



## Attendance Was Up for Grower Education Conference & Industry Show

WPVGA & UW Division of Extension put together exceptional event and researcher presentations

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common Tater*

The question repeatedly asked was, “Is attendance up this year?” followed shortly by the casual observation, “It seems like there are a lot more people on the show floor. It’s crowded.”

Such was a continual topic of conversation during the 2023 Grower Education Conference & Industry Show, February 7-9, at the Holiday Inn & Convention Center in Stevens Point.

One of the most respected potato

conferences in the nation, the Industry Show, now in its 73rd year, is a showcase for Wisconsin’s established potato and vegetable production area.

Unique as a dual effort between the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) and University of Wisconsin (UW) Division of Extension, the combined Grower Education Conference & Industry Show is a showcase for researcher presentations and an established

tradeshow under one roof.

Attendees, many of whom are potato and vegetable growers or other industry professionals, enjoy the freedom to roam the show floor, catch up with associates, conduct business and forge relationships, but also to take in a full slate of reports on hot-topic issues affecting farmers.

Through the efforts of the WPVGA Association Division Board and staff members, such as Executive Assistant Julie Braun and Financial Officer Karen Rasmussen, attendees picked up their badges and show packets, hit the floor running and enjoyed the educational presentations.

A range of ag businesses once again populated booths on the sold-out show floor to meet face-to-face with growers and researchers, as well as show off their latest products, technologies, services, and corporate portfolios.

The Industry Show showcased technologically advanced equipment, remote sensing, controls, and more to help potato and vegetable growers become more efficient farmers who use less water, fewer inputs,

**Above:** The big machinery was strategically set up outside the Holiday Inn & Convention Center, in Stevens Point, for the 2023 Grower Education Conference & Industry Show.

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Exhibitors included implement manufacturers and dealers; irrigation companies; banks and credit unions; insurance agencies; the technology sector; fertilizer, chemical and biochemical companies; ag associations; parts dealers; building contractors; seed suppliers; and crop consultants.

One bonus for show attendees this year were free tours to the new Food + Farm Exploration Center, in Plover. As part of its mission to have a conversation with the public about where their food comes from, and for farmers to be able to tell their stories, the Farming for the Future Foundation is in the final stages of building the center.

Buses ran Tuesday and Wednesday pre- and post-show to the impressive



Nick and Dianne Somers (left) of Plover River Farms, Stevens Point, visited WPVGA Financial Officer Karen Rasmussen (second from right) and Executive Assistant Julie Braun (right) to pick up their badges and packets before hitting the show floor and enjoying the educational presentations.

Food + Farm Exploration Center complex, which is scheduled to be completed in late summer 2023. For more information, see "Now News" in this issue.

More than 300 people pre-registered and hundreds more attended the Grower Education Conference to take full advantage informative sessions

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## Attendance Was Up for Grower Education Conference & Industry Show . . .

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on issues directly affecting their ag businesses.

Dr. Russell L. Groves, with the help of the WPVGA Grower Education Planning Committee, put together a comprehensive, timely, and information-packed lineup of research presentations.

Topics covered issues such as potato breeding and variety development; nitrogen management in vegetable cropping systems; pest, weed and disease management; agrichemical quality; water and carbon dynamics in the soils of the Central Sands; and seed treatment options.

Water quality; nitrate response, uptake, and leaching; diploid potato breeding; post-harvest potato

storability factors; microbiomes and soil organic matter; Colorado potato beetle emergence and adaptation; the rise of metabolic resistance; and water use of crops versus forests were all covered.

Deana Knuteson, University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Horticulture, gave a presentation titled “Healthy Grown, Sustainability, Resilient Ag—Are They Linked?” And Tracy Hames, executive director of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, headed a panel presentation by a producer-led watershed group.

A great place for growers and agribusiness professionals to gain insight into what they need in today’s tough business climate, the conference featured a well-informed

**Left:** From left to right, James Drought of GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc., J.D. Schroeder from Schroeder Bros. Farms, and Steve Diercks of Coloma Farms took in presentations during the Grower Education Conference.

**Right:** James Spychalla (left) of Kohm and Spychalla, LLC visited Marty Kolpack at the ThorPack booth during the Industry Show.

group of speakers.

