



POSITIVE ENERGY WAS PALPABLE AT 75TH ANNUAL INDUSTRY SHOW

WPVGA & UW Division of Extension saw record attendance at Grower Education Conference & Industry Show

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

The Wisconsin potato and vegetable growing industry came out in full force for the 75th Annual Industry Show, February 4-6, 2025, at the Holiday Inn & Convention Center, in Stevens Point.

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 features researcher presentations and an established tradeshow under one roof.

Those in attendance would not be surprised to hear WPVGA Program Assistant Julie Braun say she had more requests for registrations and related materials before the show started than she has ever had in the past.

One of the most respected potato conferences in the nation, the Industry Show is a showcase for the state's established potato and



Above: The Holiday Inn & Convention Center in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, was the place to be, February 4-6, for the 75th Annual Industry Show.

Left: Stevens Point Mayor Mike Wiza welcomed guests, thanked them for holding the show in the city he represents, and encouraged visitors to explore the area's parks, trails, restaurants, breweries, distilleries, and other businesses.



vegetable production area, and a chance for agribusinesses to present their products and services.

Growers and industry professionals from across the country traverse the show floor, meeting with associates, networking, and forging new relationships, but also taking in a full slate of reports on current issues affecting farmers everywhere.

Stevens Point Mayor Mike Wiza was there to welcome guests, thank them for holding the show in the city he represents, and encourage visitors to explore the area's parks, trails, restaurants, breweries, distilleries, and other businesses.

Now in its second year, the Student Leadership Development Workshop is a fantastic chance for selected

Left: From left to right, Dale Warner and Nate Bolton of Warner & Warner, Inc. welcomed a visit from John Hopfensperger and Mike Carter, Bushmans' Inc., to their Industry Show booth.

Right: During the Industry Show, Stephanie Hoff (left) of "Midwest Farm Report" conducted a live interview with Kevin Gallenberg, manager of the Langlade Agricultural Research Station and a field inspector with the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program.

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university, technical college, and high school students to attend the Grower Education Conference & Industry Show free of charge.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

This year, students met with Natasha Paris, UW Extension regional crops educator, and Niles Franc, field inspector for the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program, for an introduction to the industry and continental breakfast before hitting the tradeshow floor to meet with

exhibitors and learn about the vast business and career opportunities available to them.

The students attended the "Bringing Value to Agriculture" session consisting of five 10-minute presentations given by select exhibitors who apply for the opportunity to discuss new technologies, tools, services and approaches their companies offer that benefit the industry.

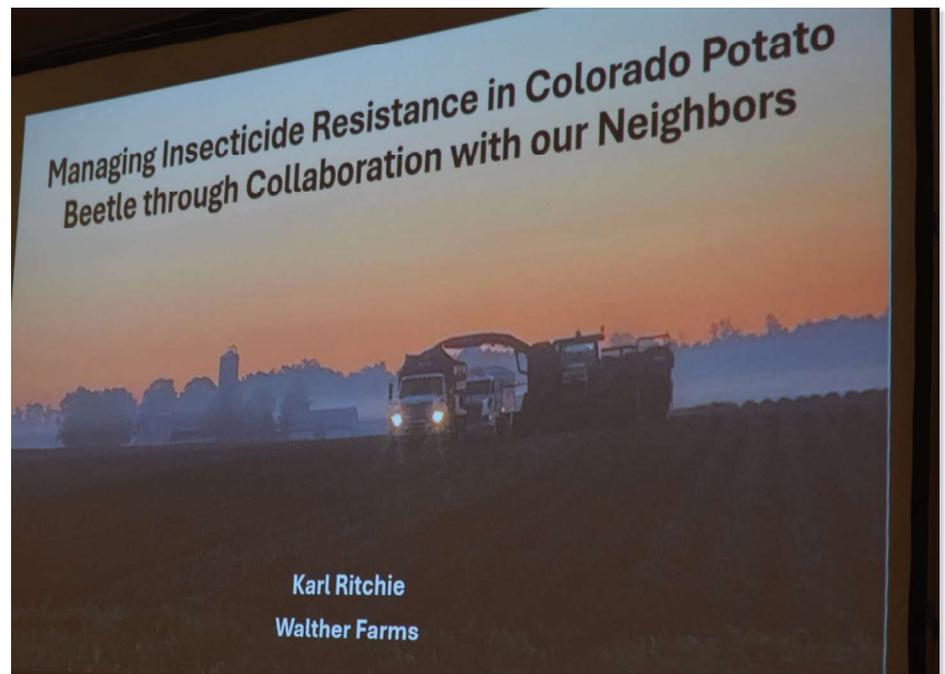
They also enjoyed "Agriculture 101"

Left: Displayed at the American Drone booth during the Industry Show is a large aerial application model. The company offers drones that can hold 13-18.5 gallons per load and fly 22-40 miles per hour.

