



NAME: Joe Ebben

TITLE: New Mack, used trucks and Cross Country Trailer sales

COMPANY: Kriete Truck Center

LOCATION: Stevens Point and Tomahawk, WI

HOMETOWN: Hancock, WI

YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION: 10, with 22 years at the dealership

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: Oshkosh Truck Corp. and Heartland Farms

SCHOOLING: Tri-County Schools and one-year certificate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Agriculture Short Course Program

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS: Member of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association and Central Wisconsin Cheese and Butter Makers Association

FAMILY: Two sons, Michael (19) and Matthew (17)

HOBBIES: Downhill skiing, volleyball, golf, do-it-yourself projects, camping, hunting, fishing, and always up for a drink with a friend.

8 BC'T January

INTERVIEW

JOE EBBEN, sales representative, Kriete Truck Center

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

Family owned and operated since its inception in 1951, Kriete Truck Centers has been earning customer trust through honesty and proven expertise in product, service, and support for more than 70 years.

Currently operating 10 locations across Wisconsin, Kriete offers the full lines of Mack, Volvo, and Hino heavy-duty and medium-duty trucks, Autocar terminal tractors, and seven equipment/trailer lines.

With 500-plus employees spread throughout the 10 Wisconsin dealerships and Milwaukee corporate office, Kriete offers an all-encompassing suite of truck services, from financing and full-service lease programs to rental, sales, service, and parts.

Trailer, body, and loader options include equipment and implements from Barko, Cross Country

Manufacturing, Great Lakes, Kesla, Palfinger, and Serco.

“Kriete Truck Centers has a foundation built on family and trust with people in and out of its dealerships,” says Joe Ebben, who works in new Mack, used truck, and Cross Country Trailer sales for the company. “That message is passed on to our employees and customers by showing, not telling.”

Above: Joe Ebben specializes in sales of new Macks, used trucks, and Cross Country Trailers for the Kriete Truck Center in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, where he’s built a 22-year career at the dealership.



Above & Left: Kriete Truck Centers is one of the top five Mack truck dealers in the nation.

“It impresses me that, when the owner of our company, David Kriete, comes to visit, you can truly see he has ties to every single person, knowing their names and backgrounds,” Ebben says. “He will reflect on a past conversation about something going on in their lives.”

How and when did you start working for Kriete Truck Center, Joe? I started at the Stevens Point store a little over 22 years ago, in October 2001.

I was working in the Glider shop at Oshkosh Truck while dating a girl from Stevens Point. I made the transition to Stevens Point to avoid the two-and-a-half hours a day of driving to and from work.

Like many area farming operations, Kriete Truck Centers is a third-generation family business with roots dating back to 1951. Does that appeal to you, and if so, why?

Yes, it does. Since the dealership transitioned into the Kriete organization, in 2021, I feel the family atmosphere within the group.

Do you have a background in agriculture or ag business? My ag background is a mix of visiting my grandpa’s farm, in Stanley, helping during haying seasons, working on a hog farm in Hancock during middle

school and high school, and working for Heartland Farms, in Hancock, after high school.

Is your father, Bob, still a financial advisor with Edward Jones, and did you ever work with or for him? My father is retiring at the end of the year (with this interview occurring in December 2023) after servicing customers with Edward Jones for the past 25 years.

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Since we have been working in sales in different industries, we've had booths across the hall from each other at the WPVGA Industry Show each February.

During that show, I've enjoyed listening to and seeing my father's interactions with connections he has made over his career and how the relationships have evolved. His clients

are truly friends and always ask for his advice.

I believe Kriete Truck Centers is one of the largest Mack (and Volvo) truck dealers in the United States. Do you have many potato and vegetable grower customers or ag companies that you work with? Kriete is definitely one of the largest Mack and Volvo truck dealers in the

Above: In its Cross Country Manufacturing (CCM) trailer line, Kriete Truck Centers offers anything from end dump, belly dump or belt trailers to 55-ton Lowboys, tilt-deck tag trailers, and 45-ton, hydraulic-tilt, low-deck trailers, all with some of the strongest frames and lowest ramps and load angles in the industry.

