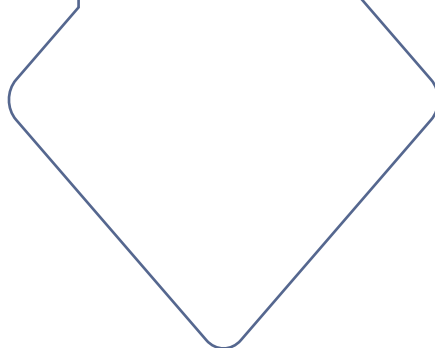
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FROM THE BOARDROOM



TIM SCATES |
SECRETARY | ILLINOIS SOYBEAN BOARD |
AT-LARGE DIRECTOR

What I'd Say to My 25-Year-Old Self

It feels like yesterday I started my farming career. Looking back over these years of tending the soil, unpredictable plantings, and plenty of harvests, I reflect on so many memories – some good, some not-so-good.

It's easy to look back and wish I could advise myself at age 25 what to do the same or do differently, what to not worry so much about and what to worry more about, and most importantly, what not to take for granted.

I wish I would have known, even though I was probably told by my parents, aunts, or uncles, that I should get involved in organizations sooner that would benefit others as well as myself. For one example, the Illinois Soybean Association has been a great way for me to grow and understand that not all farms, and surely not all farmers, are the same. What works great on our farm isn't necessarily the best way to tackle a problem on a friend's farm elsewhere in the state.

It's a big world out there and by integrating myself into the industry, I can see how far of a reach I have as an individual by stepping out of my comfort zone by being involved in good organizations. While I can't go back and change the past, I can be certain that I made the right decision by becoming involved - even if it was a little later in my farming career.

One choice I made that most impacted my life that I wouldn't change? The decision to work alongside my dad, brother, uncles, and cousins. What we have been able to build upon using the foundation set for us by our past generations has been hard work; hard work by everyone utilizing their own very different skillsets ranging from shop work, agronomy, to office work.

I'd always thought growing up that the closeness between my cousins and I was a little more like having 20 plus brothers and sisters. I can't imagine myself working anywhere else and only seeing my family on holidays.

Similarly, being involved in the industry outside of the farm feels like a family, too. Just a much larger, more extended family. We all may have different skillsets and ways of thinking, but in the end we all have shared goals and values.

Take it from my own experience, don't wait 25 more years. Start today. Try something new on your farm. Identify your strengths and how you can use them for more than just yourself. Get involved in organizations that share the same mission as you. You never know, you might find yourself a part of a new, agricultural family.

Cream of the Crop

We recently held the Illinois Soybean Association's inaugural Impact Awards celebration in Bloomington. In a room with more than 150 of our friends, we celebrated Illinois farmers and industry leaders who are making their mark on Illinois agriculture. As far as 2022 was concerned, Illinois agriculture and ISA had a banner year and it was fun to highlight the achievements from the past 12 months, all together as one united Illinois ag family.

While the evening was full of inspiring moments, there's one that I'm especially proud of. It was the moment we called a special group of 20 farmers to the stage to be recognized. These farmers are the first class of Illinois ag's "20 Under 40" young farmer recognition program, or the cream of the crop you could say. We introduced this stand-out group of individuals with the following:

"Illinois is known for two things: the high-quality products we feed to the world, and the high-quality farmers who make it happen. Specifically, young farmers are our future, and no state's future in agriculture is brighter than that of Illinois. Illinois is brimming with farmers of all specialties who truly operate in a league all their own."

Throughout that evening, I had the opportunity to visit with several members of this class. I was as impressed as I was proudly aware that our industry and our commodity boards are in good hands with the caliber of farmer talent we're growing here in Illinois. These dedicated men and women are proof that "being green" might just be the key to growing green.

Over the next few pages of this issue, you'll get to know this incredible class and the impacts they are making at home, on the farm, and in their communities. You'll learn about the ways we're celebrating young farmers in Illinois who are thriving in our industry and paving a new way forward. They are trying new practices, bringing in new revenue streams, adopting new technologies, committed to sustainable choices, and even thinking differently about the way we're educating the next generation that will support this industry.

Cheers to Illinois' young farmers. Those celebrated here in this issue, and those reading it at home. May Illinois' agriculture continue to benefit from your immeasurable contributions. You are the way forward.

Know a young farmer that we should know, too? I'd love to hear about them. Email me today at ilsoy@ilsoy.org.



JOHN LUMPE | CEO |
ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION





Blake and wife, Kristin, have three children: Lyla 5-years, June 4-years, and Mack 3-years.

Letting Go of Status Quo

By Betsy Osman

Blake Noland is a man reckoning in real life. He is charismatic and full of stories, and his creative enthusiasm is on lock. His entire career has been built around helping the next generation of agri-professionals and skilled trade workers blaze their unique path toward success, not by identifying what they want out of their career but what they don't want.

"I love helping a young person narrow down what they do not want to do in a career," says Noland. "Everyone focus-

es on finding something they love as a career; I think we need to focus more on identifying what we don't enjoy, what we tolerate, and which skills we want to build. A career path will start to materialize when you can point to what you don't want to do with your life, and identify skills that can provide value to others."

