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COVER PHOTO

Photo taken in Ottawa County by Kayla Laubacher.





Page 9



Page 20



Page 22

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT	
Keep Your Powder Dry	4
CROP INSURANCE CORNER	
Changes in Insurance	6
INDUSTRY NEWS	
Let's Get Involved!	7
Employment Law	8
The Power of Wisdom	9
Recent Land Sales	17
Year-End Loan Payment and Tax Pointers	20
THE LIGHTER SIDE	
Service	10
Divine Sisterhood	30
FINANCIAL REPORT	
Second Quarter Financials	11
ASSOCIATION NEWS	
Around Ag Credit	12
Director Candidates Needed	25
Appreciation Days	26
2015 Ag Credit Joe Leiser Memorial Scholarship Winners	29
COMMUNITY NEWS	
2016 Calendar Photo Contest Winners	18
Pee Wee Swine Shows	22



KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY

In the old days if someone ran out of gun powder they would not be ready for an emergency. The powder is comparable to your cash, liquidity and working capital.

During the past few months I talked with more than 400 Ag Credit members at advisory meetings, fairs and other functions. Most of the conversations carried a common theme – the wide variety of crop conditions across Ohio. I heard many colorful descriptions of the Buckeye state’s crop variability:

- The good, the bad and the ugly
- Our worst crop ever
- 200 bushel corn over the tile lines and 50 bushel over the rest of field
- My yields were about the same as in previous droughts

These were just a few of the analogies members shared with me. For many farmers, 2015 is a year they would soon like to forget.

Though disappointment and frustration were expressed, there was also humor, a spirit of togetherness and a can-do attitude. We have survived poor yields in the past, and we will do it again.

In many cases, simply talking about it seemed to make everyone feel better. What makes this year particularly difficult is the low grain prices accompanying the low yields and the realization that the agricultural super cycle for corn, soybeans and wheat has ended.

The super cycle was a result of grain demand due, in part, from the ethanol mandates fueling strong demand for grain commodities, a period of low interest rates and a weak dollar to help increase exports. The ethanol boom has leveled, and although rates continue to be low, our dollar is strong again. This makes our agricultural exports more expensive and less marketable. A correction of agricultural asset values appears to be in process as evidenced by equipment values declining and land values beginning to retreat. (See chart). I was recently reminded of a saying from a retired AgFirst CEO. He said, “Things are never as good as they appear and likewise never as bad as they appear.” I believe this expression is fitting in the current economic environment.

We anticipate cash flow shortages will become more prevalent with yields being 50 to 70 percent of Actual Production History (APH) in some areas, combined with low grain prices. Agriculture is cyclical just like many other industries. We need to be proactive and understand we can survive the inevitable low cycles.

We encourage you to visit your account officer soon to discuss options if you feel a cash flow shortfall is imminent. Past experience has shown the earlier a problem is identified the more options are available. Even if sufficient funds are available to meet your financial obligations we urge you to evaluate your balance sheet, project cash flow for three to five years and determine if your balance sheet is structured in a way to service your financial commitments at today’s lower margins and profits. Conserving your working capital and being aware of your “burn rate” are very important.

We have an expression around Ag Credit—one we say quite often – “Keep your powder dry.” In the old days if someone ran out of gun powder they would not be ready for an emergency. The powder is comparable to your cash, liquidity and working capital.

You may be asking – Can anything good come out of a tough year and a challenging future? We believe there are opportunities in any type of market cycle.

This past summer, during the height of the growing season, Ag Credit hosted two meetings with Congressman Jim Jordan to discuss crop conditions and the importance of crop insurance. Congressman Jordan represents Ag Credit members who live in Crawford, Sandusky and Seneca counties and in parts of Erie, Huron, Lorain and Marion counties. Unfortunately, Mr. Jordan did not support the most recent Farm Bill, so the meetings showing poor crop conditions provided a great opportunity to educate him about the needs of farmers and agriculture.

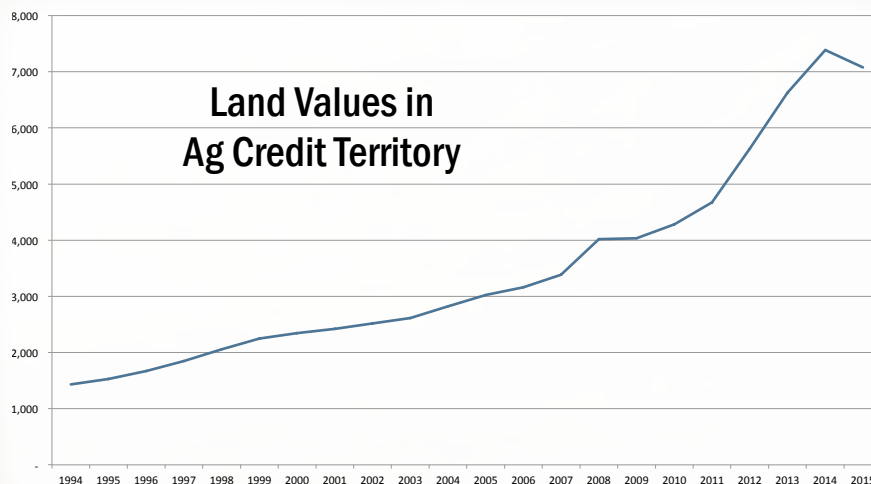
A few weeks later, Congressman Robert Latta visited Ag Credit members on their farms to discuss a variety of agricultural issues. His constituents live in Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Paulding, Putnam, Van Wert and Wood counties and in parts of Lucas and Ottawa counties. During the meetings members stressed the importance of crop insurance as well as the need to make Section 179 permanent, believing this would facilitate more strategic business plans and improve economic growth. They voiced concerns regarding the Waters of the U. S. (WOTUS) rule and Lake Erie water quality issues and talked about how farmers are doing their part to protect water quality. The on-farm meetings provided an excellent opportunity for Ag Credit members to educate Mr. Latta, and members of his staff, about the challenges facing farmers and ag-related stakeholders.

The same month we hosted the congressional visits and meetings, the stock market dropped very quickly after concerns with China's economic growth were announced. Investors who were holding cash and had liquidity saw this correction as an opportunity to purchase financially strong, well-known companies at a discount. Similarly those farms and agribusinesses who have strong balance sheets with ample liquidity will see declining asset values as an opportunity to retool or purchase real estate at lower values.

Ag Credit values the relationships it has built with its members. We have learned relationships are strengthened during the most challenging and stressful periods more than during the good times. When financial stress initially arises, unfortunately resentment, blame,

denial and disagreement on how to resolve the challenge can prevent the development of a plan to resolve the problem. Communication is the key to resolving the situation. It will take time, effort and understanding from everyone involved to move forward with a workable strategy.

As we prepare for times of lower profitability I would like to share a conversation my wife and I recently had with our eight year-old son. The conversation came about at a gas station when I used a credit card to pay for the fuel. When I returned to the car, my son began to ask questions about the credit card and how it worked. My wife realized this was a good time to educate him on how a credit card works. She explained the responsibility you assume with a credit card, the importance of paying your bill at a later date and one of the main reasons people use credit cards is because of convenience. After a thorough explanation she turned to our son in the back seat and said, "So, when you receive your credit card statement in the mail what do you do with it?" The answer from the backseat was, "You pay it off with another credit card!" My wife and I looked at each other and shook our heads in disbelief. We laughed and quickly realized our eight year-old was joking. However, it made me realize how important it is to be smart with all our financial decisions. We need to stick with common sense and make conservative financial decisions to help avoid overly creative or aggressive strategies that only prolong or mask the situation. ■



CHANGES IN CROP INSURANCE

BY THOMAS MILLIGAN



During 2014 many changes occurred that impacted the farming industry. The 2014 Farm Bill was the source of a number of the changes. Two new options for coverage are: Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) and Area Revenue Coverage (ARC). Virtually all of the producers our team has met with have opted to go with ARC, so no further discussion will be chronicled here. Also, for the first time, conservation compliance was tied to crop insurance subsidies. Farmers are encouraged to contact their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) and crop insurance agents to help ensure they are in compliance. Form AD1026 must be on file with the FSA. Most of the non-compliance we found was due to entity names or non-matching tax-ID numbers.

