

CUSTOM News

Representing custom farming in Wisconsin and beyond | **SPRING 2025**



The 2025 Wisconsin Custom Operators board of directors.
Photo by Troy Meyer

WCO members elect directors, new officers, retiring director honored *By WCO*

WCO members recently elected two new directors and honored two retiring directors during the group’s annual business meeting on Feb. 19, held in conjunction with the Forage Symposium at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

Charlie Schultz was elected as an operator director and Steve Pesik as a corporate director.

Schultz, together with his brother Dave, owns Schultz Bros Forage Service, LLC, in Orangeville, Ill. providing a wide array of custom farming services in South Central Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. Prior to custom farming, he worked in the commercial grain export industry for 10 years. In addition to WCO, he is a member

of the Illinois Forage and Grassland Council and has represented the custom harvesting industry by speaking at events like the Driftless Region Beef Conference and local career days. Schultz and his wife have two children who are both very active in 4H, and they enjoy spending family time helping with their numerous projects.

Pesik serves as the sales manager of Zimmerman Manufacturing, an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) that builds custom manure injection, strip-till, side dress, anhydrous, fertilizer band, and hay ground injection units. He has worked in the farm equipment industry for more than 30 years, with experience in forage, application, and manure

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UPCOMING DATES:

WCO Mini-grant program
Accepted on a rolling basis

WCO Scholarships
Applications due May 1

Forage Symposium
Feb. 16-18, 2026
Chula Vista, Wis. Dells

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Continued on p. 3

From the President's Cab: *Reflecting back, looking forward*

By John Osterhaus



Dear WCO Members, I hope this message finds you well as we prepare to kick off another season. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of

you who attended the 2025 Forage Symposium and our annual meeting in Wisconsin Dells this past February. Your participation and enthusiasm are what make this event a success, and it's inspiring to see how dedicated our members are to staying ahead in our industry.

The 2025 Forage Symposium was a valuable opportunity for all of us to come together, share knowledge, and gain insights into the latest trends and innovations in forage harvesting, manure application, and related topics.

As is our practice, WCO sessions focus on developing your business as well as providing industry insights. Your involvement helped make the event a memorable one. I also want to thank our speakers, sponsors, and board members for their hard work in making this year's symposium an event to remember.

“**Together, we will continue to make strides toward creating safer, more efficient, and more sustainable practices in the forage and manure industries.**”



At the recent Forage Symposium, John Osterhaus recorded an episode of the *Heart of Rural America* podcast with host and keynote speaker Amanda Radke

As we continue to grow as an organization, it's important that we stay connected and ensure that our annual symposium and other events are as relevant as possible. To that end, thank you to all who provided thoughts and suggestions for future symposium topics. We collect this information after each WCO session, and these simple paper surveys are

To listen to the episode, scan the QR code.



how we populate the speakers for the next year's event.

For those of you who didn't complete a survey, or have additional ideas to share, what subjects or areas of focus would you like to see covered at upcoming events? Are there specific challenges or opportunities in your business that you'd like us to explore? Please feel free to reach out to Maria with your ideas. We begin the process in May to pick topics for 2026.

Looking ahead, we are planning a forage and manure safety event for early 2026. This event will provide a deep dive into the critical issues surrounding forage safety and manure management. The event will feature expert speakers, hands-on demonstrations, and plenty of opportunities for networking with fellow members. More information (including a date) will be coming soon, so stay tuned!

As we continue to build on the momentum from the Forage Symposium, I want to express my gratitude for your continued support and engagement. It's your passion, ideas, and hard work that make WCO a strong and dynamic organization. Together, we will continue to make strides toward creating safer, more efficient, and more sustainable practices in the forage and manure industries.

In closing, please remember to share the WCO scholarship with any students, future CDL drivers, or aspiring custom operators. Applications are due May 1, and the program is open to any and all forms of continuing education and professional development. Best wishes for a safe start to the season. 🇺🇸

- John

board changes
(continued from p. 1)

equipment at Oxbo International, Miller, and Kuhn Knight. At Zimmerman Manufacturing, Pesik leads the sales and marketing department and is working to grow the company's manure application and strip till products and dealer relationships. Outside of work, he has been married for 43 years and has two children and two grandchildren.