Right: John Mesko, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Potato Sustainability Alliance, discussed "The Ecosystem Elements of Potato Sustainability" at the Grower Education Conference & Industry Show. He said, "Every topic on the Grower Education Conference agenda is a sustainability issue. Sustainability not only has to be about common sense, but also work for farmers, recognize past and current achievements, prevent accusations of greenwashing, and be legitimate."



Above and Right: A research agronomist with Walther Farms of Three Rivers, Michigan, Karl Ritchie presented "Managing Insecticide Resistance in Colorado Potato Beetle Through Collaboration with Our Neighbors" during the Grower Education Conference on Wednesday, February 5.





Above Left: Clover Spacek (left), general manager of Eagle River Seed Farm, paid a visit to Justin Dagen of Dagen Heritage Farms at his Industry Show booth.

Above Right: National Potato Council CEO Kam Quarles provided a legislative policy update for lunch attendees, Tuesday, February 4, during the Grower Education Conference & Industry Show.

Right: Ryan Bulgrin (left), sales rep for Gumz Farms, conversed with Marty Kolpack of ThorPack, LLC during the Industry Show.



presentations by UW-Madison based researchers in the areas of “Basics of Potato Diseases,” “Fertility Fundamentals,” and “Basics of Potato Irrigation Management.”

The Student Leadership Development Workshop is a valuable opportunity to expose developing professionals—

the future workforce—to the Wisconsin potato and vegetable industry, and a chance for business leaders to showcase their companies, areas of focus and career opportunities.

Ag businesses and professionals populating booths on the sold-out show floor meet face-to-face with growers, dealers, researchers, brokerages, and other attendees

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to show off the latest in products, machinery, technologies, and services.

The Industry Show, including the parking lot outside of the Holiday Inn & Convention Center, provides a venue to exhibit new tractors, implements, equipment, controls, technologies, and products that help potato and vegetable growers become more efficient farmers who use less water, fewer inputs, and

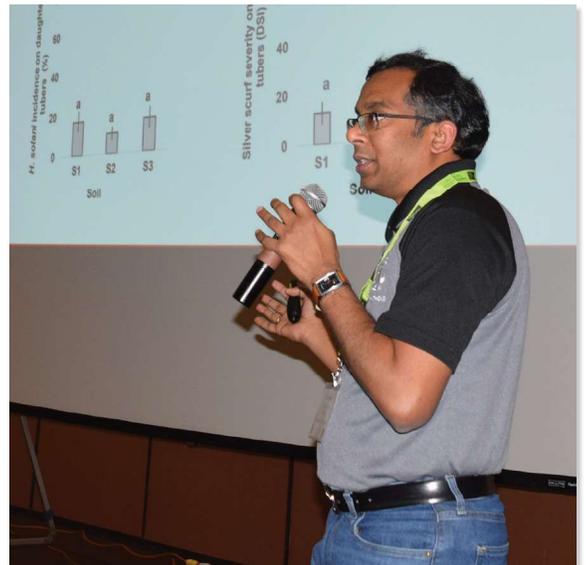
Left: Dr. Peter DiGennaro, assistant professor, UW-Madison Department of Plant Pathology, engaged Grower Education Conference attendees in a discussion on “Advancing Nematology and Bridging Basic Science to Agricultural Innovations.”

Right: From left to right, Steve Worzella, Worzella & Sons, Inc., visited Bruce Andersen and Aaron Burke at the Atticus, LLC booth during the Industry Show.

environmentally friendly practices. Exhibitors include implement manufacturers and dealers; irrigation



Jed Colquhoun, professor, UW-Madison Department of Horticulture, asked “Can Non-Chemical Alternatives Overcome Herbicide Resistance and Regulations?” during a Grower Education Conference Presentation.



companies; banks and credit unions; insurance agencies; the technology sector; fertilizer, chemical and biochemical companies; ag associations; building contractors; seed suppliers; crop consultants and more.

GROWER ED CONFERENCE

A grand total of 375 people pre-registered for one, two, or all three days of the Grower Education Conference, taking full advantage of informative sessions covering issues directly affecting potato and

Top Left: Two veterans of the potato industry, Larry Alsum (left) of Alsum Farms & Produce and Dale Nelson, Nelson's Vegetable Storage Systems, caught up with each other at the Industry Show.

Top Right: Chakradhar Mattupalli of Washington State University explained the "Effect of Location on the Development of Silver Scurf of Potato" for Grower Education Conference attendees.