Noland is the founder of Birddog Workforce Scouting, a company dedicated to helping trade school students find employment in agriculture and other skilled trade industries by matching skills and interests with available opportunities – a

career matchmaker of sorts. He sees a growing need in recruiting individuals who can stand in front of technological advancements and won't be ousted by breakthrough AI operations. "As technology continues to integrate in tractor cabs, there will still be a need for an individual that knows how to setup, monitor, and fix these modern machines," says Noland. "Learning the basics from the operator seat is a natural transition to being the go-to-guy when autonomous operations hit the countryside."

Blake started as a farm kid who went to a diesel tech

school and wanted to offset his farm income by working on farmers' equipment. "I started selling seed as another revenue stream and caught the eye of the General Manager for one of Dow AgroSciences' Seed Affiliates. He asked if I wanted to design a seed sales internship for kids wanting to get back to the farm. Before that, I didn't even know you could get paid to help college students navigate their career paths. When Dow and DuPont merged, I didn't make the cut, but I did find my purpose."

Noland has never cared for the truism that everything

happens for a reason. Rather, he answers another call. "I'm inspired and consistently surprised by the outcomes that come from living a faith-based life in Jesus Christ. The more I let go of control and give my concerns and decisions over to God, the more enjoyment I experience in my life. Knowing a 'No' today is setting me up for a 'Yes' tomorrow makes this adventure a lot more fun."

Currently, Noland is working on an educational entertainment video series for ISA called "Behind the Bean" that breaks down entry-level career opportunities in agriculture which don't require a bachelor's degree, and you can check out the video series on ISA's YouTube account. He is also building his network of internship opportunities that span throughout Illinois, Wisconsin, and Florida.

Birddog's upcoming project, "Job Hopper," will provide a quarterly career experience for high school graduates ranging

from retail agriculture, grain handling, HVAC and electrical, to metal fabrication, diesel tech, and auto-collision. "If we don't have talented young individuals entering these career fields, our farms will struggle to thrive," he cautions.

Looking ahead, Noland hopes to see more opportunities for students to trial various career paths. "I want to shake up the status quo. Let's do away with the idea that everyone goes to college and that internships are only provided to college students, and instead provide young people the opportunity to experience careers in different geographic locations."

Continues Noland, "Say what you want most is to work on diesel engines. How exciting would it be to get to spend three months in Florida during the winter working on a diesel boat's engines, then three months in Tennessee working on diesel construction equipment, and finally three months



Workforce Scouting

in Illinois working on diesel tractors. You would have such a clear picture of what you really enjoy doing, where you want to do it, and you've developed some really important relationships along the way."

He talks a lot to young people about investing in themselves. And if you ask Blake about the most important investment he's made in himself, his response is swift and sincere. "Marrying my wife was the smartest thing I've ever done. I'm extremely hyperactive and fully appreciate a significant other who can help reign in my excitement. Having a solid and steady person

to bounce wild ideas off of is something I'll never take for granted."

Being comfortable with being uncomfortable is the space where Noland lives. He is drawn to extremes, transfixed by social reforms, and resists the idea that today's younger generation has a flawed work ethic. His hunger to make a difference is evidenced by his thoughtful responses and long-worded answers. But when asked for the single piece of advice he has for our youth, he answers simply:

"Put down your phone. Enjoy your community. Love your people."



Noland is an Illinois farmer and founder of Birddog Workforce Scouting, a company dedicated to helping trade school students find employment in agriculture and other skilled trade industries.

WISHH serves as an international soy industry incubator, spurring innovation by **connecting local entrepreneurs with industry-specific resources and business knowledge.**



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WISHH is a program of the American Soybean Association and is funded in part by the United Soybean Board and state soybean board checkoff programs.

FULL-CIRCLE RETURN

HERE'S HOW THE SOY CHECKOFF WORKS. The national soy checkoff was created as part of the 1990 Farm Bill. The Act & Order that created the soy checkoff requires that all soybean farmers pay into the soy checkoff at the first point of purchase. These funds are then used for promotion, research and education at both the state and national level.



* Led by 73 volunteer soybean farmers, the United Soybean Board (USB) invests and leverages soy checkoff dollars to MAXIMIZE PROFIT OPPORTUNITIES for all U.S. soybean farmers.

unitedsoybean.org



Capturing Energy

Challenges facing agriculture are in some ways similar to those facing other sectors of the economy. These include supply chain issues including a shortage of truck drivers, aging demographics, and financial barriers to entry for younger people who want to pursue a career in agriculture.

Illinois farmers are arguably the most productive in the world. One of the big reasons is their resilience to changing conditions and adaptability to best practices which made Illinois agriculture the world leaders in soybean production.

This adaptability and willingness to use the latest scientific advances is a feature of modern agriculture. Advances in agronomy and sustainability practices are just a few areas where Illinois farmers distinguish themselves from other countries.

So, how can we capture the energy necessary and the new means of communicating the success story of our Illinois farmers and how they sustain this productivity? To answer this question, it helps to understand how the world and economy have changed and continues to change rapidly. When many of us were younger, we lived in a world and economy where information was a scarce resource. Those who had a good education and unique knowledge were rewarded the most financially. For example, doctors, lawyers, scientists, and engineers were often able to command the highest salaries.

