

RVC

SUMMER 2019

INSIGHTS

WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

DELIVERING COMMITMENT TO EVERY ACRE

River Valley Cooperative is dedicated to the viability of the entire acre and the livelihood it creates for our customers, our communities and our employees.

FEEDING KIDS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

GALVA FFA: GROWING STRONG STUDENTS

MEMORIAL ENABLES GREATER ACCESSIBILITY AT CLINTON COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

**RIVER
VALLEY**
COOPERATIVE



Central Office

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Locations

Altona • Annawan • Camp Grove
Clarence • Dixon • Donahue • DeWitt
Durant • Edelstein • Eldridge
Fenton • Galva • Geneseo
Lost Nation • Martelle • Oiln
Osco • Ryan • Sperry
Stanwood • Sunbury • Walcott

Mission Statement

River Valley Cooperative is dedicated to delivering personalized services and expert solutions that enhance and ensure the longterm viability of our customer-owners, employees and communities

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Our Story River Valley Cooperative

From one season to the next, River Valley Cooperative is there for member-owners and the communities we call home. More than just another supplier, we're neighbors invested in the success of local agriculture. Like you, we combine the latest technologies and insights with roll-up-your-sleeves hard work that doesn't end with harvest. To us, every season of the year is another opportunity to grow. That commitment is why we've been around since 1906 and why we'll be here for generations to come.



Feeding Kids in our Communities

Fundraising Event



Friday, June 21

5:30 - 9:00 PM

**Clinton County Fairgrounds
(Auditorium Building)
328 E. 8th Street • DeWitt, IA**



You and a guest are invited to join us in helping to raise funds for backpack programs in our area schools and food pantries!

5:30 PM - Doors Open - Social Time

**6:00 - 6:45 PM - Buffet Dinner Served
(donations for meal are encouraged)**

7:00 PM - Welcome/Short Program

7:30 PM - Live Auction (followed by silent auction/raffle baskets winners)



100% of all proceeds will be donated to local food pantries and school programs served by River Bend Foodbank and Hawkeye Area Community Action Program.

Live Auction Silent Auction Raffle Baskets 50/50 Raffles



Seating is limited! Please RSVP online at www.rivervalleycoop.com or contact Jayne Carstensen at (563) 285-1715 or email jcarstensen@rivervalleycoop.com.



Dinner by Matthiesen's Catering • Bar service by Murphy's Pub

Differentiation Through Talent

Tim Burress, President & CEO

River Valley Cooperative has a long history of fielding a great employee team that has always been focused on serving and providing solutions to meet the needs and demands of our customers. Our employees are the key to how the customer perceives their experience with our organization. It's all about the relationship and we believe that every River Valley Cooperative employee plays a part in influencing a positive customer experience.

Over the last four years, River Valley Cooperative has developed, and is in the process of executing, a targeted employee strategy plan that has focused on attracting, developing and retaining industry-leading talent.

We have been deliberate in building a culture, as well as a story, that our current and prospective employees are attracted to and want to be part of.

These strategies have been successful, and they have allowed us to add very impressive talent across all business units and functional areas within the company. Talent that sets us apart from any other ag retail businesses in our space.

These individuals have challenged us to think differently, exploit our strengths and fundamentally change the way we go to market, offering unique tools/programs that benefit and meet all our customers' needs.

Our success in developing and attracting high performing talent has also enabled us to create unique positions such as the Strategic



Brandi Fink (Accountant) and Kendra Keitzer (Sales Account Manager) were recognized as “Rising Stars” by the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA).

Customer Manager (SCM) role that focuses on “whole farm” customer solutions by tying together services and products across our core businesses. It has been fun to experience the breaking down of silos and the success that teamwork and collaboration can bring to an organization.

As we continually look toward the future, we are committed to executing internal growth and development initiatives for our team, such as our Emerging Leaders Program, that identifies tomorrow's leaders, sharpens their skills and provides them with the professional tools necessary to grow, advance, and ultimately succeed at River Valley Cooperative.

It has also been rewarding to see the new generation of employees

receive outside acknowledgment for their high potential attributes.

Recently, two members of our River Valley Cooperative employee team were recognized as “Rising Stars” by the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA). Brandi Fink, Accountant, and Kendra Keitzer, Sales Account Manager, received special recognition as high achieving individuals and future leaders within the agricultural retail field at the recent 2018 ARA Conference & Expo. Brandi and Kendra's skill sets are a great example of the fresh talent that has been assembled at River Valley Cooperative.

We certainly are aware that current and prospective employee ideals are continuing to change. It is not just a paycheck and a strong benefit package that attracts and compels employees to stay at a company.

Burress credits employee success to company culture:

“Over the last four years, River Valley Cooperative has developed and is in the process of executing, a targeted employee strategy plan that has focused on attracting, developing and retaining industry-leading talent.

We have been deliberate in building a culture, as well as a story, that our current and prospective employees are attracted to and want to be part of.”