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During lunch on Tuesday, WPVGA Executive Director Tamas Houlihan, left in both images, honored Charlie Mattek of J.W. Mattek & Sons (first image) and Alex Okray (second image) from Okray Family Farms with plaques in appreciation for their service on the WPVGA Board of Directors. Mattek and Okray each completed their second terms on the Board. At a brief meeting held immediately following the WPVGA Annual Meeting, February 6, in Stevens Point, the Board of Directors elected John Bustamante of Wysocki Family Farms as its president for 2025, Wendy Dykstra from Alsum Farms & Produce as vice president, Josh Knights, Heartland Farms, Inc., as secretary, and John Hopfensperger of Bushmans' Inc. to the treasurer position. The rest of the WPVGA Board of Directors includes Mike Baginski, Baginski Farms, Randy Fleishauer from Plover River Farms, Brian Lee of Okray Family Farms, J.D. Schroeder, Schroeder Bros. Farms, Inc., and Jeff Suchon from Bushman's Riverside Ranch.

vegetable farmers and ag businesses.

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

Topics included managing potato tuber necrotic viruses, understanding and minimizing black dot, integrated pest and weed management, potato breeding and genetics, reducing nitrate losses, enhancing early season detection of late blight in potato crops, and managing insect resistance in Colorado Potato Beetle.

Researchers discussed control of onion maggot and thrips, improving gravity and quality in a chipping potato, evaluation of nitrate leaching and groundwater recharge, precision technologies in laser weeding, herbicide resistance and regulation, crop rotation, potato nutrient management, and early generation seed potato advancement.

Rob Schaefer, an agronomist and founder of Mid-Michigan Agronomy, presented "A New Way to Look at In-Season Testing for Verticillium and Lesion Nematodes; and WPVGA base-funded researcher Jed Colquhoun covered "Implications of the Newly

Enacted Endangered Species Act."

Dr. Zsofia Szendrei, professor in the Department of Entomology at Michigan State University-East Lansing, prepared a presentation on "Alternatives to Neonicotinoid Insecticides—Refinement of IPM Programs in Potato."

In addition to Wisconsin's own scientific community, researchers included those traveling from Cornell University, Michigan State, the University of Idaho and Washington State University.

PROCEEDINGS AVAILABLE

The Proceedings of the Annual WPVGA & UW Madison Division of Extension Grower Education Conference are now online. To access a complete index of the 2025 Grower Ed Conference proceedings, as well as .pdf versions of the presentations, research reports and poster abstracts, visit <https://wpvga.conferencespot.org/event-data>.

The Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association and WPVGA Associate Division held their annual reception on the show floor, Tuesday evening, including delicious appetizers and refreshments.

The WPVGA Associate Division

Banquet, Wednesday evening, is the premier social event in the Wisconsin potato industry, including a social hour with appetizers and refreshments, dinner, Industry and WPVGA Hall of Fame awards, and entertainment.

In addition to the annual Industry Awards and WPVGA Hall of Fame induction, drawings for cash prizes totaled \$1,600, including 10 \$100 cash prizes, a \$100 Slumberland gift card, and a \$500 grand prize winner whose name was drawn after the awards banquet and during the evening's entertainment—Wisconsin's own New Dueling Pianos.

Positive energy from the Grower Education Conference & Industry Show spilled over into the Awards Banquet, while the entertainment and camaraderie that went along with it were a nice way to cap off another record-breaking year.

Thank you to all sponsors who made the 2025 UW Extension & WPVGA Grower Education Conference & Industry Show possible! Please see the ad thanking sponsors on page 33.

WPVGA Honors Industry Stalwarts with Coveted Awards

Ag industry professionals who've gone above and beyond recognized at the 2025 banquet

The WPVGA Associate Division Awards Banquet has earned its reputation over the years as the premier social event in the Wisconsin potato industry.

A fitting 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 5, a deserving group of award recipients was recognized.

The WPVGA Associate Division Business Person of the Year Award was presented to **Matt Selenske**, Allied Coop's Pest Pros Division. Selenske grew up in the potato industry on his family farm in Coloma. There he learned from his father, Robert, and uncles, Ron and Charlie, about how to raise and care for potatoes.

From an early age, Matt's jobs on the farm included checking seed spacing, quality control on the end of the seed cutter (with a knife), poking potatoes on the back of a Lockwood pick planter and playing good potato-bad potato on the grading line. In high school, he spent many of his summers scouting the family potatoes and helping make pesticide decisions.