United States in annual sales and number of service locations.

I have serviced several of our local vegetable growers, and as a dealer group, we have a strong customer base throughout the state serving many different areas of agriculture.

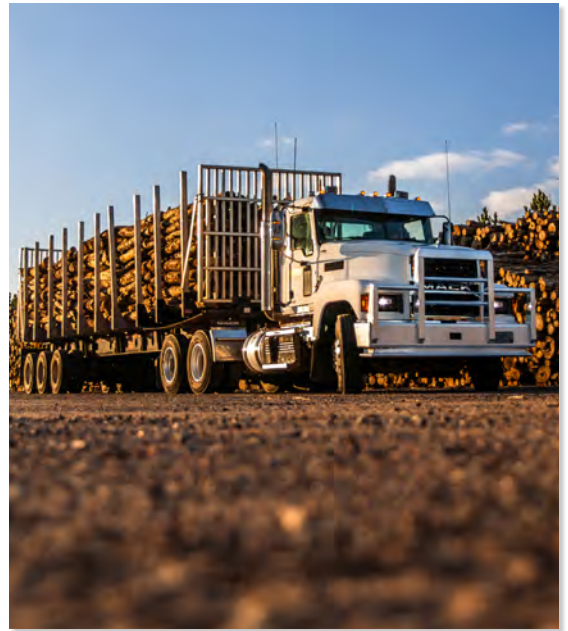
Including equipment—cranes, lifts, loaders, hydraulics, and trailers—what specifically do you offer growers and ag industry professionals that perhaps other trucking companies don't? Kriete Truck Centers offers a wide variety of products like you mentioned. We service and sell everything from new and used trucks to a wide variety of trailers such as tag trailers, low boys and end dumps, as well as hydraulic loaders from Serco and Palfinger, and Autocar spot tractors.

One additional benefit we have is our Kriete Leasing & Rental division. We offer many different rental and lease units, such as dump trucks, dry vans and storage trailers, sleeper trucks, day cabs (some with wet kits) and



The Kriete Sales Summit, held in Madison the first week of December 2023, included sales staff; service, parts, sales, and accounting managers; the marketing and communications departments; and corporate representatives—about 150 people in all, shown here in front of the capitol building. During the four-day summit, the team analyzed the year in business, shared ideas on creating a better environment for staff and clients and set goals for the following year and beyond. Break-out sessions delved into products and recent updates.

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medium-duty box trucks.

If you have a short-term need for a rental, chances are we have it or can look into providing it. This works great, especially for short-term needs

during planting or harvest seasons.

Can the Stevens Point location also help with parts and/or service? Yes, we have a staff of seven people in our Stevens Point Parts Department

that provides parts support for our customers covering both 1st and 2nd shifts and Saturday mornings.

We have \$850,000 of parts inventory in Stevens Point, along with our parts inventory at nine other locations and our new Central Parts Warehouse housing an impressive \$1.9 million in parts inventory.

We have two route delivery drivers who deliver ordered parts daily to our customers. We also offer 24-hour service for truck and trailer repairs in Stevens Point, remaining open from 7 a.m. Monday until noon on Saturday.

Our Stevens Point store and all our Mack dealer locations are Certified Up Time Dealers. This program is targeted to have an unscheduled truck repair diagnosed and length of downtime determined within four hours of reaching the dealership.

Above: In addition to Mack, Volvo, and Hino heavy-duty and medium-duty trucks, Kriete Truck Centers offers trailer, body, and loader equipment and implements from Barko, Cross Country Manufacturing, Great Lakes, Kesla, Palfinger, and Serco.

Left: Kriete offers full lines of Mack, Volvo, and Hino heavy-duty and medium-duty trucks.