A new coverage, made available by the 2014 Farm Bill, is called Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP). Coverage has been available for many years under the regular Multi-Peril policy (MPCI) for common Ohio crops such as corn, soybeans, and wheat. WFRP will assist farmers who grow other crops not insurable under MPCI. For example, potatoes are insurable in only a few Ohio counties; commodities like carrots, green beans, and cucumbers are not insurable at all under an MPCI policy. WFRP approaches coverage differently than traditional MPCI has. The well-established Revenue Protection and Yield Protection policies insure loss based on a percentage of a farmer's historical production of a crop and uses a price set by the average of the Chicago Board of Trade. For example: February or October for corn and soybeans. Instead, WFRP insures the approved revenue a farmer expects to earn from the commodities produced on his farm. It will provide comprehensive protection against unavoidable natural disasters and price-related causes of loss.

Coverage is a revenue guarantee based on a percent of the lower of:

- the expected revenue for the insurance year, or
- the adjusted 5-year historic average of allowable Schedule F income on a calendar or fiscal year basis.

Coverage levels are available from 50% to 85%, in five percent increments. Three commodities must be raised to qualify for the 80% or 85% levels. Since WFRP uses income instead of commodity prices, it is a way to have a safety net for previously uninsurable crops. The premium is markedly lower if there is an underlying MPCI policy. Including more crops in the program will also lower premiums.

Finally, beginning in 2016, the MPCI rules will require acreage be reported by Common Land Unit (CLU). These methods have reclassified some land never previously identified as high-risk to now be considered high-risk ground. Written agreements may help get an exception for this newly reclassified land. Check with your insurance provider to discuss whether or not you need to apply for a written agreement. Agreements can be filed any time up to March 15, 2016. As is usually the case, sooner is better than later.

For more information about crop insurance or anything discussed in this article, contact The Thomas Milligan Agency, 877-386-2991. ■


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LET'S GET INVOLVED!

BY DAVID WHITE

Just in case you missed the memo – 2016 is an election year. Farmers account for less than two percent of the population so it's vitally important they become more politically active than ever before.

Even though farmers are a small fraction of the population, they contribute significantly to the economy. Food and agriculture is Ohio's top industry contributing \$105 billion to Ohio's economy. This is an important fact to share with candidates running for office at the state and federal levels. You may also need to remind local candidates of the importance of farming and agriculture to their respective county.

As we prepare for another election year, here are a few things you may wish to consider doing to ensure farming and agriculture are well represented in the process:

- Make sure you are registered to vote. Encourage family members, friends and co-workers to register to vote and participate in the process. If you, or someone you know, will be away on Election Day, plan to vote via absentee ballot or early in-person at an absentee voting location.
- Volunteer to be a poll worker for the spring primary and/or fall general or presidential election. Many precincts have a difficult time finding poll workers. You will need to participate in a training session and will earn some spending money for your time. Additionally, maybe you can help conduct outreach activities to register voters, demonstrate how to properly use voting equipment or stress the importance of participating to first time voters. For additional information, contact your county's board of elections office.
- Find out where elected officials at all levels stand on issues. Many elected state and national office holders start out as elected county officials. Creating a relationship at the grass roots level is extremely important and may pay as they move on up the political ladder.
- Attend and participate in a "Meet the Candidates" event.
- Invite a candidate to your farm or place of business to help them learn more about food, farming and agriculture. Many would enjoy riding a tractor with you during planting season or a combine during harvest. It provides a great opportunity to discuss farm and agricultural issues. They might be surprised to discover the capital investment required for farm equipment and machinery. Some may have questions or concerns about modern livestock housing, conventional farming practices and management to protect water quality. Provide time for your employees to meet and visit with them.
- Host a neighborhood "Meet and Greet" with candidates.
- Volunteer to work for a candidate who supports farming and agriculture or who has pledged their support. Candidates need folks going door-to-door, doing neighborhood leaflet drops,



walking in parades and more. Before I came to work for Ag Credit, I used to walk in a couple of parades every year with my congressman who was generally a very good supporter of farming and agriculture. I used to joke I had the best job along the parade route. Instead of tossing candy to kids I carried a box of dog treats and gave them to the pets hanging out with their owners along the streets and never once did I hear a pet complain that it wasn't his favorite!

- Invite candidates to attend your regularly scheduled meeting if you belong to a civic club or community organization.
- Consider making a cash donation. Small donations add up. In 2008, more than one-third of presidential candidate Barack Obama's total campaign money came in from donors who contributed \$200 or less. Recently a state representative candidate shared with me that his average donation was less than \$100.
- Attend a fundraiser for a candidate or candidates who have demonstrated or pledged their support to farming and agriculture. Most fundraisers are not lavish, expensive events. I know of a group of farmers who host a hog roast as a fundraiser for their congressman every year. It only costs \$25 per person to attend. ■

EMPLOYMENT LAW

BY: RYAN CONKLIN, J.D.

IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT LAW COMPLIANCE, IS YOUR AGRIBUSINESS HIRED OR FIRED?

Whether you are an employer or employee, the odds are extremely high that you come across an employment law issue every day or every business day. These issues may range from minor problems, such as proper tax withholdings on your paychecks, to major concerns, such as harassment or discrimination. Regardless of whether your issues are major or minor, employment law compliance is arguably an area of great vulnerability for agribusinesses. Oftentimes, farm employers argue they, “Don’t have enough time for these things” or, “Haven’t had to worry about it in the past,” as reasons why employment law compliance is put on the back burner.

Adopting the position that you are not concerned with employment compliance is very dangerous for both business owners and employees alike. In the next few paragraphs, I am going to walk you through a few reasons why employment law compliance is essential, examine some of the key areas, explain how you can bring your operation into compliance, or, for employees, explain how you can learn more about your rights.

Why is Employment Law

Compliance Important?

“So sue me.” You have probably used or heard this phrase uttered in a joking manner plenty of times. Well, it is all fun and games until someone is actually sued. Litigation is no laughing matter, and neither are the fines, costs, and criminal punishments often accompanying an employment law violation. For example, according to the Ohio Revised Code, allowing a minor under the age of 16 to engage in a hazardous occupation on your farm is a third degree misdemeanor, punishable by a \$500 fine or 60 days in jail per violation. Hence, litigation avoidance is the primary reason why employment law compliance is important.

In addition to avoiding litigation, the long-term sustainability of your business should also encourage employment law compliance. For many farm families, the farming operation is a significant source of income, the absence of which can bring about

substantial hardship. Losing employees, or not being able to hire sufficient dependable employees, may result in a decision to downsize or shut down altogether. Therefore, employment law compliance is instrumental for maintaining a steady workforce and a healthy, profitable operation.

What is the Difference Between Labor Law and Employment Law?

In your time as a business owner or an employee, you may be familiar with a legal field known as labor law. At first glance, you might think that labor law and employment law are the same thing. As it turns out, labor law and employment law are distinct areas of specialty, although there is some occasional overlap. Topics such as labor unions, collective bargaining, strikes, and boycotts fall under the umbrella of labor law. Employment law, on the other hand, examines very distinct subjects.

Ok, take your best guess at how many specific issues fall within the area of employment? How many did you come up with? 20? 30? 50? If you guessed around 30, then you were close to my estimate. That is correct, 30 subject areas. Some of the more common employment law subjects include employment agreements, compensation and benefits, workplace harassment, at-will employment, workers compensation, termination, and many others. Employment-related discrimination is a major component of employment law and labor law, as it can affect recruitment, hiring, promotion, and termination. While this represents a small list of topics, you can see the scope of employment law and how it differs from labor law.