After a few years, Matt's father hired Pest Pros to consult for him, and, in turn, the company hired Matt as a summer intern. This is where Matt found his calling. He worked for Pest Pros through the summers of his college career while he attended UW-Oshkosh as a plant science major.

After college, he took a job as a

farm agronomist for a multi-state potato farm. After a five-month stint growing potatoes in China, Matt was promoted to farm manager in northern Indiana. Then, he moved to Missouri to work again as an agronomist on a chip farm before finally returning home to Wisconsin.

In the spring of 2010, Randy Van Haren sought Matt out to have him return to Pest Pros. Matt enjoys working with many of the same growers he grew up with and worked alongside as a young adult. As Randy sold Pest Pros to Allied Cooperative and eventually retired, Matt was promoted to division manager, where he remains to this day.



Matt Selenske

Matt and his team at Pest Pros consult with over 30 growers on 40,000 acres of potatoes, carrots, corn, soybeans, cabbage, and most other crops that are grown in the Central Sands. Pest Pros soil samples

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A large graphic featuring a photograph of a potato field with purple flowers in the foreground and mountains in the background under a blue sky with clouds. Below the photo is the logo for Colorado Certified Potato Growers Association, which includes a green leaf icon and the text "Colorado Certified POTATO GROWERS ASSOCIATION". Below the logo is the slogan "Quality as High as our Mountains" in a stylized font. At the bottom of the graphic, there is contact information: "P O Box 267, Monte Vista, CO 81144", the website "ColoradoCertifiedPotatoGrowers.com", the email "Lyla@ColoradoCertifiedPotatoGrowers.com", and the phone number "(719) 274-5996". A QR code is located in the bottom right corner of the graphic.

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50,000-75,000 acres a year for Allied customers and the Pest Pros nematode lab processes early dying samples from over 20 states.

Matt always strives to continue the legacy of service that was started by Randy back in the 1980's. He has always done his best to treat his customers like their farm was his, making the best management decisions with the information he has available.

He understands the stakes of wasted applications, missed opportunities, and yield robbers. He is constantly asking questions of his peers and growers to help get closer to solving issues as they materialize. He is diligent in understanding new products because he knows he is a resource for the people he works with at Allied as well as his customers.

Matt was awarded the Certified Crop Advisor of the Year Award, in 2024, and has served on the WPVGA Associate Division Board of Directors since 2021, currently as president.

Wendy Dykstra of Alsum Farms & Produce was named the WPVGA



Wendy Dykstra

Volunteer of the Year. Dykstra is the chief operating officer at Alsum Farms & Produce, Inc., a five-decade-strong grower and shipper of potatoes, re-packer of onions and a wholesale distributor of a full line of produce headquartered in Friesland.

Wendy has served in her role for 14 years, working in many aspects of the business from strategy and farm operations to accounting and



Charlie and Kelly Mattek

logistics. She's been a catalyst of growth in her family's vertically integrated family-owned farm, packing facility and logistics company.

Today, Alsum Farms raises 3,000 acres of Wisconsin Healthy Grown® certified potatoes, along with pumpkins, in two farming locations of Arena and Adams.

Wendy has furthered her leadership development and service to the potato industry and community. She serves as the treasurer on the WPVGA Board of Directors and is a member of the Promotions Committee. She also serves on the Potatoes USA Board and is an Executive Committee member serving on the Finance & Policy Committee.

Wendy serves on the Potato Leadership, Education, and Advancement Foundation (Potato LEAF) Board. Additionally, she has served on the National Potato Council Finance & Trade Affairs Committee since 2020. She is a 2019 Potato Industry Leadership Institute graduate.

She has been a Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants member

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from 2010-present; a Sunday school teacher from 2018-present; a co-leader for the Welsh Prairie Livewires 4-H Club, served on the Foundation for Christian Education in Central Wisconsin Board from 2020-present; and served on the Randolph Christian School Board from 2018-2020.

Wendy was a Class of 2019 Produce Business Forty under 40 Award recipient and received the WPVGA President's Award in 2015 and the WPVGA Young Grower of the Year Award in 2022.

Wendy grew up next to the family's business and followed in her father Larry's footsteps, graduating from UW-Whitewater with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in accounting and a Master of Professional Accountancy degree.

She and her husband, Neil, have two daughters, Reagan (12) and Riley (9). Outside of work, Wendy enjoys spending time with family and friends and supporting her daughters with their sports and activities.

This year's WPVGA Young Grower of the Year Award went to **Charlie Mattek** from J.W. Mattek & Sons. Charlie is a sixth-generation potato grower at J.W. Mattek & Sons, Inc., a seed potato farm in Deerbrook. Charlie studied agribusiness at Fox Valley Technical College. He also studied welding at Northcentral Technical College.