Today we live in a world where information is ubiquitous, and the information economy is absorbing and transforming every sector. Agriculture today is becoming one of the most information-intensive sectors of the economy and as the use of precision agriculture techniques achieves wider adoption, this



TODD MAIN | DIRECTOR OF MARKET DEVELOPMENT |
ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION

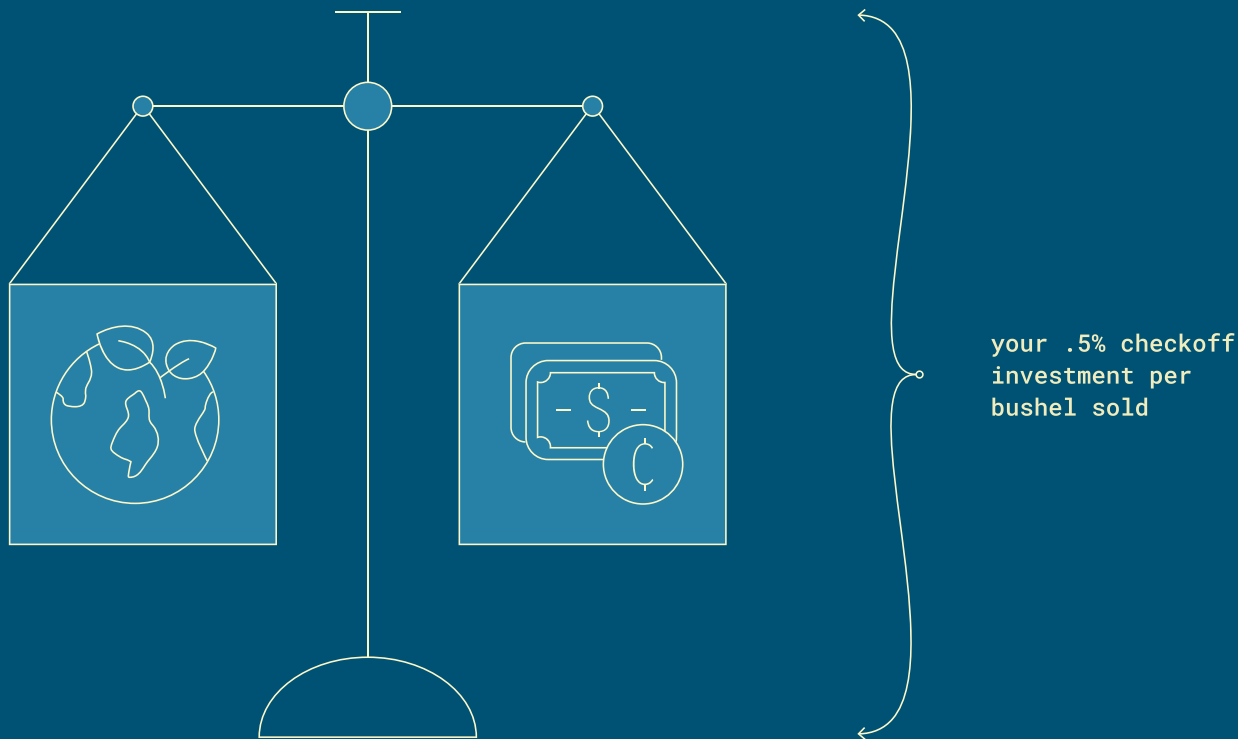
will only hasten this rapid change with the promise of productivity increases necessary to meet the increasing world demand.

One challenge that we need to address is the recruitment of the next generation. Young people are being taught skills for a future that requires the ability to filter out the “signal” or relevant information from the noise. As participants in this new information economy, younger people are exposed to perhaps the widest range of new ideas and thinking of any generation in world history.

As we seek to recruit and train the next generation of agriculture professionals, the checkoff program is working to understand how we preserve our values and traditions and the best of what we have while providing a welcoming space for them. Attracting the best and brightest of this new generation requires us to demonstrate an openness to new ideas and things that may challenge current thinking on a variety of fronts.



Making the economics of sustainability pay off.



In 2021, Illinois farmers enrolled more than 125,000 acres of farmland in PCM nitrogen management programs, reducing nitrate-nitrogen loss by 578,000 pounds.

Your half percent per bushel checkoff contribution goes in part to fund Precision Conservation Management (PCM) programs in Illinois. Jointly funded by ISA and IL Corn, PCM is a farmer service program designed to help you understand and manage risks associated with adopting new conservation practices on your farm. Ultimately, PCM integrates conservation practices and financial data to help you make sound management decisions that not only benefit the environment but also your bottom line.

For more information on your investment, visit ilsoy.org.

THE CHECKOFF THAT PAYS OFF.



