

# CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | WINTER 2017



Steve Burclaw of Biadasz Farms in Amherst was honored as the inaugural WCO Employee of the Year at the 2017 Forage Symposium in the Dells.

## Steve Burclaw receives WCO's Employee of the Year Award

WCO honored an Amherst man for his hard work and dedication during a time of extreme grief and transition.

WCO's first ever Employee of the Year award was given to Steve Burclaw, an employee of Biadasz Farms, on Jan. 25 during the organization's annual meeting at the Forage Symposium at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

Burclaw has worked for Biadasz Farms since 2014 where he helps care for the family's 900 starter-to-finish steer operation and assists with the custom farming business. On the morning of August 15, tragedy struck when co-owner Mike Biadasz was overcome by toxic gases while agitating a manure pit on the farm. Noticing that Mike's truck and tractor were running, but he was nowhere to be found, Burclaw discovered his best friend and boss unresponsive.

In the wake of tragedy, work at

Biadasz Farms continued – as all farm work does. The day after Mike's death, a custom harvesting client had approximately 300 acres of hay cut for chopping. The weather forecast was predicted to be unfavorable in the coming days, so Burclaw did what all good farmers do and organized a chopping and hauling crew.

"Mike was the only person who operated the New Holland FR650 self-propelled chopper. Steve took the initiative to recruit two friends to train him that day with no prior knowledge of operating the machine," said Mike's mother Diane. "Within two or three hours, Steve had mastered operating the chopper, but it was a very emotional day without Mike there by his side."

WCO created this new award to honor an exemplary employee who demonstrates excellence in the areas of safety, efficiency, customer service, environmental stewardship and

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

WCO Business Development Training  
Friday, March 17, 2017  
Liberty Hall  
Kimberly, Wisconsin

Farm Technology Days  
Board Meeting - July 11

## CONTACT WCO:

Membership or Sponsorship:  
execdir@wiscustomoperators.org  
(608) 577-4345



From the  
**President's Cab**  
By Bryce O'Leary



Hello everyone, as the new president of WCO I would like to thank the board for giving me the opportunity to lead. Kathy has left some big shoes to fill and I will certainly do my best to carry on her good work. I would also like to thank Troy Meyer and Isaac Lemmenes for the excellent work they did while on the board.

One of the big topics of discussion for our organization are the loH laws. As a group, we want to stay in touch on any issues that arise about these laws, but we are only as informed as our members allow us to be. If any of you experience problems, or hear of those who do, please let me or Bill Arneson, chair of the Safety and Regulations committee, know. loH is scheduled to be reexamined by the legislature in 2019. If there are changes or revisions that are needed, WCO would like to have a list of issues prepared when the time comes.

2017 marks the third year for the WCO Safety Certification Program. New this year and based on member-feedback, the March certification event will focus on business development topics like hiring and firing, job descriptions, performance reviews, health insurance and social media. The presentations will be informative and another good chance to network with fellow operators. In addition to operators ourselves, this event is perfect for your office manager, bookkeeper and anyone who's job focuses more on keeping your business running. Please save the date for March 17 at Liberty Hall in Kimberly, Wis.

During this "slower" time of year, we take time to renew friendships and stop and enjoy everything we can. That might mean a snow mobile trip or a vacation somewhere warm. You might also be dedicating time to other farming duties that go undone during the harvest season. Our busy time will be here before we know it, so it's important to take the winter to invest in ourselves. As you are making your plans for this harvest season make sure to dedicate time to safety planning. One incident can impact you, your employees and your business for years to come. Once again thank you for the opportunity to serve in this capacity and don't be afraid to contact me. As I told residents while serving on the town board, if I don't know the answer to your question, I will find the information and get it to you. 🍷

-Bryce

**Employee of the Year** (continued from p. 1)

profitability of a custom farming or custom harvest operation.

"Custom farmers and their employees are highly skilled. They operate advanced equipment, maintain certifications and licensures and are front and center with clients," said Kathy Vander Kinter, WCO past-president, who presented the award. "Steve is honest, courteous and faithful to the obligations to both customers and the crew. Despite tragedy, Steve continued the harvest in a safe and professional manner."

Burclaw led the crew from fourth crop hay to corn silage then on

to snaplage and combining with very few breakdowns and a constant commitment to communication with clients and the crew. He paid close attention to conditions, rules of the road and organized a first and second shift to avoid driver fatigue within the crew.

