



INTERVIEW

GUY MATHIAS,

location manager, Heartland AG Systems

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, Badger Common Tater



NAME: Guy Mathias

TITLE: Location manager

COMPANY: Heartland AG Systems

LOCATION: DeForest, Wisconsin

HOMETOWN: Cuba City, Wisconsin

YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION: 17

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: Danco Prairie FS Co-Op and Fertilizer Dealer Supply

SCHOOLING: Bachelor of Science degree in soil and crop science, University of Wisconsin-Platteville

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS: Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association member, Wisconsin Agri-Business Association (WABA) and Stoughton youth football

AWARDS/HONORS: President of WABA, 2017 WABA Distinguished Organization and 1993 collegiate soil judging national champion

FAMILY: Wife, Julie, and sons, Jacob and Nicolas

HOBBIES: Motorcycle and ATV riding, trap shooting, hunting and watching kids play sports

When AG Systems merged with Heartland AG in March of 2019, Heartland AG Systems became the largest Case IH application equipment dealership in North America, says Guy Mathias, location manager, DeForest, Wisconsin.

In 1967, Dick Lenz started AG Systems, located in Hutchinson, Minnesota. Tyler Equipment was the main line sold along with other fertilizer equipment that the company manufactured.

"In 1991, Tyler came out with the Patriot sprayer, which was a great boost to our success," Mathias says. "Case IH purchased Tyler Equipment in 1997 to complete their 'Circle of Equipment'."

DeForest was the first branch location, launched in 1988, and with its success, two more branches were opened in Manvel, North Dakota (1990) and Mitchell, South Dakota (1994). The last location opened its doors, in Garrison, North Dakota, in 2015.

"We had 125 employees companywide when we merged with Heartland AG on March 1, 2019," Mathias explains. "Heartland AG is a CNH application equipment dealership that has four locations

serving Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado."

The Heartland AG Systems corporate office and manufacturing plant are part of a new facility in Hutchinson, Minnesota, and Mathias says customers won't see anything different when they stop in or call.

"With the merger, it gives us access to some additional parts and equipment suppliers and four more warehouses to get parts from," he relates.

How did you first become involved with AG Systems and how has your role evolved? I was hired as the location manager, in 2002, and I had five employees. Since then, we have expanded our parts and service

Above: Guy Mathias, location manager for Heartland AG Systems in DeForest, Wisconsin, says the sales, parts and service office building pictured holds the largest inventory of Case IH sprayer and floater parts in the state.



A precision ag specialist for Heartland AG Systems, Ryan Culver installs an Intelligent AG dry fertilizer blockage monitor on a new 72-foot Salford RA-855 Air Boom Spreader.

departments, added a precision ag department, and currently have 11 employees. I manage the parts department as well.

What is your own personal history in the ag industry? I worked on various dairy, beef and swine farms through high school and college. My first job out of college was as a crop scout for Danco Prairie FS (Insight FS) in Arlington, Wisconsin.

I then moved on to Fertilizer Dealer Supply, in Milton, as an inside salesperson. This was my introduction into the fertilizer/spraying parts and equipment industry.

Is there a dealership or distributorship in DeForest,

Wisconsin? We are a branch office sitting on three acres of land with two buildings totaling 20,400 square feet. We also have branch locations in Manvel and Garrison, North Dakota; Mitchell, South Dakota; Ames, Iowa; Marshall, Missouri; Grand Island, Nebraska; and Great Bend, Kansas.

I believe Heartland AG Systems offers applicators, hitches, nurse wagons, tanks, spreaders, tenders, liquid floaters, sprayers and precision ag. Tell me briefly what exactly you supply to potato and vegetable growers in Wisconsin and the Midwest. Heartland AG Systems is a one-stop shop for all things fertilizer/spraying related. With over \$5 million in parts and inventory at

our DeForest store, we have anything and everything, whether it be for liquid or dry fertilizer needs.

Along with the Case IH sprayer and floater line, we also handle the RBR Enterprise floater/row crop line of four-wheel-drive chassis that come with New Leader boxes, Case IH 810 Flex-Air applicators or 1,600-gallon sprayers with 120-foot booms.

How large is your sales territory?

Our DeForest location is responsible for the state of Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. With our DeForest warehouse being one of the major parts hubs, we have shipped products to places as far and wide as the states of Idaho, New York and even Hawaii.

If we don't have it in DeForest, we can get the parts shipped from one

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of our other eight locations.

What does Heartland AG Systems specialize in that perhaps similar distributorships don't? Because we are the largest commercial application distributor for Case IH in the world, Heartland AG Systems has become the go-to for Case IH parts that similar distributors just won't carry.

In the world of just-in-time inventory, downtime is paid lip service by many distributors. "You can have the part by 10 o'clock tomorrow morning," in many cases, just isn't good enough in our opinion.

We are not like other implement dealers that sell tractors, combines and sprayers. All we do is sell and service sprayers and fertilizer equipment.

Why should potato and vegetable growers in Wisconsin and the Midwest turn to Heartland AG Systems? Knowledge, parts and service: we have a lot of experienced people in our sales, parts and service departments, and we carry a large parts inventory to take care of customers' wants and needs.



