Faces of AGRICULTURE
brought to you by the Fulton County Farm Bureau
May 2016

The Fulton County Young Leader Committee sponsored the “Faces of Ag” promotion on the Fulton County Farm Bureau Facebook page during March of 2016.

The original intent of the Committee was to spotlight a farmer, farm family, or individual involved in the agriculture industry each day during Ag. Week. The Committee, however, decided to expand the promotion and celebrate “Ag Day” each day of March! The program was a huge success and garnered outstanding praise.

Our local, weekly newspaper, The Fulton Democrat, followed the project and pulled some of the early ones off of Facebook. These were published in a special supplement during Ag. Week. We thought the entire set of stories was too good to “let go”; so we had the Democrat publish a book of each of the 31 “faces” to keep.

These profiles spotlight the diversity, dedication, and passion local individuals have for our agricultural industry. Importantly, some of the stories also discuss changes, and sometimes the difficulties, that have been made to farm operations over the course of their farming careers.
“I graduated from Spoon River Valley High School, Spoon River College, and Western Illinois University with a degree in Agriculture Education. I work in the parts department of Fliginger Equipment in Trivoli. I raise Rambouillet sheep and poultry. I also assist with my parents Barry & Laura Fisher’s diversified crop and livestock operation.

I am an active member of Fairview Reformed Church and the Central Illinois Stock Dog Association. My hobbies include spinning, knitting, and training dogs to herd livestock.

I grew up on a farm surrounded by agriculture. Some of my earliest memories deal with agriculture. I love working with animals and the land. The first steps of a baby animal or the first tips of plants emerging from the ground are sights that I wouldn't trade for anything.

Agriculture isn't just about squeezing the last drop of production out of the soil. If farmers abuse the land, it will quickly lose its productivity. Farmers are stewards of the land. We strive to care for the ground so it will be there for the next generation. 97% of farms are family operated farms. Farms are larger today because there are fewer farmers. The population is still growing with less land and fewer farmers to produce food.”
I live and farm near Ipava with my wife Sue, who recently retired as a Court Reporter in the Fulton and McDonough County circuits. We have two sons. Jason (married to Jenny) farms near Table Grove and works for Caterpillar in Mapleton. Our son Jared (engaged to Breann Martin) works at Duck Creek Power Plant. We have 3 grandchildren; Ella who’s not quite a year old yet, Taylor (8) and Colby (6).

I graduated from V.I.T High School, attended Western Illinois University, and have an Associate’s Degree from Spoon River College. I farm with my brother in law. We have 800 acres of corn, soybeans, and hay. Sue and I have a 70-head Red Angus Cow herd.

Sue and I attend Grace Bible Church where I am a Deacon. When I’m not farming (which I enjoy very much) I like to travel and play with the grandkids. I am a past President of the Fulton County Farm Bureau, and served on the board many years before being elected. I served on the Ministerial and Worship Committees at church. I’ve helped coach basketball and football at VIT.

I’ve farmed over 40 years and with such a small number of tillable acres, livestock has always been a large part of my farming operation. At one time I had a 150 head farrow to finish hog enterprise and a 100 plus cow herd.

I would tell young people today interested in being in ag, get at least an associate’s degree. Work in an ag-related field. Partner with a retiring farmer if the home farm isn’t able to take you in.

One of the great things about farming is I like being my own boss. It’s my responsibility if I make it or not. Every day is different. I feel agriculture is the most valuable business in the United States.
My name is Emily Schleich. I am 19 years old and from Fairview. I’m an only child but right now have a temporary sister from France, Juliette, who is a foreign exchange student!

I am a Spoon River Valley High School graduate and a sophomore at Spoon River College in Canton, working part time at HyVee.

My Mom and Dad are Kent and Wendy Schleich. We raise corn, soybeans, and hay. My parents also own Sunnyhill Angus Farm, a well-known Angus cow/calf herd, and we have a big breeding sale in March of every year. My Dad was President of the Fulton County Farm Bureau, and even served on the Illinois Farm Bureau Board as District 8 Director. My Mom served as FCFB Women’s Committee for a while, too, so I’ve been to many Farm Bureau meetings in my childhood!

On the farm, I help haul grain, tag cattle and move cattle. I attend Fiatt Christian church and help in the nursery there occasionally. I want to soon begin studying cosmetology. I love horseback riding, photography, and living in the country and on the farm!
I am Wes Strode from Marietta. I am married to Jamie and we have three children; Dalton 11, Miles 5, and Reid 2.

I graduated from Bushnell Prairie City High School and the University of Illinois. I was a Commercial/Ag Lender for 7 years prior to returning to the farm.

Most of my free time is spent with my kids. I coach basketball and I am a board member of our youth football program. I am a 5th generation farmer on our family farm. I farm with my father and we also have two employees. We raise corn, soybeans and a little hay. We have a 120 head commercial cow herd, as well as 640 head feeder cattle.

I don’t think many non-farmers realize the complexity of many farming operations. Today’s farms are getting larger and farmer’s businesses involve larger dollar amounts and more risk than ever before.

For young people wanting to go into agriculture, I think a business background or education would be very useful for a farmer. Experience in agronomy, marketing, banking, mechanics, nutrition, accounting, computers and technology would also be helpful. I’ve found, however, it’s much more effective to find knowledgeable people in these fields that you have confidence in and can trust.
I'm Blake Miller and I'm married to Robinette Miller. We have two children; Elizabeth Miller, age 20, a student at Western Illinois University majoring in Agriculture business with a minor in communications. Our son Johnathon Miller, is 13 years old and a student at VIT Jr. High School. My wife and I own farmland near Astoria which is rented by a legacy farming family.

I graduated from Astoria High School, then went on to graduate with a bachelor's degree in business from Greenville College. Currently I am an Agronomic Service Representative for Syngenta in the West Central Illinois area.

We attend Grace Bible Church in Astoria, Illinois. In my spare time, I enjoy off-road riding, hunting, and spending time with family.

In my job, I'm responsible for the technical training of our products with our sales force and our retail customers in Western Illinois. More specifically, I provide technical support to four retail sales representatives. My area of accountability includes crop protection products, seeds, traits, and seed care.

I want non-farmers to recognize that arable land is shrinking daily and population expansion is occurring rapidly. I remind them that modern agriculture is employing technology and innovation in a sustainable way to feed a growing global population. Without technologies like GMO’s and Crop Protection Products we will struggle to achieve our collective mission.
I’m Diane Weaver. My husband Robert and I live and farm east of Lewistown. Robert grew up about a half mile from where we now live. He has been involved in the family farm since he was very small and became a fifth generation farmer right after graduating from Lewistown High School. He continues to farm alongside his dad, Gene. I grew up at the former Norris Farm where my dad ran the cattle feedlot. So a love of Agriculture runs deep in both of us. We attend the Bryant Christian church.

Our children are Alicia (& Brad) Robinson; she lives less than a mile from us and is a stay at home mom. Our son, Seth, is farming full-time with Robert and Gene, my Father in Law. We have two grandsons Brady (who is in kindergarten at Lewistown Grade School) and Miles (who is 2½).

