

CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | **SPRING 2021**



Bryce O'Leary, pictured last spring, recently retired from the WCO board. New officers and board announced on p. 5 Photo by Tracey Leeder.

Suicide: another pandemic

By Mary Hookham for WCO



Jeff Ditzenberger

The rate of death by suicide increases every year in the farming community, a rate that could be reduced if there was more hope.

People can offer that hope to one another through positive, kind actions, and by becoming trained in the Question, Persuade and Refer concept.

"Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem," said Jeff Ditzenberger, a certified QPR trainer. "Giving someone in trouble your time and attention might make all the difference and restore hope."

Ditzenberger hosted a QPR training session for WCO in a virtual format in mid-March. The concept is designed to teach people how to make a positive difference in the lives of people they know. Learning what to do at the time it needs to be done can save lives.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported an increase in use of the national suicide hotline by 892 percent. Ditzenberger's non-profit, T.U.G.S., has experienced an increase in mental health call volumes of 415 percent. For every one COVID-19-related death, there have been 324 suicides or overdoses.

"We have another pandemic going on

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UPCOMING DATES:

WCO Mini-grant program
Accepted on a rolling basis

WCO Scholarships
Applications due May 1

WI Farm Technology Days
July 20-22, Eau Claire, Wis.
Board meeting - July 20

CONTACT WCO:

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From the President's Cab

By Raymond Liska



Proper planning promotes positive performance and is a great way to start a season, a day, chopper, combine or a manure pump. Whatever it is, what you put in is what you'll get out.

The 2021 season is underway and getting a custom farming business ready for the season calls for year-round planning. Organizing parts and repairs, checking in with customers, meeting with your insurance agent, are just some things to consider. If you find yourself in need of more resources, remember that WCO provides a platform for networking among members, whether you're harvesting, planting, manure handling or all of the above, sharing our experiences allows us to learn and grow together.

Learning and growth are essential to your business's performance. WCO promotes educational opportunities to help strengthen and improve your business. Safety training, newsletters and the annual symposium are some of the many ways that we do this. These opportunities, like seeds on an ear, can be nurtured from a single idea from an individual member. WCO, like the soil and nutrients, provides the forum for these ideas to become critical components to your success.

Sometimes we all need a little help, whether it's changing a tire on the side of the road, or those infamous words, "we need more trucks". Having a network of people is important. Use the WCO website and social media to connect you to fellow operators, equipment dealers, manufacturers, industry support and to guide your business into the future.

In 2020, custom operators harvested 23,853,000 tons of silage in Wisconsin alone. It is a testament to the power of positivity, leadership and hard work required to get the job done. Make a sound investment in your future and utilize the tools that WCO has to offer, by getting involved and getting back even more than you've put in. Have a safe and happy season, and may God be with you on your journey. 🍷 - Ray

Policy center *issues to watch*

Biennial state budget: Agriculture plays a big role in Gov. Evers' 2021-2023 state budget proposal. Highlights for the ag community include: \$200 million for broadband internet access. \$2 billion for highway rehabilitation, including \$941.9 million in transportation aid for counties and municipalities. \$5.4M for updates and improvements to Farmland Preservation, increased funding to farmer-led watershed groups (\$500K) and increased funding for UW-Extension specialists and county conservation staff (\$9.2M).

The Joint Finance Committee has scheduled state-wide public hearings for April 9 at UW-Whitewater, April 21 in Rhinelander, April 22 at UW-Stout and April 28 in a virtual format. If you can't attend a hearing, you can submit comments. Go to legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/ to learn more.

Federal COVID-19 relief for farmers and business owners:

The Senate passed a bill extending the *PPP application deadline* from March 31 to May 31. Check with your banking institution for more information.

The USDA is making changes to *CFAP*. If you applied (and were accepted) for the last two rounds of CFAP payments, you will automatically receive payments for this cycle accounting for some changes to cattle and row crop formulas. More info at farmers.gov/cfap.

Truth-in-labeling: Three Senate bills have passed in the state Senate Agriculture Committee to ensure plant-based imitators cannot use terms like milk, cheese, yogurt and hamburger to confuse customers and hijack legal definitions. Sen. Howard Marklein, Rep. Travis Tranel and Rep. Clint Moses are championing the efforts. 🍷

Welcome new members!

