



MOMENTUM

The Hemp Hype

As Legal Hemp Production Produces Headlines,
Hurdles Exist for Missouri Growers

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Saving the Soil

Cover Crops Aid Arkansas
Farmer in Sustaining
His Land

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Fall 2019

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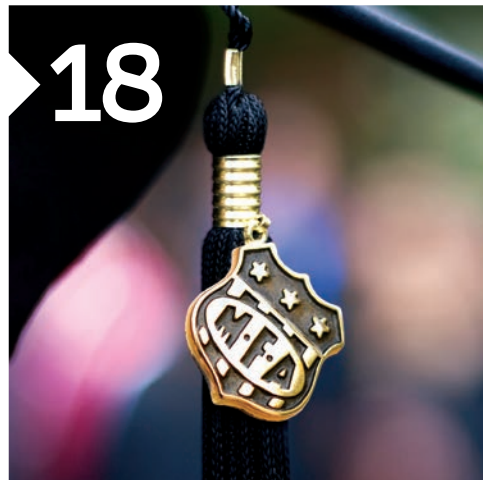
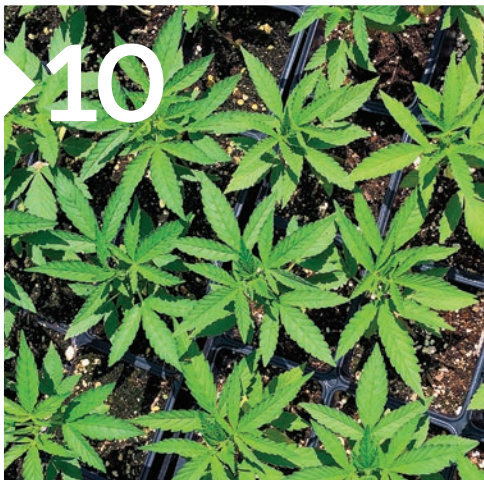
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On the Cover:

Arkansas farmer Robby Bevis plants winter cover crops to improve the health and biology of his soils. Photo by Sara Reeves.

We Live Where You Do

SLOGANS ARE GREAT FOR quickly stating or reinforcing the character of a company or brand. They also help to align our team and differentiate us from our competitors. MFA Oil Company recently reintroduced the slogan “We Live Where You Do.” The decision to update our slogan may seem minor, but for us, it underscores our commitment to serving our local communities.

When we shifted away from “We Live Where You Do” to “Stronger Together” in 2015, MFA Oil

was in the midst of significantly restructuring our field operations. We were consolidating some locations, and our bulk and propane plants were coming together to work more effectively and efficiently. While “Stronger Together” fit our organizational objectives during that stretch, we feel the time is right to return to “We Live Where You Do” because of our dedication to local service and the strong connection we have with our rural communities and customers.

For 90 years, MFA Oil employees have lived and worked in the same communities our co-op has served, and we wouldn’t have it any other way. We are just as devoted to meeting the needs of our farmers, ranchers and rural residents as ever before.

In my early years with the company, a mentor told me, “We’re a company that is large enough to react but small enough to care.” This is our direction.

Besides our position as your energy supplier, when you think of MFA Oil, we want you to think of great service and an outstanding buying experience. That’s our top priority. All of our businesses are aligned with the same strategy: putting the customer first. I’m sure we will run into the occasional hiccup — no organization is perfect — however, you will always remain our focus.

No matter how you choose to do business with us — whether it be face-to-face, over the phone, online or through automation — we aim to deliver the best combination of value through excellent service, expert knowledge and quality products.



Jon Ihler
President and CEO



Jon Ihler



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This magazine comes to you courtesy of MFA Oil Company, a farmer-owned cooperative providing energy solutions to customers for 90 years. We deliver high-quality propane, fuels and lubricants to farmers and other customers across an eight-state region stretching from Indiana to Kansas. *Momentum* is an information service for farm families, published by MFA Oil.

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Mobile Hope

Centralia couple's innovative solution helps kids around the world

HEADLINES AND AWARDS WEREN'T ON TAYLOR

Moreland's mind that night in August 2018 when he flipped on the lights in his Centralia garage, sat down and began to work.

All he was thinking about was how he could help his son, Brody.

Born with spina bifida, Brody, now 2 years old, has little to no movement or control of his body below his chest. His ability to be mobile like other toddlers — whether playing with toys, chasing the cat or generally exploring his world — was completely hindered. He needed a way to crawl.

"We tried a scooter board, but it didn't work on the carpet, and his hands would get stuck underneath it," Taylor recalls. "So, I just started tinkering."

The result was "The Frog," a mobility device for children as young as 6 months old. The Frog supports the weight of the lower body on a teetering frame with independent wheels, allowing a child to push up with his arms and pull himself along. The forward motion resembles a hopping frog, hence the device's name.

"When we made the first version for Brody, we never thought we would make it for anybody else," says Ally, Brody's mother. "But when his physical therapist said other kids could benefit, we realized there was a big need. It was so thrilling for us to see Brody move wherever he wanted on his own, so we said, 'OK, let's try to get other kids moving.'"

With a goal of building 100 Frogs for the year, the Morelands started a GoFundMe campaign this past January. After receiving local press coverage in the spring, the story was picked up nationally. In late June, ABC's "World News Tonight" told Brody's story.

"After that, the GoFundMe just exploded," Taylor says. "We raised \$50,000 in a matter of hours, and by the end of the weekend, we had raised \$100,000."

Overnight, they began receiving inquiries from scores of parents whose children had spina bifida as well as conditions such as cerebral palsy and Down syndrome.

"There's nothing like it out there for kids who can't crawl," Ally says. "It takes weight off the upper extremities so they can get the concept a lot easier."