This is All Important, but How Do I Comply?

The simple answer is: It depends. Compliance with applicable laws and regulations varies by the type of operation, its size, and who it employs, among a host of other factors. This makes sense; think about how the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency regulates a 1,000-cow dairy farm versus a 10-cow dairy.



One farm is treated very differently from the other in that scenario. The same thing happens with employment law compliance.

Since compliance requirements vary, the first step towards compliance is to conduct a thorough assessment of your farm and its employment law vulnerabilities. Does your business use an application and interview process for hiring? Do you conduct training on your farm? On payday, are you wringing it on your employees’ tax withholdings? Are you completely and accurately maintaining employee files? These inquiries, along with many others, are questions you should be asking yourself when assessing the employment law weaknesses of your agribusiness.

Once this critique is complete, your next step is to research the law. Luckily, Ohio State Extension recently unveiled a new website that contains a summary of all federal and state employment laws in a tool called the “Ohio Farm Employment Handbook.” This handbook is user-friendly and focuses on summarizing the law in easy-to-understand language and clearly outlining the steps required for compliance. Additionally, the handbook is a resource for employees who are looking to learn more about their employment rights. It will be available online in December 2015 at u.osu.edu/ohiofarmemployment.

If your operation is too large, or you do not feel comfortable deciphering the laws on your own, then your best option is to consult an attorney or human resources professional.

This article is intended to provide general legal information, and should not be construed as legal advice. Individuals should seek the advice of a competent attorney regarding their own individual circumstances. ■



DR. DAVID KOHL

THE POWER OF WISDOM

By DR. DAVID KOHL

Sharing wisdom and institutional knowledge between generations is growing in importance as the transition of producers, lenders and suppliers in the agriculture industry accelerates. Personally, thinking back to graduate school at Cornell University, I remember listening to my professors' stories ranging from the Great Depression to the 1970s as we traveled together on field trips and to farm auctions. Their insight paid dividends later in my career and business endeavors. Officemates who were from Purdue University recalled similar experiences while being the driver for Dr. Earl Butz, former Secretary of Agriculture, as they had engaging conversations about the past, present, and the future. All of those experiences were treasured.

A recent wisdom-filled experience occurred at the Farm Credit University Ag Biz Planner graduation. In this experience, several CEOs of Farm Credit associations shared some of their nuggets of wisdom with this year's group of aspiring young farmers who had just completed an online curriculum to become incrementally better business managers through creating a business plan.

The power of organization and utilizing a good set of farm records were high on the list of advice from the CEOs. This includes production and financial records that separate the business and personal cash flow and balance sheets. Speaking of cash flow, the lenders indicated that this is a method of conveying thoughts and financial outcomes on paper as one thinks through production, marketing, financial budgeting, and debt service requirements. This builds the lender's confidence that the producer understands anticipated periods of fluctuation in revenue, cost, and net cash flows so that they are running their business, rather than the business running them. All CEOs stressed that preparing a cash flow projection is great, but it needs to be executed and monitored.

Planning for the "but what if's," a saying from my graduate school days, was another wisdom perspective from this event. Unexpected financial windfalls, loss of markets, and a rise in interest rates were high

on the wisdom list. Working through these scenarios on paper allows one to be proactive rather than reactive in decision making.

The lenders emphasized the importance of shared sacrifice and moderation in living cost. As one CEO put it, you do not have to live like a pauper, but extravagant lifestyle is not the way to build a business. Developing a family living budget and living within your means are practices that will stand the test of time.

Another piece of wisdom is to stay financially liquid. That includes building four to six months of household living costs in cash in the bank. On the business side, setting aside a goal of one year's debt payments in the bank as a reserve to manage through abrupt economic cycles can be very important for young persons who are heavily financially leveraged. Build liquidity in the good times, holding back some of the profits for reserves to weather the downside of the cycle.

Invest in productive assets. While riding through the countryside back in graduate school with my professor mentors, stories about each farm and their characteristics were interesting and humorous at times. I recall phrases like "bigness on the brain," "don't put all your eggs in one basket," "blue tombstones," and "new paint fever." Each CEO indicated the investment in productive assets such as livestock, land, equipment, and human assets that will generate a positive bottom line will be a key to a sustainable business in the long run.

As we concluded our panel session, a special message went out to the producers and lenders in attendance. Seek balance in life and business, and enjoy the small victories and success along the way. As Forrest Gump said in the movie, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." ■



About the Author

David Kohl received his master of science and Ph.D. degrees in agricultural economics from Cornell University. For 25 years, Kohl was professor of agricultural finance and small business management and entrepreneurship in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia. He was on special leave with the Royal Bank of Canada working on advanced initiatives for two years, and also assisted in the launch of the successful entrepreneurship program at Cornell University. Kohl is professor emeritus in the AAEC Department at Virginia Tech.

Kohl has traveled more than seven million miles throughout his professional career! He has conducted more than 5,000 workshops and seminars for agricultural groups such as bankers, Farm Credit, FSA and regulators, as well as producer and agribusiness groups. He has published four books and more than 1,000 articles on financial and business related topics in journals, extension, and other popular publications. Kohl regularly writes for *Ag Lender* and *Corn and Soybean Digest*.

A Rural Perspective: Service

By JAMES MCCONNELL

JAMES MCCONNELL IS A MEMBER OF AG CREDIT WHO FARMS 2,500 ACRES IN SOUTHERN LORAIN COUNTY WITH HIS TWO BROTHERS.



JAMES MCCONNELL

Choosing whether or not to join the military was not an easy decision for me. In my second year as a student at Ohio State, I struggled to make that choice. Like a lot of my friends, as a freshman I had chosen

to enroll in ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) over the alternative of numerous humanities courses like History of the Roman Empire or Greek Mythology. Learning the rudimentary elements of soldiering and pretending to be one was easier and a lot more interesting to this country boy.

Unlike the first two years of ROTC, which did not require a commitment to serve in the military after graduation, advanced ROTC for my final two years of college would, at a minimum, require three years of active duty. I could have chosen any branch of the military. I considered either the Air Force or the Navy since they were the only way I could possibly fulfill my childhood dream of piloting a jet fighter plane. However, the extensive training necessary would require a seven year active duty commitment. The Army, on the other hand, would teach me to fly helicopters for just a five year active duty obligation. Spending five years rather than seven doing what I considered a temporary career, as an officer and a pilot, seemed like a good compromise.

At a different time in history, I probably wouldn't have thought seriously about any military service after college. In 1966, however, it was obvious this country was gearing up for a full-fledged war in southeast Asia and without pursuing a graduate degree (not interested and couldn't afford), I was very likely to end up a soldier anyway. Add in the financial help the ROTC program provided toward tuition expenses, a free uniform to wear three days a

week with training as a private pilot, and my career course for the next seven years was set.

I've never regretted the choices I made back then. I was proud to serve my country and my time in the Army was, with few exceptions, a very positive experience. As an officer I learned a great deal about personnel management and how to logically handle challenging situations. Some of those challenges came hard and fast and made it easy to appreciate the extensive and repetitive training I had endured.

I also came to realize that choosing a career in the military, even a short one, was different from almost any other choice I would ever have to make. There is no going back or starting over. If I didn't like what I was ordered to do, resignation was not an option. I couldn't go looking for another job just because the people I worked for decided they needed me overseas, in a dangerous environment, where I would be separated from my family for a year or more. I had literally written a blank check to my country and put my future in someone else's hands.