To access a complete index of the 2023 Grower Ed Conference proceedings, watch presentations and see poster sessions, as well as those of previous years, visit <http://wpvga.conferencespot.org/>.

### **ANNUAL RECEPTION**

On Tuesday evening, the Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement



**Chad Glaze (right) of Vine Vest North, Inc. welcomed visitors Mike Helbach (left) of Helbach Farms and Ed Burns (center) from James Burns & Sons Farms to his booth during the Industry Show.**



**Brothers in arms Doug Nelson (left) of The Little Potato Company and Dennis Schultz, Alsum Farms & Produce, were enjoying their time together at the Industry Show.**

Association and WPVGA Associate Division held their annual reception on the show floor, including delicious appetizers and refreshments.

In its seventh year, the WPVGA Associate Division's "Bringing Value to Agriculture" session, Wednesday, February 8, consisted of five 10-minute presentations given by select exhibitors.

Exhibitors apply for the opportunity to discuss new technologies, tools, services and approaches their companies offer in agricultural

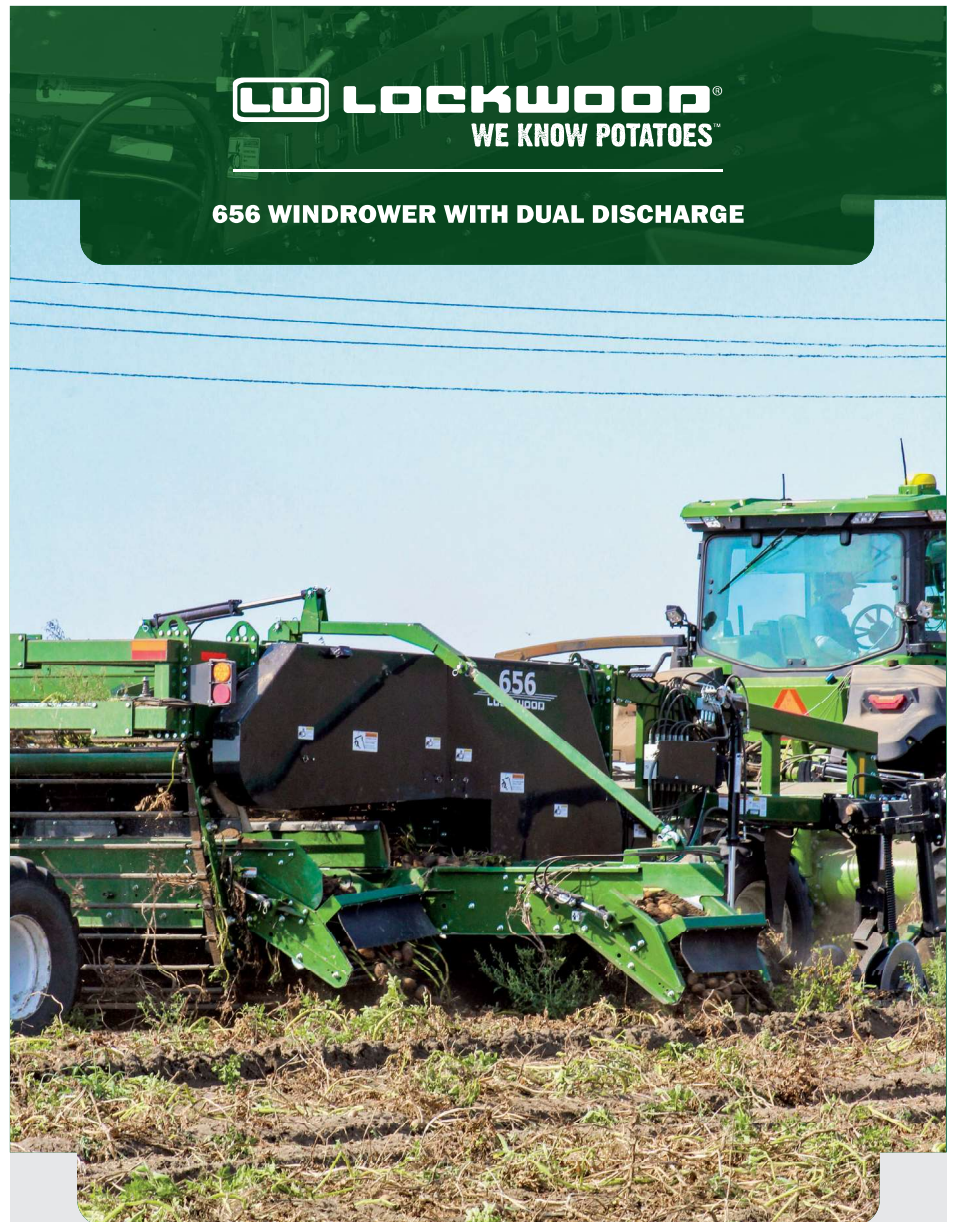
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Chris Kucharik, professor and chair, University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison Department of Agronomy, discussed "Development of a Mesonet of Environmental Monitoring Stations to Support Wisconsin Agriculture" during Tuesday's Grower Education Conference.