RACHEL PEABODY | EDITOR |
ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION

We Speak Farmer

Most days I find myself somewhere between TikTok and the nightly news. As a millennial, I feel like I've grown up in this age of information with communications available at every turn, and I know there's no shortage of ways to get an update every way, every day. At ISA, we take great pride in the every-way, every-day information we're communicating, and with 43,000 soybean farmers to serve, it requires every tool in the toolbox to effectively tell you the stories of your state soy checkoff and membership programs. Your monthly copy of Illinois Field & Bean is just one way that we do that.

Whether it's by text alert, magazine article, podcast, or research summary, whether it's online or over coffee, you'll find that we speak farmer, and to every generation involved with the farm. As part of our organization's transition to being more farmer-focused, we understand the importance of storytelling from a field-level point of view. We're reporting from the places our farmers are, providing inside access to the good news coming from the Illinois soybean industry that your checkoff investments have made possible. In all places, and across all generations, we're speaking farmer and proud of it.

This particular issue is focused on our efforts in fostering the next generation of soybean leaders. We've got a special insert in this issue starting on page 14. I invite you to read all about the Illinois ag industry's first ever "20 Under 40" recognition program and the young

farmers who claimed these honors in 2022. I think you'll also enjoy this month's cover story on Blake Noland from Blue Mound, Illinois who is a former farm kid turned family farmer and the pioneering entrepreneur behind Birddog Workforce Scouting. Your checkoff has invested in an innovative educational video series with Birddog titled "Behind the Bean" that demonstrates the ways we're growing young talent and bringing it back to Illinois agriculture.

This issue is a testament to the energy happening in the soybean industry and highlights some of the brightest young farmers who are igniting the way forward. I think that's worth getting excited about.





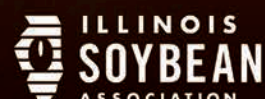
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We're declaring 2023 as the Year of the Farmer to show our appreciation to you, and to show consumers exactly who's behind their food. During the biggest game in football, watch for the ad featuring Illinois farmers and one powerful message: 96% of Illinois farms are still owned and operated by families, just like yours.



Why the 96%?
Scan the code to learn more.





MEET OUR 2022 WINNERS



Nominated for their on-farm success, community leadership and tremendous potential, these men and women have individual stories united by the collective pride of farming in Illinois. Read on to get to know them, their operations and involvements and what they're most excited about in 2023 (in gold).

Visit IL20Under40.com to learn more about the program.

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Andrew Bowman

ONEIDA, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS AND POPCORN

Andrew Bowman is a co-owner of Bowman-Hulsizer Family Farms in Oneida, Ill, raising corn, soybeans and specialty popcorn. Bowman is also an independent insurance agent focusing on agriculture risk management and a co-owner of a specialty popcorn business, Pilot Knob Comforts. You can find the popcorn at Eataly Chicago, Erewhon Market in California, Cost Plus World Market, Amazon, Hy-Vee and at many local family-owned stores.

"The same thing always excites me: building up better than the past year. Part of the inspiration for the farm is that we strive to improve. In addition to our typical large-scale test plots, 2023 in particular already has a new planter in store, another year for a farm we just bought in 2022 and the first year of 4-H for our sons."



Andy Lenkaitis

ST. CHARLES, IL

DAIRY, FEED CROPS AND COVER CROPS

Andy Lenkaitis is the owner of Lenkaitis Holsteins in St. Charles, Ill where he raises dairy cattle, crops for feed and cover crops with his wife, Sarah. Andy is active in the Illinois Farm Bureau State Young Leader Committee and the Kane County Farm Bureau, where he has served as a Board Director since 2018. The Lenkaitis family is known to always open their barn doors to share their dairy story and recently built a viewing room to better host visitors and tours on their farm.



Sarah Lenkaitis

ST. CHARLES, IL

DAIRY, FEED CROPS AND COVER CROPS

Sarah Lenkaitis and her husband, Andy, own Lenkaitis Holsteins in St. Charles, Ill, where they raise dairy cattle, feed crops and cover crops. Sarah also serves on the IL Holstein Association as Secretary, and has competed in district and state Young Farmers Coalition competitions. Through her participation and success, she has encouraged others to build leadership skills by doing the same.



Austin B. Rincker
MOWEAQUA, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS, HAY AND ANGUS CATTLE

Austin Rincker is the owner of Rincker Ag LLC in Moweaqua, Ill, where he raises corn, soybeans, hay and Angus cattle. Locally, Rincker is the Beef Superintendent of the Shelby County 4-H fair, President of Shelby County Young Leaders, and sits on the Shelby County Farm Bureau Board as well as serving as a director for his township. Rincker formerly served the Illinois Soybean Association as an At-Large Director and served as Marketing Committee Chair for two years. During his ISA tenure, he was also a member of the Illinois Livestock Development Group and the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council.



Blake Lockett
RIDGWAY, IL

CORN AND SOYBEANS

Blake Lockett is the owner of Lockett Farms in Ridgway, Ill, where he grows corn and soybeans. Lockett is also a full-time crop insurance adjuster, serves as the county Young Leader Chair and is in his fourth year as the district 18 Representative of the State Young Leader Board. Lockett also enjoys talking to kids in his community who have an interest in farming and often invites families to the farm to teach them about his operation and explain day-to-day operations.