"Steve was the saving grace of Biadasz Farms," said Diane. "Mike would be truly proud of Steve for keeping his legacy going."

A special thank you to New Holland Agriculture and Gruette's Agriculture for sponsoring the award. 🍷

**Welcome new members!**

The following list represents individuals who joined WCO from December 1, 2016 to Feb 15, 2017

Mark Anderson  
Diane Biadasz  
Steve Burclaw  
Nelson Culp  
Tony Erickson  
Dan Esker  
April Gumney  
Andy Gunn  
Casey Halopka

Paul Howard  
Linda Jantzen  
Travis Jergenson  
Matt Peterson  
Jacob Petrie  
Travis Rotar  
Barry Soukup  
Cody Wallenhorst  
Trevor Weis



The 2017-2018 board of directors

WCO members select directors, officers

WCO members selected three new directors, a new president and new officers during the annual meeting at the Forage Symposium Jan. 25 at the Chula Vista Resort.

Newly elected board directors include operator representatives Ray Liska, owner of Apollo Vale Enterprises in Cochrane and Derek Ducat, from Ducat Farms Custom Work in Kewaunee. Josh Bartholomew, territory manager for Oxbo International was elected as corporate representative. Bryce O’Leary, owner of O’Leary Brothers Chopping Service LLC in Janesville was selected as president.

Liska owns and operates Apollo Vale Enterprises and custom raises poultry for Gold’n Plump Farms. He is a 10-year member of Wisconsin Farm Bureau where he has served in various leadership roles and is a proud graduate of the Farm Bureau Leadership Institute.

Ducat owns and operates Ducat Farms Custom Work with his family. In addition to his work as a custom farmer, the family owns Deer Run Dairy, LLC, a 1600 cow dairy farm. The Ducat family has been actively involved with Peninsula Pride Farms, a farmer-led environmental stewardship group in Kewaunee and southern Door counties.

Bartholomew lives in Clear Lake and serves as the territory manager for Oxbo International, an equipment company that serves the custom farming industry with forage mergers and dump carts.

O’Leary has been active in WCO since the early days of the organization and was first elected to the board in 2015. With a passion for safety and policy, O’Leary was among WCO’s first group of Safety Certified operators. He has also chaired the Safety and Regulations Committee since 2016.

In addition to his work with WCO, O’Leary previously served on his town board and was a town supervisor for six years. He also served nine years on the Rock County FSA board including seven years as chair. O’Leary holds a degree in agriculture education from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

O’Leary replaces Kathy Vander Kinter of Vander Kinter Farms in Green Bay.

Other officer changes included Josh Bartholomew as secretary. Operator representative Cole Olson of Diversified Farms LTD in Alma was re-elected as vice president and corporate representative Chuck Rabitz of Denmark State Bank in Denmark was re-elected as Treasurer. Retiring board members Kathy Vander Kinter, Green Bay, Isaac Lemmenes, Manitowoc and Troy Meyer, Dorchester were honored for their service to WCO. 🍷



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**Attend the WCO Business Development Training March 17**

WCO is pleased to announce a business development training scheduled for March 17 at Liberty Hall in Kimberly, Wis. This program showcases speakers on a variety of relevant topics in human resources, marketing and administration in the context of the custom farming industry. Office managers, owners, crew leaders and employees from the custom farming industry are encouraged to attend.

The business development training qualifies as continuing education towards the WCO Safety Certification program, now in its third year.

The purpose of WCO's Safety Certification Program is to train WCO members and their employees in occupational safety and health in order

to reduce incident rates. Participants have the opportunity to earn a certificate upon completion and are eligible for insurance discounts.

"Operating a safe and productive business isn't limited to equipment and in-field safety," said Bryce O'Leary, WCO President. "Our first two years of the program were a success, and this year we have chosen to focus on key business topics that will add value for the professional custom operators who participate."

The training on March 17 will consist of the following topic areas:

- **Hiring & firing: Know your rights** - Blake Knickelbein, attorney, Twohig Rietbrock Schneider & Halbach S.C.