Today, more than ever, it is about being part of something bigger. It is important for employees to believe in the company’s mission and ensure that charge aligns with their own values and priorities.

Recent results from our employee surveys highlight that company support of the local community is an important driver to achieving and maintaining successful employee engagement.

I believe our customers share these same values and also place a priority on supporting the communities in which we all live and work.

As highlighted throughout this edition of RVC Insights, River Valley Cooperative remains committed to promoting community through our investments of time and funding. Our employees embrace this dedication.

I personally believe organizations are defined by their talent pool, and that level of talent ultimately differentiates a successful organization from one which eventually fails. Our talented employee team will be the key to the long-term sustainability and success of our organization.

I am very proud of the employee team we have assembled and truly believe they have been, and will continue to be, the reason customers see the value of doing business with us and put their trust in River Valley Cooperative as their business partner for decades to come.

Enriching Students with Annual Intern Program

River Valley Cooperative believes in investing in the future of agriculture, which involves providing learning opportunities for students interested in agricultural careers. Through partnerships with local schools, River Valley Cooperative has developed a successful internship program.

Daniele Mineck, Director of Talent Management at River Valley Cooperative, is actively engaged with many local junior highs and high schools in their career development programs, including mock interviews and career day activities. She is committed to creating awareness of the great opportunities that agriculture and River Valley Cooperative have to offer as students begin to consider their future careers.

To provide experience in agriculture, the Operations Department at River Valley Cooperative brings on students in the spring and fall through community college internship programs. Since 2016, River Valley Cooperative has hired 30 interns in either the spring and/or fall (many returned from season to season) and nine have been hired as full-time employees.

Each summer, six to ten agronomy sales interns are hired to join the River Valley Cooperative team. One to two of these interns have returned for another experience with us the following year. Recently, two interns completed three summers with us. Both individuals were extended offers to join River Valley Cooperative before they finished school. Additionally, two previous interns have been hired full-time on our sales team.



Delivering Innovation

Innovative tech tools take guesswork out of farming

Craig Patty, Regional Sales Manager

There has never been a more exciting time to be a grower, or the company serving them. That's especially true as River Valley Cooperative offers leading technology designed to take more of the guesswork out of farming, and that is just the start.

The power of data and artificial intelligence has growers making more informed decisions than ever before. Tailored solutions that integrate available technology tools help growers to simplify tough choices, minimize risks and maximize their chance for a plentiful harvest.

Before the adoption of technology, growers focused solely on their harvest results to determine the success or failure of the decisions they made throughout the growing season.

The trial and error method left growers questioning their decisions during the growing season, and wondering if they made the best decisions for their farm.

Growers so often base successes or failures on yield maps or bushels produced. While a year-end analysis is very important to improving operations, could yield and profitability be increased with the use of technology during the growing season?

Our Precision Ag Specialists stay on the cutting edge of new technology releases, and are able to support growers in their endeavors to better manage their decisions.

As growers become more data-driven, they will appreciate the analytical features of the R7 Tool, an industry-leading solution that provides unbiased product performance information and critical field data to optimize ROI potential.

The R7 Field Forecasting Tool uses field-specific information to evaluate crop growth and development. This enables growers to determine optimal timing and rates for in-season nutrient applications.

Climate FieldView is another tool that collects and stores data for all inputs. This information can help build customized fertility and seeding plans to help growers achieve their optimum yield and profit.

River Valley Cooperative is committed to delivering customers with sound agronomy and grain marketing advice, combined with advanced tools available to help achieve success.

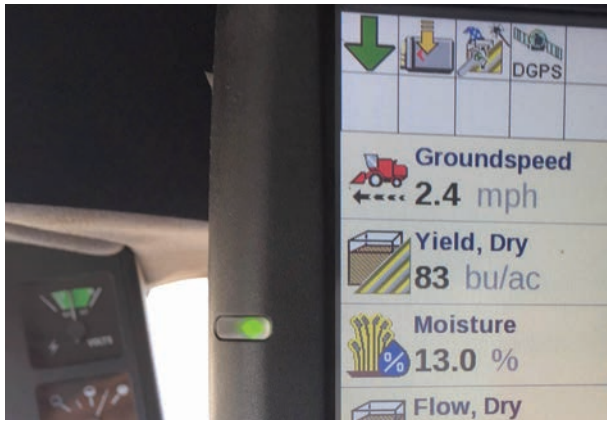
River Valley Cooperative delivers innovation to growers in the forms of science, technology and our "Boots on the Ground" philosophy. By providing actionable insights throughout the year, growers can assess and reevaluate their strategy as challenges arise.

River Valley Cooperative continues to assess new technology applications that provide value to our member-owners. For example, River Valley Cooperative, along with a group of member-owners, will be working with an AI (artificial intelligence) company that uses sophisticated computer vision, drones, and data science.

Providing insights along with solutions that can be customized to a grower's needs is, and will continue to be, the focus. Most importantly, these tools will be at the growers' fingertips digitally, and they will connect with our experts to form decisions with real-time data and ROI insights.