This was most evident to me during the holidays in 1970. I was 24 years old and had never missed a Christmas at home with my family. That year I was nearly halfway around the world in Phu Loi, Vietnam, and even though there were plenty of fellow officers and friends around, it certainly didn't seem much like Christmas. I had a tiny, eight inch tall miniature Christmas tree and a single candle Mom had sent along with some chocolate chip cookies and a few nice, practical gifts.

The tree and candle were on the 3-by-3-foot table in the center of the small room I shared with a fellow officer and friend, Cleve Hamilton. Both the tree and the candle helped brighten the otherwise very plain but functional room. They also served to emphasize the feeling of loneliness and separation that was inescapable. I spent a lot of that evening in the darkened room with the flicker of the light

from Mom's candle reflecting off the little tree, thinking of Christmas at home. I found myself the next day continually subtracting 12 hours from the local time and trying to imagine when our traditional holiday events were happening at home. Christmas day had already begun for me when it was Christmas Eve at my grandparents with my Dad's extended family. It was already evening for me when the morning milking and farm chores would be finished at home. I knew that would be followed by breakfast, opening gifts and Christmas dinner with Mom's family. Long before they gathered for that always fabulous meal, I would be asleep 9,000 miles away, preparing for another day of service to my country.

Certainly not every soldier, sailor and airman considers their military service a temporary interruption toward their life's goals, as I did. Some like the frequent relocation and opportunities to travel. Others find their roles within the military to be continually challenging and rewarding. And without a doubt, there are those who love the adventure, the thrills and the risk of being the point-of-the-spear, so to speak, of the defense of our country. I shared all of those feelings at one time or another, just not as strongly as I felt I'd find my long term challenges back home. I would put my roots down in Pittsfield, Ohio, and hopefully contribute to adding another chapter to my family's history.

I'm proud to have had the opportunity to serve my country as a soldier, even if my original decision was more practical in nature than patriotic. This Christmas, as I watch my grandchildren tear into their presents, I'll be remembering that solitary candle and miniature Christmas tree and a lonely Christmas a long time ago. I'll also be thinking of those soldiers, sailors and airmen who will be separated from their families this holiday season. That's what service to our country often means. My thanks to all who serve. ■

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

	(dollars in thousands)	
	June 30, 2015	December 31, 2014
	(unaudited)	(audited)
Assets		
Cash	\$ 1,884	\$ 4,656
Investment securities:		
Held to maturity (fair value of \$22,050 and \$22,945, respectively)	22,377	22,783
Loans	1,590,288	1,583,788
Allowance for loan losses	(15,384)	(14,014)
Net loans	1,574,904	1,569,774
Accrued interest receivable	23,030	20,609
Investments in other Farm Credit institutions	17,185	17,184
Premises and equipment, net	6,917	5,869
Accounts receivable	5,410	24,763
Other assets	2,169	2,908
Total assets	\$ 1,653,876	\$ 1,668,546
Liabilities		
Notes payable to AgFirst Farm Credit Bank	\$ 1,377,108	\$ 1,390,681
Accrued interest payable	2,587	2,635
Patronage refunds payable	83	20,109
Accounts payable	820	1,141
Advanced conditional payments	1,164	560
Other liabilities	9,680	7,683
Total liabilities	1,391,442	1,422,809
Members' Equity		
Capital stock and participation certificates	19,311	19,173
Retained earnings		
Allocated	157,568	157,715
Unallocated	85,555	68,849
Total members' equity	262,434	245,737
Total liabilities and members' equity	\$ 1,653,876	\$ 1,668,546

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	(dollars in thousands)		For the three months ended June 30,		For the six months ended June 30,	
	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014
	(unaudited)					
Interest Income						
Loans	\$ 18,588	\$ 16,999	\$ 36,638	\$ 33,722		
Investments	291	224	585	446		
Total interest income	18,879	17,223	37,223	34,168		
Interest Expense						
Notes payable to AgFirst Farm Credit Bank	7,906	7,041	15,600	13,976		
Net interest income	10,973	10,182	21,623	20,192		
Provision for loan losses	1,468	—	1,468	—		
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	9,505	10,182	20,155	20,192		
Noninterest Income						
Loan fees	136	102	274	180		
Fees for financially related services	39	17	55	28		
Patronage refunds from other Farm Credit institutions	2,729	2,421	5,350	4,806		
Gains (losses) on sales of premises and equipment, net	—	83	—	84		
Gains (losses) on other transactions	1	—	2	—		
Other noninterest income	4	3	68	61		
Total noninterest income	2,909	2,626	5,749	5,159		
Noninterest Expense						
Salaries and employee benefits	2,930	2,595	5,964	5,390		
Occupancy and equipment	238	233	491	457		
Insurance Fund premiums	306	243	597	489		
Guarantee fees	219	352	428	868		
(Gains) losses on other property owned, net	—	1	—	(275)		
Other operating expenses	700	584	1,510	1,252		
Total noninterest expense	4,393	4,008	8,990	8,181		
Income before income taxes	8,021	8,800	16,914	17,170		
Provision (benefit) for income taxes	—	(205)	—	(155)		
Net income	8,021	9,005	16,914	17,325		
Other comprehensive income	—	—	—	—		
Comprehensive income	\$ 8,021	\$ 9,005	\$ 16,914	\$ 17,325		

The shareholders' investment in the association is materially affected by the financial condition and results of operations of AgFirst Farm Credit Bank. Copies of AgFirst's quarterly and annual financial reports to shareholders are available free of charge at www.agfirst.com, or by writing to AgFirst Farm Credit Bank, Financial Reporting Department, P.O. Box 1499, Columbia, SC 29202-1499.

AROUND AG CREDIT

Calendar

- Nov. 26 & 27** Offices closed for Thanksgiving
- December 8** Nominating Committee meeting
- December 25** Offices closed for Christmas
- January 1** Offices closed for New Year's Day
- January 18** Offices closed for Martin Luther King Day
- February 15** Offices closed for Presidents Day
- March 25** Offices closed for Good Friday
- April 13** Annual Meeting at Ole Zim's Wagon Shed

Roy and Don Loudenslager Inducted into Ohio Agriculture Hall of Fame

On August 7, Ag Credit members Roy Loudenslager and his brother, the late Don Loudenslager, were inducted into the Ohio Agricultural Hall of Fame at the Ohio State Fair. Reva Loudenslager accepted the award for her late husband. Don's award was presented by David Daniels, Ohio Dept. of Agriculture Director. Roy Loudenslager received his plaque from Dr. Bruce McPheron, OSU Dean of the College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.



*Dr. Bruce McPheron
with Roy Loudenslager*



*David Daniels with
Reva Loudenslager*

Photos courtesy of Matt Reese, Ohio's Country Journal

Fremont Ladies Night

Our Fremont team hosted a Ladies Night Out at Chateau Tebeau Vineyard and Winery in Helena, Ohio, on July 27. The ladies enjoyed dinner and a painting class taught by Cindy Aschliman of Artself Expressions.



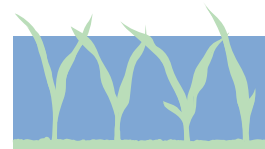
Enjoying some wine before dinner



Painting wine glasses



Finished products



WRIGHT & MOORE
www.OhioFarmLaw.com

Estate Planning - Business Planning
Farm Succession Planning - Agricultural Law

(740) 990-0750 92 N Sandusky St., Delaware, OH

Serving Ohio Farmers For Over 20 years.

Wellington Ladies Day

On June 12, our Wellington team hosted a Ladies Day to Cleveland's west side. The group rode the rapid transit to Cleveland and enjoyed lunch at Crop Bistro. The restaurant building used to be a large bank and still houses one of the largest vaults in the U.S. The manager took the group on a tour of the vault and shared some of the building's history. After lunch, the ladies spent the afternoon shopping at West Side Market.