Officers were selected by the WCO board of directors. John Osterhaus, owner of Silver Streak AG Services in Chadwick, Ill. was re-elected as president and Jeremy Heim, co-owner of Heim Brothers Custom in Kewaunee was re-elected as vice-president. Randy Clark, owner of RCI Engineering in Mayville was re-elected as secretary and Charlie Schultz was elected treasurer.

Osterhaus owns Silver Streak AG Services in Chadwick, Ill. with his wife, Monica. Together, they harvest 5,000 acres annually in Northwest Illinois and sell and service Meyer Manufacturing equipment. In addition to WCO, he is an active member US Custom Harvesters. The Osterhaus' have three grown children, including a son, Alan, who has continued his passion for agriculture as a marketing specialist for CLAAS of America. Two of their children have been awarded WCO scholarships.

Heim is co-owner of Heim Brothers Custom in Kewaunee, a 200-million gallon per year custom manure hauling and chopping business. In addition to the custom business, Heim is co-owner of an 850-cow dairy, Heim's Hillcrest Dairy. Together with this wife Kari, Heim has two children, Ben, and Kiley. Kiley has been working full time on the farm since 2013 focusing on calf care and Ben plays



Isaac Lemmenes, product specialist with Nuhn Industries and Amanda Krepline of Krepline Custom Harvesting in Reedsville retired from the board of directors and were honored for their years of service.

a critical role in field work and the custom business.

Clark is the owner of RCI Engineering in Mayville, where he designs and manufactures equipment solutions for the hay and forage industry, including plot research equipment and the Ag-Bag product line. In addition to WCO, he is involved with Wisconsin Section of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, Midwest Forage Association, and other industry groups. Clark credits his wife, Wendy, for his success in business and in life. The two work together at RCI Engineering where Wendy serves as marketing manager. They have three boys, Ryan, Isaac, and Colin.

Amanda Krepline of Krepline Custom Harvesting in Reedsville and Isaac Lemmenes, product specialist with Nuhn Industries retired from the board of directors and were honored for their years of service. 🇺🇸



Charlie Schultz,



Steve Pesik

To view the scholarship application, scan the QR code.



WCO honors four scholarship winners; 2025 applications due May 1 *By WCO*



WCO recently awarded four scholarships to students 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 WCO and received a \$1,000 or \$1,500 scholarship.

“WCO understands that Wisconsin’s agricultural economy depends on a well-trained workforce,” said Joseph Sanford, chairman of the WCO Scholarship and Awards Committee and an assistant professor at UW-Platteville. “There are a growing number of training opportunities to fulfill this need, ranging from traditional college experiences to trade and apprenticeship programs.”

Amber Anhalt of Chilton, Wis. was chosen to receive the \$1,500 Robert Hoerth Memorial Scholarship, which honors the late WCO Past President

Robert Hoerth, who tragically passed away in early 2020. The scholarship is awarded to the most deserving applicant based on their alignment with the established criteria. Amber is pursuing a degree in radiology at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. Driven by a desire to help others, she chose radiology because it is a growing field with numerous opportunities for advancement. After graduation, Amber plans to continue her medical education with additional certifications in CT and MRI technology. This award holds special significance for Amber, as Robert Hoerth was her grandfather. She fondly remembers riding in the chopper with him and showing animals at the county fair. Completing her education is one of the ways Amber hopes to honor his memory and make him proud.

Chloe Breunig of Sheboygan Falls, Wis. received a \$1,000 scholarship. She

is majoring in dairy science with the ambition of becoming the 6th generation to run her family’s dairy farm in rural Sheboygan County. Nominated by Kraus Custom Forage Harvesting LLP, Chloe credits scholarships for enabling her to devote time outside of her studies to co-curricular activities such as the UW Marching Band, the Association of Women in Agriculture, and the Badger Dairy Club. Initially, Chloe felt that attending college and stepping away from the farm seemed selfish, but she quickly realized that experiencing new environments and meeting different people would ultimately help her achieve her goal of continuing her family’s farming legacy.