Advancements in technology have enabled farmers to make real-time decisions, improving yield and increasing profitability.



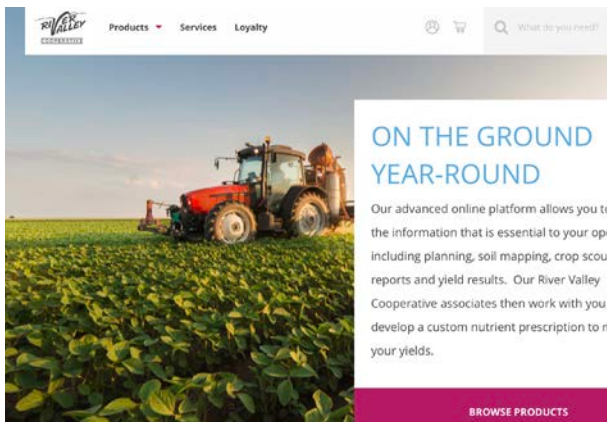
Precision Services

Our Precision Team provides services to customers that include variable-rate custom application of lime, nitrogen, and dry fertilizer, variable-rate seeding prescriptions for your planting equipment, mapping services including grid soil sampling and micronutrients, yield mapping, field boundaries, GIS record keeping, data overlays, and more.



YieldVantage™

YieldVantage™ will be re-launched in the near future, and will feature a new look and feel. In addition to its heritage of being a Precision Platform, it will also serve as home for all technology offerings and services. These tools will focus on our member-owners' entire acre providing actionable insights into all facets of their business. We will provide tools that focus on ROI (Return on Investment) and profitability for our member-owners.



E-Commerce

The innovative E-Commerce site is currently in a testing phase working with a group of member-owners. This site provided by WinField United, will give growers the opportunity to turn insights into action by educating themselves or shopping for products on their own or working virtually with their account manager. This site will provide the flexibility needed for the busy grower of today.



New Technology

With a commitment to enhance our member-owners' success across the entire acre, providing insights along with solutions that can be customized to a grower's needs is, and will continue to be, our focus. We are digitally connecting our growers with their fields and providing them with current information at their fingertips. This drives successful decision making as we are able to connect growers with our experts to form decisions with real-time data and ROI insights.

Delivering Commitment To Every Acre and Every Season

Andy Rash, Vice President Sales and Marketing

If you have been around a River Valley Cooperative location, employee or event recently you have heard it! Whole Acre, Full Farm ROI, Every Acre and Every Season... Why? This is what we do, and we are passionate about this contribution we can make to your operation.

At our core, our company and the talent we employ, deeply understand our member-owners, the farmers. Not just any farmer, farmers in the communities where we also live and work. We are your neighbor, but with access to a dimension of ag that encompasses talent, technology and theory to simplify the choices you make every season. The decisions ag producers have to make on a daily and annual basis, on one acre or one barn, are more intense than ever. You can master every aspect of production/input farming

and marketing (your paycheck), but it can be daunting and not meet desired outcomes. You can deploy a solid and productive marketing plan, but if the yield and input management doesn't perform, it stings. The concept really isn't science, it is good business management.

River Valley Cooperative is fortunate to have a system that can supply and even innovate with your production needs, but also has the ability to offer you efficiencies and profitability with your crop. The best part? We have teams of talent collaborating to bring unique ways to look at this holistically.

As we invest and deploy technology to our customers we serve, we will now be able to see this business evaluation and the choices that come with it in real time. River Valley Cooperative accepts the challenge of

bringing you an improvement tool, not just a ton, bag or gallon.

To start this discussion, I want to be clear that our purpose is easily outlined with this statement, "We are committed to viability on every acre, in every season, and the livelihood it creates." To elaborate, this means every acre to us is an opportunity to create a sustainable profit center for our member-owners.

Their livelihood, our livelihood and our community's livelihood depend on it. Think about how many lives just one acre touches. We combine scale and local to a new level. Perhaps you even have a relationship with three, or even four, of our business units. We owe it to our customers to bring solutions that are simplified with our ability to play ball in agronomy, energy and grain, and in some cases even feed.



We are your neighbor, but with access to a dimension of agriculture that encompasses talent, technology and theory to simplify the choices every season.



We truly can have programs and customer offerings that don't look at products as costs per ton, but cost per acre. We can compare that to a marketing plan per acre and essentially give the farmer the chance to secure a profit on as many acres as they choose. Going back to the previous paragraph, there are so many decisions that must be timely. Consolidating decisions into fact-based choices that reduce risk, relieve time pressures, and are profitable, just seems right.

We schedule, set goals and hold each other accountable to create unique and relevant ways to partner with our customers and generate a profitable and simplified solution. This isn't just throwing ideas against a wall. This is deploying services with the best people in the game, services that others haven't brought down your driveway!