Pictured courtesy of Mike Dailey at Insight FS, an RBR Vector chassis is shown with a New Leader L4000 G4 spinner spreader. Available from Heartland AG Systems, the Vector chassis can be equipped with float tires or row crop tires to be used pre-plant and for side-dressing fertilizer once the crop is out of the ground, enabling operators to cover more acres per year and increasing return on investment.

Do you also service your products?

We have a comprehensive service department both in-house and in the field. We have four CNH certified service technicians, all with field trucks so we can best serve our customers wherever they are.

As far as precision ag—it's still a relatively new concept. What does Heartland AG Systems offer

in that area? We have three full-time precision ag staff members averaging more than five years of experience each to aid with the ever-growing technology needs. Given the industry average is about two years of experience, we have the people to handle in-person calls as well as provide remote service.

Who are your typical buyers for nurse wagons and tanks? We have a complete line of liquid tanks, from 25 gallons for small-volume situations to 30,000-gallon fiberglass on-farm or fertilizer dealer storage tanks.

The typical buyer is "anyone and everyone!" If you need storage tanks or nurse trailers, we have a size to fit your needs.

Who are some of your Central Wisconsin grower customers, and why do you think they subscribe to your services? Prior to 1997, the Central Sands was basically "small potatoes" for AG Systems. We were fortunate to have Kent Syth come on board at that time, who had worked at Pavelski Enterprises and Wilbur-Ellis/Spiritland Agriculture Services.

This gave us exposure to the "who's



The Heartland AG Systems service department, in DeForest, includes, from left to right, Bill Garbe, Andy Schmidt, Jim Ringelstetter (service manager) and Clint Thompson. They all have fully equipped field trucks to service customers' needs.

who” at the grower level. The list is extensive, stretching from Hafner Seed Farms in Bryant, to Alsum Farms in Arena, and many folks in between. The main reason we exist for our customers is because of our extensive working inventory of parts.

What are your goals for customer service? We as a location try to help our customers with their challenges. As an example, the advent of new products for in-furrow fertilizer and chemicals has been a challenge.

Requests such as, “I have this tractor and this planter and want to come off the saddle tanks and go over here with some product and do this and do that ...,” those have been a huge challenge for us.

I feel we have done well because of our huge inventory and access to everything liquid or dry.

What are your long-term goals in this area, and what do you think



Heartland AG Systems in DeForest, Wisconsin, offers nurse trailers that hold 1,000-2,000 gallons and storage trailers that carry 6,000 to 9,000 gallons. All trailers are plumbed up to the customer’s specifications.

you have to offer current and future customers? If we keep doing what we are doing, we will stay on the forefront of innovation. With our own equipment manufacturing plant, we

are nimble to the changes that may come along.

Are there inroads you’d like to make

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Courtesy of Mike Dailey, branch manager of Insight FS in Antigo, Wisconsin, the photo shows a Case IH 4440 self-propelled sprayer with 120-foot booms and float tires, available from Heartland AG Systems, spraying burn-down wheat stubble.

in the potato and vegetable growing area, and if so, what are those? We have our own manufacturing facility. We make dry fertilizer tenders and spreaders, as well as liquid wagons. As an example, we have just come out with a 1,300-gallon cone-bottom nurse wagon, ideal for some of the products that need agitation.

We feel we have much more to offer along those lines. Is there a need down the road for customization of nurse wagons for specific product? That is the type of request we can be more responsive to and that maybe growers didn't know we had the capability of doing.

You are a member of the Associate Division of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association—why did you decide to become a member? We have been a member of the WPVGA since before my time here. AG Systems and now Heartland AG Systems has always been a supporter of our customers.

For another example, our company is the largest exhibitor at the Wisconsin Agri-Business Association Winter Conference. It keeps us in the communication loop and focused on how companies do business from their point-of-view. It just makes sense.



Heartland AG Systems holds "ride and drive" events twice a year, one near DeForest and the other in the northwest part of the state, where customers can test drive a wide variety of the latest equipment. At the last event, the company also conducted fertilizer pan testing of the New Leader G5 spinner box that is capable of 16-section spread control. The demo shows how much fertilizer can be saved by reducing the overlap of full-width spreading.



The 2019 RBR Chassis with a Salford RA-885 Air Boom Spreader is shown in the precision and assembly department at Heartland AG Systems, where workers will install Raven steering, an Intelligent Ag Recon blockage monitor, A&I camera system and an Agri-Cover SRT2 electric roll tarp.



Heartland AG Systems carries a large selection of used floaters with New Leader spinner boxes or Case IH Flex Air boxes on them. The dealership also boasts a rotating selection of good used sprayers, with 1,000- or 1,200-gallon tanks and boom widths from 90-120 feet.

How has your company merger changed the way you do business, if at all? By covering a 10-state area with nine warehouse locations, we will have even more access to the equipment and parts our customers need.

What does the future hold for Heartland AG Systems? We feel we have a bright future. With our company size and breadth of scope, we indeed will be “growing bigger by serving better!”

What are your own hopes or goals for the company? I would love to keep growing the company like we have over the last 17 years, all while keeping our services to the standards that our current customers receive. **BC^T**



Guy Mathias (right), location manager for Heartland AG Systems, helps Jared Suchon (left) from Bushman's Riverside Ranch in Crivitz, Wisconsin, who traveled to the dealership in DeForest to pick up a Snyder poly tank and some plumbing for an upcoming project.


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