We farm around 1000 acres of corn, soybeans, and hay plus have a 100 head angus cow herd. Over the years livestock has always been a mainstay of our farm. We had a farrow to finish hog operation until the mid-90’s. We have also raised dairy bull calves in the past as well. While Robert is involved in the day to day part of our farming operation, I am the farm bookkeeper.

We enjoy our farming lives but when we do have free time we like to spend it together or do things with family, especially the grandsons.

Being a farmer isn’t just a job or a career but a life style. So often the media focuses on sensationalism and non-farm consumers need to ask questions to be informed. If you have a friend who has something to do with Agriculture, ask them questions and find out what farming is all about.

Farmers don’t just grow crops and raise livestock for something to do. Seeing God’s creation unfolding every day is a tremendous blessing. There is nothing like watching your crops growing or seeing a newborn calf take his first steps. That never grows old. Most important is being able to pass down our love of farming and agriculture to not only our children but also to our grandchildren.

For someone wanting to get into farming it is important to learn as much about marketing and technology as possible. Being able to keep up with the ever-changing world of farming is extremely important for the survival of a family farm.
I am Barry Fisher and I am married to Laura Fisher. We have two children; Bill is 35 years old and is an Experimental Mechanic for Caterpillar at the East Peoria proving grounds. Our daughter Robin is 32 years old and is a parts person at Fliginger's Equipment in Trivoli.

I graduated from Spoon River Valley High School and Spoon River Jr. College. Laura and I raise corn, soybeans, oats and alfalfa on our own farm and ground rented from 22 landlords. We also have 50 mostly Angus cows in a cow calf operation and 85 ewes selling Easter Lambs. I have a custom hay business, mowing around 300 acres and baling 2500 big bales for numerous area farmers each summer. Laura works off the farm as a scheduler at a large medical clinic in Fulton County.

I am currently a deacon and past elder of the Fairview Reformed Church. I was a 4-H leader for 20 plus years, and was a school board member for 12 years. Currently I serve as a Deerfield township trustee, as a Director on the West Central FS board, and am a Director and Marketing Chair on the Fulton County Farm Bureau Board.

In farming, we are continuously told that we need to increase production to feed the growing world population. This has led to the increased size of farm operations, but the loss of contact with the family farm. We need to take every opportunity to remind the non-farm public that we live where we farm. We raise our kids and grandkids where we farm; that we make every effort to farm in an environmentally safe and sustainable way; That we treat our livestock better than the ads on the television would have you believe. Our livelihood depends on the soil and livestock in our care. This is one of the many things that Farm Bureau works towards. This is one of the reasons that I belong to Farm Bureau and serve on the board.
Hi! I’m Julie Serven. I farm with my husband Sam in the North West corner of Fulton County. I graduated from Canton HS, went on to receive an Associate’s Degree from Spoon River College and then transferred to the University of Illinois, graduating in 2006 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agribusiness. I spent almost 10 years working for AgReliant Genetics in seed corn production and for LG Seeds helping to manage the seed supply.

Growing up my brother and I were very involved in our parents’ corn and soybean farm south of Canton. I spent a majority of my work “vacation” days, farming. So it was no surprise to my co-workers and friends when I decided to leave LG Seeds this fall and farm full time with my husband, his dad, uncle and cousin in the St. Augustine area. The timing seemed right and all I’ve ever wanted to do is farm. I feel very blessed to have this opportunity. I have learned a lot from the experiences I’ve had while working off the farm, it makes me appreciate farming even more.

This fall I primarily operated the tractor and grain cart during corn and bean harvest, which I love doing. I even got a couple lessons running the combine and driving the semi. After the crops were harvested, I did fall tillage. As winter rolled around and things on our grain farm slowed down I attended a few meetings learning about various crop production topics, had time to volunteer with FFA and Farm Bureau activities, attended my first calf sale with my father-in-law, and started learning a new accounting program for our farm business. I’m looking forward to warmer weather and being able to help put another crop in the ground, then watch and care for it as it grows to maturity.

I really enjoy the seasonality of the Ag industry. Things are always changing in this business, new technology for machinery, seed, herbicides, fertilizer recommendations, even drones can be used to scout fields. Farmers are always looking for more efficient and better ways of increasing production. It’s just human nature, who doesn’t want to do things better than they did before? I look forward to the challenge of producing more corn and beans while trying to manage the bottom line, conserving our land/natural resources, and working with family to make a living.

I am an active member of the Maples Mill United Methodist Church, located south of Canton. I was recently elected to the Fulton County Farm Bureau Board, serving as Secretary. In February, I concluded 9 years as the FCFB Young Leader Chair. I also serve on the Spoon River College Agriculture Advisory Committee. Each year I help judge various FFA contests in the area, which I truly enjoy watching and helping the high school students reach their goals at these events. My hobbies include caring for two dozen chickens, gardening, quilting, riding ATVs with friends and watching Illini Basketball.

I enjoy being part of the less than 2% of the US population that gets to feed the world. My hope is that if anyone has questions about food production, that they will seek out a farmer, rancher or someone in the Ag industry to help answer their questions.

“The Faces of Ag” campaign is sponsored by the Fulton County Farm Bureau Young Leader Committee. Each day during the month of March, we’ll spotlight an individual or family involved in farming or ag industry. Follow us, like and share our stories, and encourage others to follow us on the Fulton County Farm Bureau Facebook page as we celebrate the diversity, dedication, and passion of our “Faces of Ag”!
My name is Devon Armstrong and I'm a graduate of A-C Central High School, Lincoln Land Community College at Springfield, and Western Illinois University. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture.

I have a small herd of 30 cows that we raise calves from each year for market. I have been personally involved with grain farming for the last 5 years. I currently work with John Spangler on his family farm near Marietta IL. I also own and operate a small hay business that supplies multiple horse farms with quality square bales throughout the year, as well as raising hay for my own cattle.

I am a member of Checkrow Community church, and I like working on rental properties that my dad and I own. I also enjoy flying drones while scouting our crop fields.

The farming industry has been instilled in me since I was born. I have always enjoyed being able to be involved with a production field that not many other people have the chance to. One thing that I'd like the non-farmers to know about farmers of today is that we truly do care what we are growing and raising, whether it be cattle or corn, we take a deep pride and responsibility in producing the best possible items that we can. Also I’d like non-farmers to know that if they really have any doubt in what we, the farmers, are doing, just go visit a family farm. 97% of farms in Illinois are family farms, so it’s not hard to find one in your area; and I'd encourage them to be open minded about the way we farm.
I live and farm near Farmington with my wife Deb, who teaches Special Ed at a school district in Fulton County. Our three adult sons are Isaac who is a research scientist for Pioneer Hi-Breds, Nathan who farms with us, and Seth who farms with us too. We have two grandchildren and another on the way. I graduated from Spoon River Valley High School and have an Associate’s Degree from Spoon River College.

I am a life-long member of the Fairview Reformed Church where I am very active, and I’m on the Fulton County Farm Bureau Board.

We have a small beef herd and grow corn, soybeans, and hay. We have been growing non-GMO corn for special markets. I also drive a truck for hire part time. My parents started our family farm and are now retired from the operation.