Blane Olson
ELKHART, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS, PUREBRED SHOW PIGS AND COMMERCIAL PIGS

Blane Olson is the owner of Olson Farms in Elkhart, Ill, where he raises corn, soybeans, purebred show pigs, and commercial pigs. Along with his wife Kristi, Olson initiated the Illinois Bred program for junior swine exhibitors at the Illinois State Fair. Olson also serves on the Purebred Swine Council, is the Central Director of the United Duroc Swine Registry and is the District 4 Director of the Illinois Pork Producers Association, where he is also chair of the education & youth committee.

"Just that—the future. I'm lucky enough to be the third generation on our farm and can't wait to see what opportunities that we can present to our kids as they get old enough to decide their own futures and possibly return to our operation. We expanded to a commercial wean to finish barn last year and have tentative plans to expand going forward. While it can sure be frustrating at times, production agriculture is a very rewarding way of life, and it sure presents a new opportunity every day."



Brandon Walter

HARVARD, IL

**CORN, SOYBEANS, STEERS,
DAIRY, ALFALFA, WHEAT AND RYE**

Brandon Walter is a farmer from Harvard, Ill, who grows corn, soybeans, alfalfa, wheat and rye. He also raises steers and dairy cattle and is the owner of Walter Seeds Inc., located in Harvard. Walter picks the varieties and traits to focus on; he grows, cleans, treats, bags and handles all the paperwork for his seed business. Locally, he serves on the McHenry County Board of Directors and on their Foundation Board. Walter is also known to host field days to continue education opportunities for his fellow farmers and, in 2021, organized a community harvest for a local farm family in need.

"You should be in competition with the top 10% in your field; everyone else is just a critic."



Cameron McClure

LAWRENCEVILLE, IL

**CORN, SOYBEANS, WHEAT,
HOGS AND CATTLE**

Cameron McClure is the owner of McClure Farms in Lawrenceville, Ill, where he raises hogs, cattle, soybeans, corn, and wheat. McClure's experience and knowledge of the livestock industry led to him integrating crop and animal production into producing high corn and soybean yields more efficiently, resulting in state wins in the National Corn Growers Yield Contest and being recognized during Commodity Classic. McClure's latest endeavor includes starting his own application business, where he works with other local farmers and co-ops to apply liquid fertilizer and fungicides late in the season, using his high clearance sprayer in support of those looking to split their nitrogen applications to better match environmental conditions.

"Adapt and overcome. My grandpa always had a positive outlook. Not everything is going to fall your way or work out the way you wanted, but you move on and work with it. If you tear something up, you fix it and keep going. Don't agonize over breaking a piece of equipment or that your crop isn't as good as you hoped."



Chad Bell

VIOLA, IL

**CORN, SOYBEANS, WHEAT
AND PIGS**

Chad Bell is the owner of Bell Family Farms in Viola, Ill, where he raises corn, soybeans, wheat and pigs. Bell has served as an Illinois Farm Bureau State Young Leader Committee Member and, in 2021, was an Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leader Achievement Award Winner, returning in 2022 to place 4th nationally. Locally, Bell serves on the Mercer County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and sits on the Gold Star FS Board of Directors.

"Continuing to improve the land I farm. I am a big proponent of conservation practices that take care of the soil and environment, such as tile and cover crops. Making those investments has improved my profitability and kept the most productive soils where they belong, and that's in the field."

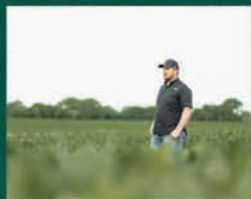


Dallas Glazik

PAXTON, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS, WHEAT, OATS AND OTHER SMALL GRAINS

Dallas Glazik is the owner of RoseLee Farms in Paxton, Ill, in addition to being a Biologist at Pheasants Forever. On the farm, he grows corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and various other small grains. Glazik has been a volunteer firefighter with the Ludlow Fire Department since 2014 and co-owns a craft spirit business, Silver Tree Beer & Spirits, along with his two brothers. To his community, Glazik has become a spokesperson for precision agriculture with a conservation mindset. He often collaborates with farmers on ways to increase the profit of their farms by analyzing agronomic data and identifying areas of a field where conservation or alternative farming practices can be made.



David Murphy

TISKILWA, IL

CORN AND SOYBEANS

David Murphy owns Murphy Farms in Tiskilwa, Ill, along with his father and uncle, where they grow corn and soybeans. Murphy is a Regional Manager at 360 Yield Center and is known for his love of the science behind raising corn and soybeans, never failing to impress others with his knowledge. He also frequently creates YouTube videos for 360 Yield Center to update and educate his fellow farmers. In the past while working at LG Seeds, Murphy was recognized as one of the Top 100 Salespeople in the world and was awarded a trip to Europe, where he received 1st place in the international team building event.

"It's meaningful to have an award recognizing the next generation. Starting to farm requires young farmers sacrificing more than ever before to start their businesses, and that level of commitment deserves praise."