Are there advantages to Kriete Truck Center having 10 locations throughout Wisconsin? Many of our customers have routes that go throughout the state. Having a 10-rooftop footprint helps us service our customers if they happen to have a problem with a truck or piece of equipment when they are away from their home dealership by being serviced at another location.

This helps them avoid unwanted downtime. Our rooftops work as one team with one goal, customer satisfaction.

What are your specific duties throughout the day, and how can you help our potato and vegetable or ag business members? My day-to-day duties vary depending on customer needs. I work my schedule around my clients.

I might be working on a truck specification for a customer and get a call from another customer that has a pressing need, whether it's a temporary truck or help getting a part or service schedule. I look at my position as an account manager, doing whatever I can to help get done what is needed.

Do you use your experience and contacts in the agriculture industry?

I do have clients in agriculture. Many of these relationships were developed long ago, whether from past employment or even from them being an old classmate, or parent or sibling of a classmate. Some of those relationships have introduced me to new people in the industry.

Also, having my dad, Bob, and one of my brothers, Jim, with direct ties to local agriculture has increased my contact and presence in our community.

Are there certain brands of trucks and equipment that are most suited to the needs of the ag industry?

I do feel that our Mack Truck product

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"It impresses me that, when the owner of our company, David Kriete, comes to visit, you can truly see he has ties to every single person, knowing their names and backgrounds."

- Joe Ebben

*Kriete Truck Center sales,
Stevens Point*



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provides some of the best reliability compared to competitors, especially when referring to the new emissions reduction demand and the systems it takes to accomplish that goal.

Some of the big factors of a decision should be based on our support after the sale. My support and the supporting staff from our parts and service departments are a huge part of how we shine above the rest.

Do the growers or associated businesses take advantage of leasing and rentals?

As we are now part of Kriete Truck Centers, as of 2021, word of our capacity for rental offerings is still hitting the streets, and I am seeing this segment growing. We have rented a few day cab units to a couple cranberry growers in the past couple of seasons.

Are there still such things as handshake deals, and loyalty and trust in the truck and ag industries?

Agriculture is an industry that I feel strongly about as far as doing handshake business. To me, it seems that the industries that mandate hard work and getting your hands dirty do have more trust and power in a handshake.

However, in today's fast-paced world and all the information that happens in day-to-day business, I feel the paperwork should be drawn up and signed. This places accountability on the client and salesperson,



clearing up all expectations of what is being provided.

Can growers and ag businesses take their trucks and equipment to be serviced at one of your other locations, or do service technicians travel to Stevens Point? Kriete Truck Center of Stevens Point has a full-service offering by our 16 trained and certified technicians, 24 hours a day from 7 a.m. Monday through Saturday at noon.

We can handle anything from an oil change service to a DOT [Department of Transportation] inspection, alignment, engine diagnostics or wiring repairs. We do offer roadside repair in the event of a failure on the road and work with towing service providers when that need arises.

What's the newest and most exciting truck or equipment that Kriete is offering today that might appeal to WPVGA members? Our Mack product has always been one of

Above: Joe Ebben says he believes the Mack Truck product provides some of the best reliability compared to competitors.

our solid platform offerings. Mack has proven to be a strong, reliable product with a duty cycle that is second to none.

One product category that is coming on strong is our Cross Country Manufacturing (CCM) trailer line. Through CCM, we can offer anything from an end dump trailer to a belt trailer, 55-ton Lowboy, tilt-deck tag trailer or 45-ton, hydraulic-tilt, low-deck trailer.

These trailers offer some of the strongest frames with the lowest ramp and load angles in the industry.

Can Kriete Truck Center help with financing and insurance? Yes, we have staff dedicated to aid customers in all needs of a purchase, including financing. We have flexible plans to work with several industries and competitive rates.

What do you hope for your and Kriete's future in Stevens Point?

One of Kriete's goals is to provide the best experiences to our clients. We are a team that wants to provide a great atmosphere for everyone, whether you are coming in our door for employment, to pick up a part, to purchase our product offerings or get a truck serviced. **BCT**

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