I think it’s important that everyone know where their food comes from. I like to remind people that we have the safest, most affordable, abundant food supply of ANYONE in the world.
Hi! I am Ryan Spangler from Ellisville. I was homeschooled for Elementary and High School. I then attended Spoon River College, graduating with an Associate’s Degree in Applied Science with an emphasis on Agribusiness management. I am currently taking online classes at Colorado State University for my Bachelor’s Degree in Agribusiness management.

I attend the E-free Church of Canton. My Hobbies include showing and judging livestock, giving music lessons, and hunting.

I raise and sell Hampshire, Suffolk, and crossbred show lambs. I have a flock of 25 ewes, which I started when I was in 4-H. I also am a lab assistant at Spoon River College helping with the judging team and the livestock that the school has obtained. When I am not working at SRC, working with lambs, or out judging, I work at Gorsuch-Hensley Real Estate helping with farm ground auctions. I have completed my real estate classes to become a real estate broker. After getting my license next month I will be selling houses as well.

I would advise young people interested in agriculture to work hard in what you do. Listen and learn from people around you who know more about the industry because you can always learn something new. Get involved with as much as you can in both the livestock industry and also the entire AG industry so you can have a better understanding of how it works.

I feel passionately about the Ag industry because it is our future. Without farming our country would not be the same. What I want non-farmers to know is how much work and dedication goes into what we do. I also would like them to be willing to ask about our industry so that they would have a better understanding, more knowledge, and greater appreciation for Agriculture.
I am Tonya Holt, and I am the Agriculture in the Classroom Coordinator for Fulton County. I was raised in Lewistown, and graduated from LCHS before heading to college at Webster University in St. Louis. I received my Bachelors of Arts Degree in Media Communication with an emphasis in Radio and lived and worked in the St. Louis area for eight years, before moving to Little Rock, Arkansas for two years. Eventually I moved back to my hometown and married. In 2005, I was widowed and decided to return to school to pursue new opportunities. After just two days of nursing classes, I knew that that career was definitely NOT my calling. I spoke with an advisor, who asked me what I was interested in and what made me happy. When I said I loved being outside and working on my parents’ land, she directed me to the Natural Resources program at Spoon River College. My mom used to joke that the more tired or filthy I would get during my field days or internships, the happier I seemed to be. In 2007, I graduated with an Associate’s of Science Degree in Ag Business Management with an emphasis in Natural Resources.

I own 40 acres of land, which adjoins my parents’ and brother’s properties. We produce hay for our family’s 7 horses (make that 8 in April! My APHA mare is bred to Fantastic Buck!), and have different pastures to rotate the horses throughout the year. I also have a six stall barn and have boarded horses in the past. We cash rent all three properties’ tillable acres to a young local farmer.

I spend a lot of time with my family, as my parents are aging, and I have assumed a lot more of the physical labor on the farm. In my free time, I am involved with my local Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, and we provide support for our Veterans and community through fundraisers and other activities. The VFW is an organization I hold very dear, as my husband was an Army Veteran. I also assist with local 4H Horse activities, and Farm Safety Day. This year I hope to get more involved with a riding club that has organized in the last couple years.

As the Ag Literacy Coordinator, I see over 700 kids each month during the school year. I go into classrooms and talk to students about different Ag topics. One month I might talk about corn or soybean production, and the next dairy or beef production. My goal is to make each lesson informative, but also interesting and entertaining. It is so rewarding to see amazement in a child’s eye when she sees a chick emerge from an egg, or the sense of accomplishment when hard work and chemistry turns cream into butter or ice cream. Or more importantly, that food doesn’t just miraculously arrive at the grocery store or McDonald’s.

In the past few years, I have become much more passionate and committed to being an advocate for agriculture. It is so easy to become angry or discouraged when you see false information presented as fact, which in turn leads to more false information. In reality, there is room in the market place for both conventional and non-conventional agriculture. My hope is that we take these opportunities to educate Consumers on our practices, rather than create a bigger divide.
I am married to Roberta and we have three children; Cole is 14, enjoys sports and anything related to hunting or fishing. Audrey is 13 and she also enjoys sports, reading, writing, piano and animals. Ashley is 10 and likes reading and is her Mom’s best help caring for cattle, sheep and any other animal who needs love.

I am a 1988 graduate of Spoon River Valley High School. I have a Bachelor of Science in crop sciences from the University of Illinois (1991) and a Master’s of Science in Agronomy/Crop Production from the University of Illinois (1992).

I began my professional career with Monsanto in 1993 and currently work as a Technical Agronomist for the DEKALB and Asgrow seed brands.

Our farming operation is based around London Mills, in northern Fulton and Southern Knox counties. It includes 470 acres of corn & soybeans and a 65 head cow/calf crossbred beef herd. Roberta manages our cow herd and works full time on the farm and providing for the needs of 3 active kids.

Our family attends The Crossing Church in Macomb.

These days my main hobby would be attending sporting events or 4-H functions with my kids. When I have time for myself I like movies, music and politics. I have served for 11 years on the Spoon River Valley board of education; the past 3 years as president of the board. I also serve on the board of directors for the Bank of Yates City.

My professional agronomy career requires an advanced college degree (MS at a minimum). This means you need to prepare to attend 5+ years of college after high school. Anyone who is willing and able to attain the required education can be an agronomist. It’s actually much harder to become a farmer because the immense capital requirements for land and machinery can be a huge barrier to entry into farming. Most young farmers get started with help from their family that is already farming.

If your family doesn’t farm and you don’t marry into a farming family, you will need a very good source of off farm income and start out small with your farming operation. Profit margins in farming are tight and the capital requirements are very high which makes it nearly impossible to start from scratch.

There are many job opportunities working on farms or for businesses that supply goods and services to farmers. These offer good learning and relationship building opportunities. I know several large farmers who have long time employees that now rent land and farm along with them.

Farmers are a special kind of people. Hardworking, honest, dependable stewards of the land. While farming has become much more business oriented and high tech over the past 30 years it is still as much a way of life as an occupation. I feel fortunate to have grown up on a farm and developed a love for agriculture at an early age. When I was a kid on the farm all I wanted to do was “be a farmer like Dad”. I grew up on a farm that was too small to offer opportunity for the next generation so I went to college and chose Agronomy because that was as close as I could get to farming. As an agronomist I work every day helping farmers with the same decisions and challenges I face on my own operation. My past, present and future are 100% agriculture. While I can’t say I am a fan of every trend in our industry there is nothing else I would rather do. Agriculture is in my blood and I am proud to be a farmer.
My name is Macie Howe and I am the 8th generation on my dad’s family farm south of Lewistown, IL. My mommy and daddy are Matthew and Michelle Howe, and we farm with my Grandpa and Grandma (Dave & Judi Howe).

We grow corn, soybeans, and wheat, and raise cattle. My responsibilities on the farm are limited due to my young age of 2.5, but I get to supervise daddy and grandpa in the tractor when they feed livestock and complete other daily chores.