Excited for lunch



Inside West Side Market



Checking out the produce

Fremont Ag Breakfast

Our Fremont team hosted a breakfast with Terra Community College and Marshall and Melhorne, LLC on Wednesday, July 29. Lawyers from Marshall and Melhorne were the speakers for this event and covered topics including LLCs, trusts, real estate issues, long term care and pipelines.



Drew Nitschke of Marshall and Melhorne speaking to the group

Cultivating a Cure

Ag Credit was proud to sponsor Cultivating a Cure, an event to help the Ag community raise funds and awareness for cancer research. The event raised \$90,000! It was hosted by Ag Credit members, McClure Farms. Senator Rob Portman and Dr. Bruce McPherson were guest speakers.



Senator Rob Portman

Henry County Ag Building Donation

Ag Credit donated \$15,000 to help construct a new agricultural building at the Henry County Fairgrounds. The Ag Hall will serve over 600 FFA members from Four County Career Center, Holgate, Liberty Center and Patrick Henry schools. It will also house the fairground's EMS station, Henry County Farm Bureau booth, and provide 560 square feet of meeting space, open class projects and a permanent Agricultural Hall of Fame display.



Lynn Geitgey (right) presenting Brandon Readshaw (project committee member) with Ag Credit's donation

Find us on Social Media!



Mt. Gilead Sponsors Beef Award

Our Mt. Gilead team sponsored the award for Beef Master of Showman at the Morrow County Fair in September.



Account Officer Andrea Bayles and the Beef Master of Showman

Budweiser Clydesdales

The Budweiser Clydesdales visited the home of Ag Credit members Dan and Kaycee Coles in Erie County on July 5. The 8-horse team entertained over 100 guests at the site.



Prepping for the show



What a performance!

Ag Credit visits Washington D.C. for Special Veterans Event

June 2 and 3, David White, account manager for government affairs, and Jim McConnell, Vietnam War veteran and Ag Credit member, attended a special event on Capitol Hill raising awareness of farming opportunities for veterans. The event was hosted by National Farm Credit to showcase the contributions of farmer veterans. While attending the event, David and Jim met with the staff of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and visited with Senator Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Congressman Bob Gibbs (R-Ohio, 7th district) and members of their respective staff to discuss issues and concerns related to the Farm Credit System.



David, Jim, and Congressman Gibbs

Congressman Jim Jordan Meetings

Ag Credit hosted meetings in Tiffin and Fremont with Congressman Jim Jordan (R, Ohio, 4th District) on August 4 to discuss 2015 crop conditions and damage that may lead to decreased yield and income for members.



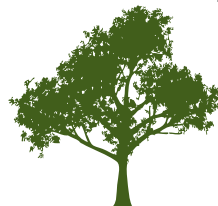
Congressman Jordan speaking to the group

SCHULTE'S LOGGING

Pandora, Ohio

419-384-7373

John Schulte



Buyer of standing timber

Low impact logging

"Harvesting Quality Trees with Care"

Parades



Our Van Wert team in the John Paulding Days parade on June 4



Upper Sandusky and Kenton teams in the Forest Tree Town Festival Parade on July 10



Kenton team in the Farmers and Merchants Picnic Parade on August 8



Upper Sandusky team represented Ag Credit in the Carey Fest Parade on Aug. 8



Tiffin team participated in the Tiffin Heritage Festival parade on September 19

Retirement

Clem Prenger, Risk Management Officer, retired as of July 1 after giving 40 years of service to Ag Credit. We thank Clem for his many years of contributions to the members of our cooperative. We will never forget Clem's favorite acronym—ACIAGPTW! (Ag Credit is a great place to work!). Enjoy your retirement, Clem!

Welcome New Employees



Heather Thomas-Eiden joined the Napoleon team as an Operations Support Specialist on July 6.



Collin Snyder began working as an Accountant in our Administrative office on September 1.



Jeremy Brewer joined the Agribusiness team in Norwalk as a Credit Analyst on September 16.



Amy Busler began working with the Agribusiness team in Norwalk as a Credit Analyst on September 16.



Jennifer Heitkamp began her career as an Operations Support Specialist in Findlay on October 1.



Matt Kiesel joined the Tiffin team as a Loan Specialist on October 1.



Seth Goodwin began working with the Appraisal department in the Marion office as a Collateral Analyst on October 16.



Clem (gray shirt) with Fostoria team members

Thank you, Interns

We would like to say ‘Thank You’ to our interns. We hope they enjoyed their summer at Ag Credit and wish them all the best of luck in the future!



From left to right, Kayla Oxendale, Fremont branch, The Ohio State University; Daniel Schmidt, IT Dept., Wright State University; Julie Wagner, Appraisal Dept. Berea College; Marissa Bolen, Tiffin Branch, Wilmington College of Ohio.

Manage your accounts on the go!



The mobileRoots™ app for AccountAccess is now available in the Google Play Store for download on Android smartphones and the Apple App store for iPhones.

Leader Magazine Advertising Now Available

Contact the Norwalk Ag Credit office if you are interested in advertising in the Leader magazine, which goes to more than 7,000 households in 18 Ohio counties. Call Connie Ruth at 1 800 686 0756 for more information.

Farm Bureau Young Ag Professionals Trip to Washington, D.C.

September 15-17 three Ag Credit team members travelled to Washington, D.C. with Ohio Farm Bureau. Libby Bender, Account Officer in Marion is part of Farm Bureau’s AgriPOWER program. Derek Snider, Account Officer in Kenton, and Kayla Laubacher, Marketing Assistant, took part in the Young Ag Professional’s Leadership Experience. Some highlights of the trip included touring the Capitol and a few monuments, visiting the New Zealand Embassy, learning about issues, legislation and regulation, and visiting with Ohio Congressmen.



AgriPOWER and Young Ag Professionals in front of Capitol building (Photo Courtesy of Callie Wells, OFBF)



Derek, Kayla and Libby in front of the New Zealand Embassy

FFA Soil Judging Contest

On Oct. 8, Ag Credit was a sponsor of the Seneca County District FFA Soil Judging Contest. Over 200 FFA students participated and shared a meal at Greg and Rene Haubert’s farm in Tiffin. The Hauberts are Ag Credit members.





RECENT LAND SALES

The information provided in this column is only a sample of recent land sales around Ohio. Since there are many factors taken into consideration when a buyer and seller establish a price, these sales may or may not reflect the current market value in any particular area and should not be used in lieu of a formal appraisal by a state certified real estate appraiser to establish a value for a particular tract of land. Ag Credit's certified specialists are qualified to prepare appraisals for residences, land, dairies, hog confinement operations, grain farms and other specialty operations. For more information about Ag Credit's fee appraisal service call Bill Eirich, ARA, Chief Appraiser, 419-523-6677 or 1-800-837-3678, Ext. 1107. Bill will connect you with an appraisal specialist.

The following information was provided by:

► **Wigton Real Estate and Auction**

20 W. High St.
Ashley, OH 43003
www.wigtonauctions.com
419-864-8417

Location 1

Acres: 40
County: Morrow
Township: Peru
Date of Sale: 5/5/15
Selling Price: \$5,131 per acre
Extremely wet property with no tile or outlet

Location 2

Acres: 977
County: Morrow
Township: Cardington
Date of Sale: 5/21/15
Selling Price: \$6,243 per acre
11 parcel multi parcel auction, 804 acres tillable, parcels sold as a whole

The following information was provided by:

► **Siefker Real Estate and Auction Co.**

12062 Road M-10
Ottawa, OH 45875
www.siefkerauctions.com
419-538-6185

Location 1

Acres: 49.8
County: Henry
Township: Flatrock
Date of Sale: 9/15/15
Selling Price: \$13,247 per acre
Unimproved
Farm was completely tiled 6-8 years ago. Mostly millgrove soils. 3 miles south of Napoleon, OH.