As of the end of September, the Morelands had raised more than \$145,000 through their GoFundMe campaign and shipped 150



Ally, Brody and Taylor Moreland with The Frog.

Frogs. They estimate it costs \$300 to build and ship one Frog, which they've sent as far away as Africa and Europe.

"When you have a child with special needs, you need a lot of equipment, and none of it is cheap," Taylor says. "Insurance helps, but not with all of it. We wanted to make The Frog free for parents who couldn't afford it and affordable for parents who could."

Recently, the Patient Innovation Association, an international nonprofit organization based in Portugal, selected The Frog for one of its 4th annual PI Awards, which will be presented in Paris, France, in December. While humbled by the honor, the Morelands don't plan to attend — and with good reason. Their second son, Brett, was born in September.

"With the new baby, we aren't making the trip to France," Ally says, "but Gerti Motovalli, Brody's amazing physical therapist, is going to go and accept on Taylor's behalf."

As the Morelands continue filling orders for the original Frog, Taylor already is designing a larger model to accommodate older children. He's also tinkering with a wheelchair that doubles as a potty chair, something they've dubbed the "GoBro."

"Sometimes, you ask yourself, 'What on earth are we doing? What have we gotten ourselves into?'" Ally says. "But when you see videos of other little kids being able to be mobile and explore their world, it's all worth it." **M**

— STORY AND PHOTO BY JASON JENKINS

To learn more about The Frog, call 573-544-0219 or visit www.frogmobilityllc.com. Donations to support the Moreland's efforts can be made at www.gofundme.com/f/help-brody-get-kids-moving.

SAVING *The* SOIL



Cover Crops Aid Arkansas Farmer in Sustaining His Land



By Adam Buckallew
Photos by Sara Reeves

Standing in a field of his soon-to-be-harvested soybeans about a half-hour's drive east of Little Rock, Ark., Robby Bevis plunges a steel soil probe into the ground. As the morning sun crests the horizon, he dumps the collected dirt into his hand. "This is the foundation of all agriculture," he says while sifting the sandy loam soil through his fingers. "And we should be doing a better job of protecting it."

Anytime Bevis sees heavy tillage or chocolate-milk colored water washing off a farm field, it pains him. He knows how crucial the topsoil lost to erosive forces is to any farm's chances of future success and how long it takes to replace what is lost.

GIVING DIRT ITS DUE

The soil Bevis is holding in his hands isn't just some inanimate lump of earth. It's part of a complex and diverse microbiome that is teeming with life—much of it microscopic—like bacteria, viruses and fungi that coexist with worms, nematodes, springtails, insects and plant roots. A single gram of fertile soil can contain up to a billion bacteria.

Each microorganism and subterranean critter plays its own special role in building sustainable soils including mineralizing nutrients for plant uptake, decomposing plant residue, stimulating root growth, biologically controlling soil pathogens, providing structure and much more. When a soil's underground life is flourishing, it provides nourishment for plants and absorbs and retains water to help minimize the effects of droughts and flooding. But when the earth is plowed up or left barren in between crops, the dirt-bound organisms begin to die off and the soil becomes degraded.



LEFT: Robby Bevis began planting cover crops in 2012. The nutrient cycling the cover crops perform have enabled Bevis to grow soybeans without applying phosphorus or potassium. ABOVE: Cover crops help not only hold precious topsoil in place, they have also improved the soil structure and increased water-holding capacity on the land Bevis farms.

When Bevis began to learn of the unseen and underappreciated life beneath his fields—and the role it plays in maintaining the productivity of his land—he knew things had to change on his farm. He now follows three core soil health principles: keep living roots in the ground, diversify the types of plants that grow in it and disturb it as little as possible.

INCORPORATING COVER CROPS

Bevis's interest in preserving and restoring his soils can be traced back to his decision to add 900 acres of winter cover crops to his farmland in 2012. The fifth-generation grower, who farms with his son, Trey, and his father, Bob, is well-acquainted with raising corn, soybeans and rice on the edge of the Arkansas Delta. But cover crops were a relative unknown to him. The first year had its challenges, but Bevis learned much from the experience.

In the summer following his initial experimentation, he noticed the fields that had been planted with cover crops needed less irrigation, cutting his water pumping expenses. That was enough to

convince him to plant cover crop seed across the majority of his 3,000 acres following the 2010 harvest, and in the years since, he's realized further benefits.

Bevis's cover crops have not only kept his soils in place but also improved the soil's structure, boosted its organic matter levels, and increased its water-holding capacity.

On some of his farms, Bevis has increased the organic matter in the soil from 0.5 percent up to between 3 and 4 percent, and it's still ticking up. Soil scientists report that for every 1 percent of organic matter, the soil can hold 20,000 gallons of plant-available water per acre of soil in the top foot of soil.

Building the land's organic matter deposits has allowed Bevis to cut his irrigations costs in half and drastically reduce his field's fertility needs. He has slashed his corn's fertilizer inputs and didn't apply any phosphorus or potassium to his 2018 soybean crop—resulting in substantial savings with no reduction in yield.

"All our inputs across the board are down," Bevis says. "We're now trying to see how low we can go."



TOP: Bevis has seen organic matter levels increase across his farmland as a result of planting cover crops. RIGHT: Bevis is working with other growers in Arkansas to promote soil conservation. BOTTOM: As he examines the earth clumped to a corn stalk's roots, Bevis looks for earthworms, a prime indicator of healthy soil.

KEEPING SOIL COVERED

As soon as he finishes the fall harvest, Bevis plants a multispecies mix of cover crops that varies based on his cash crop rotation. At minimum, he plants a three-way blend of cover crops to maximize the diversified benefits each plant species brings to the table. Every mixture always includes a grass, a brassica and legume.