Drew DeSutter

NEW WINDSOR, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS, COW/CALF, GRASS HAY AND COVER CROPS

Drew DeSutter is the owner of DeSutter Farms in Woodhull, Ill, where he raises soybeans, corn, cattle, grass hay and various cover crops. DeSutter currently represents Illinois on the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee. He also is a member of Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow, Cultivating Master Farmers and was an Illinois Soybean Ambassador. He was recently recognized for responding to all of Illinois Farm Bureau's legislative action calls, where he sent regular emails to local, state and national legislators regarding critical agriculture bills.



Kenneth Mentzer

ASSUMPTION, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS AND WHEAT

Kenneth Mentzer and his wife Kathryn own Mentzer Farms in Assumption, Ill, where they grow corn, soybeans and wheat. On the farm, Kenneth takes on the primary roles of planting, harvesting, decision-making, marketing and integrating conservation practices. He currently serves as Secretary of the Assumption Cooperative Grain Board and is a Westervelt Mutual Insurance Board member. Locally, Kenneth supports their community farmer's market and volunteers at the local food pantry.



Kathryn Mentzer

ASSUMPTION, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS AND WHEAT

Kathryn Mentzer, a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist and mother of four, farms with her husband Kenneth at Mentzer Farms in Assumption, Ill, where they grow corn, soybeans, and wheat. Kathryn runs equipment as needed during planting and harvest and often contributes to family farm decisions. She is also a volunteer for Illinois Farm Families (IFF) and her experience with IFF inspired her to create the Instagram account, [@everydayillinoisfarmfamily](https://www.instagram.com/everydayillinoisfarmfamily), where she and Kenneth share facts about Illinois agriculture, details about farm living and inspiration for farm and non-farm families alike. The account currently has nearly 10,000 followers—go check them out!



Matt Rush

FAIRFIELD, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS, WHEAT AND FEEDER CATTLE

Matt Rush farms alongside his father at Rush Farms of Fairfield, LLC in Fairfield, Ill, where they raise corn, soybeans, wheat and feeder cattle. Rush currently serves on the Illinois Corn Growers Association Board as Vice President, with expectations to grow into the President role. He was also the agriculture and 4-H coordinator for the University of Illinois Extension office in Wayne County, served as President of the Wayne County Farm Bureau Young Leaders Committee, and eventually served as a district representative on the Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leaders Board. In his community, Rush serves on the Fairfield Community High School Board, the Fairfield National Bank Board, the Fairfield Memorial Hospital Foundation Board and is a volunteer firefighter.



Matthew Hulsizer

GALESBURG, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS AND POPCORN

Matthew Hulsizer is the co-owner of Bowman-Hulsizer Family Farms in Oneida, Ill, where they raise corn, soybeans and popcorn. Hulsizer serves on the Knox County Farm Bureau Board, the Knox County Cattleman's Board, and along with his wife, Liz, the Hulsizers were recently named the Illinois representatives for the American Soybean Association Corteva Agriscience Young Leader Program. While he has no children of his own, Hulsizer often volunteers his time to youth in the area who are involved in agriculture activities—from the local 4-H Clubs and FFA Chapters to those raising livestock. He is a true hands-on teacher who aims to equip the future generation of farmers with the skills and tools they need to be successful.

"2023 is shaping up to be a challenging year, as we will still be dealing with supply issues along with higher interest rates and higher inputs, so it will become more challenging to lock in a profit. However, that's what makes us better. It's not the good times that define who you are, it's the challenges you face and how you deal with them that define you."



Michael D. Nelson

PAXTON, IL

CORN AND SOYBEANS

Michael Nelson co-farms with his father at Nelson Farms in Paxton, Ill, where they grow corn and soybeans. Nelson is a member of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives Washington Conference, the Bayer/Monsanto Next Generation Farmer Advisory Committee, Birkey's Farm Store Advisory Committee and the Farm Bureau. In 2020, he was awarded the Farm Credit Illinois Directors Cup and has been the Director of Heritage Farm Supply Cooperative since 2017.



Michael Ganschow

WALNUT, IL

CORN AND SOYBEANS

Michael Ganschow is a sixth-generation farmer and owner of Ganschow Farm in Walnut, Ill, where he grows corn and soybeans. In his community, Ganschow has served as a Walnut Public Library Trustee, sits on the Ag View FS Board of Directors, serves on the Illinois Farm Bureau Environmental Advisory Team, and is a member of the Research Committee for Nutrient Research & Education Council (NREC). Ganschow is also a contributory to a farm-based study funded by the Illinois Farm Bureau Nutrient Stewardship grant where for the past five years, Bureau County farmers pull tile water samples and test them for flow and nitrates each week. The results from this study have been used to evaluate the causes of nitrate loss on farmland.

"For me, farming has always been about family. When I was younger, I was always eager to learn and get involved on the farm, because it meant I got to spend time with my father and grandfather. Being around them on a daily basis has taught me skills and values that I use every day. As I look to the future of our farming operation, I am excited to share the time I have working on the farm with my children."