I am the next generation of agriculture and will depend on programs such as 4-H, FFA, and agriculture education to guide my learning over the next 20 years. In addition to helping on the farm, I enjoy dancing, singing, and playing outdoors with my cousins, Allison and Connor. My daddy, Matt, is a Director on the Fulton County Farm Bureau board. My mommy works at Western Illinois University in the Career Development Center and is involved with helping agriculture students with their resumes, cover letters, interviewing, and job searching skills.

My family is active at Maples Mill United Methodist Church and we enjoy gardening, hiking, and taking rides in the Utility Task Vehicle around the farm. I love living on the farm because it allows me the freedom to run, play, and learn every day. I get to see firsthand how the weather impacts the crops and how plants grow. I get to bottle-feed calves, and eat fresh, healthy produce from the garden. It truly is a wonderful life!
My name is Derek Jacobus and I am a 1993 graduate of Lewistown Community High School. I am also a 1995 graduate of Spoon River College with an Associate’s in Ag Science. I am a member of the Lewistown Episcopal Church and the Fulton County Fair & Racing Association Board (since 2009).

In my free time I enjoy hunting, and also watching and raising standard bred race horses. My family has been involved with Standard Bred horses since 1902.

My brother Aaron and I farm together and are the 4th generation involved in our farm. We raise corn, soybeans and wheat, while taking care of a 75 commercial cow calf herd.

I’ve been involved with farming since I was able to walk, spending my summers and weekends with my Dad (Dave) and Grandpa (Gardner) learning how to drive tractors and raising livestock. When I was old enough to join 4-H, I started showing Duroc hogs and Suffolk sheep. After a short time doing that, I knew I wanted to farm and raise animals on the family farm.

Once farming is in your blood, it never leaves; that’s why I believe farmers never truly retire. Ag has changed so much in the last few years, and as time goes on we get fewer generations that have farm back grounds. More and more people have become out of touch with how their food is raised and where it comes from. Luckily, we have organizations like the Farm Bureau, using programs like the “Ag in the Classroom, to help educate our youth and non-farm consumers.

If you’re not raised on a farm or don’t have family ties to a farm, it’s very hard to get started in this career. There’s not a manual on how to farm. I think the best way to learn this field is to find a farmer and see if you could find work on his or her operation. You’ll find they’re the best teachers and learn more from their experiences than from a manual anyway.
I am Seth Weaver. I graduated from Lewistown High School in 2008 and went on to Spoon River college where I got an Associate’s Degree in Ag Business Management.

Growing up on our family farm and always being involved in both the grain as well as the livestock part of farming helped me realize my senior year of high school that farming was what I wanted to do with my life. My parents encouraged me to go to college and be sure that was what I wanted to do. The more I thought about it the more obvious it became that farming was in my blood and that was where I would be the happiest. I started farming full-time with my dad, Robert, and Grandpa, Gene, shortly after graduation from college.

Our farm consists of about 1000 acres of corn and soybeans plus 75 acres of hay east of Lewistown. In addition to the crops, we have 100 head of angus crossbred cattle.

I think more than anything the reason I farm is because I was born into it and I love it. My family has farmed the same ground that I am farming for 6 generations. I count it a blessing and honor to farm alongside my father and grandfather.
I graduated from Spoon River Valley High School, and from Spoon River College.

I work as a Caterpillar Experimental Mechanic in East Peoria and I assist my parents Barry & Laura Fisher with our livestock and grain operation. I act as chief mechanic and combine operator!

I attend the Fairview Reformed Church and am active in the Fulton County Young Leaders program.

Growing up on a farm and working in an agriculture industry helped me to develop strong morals, respect for the environment, and a strong work ethic. Farmers help feed the world and the food doesn’t come from the grocery store. Today less than two percent of the US population are farmers and on average each US farmer feeds 155 people from around the world. Who else can do that?
Hello, my name is Clayton Stufflebeam. I married my wife Melissa in the fall of 2012. Melissa is a Radiologic technologist at Graham Hospital in Canton. Last August we had our first child, Oliver.

I am from Lewistown and grew up on a farm. I graduated from Lewistown High School in 2008. After high school I continued my education at Spoon River College. Then transferred to University of Illinois and graduated with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Crop Science in 2012. My father Eugene raises corn, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa. He also raised hogs until the late 1990's. Since then he has increased his cattle herd and the acres he grows in crops. I've always had more interest in crops and machinery than livestock.

After college I had every intention to come back and farm with dad right away. But along the way I got an internship at Becks Hybrid's as a research intern. Well, that internship turned into another internship and then into a full time position after graduation. Today, I manage the Practical Farm Research (PFR) center for Beck's in Downs, IL.

I feel what we do at the research farm is very important for today's farmers, especially in these markets. Research is very expensive and difficult for farmers to conduct, so we try to do as much of it for them as we can. We do several un-biased research trials every year across 6 research farms in 5 states. This year we are going to have 27 replicated studies that will be tested across the 6 sites. There will also be 39 studies that will be tested at 2 or more sites. We do everything from planting date, nitrogen, foliar, fungicide, and high yield research trials just to name a few. At the end of harvest we publish all of our findings into an easy to read research book. Our goal is to link the success or failures of a study to the given environment and conditions presented so we can become more knowledgeable and proactive in our decision making. So in a nutshell, I farm every day and I get to try new management practices every year. Someday I will take what I have learned at Beck's and bring it home to the family farm.

I help dad as much as I can on the weekends and throughout the year especially when he is busy. In the spring I will work ground and plant corn and beans. In the summer I will help with putting up hay and mowing roadides. During harvest, which is my favorite season, I will haul grain to market with the semi-truck. I also like to work on farm equipment which I get my fair share of at Beck's and home. I look forward to coming home to farm full time with dad in a few years.

I have always had motorcycles, so I like to ride quite a bit throughout the summer. I enjoy riding to different areas in the state to see how the crops look. I also have a pretty big toy tractor collection which my wife loves! Recently I have been restoring, customizing, and weathering some of my tractors and some for friends which has turned into a little side business.

Why is agriculture so important to me? We have to feed a growing population but at the same time we have to be sustainable. This goes hand in hand with what we do at the research farm. I like to focus on practices that will be practical and sustainable for the farmer and also be environmentally friendly. We cannot mine our soils, we must keep them in good shape for our future generations. I think it is very important to get young students involved in agriculture. There is so much opportunity in Ag, so much more than just farming. Since farms are bigger than they used to be, there are fewer farm kids. Therefore we need to get non-farm kids interested.

I want non-farmers to know that we do our very best to grow safe food. Science and technology has progressed so much in the past 20 years. We now use less pesticide and much safer herbicide than we used to. We grow the safest and most affordable food in the world. I also would like them to know that if you have questions about how we actually grow food contact a farmer. Don't take us for how the media depicts us.
Hey! I’m Cassidy Tarter and am from Canton. I graduated from Canton High School and am currently attending Spoon River College where I will graduate with an Associate’s Degree in Applied Sciences. I will then transfer to Western Illinois University to pursue my pre-veterinarian degree. Once I graduate with a pre-vet degree, I will have to be accepted into a vet school where I hope to obtain my Doctorate in Animal Science.