Brenna Dulak of Mosinee, Wis. was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. She is a freshman at Winona State University, majoring in nursing with the goal of becoming a nurse practitioner and travel nurse. During high school, Brenna earned

her certification as a nursing assistant and began working at Aspirus Wausau Hospital. It was there that she developed a passion for the profession and decided to pursue nursing. Nominated by Swidersky Equipment, Brenna found choosing a career in nursing to be an easy decision, as she has always been driven by a desire to care for others and make a meaningful difference in the world.

Emily Vollmer of Hilbert, Wis. was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. She is a sophomore at Drake University, majoring in English and Spanish, with the goal of earning a master's degree in education to teach at the high school or college level. Emily believes that language is the ultimate bridge between people from different backgrounds and credits her experience working at an on-campus

writing center for inspiring her to pursue a teaching career. Emily is the daughter of Greg and Jennifer Volmer, owners of Midlakes Custom Services LLC and long-time members of WCO. From a young age, Emily developed a strong work ethic by assisting in the family business, taking on tasks such as picking rocks, transporting employees, and helping in the office.

In 2025, three (3) awards will be given: Two (2) \$1,000 scholarships and the \$1,500 Robert Hoerth Memorial Scholarship. Applications are due May 1. More information is on the WCO website under "about us".

To be eligible, 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. In addition, a WCO member may nominate a scholarship applicant who does not meet the above criteria. For example, if a WCO member has a customer who has an exemplary son, daughter, or employee, they are eligible to apply.

The program is open to any post-secondary training, including traditional college experiences and career-focused programs such as CDL truck driver training courses, pesticide applicator training programs/exams, or other industry-relevant certifications. Individuals pursuing non-academic post-secondary education who are seeking career opportunities in the industry, such as joining a harvest crew or participating in an apprenticeship program, are also encouraged to apply. 🇺🇸



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Member survey data on the WCO website and new “quick read”

Data from the most recent member survey is live on the WCO website. Go to wiscustomopertors.org and click the “resources” tab. From the drop down, select “member services and rate information”. Users have the option to view rates only, or the entire survey, which contains information on technology adoption, employee management, and other relevant topics.

New this year, we created a 1-page “quick read” document that provides a min, max, mean, and median for each service rate. We also mailed a waterproof copy of this document to all current WCO members. We hope that you use it when you meet with customers and service providers.

This 1-pager is a snapshot of rates only, make sure to view the whole survey as well. Let us know what you think! 🇺🇸

WCO Wisconsin Custom Operators		2024 Annual Survey			
Forage and Silage Services					
Service	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Number of Responses
Merging (\$/ac)	\$10	\$18	\$15	\$15	13
Mowing and Conditioning (\$/ac)	\$15	\$20	\$17	\$16	12
Mowing Only (\$/ac)	\$15	\$22	\$16	\$15	6
Pack Tractor (\$/hr)	\$80	\$250	\$139	\$143	23
Large Square Baling (\$/bale)	\$8	\$15	\$11	\$10	5
Hauling Semi (\$/hr)	\$110	\$175	\$140	\$140	14
Hauling Straight Truck (\$/hr)	\$80	\$140	\$106	\$110	11
Hauling Tractor (\$/hr)	\$75	\$180	\$128	\$125	10
500-800HP SPFH Haylage (\$/hr)*	\$400	\$889	\$610	\$589	14
>800HP SPFH Haylage (\$/hr)*	\$550	\$920	\$772	\$809	8
500-800HP SPFH Corn Silage (\$/hr)*	\$400	\$900	\$650	\$669	11
>800HP SPFH Corn Silage (\$/hr)*	\$586	\$1000	\$800	\$800	7

* Customer provides fuel

To view the WCO member survey, scan the QR code.