He has served for six years on the WPVGA Board of Directors, including as president of the WPVGA in 2024. He also served on the Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association Board, including one year as president.

Since the 1800's, farming has been a way of life for the Mattek family. James W. Mattek operated a dairy and potato business. His sons, Eugene and James J. Mattek, concentrated their efforts on potatoes and were early pioneers in the certified seed program.

In 1960, the farm became incorporated and continued to raise quality foundation and certified seed potatoes.

James J. Mattek's sons, John, Jim and Joe, currently own and operate the 1,500-acre potato farm on a three-year crop rotation with oats and clover. The Matteks are always looking for new and

promising varieties.

The future of the Mattek farm looks bright, with the family's sixth generation fully invested in the certified seed potato operation.

Charlie and his wife, Kelly, enjoy hunting, ice fishing and snowmobiling. As the out-going 2024

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WPVGA Board president, Charlie presented the President's Award to his wife, **Kelly Mattek**, in grateful appreciation of her support, guidance and love.

The WPVGA Researcher of the Year Award was presented to **Jed Colquhoun**, a UW-Madison professor and extension specialist and integrated pest management (IPM) program director. His work is focused on integrated weed management strategies in commercial fruit and vegetable production that are practical while minimizing inputs and protecting the surrounding environment.

Jed has served in this role at UW-Madison since 2005, and prior to that, was a faculty member at Oregon State University for five years in a similar position.

He has held the Friday Chair for Vegetable Production Research and the Gottschalk Chair for Cranberry Research. Jed has also served in several administrative roles over his career, most recently as Interim



Jed Colquhoun

Agriculture and Natural Resource Program Leader for UW Extension and Associate Dean for Extension and Outreach for the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Jed's current research program in potato and vegetable production can be described in three broad areas: evaluation and refinement



Jeb Barzen

of new, reduced-risk herbicides and use patterns to overcome herbicide resistant weeds; development of alternative weed management strategies ranging from plant growth regulators to laser weeders that can be integrated into existing herbicide programs; and evaluation of ways to reduce the risk of off-target pesticide movement to the nearby environment and groundwater.

This research is then disseminated to growers via innovative outreach programs, such as the IPM YouTube channel that has had over 2.5 million views.

Additionally, in 2024, Jed and colleagues were awarded and created the Centrals Sands Rural Partnership Institute to find practical ways to protect groundwater from nitrate and pesticide leaching risk.

The group looks forward to a continued partnership with the agricultural community to develop feasible groundwater management options in local, on-farm research that can be readily adopted in potato and rotational crop production.

By the numbers over his career so far, Jed has been awarded 158 grants

An advertisement for Accomplish MAX plant nutrition. It features a green plant growing from soil against a background of a hexagonal molecular structure. The text reads: 'PLANT NUTRITION', 'ACCOMPLISH MAX™', 'Improve stress tolerance AND promote nutrient mineralization and release with Accomplish MAX™', and 'Nutrien Ag Solutions™'. At the bottom, it provides contact information: 'Plainfield, WI | 715.335.4900 | www.nutrienagsolutions.com'.

totaling nearly \$18 million, published over 60 peer-reviewed articles and books, advised or served on the committees for 46 graduate students, served on over 90 public committees and advisory boards, and delivered over 650 outreach presentations.

He describes the greatest honor of his work as the relationship and collaboration with the grower community. He focuses on embedded outreach, where he learns the most by becoming involved in efforts that are meaningful to and driven by growers, ensuring that his research and outreach efforts are grounded in practical reality behind the farmgate.

Recent examples of service in the potato industry include a longstanding advisory role for the Healthy Grown potato program and service alongside potato growers and crop consultants on the Department of Natural Resources Technical Advisory Committee for Groundwater Quality.

Jeb Barzen received the Agri-Communicator Award for excellence in communication and outstanding service to the potato and vegetable industry. Jeb says he's a duck biologist who worked at the International Crane Foundation (ICF) for most of his career and spent much of that time working with agricultural communities, or other types of private landowners, worldwide, to advance stewardship that might better us all.

Jeb explains that his hodgepodge of divergent attributes does have coherency. Whether he is studying waterfowl while working at the IFC, being an American working in post-war Vietnam, or working with potato growers, he has come to realize that growers, landowners and ecologists all want to be good stewards of the land, regardless of ideology.