I am the daughter of Kevin and Tiffani Tarter. I show cattle and am employed at our family business. We raise cattle, corn, and soybeans. I am passionate about the AG industry because there are so many opportunities. I would like everyone to know about what this industry truly offers. It’s more than farming and raising animals. When people think of farmers, they think only of the people who grow corn and soybeans, but this isn’t true. Its mechanics, technicians, and even ranchers. I think people should have a better knowledge of our industry and what it offers. I would like to see individuals ask about our industry and want to truly understand it instead of looking to media and forming their own conclusions about the industry.
We are John and Holly Spangler. We have three children; Jenna, 13; Nathan, 11; and Caroline, 7. We also have to include our farm dogs: Ralph and Hazel; each 2ish! We farm with John’s parents, Bruce and Sharon near Marietta. We grow corn and soybeans on 2,300 acres, and raise 100 head of beef cattle.

John grew up on the family farm and has a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics from the University of Illinois. Holly was raised on the family farm in Albion (way down in Edwards County) and met John at the U of I, in the process of obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Communications.

We are active members of the Checkrow Community Church, where John is Board Chairman and the entire family helps lead worship. John enjoys riding four-wheelers; showing cattle with the kids; and music. Holly enjoys showing cattle with the kids; photography; playing the piano; and flower gardening.

We strive to operate an efficient and profitable family farm, to raise the most we can with the resources we’ve been given, in order to feed the most people we can. We want to leave our land in the best shape we can for future generations, and we want our children to grow up on a family farm - learning to work, learning the cycles of life, learning profit and loss, and learning to care for the land – and we want them to have the opportunity to farm someday if they so desire.

We believe very strongly that our job as farmers is to be stewards of the resources we’ve been given, and to use them to grow food for a hungry world. We eat what we grow, we feed it to our family and we know it to be safe. We carefully evaluate new technologies to see what will help us do a better job.

We care for animals 24/7, in rain, wind and cold, because we care about them. Their comfort is important to us. But we also know they have a purpose in life, which is to provide us with food and other products we need to survive. We believe in biotechnology because it has helped us grow more crops with fewer inputs, and it’s allowed us to use fewer crop protection chemicals – better for both farmers and consumers.

A young person choosing to work in production agriculture needs to be well-rounded: have hands-on, practical knowledge of how to operate high-tech equipment and how to handle themselves around livestock, and they also need to have a degree in agriculture, with an emphasis in economics and grain marketing. Agriculture is a world economy and our prices are influenced as much by what happens worldwide as by what happens in our backyard. It’s also helpful to see some of the world and understand how farms operate in other parts of the world, and learn first-hand how people outside the US feel about American agriculture.
My name is Darla Pittman and I’m married to Joe Pittman. We live outside of Astoria and are raising two beautiful little girls who are 5 and 2. I am a grain merchandiser with Western Grain Marketing based out of Rushville. Joe is a Crop Specialist with Prairieland FS in Astoria. I was born and raised in Nokomis, IL and went on to graduate from Illinois State University with a B.S. in Agriculture Education and a M.S. in Agribusiness.

Joe and I farm with two friends in the Astoria/Rushville area. We all have full-time jobs off the farm so it is extremely important for everyone to work together to get all of our farming done. Our family also keeps a small herd of cattle that we finish out and take to be butchered for some local customers.

I’ve been deeply involved in agriculture my entire life. I was born and raised on a farm where we raised corn, beans and cattle. My favorite place to be was behind the wheel of a John Deere tractor. I was in FFA in high school and college and now involved again with our local chapter’s alumni. With budget cuts in the education system throughout the state, it is crucial that we continue to support our schools and agriculture programs. It is truly rewarding and exciting when you see passion for agriculture in the next generation.

Outside of agriculture, we have no problem staying busy. Our family attends Grace Bible Church in Astoria. We LOVE the Cards/Cubs rivalry with three of the four of us being avid Cardinal fans. Go Cards! We also love to ride ATVs whenever we can. Over the past couple of years we have worked with some of our friends to put on benefit rides for some of our local friends and family. It’s great to be able to help pay it forward!

I’m sure people have heard the phrase “advocating for agriculture”, especially over the past couple of years. I encourage people involved in agriculture to share with others the importance of agriculture. For those who are unsure, ask questions! It is so important to educate yourself. For those of you who are wanting to go into an agriculture profession of some sort, my advice is to get involved. Whether it is job shadowing or an internship or volunteering somewhere. Just get involved. Agriculture is a hard profession. There are absolutely no certainties. But to be a part of an industry that feeds the world… now that’s pretty awesome.
I’m Scott Welker of Lewistown. My wife Lisa and I have three children: Caitlyn, an RN at Graham Medical Group; Ryan, a senior at the University of Illinois-Springfield majoring in computer science and minoring in math; and Taryn, a junior at Lewistown High School. Caitlyn and her husband Jake made us grandparents for the first time with their birth of their daughter, Peyton, in November.

In my “spare” time, I enjoy attending our daughter’s volleyball and archery competitions, woodworking, and camping and boating with my family at Mark Twain Lake recreational area. I also serve on the Fulton County Fair and Racing Association Board, the Fulton County Ambulance Board, and the Lewistown Fire Protection District Board of Trustees.

After graduating from Lewistown Community High School, I earned my Bachelors of Science in Agribusiness Economics as well as a minor in Plant & Soil Science in 1987 at Southern Illinois University, where I was also a member of Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. I began my ag career working summers scouting crops for Norris Farms. After graduation, I was promoted to Crop Manager and eventually went on to become General Manager of the farm when it was known as Wilder Farms.

Now I am a sales representative for Pioneer Hi-Bred. The agency has changed a lot since I was first hired in 1998. When I started there were mainly four corn hybrids from which to choose from, and the farmer’s order was packaged in small bags. Fast forward to 2016, and there are over 30 hybrid options offering a variety of traits that can be provided in proboxes, seed tenders, and mini bins to satisfy farmers in my area.

Students considering a career in agriculture would benefit from a quality degree program whether they are planning on bringing that knowledge back to the family farm, starting their own ag operation, or working in the agriculture industry in another capacity. If it’s in the sales area, I think it’s important new grads understand that farmers expect more than just sales and delivery. Over the years I have built corn reels and seed tenders, designed mini bins (and a hydraulic lift to deliver them), added custom seed treatment, and many other projects to help my farmer-customers. Like farming, this is not a 9-5 job and is considered a “12-month season” with important responsibilities outside of planting and harvest.

Non-ag individuals need to understand how diverse the agriculture industry is. While I don’t own any farm ground, my experience and expertise allows me to provide a valuable service to my customers helping them to make the best seed decisions for their acreage. I am just one of many agricultural professionals that help farmers be successful.
I'm Sandy Bonney and I farm with my family near Liverpool. My maiden name is Johnson and I grew up on farm with dairy cows. From the time I was 11 years old until I married George at the age of 17 in 1964, I milked cows with my Dad. When I left home, Dad sold the cows!