Jake Williams, CFO states, "We're committed to providing our members with whole acre solutions. Through collaborative efforts and a facts-based approach, we created our Advance for Inputs program. This is a low-cost offering that mitigates risk for members by advancing funds to prepay for inputs with the Cooperative through forward contracted grain sales. This is a perfect example of how we are listening to our members' needs and teaming with them to help improve the profitability of every acre."

Farming is driven by seasonality and critical time frames. Look at this fall and spring. We seem to constantly have our backs against the wall with weather, markets and tight time lines. Our commitment to being operationally excellent goes deeper than great, hardworking people and modern equipment. It embraces proper procurement tactics, efficient use of assets and thoughtfulness in regard to our investments that we can pass on to our members.

Jim Gruenhagen, Operations Vice President states, "River Valley Cooperative operations strive to be the best across all of our businesses and with all applications. Our strength is having a committed team of employees that are willing to move around with equipment to be incredibly efficient, but also assist in ensuring a great customer experience. To elaborate, we may have had rain in one area but not in another, so we shift people and machines to execute. We may need grain hauled one day, fertilizer tended to the next, so we shift drivers. We may even need a semi added to the feed fleet from grain hauling.



River Valley Cooperative Dedicated to the whole acre.

Agronomy

Our agronomists are ready to help you select the best products and management strategies for your farm which will position you to achieve optimum yields.

Our grain originators assist farmers with their grain marketing programs. River Valley Cooperative is proud to connect farmers to buyers and processors.

Grain

Energy

By partnering with a local cooperative, farmers have access to a reliable supply of high-quality fuels and propane for their home and business.

Purina Animal Nutrition products are available for all sizes of operations. Create custom feed mixes or choose from our selection of bagged feed.

Feed



“Our grain and agronomy teams are continuously looking for creative and actionable ways to combine efforts for farmer profits or ease of doing business.”

-Mike Moellenbeck
Vice President Grain Business Unit



Bridgett Wildermuth, Grain Marketing & Logistics, and Dustin Hoeft, Agronomy Business Manager

We simply don't accept that there is seasonality in our field of work. When you have multiple business units that are all focusing on the entire farm you can adapt and adjust to have a competitive advantage. The employees make it happen when guided to areas of need and we have technology that helps us evaluate this. We rely on our Regional Operations Managers to do that across our locations.

One of our greatest advantages is the opportunity to look at input contracts and grain sales at the same time. We are able to look at by-field-yield estimates against costs to see a per-field return on investment. Doing this simultaneously offsets some risk, but the value there gives peace of mind so we can focus on advanced performance of that acre.

“Our grain and agronomy teams are continuously looking for creative and actionable ways to combine efforts for farmer profits or ease of doing business. We designed Advance for Inputs and Healthy Crop Hedge as programs to add net margins for the farmer, via interest rates, reduced fungicide costs or increased grain bids,” said Mike Moellenbeck, Vice President, Grain Business Unit.

It is often said, to form a business relationship with a customer you must uncover their unmet need. Well, we have a twist on it. We know the unmet needs and pain points of our member-owners. We simply have to deliver the fix in a simplified manner. That means collaborating internally, so we navigate through our company and solutions for them.

Our Regional Sales Managers are as good as it gets and drive this collaboration every single day. I truly believe this generation (regardless of stereotype or date of birth) is the busiest farmer we have seen. Technology comes to them at a rapid pace, markets are doing unhistorical things, production performance needs continue to climb, and cost creep continues.

On top of this, we all strive to follow in the footsteps of our nurturing agricultural roots. This means they volunteer in their communities, schools and organizations of affiliation. This farmer needs TIME and that is why we created our “whole acre” approach to customer relationships.

We have been fortunate to have been able to attract and hire the best people in the business, and their dedication to

executing our innovative way of conducting business is very special.

This talent has a way to do business that the farmer hasn't experienced yet. We are going to create a customer experience that you haven't had a chance to participate in, and it is going to put peace of mind and time back into your day. These are acres, your decisions and your investments. We simply have a model that can be more cost effective, less cumbersome and rewarding, in exchange for a loyal commitment. Join us!

SERVICE

Serving Our Communities

Over the past year, River Valley Cooperative has contributed more than \$60,000 to projects, programs and activities within the communities we call home.

Bureau Valley High School FFA Chapter

A \$5,000 donation was made to the Bureau Valley FFA Chapter for their poultry production project.



Calamus-Wheatland High School FFA Chapter

A \$5,000 donation was made to the Calamus-Wheatland High School FFA for their greenhouse project.



Annawan High School FFA Chapter

The Annawan High School FFA Chapter was presented with a \$3,000 donation for a software upgrade for their CNC plasma table.



ROWVA High School FFA Chapter

The ROWVA High School FFA Chapter received a \$5,000 donation for their animal laboratory project.

Family's Love of 4-H and FFA Makes Fairgrounds Accessible for All

Jayne Carstensen, Communications Specialist

Living in rural America, the county fair is a special time and something many of us look forward to each summer, just as it had been for many years for the Paasch family of rural Camanche, Iowa.