Location 2

Acres: 70
County: Putnam
Township: Ottawa
Date of Sale: 5/21/15
Selling Price: \$6,714 per acre
Improved
Older farm house and barn on approx. 2 acres. Estimated value

of \$50,000. Estimated farm land value of \$420,000. Farmland mostly Paulding soils. Approx. 6 acres woods.

Location 3

Acres: 77.675
County: Paulding
Township: Washington
Date of Sale: 9/19/15
Selling Price: \$6,372
Unimproved
South part of farm has an area of better soil for the area. Older tile.

Attention Auctioneers: Would you like to be featured in a future column? It's easy. Visit our website, www.agcredit.net and click on the Auctioneer's link to find the Recent Land Sale form online. Fax the completed forms to 419 663 4120 or email to klaubacher@agcredit.net.

2016 CALENDAR PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



JANUARY

A Snowy January Morning
By Amber Sewell | Prospect, OH



APRIL

Future Farmer
By Lindsay Noffsinger | Grover Hill, OH



FEBRUARY

Here Piggy Piggy
By Ashley Errett | Cygnet, OH



MAY

Newborn Piglet Enjoying a Nap
By Mary Maag | Findlay, OH



MARCH

A Newborn Calf Named Jerky
By Valerie Wallis | Decatur, IN



JUNE

Planting at Dawn
By Crystal McCown | Galion, OH



JULY

All-American Case
By Ashley Errett | Cygnet, OH



OCTOBER

Brothers
By Ashley Errett | Cygnet, OH



AUGUST

My Grandson Helping Pick Tomatoes
By Teresa Maag | Leipsic, OH



NOVEMBER

Soybean Harvest
By Shelly Bumb | Alvada, OH



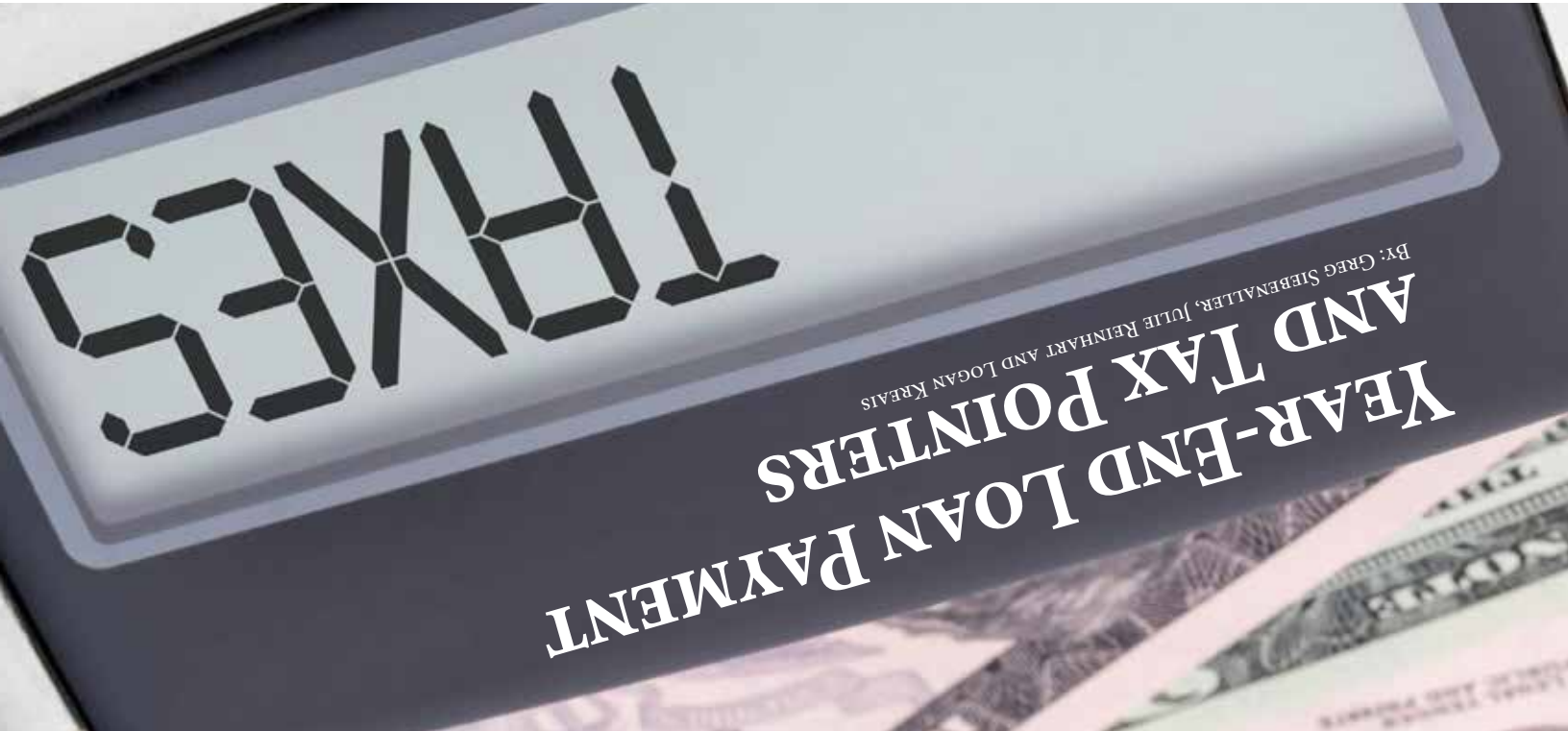
SEPTEMBER

Sowing Wheat
By Jane Brause | Bucyrus, OH



DECEMBER

Barn in the Winter
By Valerie Wallis | Decatur, IN



As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded year-end is just around the corner. With each year-end comes the task of finishing up your business plan for the current year and readying a plan for the new one. The following are a few items to keep in mind and to assist you in planning for the end of the year when making principal or interest payments and preparing for the upcoming income tax season.

Loan Payments

The branches close 2015 business at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 31, 2015.

- Payments received after this time will be credited effective Monday, January 4, 2016.
- If possible, make your loan payments prior to December 31, 2015, to help ensure the proper application of the payment to your account for 2015.
- Please take into account mail time if you mail the payment to your local branch or the payment lockbox processor.
- Credit is given based on when the payment is received, not the date of the check or the payment postmark date.

Can I pay my loan interest through year end and get credit for it in 2015?

- Yes. You can pay all or a portion of your accrued interest before the end of the year.

- If you go to your local Ag Credit office to make the payment, make sure you tell the Operations Support Specialist (OSS) you want your payment applied to interest for 2015.

- The total interest paid on all of your loans for 2015 will appear on the IRS Form 1098 Mortgage Interest Statement you receive from Ag Credit in January 2016.

- Consult with your tax preparer concerning if or how to correctly report an interest deduction.

Can I pay my January 1, 2016 real estate mortgage loan payment in 2015 and get credit for the interest in 2015?

- Yes. You can pay the entire payment before 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 31, 2015 to ensure you receive credit for the payment in 2015.

- You cannot use escrow (funds held) interest credit to pay a portion of the payment and get credit in 2015.

- It is very important for you to clearly indicate to the branch team whether you want to receive credit for your payment in 2016 or 2015.

Review 2015 payments through AccountAccess

You can help ensure the accuracy of your loan transactions for 2015, especially your interest payments.

- Use AccountAccess to review your loans to make sure payments were applied in 2015 as you intended.
- Doing this before December 31 gives you time to notify the office of any changes you think are needed and allow time for your branch's OSS to make the changes in 2015.
- This helps make sure your tax and other annual statements are correct.

IRS informational returns

- We report informational returns under the taxpayer identification number (social security number or employer identification number) for the person or entity listed as the primary borrower for the borrowing entity.



- Statements are available on AccountAccess in mid-January 2016. Paper forms, along with your Member Summary Statement, will be mailed out in late January.