Grasses are effective at scavenging nitrogen in the soil and leaving behind plenty of plant residue that helps to build organic matter and suppress weeds. Brassica provide rapid fall growth to minimize soil exposure after harvest and often have long taproots that drill down several feet helping to break up

compacted soils. Legumes fix atmospheric nitrogen in the soil while improving organic matter and soil structure.

In soybean fields that will be planted to corn the following season, Bevis plants cereal rye, black oats, Austrian winter peas, clover, vetch and a radish variety. Adding three legumes to the mix helps build sufficient nitrogen for his corn crop, and he appreciates the way vetch will help push the grasses down in the spring when he's ready to plant his cash crop into the standing cover.

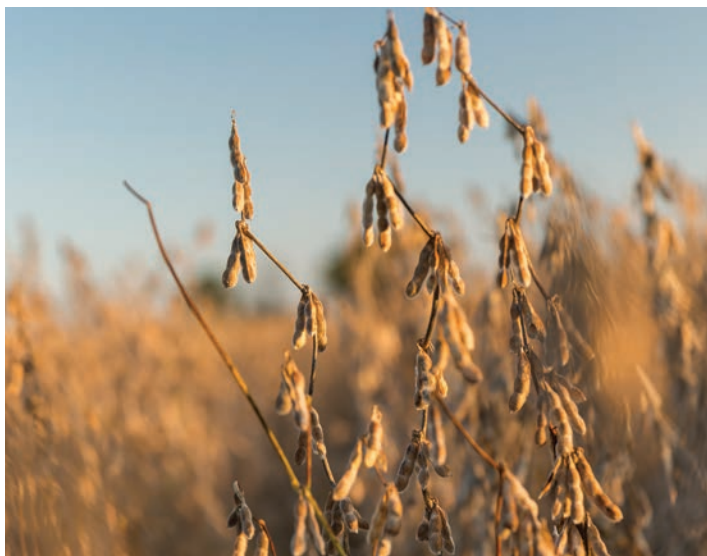
TOUTING SOIL HEALTH

Bevis's experience with cover crops has completely reshaped his views on farming and his strategy for the future.

"If you would have asked me prior to 2012 if I would be talking about stuff like cover crops, nutrient cycling, and soil health, I would have told you, 'No, that's not me,'" he says. "But the more I've stepped back and looked at it, the more I've realized the soil is the key."

In an effort to help other farmers preserve and unlock the potential in their soils, Bevis and like-minded growers formed the Arkansas Soil Health Alliance.

"We know there are a lot of people who are struggling with soil health questions and how they can incorporate cover crops and other practices into their operations," says Bevis, who serves as the non-profit's



LEFT: The crops Bevis grows benefit from diverse soil-dwelling microorganisms, like mycorrhizae fungi, that increase the absorptive capacity of crop roots. TOP: The nutrients cycled through the soil by cover crops have allowed Bevis to cut his fertilizer applications without sacrificing crop yield. BOTTOM: Bevis (right) hopes to leave his son, Trey (left), with healthy, productive soil to continue the family's farming legacy.

president. “We want to help people avoid some of the mistakes we made and dispel some of the myths and misinformation that’s out there.”

Cost is a common concern many farmers share with Bevis when considering jumping into cover cropping. Bevis says that’s no surprise given the low levels of profitability in farming at the moment. His annual investment on his cover crops is typically \$25 per acre, which Bevis says isn’t much compared to the \$75 to \$100 an acre many farmers in his area will spend on tillage.

“Everyone is looking to save money anywhere they can, but you have to look at the bigger picture,” Bevis says.

“I honestly don’t think we can continue to farm the way we have been and hope to maintain our sustainability.”


PROTECTING THE FUTURE

While Bevis is confident in the results he has seen from growing cover crops, he’s working with researchers with the University of Arkansas Discovery Farms Program to conduct water infiltration studies, measure soil quality, and test nitrogen application rates on his farms in an effort to provide verifiable data that could benefit other growers.

This fall, scientists will be burying moisture sensors at varying depths in the soil at Bevis’s farms.

“We know our infiltration has gotten better,” Bevis says. “We can catch a two-to-three-inch rain without any runoff. We are also seeing water get down to 30-inch depths within 36 hours following a rain.”

Bevis hopes the researchers will be able to identify best practices and economic models that will encourage other farmers to make cover cropping part of their crop management routine.

“It takes some patience and may cause some head turning with your neighbors, but it’s worth it,” Bevis says. “We want to build the soil back up and be proud of the land that we pass on to the next generation.” 



THE HEMP HYPE

AS LEGAL HEMP PRODUCTION PRODUCES HEADLINES, HURDLES EXIST FOR MISSOURI GROWERS

Story & Photos by Jason Jenkins

Kelly Nelson has grown his share of cash crops during 20 growing seasons at the University of Missouri's Greenley Research Center just outside of Novelty, Mo. The research agronomist has raised everything in northeast Missouri from the traditional commodity crops of corn and soybeans to more specialized crops such as fescue grass seed, pennycress oilseed and even varieties of rice growing hundreds of miles north of where you'd expect to find them.

But in 2019, Nelson planted what just might be the most novel of the crops he's planted at Novelty — industrial hemp. It certainly has garnered the most attention.

"The amount of interest we had in our hemp plot during our field day in August was tremendous," Nelson says. "There were a lot of questions, folks trying to understand what opportunities there could be for a new crop. It's exciting."

Nelson is part of a team of MU researchers across the Show-Me State who got a jump on growing hemp this year to offer some agronomic answers to producers considering the crop in 2020. Hemp seed, donated by St. Louis-based Tiger Fiber, was planted at seven MU research farms, according to Tim Reinbott, assistant director of the MU Agricultural Experiment Station.