Sarah M. Tweet-Landers

MENDOTA, IL

CORN, SOYBEANS AND BEEF CATTLE

Sarah Tweet-Landers is the co-owner of Tweet and Landers Farms in Mendota and Earlville, Ill, where she raises corn, soybeans and beef cattle. Landers was a high school agriculture teacher for 14 years, and prior to that, she worked for Grainco FS, Cargill AgHorizons, Crop Pro-Tech and the University of Illinois Dairy Research Farms. Today, Sarah is employed by the University of Illinois as a part-time supervisor, where she visits student teachers of agriculture education at their host schools to evaluate while they are teaching, as well as managing both Tweet and Landers Farms with her husband, Jeff. Landers also owns Tweet Floral Design, where she creates floral arrangements and design work for weddings, receptions and other special events.

Tyler Schleich

MONMOUTH, IL

CATTLE

Tyler Schleich raises cattle as the owner of Schleich Cattle in Monmouth, Ill. Schleich is also a Territory Sales Manager at Kent Nutrition Group and is actively involved in the Illinois Farm Bureau, recently receiving their Excellence in Agriculture Award along with his wife, Cassie. He currently serves on the Tri County Cattlemen's Board and has held positions in the past on the Illinois Angus Board, serving as Sales Manager for the Lamoine Valley Angus Sale. Schleich is known to give back to his community by teaching ag youth days and is committed to raising his two daughters on the farm, equipping them with the confidence to take it over if they choose to do so.



Today's biodiesel is a reliable, high-performance fuel that works in any diesel engine without modifications.

Not Your Father's Biodiesel

By Claire Weinzierl

It can be a scary thing, making big decisions to change practices on your farm that could be impactful. Particularly decisions that mean changing the way your operation has done something for generation after generation. But what if that decision meant taking a look at a practice that may have evolved into something newer and better than the first time you considered it?

Let's cut to the chase. Today's biodiesel is better than ever. And

sure, right now you're probably thinking about how your dad tried biodiesel on the farm about 20 years ago and was met with issue after issue. Maybe it was gelling in cold months, maybe it was not being able to source it locally. Whatever the issue may have once been, today's diesel and transportation experts agree on one thing: this is not your father's biodiesel.

Today's biodiesel offers so many benefits for farmers, fleets, fuel retailers, drivers, and more that it beats out standard diesel by a mile. Made from soybean oil,

biodiesel reduces those harmful greenhouse gases while also delivering high-quality performance you can trust all year long.

Today's biodiesel is a reliable, high-performance fuel that works in any diesel engine without modifications. It doesn't hamper fuel efficiency, nor create engine maintenance problems. Due to its superior lubricity, biodiesel reduces engine wear and contains higher cetane for enhanced power, which means the fuel ignites faster and allows the engine to run better. It also offers engine cleaning properties.

Biodiesel blends are used successfully all year in even the coldest U.S. climates. Treat biodiesel like regular diesel fuel by using cold-weather additives recommended by your fuel supplier. And regardless of the fuel you use, make sure your storage tank is free from water that can freeze in cold temperatures.

Additionally, it costs no more to operate and maintain vehicles that are fueled with biodiesel. Another perk? Biodiesel users in Illinois save tax dollars. Blends of B11 and up – 11 percent biodiesel

and higher – are exempt from the state's sales tax.

Of course, there are the environmental benefits as well. Compared with regular diesel fuel, biodiesel has significantly fewer emissions of particulate matter and other harmful pollutants. Biodiesel is labeled a Clean Air Choice® by the American Lung Association.

You may not have been aware that you're located in one of the largest biodiesel-producing states in the nation. Biodiesel production supports nearly 2,000 jobs in all sectors of Illinois' economy. And thanks to its local production, biodiesel reduces our dependence on foreign oil. It's made from readily available, renewable resources including soybean oil and animal fats. Soybean oil is a natural co-product of soybean processing so biodiesel production doesn't take land away from food production.

But don't take it from us, take it from Illinois Soybean Association At-Large Director and soybean farmer, Brady Holst.

"A challenging part of using biodiesel is not much of a challenge at all. It's simply asking your fuel supplier what options are available," says Holst. "The most rewarding part of using biodiesel is knowing that it is a fuel made from Illinois farmers' crops. Using a product that utilizes a large amount of Illinois soybeans makes it easy to see the benefit it has to agriculture."

And that's just it – using biodiesel to fuel your farm is like putting money back in your pocket because it adds more than 10 percent to the price of soybeans. You're growing more than just crops in your fields – you're growing sustainable energy. So why not use the product you're helping to produce to power your own equipment?

Just think about it. Consider giving biodiesel another try on your farm and talk to your fuel supplier today. Visit <https://ilsoy.org/farmer-resources/> for more information. And remember, this is not your father's biodiesel.



Biodiesel production supports nearly 2,000 jobs in all sectors of Illinois' economy.



Biodiesel users in Illinois save tax dollars. Blends of B11 and up – 11 percent biodiesel and higher – are exempt from the state's sales tax.

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Meet social media influencer, Mary Pat Sass, who is helping agriculture groups like the Illinois Soybean Association stay fresh, relevant, and accessible to young grower audiences.

By Olivia Key

Social media influencers continue to be one of the most utilized assets in consumer marketing, and the same is true in the agriculture industry. Social media is one of the best ways to engage directly with an audience that is interested in a specific topic or product. Especially in agriculture, influencers can shape the way followers interpret information and are unique in the way they can educate their audience. However, most farmers are focused on growing crops rather than growing an audience online.