The real question, he says, is not if we should be good stewards, it is how to be good stewards of a vibrant,

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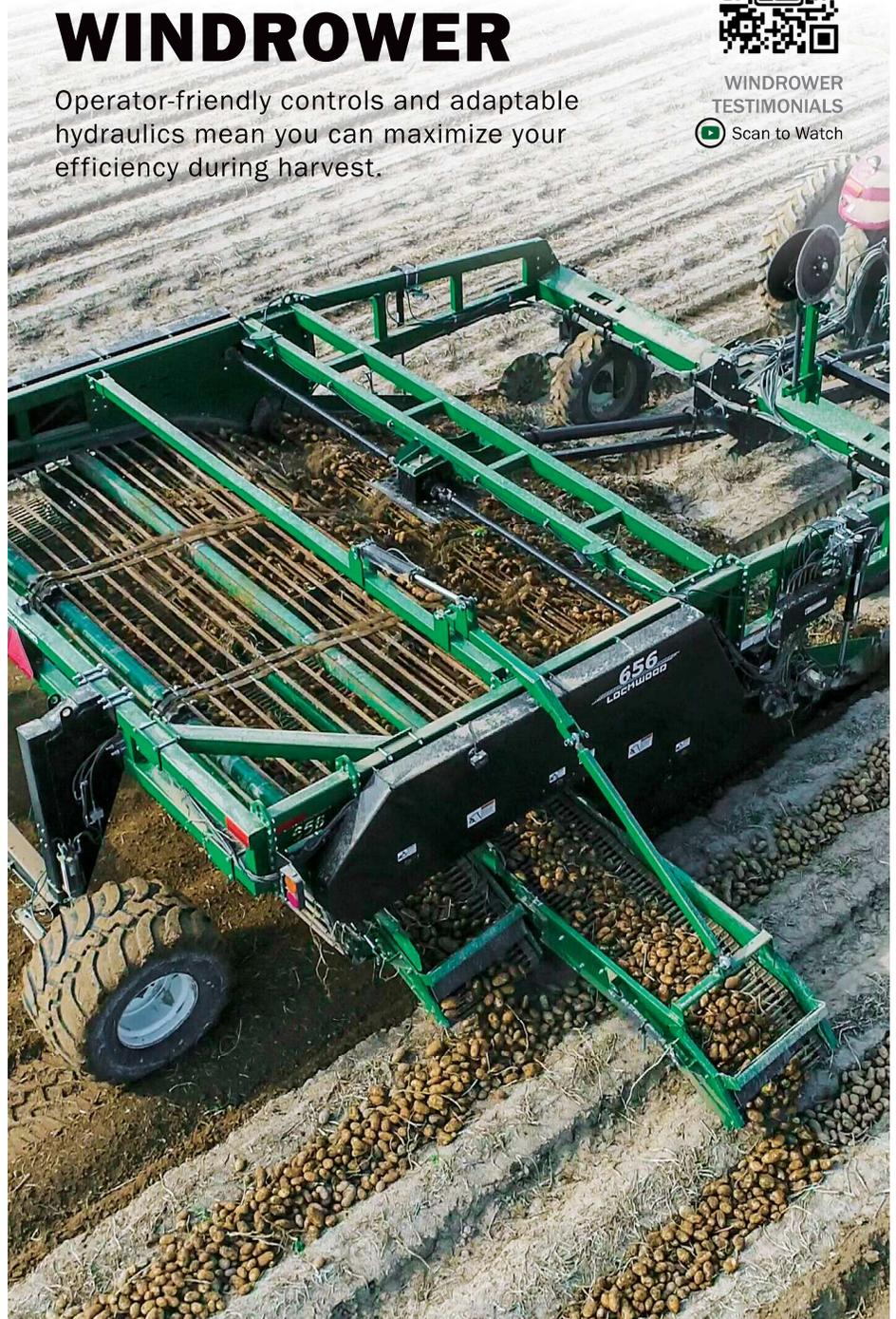
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ecologically sustainable business.

Jeb has worked with the Healthy Grown program nearly since its inception, and this project embodies the process of becoming a better steward for all of us, himself included.

“Meeting the Healthy Grown standard to manage your own farm in its entirety is challenging,” Jeb says, “and it is not a linear process. It evolves over time, requires outside input, and the development of new tools and trust.”

“After all,” he reasons, “Healthy Grown growers allow me to light their prairies, savannas and wetlands on fire—prescribed fire that prevents damaging wildfire, stores carbon in the soil, increases groundwater recharge, cleans water, benefits pollinators and recovers species that otherwise would decline.”

Jeb says it has been an honor to work with Healthy Grown growers and the WPVGA staff over these four decades and he looks forward to seeing what they may accomplish next.

A special WPVGA Appreciation Award went to **Paul Sytsma**. When Paul was young, he had a fascination with agricultural equipment, whether it was new or old. His interest in agronomy and all related fields continues to develop to this day as farm manager of the Hancock

Agricultural Research Station (HARS).

