CUSTON DEVISE Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | SPRING 2020



Ditzenberger: Take time to be kind

By Mary Hookham for WCO



Jeff Ditzenberger, founder of the Talking, Understanding, Growing, Supporting (T.U.G.S.) program for mental health. believes

basic human kindness can cure many issues, but especially mental health issues. He emphasizes the ever-growing need for comprehensive mental health care for farmers and all workers in agricultural-related industries. He started his program to provide support for anybody struggling with mental issues and is specifically catering to men who find it challenging to talk about their feelings.

"Everybody has depression, everybody

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has bad days, and everybody has those moments where they just want somebody to talk to," he said. "This is important because we're losing farmers every single day to suicide."

Ditzenberger encourages people to attend the T.U.G.S. meetings because taking time to really listen to those who are struggling is crucial. It's all about being kind, he said.

"A lot of times when things trouble us, it's just a bad day, not a bad life," he said. "What's the cure for mental health? Honestly, it's just being kind."

Attendees at the 2020 Forage Symposium listened as Ditzenberger told his story of growing up with a physically, verbally and mentally abusive father. He

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UPCOMING DATES:

WCO Scholarships Applications due May 1

WCO Mini-grant program Accepted on a rolling basis

WI Farm Technology Days July 21-23, Eau Claire, Wis Board meeting - July 21

CONTACT WCO:

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



Hello everyone. As I write this letter, I find it to be the most difficult column I have had to write as your WCO president. The situation at hand is something that none of us have ever had to handle, nor did we

see coming. I can tell you what I was doing when the Cuban missile crisis happened, or when President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, President Reagan, Pope John Paul II were shot. All of those events had an effect on everyone around the world at the time, but none as great as the impact that the COVID-19 virus will have on every one of us! There is information posted on our social media pages to keep you informed. It's hard to see beyond the day's news cycle, but we will get through this and it's important that we band together.

In the world of WCO, we will be offering three scholarships for students continuing their education. Applications are due May 1. This year, we have added the criteria that you as a member can sponsor a student who may have no connection to you as an employee or relative. We hope this encourages more students to apply, and helps your clients see value in you and WCO.

The education committee got some great ideas for topics for next year's Symposium, Feb. 15-17 in the Dells. Who knows, that may be about the first time we are able to have a more normal life. Please save the date.

The board has started the process of looking into some changes to two state statutes that could be of some use to all of our members. Those are the Farm Service CDL and the Threshers Lien. The goal is to update them to be more valuable to custom farmers and the current custom industry.

So with Spring work arriving and things getting busy, be sure to be safe. We all have to work together as a community. There is an old saying "good people accomplish great things"! Watch out for your friends and neighbors. Our eyes face forward so we can only see where we are going, not into the future.

Policy center issues to watch

Ag related bills pass Assemby, await Senate and Governor: In early March, a package of ag bills to help rural Wisconsin passed the Assembly. These bills were ready for a Senate vote when the Coronavirus crisis led to a temporary adjournment of the Senate session. At press time, the exact date of the vote was unknown. If the bills are approved, they would then move to Gov. Evers. Highlights include: Water quality: AB 789/SB 724 and AB 800/SB 722 provide more help for rural well remediation.

Truth in labeling: AB 515/SB 463 requires any food identifying as a dairy product must include a milk-based source.

Refundable tax credit on farm sets: AB 873/SB 818 would allow a farmer to claim an income tax credit up to \$7,500 on farm improvement taxes assessed on their business.

Welcome new members!