As part of the water quality breakout sessions during the Grower Education Conference, Guolong Liang, outreach specialist, UW-Madison Ag Water Quality Program, gave his presentation "Estimating Nitrogen Leaching: A Step to Improve Water Quality and Nitrogen Use Efficiency."



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management of potato and vegetable production systems.

The WPVGA Associate Division Banquet, Wednesday evening, is the premier social event in the Wisconsin potato industry, including a social hour, dinner, Industry and WPVGA Hall of Fame awards, and

entertainment.

In addition to the annual Industry Awards, drawings for cash prizes totaled \$1,500, including more than 10 individual cash prizes and a \$500 grand prize winner whose name was drawn after the awards banquet and during the evening's entertainment.

Malorie Paine, marketing and communications manager for the Farming for the Future Foundation, gave a special presentation on the near construction completion of the Food + Farm Exploration Center and invited guests who hadn't already visited before or after the Industry

**Left:** Enjoying lunch on Tuesday of the Grower Education Conference & Industry Show, are, from left to right, Chris Clark and Chuck Bolte of AgSource Laboratories, and Marty and Sandra Kolpack of ThorPack.

**Right:** Grower Education Conference attendees had the chance to hear Carla Romano, groundwater specialist, Environmental Quality Unit for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, delve into the issue of "Pesticides in Central Sands Surface Water."

Show each day to tour the new educational agriculture facility.

Then the audience sat rapt in attention, being thoroughly



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From left to right, Sarah DeVeer and Brooke Babler of the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program enjoyed the company of John Bobek, Trembling Prairie Farms, during Wednesday's Industry Show lunch.



entertained during the Industry Show Banquet as Greg Peterson, spokesman for Peterson Farm Brothers, showed hilarious videos and explained how he and his brothers have used social media to spread the word about farmers being stewards of the land.

The videos, most of which have gone viral, are of Greg and his family, as well as farmers from across the nation, singing, dancing, planting, harvesting, and going about their

daily chores to a soundtrack of catchy tunes and popular songs. The brothers change the words and titles of the songs to fit their message, such as "I'm Farming & I Grow It."

It was truly an evening for the record books.

**Our sincere thanks** to all sponsors who made the 2023 UW Extension & WPGA Grower Education Conference & Industry Show

**Left:** Jarod (left) and Pauly Cieslewicz (right) of Sand County Equipment hosted Lockwood Manufacturing's Joe Dahlen (center) at their Industry Show booth.

**Right:** As part of the WPGA Associate Division's "Bringing Value to Agriculture" session, Jason Haegele, North American agronomy lead for ICL Specialty Fertilizers, presented the company's strategies for improving nutrient use efficiency and sustainability in potato production.

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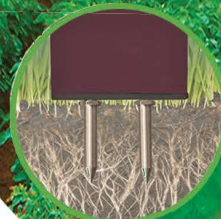
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During the WPVGA Associate Division Banquet, Wednesday evening, Malorie Paine, marketing and communications manager for the Farming for the Future Foundation, gave a special presentation on the near construction completion of the Food + Farm Exploration Center, in Plover. Paine invited guests who hadn't already visited before or after the Industry Show each day to tour the new, impressive educational agriculture facility.