I have always loved cows and George grew up raising hogs. When we were first married, George worked at Caterpillar and I worked at the Fulton County Courthouse for a few years. We started farming basically from “scratch” in 1965 on rented ground near Canton. We began farming with my Dad in 1975 and he retired in 1985. George and I bought our first farm (the place where we now live) in 1989.

We raise corn and soybeans, have always had cattle, and we have been in and out of the hog business two different times (we’re hard learners’!). We quit raising hogs in the early 1990’s, at the time having a farrow to finish operation with about 50 sows. At one time we farmed as much as 2900 acres, but are smaller than that now. I still love “my girls” (my cows), but have 25 at the most now. I raise babies from them for show calves, for locker beef, and a few will go to the sale barn.

George is pretty much retired now, and I’m semi-retired. I still fill bins in the Fall and haul corn and soybeans from the field to the farm or the elevator. I don’t do any “tractor stuff” anymore! I handle the buying of the inputs (seed, fertilizer, chemicals, etc.), and handle the Farm Service Agency and Soil Conservation dealings.

I am a past director of the Fulton County Farm Bureau Board and currently I’m serving on the Farm Service Agency Board. I love to shop and I love auctions of any kind; farm auctions, household and estate auctions, and cattle auctions. I enjoyed watching our Grandsons show livestock, and now that are mostly too old for that, I still enjoy watching the local shows and cheering on other kids. I am very active in the Fulton County Fair Livestock Auction and with the “Friends of 4-H”, which is a group that pools money together to make purchases during the auction. I love to travel and George and I are very fortunate that we have had the opportunity to take 3 cruise with some very good friends in recent years.

Both of our sons are involved in the farm; Scott full time and Kevin when he can, as he drives a truck for a living. Our 3 grandsons are involved in the farm to different degrees, which I love, but I have encouraged them to continue their education after high school. Things are so different than when we started farming. Then we didn’t have to worry about every dollar; back then you may not have gotten rich farming, but we didn’t have to worry if we were going to make it.

Farming is very much affected by global markets now. A farmer has to go to meetings, read a great deal, and be educated about the business of farming. Non farmers need to realize that inputs costs effect our bottom-line, as does weather and many things we can’t control. Some parts of farming are a gamble and we have to be willing to take a chance to succeed.
Hello, my name is Shelley Sweatman-Fairow and I am the County Executive Director (CED) at Fulton County Farm Service Agency (FSA).

I live in Mason County and I am married to Eric Fairow who is an energy salesman at Prairieland FS in Mason County. Together we have 5 boys - Tyler Fairow is 25 years old, farms full time with Sid VanEtten in Mason County. Tyler is married to Mariscia (Harnacke) Fairow who is a Funeral Director for Hurley Funeral Home in Havana, IL. They have a beautiful little daughter Raigan who is almost 3 mos. old and the center of their world! Dillon Fairow is 23 years old and finishing up an Assoc. Degree from BHE. Dillon is a huge help at home with the show cattle operation when he is not at school or employed helping others with their show cattle. Hayden Fairow is 21 years old and working full time on a cutting horse training facility in Drumright, OK for Ashley Baxstrom. Clancey Sweatman is 16 years old, a sophomore at Illini Central and loves showing cattle, FFA, and anything Ag related. Chapin Sweatman is 14 years old, in 8th grade at Illini Central and loves showing cattle and “fixing things”.

I grew up on a crop and livestock farm in Tazewell County. I graduated from Pekin Community High School and then went on to graduate from University of Illinois with a degree in Animal Science. I started out buying livestock for IBP Inc. in Iowa, after I graduated. After a couple of years, I decided that it would be nice to be closer to family so I moved back to Illinois and worked in the Horticulture Industry as a Department Manager/Wholesale Salesman. In 2008 I became part of the Farm Service Agency Family. In 2011 I transferred here and have thoroughly enjoyed being a CED and getting to know all the producers and unique diversity that is Fulton County.

When I am not at the office I enjoy time with my family and our show cattle operation. We have 25 head of various breeds that we raise for online and club calf sales and compete with in the show ring. We spend our year juggling our A.I. Program and Embryo Transfer work as well as sales and shows all over Illinois and various other states.

The Ag industry is a way of life for me. I feel blessed that I was able to grow up in a family-oriented industry and that my kids have had a chance to do the same. To know the value of the hard work and what it takes to care for and help an animal or put food on not only their table but the worlds table are irreplaceable life lessons and I am proud to be able to pass those on to my children. Being a part of the FSA Agency has been another great Ag experience. What we do here is very rewarding and relates in terms of the local help we can offer in natural disaster type situations, times of financial crisis, and conservation efforts.

What farmers do is a way of life, a choice, and a blessing. However, it is also an industry. As with any industry and occupation, those of us who love agriculture must all be vigilant in our ability to educate and win over our consumers or the folks who buy our products. Consumers must understand our way of life and why we love to do what we do every day. They must also have faith that what we do every day is to provide not only our own families but their families as well with safe, abundant, and affordable food and fiber. It’s all of our jobs to get this message and education out there. I encourage anyone who has not grown up involved in agriculture to take their questions or concerns and visit with those folks that actually do the work and grow your food and fiber. Take the time so that you don’t jump on a social media bandwagon without educating yourself and making the effort to sort the fact from fiction.
I am Bill Carlberg and I have a Dairy farm with my family near Canton. I graduated from Abingdon High School and Bradley University with a degree in Automotive Tech. I worked for Caterpillar full time for 32 years, and part time for the past 20 years.

My wife Ellie is a registered nurse at PAN. We have two children. Our son Lars, is married to Lori, (who teaches math at Canton High School). Lars and Lori are instrumental in the operation of the Dairy, doing most of the milking now. Our daughter, Krista, is the librarian at Westview School in Canton. She is married to Larry (retired military and postal employee). We have one granddaughter, Taylor, who is a senior at Canton High School.

We have the only operating Grade A dairy farm in Fulton County. We are truly a family farm, as we have no outside help hired.

We purchased 40 acres in 1967 for the sole purpose to raise our children in the rural atmosphere, and so they could have 4-H projects and enjoy farm animals. We organized the first 4-H club in our area (the Blackjack Hustlers) which grew to over 50 members. Ellie and I were leaders of that club for 22 years.

In the meantime, our son’s interest in dairy cattle was growing, and upon graduation from Spoon River College and receiving his American Farmer Degree, we decided to enter the grade A dairy business. We started our operation in 1983 by building a new milking parlor and became a proud shipper to Prairie Farms Dairy. Today we farm 185 acres which is used to grow commodities for our dairy cattle.

We are members of Wesley United Methodist Church. We are involved in many church functions, including myself and a past trustee and both of us volunteer for the Wednesday night youth club. I enjoy restoring Model A and T Fords. We love to travel and many of our trips incorporate one of my Model T’s or Model A’s as we participate in Antique Car Tours across the United States. I am currently the President of the Fulton County Farm Bureau and a Graham Hospital Foundation Trustee.