Don't forget about WCO's mini-grant program!

In addition to scholarships and other awards, WCO has a mini-grant program designed to provide smaller, more flexible awards to assist with important projects or programs that will benefit the custom farming and the ag communities.

The WCO board feels strongly that it is important to invest in great people and innovative ideas. To learn more about the mini-grant program and to download the application, go to wiscustomoperators.org and click the "about us" tab.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and awards range from \$500-\$5,000. Funding is available as soon as the application is approved by WCO.

Funds are distributed as follows: 50% upon application approval and 50% upon receipt of final report.

Like most grants, there are reporting obligations and we also ask that recipients be willing to speak about their project at a WCO event such as the annual Forage Symposium.

Priority is given to projects that:

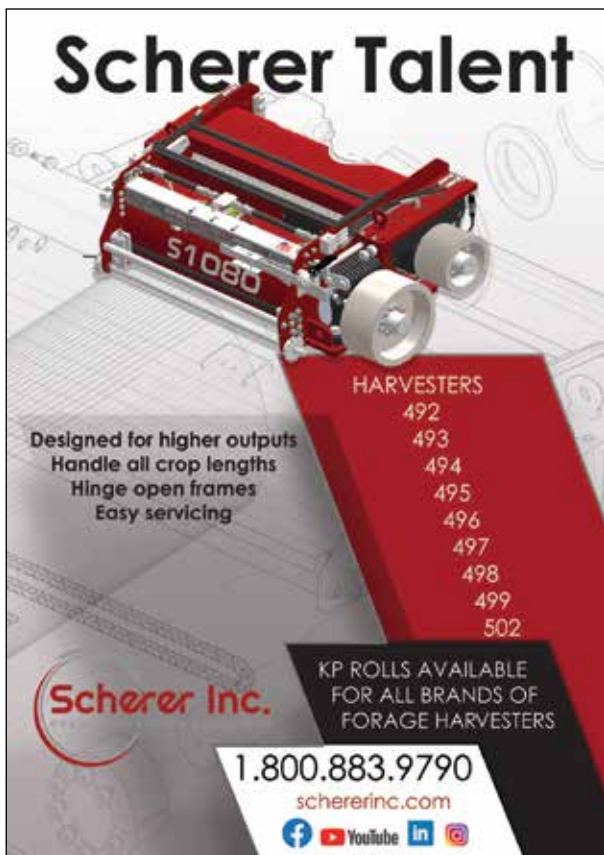
- >>Directly benefit the custom farming community
- >>Involve custom farmers or clients of custom farmers
- >>Involve post-secondary student research or organization opportunities
- >>Emphasize farm safety and health,

leadership, teamwork, sustainability, innovation, or community involvement

This program is open to university/technical college faculty, staff, students, student organizations or non-profit organizations. Others deemed appropriate by the WCO Scholarship and Awards Committee will also be considered.

Examples include: Funding for students as part of larger project, costs associated with hosting an event or farmer meeting, incentive funds for farmers/custom farmers to try new practices.