These individuals/sponsors joined WCO from Nov. 2020 - March 2021

Larry Schamberger – Vanderloop Equipment

Kristyn Nigon – Komro Sales & Service

Hunter Konop – Ducat Farms Custom Work

Tell your #CustomFarming Story



QPR

(continued from p. 1)

that nobody is talking about, and it's one that I'm very, very passionate about," Ditzenberger said.

In many cases, people who take their own lives are suffering from an acute stress situation, a major relationship conflict or a treatable brain disorder, according to Dr. Paul Quinnett in a video shown during the training session.

"This type of training is definitely important in not only the farming community, but in our world as a whole," said Megan Hoff, a WCO member with her husband, Allen. "Even before COVID, we were in a mental health crisis. There isn't enough resources, so we have to help each other in any way we can, even if it's just someone to be there to listen."

Listening is another crucial step in preventing suicides. When someone is having thoughts of hurting or killing himself or herself, listening and providing your full attention can make a big difference, Ditzenberger said.

"Just simply being there to listen may save a life," he said.

Hoff feels she and her husband can put this training to good use with their employees as those employees handle potentially tough situations in their personal lives. She appreciated Ditzenberger sprinkling in some of his own personal experiences and struggles throughout the training, she said. This made the session more personal and relatable.

"The last few years have been tough for our customers, so the training gives us that knowledge to really listen when they talk about how things are going," Hoff said. "We've had a lot of our customers for years, so we know their mannerisms and can be more aware if something

seems off."

Questioning someone to find out if something is off can consist of a simple conversation that appears to be casual, Ditzenberger said. There are almost always direct and indirect verbal clues when someone is contemplating hurting or killing themselves.

"Remember that how you ask the question is less important than that you ask," he said. "The fact that we're asking the question is the most important part, so if you can't ask this question, find someone who can. It's not harsh, it's showing you care."

The persuade portion of the concept involves active, thoughtful listening. Ditzenberger recommends planting a seed of hope for someone who may otherwise be hopeless.

"The impact of words on a daily basis is one of the easiest ways to make people feel better," he said.

WCO President Ray Liska understands that getting a conversation started in order to provide hope and positivity can be tough. Sharing his training with his employees will help that flow of dialogue continue constantly, he said.

"I saw a change today in the way I approach depression and suicide," Liska said. "QPR training provides talking points and compassion to help open up the conversation, whether it's with someone you've known for years, or someone you just met. It also helps identify key indicators that someone

may be struggling and how to engage with them."

People in suicidal situations can be referred to professional counselors for help. But that doesn't mean the efforts of coworkers, bosses, family members and friends trained in QPR are done. It takes a network of supportive, well-trained people to save each life.

"Jeff's program can be beneficial to businesses and individuals of all walks of life, and I would highly recommend him and his approach to mental health awareness," Liska said. 🇺🇸

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WCO members elect directors, new officers

By WCO

WCO members elected two directors and new officers during the group's annual business meeting held virtually on Jan. 27.

William Smith, owner of Smith Custom Farming LLC in Darlington and Pat Johnson, co-owner of Number 2 Injection LLC were elected as operator directors. Smith was re-elected to a second term and Johnson is a new addition to the WCO board.

In addition to Smith Custom Farming, Smith farms 2,000 acres of grain in the Darlington area. Smith is a member of MFA, Lafayette County Farm Bureau, National Federation of Independent Business and he supports local FFA and

4-H activities. Smith Custom Farming has a strong presence on social media with nearly 3,000 people following their Facebook page. Smith and his wife, Jamie, have two sons.

Johnson co-owns Number 2 Injection LLC, a custom manure application business in Evansville. In addition to WCO, he is a member of PNAAW and participates in manure pump schools and safety trainings whenever possible. Public perception of agriculture, especially manure application, is very important to Johnson. He is also passionate about helping younger people enter the custom farming industry because there are often fewer barriers to entry than traditional

farming for someone without a family farm connection. Johnson and his wife have two children and are also a foster family.