Cheryl Paasch, mother of twin sons, Jason and Joshua Paasch, and daughter Dawn Paasch VanderHeiden, recalled how when her three children were younger, they participated in 4-H and the Clinton County Fair in DeWitt, Iowa. Cheryl was all smiles as she explained, "They loved it dearly and it was great stepping stones with life lessons for them." Those fond memories were why, when the family lost Jason, they wanted to do something special for the fairgrounds in his memory.

Both Jason and Joshua were diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy at a young age. For many years they enjoyed showing hogs at the fair, just like the other kids their age, but as they grew older, they slowly regressed and became wheelchair confined. Cheryl fondly recalls when the boys got their wheelchairs, Dawn brought their oldest grandchild, two-year-old Jenna, over to visit. Josh was so excited, telling me, "Mom, I can chase her around and we can run together." Cheryl quietly said, "It was like one door shut, but another one opened for him."

Now in wheelchairs, Jason and Joshua soon found that getting around the fairgrounds, that they had enjoyed visiting for so many years, was a little harder for them to navigate. When the Paasch's grandchildren, Jenna and Kyle, were involved in 4-H and then FFA, the family would still try to come and watch them show at the fair, but they were finding it difficult. The boys could not even get into the hog arena where the grandkids were participating. Cheryl remarked that it was very challenging to try to find a spot that wasn't muddy to drive their wheelchairs through and that was



Siblings Joshua, Dawn (VanderHeiden) and Jason Paasch

pretty important as Cheryl laughingly said, "Those chairs had to go back in the house later, too."

Cheryl went on to say that mud wasn't the only challenge at the fairgrounds for Jason and Joshua. She explained that when they would go to eat lunch during fair days, they couldn't find a place for the boys to eat. Their chairs were too high, and they couldn't get them under the tables. Cheryl said that fortunately their daughter's family always camped at the fair and they would make arrangements to eat at their camper, but that meant not being able to stay and enjoy the fair.

Jason passed away in October of 2017. Cheryl remarked that all of their family and friends were very generous with memorials. Joshua and Dawn decided that some of the memorial money should go to the fairgrounds because it was a big part of their family. The rest of the memorial money was given to Calamus-Wheatland High School's FFA

chapter for some of their projects.

When Cheryl contacted Mary Stevenson, Board Secretary/Fair Manager, at the Clinton County Fairgrounds about the memorial money, Mary asked if there was anything in particular that they'd like the money to be used for. Cheryl said she didn't realize that they'd have the option to choose, so she suggested to Joshua, "Why not the picnic tables because it was always so hard to find a place for you guys to eat? What about some of the ramps, because they couldn't get into the exhibit buildings very easily?" Cheryl explained, "Most people don't stop to think about a two-inch lip, but you try pushing a 300-pound wheelchair with a guy who weighs 179 pounds. You're trying to navigate almost 500 pounds over this little lip and it's not easy. We just wanted to share it with the public. I'm sure that my sons weren't the only ones having challenges and that some of the elderly that visit would benefit, too."

MEMORIAL

Mary mentioned to Cheryl that the sidewalks were in pretty bad shape and the fair board had wanted to replace them along with making them a little wider. She also told Cheryl that they are hoping to continue the sidewalk all the way down to the new swine building. Mary said, "Once that's done, the sidewalks will pretty much run the whole length of the fairgrounds." Cheryl exclaimed, "I loved the idea of adding sidewalks, that was awesome."

Board members of the Clinton County Agricultural Society sought out additional funds from area business and offered to provide the labor to put in the new sidewalks. Mary stated, "We're very fortunate to have Rod Kluever, owner of KE Flatwork, Inc. out of Eldridge, on the board. He's been very generous with all the cement work around the fairgrounds that has been done over the last several years." According to Mary, many of the fair board members helped Rod by taking out the old sidewalk and approaches, setting forms and helping to pour and level out the cement for the new sidewalks.

When the project was complete, several new sidewalks were replaced or added, and seven new approaches were installed. These included the sidewalks leading into the auditorium building, fair office entrance, beef arena, and the creative arts building.



Mary Stevenson, Clinton County Agricultural Society Secretary, and Cheryl Paasch, mother of Joshua, Dawn (Vander Heiden) and the late Jason Paasch next to the sidewalk that was installed, making the Clinton County Fairgrounds more handicap accessible.

River Valley Cooperative was a proud contributor to this project providing \$5,000 through its matching funds program with Land O'Lakes Foundation. Additional contributions were received from Continental Concrete and the Lawlor Family Charitable Trust, after the completion of the first project. These funds will be used to extend the sidewalk to the swine building this year.

Cheryl mentioned that Joshua has yet to enjoy the new approaches and sidewalks at the fairgrounds, but that their family knows many others have been able to. She said, "We're glad we were able to help, but sorry that it was under these circumstances. It's nice to know that somebody else can benefit from it."