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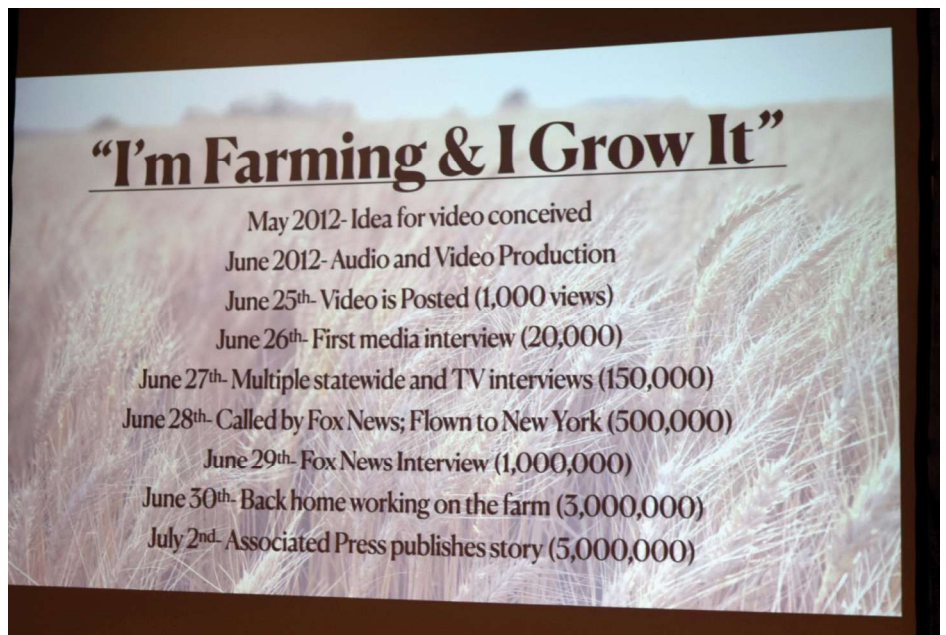
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During the Awards Banquet, Greg Peterson, spokesman for Peterson Farm Brothers, showed hilarious videos and explained how he and his brothers have used social media to spread the word about farmers being stewards of the land. The videos, most of which have gone viral, are of Greg and his family, as well as farmers from across the nation, singing, dancing, planting, harvesting, and going about their daily chores to a soundtrack of catchy tunes and popular songs. The brothers change the words and titles of the songs to fit their message, such as "I'm Farming & I Grow It."

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# WPVGA Honors Members with Industry Awards

Those dedicated to service recognized during a fun-filled 2023 banquet

The WPVGA Associate Division Awards Banquet has earned its reputation over the years as the premier social event in the Wisconsin potato industry, including a social hour, dinner, presentation of the awards, and entertainment.

The perfect way to cap off the Grower Education Conference & Industry Show, the Awards Banquet recognizes those who go above and beyond in furthering the causes of the Wisconsin potato and vegetable growing industry.

Taking place Wednesday evening, February 8, a social hour with beverages and hors d'oeuvres sponsored by McCain Foods and Volm Companies was followed by a nice meal, the Industry Awards and

Hall of Fame induction.

A deserving group of awards recipients were recognized.

The WPVGA Associate Division Business Person of the Year Award was presented to **Julie Cartwright**, sales agronomist for Jay-Mar, Inc., of Plover. For more than seven years, Julie has become a trusted resource for growers in the Central Sands and throughout Wisconsin's agricultural production areas.

Julie completed her last year on the WPVGA Associate Division Board in 2023, having served as president in her final term.

During her time on the Board, she immersed herself in fundraisers and related events such as the Putt-Tato



Julie Cartwright

Open golf outing, which is the largest Associate Division fundraiser, the Hancock Agricultural Research Station Field Day, and annual Sporting Clays Shoot.

She says, "I am proud of the work we do on the Board, from educating the community through the Spudmobile to sharing information with growers at the Grower Education Conference & Industry Show, offering scholarships to those pursuing ag careers, and a lot of other little things in between."

"In general, I think that there are few things of greater importance than to increase awareness and education of our potato and vegetable industry," she concludes.

**Douglas Posthuma** of Alsum Farms & Produce, Friesland, Wisconsin, was named the WPVGA Volunteer of the Year. The procurement and grower relations manager at Alsum Farms & Produce, Doug is a key driver of the business, working to determine

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customer pricing and returning a favorable price to farmers.