1098 – Mortgage Interest Statements – This form shows interest paid to Ag Credit in 2015. Any interest refinanced or paid with funds from another loan is not reported. Only interest paid by you is reported on this statement.

1099-INT – Interest Income – This form shows interest of \$10 or more earned on funds in escrow (funds held) and/or Voluntary Advanced Conditional Payment Account (also referred to as VACP or Reserve Account) during the year.

1099-DIV – Dividends and Distributions – This form shows dividends of \$10 or more earned during 2015 on Class A Preferred stock you have with Ag Credit.

1099 PATR – Taxable Distributions Received from Cooperatives – This form shows the amount of taxable patronage you received, either by check or notice, during the 2015 tax year. Any patronage refund and disbursement of allocated equities is at the discretion of the board of directors. The taxable patronage for 2015 includes the following:

- 2014 cash patronage distributed in late March or early April 2015.
- 2009 Nonqualified Allocated Surplus distributed in September 2015. Nonqualified allocated equity is taxable in the year it is distributed to you in cash.

Once you receive your tax statements through AccountAccess or by mail, please review them carefully for accuracy. If you find an error, please notify your local branch team right away. If you notify us in time, we can make corrections and have new notices issued through our normal, automated process.

Member summary statements

Statements are produced and mailed to each borrowing entity at the end of January 2016. The statement is available on-line via AccountAccess in mid-January 2016. This is an informational statement. It is not sent to the IRS.

Your member summary statement will show beginning and ending loan balances, interest paid, fees or late charges paid, stock and allocated equity balances.

AccountAccess

AccountAccess provides you with 24/7 on-line, internet access to your Ag Credit loans. AccountAccess provides you with the following benefits:

- Quicker access to your 2015 IRS informational tax forms and member summary statement.
- The ability to request draws on your line of credit and make loan payments, day or night, from your home or business at your convenience.
- See loan balances, loan activity, YTD interest paid, billing statements, upcoming payments and more.

If you are not signed up for AccountAccess or have forgotten your password, contact the customer support center 1-844-275-9534 or email AASupport@farmcredit.net.

As you reflect on and close out 2015 and welcome 2016, remember to jot down your inventories and other information necessary to complete a balance sheet in preparation for the completion of the financial analysis of your business. If you need assistance with this process contact your Ag Credit account officer.

Finally, the Operation's team members at the administrative office in Fostoria say, "Thank you," for choosing to do business with Ag Credit. We wish you a blessed holiday season and new year. ■

PEE WEE SWINE SHOWS

We love sponsoring Pee Wee Swine shows at local fairs. The shows give kids who are too young to be in 4 H (ages 8 & under) a chance to show a pig. It's a great event for kids to gain experience in the show ring as well as provide some entertainment for fair goers. Visit our Facebook page for more photos.



OTTAWA



SENECA





WOOD



ATTICA





HANCOCK



WYANDOT



Help your cooperative and our nominating committee by giving us your suggestions...

DIRECTOR CANDIDATES NEEDED

Ag Credit is a cooperative lender making you a customer and owner. You can help by recommending director candidates to the 2016 Nominating Committee.

Director candidates needed for Regions 2, 3, and 4.

Qualifications for a director include:

- Strong management skills
- Desire to improve, contribute and serve our industry
- A passion for agriculture
- An understanding of the agricultural industry and territory served.



2016 Nominating Committee Members

County	Member
Crawford	Ron Schroeder
Erie	Daniel Saylor
Hancock	Gary Conine
Hardin	John Dulin
Henry	Joel Meyer
Huron	Larry R French
Lorain	Jim Woodrum
Lucas	Chris Weimer
Marion	David Isler
Morrow	Matt Clinger
Ottawa	Craig Blausey
Paulding	Roy Klopfenstein
Putnam	David Moser
Sandusky	Jerry R Hetrick
Seneca	Dwight L Clary
Van Wert	Dan Bauer
Wood	William Kale
Wyandot	Pete Gottfried

Your Board of Directors



Scott A. Schroeder,
Chairman, Region 1



Charles L. Bostdorff
Region 2



S. Jerry Layman
Region 3



Deborah L. Johlin-Bach
Region 4



Gary L. Baldosser,
Vice Chairman, Region 5



Mike A. Thiel
Region 6



Michael W. Stump
Region 7



David J. Conrad
Region 8



Paul N. Aley
Outside Director



Daniel C. Rengert
Outside Director



Dr. David M. Stott,
Ph.D., CPA
Outside Director



What Ag Credit member would you like to nominate for our Board of Directors?

First Name _____ Last name _____

Street Address _____ Phone Number _____

County _____ Your name: (Optional) _____

Cut out and return to: Ag Credit Admin. Office | Attn: Karen Welter | 610 West Lytle St. | Fostoria, OH 44830, by December 1, 2015.

Marion—July 1 at Marion County Fair



Enjoying dinner



Ruth Thiel and Phyllis Butler



Penny Sue Carroll and Terry Neville



Tiffin—July 19 at Seneca County Fair



Handing out door prize tickets



Enjoying some snacks



Ken and Evie Detterman



Paula handing out a door prize

APPRECIATION DAYS

Wellington—August 5



Orchids from Green Circle Growers for door prizes



Great night for a picnic



Kenton—Sept. 9 at Hardin County Fair



Waiting for door prizes



Mike and Michelle Ault checking out the grand prize



Joe and Tammy Sherman



Awesome giveaways!

Norwalk—September 10 at office



Steve Zimmerman sharing ice cream with grandson, Cooper



Great turnout!



Brian Ricker with son, Cason



Carrie, Stephanie and Jeff from the Norwalk team

Findlay—Sept. 19 at BGSU football game



Tailgating before the game



Meeting Frieda Falcon



The grill masters!



Great seats!

APPRECIATION DAYS



2015 AG CREDIT JOE LEISER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Congratulations to our scholarship winners! The winners are:

Linda Overmyer

is the daughter of Alan and Jude Overmyer, from Tiffin (Seneca County). She is a senior studying agronomy and chemistry at Wilmington College.

Matthew Klopfenstein

is a junior at The Ohio State University where he is studying agricultural engineering, agribusiness and applied economics. His parents, Roy and Deb Klopfenstein, live near Haviland (Paulding County).

Molly Cleveland

is a junior studying animal science and agronomy at The Ohio State University. She is the daughter of Bret and Melissa Cleveland from Green Springs (Seneca County).

Jake Biery

is a senior majoring in diesel technology at the University of Northwestern Ohio. His parents are Mike and Kathy Biery of Rawson (Hancock County).

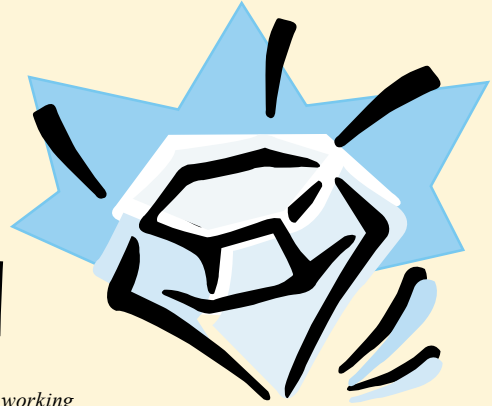
Emily Augsburger

is the daughter of Gary and Betty Augsburger of Pandora (Putnam County). She is a senior animal biosciences major with a minor in agribusiness at The Ohio State University.

Ag Credit issued five, \$2,000 scholarship checks in August. The winners were selected based on their applications and letters of recommendation. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to all who completed applications.

Since 1989, Ag Credit has given \$89,422 in scholarships. For more information about our scholarship program please visit our website www.agcredit.net.

