



**NAME:** Kiley Stucker

**TITLE:** Owner/farm manager

**COMPANY:** K&A Farms, LLC

**LOCATION:** Bancroft, WI

**HOMETOWN:** Almond

**YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION:** Ten years

**PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:** Head of agronomy and irrigation at Paramount Farms for 12 years

**SCHOOLING:** Almond-Bancroft Area School and Mid-State Technical College

**ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS:** Grower member of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA)

**AWARDS/HONORS:** Champion Direct Delivery-McCain Foods Grower Award

**FAMILY:** Wife, Annette, and children, Amy (30), Briana (26), Lily (18), and Jr (16)

**HOBBIES:** Farming, saying, "I would farm down south in the winter if my wife would go along," as well as spending time with family, and deer, goose and duck hunting if time allows.

**Above:** Kiley (left) and Annette Stucker stand in front of their Lenco 4-row harvester at K&A Farms, a first-generation family potato and vegetable operation in Bancroft, Wisconsin.

# INTERVIEW

## KILEY STUCKER,

owner/farm manager, K&A Farms, LLC

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

*Nestled along County Road D in Bancroft, Wisconsin,* K&A Farms, LLC is the rare first-generation family potato and vegetable farm headed by husband-and-wife business and life partners, Kiley and Annette (K&A) Stucker.

While Kiley handles management of the farm, Annette holds down the office, including accounting and finance, human resources, yield monitoring, and bookkeeping and database duties.

And though neither Kiley nor Annette grew up on farms, they proudly showed me around their operation, starting with an impressive 70-by-170-foot shop built on the property three years ago.

Next came a potato storage facility, and machinery such as a 2018 4-row Lenco harvester, a Lockwood 656

six-row windrower, a John Deere 8420 tillage tractor, liquid tanks, an entire lineup of E-Z Tarp truck liners/beds, and the first tractor they ever bought, a John Deere 8220 used for planting and tillage.

"There are times when we walk around and think, 'This is all ours,'" Annette says in wonder. "We sure have our plate full."

Kiley was kind enough to answer interview questions for me before the visit and expound on his notes while I was there.



**Can you please give me a few-sentence history of K&A Farms in your own words?** We embarked on our own with the help of good friends Jerry and Cheryl Hetzel. Jerry always told me that if I could find land, he would help me get started.

After many years, I finally found some. I am very appreciative of so many people who took a chance on a first-generation farmer. Without them, I would not have been able to grow the operation to what it is.

I would like to say a huge “thank you” to Danny and Tomi Jane Dittburner, Tom Guth, John Bovee, Craig Chamberlin, and Oak Grove Farms. Without them taking a chance through renting to a first-time farmer, I wouldn’t be where I am today.

I also want to thank Rick Beggs for selling me his farm and land at a reasonable price. We would also like to send out a “thank you” to our banker at Nicolet. Without Craig Rogan, we would not be able to continue operating. Obviously, without help in this industry, it is almost impossible to get into it.

**Despite not growing up on a farm, have you been farming in one respect or another your whole life, and how did you progress?** I have worked on a farm since I was in middle school. I started out picking rocks, and then, as I got older, learned how to run equipment.

I got a taste of managing and learning the agronomy side when I was working for Jerry Knutson at K&K Farms. From there, I bounced around to a couple different operations until I took a position at Paramount Farms. There, I was head of irrigation and everything on the agronomy side.

I ended up working full-time and doing my own farming on the side with the help of my dad, Steve, Tom Guth, and my wife, Annette. If it wasn’t for their help, I wouldn’t have been able to make everything work having a full-time job.

Once Paramount was sold, I took a full-time job at Taterland Farms,

**Above:** Kiley Stucker watches as seed potatoes are loaded into a Harriston planter at K&A Farms, in Bancroft.

and at that time, started acquiring more land. Gary Woyak was very helpful, allowing the use of his equipment and letting me take time to do my thing in addition farm duties for him.

When we first started, my wife did all the planting of beans and corn along with any other tractor work that needed to be done. I took care of all the irrigation in the evening when I was home from work.

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After a few years, we had enough acres to go on our own and eventually partnered with Oak Grove Farms to grow potatoes for McCain Foods. We were partners for three years when they decided to get out of potatoes, and we were able to buy the equipment and keep growing for McCain.

This coming year is our fourth on our

own in potatoes. We also do all the custom work for Wisconsin Spray Millet during the planting season.

**Are you mainly growing processing potatoes for McCain Foods?** Half of our potato acreage is reserved for the process market and the other half for the fresh market.

We have storage capacity for 45,000 cwt. (hundredweight) of potatoes

**Above:** Kiley Stucker's dad, Steve, pulls a disc ripper with a 9560R John Deere tractor to loosen up the soil.

and harvest the remaining fresh market crop off the field where it's trucked over to Midwestern Potatoes for storing, packing, and shipping.

**How many acres of potatoes are you growing and what varieties?**

We have 1,000 acres of potatoes on a three-year rotation, including Russet Burbank, Caribou Russet, Goldrush, Silverton, Russet Norkotah, Laona, and Dakota Russet varieties.