“I had so many mentors over the years, it is hard to count them all,” Sytsma said after learning he’d be receiving the Industry Appreciation Award. “The positive impact they made in my life is hard to measure,” he added, “and makes me think that I can do more to pass it on, which I look forward to doing.”

As farm manager, Paul’s responsibilities include crop and research management at HARS, which is comprised of 412 acres in the Central Sands.

The focus of the research station is on irrigated potato and processing vegetable research, and Paul works closely with many UW-Madison professors and private industry professionals to make sure their research and production objectives are met.

He supervises staff carrying out the day-to-day operations on the farm and makes sure field conditions are as uniform as possible for conducting research.

Paul, who also serves on the Agronomy Committee of the Food + Farm Exploration Center, says, “I am grateful for the influence of my family, especially my mom and dad, as well as Coon Allen, Charles Church, and all the people that I have worked



Paul Sytsma

with at the Hancock Agricultural Research Station over the years and elsewhere.”

“Most importantly,” he adds, “I would like to thank my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has given me so much that I am very grateful for. All honor and glory go to him.”

During dinner and after the awards ceremony, Wisconsin’s own New Dueling Pianos entertained guests. During the entertainment, cash prizes were awarded to attendees lucky enough to have their names drawn at the banquet.

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2025 INDUSTRY AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Associate Division Business Person of the Year:
Matt Selenske

WPVGA Volunteer of the Year: **Wendy Dykstra**

WPVGA Young Grower of the Year:
Charlie Mattek

WPVGA Researcher of the Year: **Jed Colquhoun**

WPVGA Board President’s Award: **Kelly Mattek**

Agri-Communicator Award: **Jeb Barzen**

WPVGA Industry Appreciation Awards:
Paul Sytsma

Recognition of out-going WPVGA Board Members:
Charlie Mattek and Alex Okray

WPVGA Hall of Fame Induction:
Kevin Bula and Dianne Somers

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Dianne Somers and Kevin Bula Enter the WPVGA Hall of Fame

Dianne Somers, co-owner of Plover River Farms Alliance, LLC, and Kevin Bula, longtime inspector with the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program, were inducted into the WPVGA Hall of Fame at the industry's Annual Awards Banquet held February 5, 2025, in Stevens Point.

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.

The dedication and involvement in the potato and vegetable industry by Dianne Somers over her lifetime are immeasurable, in time, energy and accomplishments. She is one of the founding members of the Wisconsin Potato Growers Auxiliary (WPGA), which is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2025!

A past president of the Auxiliary, Dianne has worked tirelessly on behalf of the industry she loves, and her passion shows through on everything she does. She served on the WPGA Board of Directors for many years and continues to be an active member of the Auxiliary.

She also serves on the WPVGA Water Task Force as well as on the Promotions Committee. She and her husband, Nick, serve on the Spud Bowl Committee, and their efforts have helped make the Spud Bowl an outstanding event while raising thousands of dollars for UW-Stevens Point (UWSP) student scholarships.



Kevin Bula and Dianne Somers were inducted into the WPVGA Hall of Fame, February 5, each for a lifelong commitment to the Wisconsin potato industry.

Dianne has served on the UWSP Foundation Board of Directors for many years. She is also an Advisory Committee member for the UWSP College of Fine Arts. In 2016, UWSP presented the Mary Ann Nigbor Volunteer of the Year Award to Dianne for service to the university and the potato industry.

Nick and Dianne now provide an annual scholarship to a UWSP student in the Soils Department of the College of Natural Resources.

Dianne has served for many years on the WPVGA Promotions Committee, and along with Nick, has been a strong supporter of the Spudmobile. The Committee undertook years of discussion and research before Nick's idea of the Spudmobile materialized, but it finally came to fruition and has been a successful promotional tool for the industry over the past decade.

Nick and Dianne were also among the original supporters of the Food + Farm Exploration Center (FFEC), in Plover, serving as co-chairs of the Campaign Committee for the FFEC.

Dianne is a strong supporter of the Healthy Grown program and Plover River Farms has been a Healthy Grown grower since its inception.

Among the awards she has received over the years are the Wisconsin Potato Growers Auxiliary Member of the Year (1988) and the WPVGA Agri-Communicator Award (2015).

Dianne is a continual promoter of the industry. She looks for every opportunity to discuss the benefits of eating potatoes, even with the people sitting next to her on an airplane. Her passion and love are the potato and vegetable industry.

Kevin Bula, who grew up on his

family's small dairy and potato farm in Antigo, applied for a position as an inspector with the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program. Drs. Steve Slack and Bob Slattery "took a chance" on Kevin.