The research was made possible by the passage of Missouri Senate Bill 133 in late June, which repealed a pilot program authorized in 2018 and removed acreage restrictions on hemp production — putting state laws in line with federal requirements.

The 2018 Farm Bill, signed by President Donald Trump this past December, redefined hemp as an agricultural commodity, ending nearly a half-century of prohibition under the Controlled Substances Act of 1970. With this barrier removed, Missouri and other states are scrambling to establish a foothold in an infant industry where questions about the plant and its potential as a crop abound.

HEMP HISTORY

The story of hemp production in Missouri is almost as old as the state itself. According to the 1913 Yearbook of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, farmers planted their first hemp crops here in 1835. It was an era of sailing vessels, and hemp was the fiber of choice for sailcloth and rope.



LEFT: Kelly Nelson, research agronomist at the University of Missouri's Greenley Research Center, grew industrial hemp this past summer to learn more about the crop, which is once again considered an agricultural commodity. CENTER: Harvesting hemp for both seed and fiber could offer farmers two potential crops in one plant. RIGHT: As with other crops, there are different varieties of hemp, and MU researchers found differences among them during field trials.

Between 1840 and 1860, the hemp industry flourished in Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri due to strong demand by the U.S. Navy. The majority of Missouri's hemp was produced in the central part of the state along the Missouri River.

In 1850, the Census of Agriculture reported that Missouri farmers had grown 16,028 tons of hemp — second only to Kentucky's production of 17,787 tons. Hemp warehouses sprung up from Lexington and Glasgow to Arrow Rock and Rocheport. Rope-making became a thriving industry in these towns and others such as Miami.

Hemp would even play a pivotal role in one of Missouri's most well-known Civil War battles, the First Battle of Lexington in September 1861. During the three-day siege, pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard soldiers, led by Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, worked to evict Union soldiers from this town in the heart of Missouri's "Little Dixie" region.

With the federal soldiers well entrenched, the Missouri State Guard devised a plan. They soaked hemp bales in the nearby Missouri River overnight, rendering them impervious to rifle fire as well as fireproof against red-hot cannon balls. The "Battle of the Hemp Bales" ended in a Confederate victory, bolstering

Southern sentiment in the area. Evidence of the battle remains today in Lexington, where a cannonball can be seen lodged in a column on the front of the Lafayette County Courthouse.

However, hemp's heyday wouldn't last much past the Civil War in Missouri. Processing the fiber was labor-intensive, making it less profitable than other sources such as cotton, jute and sisal. The advent of steam-powered ships also meant fewer sails, and steel wire reduced demand for hemp cordage.

Nationwide production continued to fall. Then, in 1937, Congress passed the Marijuana Tax Act, which all but eliminated the crop. While hemp for fiber would see a brief resurgence during World War II, after the war, synthetic fibers would signal a death knell to the hemp industry. The Controlled Substances Act in 1970 ensured that legal agricultural production ceased.

CANNABIS COMEBACK

Despite the prohibition of domestic cultivation, demand for hemp-derived products and materials has never ceased. With roughly 50,000 known uses for the plant's fiber, seeds and the compound CBD, hemp is used in everything from supplements and cosmetics to packaging,

clothing and insulation. Companies have imported hemp from Canada, China and Europe. As societal views toward marijuana have softened in the United States in recent years, a door of opportunity has opened to again allow American farmers the opportunity to cash in on a hemp cash crop.

Among those farmers whose interest has been piqued by hemp is Neal Bredehoeft of Alma, Mo., who currently sits on the board of the Missouri Hemp Producers Association. Bredehoeft's grandparents founded the family farm more than a century ago in Lafayette County — the same county where Civil War soldiers once rolled hemp bales to victory in Lexington.

"We're a long way from planting any on our farm, but we're typical farmers," he says. "We're looking for another crop that we can grow that may produce a profit and diversify our operation a little bit more."

While Bredehoeft has seen his share of "alternative" crops come and go during his more than 40 years of full-time farming, he's encouraged by the fact that hemp was once grown successfully in Missouri. He says the non-profit association, which partnered on the MU trial this year, is producer-focused and

working to ensure farmers get the correct information.

“When you have a new industry like this, there’s always some folks who are not going to be on the up and up, so we’re trying to make sure that producers come first,” Bredehoeft says. “In reality, we don’t have an industry in Missouri yet, so how do we move everything — production and processing — forward together?”

Nelson and his fellow MU researchers are doing their part to provide information on the production. During their 2019 trials, they planted four hemp varieties at seven locations around the state. They planted into both conventionally tilled soil and no-till soil with two row spacings at a seeding rate of 40 pounds per acre.

“We planted the last week of June as soon as we got approval,” Nelson explains. “Even though the plots were planted later, some of our bigger plants were 5 feet tall or a little taller. Usually they’re in the 8-to-10-foot range.”

Nelson harvested his plot in late September, and while seed and fiber yield data is still being analyzed, he says that big differences were evident among hemp varieties.

“Variety selection is going to be critical, not only for the biomass but also the seed production,” he says. “We had two different row spacings, and I would say the narrow rows had at least 30 percent greater yield than my wide rows.

“One of the biggest challenges is going to be weed control, because there are no products currently labeled for hemp,” he adds. “But it’s a big crop that’s very competitive. If we can put down a pre-emergent and go with an early planting date with narrow row spacings, it’s got the potential to have a closed canopy and outcompete a lot of the weed species.”

Nelson adds that the timing of harvest also will be important, especially for growers seeking both a seed crop and a fiber crop.