Questions? Call (608) 577-4345 or email execdir@wiscustomoperators.org



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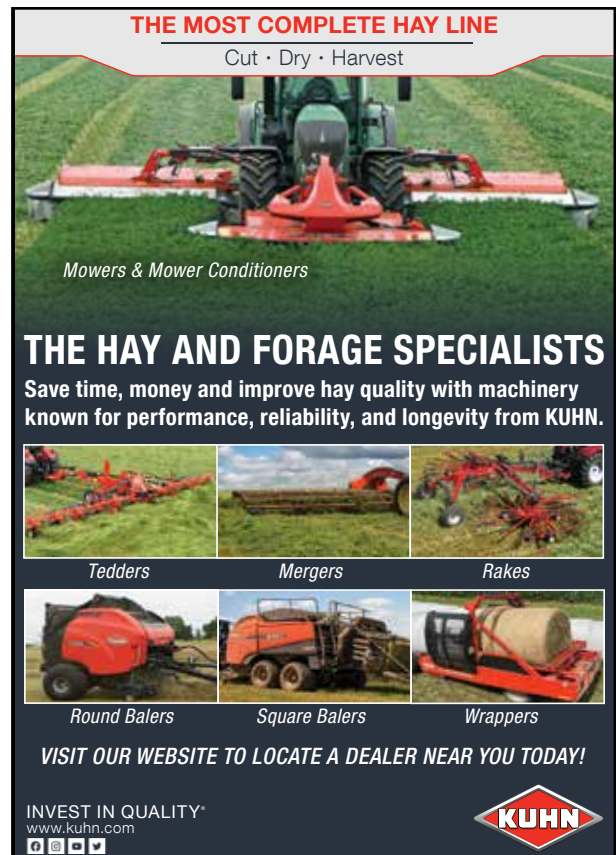
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Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member you receive \$25 towards your 2026 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2026 membership or sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. Help WCO grow our membership base!

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Welcome to WCO

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

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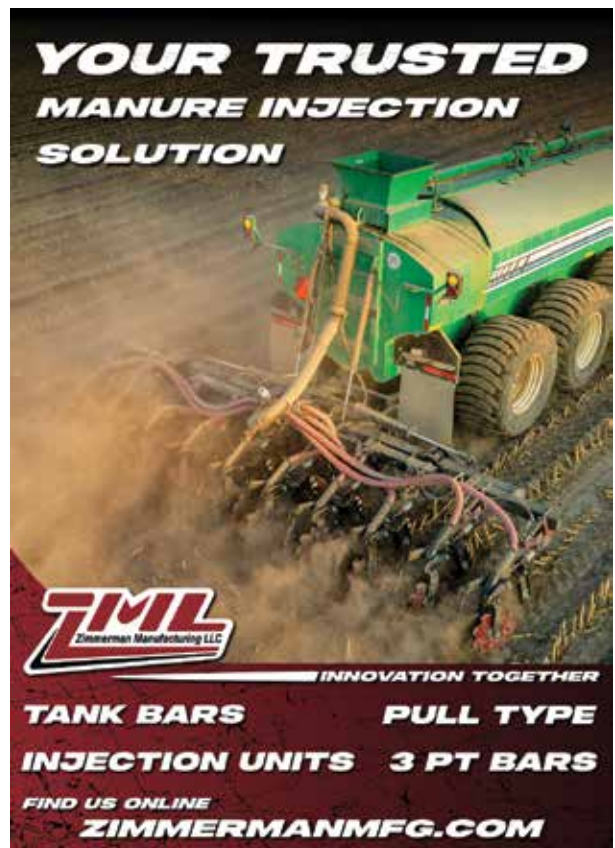


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- Jakobi Dammen, Dammen Custom Chopping
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- Luke Keulers, Keulers Farm
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- Jean Manthe, D&J Manthe Forage Service LLC
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Please 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 and we do our best to feature diverse equipment brands and 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! 🇺🇸



Brittany Herricks, from 1st CCU and Herricks Enterprises LLC spoke at Forage Symposium about custom farming finance and structuring debt for new businesses.

Zutz wins \$1,000 grand prize!



Jake Zutz won \$1,000 at the recent WCO annual meeting during Forage Symposium. Members were entered to win after completing the online member survey and Jake's name was chosen at random. Congrats Jake! 🇺🇸

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***Applications for the
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program are due
May 1. College,
CDL courses, and
other continuing
education courses
are considered!***

wiscustomoperators.org

A green John Deere tractor is shown from a rear-quarter perspective, parked in a field. It is pulling a large, complex green implement, likely a planter or harrow. The tractor's headlights are on, and the scene is set against a dramatic sunset sky with orange, pink, and purple hues. The John Deere logo is visible on the side of the implement.

**Questions about loH/Ag CMV rules and
permit applications?**

go to wisconsin.gov and search
"Implements of Husbandry"