These individuals/sponsors joined WCO from Nov. 2019 - March 2020

Pat Annen, Blue Star Dairy Farms Angie Ansorge, Riesterer & Schnell Drew Benish, Green Harvest Soulutions Mike Brugger, Brugger Farms CASE IH Chet Chriss, Schultz Bros. Forage Service Dana Cook, Cook's Countryside Trucking LLC Steph Faymoville, GEA Mike Endres, Endres Insurance Brad Gerrits, Breeze Dairy Group LLC Scott Glynn, Blue Star Dairy Farms Kendall Guither Mitchell Harbeck Nick Hendricks, Cauffman's Slurry Transfer Danny Hochstetler, AB AG Services Pat Johnson, Number 2 Injection Kyle Kraus, Kraus Custom Combining LLC Brad Laack, Laack Agri-Services Garrett Lindstrom, Lindstrom Equipment Christopher Lisney Nathan Martin, Cauffman's Slurry Transfer Carl Moen, AB AG Services Doug Potter, Dairy Support Services Company Kyle Roate, Blue Star Dairy Farms Bruce Sterr, Forage Storage Solutions Bryce Stewart, Milk-N-More Harvesting Ross Vehmeier, Green Harvest Soulutions Blake Walke, D & J Manthe Forage Services Tate Warring Jackson Yeager

-Bryce

Be kind (continued from p. 1)

once helped a neighbor unload a semi truck of straw and got into a accident with his dad's truck.

"When I told my dad what happened, he told me he was going to talk to our insurance guy about the truck and I better not be home when he gets back," Ditzenberger said.

He joined the United States Navy as a way to get away from his dad and be part of something bigger than the problems in his own world. He used this experience as a basis for his T.U.G.S. program. When the submarines he was on needed help moving through tight spaces, his superiors would call for a tugboat. The tugboat would come in, pull the submarine where it needed to go and then unhook and leave. Ditzenberger compared this practice to the mental health needs of many people.

"This is kind of like life," he said. "What if you're a really big ship, you're really tough and you have a great steel exterior, but man, sometimes you just need somebody to get you home safe? We can help each other."

After experiencing some tough marriages, trouble in his career, and alcoholism, he realized he had posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety. So he began taking steps to work through those issues.

"Why is it that we can talk about the common cold and cancer like it's our ABC's but we can't talk about mental health?" he asked.

Ditzenberger struggled to cope with the pressures of his life, so he spent eight weeks planning a suicide attempt. He was charged with felony arson and spent nine months in jail when the attempt failed. Today he is using his life experiences to help others who struggle to face and deal with their feelings.

"Mental health, depression, anxiety and all the other bevy of things that are out there are not a phase," he said.

Ditzenberger said when people need to talk, having conversations with family members and friends can help relieve stress, but it may not be the best course of action to actually get long-term help with problems. In many cases, those family members and friends are having similar issues.

"Your wife is going through the same thing you are," he said. "If your son is one of your partners, your brother is a partner, your uncle is a partner, they're going through the exact same things. Your conversations are the same and there's no tug to get you out of that."

He is adamant that mental health is not

a phase. Rather, it's a struggle for people every single day. He encourages his audiences to think about what people actually deal with every day.

"Think about your worst day ever, then put like 10 ton of bricks on top of your head, and then slip your feet into some cement shoes and then go take a walk off a short pier, have the water where you can almost get out of it to breath but not quite, with nobody around to get you out," he said. "Mental health stays with you all the time."

Ditzenberger closed his presentation by providing an analogy to a \$20 bill. When a \$20 bill is brand new, it's valuable. But as it goes through its life and is crumpled, walked on, dirty, beat up and spit on, it still has its same value. Most people would smooth out the bill and still be able to see its value. People are the same way, he said. They want to be picked up, smoothed out and accepted and loved because they never lost their value.

"People, this is first-grade sharing stuff," he said. "You want to know how simple it is to help with the mental health crisis we have in this nation right now? It's as simple as sharing your time. It's as simple as picking up that crumpled up \$20 bill and smoothing it out and putting it in your pocket. It's simply becoming somebody's tug. We need to take the time to be kind to people."

Watch your email for more information about suicide prevention workshops featuring Jeff and sponsored by WCO.



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WCO NEWS

WCO members re-elect directors

WCO members re-elected three directors during the annual business meeting on Feb. 19.

Ray Liska, owner of Apollo-Vale Enterprizes in Cochrane and Derek Ducat, from Ducat Farms Custom Work in Kewaunee were re-elected as operator directors. Josh Bartholomew, territory manager for Oxbo International, was reelected as a corporate director.