“That first week of September, you could see some seeds were mature and harvestable, but the majority of the plant was not ready,” he says. “So, there’s probably a sweet spot when you harvest for seed and get that dual purpose. We



TOP: As is the case with other parts of the hemp plant, the seed and the oil it contains has a number of commercial uses, including lubricants, cooking oil and even cosmetics. ABOVE LEFT: Despite not being planted until late June, the hemp at the Greenley Center reached heights of more than five feet (photo courtesy of Kelly Nelson). ABOVE RIGHT: While hemp leaves may look much like marijuana, this member of the cannabis family doesn't contain high levels of THC.

have a lot of diversified crops, and each has its own unique personality. It brings an art into farming.”

Such agronomic guidance is what Bredehoeft and his fellow farmers are waiting for — along with a set of rules. In late October, USDA announced the establishment of the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program, which creates a regulatory framework for growing hemp nationwide. Under the program, USDA can approve hemp-production plans developed by states, including Missouri. Once a state’s plan is federally approved, growers are eligible for a number of agricultural programs, including crop insurance, farm loans and conservation programs.

The Missouri Department of Agriculture posted its own proposed plan and

regulations for the Missouri Industrial Hemp Program in early October. The rules, which Missouri will submit to USDA, will amend existing regulations and transition the legal growth of industrial hemp in the state. A public comment period on the state rules runs from Nov. 1 to Dec. 1, 2019.

“In general, we want to make sure the regulations are not too burdensome so that producers who want to grow hemp can do so,” Bredehoeft says. [M](#)

For more information on Missouri’s Industrial Hemp Program, visit www.agriculture.mo.gov/plants/industrial-hemp/ or call 573-522-0351. Learn more about hemp and the Farm Bill at www.farmers.gov/manage/hemp.



Turkey Time

Turkeys have starred as the main attraction of traditional Thanksgiving feasts for hundreds of years and their prominent place on the day's menu precedes President Abraham Lincoln's nationalization of the holiday in 1863. The birds have become so closely associated with Thanksgiving that the holiday is sometimes referred to as Turkey Day. Here are 10 facts about the American turkey you can use to impress your friends when you gather to give thanks.

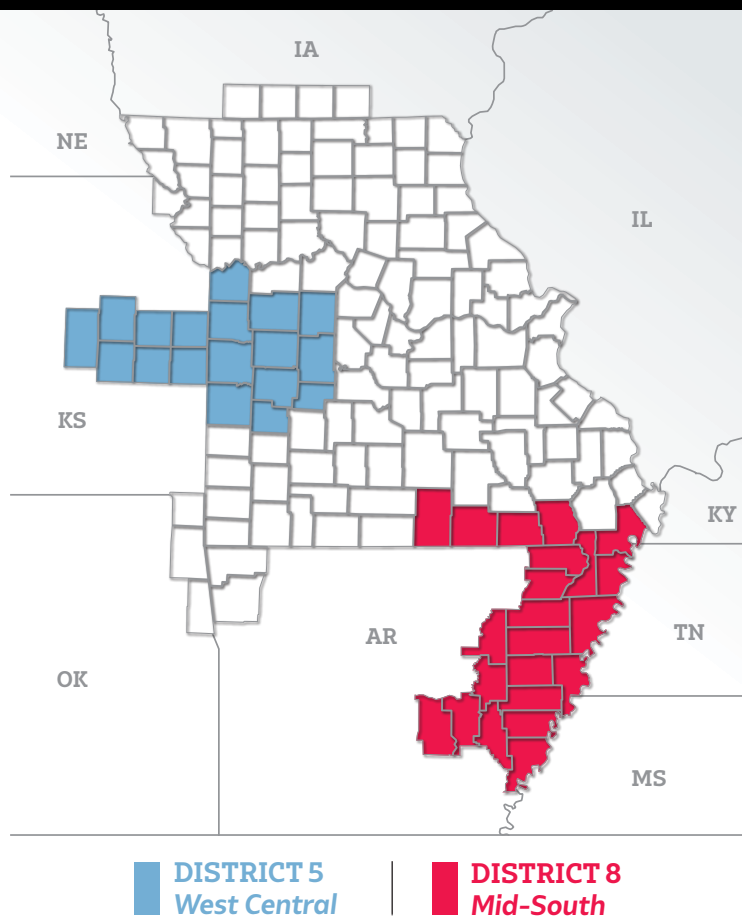
- 1 Today's domesticated turkeys are descendants of wild turkeys and were tamed by the Aztecs in Mexico around 800 B.C.
- 2 In a letter to his daughter, Ben Franklin once proposed making the turkey the official bird of the United States.
- 3 Americans eat 46 million turkeys every Thanksgiving.
- 4 Turkey is also a popular dish on Christmas and Easter when 22 million and 19 million turkeys are consumed, respectively.
- 5 In 2018, 244 million turkeys were raised in the United States.
- 6 Three states in MFA Oil's service territory annually rank in the top five in turkey production. Arkansas produces 32 million birds, Indiana produces 21.5 million birds and Missouri produces 19 million birds.
- 7 The most commonly raised commercial turkey breed is the Broad Breasted White.
- 8 The most popular ways to serve leftover turkey are in a sandwich, stew, chili, soup, casserole or burger.
- 9 Male turkeys, known as toms, gobble, while female turkeys, or hens, make a clicking sound.
- 10 Wild turkeys can run up to 20 miles per hour and can fly short distances up to 55 miles per hour. **M**





TWO BOARD SEATS UP FOR ELECTION

MFA Oil Company will hold its 90th Annual Delegate Meeting on Dec. 8, 2019, at the Hilton Branson Convention Center in Branson, Mo. During the meeting, delegates from the company's West Central and Mid-South districts will elect their representatives to the MFA Oil Board of Directors. The following individuals have applied for the board and will be listed on the ballot in their respective districts.