Officers were selected by the WCO board of directors including a new president and vice-president. Ray Liska, owner of Apollo-Vale Enterprises in Cochrane will serve as president and Jesse Dvorachek, owner of Dvorachek Farm and Industry, LLC in Brillion as vice-president. Josh Bartholomew, a corporate director from Oxbo International in Clear Lake, was re-elected as secretary and Isaac Lemmenes, a corporate director from R Braun, Inc. in St Nazianz, was re-elected treasurer.

Liska owns and operates Apollo-Vale

Continued on p. 5

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Enterprizes and custom raises poultry for Gold'n Plump Farms. He was very active in FFA and is a member of Wisconsin Farm Bureau. 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 home school, which leads to a lot of time in the fields working as a family.

Dvorachek is the owner of Dvorachek Farm and Industry, LLC, a custom manure application company. In addition to WCO, Dvorachek is a member of PNAAW, Dairy Business Association and Peninsula Pride Farms, a farmer-led group that focuses on promoting environmentally sound agriculture on the Door Peninsula. Dvorachek, his wife, Heather, along with the couple's four children are very active in their church and regularly attend mission trips.

Retiring board member and long-time president Bryce O'Leary, owner of O'Leary Brothers Chopping Service LLC in Janesville, was honored for his service to WCO. 🇺🇸



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Latest hay merger technology offers options to farmers

By Mary Hookham for WCO

Hay mergers come in a variety of shapes and sizes from several different companies. Farmers can find features and benefits that will best serve their needs while improving efficiency.

"Serviceability is a big thing on hay mergers," said Ben Craker, senior product manager with Kuhn North America.

During the Midwest Forage Association annual symposium, Craker and three colleagues detailed new features and benefits of hay mergers from their four respective companies. Many of these improvements were results of customer feedback.

All commercial mergers have drivelines to keep them straight and large volumes of oil to keep

the machines cool, Craker said. Kuhn now offers floating wind guards to help keep windrows consistent as well as crop nets to retain leaves. These features are increasing merging speed by one-half mile per hour as the mergers pick up the crop and put it on the conveyor belt.

"With crop nets on top, we're able to catch leaves that blow away otherwise and direct them back down into the crop to enhance the nutrient value," he said.

Kuhn also offers commercial-grade belts, a variety of windrow delivery options, constant float suspension, floating skid shoes, indicator control systems for head pick up height and speed and an automatic clean out mode. The

Continued on p. 7

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 **OXBO**



Representatives from H&S, Kuhn North America, Oxbo International and ROC/Eisentraut Ag presented on the latest innovations in merger technology at the virtual Forage Symposium.



Continued from p. 6

clean out mode uses gravity to pull the crop down and saves time.

Split bearings and wear guards, hallmarks of mergers made by Kuhn, are now being made of plastic for easy removal for maintenance. Anti-wrap discs help prevent longer crops from getting wrapped up in the machine.

Josh Bartholomew, Oxbo International hay and forage territory sales manager, shared the benefits of investing in mergers over rakes. Merging hay reduces ash content because the crop is picked up and conveyed off the ground. Mergers increase productivity because farmers can move up to 12 miles per hour faster, they provide versatility in the field and improve forage quality of hay.

"Farmers can get back to doing hay in a day," Bartholomew said. "There is also less dirt and leaf loss."

Oxbo offers five merger models with pick up widths ranging from 12 inches to 40 inches. The three-point hitch can accommodate larger tractors, and the hitch-mounted gearbox and pumps reduce maintenance. The gearbox now has higher torque and gear oil capacity while the pump-gearbox combination delivers 49 percent more hydraulic flow.

The merger models 2330 and 2334 offer hydraulic float systems, positive drive motors and skid shoes. Those models as well as the 2340 model have steerable rear wheels for added maneuverability.

A 90-gallon hydraulic oil reservoir improves cooling capabilities and the rear-mounted hydraulic tank and access platform make maintenance easier. Options on Oxbo's mergers include auto lube standard and a dry hay skirt.