**What are your other rotational crops?** We grow sweet corn, peas, beans, food-grade soybeans, field corn, and rent ground out for cabbage.

**Who are your customers for vegetables raised on the farm?**

We grow vegetables for Seneca, Del Monte, Lakeside Foods, Nortera, Razorback, McCain Foods, and Midwestern Potatoes.

**How were the growing and harvest seasons this year?** The growing

season this year was full of all kinds of challenges, first and foremost the excessive amount of rain, followed by insect pressure and a loss of nutrients that made it a busy season.

Harvest went relatively well considering the warmer

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Kiley Stucker holds Laona potatoes, a new McCain Foods variety, in his storage facility at K&A Farms, which has a 45,000-cwt. capacity.



temperatures and early morning starts. Of course, there are unexpected breakdowns that throw loops into everything.

**Any plans for next year that might be different, or a progression for the farm?** We don't have anything that will be different other than acres between crops. Progression will always be trying to grow the farm and keep moving forward.

**Are you already building up supplies, inputs and seed for next year?** Yes, we are already locking up seed for

certain crops for next year.

**What are the next steps for transitioning from one season to another?** We are in the process of finishing up fall harvest. We will let the employees have a couple of weeks off during the holiday season, and as soon as everyone is back, we'll fill the shop with equipment to work on during the winter months.

**How many full-time and seasonal workers, and family members does K&A Farms employ?** We currently have nine full-time employees.

During planting and harvest, we employ up to 12 more seasonal workers. We currently have myself, my wife and our son, along with my dad, Steve, my brother, Kory, and my brother-in-law, Michael.

**Have you been expanding in acreage, technology, buildings, and equipment over the years?** We got our start in 2014 with 300 acres and have steadily grown over the years, with total control of 3,629 acres now, in 2024.

We bought a farm with 200 acres and



Kiley and Annette Stucker had an impressive new 70-by-170-foot shop built on the property three years ago.





Crop protection product is being applied to potatoes at K&A Farms of Bancroft.

built a 70 x 170-foot shop, which was a big improvement from working out of three different shops, and half of our equipment wouldn't fit in them.

We have invested in technology that will further benefit all our farming operation. When we first started out, we bought two John Deere 8220 tractors and now have seven total that vary in size, along with a complete potato line from seed cutting to harvest and storage equipment.

In addition, we have multiple trucks and other equipment for day-to-day operations during the growing season.

**Where is most of your acreage, and do you enjoy being in the Central Sands potato growing community?**

Most of our acreage is in the Pine Grove township, and we do have some acres in Waushara, Portage, Adams, and Waupaca counties. So, we are spread out.

The Central Sands community is where I have always been and grown up, so being on my own wasn't much different.

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*“A lot of my learning has been from my positions on previous farms, leaning on people in the industry who have more knowledge than myself, and listening to other farmers’ experiences.”*

**– Kiley Stucker**

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**Do you have other growers in the area who you work or share resources with?** We do work with other growers. They are not from our area, but rather in Rosholt and Bear Creek, Wisconsin.

**You won the McCain Class A Champion Award for 2021 (and probably other McCain Awards). How have you been able to grow a quality crop for McCain?** Most of

our acreage is in potatoes, so we pay attention to the littlest of details and take time to ensure a good crop at harvest. We work closely with McCain's field reps and agronomy department.

**How is it that you've been able to learn and progress in this business?** A lot of my learning has been from my positions on previous farms, leaning on people in the industry

**Above:** It's all hands on deck during potato harvest at K&A Farms in Bancroft.

who have more knowledge than myself, and listening to other farmers' experiences.

I started out as a grunt in school and worked my way up through other farms to now owning and operating

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**Above:** Equipment at K&A Farms includes potato trucks, E-Z Tarp truck liners/beds, John Deere tractors for spraying, tillage, planting and harvest, as well as planters, harvesters, windrowers and more.

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my farm, which has always been the dream.

**Speaking of progression, what do you hope for the future of the farm?**

I would like to continue growing the farm because, in my opinion, if you aren't growing and evolving, you're being left behind.

**Is there a next generation to take the reins?**

I'm hoping to have my son, Jr, take over in the future once he is old enough and has the experience, just like how I had to learn.

He has been working on the farm and learning since he was 6 years old, and I had him driving equipment when he could barely reach the pedals. He's a junior in high school, a very good equipment operator, and he gets credits in school for working on the farm. My youngest daughter, Lily, is a senior.

**What's your favorite part of the job and time of year on the farm?**

My favorite part of the job is doing all the potato planting and harvesting, but specifically running the combine for corn harvest in the fall.

**Is there anything you'd like to add that I might have missed, Kiley?**

My biggest fear with this whole thing is failing. I pray every night that we can keep it going. **BCT**



**Above:** Kiley Stucker accepts the McCain Foods Class A Champion Award for crop year 2021 at the February 2023 McCain Grower Awards Banquet.

**Below:** Easton King, who's been working for K&A Farms for four years, runs a John Deere 9500 combine during soybean harvest in Wild Rose, Wisconsin.



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