DISTRICT 5 - WEST CENTRAL



Kevin Buckstead

Kevin Buckstead and his wife, Darlene, raise 1,000 acres of mostly row-crops in Holden, Mo. He is a past treasurer and president of Johnson County Farm Bureau and a former chairman of the Johnson County University Extension Council. Kevin currently serves on the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation board and has served on the Missouri Farm Bureau Soybean Advisory Committee. He is also a deacon at Chilhowee Baptist Church. Kevin is a longtime MFA Oil delegate and previously served two terms on the company's Board of Directors from 2010 to 2016.



Mike Moreland

Mike Moreland is a third-generation farmer from Harrisonville, Mo., where he raises corn, soybeans and cattle with his brother and sons. In addition to serving as an MFA Oil delegate, he is the current president of the Missouri Corn Growers Association (MCGA), and has also served as vice president and secretary/treasurer for MCGA. He is the previous chairman of the Missouri Corn Merchandising Council (MCMC) and has also held the positions of vice president, secretary and treasurer with MCMC. He currently sits on the National Corn Growers Association's Market Access Action Team and Resolutions Committee. Mike is a current board member and past president of Cass County Farm Bureau, a former board member and chairman of the Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District and has served on various dairy committees.

DISTRICT 8 - MID-SOUTH



Scott Mitchell

Scott Mitchell of Lonoke, Ark., is a fourth-generation rice, corn and soybean farmer. He and his wife, Rita, along with their two sons, Drew and Luke, farm in Lonoke and Prairie Counties. Scott presently serves as an MFA Oil delegate and a committee member with the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service (ASCS) office in Lonoke. He was a former member of the Board of Directors of The Farmers and Merchants Bank of Des Arc, Ark., and the Lonoke County Farm Bureau Board. Scott is a member of the Lonoke Baptist Church where he serves as a deacon.



Terry L. "Bo" Pace

Bo Pace is a lifelong resident of West Plains, Mo., and has been raising cattle on the family farm in Howell County for more than 50 years. He is past president and a member of the Missouri State University-West Plains Grizzly Booster Club, a former vice-president and member of the West Plains R-7 School Board, past member of the Missouri School Board Association, and past president and member of the Howell County University Extension Council. Bo is an elder at First Presbyterian Church in West Plains, and a current member of the South-Central Cattlemen's Association and the Missouri Cattlemen's Association. Bo has received numerous civic and community awards from the West Plains Chamber of Commerce, Missouri State University-West Plains, West Plains R-7 School System, the West Plains Chapter of Cystic Fibrosis and others. He has been an MFA Oil delegate since 2016.

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2019

MFA FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Every year, the MFA Foundation distributes hundreds of thousands of dollars to high school seniors. The Foundation is a nonprofit, philanthropic organization jointly administered by MFA Oil Company and MFA Incorporated with the primary purpose of providing educational opportunities to youth located throughout the trade territories of the two companies. Since 1965, the Foundation has awarded scholarships to nearly 14,500 students totaling more than \$15 million.

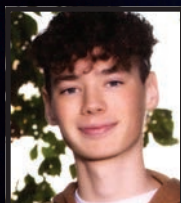
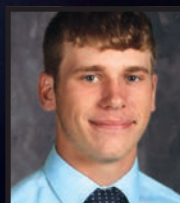
One scholarship is offered annually at each high school in whose town a participating MFA Agri Services Center, MFA Oil Company propane plant, MFA Oil Company bulk plant or other MFA agency is located. MFA Oil funds its contributions to the Foundation through unclaimed member equities.

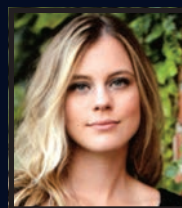
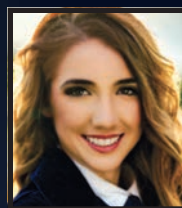
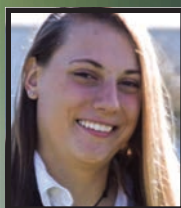
Students interested in applying for a scholarship should contact their school counselor to see if one is offered in their area. Counselors obtain applications from participating locations. Local committees select the scholarship winners, who are announced at graduation ceremonies. The majority of the scholarships are \$2,000 and may be used at any college or university. This year 342 high school seniors received a total of \$680,000 in scholarships.

Austin Thomas Adam, Durham
Brooke Elizabeth Adams, Salem
Gage Ryan Alexander, Cincinnati, IA
Selena Marie Allen, Hallsville

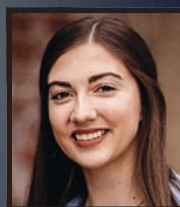


Nicholas Zane Althoff, California
Camron J. Anderegg, Garnett, KS
Hannah Nicole Anderson, Ionia
Jacob Daniel Anderson, Senath
Hunter Robert Arends, Diagonal, IA

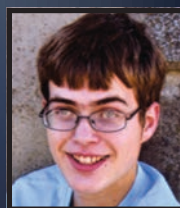
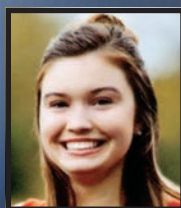




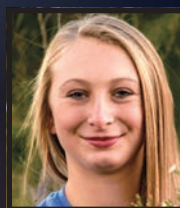
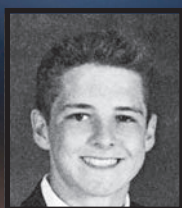
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Megan Nicole Atkins, Columbia
Wyatt Thurman Atkisson, Everton
Grace Emmaline Aust, La Cygne, KS
Morgan Beth Axtell, Galt