H&S Manufacturing offers a 28-foot

2-inch merging width with the ability to merge five windrows into one without the need for an additional cross-conveyor, said Ron Zygarlicke, product and marketing manager for H&S.

The company also offers a patented center cam/center drive with rubber mounted teeth. The 5128 Twin Flex merger comes standard with a self-contained hydraulic system, manual hydraulic controls, manual adjust skid shoes and 16.5 by 16.1 tires with rims. The 6128 Twin Flex merger comes with soft-shoe suspension technology, which is a self-contained, self-monitoring suspension system that provides the softest merger head footprint in the industry, Zygarlicke said. This technology works well in wet soils, rough terrain and new seeding.


H&S mergers also have remote filter package and dual cross-conveyor drive options available.

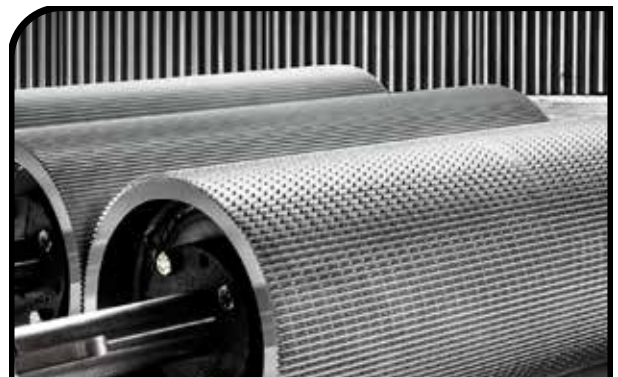
Dave Eisentraut, owner of Eisentraut Ag Services and dealer for ROC Service Company, said the RT 730 hay merger model offers the shortest wheel base in the industry with a two-point hitch that oscillates and can pivot 100 degrees. This allows a tractor to run parallel to the pick up with no steering components needed.

All machines use universal heads that come in two different sizes and configurations depending on machine width. Belt tensioning is simple,

Eisentraut said. Every head has one adjustment and is spring-loaded with an indicator. Belts can be stretched to maximum tension three times before replacements are needed.

"Our belt system returns around the tail wheel," he said. "As the belt starts to stretch, you can loosen the tensioner all the way up and then start out fresh on your adjustment again. This can be done on both ends of the head."

ROC mergers are easy to repair and maintain and have a modular system on the conveyor belts. Rubber flaps on the belts open up to allow debris to fall out. The cam system is designed to be removed without dismantling the entire head, and the tandem axle set of wheels move contour to the ground providing more suspension. 



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WCO announces scholarship winners; 2020 applications due May 1

By WCO

WCO recently awarded two scholarships to students pursuing further education. 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.

“WCO understands that the foundation for the continued success of Wisconsin’s agricultural economy depends on a well-educated workforce,” said Dr. Kevin Shinnars, chairman of the WCO Scholarship and Awards Committee and professor of biological systems engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “We also recognize

that the high-cost of additional education can impact this need.”

Applications for the 2021 WCO scholarship are due May 1. Interested students should visit wiscustomoperators.org for more information including eligibility, criteria and application.

In 2021, three awards will be given: two \$1,000 scholarships and the \$1,500 Robert Hoerth Memorial Scholarship which honors WCO Past President Robert Hoerth.

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 would

be eligible to apply.

Meet the 2020 winners:

Jonni VanRite of Green Bay received a \$1,000 scholarship. She is a junior at St. Norbert College, majoring in business administration with an emphasis in human resources. Jonni’s father is an employee of WCO member Vander Kinter Farms in Green Bay.

Emily Olson of Mondovi received the inaugural \$1,500 Robert Hoerth Memorial Scholarship to honor WCO Past President Robert Hoerth who passed away unexpectedly in early 2020. This award is given to the most deserving scholarship applicant based on their alignment to the overall criteria. Emily is a first-year student at Chippewa Valley Technical College, majoring in business management. She is the sister of Cole Olson, a WCO member from Diversified Farms in Mondovi. 🇺🇸

Please send your photos to WCO

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“Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Giving someone in trouble your time and attention might make all the difference and restore hope.”

-Jeff Ditzenberger Feature article on p. 1

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(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