

# CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | SUMMER 2022



WCO member Bryce O'Leary brought his forage harvester to the City of Greenfield's Touch a Truck event this past June.

## 2,000 urban residents 'Touch a Truck' with help from WCO members

By Maria Woldt for WCO

As a dairy farmer and agriculture professional, cows, crops, manure, trucks, and tractors are part of my every day life. Having grown up in the city, I don't take for granted how lucky I am to have this life and for the opportunity to share it with my girls.

People are often surprised to hear that I didn't grow up on a farm. They are even more surprised to hear the story of how I got involved with agriculture. Spending time at the Minnesota State Fair in the animal barns and agriculture buildings sparked something inside me, and I knew that agriculture was my career path.

Back in March, WCO received a message from the City of Greenfield asking if we would participate in their new "Touch

a Truck" event planned for June 18. Since I've already told you I'm from Minnesota, you won't be surprised that I had to google Greenfield. It's essentially Milwaukee.

Public engagement is so important and when possible, WCO loves to support community events, especially when there is a connection to equipment and transportation safety. I told the event organizer I'd do my best to find a member willing to bring some farm machinery to the event.

Touch a Truck is a free, family-friendly event where the young and young at heart have a chance to touch, sit in, and learn about large trucks and heavy-duty machinery they see throughout their

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## UPCOMING DATES:

**WCO Mini-grant program**  
Accepted on a rolling basis

**WCO Fundraising Auction**  
Coming in December

**Forage Symposium**  
Feb. 20-22, 2023  
Chula Vista, Wis. Dells

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From the President's Cab: *don't focus on the low spots*  
By Raymond Liska



A slow start for fast-paced crews across the region was the kick-off for the 2022 cropping season. From north to south and east to west, a variety of weather patterns left both people and machinery idling patiently, waiting for the opportunity to get to work. As always, the weather finally broke and the dust began to fly, hoses were reeled in and out, planters and tillage tools crept along from one end of the field to the other, and the buzzing of tanker trucks continued in perfect rhythm from sunup until....the sun came up again. Preparing the soil and sowing the seeds soon led to hay making. Harvest crews worked hard to put up the best quality feed while dealing with break downs, limited supplies, logistics, help, etc. all while trying to dodge rain clouds. All in all, the pace paid off and the work was completed.

As the crops continue their life cycle and you take the time to stop and admire the fruits of your labor, you may notice something about the endless fields of lush green. Perhaps it's a low spot, discoloration, or some weeds around the edge, whatever it is it may require some individual attention. Our businesses, like our fields, require individual attention, and at the center of many businesses is the team of people needed to operate the equipment safely and efficiently. The shortage of quality employees is a hot topic between custom operators and is not going away any time soon. Ideas are discussed with the only outcome ever being "it's up to YOU to make it happen." WCO does not take this issue lightly.

Last winter at the annual Symposium, we listened to a panel of current and previous H2-A employers from the USCHI group. In addition to this panel, WCO invested in a keynote speaker to help motivate and promote team building and leadership. Thinking about managing a crew is not just something we can do once a year at Symposium. Throughout the year, WCO makes many efforts to promote and educate future agriculture professionals. WCO offers a variety of awards and scholarships designed to reward the most promising applicants with financial support toward their career pursuits.

Our most recent efforts have been to elevate your needs to the state legislature regarding the expansion and improvement to Farm Service CDL rules. The Farm Service CDL program is a great way to help keep a steady flow of drivers coming into the industry and WCO is eager to hear your ideas, questions, and concerns regarding this topic.

Sometimes fields experience flooding, and debris washes in during the growing season. Before harvest can commence, this problem must be dealt with. Preparation of your business for the fall harvest requires time, energy, and careful thinking. Inflation is also top of mind for us as business owners. Everything from replacement equipment, parts, supplies, all the way down to the light bill influences the bottom line.

The WCO annual member survey has helped members make informed decisions when setting or adjusting rates for services. Throughout the years, the survey has expanded to include things like acres serviced, distance traveled, benefits for employees, etc. as

well as rates for manure handling and application. The survey is sent to member owners and managers by email prior to the annual symposium and has been designed to be easy to fill out. The results are then posted to the WCO website. WCO encourages members to participate in and use this confidential survey to help reflect the most accurate trends of the industry.