This is where agriculture influencers, like Mary Pat Sass, come in.

Mary Pat (MP) Sass is a Wisconsin farm kid turned Illinois farm wife and mom who is passionate about inspiring others to find their true passions through sharing her experiences on her family farm. Over the years, MP has cultivated an audience on various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, which has

given her the title of “Ag Influencer.” MP says, “I was telling our story for years before I built an audience, it’s important to have that perseverance to keep telling your story and not give up.”

MP is known for sharing videos from the Sass Family Farm in northern Illinois that feature her family, time-saving field meals and recipes, life on the farm and tips and tricks to get through planting, harvest and everything in between.

Agriculture is a niche market when it comes to the vast world of social media, but offline the industry is extensive, as it plays a significant part in the lives of not only farmers but also consumers worldwide. Being in Illinois, the Sass Family Farm grows mostly row crops and MP and her husband, Josh, stay on top of the latest in corn, soybean, and alfalfa production.

Communicating with farmers can be a daunting task due to the variety of growers and the number of varying practices within the industry. “It’s important to remember that you only have your own

experiences, and you can’t speak for everyone, because everyone does things differently,” says MP. “There are different ways of farming across the U.S., and there are even differences from northern to southern Illinois - the worst thing we can do as an ag community is argue about how to do things.”

So, what does influence in the agriculture industry look like? According to MP, “It’s putting a face to a farmer. I think so many people are disconnected from where their food comes from, and it’s important for us to be sharing what we do as the 2 percent of people providing food for the world.”

MP’s presence online not only helps to put a face to a farmer, but also educates consumers about how and why modern farmers produce their food, she says, “We share what we do and why we do it so consumers can be confident in the food they’re buying.”

In the past, MP has worked with various commodity groups and organizations, including the Illinois Soybean Association, to extend the reach of education to consumers on what the checkoff



“We share what we do and why we do it so consumers can be confident in the food they’re buying,” says Sass.

and other organizations do to support Illinois farmers. “I learned a lot by doing work with ISA and I know there’s a darn good return on our investment from the work the checkoff does.” She adds, “Through what I do, I can help to make sure more farmers know where their dollars are going and how these efforts are impacting their bottom line.”

Even though MP is well informed on the ins-and-outs of the agriculture industry, taking on the role of agriculture influencer has led her to learn even more. “I enjoy connecting with other groups, like the pork industry, which I don’t have much connection to outside of what I have done with ISA,” she says.

Aside from continuing to share her story, Mary Pat Sass has some big plans for her future. “This coming year, I’m pushing to inspire people to connect within their own farm families through a company I’m starting, Grounded Journals, a farm and ranch prompted journal and album company to help families preserve their memories,” MP says.

To learn more about MP Sass and life on the Sass Family Farm, visit <https://www.marypatsass.com/>. You can also check out her Instagram and Tik Tok, [@marypat.sass](#), or her Facebook page, [@MaryPatSass](#).

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WISHH is a program of the American Soybean Association and is funded in part by the United Soybean Board and state soybean board checkoff programs.

Q & A with Thomas Titus, 2022 IPPA President



*Illinois Pork Producers.
Generations of Commitment.*



THOMAS TITUS | PRESIDENT |
ILLINOIS PORK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

1. What was the best part of your IPPA Presidency?

The best part of my presidency has been the opportunities to work with great ag association leaders across Illinois. Additionally, the projects directed by the IPPA staff has equipped our association members with the ability to reach consumers, producers, and legislators with effectiveness.

2. What are some of the most memorable moments of your presidency?

Building lasting relationships with the IPPA board of directors has been extremely rewarding and I look forward to seeing how the board will continually evolve. However, installing the air conditioners at the Pork Patio for the 2022 Illinois State Fair may have been the most frustrating event of the year!

3. Why do you think it's important to be a part of the Illinois Pork Producers Association?

IPPA helps shape and lead our pork producing members from across the state and is crucial to keep in tune with the challenges, policies, and activities of our organization.

4. Why is our Future Leaders Group important and how do you think we can continue to engage the next generation of leaders?

The Future Leaders Group is a program that provides great space for an individual new to the pork industry or someone wanting to grow with pork acumen by exposing them to all facets of IPPA activities. These individuals are the future of the pork industry, and the level of interest is extremely positive for IPPA.

5. The documentary, "Hog Farmer: The Trials of Joey Carter" was recently released on Amazon Prime. As a commercial hog farmer, how do you maintain good relationships with your neighbors?

It is very important to maintain positive relationships and open lines of communication with our neighbors. Especially today when neighbors may not be from rural communities and understand the level of care that goes into raising pork.

6. Tell us a little about your relationship with "Market on the Hill" and how families in your community will be eating your pork products this holiday season.

Market on the Hill is a local grocery cooperative in Mount Pulaski that was developed through local support of the community and its shareholder members to open a grocery store in a community that had become a food desert. Tri Pork Inc. is one of many local protein suppliers of the market and we are thankful for the opportunity to provide premium pork products for Logan County.





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