He attended the 2021 Potato Industry Leadership Institute (PILI) and served as a PILI grower leader in 2022. He says, "The opportunity to meet and network with other potato leaders around the country while in Washington, D.C., and participate in helping the industry was something I couldn't pass up."

Doug has participated in the National Potato Council's Washington, D.C. Fly-In where he met with legislators on Capitol Hill to inform congressional leaders of the issues impacting the potato industry.

Doug was named as a Class of 2020 Produce Business "Forty under 40" recipient and is a graduate of the WPVGA Member Development Program, in 2019.

This year's WPVGA Young Grower of the Year Award went to **Nicola Carey**



**Douglas Posthuma**

of Wysocki Produce Farm, Bancroft. Nicola knew at a young age that she wanted to work in the potato industry.

Growing up, she spent years cutting seed, preparing potato storages, collecting yield samples, and managing the storage crop



**Nicola Carey**

with her dad.

During college, she worked in the summer on small-plot research trials, which introduced her to using statistics within agriculture and encouraged her to specialize in agricultural economics.

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Nicola says: "I enjoy the challenge and variability that potato farming brings. Agricultural economics provides me the balance between being out in the fields and using data to support our operation teams."

The daughter of Kirk and Jacqueline Wille, Nicola returned to work in the family business seven years ago.

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Dr. James Busse

She is a graduate of the 2022 WPVGA Member Development Program, which she viewed as an excellent way to meet people in the industry and gain an understanding of the different WPVGA Boards.

Nicola notes, "It also gave me perspective on how the industry has changed from what I knew in college."

A 2023 PILI member, Nicola says she was excited to spend 10 days in Buffalo, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., February 27-March 3, to see growing practices outside of the Midwest and gain a better understanding of the national market.

The WPVGA Researcher of the Year Award was presented to **Dr. James Busse**. Jim's nomination came with supporting letters of recommendation from university professors as well as industry stakeholders from Wisconsin and Idaho.

Jim is a research technician in Dr. Paul Bethke's program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Vegetable Crops Research Unit on the UW-Madison campus.

Jim has been involved with countless potato research projects in his 20-



Jordan Lamb

plus years of work and service.

He is a motivated and accomplished researcher, mentor, and team player. His enthusiasm, creativity, and skill set have gained respect with scientists, students, and potato industry stakeholders.

He pioneered work on potato calcium nutrition and developed a workflow for generating diploid germplasm from tetraploid potato varieties.

He has been an essential participant in research on vine kill timing, effects of invertase enzyme activity on chip and fry processing quality, sugar metabolism in cold-stored potatoes, senescence sweetening, effects of 2,4-D on appearance of red-skinned potatoes, and varietal susceptibility to stem-end chip defect.

Jim, who has authored and co-authored 18 peer-reviewed scientific publications, also contributed countless other talks and posters at professional potato meetings.

He is currently the secretary for the Potato Association of America's physiology section.

While Jim's resume is outstanding, he remains compassionate and concerned about those with whom he works. He cares as much about his colleagues as the research itself, and

that leadership shines through his character.

**Jordan Lamb** received the Agri-Communicator Award for excellence in communication and outstanding service to the potato and vegetable industry.

A principal and contract lobbyist with The Welch Group public affairs firm, in Madison, Jordan has been working on behalf of agriculture for 22 years, representing a diverse set of clients before the Wisconsin legislature and state agencies.

A Madison native, Jordan graduated from the UW-Madison Law School. She spent over 20 years in private law practice serving government relations clients and developing a strong legal background in environmental and administrative law.

She is highly skilled at legislative planning and analysis, and her legal background is an asset to clients as they navigate complex state regulations.

2022 WPVGA Board President **Alex Okray** of Okray Family Farms, Plover, presented the President's Award to his wife, **Anna Okray**, for her faithful support, guidance, and love.

A special Industry Appreciation Award went to WPVGA Executive Assistant **Julie Braun**, who is celebrating 25 years of service in 2023. Julie also serves as administrative coordinator for Wisconsin Mint Board, Inc. and the



**Anna and Alex Okray**

Wisconsin Muck Farmers Association. She received an Industry Appreciation Award from the WPVGA Associate Division in 2012, the WPVGA President's Award in 2013, and an Industry Appreciation Award from the WPVGA in 2018.