“Don't let the low areas in your field be the primary focus of your business. Be proud to be a part of this great group of people with the skills, motivation, and equipment to produce food for the world!”

Whether growing crops, chopping, baling, or spreading manure, sometimes things just don't go as planned. You are not alone, and many operators experience similar stress points and find ways to make good of the situation. Don't let the low growing areas in your field be the primary focus of your business. Be proud to be a part of this great group of people with the skills, motivation, and equipment to produce food for the world! Remember that WCO is here to help you. Have a safe and happy harvest season and may God be with you on your journey. 🍷

-Ray

Touch a Truck  
(continued from p. 1)

community. Kids had the chance to sit in the driver's seat, take photos, and learn about how each vehicle works.

June in Wisconsin, transporting farm equipment to Milwaukee, diesel prices...I soon realized I might have bitten off more than I could chew. Looking at the map of WCO members in southeast Wisconsin, I knew that my best chance of making this happen was to call Bryce O'Leary from O'Leary Brothers Chopping Service in Janesville.

Bryce is WCO's immediate past president, and a committed volunteer having served on his town board, as a poll worker, election examiner and numerous other community posts.

I didn't even have to twist his arm. Bryce said that if he could find someone to haul his forage harvester to the event, he would participate. "It's for the kids!" Bryce said on several occasions.

If anything, Bryce had to do the arm twisting! After some negotiations, Bryce's long-time friend Steve Haberman from Haberman Trucking in Janesville agreed to transport the forage harvester and corn head to Greenfield for the event.

The stars aligned for Touch a Truck – June 18 fell neatly between hay crops, other planting or spraying were already done, and the weather was perfect. I didn't know what to expect in terms of crowd size, but it was packed! In all, more than 2,000 people came out to support the event and Bryce's chopper had a line all day to sit in the cab.

No doubt, Bryce and Steve had other priorities that day, but they said 'yes' to this opportunity to engage with the public.

Fairs and other community events are a great way to share what you do



Bryce O'Leary (left) and Steve Haberman (right) spent a beautiful Saturday in June engaging with more than 2,000 Milwaukee-area residents. Photos by WCO

with people who wouldn't otherwise have a chance to talk to a farmer or see the equipment you use.

In addition to helping kids and their parents better understand agriculture, you might also spark a career interest in someone. I'm living proof of that.

As an industry, we need to think of creative ways to find people who love big machines and wide-open spaces. That young girl or boy from Milwaukee with no farm experience could be your next crew member.

More photos from the event are on the WCO Facebook page. 🍷

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Safety expert has long and productive career *By John Shutske, UW-Madison*

Cheryl Skjolaas is a familiar face and a trusted resource in agriculture safety. After a 38-year career with Extension and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) at UW-Madison, Cheryl will retire this summer.

Cheryl started as an interim 4-H Youth Agent in Pierce County in 1984 and then moved to St. Croix County where she led programs for 800+ youth and 350 adult volunteers. In December of 1990, Cheryl was recruited to join a team in Biological Systems Engineering in CALS with Dr. Ron Schuler and others.

She came to work on evaluation in an agricultural safety and health program funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. She was also responsible for outreach with the

AgrAbility of Wisconsin program.

Cheryl was instrumental in managing the Wisconsin Safe Operation of Tractor and Machinery Certification program and the County Farm Safety Grant program after the legislature mandated training for youth in the state and CALS approved a research and outreach education center in the early 90s. She led efforts to distribute \$20,000 each year for local farm safety grants to collaborative programs led by community organizations that included Extension, vo-ag and agri-science programs, public health, technical colleges, and farm organizations until 2019.

In 2000, Cheryl took on an important role as the National AgrAbility Program Manager where she aided state projects.

She worked with the national project team in Washington D.C. to conduct annual national training workshops and developed technical assistance resources, project evaluation, and marketing materials. During these times, Cheryl also directed the UW Center for Agricultural Safety and Health.

Her leadership with the National AgrAbility program was critical to the states. She was a great resource - and her ability to connect to the national groups was vital.