Presenting River Valley Cooperative's \$5,000 donation for the handicap accessible sidewalks and approaches for the Clinton County Fairgrounds were River Valley Cooperative employees Hobie Stutt, Regional Operations Manager, and Dave Weiskircher, DeWitt Location Manager (both in center). Representing the fair board were (front l-r) Rod Seyfert, Erica Goldensoph, Megan Burke, Mike Goodall, Dede Wagener, Jessica Taylor, Sharon Leonard and (back l-r), Greg Haack, Rod Kluever, Chris Goldensoph, Phil Burke, Dan Wagener, Hunter Wagener, Lance Goettsch, Matt McGuire, Gabby Bethke, Dan Burzlaff and Levi Wagener.

Growing Strong Students

Galva FFA Greenhouse Project

Jayne Carstensen, Communications Specialist



Seniors Darrah Schilling and Elizabeth Whitford are checking the plant health of sprouting canna bulbs.

Spring is a busy time in area greenhouses, as people make plans and purchases to beautify their homes and gardens for the rest of the year. Things are different in Galva, where the high school FFA chapter's greenhouse is planting seeds that will last a lifetime.

Yes, this greenhouse, which was built more than 18 years ago by students, for students, does grow your typical spring flowers and vegetables. However, it also specializes in nurturing the hopes and dreams that will lead to bright futures for Galva's students. And, over the years it has grown fond memories,

friendships, teamwork, and skills in project management, agriculture, horticulture, communications, sales and accounting, along with a lot of plants and flowers.

Trish Main, Galva's FFA advisor and Ag teacher, said that running a greenhouse is not an easy task, and that a lot of work goes into it, with students getting their hands dirty as early as February. However, before seeds can even be planted, there is much to be done.

"What we do at the beginning of the year, before we have all these cuttings and plants, is we go to different vendors and pick out the

different varieties that we like," said Elizabeth Whitford, FFA member and Ag student. "Some of the varieties that we've chosen are cannas, geraniums, sweet potato vine, coleus, and petunias. We've picked out a bunch of different varieties, and we also consider their heights and colors because we make hanging baskets and other assortments. We want to make sure that they all go together."

The students also grow plants from seed, bulbs and unrooted cuttings, as well as different types of tomato and pepper plants.

"It's definitely a lot of work and

“ It’s definitely a lot of work and responsibility, because it involves a lot of different classes and a lot of different students. There’s a lot of work that goes into it, and there are definitely a lot of plants here. ”

responsibility, because it involves a lot of different classes and a lot of different students,” said FFA member and Ag student Gunner Spivey. “There’s a lot of work that goes into it, and there are definitely a lot of plants here.”

FFA member and Ag student Darrah Schilling spends an hour each day in the greenhouse.

“I come in for my Ag tech and my Ag intern three times,” she said. “I’m in here for three class periods on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and then just one on Tuesdays and Thursdays.”

“What I like,” added FFA member and

Ag student Emilyann Wexell, “is that even though there’s a horticulture class, FFA members, every single Ag class and Miss Main will come in here and help out. It’s not just one class. It’s all the students coming together.”

Ashley Whithrow, another FFA member and Ag student, said that students learn a lot about greenhouse management, as well as skills that will be beneficial later in life.

“You have to monitor the plant house,” she said. “You learn about transplanting, combination planters and what goes in hanging baskets. You also learn patience, because you have to wait for the

flowers to grow and mature.”

“Plants are everywhere and having this knowledge in the back of your mind can help you a lot more than you actually think,” said Tressa Rogers, yet another FFA member and Ag student, “especially like whether you’re living in a small town or the big city.”

One of the biggest concerns in greenhouse management is keeping the plants healthy and happy. Soil moisture and nutrition must be carefully monitored. Students collaborated and decided that the best solution for watering plants would be to install an irrigation system with automatic sensors. Students researched different types of systems, put together a project list based on their needs and started seeking funds to pay for it.

When they reached out to River Valley Cooperative, it was a huge, “Yes, we’d like to help” answer.

River Valley Cooperative has long been a proud supporter of youth and Ag programs in the communities in which they have facilities, and where member-owners and employees call home. Through matching funds with Land O’Lakes Foundation, a donation of \$5,000 was presented to the Galva FFA chapter to help purchase their irrigation system.

Since receiving the donation, students have purchased the irrigation system and are currently working on the design and installation. Mrs. Main explained that part of their classwork is designing and programming zones that are determined by pot sizes, with one pot size per zone. With built-in soil moisture meters, plants will only get watered when needed, which is different than systems that are run on timers.



Students enjoy the hands-on experience gained from the greenhouse. Front (l-r): Ashley Whithrow, Tressa Rogers, Elizabeth Whitford Back (l-r): Gunner Spivey, Emilyann Wexell, Darrah Schilling.



Junior Tressa Rogers and senior Ashley Whithrow are happy with how the sweet potato vines are progressing.

With this type of system, water and nutrients aren't wasted. This can provide quite a savings during the growing season, while also growing healthier plants.