Liska owns and operates Apollo-Vale Enterprizes. He was very active in FFA and is a 13-year member of Wisconsin Farm Bureau where he served in various leadership roles and is a proud a graduate of the Farm Bureau Leadership Institute. Liska is passionate about policy and has attended numerous lobby days for WCO and other organizations. He and his wife Holly have three children that they homeschool, which leads to a lot of time in the fields working as a family.

Ducat owns and operates Ducat Farms Custom Work with his family in Kewaunee. In addition to his work as a custom farmer, the family owns Deer Run Dairy, LLC a 1,600-cow dairy farm also in Kewaunee. The Ducat family is actively involved with Peninsula Pride Farms, a farmer-led environmental stewardship group in Kewaunee and southern Door counties and serves as one of four demonstration farms in the Door-Kewaunee Demonstration Farm Network, a partnership between Peninsula Pride Farms, NRCS and DATCP. Their project for "demo farms" focuses on testing low disturbance manure injection into a growing crop, cover cropping and a denitrifying bioreactor for tile lines. Ducat and his wife Laura have four children.

Bartholomew serves as a territory manager for Oxbo International, an equipment company that serves the custom farming industry with forage mergers, dump carts, spreaders and sprayers. In addition to forage and manure, Oxbo International manufactures equipment for seed corn, fruits, vegetables, olives, grapes and coffee.

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CONTACT YOUR LOCAL JOHN DEERE FORAGE PRO DEALER The 2020-2021 Wisconsin Custom Operators board of directors. Photo by Tracey Leeder.

Employer guidance for COVID-19

WCO, along with other ag groups, has been monitoring the COVID-19 situation in an effort to provide information related to workplace safety and health of employees. We have been sharing these resources on our social media platforms and will continue as long as necessary.

We have found the following websites particularly helpful: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (employer info), Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (cleaning and disinfecting) and Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative (farmer/ag information).

More helpful websites for employers:

Centers for Disease Control: Protections, prevention of spreading Food and Drug Administration: Health care and medical supplies Department of Labor: Preparing workplaces World Organization for Animal Health: Animal interaction American Veterinary Medical Association: Animal welfare





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Annual symposium equips farmers with more tools By Mary Hookham for WCO

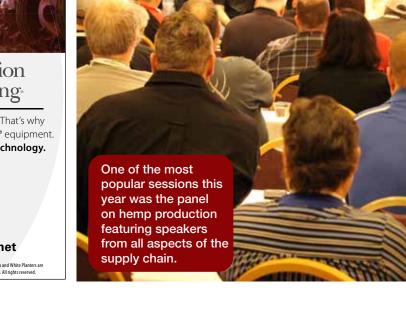
The 2020 Forage Symposium highlighted the new decade of agriculture with presentations on large-scale forage operations, nutrient management regulation updates, farm diversification options, the economics of silage bag use and the latest in equipment technology.

Patricio Aguirre Saravia of Buenos Aires, Argentina told his story of growing up on a farm near the small town of Carlos Casares and working closely with his brother on an entrepreneurial adventure. In 1983 the brothers started the Duckas Group, which provided silage services to area farmers. Although his brother passed away in 2006, Saravia has continued his family business enterprise, now operating three custom farming services under the Duckas Group with a team of employees. He prides himself on setting a great example of professionalism for his employees to mimic every day.

"Because of our professionalism, we have the same customers from 37 years ago when we started our company," Saravia said. "I'm very proud of that."

Zach Bemis, attorney with Godfrey & Kahn, S.C. of Madison, explained how farmers could diversify with hemp to boost their bottom line. He warned that despite some movement forward in the industry Continued on next page





SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS

Continued from previous page

with the 2014 farm bill, hemp regulations are still being developed.

"Wisconsin has gone a long way to remove a lot of the risk for growers," Bemis said.

Wisconsin growers cautioned farmers in attendance to beware of the extra work involved in growing hemp. They also advised farmers to secure a buyer for their product prior to planting and have at least two back-up plans.