I feel good about the contribution my family makes to American Agriculture. As the population has grown, modern-day ag has had to keep up with the demand for food. American families have the safest and most abundant supply of food in the world. There are hundreds of jobs in modern Agriculture to choose from. I would tell a young person interested in ag this; Pick your field of interest, get as much education as you can, and be willing to work hard. Then you’ll be a success!
I am Linda Rock. I farm with my family near Canton. I grew up on a farm near Lewistown, the daughter of Lila and the late Charles E. Gray. I graduated from Lewistown High School in 1969 and two weeks later started working at Lock’s Ford as a bookkeeper where I stayed for 3 years. I was asked to come to work at Endres’ Equipment and in doing such became the first “parts” lady in Fulton County! I loved the job, the farmers that I helped, and the fact that while they may have been skeptical of my abilities when I started, they came to respect me and the job I did. And… ...I met my husband through my job there!

Jimmy grew up on a dairy, grain, and beef farm in Minnesota, graduating from High School in 1965. He was drafted into the US Army in 1968 and served a tour of duty in Vietnam. He was discharged in 1970 and came down to a Spoon River bottom farm in Fulton County, Illinois, that had been in his Mother’s family and to which his folks had moved.

Jimmy and I married in 1977 and I became a full-time farmer after that. We have two children. Julie, our oldest, works for Iowa Extension as a nutritionist. She is married to Eric and they have 3 kids; Jameson (10), Evelyn (8), and Jacqueline (5). Our son Jimmer farms with us. He and his wife Brooks (an RN) have two children; Braxton (8) and Truman James (1 ½).

We attend Shields Chapel Methodist Church, where I am in the Chimes Choir. I also teach kindergarten and 1st Grade Sunday School, which I have done for over 25 years. I am also the co-hostess for church bridal showers! I am a Director on the Fulton County Farm Bureau Board, where I have served as Treasurer for the past three years. Jimmy and I like to visit with friends over dinners out, we love dancing, and spending time with our grandkids when we can.

We have corn and beans, and had a very small herd of cattle until 1986. As far as my role on the farm, I am included in all planning meetings, I pay the input bills, write checks, and balance the checkbooks. I also haul meals, run for parts, and in the fall I dump grain at the storage bins. My favorite time on the farm is August; we watch the crops grow and get ready for harvest. That’s really our vacation, as is taking the kids to the Fulton County Fair!

I hope that our Grandkids want to farm. I know the ones that are local plan to now. I would tell them and other young people interested in farming that a success of a farm is 90% management. It’s time consuming and farms need to be bigger than when we started out. We learn a lot to improve our operation from conversations with our fellow farmers and neighbors.

I am very passionate about what we do and how we take care of the land for the future. My Dad always said that I’d be the one to marry a farmer and make it my livelihood. I love farming and always have.
I'm Dick Plumer from Farmington. I have been married to Margie since 1960. Our children are: Steven R., (53), a Professional Firefighter and Contractor; Bruce E., (52), a Professional firefighter, Caterer and Grocery Business owner; Daniel W., (50) a U.P.S. National Accountant Executive; and Dale W. (50), who works in the Grain Division of J.B United.

I graduated from Farmington Community High School in 1957. I have raised beef cattle, hogs, hay, and grain for 40 years near the Trivoli-Fairview area.

I'm a member of the Fairview Reformed Church, where I served as a Deacon and Elder. I am a former volunteer fireman, Church Scout Representative, and a 57-year member of Memento Lodge, Independent Order of Odd Fellows in Farmington.

I have been a salesman for Fliginger Equipment 27 years. Fliginger's is an implement dealership in Trivoli that sells farm equipment and lawn and garden equipment. Brands sold include AGCO, Massey Ferguson, New Holland, Mahindra, and multiple short lines. I am available to farmers any time of the day or night for any of their needs. Farmers call me or drop by the store to discuss equipment. I also visit them at their farms to discuss what would best fit their situation and to look at their trade-in equipment.

I am passionate about the agriculture industry because this world needs agriculture to survive! I am amazed at how fast farming has changed in my lifetime with modern technology.
I am Ben Shelby. My wife Kristin and I have three children; Lucas 6, Mason 5, and Camden 2. Kristin is a stay at home mom and bookkeeper for our seed and chemical business.

I am a 1997 graduate of Lewistown High school and a 2001 graduate of the University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Science degree in Crop Sciences. After attending the U of I, I started work for Pioneer Hi-Bred as an Agronomist, Account Manager and Territory Planning Manager over the course of 10 years. In my last role on the company side I was a Pioneer Rep near Knoxville, IL and then is when I switched from being an employee of DuPont Pioneer to and Independent Sales Rep of Pioneer.

I run a Pioneer seed agency located on IL Rt 116 East of London Mills, with my brother Jeff. We have 3 employees; Alex Slack, Marty Vahle, and Carl Smith. In addition to the seed agency we provide wholesale chemicals, aerial application of fungicides and insecticides, full scouting services including 2 part-time scouts in the summer which utilize our drone that we purchased last year, seed treating and consulting.

We are members of Maples Mill United Methodist church where I was raised and still attend today. Occasionally we will attend Northwoods Community Church in Peoria where Kristin's folks go. Kristin teaches Sunday school and is working with several other church members to plan the Maples Mill Vacation Bible School for this summer. I serve as a Director for the MidAmerica National Bank. I love to hunt and fish although these days fishing with three boys is more of a chore than a hobby, but we still seem to have a good time. The boys aren't old enough to hunt ducks yet but I look forward to that. I'm a member of the Woodyard near Liverpool.

In our business last year, we sold a little over 11,000 units of corn and 30,000 units of beans. Over 90% of the beans we sell today are treated with Fungicide, Insecticide and Inoculant. About 15% of those will be treated with ILeVO seed treatment in addition to the standard offering. I am passionate about the ag industry because Farmers are the ground floor of what makes this nation great. There is no greater sense of accomplishment than watching your crops grow and be harvested. Although we face many challenges today as leaders in agriculture I think we are doing a great job getting the message out that we only want what is best for our children, environment and community. We come under attack by a lot of people that don't fully understand what they are talking about and in 90% of the cases where someone is speaking out against agriculture they don't even have their facts straight. There is no doubt that the task falls on today's Faces of Agriculture to educate a community getting further and further away from the farm gate.

I want non farmers to know that farmers are growing the safest most abundant food supply with fewer pesticides than before. I wouldn't be feeding it to my family if I didn't think it was just that! I also want consumers to know that farmers don't necessarily disagree with food labeling or the promotion of organic produce. In fact, it provides for a niche market and if it can make producers profitable then farmers will grow it. Farming is one of the most responsive industries in our nation. If a customer sends a demand signal that tells Agriculture that it can be more profitable growing one crop over the other including niche crops you can believe that farmers will find a way to produce it safely, efficiently and effectively. I feel it is my job to provide the best advice that I can with the knowledge that I have about products and emerging technologies.