- **Small business health insurance plans** - Staci Wocjik, Vincent Urban Walker and Assoc.
- **Social media, business promotion & employee recruitment** - Joanna Wavrunek, Dairy Business Association & Jamie Ackley, Smith Custom Farming, Inc.
- **Effective job descriptions and meaningful performance reviews** - Tom Wall, Dairy Coach

Register and view the complete schedule at [wiscustomoperators.org](http://wiscustomoperators.org). The program is free for members and runs from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Lunch is provided thanks to sponsor Dave Anderson and Vincent, Urban, Walker & Associates. 🍷




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## Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member and they list your name on the paper application or online, you receive \$25 towards your 2017 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2017 sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. We already have members and sponsors taking advantage of the program. Help WCO grow our membership base!

### Welcome to WCO

**General Members (\$50/year)** derive their income (whole or part) from custom farming. Receive full voting rights and featured on website with business information.

**Associate Members (\$50/year)** support the custom farming industry, but do not engage in custom farming themselves.

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Membership Type:  General  Assoc.

Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return membership form with payment to:**

Wisconsin Custom Operators, Inc.  
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Kristen Woldt



Brooke Trustem



## WCO announces scholarship winners

*Dr. Kevin Shinnars, chair - Scholarship Committee*

WCO understands that the foundation for the continued success of Wisconsin's agricultural economy depends on a well-educated workforce. We also recognize that the high-cost of additional education can impact this need.

Students are selected based on leadership, civic engagement, academics and volunteer activities related to agriculture. Students also submit essays detailing their educational and career plans for the future. Scholarship winners are required to have ties to WCO – either as a member, relative of a member or employee of a member.

The quality of applicants continues to grow ever year. Applicants are chosen over the summer and checks are mailed once fall grades are verified. Again in 2016, scholarships were \$1,000 each.

Winners of the 2016 awards are: Kristen Woldt of Brillion, Brooke Trustem of Evansville, and Matthew Schmidt also of Brillion. Applications for the 2017 WCO scholarships will open in

March and are due May 1, 2017. This year, three (3) \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded. Visit [wiscustomperators.org](http://wiscustomperators.org) for more information including eligibility, criteria and application. Awards are open to members, children of members and employees of members and are applied to **any post-secondary educational pursuit**.

### **Meet the winners**

**Kristen Woldt** of Brillion is a Freshman studying business at UW – Steven's Point. After finishing her undergraduate degree, Woldt plans to pursue an agricultural degree from Fox Valley Tech. Upon completion of her schooling, she plans to invest and eventually become a co-owner in the family farm and harvesting business. She would also like to have a job off the farm in the agribusiness field. Kristen Woldt is the daughter of WCO member, Daryl Woldt of Woldt Harvesting, LLC.

**Brooke Trustem** of Evansville is a Freshman studying dairy science at UW – Madison. In her first year on campus, Trustem has become active

in student organizations and is actively pursuing internship opportunities in the areas of milk quality and agricultural marketing. While in college, she plans to study abroad to gain a more global perspective of the dairy industry. Trustem would eventually like to return to the family farm. She is the daughter of WCO member, Sandy Larson of Larson Acres.

**Matthew Schmidt** of Brillion studies agriculture engineering technology at Fox Valley Tech. Schmidt grew up on a family dairy farm and intended to farm directly out of high school when a job opportunity with a custom operator presented itself. His work at Lemmenes Custom Farms, LLC opened his eyes to the vast world of agriculture and is the motivation behind his goal becoming an agriculture engineer. His dream is to work for companies like CNH, Agco, Claas or John Deere designing modern equipment that will improve agriculture. Please join WCO in congratulating these outstanding young professionals! 🍷



Matthew Schmidt



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“  
As you are making your plans for this harvest season make sure to dedicate time to safety planning. One incident can impact you, your employees and your business for years to come.”

-Bryce O'Leary, WCO President

To complete your no fee IoH/Ag CMV permit applications  
(Required as of January 1, 2015), go to  
**wisconsin.gov** and search “no fee ag permits”

Questions about IoH definitions and rules? Go to  
**wiscustomoperators.org/resources**

**Save the Date!**  
**WCO Safety Certification**  
**Training Session**

**Friday, March 17, 2017**  
**Liberty Hall**  
**800 Eisenhower Dr. Kimberly, Wis.**

8 a.m. Registration, coffee  
8:30 a.m. Welcome  
11:45 a.m. Lunch  
2 p.m. Program concludes

**WCO Members: Free**  
**Non-Members: \$50**  
(includes WCO Membership)

**REGISTER online at**  
**wiscustomoperators.org**  
RSVP Deadline - March 10  
Contact WCO at (608) 577-4345 or  
execdir@wiscustomoperators.org