"On the weekends, instead of having to have someone come in, we can just set up the irrigation system," said Emilyann. "We will have the knowledge of how much water goes into each plant, and we can set the irrigation system to spray certain ones at certain times, for however much water they need."

The class is truly hands-on, as are the other Ag classes at Galva High School. Gunner mentioned that he's in Ag tech, which encompasses a lot of different things.

"We were in plasma cam earli-

er this year, and now we're in the greenhouse," he said. "What I enjoy about that class is all the different areas of Ag that they let you discover."

Darrah said she enjoys being an aide for basic Ag, where she works with freshman classes as they're introduced to Ag. The younger students get to come out to the greenhouse and start working and hopefully take horticulture.

Emilyann is in the same Ag tech class as Gunner, and like Darrah, both are aides.

"I come out here with the freshmen," said Emilyann. "It's nice to hear everything that they're learning, and then come out here and help them do what they're doing. I like

being in the Ag tech class because it's more than just one area. You get to learn a ton of different things. Last week we were welding, and now we're doing plasma cam. It just switches all the time."

Ashely is in Horticulture 2 after taking Horticulture 1 last semester.

"We get quizzed on all the flowers before we come in, so we can actually get a feel for what they look like, and if we know if they're annuals or perennials," she said.

Tressa is in Ag tech, Vet tech and Horticulture.

"I learn so much on a daily basis," she said, "and being in horticulture really gives me freedom to come out here and work with the flowers. We come out here for vet tech, too, it's just like everyone said, it's not just one class. It's freshmen all the way to seniors, and sometimes junior high kids as well. It's nice to go here and not be stuck in a classroom all day, and have some freedom to work with my fellow students."

"We actually specialize in this class, and we actually help," added Elizabeth, who is also in Vet tech and Horticulture 1 and 2. "That's what our class is about, so a majority of our time is spent in the greenhouse."

Students working in the greenhouse have many things in common, but highest on the list is that they enjoy working together and growing things. They're proud of the hard work they've done and enjoy being recognized for their work when they hear the many nice compliments from customers as they walk through the greenhouse picking out their favorite flowers and plants.

"What I enjoy about that class is all the different areas of Ag that they let you discover."

-Gunner Spivey

This year, the fruits of the students' labor are also visible at a Galva business.

In years past, customers could only buy the student-grown plants and flowers at the school's greenhouse, but this spring things were a little different. Emilyann said that although the school's greenhouse is closed for the season, the Galva High School FFA students have partnered with Hathaway's Hardware & Fresh Market to sell the students' plants and flowers in their greenhouse and store.



Emilyann Wexell and Gunner Spivey, both seniors, are preparing to plant seeds.

The Galva High School FFA horticulture team placed 1st at the Black Hawk College Invitational Horticulture Competition in April.



The Ag Technology students at Galva High School have partnered with Hathaway's Hardware & Fresh Market to sell the plants they grew. Front (l-r): Elizabeth Whitford, Rachel Russell, Jaymi Gibbs, Tressa Rogers. Second row: Taylor Parker, Lexi Moore, Emma Lindquist, Josie Williams. Third row: Sumner Strom, Darrah Schilling, Emilyann Wexell, Gunner Spivey, Shivam Patel. Back row: Nick Ingle, Karter Smith, Tyvine Hodges, Tristan Rogers, and Nathan Berry.

Facility Updates

Increase Customer Efficiency

Culley Medley, Regional Sales Manager



The newly constructed seed shed in Annawan, Illinois, is operational this spring. The heated building is being used to treat and store seed.

At River Valley Cooperative, our ability to service the whole acre comes largely from having a dedicated employee team and by having the right equipment, the right products, at the right locations.

In order to get the work done, especially during a spring such as we've been experiencing, it doesn't always mean adding more people to the payroll. At River Valley Cooperative, we look at things differently. Our unique business model allows us to move our equipment, our people, and our resources based on the differing climate conditions across our geography, maximizing the customers we are able to serve.

Collaboration between company business units and the exceptional willingness of employees to assist

ensures that our customers receive the service they deserve.

We invest in our workforce by providing our employees with the tools, equipment, technology and training they need to succeed. Doing so supports our existing business locations, while being able to add new customers in developing areas.

River Valley Cooperative invested in a new seed warehouse at the Annawan, Illinois, River Valley Cooperative location.



The Galva, Illinois, location received exterior building updates and new signage.

Construction was completed earlier this year, and it was fully operational this spring.

The new KSI on-demand operating system that was installed has increased efficiency, while the new heated warehouse allows seed to be treated earlier in the season. The addition of heat has increased the flexibility of treating seed quicker, earlier, and enabling us to serve our customers even better.

Our Galva, Illinois, River Valley Cooperative location gained a fresh new look with the addition of new tin and signage. We are proud to be a member of the community, and of the employees who work there, and now our new look reflects our position in the Galva community.