Dan Wiese of Ledge Rock Hemp in Greenleaf, Wisconsin got involved in hemp production because of his curiosity, but he says hemp production requires focus and money.

"Size yourself up by the amount of money you won't need back for awhile," Wiese said.

Green Bay hemp producer Peggy Coffeen said although the production of the crop is intense and labor is all completed by hand, she believes there are opportunities for direct marketing in the future. She said producing a quality product is crucial for traceability as well.

"Consumers continue to want to know where their products are coming from," she said.

Growers continue to learn about the benefits of hemp production not only for the consumer demand but also for soil health. Some producers are using it in their crop rotations, said Ed Liegel of Driftless Extracts of Lone Rock, Wisconsin.

"Hemp removes toxic chemicals from the soil and naturally fights mold," he said. "It's revitalizing, recyclable and sustainable."

Wiese warns that consumers need to watch out for themselves during random drug tests. Being aware of how often



people consume CBD products can help them pass drug tests, he said.

"It's buyer beware," he said. "The Food and Drug Administration has set guidelines, but the products have always been marketed as dietary supplements."

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Ditzenberger encourages people to attend the T.U.G.S. meetings because taking time to really listen to those who are struggling is crucial. It's all about being kind, he said.

"A lot of times when things trouble us, it's just a bad day, not a bad life," he said. "What's the cure for mental health? Honestly, it's just being kind."

Taylor Weisensel of Ag-Bag by RCI of Mayville, Wisconsin continues to advocate for the use of silage bags on farms despite the increase of silage piles. Silage bags minimize silage shrinkage and are safer because they prevent avalanches, he said.

"Bagged feed is higher quality which leads to better milk production," Weisensel said.

He believes in working closely with farmers to implement best-management practices with silage bag use, which includes providing as many tools for farmers to be successful and profitable with bags, he said. An important component of silage bag use is to cut excess plastic off daily and dispose of it properly, so it's doesn't cause issues at the next feeding or end up in neighbor's fence lines.



Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member you receive \$25 towards your 2021 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2021 membership or sponsorship.

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SUPPORTING EDUCATION

Tyler Cross

Racheal Osterhaus

WCO announces scholarship winners; 2020 applications due May 1

WCO recently awarded scholarships to two young professionals. 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 \$1000 scholarship.

"WCO understands that the foundation for the continued success of Wisconsin's agricultural economy depends on a well-educated workforce," said Dr. Kevin Shinners, chairman of the WCO Scholarship Committee and professor of biological systems engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Applications for the 2020 WCO scholarships are being accepted through

May 1. Interested students should visit wiscustomoperators.org for more information including eligibility, criteria and application.

There are two significant shifts in 2020 to the program: First, the scholarship committee created the "Robert Hoerth Memorial Scholarship" to honor WCO Past President Robert Hoerth. This \$1,500 award will be given to applicant who best aligns to the overall criteria. In addition to this award, two \$1,000 scholarships will be given for a total of three awards.

The second shift in the program is for eligibility. As in year's past, applicants may have direct family ties to a current WCO member or to an employee of a WCO member. Applicants may also be a member themselves. New for 2020, A WCO member may sponsor a scholarship applicant who does not meet the regular criteria. For example, if you have a customer who has an exemplary son, daughter or employee, they would be eligible to apply.

Meet the 2019 winners:

Tyler Cross, Poynette, is a first-year student in the Farm and Industry Short Course program at UW-Madison. He is an employee of D & J Manthe Forage Service. Tyler actively shows and raises beef cattle. Through his work and by attending WCO events, he has decided that he would like to pursue a career as a custom farmer.

Racheal Osterhaus, Chadwick, Ill., is a junior at UW-Platteville, majoring in animal science with a minor in biology. Her parents own and operate Silver Streak Ag Services. Racheal is passionate about research and hopes to study how discoveries with animals can benefit human medicine. She is also very interested in training animals and learning about their behavior.

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 and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance!





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A lot of times when things trouble us, it's just a bad day, not a bad life. What's the cure for mental health? Honestly, it's just being kind. "

-Jeff Ditzenberger. Read his article on p. 1

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