I'd tell a young person entering the industry that it all starts with education! The best farmers I know today are open to change, listen to expert opinions, and educate themselves. They ask the best questions and challenge me to continue to learn. I really believe that in today's world a person needs to have some Agronomy background to understand the science behind what makes the genetics perform the best, what makes the chemicals that we use work and how to make the plan that you put in place over the winter come to life in your field with minimal challenges. The genetic potential of today's crop is much higher than we may have considered 5 years ago. A new world record was set in corn production in 2015 at greater than 500 bushel per acre. With the best farm average yields for corn today being around 250 bushels per acre that means we have a lot of room to improve. I hope to be part of the discussion on how we can do that.
Hello! I’m Kaci Westrich and I’m originally from Cape Girardeau, MO where my family still lives. I graduated from Missouri State University with a Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and then completed my dietetic internship at Bradley University in 2012. I have been the dietitian at the Canton Hy-Vee for the past 4 years and also the HR Manager the past 2 years.

My best friends back home in Missouri lived down the road from me on a farm, so I grew up getting to help feed the sheep and chickens and getting the cows ready for show at the fair. Since moving to Illinois I’ve also been very fortunate to get to know Dave and Kathy Tolley and their family. I’ve been able to learn a lot from them and experience a small part of harvesting while riding with their son Joe.

I am a member of St. Philomena parish in Peoria and I am an active member of the Canton Young Professionals group. I volunteer at events around the community through them. I am also an active member of the Central Illinois Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics where I serve on our exec board as Nominating Chair and am part of our 5K race committee. My hobbies include playing softball and volleyball, hanging out with family and friends, watching football and Cardinals Baseball!

One of my favorite parts of my job is getting to work with people in the community. I love being able to incorporate food and nutrition into all different aspects of our lives. Working with men and women who are involved with the agriculture side of our food is one of my favorites. Knowing where your food is coming from and who is actually growing and raising it is something customers at Hy-Vee, myself included, are really interested in. People want to support their local farmers and I think it’s an extremely important part of my job to help educate them on this issue. The media plays a huge role in what people think is the best or healthiest option. I enjoy being able to provide research based information to my customers so then they can make the best decision for them and their family rather than just because they heard something on Dr. Oz. I’ve been very fortunate to have been able to attend a conference through the Beef Council last year and work with the Dairy Council to help me provide this information to my customers. I also look forward to continuing to work with the Farm Bureau in the future.

I have been very blessed to have been able to know several farmers and people involved in agriculture and I realize the amount of hard work and dedication farming takes. I respect the work they do and am very passionate about helping spread the information and knowledge they have to our customers, whether it be the produce grown or the cattle raised.

I’d tell a young person wanting to go into a dietetics career that having a passion for nutrition and food is a must! You want to enjoy what you do every day. There are so many areas of dietetics so you want to find one that fits you and what you’re passionate about. I have come to find in the past couple of years that the agriculture side of dietetics is something I am extremely passionate about, and I want to continue to find ways to share that with my customers.
Hi! I am Candace Hanson. I am married to Galen and have 2 children, Cali (age 9) and Drake (age 6). We live in Wee-Ma-Tuk and our children go to Cuba Elementary. They are very active in basketball, softball/baseball, 4-H, hunting, and fishing.

I graduated from Lewistown High School and the University of Illinois, with a Bachelor’s degree in Agricultural Economics with an emphasis in Accounting. I am the Controller for Fulton FS in Lewistown and have been here for almost 15 years. My husband Galen is a Channel seedsman, and sells corn and beans in Fulton County. His warehouse on the south edge of Cuba.

Even though I currently do not live on a farm, we are both very active in the farming industry. I was raised on a farm and was actively involved in 4-H and FFA, so it was only fitting that I pursued a degree in Agriculture while in college. After graduation, I took a job in a different industry, but once I heard there was an opening at Fulton FS, I was excited about the opportunity to put my degree to use. As the Controller for Fulton FS, I am responsible for accounts receivable, accounts payable, inventory, financial statements, payroll, and also keep track of our customers’ corn and soybean orders.

The greatest part of my job is to work with hard-working individuals every day that do their best to get our customer’s fields prepared to produce the best yielding corn and beans year after year.
I'm Howard Vohland and this is my wife Lois. I was not raised on a farm. I grew up in Washington, Illinois and started at Bradley University in the Fall of 1947. I was pre-med, studying to become a pharmacist. After that first year, I was pretty sure I would be drafted for the Korean Conflict, and so as not to complicate my studies, I attended Brown's Business College for a degree in Sales. This is where I met Lois Rohrer, from a farming family near Canton. She was beginning her education in accounting after graduating from high school a year after me. I graduated from Brown's in 1949 and Lois did the same in 1950. We married that same year. I worked for a contractor and Lois worked for an accountant.

I WAS drafted in 1951 and Lois followed me to Oklahoma for a bit, until I was shipped to Korea. After I was discharged from the US Army in 1953, we started farming on 120 acres owned by Lois' Dad, Glenn Rohrer. A year later we moved to our current house, where the owner had a chicken house; so we started raising chickens! We had about 5000 chickens, which we purchased from Dekalb Genetics, and raised them as layers. We sold eggs to area restaurants, grocery stores, and to the hospital in Canton. After the layers' productive lives reached their limit, we would sell the chickens to Campbell’s soup, or a similar company, for them to use. We were in the chicken business until 1973.

Over the years we also had pigs and calves, and sold seed corn. We started raising seed corn for Pioneer in 1984 and then seed beans, which we did until 1998. At the most in our farming career, we farmed a total of over 3000 acres. I would consider both Lois and I retired now, but Lois was very active in the farm; hauling grain and doing tillage work. She still does some of the marketing for the farm, and our Granddaughter does the computer work! We were in the chicken business until 1973.

We incorporated our farm in 1979, which was not a common thing to do at the time. I think with our business and accounting backgrounds, it was a natural consideration for us. It’s been great for our operation and was a great advantage for estate planning purposes too.

We are active members in the Fairview Reformed Church. I’m a past Fulton County Farm Bureau President and am honored to have been named a Prairie Farmer “Master Farmer” in 1992. I’ve been involved in the Gideon’s, in a prison ministry, the Soil and Water Board, and 1st Farm Credit Board. I have a private pilot’s license. Lois has been active in the Women’s Guild at Church, and served on the FCFB Board too. Before our sons were born, she worked in accounting, including a time at the Fairview Sale Barn, and in later years coordinated the de-tasseling crews for Pioneer Seeds for many years.

I think the most that has changed in my farming career is the size of the equipment. I never thought we’d see the size of some of the tractors and equipment we use now. So much has changed that I don’t think people would believe how we farmed 60 years ago! We started with a Model A John Deere and a single row corn picker. My father-in law was very progressive; he was one of the first farmers in the area to move from true horse-power, to a self-propelled combine. He had a 4-row head and a 10 ft. grain platform that we thought was huge! Not many farmers were raising beans yet either, so that was progressive for a farmer to venture into that.

Most of our grandchildren are involved in the farm; for a couple of them it’s their full-time career. I think it’s really difficult for young people to enter farming; not like it was when we started. Maybe farms have gotten too big and shut out the opportunity for new farmers starting out? I don’t know.

I am so happy with my life as a farmer. I wouldn’t have wanted to do anything else. We were just recently told while doing some business “Thank you for your occupation, because I like to eat”! This farm and this way of life have been a true Blessing to ALL of us.
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