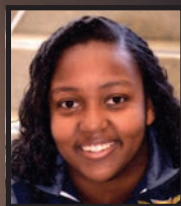
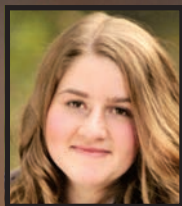
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Bailey Eugene Baker, Greenfield
Elizabeth Juliet Baker, Blanchard, OK
Hannah Paige Ballard, Madison, KS
Trenton E. Bargfrede, Sweet Springs



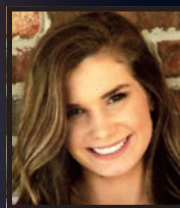
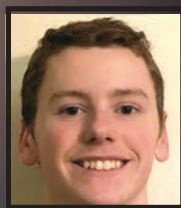
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Kylee Breanne Barney, Parsons, KS
Christian Michael Becker, Marion, KS
Sydney Elise Berghaus, Ironton
Jeffrey Alan Berhorst, Canton



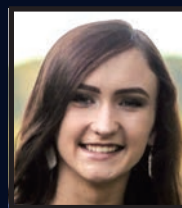
Tanner Scott Berry, Meadville
Katie Ruth Bertels, Martinsburg
Laura Beth Biggers, Niangua
Jordan Elizabeth Bistline, Warrensburg
Austin Dean Black, Center



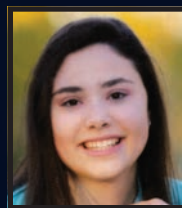
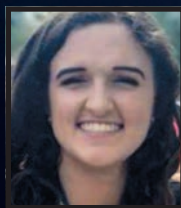
Breanne Joy Blakemore, Aldrich
Ashley Carol Bland, Columbia
Aaron Christopher Blomberg, Iberia
Garrett Lewis Boatright, Versailles
Anthony Joseph Bock, Freeburg



Blake Andrew Bollinger, Sedgewickville
Joshua Gerald Bomberger, DeKalb
Heather Nicole Bowlan, Carlisle, AR
Parker D. Boyce, Hartsburg
Abigail Marie Braun, Saint Mary

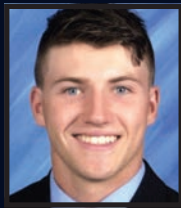
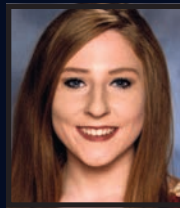


Shayla Renee Brazeal, West Plains
Collin Ross Breckenridge, King City
Haley Marie Briddle, Carrollton
Brody Neil Brown, Rolla
Mikena Rene Brown, Neosho



Taylor Lane Burnett, Bunceton
Marcella Cecelia Grace Cadle, Highlandville
Kennedy Riene Campbell, Houston
Anna Russel Carpenter, Shelbyna
Austin Joseph Carrico, Bourbon

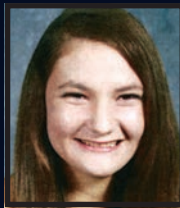
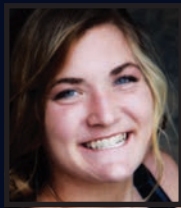
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 Hayden William Catlett, Clarksdale
 Tawna Jean Cavender, Elmer
 Trace Wheaton Chambers, Fayette
 Sydney Ruth Chidester, Hayti



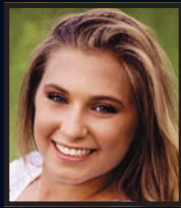
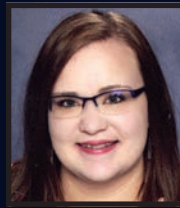
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 Alex M. Clark, Montgomery City
 Karissa Angeline Coble, Dunnegan
 Kamryn N. Collins, Ava
 Hannah Leigh Colliver, Tina



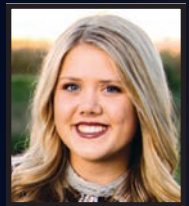
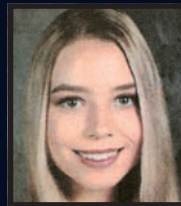
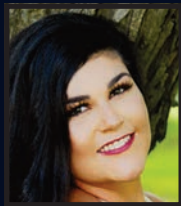
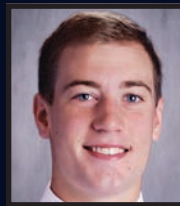
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 Shelby Dale Copeland, Cowgill
 Elizabeth LeeAnn Corey, Ewing
 Kiley Marie Counts, Winona
 Tanna Marcedies Courter, Jamesport



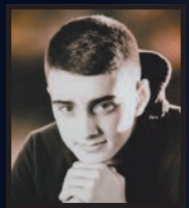
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 Claire Irene Crawford, Reading, KS
 Treyson Eugene Goodpasture Culwell, Vandalia
 Aiden Amalene Cumins, Ellington
 Hollie Lyn Cunningham, Gravois Mills



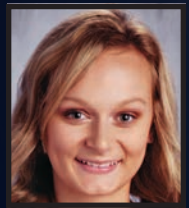
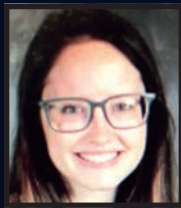
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 Harley Rae-Lynn Daniels, Marked Tree, AR
 Evan Elliott Davidson, Hartsburg
 Alicia Marie Davis, La Monte
 Riley Renee Davis, Corydon, IA



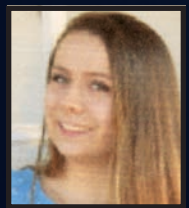
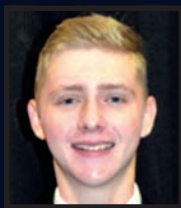
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 Cody Garrett Donley, Gainesville
 Mikayla L. East, Avilla
 Lillian Jaide Eggerman, Lockwood
 Cole Jackson Ellis, McFall