AGATES FROM AGATHA SEMI-PRECIOUS TIDBITS OF INFORMATION



COMPILED BY CONNIE RUTH, AKA AGATHA CREDIT

Note: *Agatha Credit* is the nickname my late husband, Dan, bestowed upon me when I first started working at Ag Credit. He enjoyed the enthusiasm I had for my new job.

DIVINE SISTERHOOD

I just spent the weekend with my girlfriends. We call ourselves the “Ya-Ya Sisters.” How we got the name is a long story, but it refers to a book, *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, written by Rebecca Wells, around the same time our group was formed—almost 20 years ago. The book’s main characters (mostly middle-aged women) cause chaos everywhere they go, but they have a sisterly bond that can fix just about anything. In the book, the Ya-Yas send a scrapbook of their adventures to help a daughter understand how they’ve come to be the way they are (a bit crazy) and the importance of their friendship.

I’ve often thought our Ya-Ya group would have an amazing scrapbook if we ever had the time to create one. We’ve shared good times—rejoiced together celebrating romances, marriages of kids, births of grandkids, work rewards,

retirements, birthdays, holidays and travels. We’ve also grieved together over deaths, near-divorce, health scares, parents aging, our aging, worry about kids and grandkids and on and on. But through it all we have stuck together like glue.

Some women say they don’t have many girlfriends. Others say they think men make better friends. I love men, but I couldn’t imagine life without my “Ya-Ya sisters.”

We are all busy and each of us has a different lifestyle but we “get” each other in a fundamental way, so we take care to carve out time for our friendship. The Ya-Yas are my extra sisters, mothers and daughters. We share stories, trials, secrets, recipes, embarrassments, books, problems and joys.

We bounce things off each other. We vent, we whine and then we get over it—

whatever it may be. And, as I said before, we also laugh. We laugh loudly and a lot. Often we laugh at ourselves.

For our latest adventure, we took a ferry and went to a friend’s house in Put-In-Bay on South Bass Island. It was cold and rainy but you’d never know it because our spirits were in sunshine mode. For this trip we ranged in age from 40 to 89. We all brought food and drinks. We talked and ate and played cards and argued about the card game rules and toured the island via golf cart, cooked and ate and laughed and ate some more. It was a perfect weekend.

I almost didn’t go. I had too much to do at home and I was in the middle of cleaning out my barn for a barn sale. I was busy at work with a Leader magazine deadline and budgets to submit. But, I just couldn’t flake out on my girlfriends, so I got my sister and brother-in-law to watch my dog and off we went.

Each week we try to get together.



When we are together we catch up by telling our stories—sometimes they are happy and sometimes sad but often they are funny. We admit our weaknesses and challenges to each other. Each week someone has a story to tell. Here is one of the best from our last gathering. I won't be able to do it justice but here goes.

The conversation went something like this:

Linda says, "OK, right now, just let me say—before the night is over—I want to make sure I don't forget to tell you two stories."

"OK," we say, "Go for it."

"OK, well, on Tuesday, Rick, offered to drive me to my eye appointment in Akron. (Rick is her husband.) The night before, I decided I didn't want to waste all that time in the car just sitting there, so I would paint my toenails on the way. I gathered up all the stuff I would need to take in the car..."

"Oh no, don't tell us you spilled nail polish in the car!" someone interrupted.

"Did you?" Marcie asked.

"No, just let me finish my story. So, I got the toe spacer pads between my toes and did a really good job of painting them even though the road was pretty bumpy."

Laughter erupts as she pantomimes going over a bump and we picture her with

nail polish brush in hand, bouncing up in the air.

"And I had plenty of time to let my toenails completely dry and even give them a second coat."

"Wow!" we say.

"I was feeling very pleased with myself when we pulled up to the doctor's office 15 minutes early. But then...I realized... (Long pause) I didn't bring any shoes."

"What? None at all?" we chorused.

"What did you do? Go in barefoot?"

She continued, "No. At first I thought maybe I had a pair of flip flops in the trunk or something but then I panicked. Just about then, Rick shouted, 'There's a Walmart' and we sped across the parking lot. He stopped the car right by the door and handed me his shoes knowing I wouldn't trust him to pick out anything for me (even flip flops in a crisis) so I shoved my feet into his big shoes and shuffled as fast as I could into the store trying to keep them from falling off while trying to hide my feet behind a cart."

We were all laughing and someone mentioned the possibility of Walmart having caught her on camera ... for a "People of Walmart" photo spread.

She continued, "I dashed around and managed to find something. They were the wrong size—but THEY WERE ON SALE!"

This made us laugh even harder. "Thank goodness they were on sale!" we agreed as we tried to catch our breath. She finished the story saying she made it to her appointment with beautiful toe nails.

A few minutes later, Kathy said, "Hey, what was the second story you wanted to tell us?"

Linda paused, "The second story? Yes, I did say I had another story didn't I."

There was silence for a moment.

"Oh, hmmm ... I forgot."

And, we laughed again.

This is how it goes. We laugh for the sheer joy of being together to be able to share our stories and travel down this road together. We connect with one another a few times a month and this connection is important to each of us in a different way.

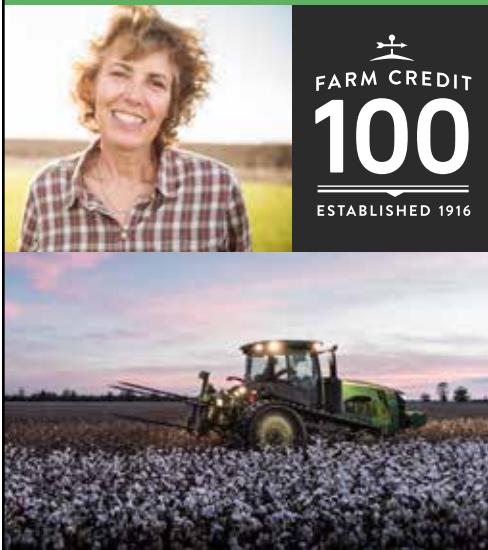
So many times, I find myself thinking I am too busy to spend time with my friends, but remind myself—this is special! I need this.

Make time for your divine sisters or brothers! You'll be glad you did.

Agatha



Farm Credit 100 Fresh Perspectives



Nominate a Leader from Ag Credit!

To commemorate a century of service to rural communities and agriculture, Farm Credit is searching nationwide to identify and honor 100 leaders who are changing the future of rural communities and agriculture for the better. Ten distinguished honorees—one from each nomination category—will receive a \$10,000 cash prize to help further their contributions to thriving rural communities and agriculture. These 10 honorees and a guest also will be invited to Washington, D.C. to participate in a special Farm Credit recognition event in 2016.

For more information and to nominate a leader, go to www.farmcredit100.com/fresh. Nominations will be accepted until December 18, 2015.



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Mt. Gilead New Ag-Complex—Now Open!

On September 16, Ag Credit, ACA held an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony for their new Mt. Gilead Ag Complex. The building is located on U.S. 42, Mt Gilead, OH. Construction began last fall and the new Ag Credit offices opened on Sept. 9, 2015. The initial tenants also include: Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District, OSU Extension, Community Tax Service LLC, and Community Bookkeeping LLC.

Ribbon Cutting—Back row: Pat Davies, Morrow County Auditor; Daniel Rengert, Ag Credit Board; Mike Portal, Mt. Gilead Mayor; Dan Ebert, CFO, Don Wiggins, Chamber of Commerce, Vice President. Front row: Mike Stump, Ag Credit Board; Andy Bower, President Mt. Gilead Chamber of Commerce; Brandy McKinney, OSS; Kristen Redmond, OSS; Andrea Bayles, Account Officer; Joseph Erb, Branch Manager; Brian Ricker, CEO; and Tom Whiston, Tom Harden, & Dick Miller - Morrow County Commissioners, Deborah Johlin-Bach, Ag Credit Board, Gary Baldosser, Vice Chairman Ag Credit Board