A new facility being constructed in Camp Grove, Illinois, will service growers in the Peoria, Marshall and Stark County areas.

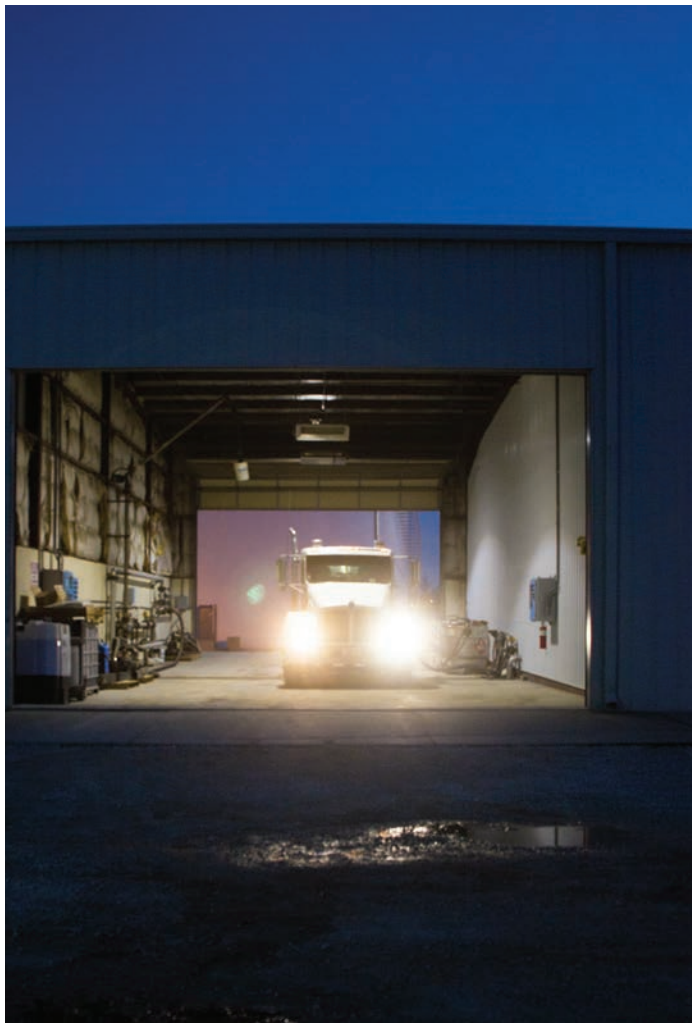
The state-of-the-art Camp Grove facility will be able to build off the acquisition of Hensel Seed, to now encompass the full acre, encompassing fertilizer and chemical products. The addition of this location opens our doors to a new geography and efficiency to serve customers in the Peoria, Marshall, and Stark County areas. By this fall ammonia will be on site, which will open the door for grain and energy in the future.

The 24/7 fertilizer loadout bay in Geneseo, Illinois, has streamlined operations for customers and employees.

We are happy to have Justin Stabler, previously an Agronomy Account Manager at Galva, as the Location Manager of the new Camp Grove facility. Mark Feucht, who recently came on board with River Valley Cooperative, will service sales. Mark is a great asset to this location along with Bill Hensel's continuation to sell seed.



Construction is underway in Camp Grove, Illinois.



The 24/7 fertilizer loadout bay in Geneseo, Illinois, has streamlined operations for customers and employees.

One of our most efficient and time-saving expenditures over the past few years has been our 24/7 fertilizer load-out facilities. There are two operating in Illinois, Galva and Geneseo, with a third one to be available when the Camp Grove facility is completed.

In Iowa, there are 24/7 loadouts at Lost Nation, Ryan, Sperry, and Stanwood. Due to high demand at the Lost Nation location, an additional 24/7 load-out bay was added this spring.

Most often used to pick up preplant starters and UAN, the 24/7 fertilizer load-out facilities have streamlined operations for customers and employees.

In order to use the 24/7 facility, account managers set customers up with a pickup load number, which can be set for specific load quantities and products. Customers then have the ability and flexibility to pick up their order anytime that's convenient for them, day or night. River Valley Cooperative offers step-by-step instructions and one-on-one training prior to the start of the season.

River Valley Cooperative is committed to investing in the best technology, the best equipment, and facilities to continue to serve new and existing customers at a level that we consider operationally excellent. This is what we strive for, and we will continue to invest in resources to make this happen.



Serving Our Communities

As a proud member of the communities where we've grown our roots, River Valley Cooperative is proud to support the projects, programs and activities that take place where we call home. Over the past year, more than \$60,000 has been contributed to community projects.



Hawkeye Area Community Action Program

A donation of \$17,800 was presented to Hawkeye Area Community Action Program for area food pantries and backpack programs which they serve.



River Bend Foodbank

River Valley Cooperative proudly provided over \$24,000 to area food pantries and backpack programs served by River Bend Foodbank.



Friends of Stark County 4-H Association

A \$5,000 donation was presented to Friends of Stark County 4-H Association for construction of a new 4-H building.