WPVGA Executive Director Tamas Houlihan presented Julie with the Industry Appreciation Award in recognition of 25 years of service and outstanding contributions to the Wisconsin potato and vegetable industry.

He said, "I am very pleased to present Julie with this award. She is a true professional on the staff of the WPVGA. She comes to meetings on time and is always well-prepared. She is extremely organized and is an incredibly reliable person."



**Julie Braun**

"She has a very positive attitude and performs all of her duties promptly and with a pleasant demeanor," Houlihan continued. "The industry is fortunate to have such a hardworking, dedicated, loyal employee."

Following dinner and the awards ceremony, Greg Peterson, spokesman for Peterson Farm Brothers, showed hilarious videos and explained how he and his brothers have used social media to spread the word about farmers being stewards of the land.

Before and after the entertainment, cash prizes were awarded attendees lucky enough to have their names drawn at the banquet.

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## 2023 INDUSTRY AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Associate Division Business Person of the Year: **Julie Cartwright**

WPVGA Volunteer of the Year: **Douglas Posthuma**

WPVGA Young Grower of the Year: **Nicola Carey**

WPVGA Researcher of the Year: **Dr. James Busse**

WPVGA Board President's Award: **Anna Okray**

WPVGA Industry Appreciation Awards: **Julie Braun**

Agri-Communicator Award: **Jordan Lamb**

Recognition of out-going WPVGA Associate Division Board Members: **Julie Cartwright**

WPVGA Hall of Fame Induction: **Randy Van Haren**

## Randy Van Haren Inducted into the WPVGA Hall of Fame

Pest Management Specialist Randy Van Haren, who established Pest Pros, Inc. of Plainfield, in 1984, was inducted into the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) Hall of Fame at the industry's annual Awards Banquet.

The WPVGA Hall of Fame honors lifetime achievement in the development of the state's potato industry. It is the intention of the WPVGA to continue to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to the potato industry in Wisconsin by making annual Hall of Fame inductions.

Van Haren was born in Spokane, Washington, to Don and Ellie Van Haren. The family moved to Madison in 1955, where he and his three brothers and two sisters were raised.

Randy attended UW-Madison where he received a bachelor's degree in natural science in 1979, and a master's of entomology in 1984.

He worked as a research specialist in the UW-Madison Department of Horticulture from 1980-1984, including work on the pilot Vegetable Integrated Pest Management (IPM) initiative and Mint IPM project.

Dr. Walt Stevenson hired Randy as a crop scouting intern working out of the Hancock Agricultural Research Station, in 1980. Dr. Jeff Wyman hired him as an IPM research specialist in 1981 and brought him into the master's program in entomology, in 1983.

### PEST PROS

Randy established Pest Pros, Inc. and has worked with many potato and vegetable growers over the last 39 years. Pest Pros is a crop consulting and plant disease diagnostic lab including a potato early dying assay to predict wilt potential.

In 2012, Randy sold Pest Pros to Wisconsin River Co-op, which merged in April 2013 with Farmers' Co-op Supply & Shipping Association of



Randy Van Haren was inducted into the WPVGA Hall of Fame, February 8, for his lifelong commitment to the Wisconsin potato industry.

West Salem and is now known as Allied Cooperative.

In addition to his 39 years of work as a pest management specialist, Randy was the owner/operator of Willow Creek Aquaculture, a producer of feed-trained yellow perch fingerlings for 10 years in the late 1990s to the early 2000s.

Active locally and nationally, Randy served as the president and secretary of the Wisconsin Association of



Randy Van Haren's family came out in full force to help him celebrate his induction into the WPVGA Hall of Fame. In the first photo, along with Randy (holding his award) are, from left to right, Randy's son, Ben, holding his grandson, Theodore, along with Randy's mom, Ellie. Posing in the second photo are Ellie, and Randy and his wife, Cindy.

Professional Agricultural Consultants. He was the newsletter editor for the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants.

He also served on the WPVGA Associate Division Board of Directors, including a term as secretary. He is a past president and current secretary of the Plainfield Lions Club and has been a member since 1986.

He is also a lifetime member and alumni of the Future Farmers of America, in Plainfield.