As Kevin states: "I was fortunate to learn the certification and inspection process from Slattery and long-time inspectors Wayne Guyant and Len Sorenson."

"I always viewed myself as being seed grower oriented," he adds, "and always tried to be fair, impartial, and consistent in my decisions, but never forgetting the reason for certification in the first place, to protect the commercial potato industry and never compromise the university, the certification program or myself."

"Potatoes have been good to me," Bula continues. "Working in the seed program for 45 years provided a fair wage, opened doors for travel, and most importantly, it introduced me to some great potato people, people who have become some of my best friends."

"The winter test plots in Homestead, Florida," he says, "were a lot of work but also a lot of great times. The evenings were often spent in friendly banter, each of us promoting our own state as being the best, but of course, Wisconsin was the best. It was a special time, and we became a special seed potato fraternity."

Bula has received several awards and honors over the years, including the WPVGA's Industry Appreciation Award in 2009 and again in 2012, as well as the Wisconsin Seed Potato Industry Leadership Award in 2012 for outstanding service and leadership to the Wisconsin seed potato industry.

Congratulations, Kevin and Dianne, on your induction into the WPVGA Hall of Fame. **BC'T**



Dianne Somers (second from left) celebrated her induction into the WPVGA Hall of Fame with her immediate family, from left to right, Doug Somers, Nick Somers and Heidi Foote.

Complete List of WPVGA Hall of Fame Members and Years Inducted

1990

Joseph L. Bushman
Ben H. Diercks
Myron Mommsen
Edward J. Okray
John Okray
W. James Prosser
Lelah Starks
James D. Swan
Barron G. West
Felix Zeloski

1991

Henry M. Darling
Robert H. Diercks
Melvin E. Luther
Albert M. Pavelski
Henry L. Woodward

1992

Lawrence Krogwold
Michael Patrykus
John A. Schoenemann
Clarence Worzella
Louis E. Wysocki

1993

Champ Bean Tanner
Ernest Bushman
Melvin Hugo Rominsky
Lawrence (Larry) Lapcinski
Wayne Brittenham

1994

James Burns, Sr.
Myron D. Groskopp
James Wencel
(J.W.) Mattek
Hal Roberts

1995

A.F. (Bill) Hoelt
Bennett Katz
Eugene Katz

Donn "Hokey" West

1996

Charles M. Creuziger
Alois (Al) Okray
Joseph Jacob Okray
Stanley J. Peloquin

1997

Anton (Tony) Gallenberg
Howard F. Chilewski

1998

Dave Curwen
Francis Gilson
Emil Perzinski

1999

John J. Bushman
James G. Milward

2000

Dean Kincaid
Henry V. Sowinski

2001

(Presented in Feb. 2002)
James J. Mattek
Francis X. Wysocki

2002

(Presented in Feb. 2003)
Robert Hougas
Gerri Okray

2003

(Presented in Jan. 2004)
Larry Binning
Peter Wallendal

2004

(Presented in Feb. 2005)
Jerome Bushman
Harold Sargent

2005

(Presented in Feb. 2006)
Ed Wade

Dennis Zeloski

2006

(Presented in Feb. 2007)
Don Kichefski

2007

(Presented in Feb. 2008)
Walt Stevenson

2008

(Presented in Feb. 2009)
Victor Anthony
Jeffrey Wyman

2009

(Presented in Feb. 2010)
John Landa
Robert Stodola

2010

(Presented in Feb. 2011)
John H. Schroeder
August Winkler

2011

(Presented in Feb. 2012)
Fred and Kathryn Meyer
Howard "Skip" Tenpas

2012

(Presented in Feb. 2013)
Steve Diercks
Mike Finnessy

2013

(Presented in Feb. 2014)
Myron Soik

2014

(Presented in Feb. 2015)
Robert Helbach

2015

(Presented in Feb. 2016)
Charles Cofer
Robert Guenther

2016

(Presented in Feb. 2017)
Donald Hamerski
Richard Pavelski

2017

(Presented in Feb. 2018)
Nick Somers

2018

(Presented in Feb. 2019)
Dr. Keith Kelling

2019

(Presented in Feb. 2020)
Larry Alsum
Dick Okray

2020

(Presented in Feb. 2021)
Marv Worzella
Norm Worzella

2021

(Presented in Feb. 2022)
Paul Miller

2022

(Presented in Feb. 2023)
Randy Van Haren

2023

(Presented in Feb. 2024)
Ron Krueger

2024

(Presented in Feb. 2025)
Kevin Bula
Dianne Somers