Not too far in the distant past, funding for many Extension programs was called into question. As part of my role with the dean's office at the time, I visited with key leaders in the Wisconsin Senate and

*Continued on p. 5*

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Assembly to talk about the future of these programs. At least a half dozen legislators from both sides of the aisle turned in their chairs to grab a copy of a technical resource manual on Implements of Husbandry provided through Cheryl. Most legislative staffers noted that she was on speed dial! They relied on her as a resource to create sound public policy around public roadway safety, specifically citing Cheryl's role and leadership. The same occurred within the Ag Coalition as we dealt with budget issues in 2015.

With such a long and productive career and so many accomplishments to be proud of, please join me in congratulating Cheryl as she moves to her next chapter in life! 🍷



Cheryl Skjolaas, pictured in June 2018 at a field day in Arlington, talks about roll bars and other tractor safety issues. *Photo by Michael P. King/UW-Madison CALS*

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WCO honors additional scholarship winner; Fundraising auction planned for December *By WCO*

The WCO board feels strongly that supporting the custom farming community and allied agriculture partners are a good use of WCO's membership and sponsorship dollars. To this end, WCO gives scholarships and other awards to deserving students, community groups and crew members.

Additional scholarship winner



*Kalleigh Schroeder* WCO recently awarded two scholarships to students pursuing further education. The WCO scholarship and awards committee selected one additional student for the 2021 scholarship cohort.

These students were selected based on leadership, civic engagement, academics and volunteer activities related to agriculture. Students also submitted

essays detailing their educational and vocational plans for the future.

Scholarship winners are required to have ties to the WCO – either as a member, relative of a member or employee of a member. Students received a \$1,000 or \$1,500 scholarship.

Kalleigh Schroeder is the daughter of WCO member Keith Schroeder. Keith is employed by Milk-n-More Harvesting in Cecil.

Kalleigh recently completed her freshman year at Concordia University of Wisconsin and is studying sport and entertainment business with a minor in marketing. On campus, she is a student athlete on the track and field team. In the future, Kalleigh hopes to own her own design or marketing business.

The 2022 cohort of scholarship winners has been selected and will be announced after their fall grades are verified, per program rules.

Fundraising auction

WCO is proud to announce a fundraising auction planned for December! The auction will be online, hosted by Hansen Auction Group. It will be consignment based and as a custom operator machinery auction.

The auction will be marketed to WCO members, but will accept consignments from outside sellers with equipment for the custom farming industry. Sellers receive 10% and WCO will receive 2%.

The WCO board is excited about this potential revenue stream and several new programs that could become a reality with the additional funds.

Initial ideas for funds include support for ongoing involvement in transportation legislation and start-up funds for a CDL specific scholarship program.

Watch your email for more details about how to consign and purchase from the auction. 🇺🇸

**WCO** Wisconsin Custom Operators

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Sellers receive 10% and WCO receives 2% of all sales! More info coming soon.

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## Issues to watch

**Farm Service CDL:** WCO has been looking for flexibilities with the Farm Service CDL program to help more drivers gain credentials. The program is widely federalized, and the only possible change is to extend the 180 day window to 210 days. This extension is the result of the recently passed federal infrastructure bill, however, states must opt-in to gain these extra days. We will continue to keep you informed of any additional developments.

**“Right to repair”:** In March, the Fair Repair Act of 2022 was introduced which would require manufacturers to provide tools and documentation for consumers and third parties to repair electronic equipment. The bill covers products ranging from agricultural equipment to electronics and is the latest in a series proposed laws seeking to codify the “right to repair.”

## Welcome new members!

These individuals/sponsors joined WCO from  
April 2022 - July 2022

- » Randy Manning, Manner Dairy
- » Bob Socha, Walterscheid

## Please send your photos to WCO

Photos featured in the *Custom News* are taken by staff or submitted by members and sponsors. We are always looking for high quality images of custom farmers in action. We do our best to feature multiple brands of equipment and diverse custom farming practices.

Please e-mail your high-resolution images (1MB or larger) to [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance!

Maass Farms, Seymore, Wis.



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***“ We need to think of creative ways to find people who love big machines and wide-open spaces. That young girl or boy from Milwaukee with no farm experience could be your next crew member ”***

*- Maria Woldt, feature article on p. 1  
photo by Tracey Leeder*

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

Questions about IoH definitions and rules? Go to  
**[wiscustomoperators.org/resources](http://wiscustomoperators.org/resources)**