#### INDUSTRY APPRECIATION

Randy received a WPVGA Industry Appreciation Award, in 1994, in response to his outstanding service during a late blight epidemic. He also received the Melvin Jones Fellowship, in 2021, a public service award from the Lions Club International recognizing a tremendous contribution to humanity.

Randy has been married to his wife,

Cindy, for 38 years. They have a son, Ben (wife Emma) and grandson, Theodore, who live in Westfield, and a daughter, Abby, who lives in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

He lists his hobbies as guitar, alpine and cross-country skiing, road bike cycling, hiking the National Ice Age Trail, and linoleum block print art.

He has served on the WPVGA Research Committee for over 25 years and continues to work with countless growers on pest management for their potato and vegetable crops.

Known for his perpetual smile and positive attitude, Randy has truly shown a lifelong commitment to excellence for the betterment of the Wisconsin potato and vegetable industry.

Congratulations, Randy, on your induction into the WPVGA Hall of Fame. **BCT**

## Complete List of WPVGA Hall of Fame Members and Years Inducted

<b>1990</b>	<b>2004</b>
Joseph L. Bushman	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2005)</i>
Ben H. Diercks	Jerome Bushman
Myron Mommsen	Harold Sargent
Edward J. Okray	<b>2005</b>
John Okray	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2006)</i>
W. James Prosser	Ed Wade
Lelah Starks	Dennis Zeloski
James D. Swan	<b>2006</b>
Barron G. West	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2007)</i>
Felix Zeloski	Don Kichefski
<b>1991</b>	<b>2007</b>
Henry M. Darling	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2008)</i>
Robert H. Diercks	Walt Stevenson
Melvin E. Luther	<b>2008</b>
Albert M. Pavelski	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2009)</i>
Henry L. Woodward	Victor Anthony
<b>1992</b>	Jeffrey Wyman
Lawrence Krogwold	<b>2009</b>
Michael Patrykus	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2010)</i>
John A. Schoenemann	John Landa
Clarence Worzella	Robert Stodola
Louis E. Wysocki	<b>2010</b>
<b>1993</b>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2011)</i>
Champ Bean Tanner	John H. Schroeder
Ernest Bushman	August Winkler
Melvin Hugo Rominsky	<b>2011</b>
Lawrence (Larry) Lاپcinski	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2012)</i>
Wayne Brittenham	Fred and Kathryn Meyer
<b>1994</b>	Howard "Skip" Tenpas
James Burns, Sr.	<b>2012</b>
Myron D. Groskopp	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2013)</i>
James Wencel	Steve Diercks
(J.W.) Mattek	Mike Finnessy
Hal Roberts	<b>2013</b>
<b>1995</b>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2014)</i>
A.F. (Bill) Hoeft	Myron Soik
Bennett Katz	<b>2014</b>
Eugene Katz	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2015)</i>
Donn "Hokey" West	Robert Helbach
<b>1996</b>	<b>2015</b>
Charles M. Creuziger	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2016)</i>
Alois (Al) Okray	Charles Cofer
Joseph Jacob Okray	Robert Guentchner
Stanley J. Peloquin	<b>2016</b>
<b>1997</b>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2017)</i>
Anton (Tony) Gallenberg	Donald Hamerski
Howard F. Chilewski	Richard Pavelski
<b>1998</b>	<b>2017</b>
Dave Curwen	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2018)</i>
Francis Gilson	Nick Somers
Emil Perzinski	<b>2018</b>
<b>1999</b>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2019)</i>
John J. Bushman	Dr. Keith Kelling
James G. Milward	<b>2019</b>
<b>2000</b>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2020)</i>
Dean Kincaid	Larry Alsum
Henry V. Sowinski	Dick Okray
<b>2001</b>	<b>2020</b>
<i>(Presented in Feb. 2002)</i>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2021)</i>
James J. Mattek	Marv Worzella
Francis X. Wysocki	Norm Worzella
<b>2002</b>	<b>2021</b>
<i>(Presented in Feb. 2003)</i>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2022)</i>
Robert Hougas	Paul Miller
Gerri Okray	<b>2022</b>
<b>2003</b>	<i>(Presented in Feb. 2023)</i>
<i>(Presented in Jan. 2004)</i>	Randy Van Haren
Larry Binning	
Peter Wallendal	



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