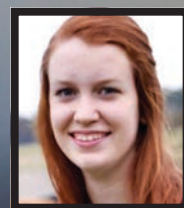
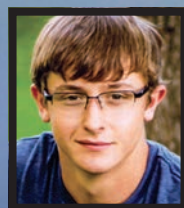
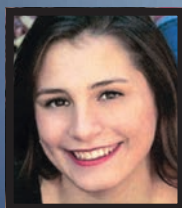


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 Sherydan Danielle Emory, Clarkton
 Thomas Ethan Endecott, Cleveland
 Kylie Morgan Ennis, Willow Springs
 Makenley Elaine Fenton, Udell, IA

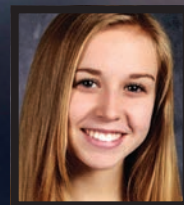
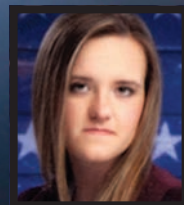
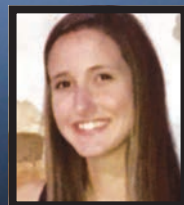
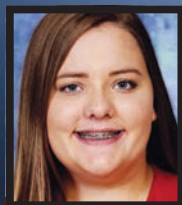
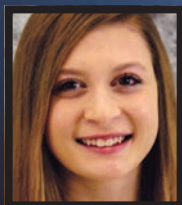


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 James Alan Fischer, Appleton City
 Kayla Kristen Foht, Strafford
 Taylor Quint Freemyer, Maryville
 Brooke McKenna Friesenborg, Golden City

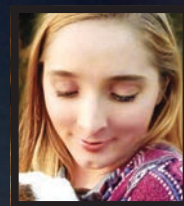
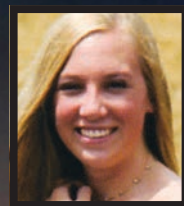
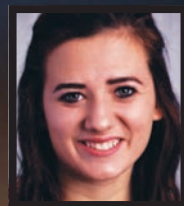




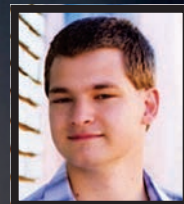
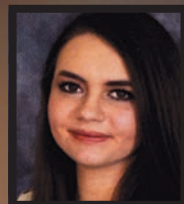
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Kelcie Loren Gaines, Watson
Gavin Michael Garrett, Ridgeway
Hannah Marie Gebhardt, Salisbury
Madelyn Elizabeth Gegg, Ste. Genevieve



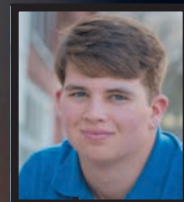
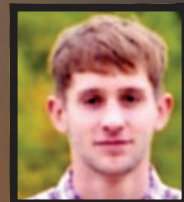
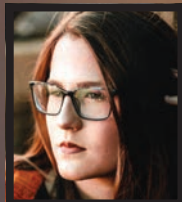
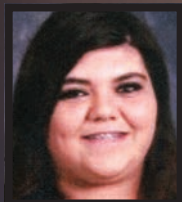
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Haddie Jo Gideon, Columbus, KS
Christa Leigh Gilman, Auxvasse
Anna Kathryn Ginnings, Hermitage
Jessie Eryn Glenn, Warsaw



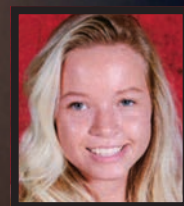
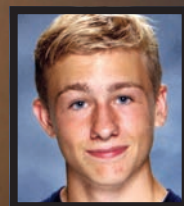
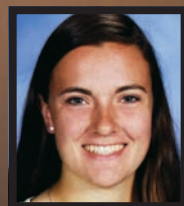
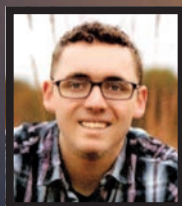
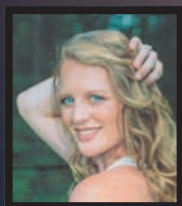
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Anna Lee Rose Golliver, Eminence
Gabrielle Kayla Goolsby, Concordia
Jessica Renee Grathwohl, Boonville
Caroline Laura Green, Troy



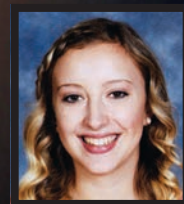
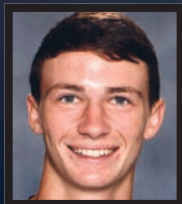
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Madelyn Renee Guss, Truxton
Mickey Leigh Hackman, Fayette
Landon Blake Hahn, Jackson
Tyler James Hale, Cushing, OK



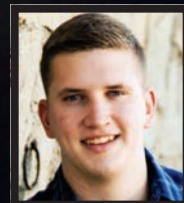
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Savannah Marie Hall, Paragould, AR
Carissa Marie Harmon, Salem
Dylan Wade Harris, Trenton
Koy Austin Harris, New Franklin



Trinity Lynne Harris, Hale
Drake Montgomery Harrison, La Monte
Emma Danielle Hart, Sheridan
Jackson Dane Haskamp, Glasgow
Kristin Kay Hayes, Bucklin

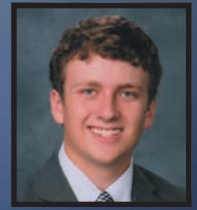
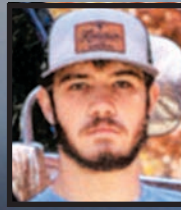


Blake Patrick Hays, Monroe City
Kendyl Jade Hayward, Wentworth
Maria Jenika Hazelbaker, Wentzville
Dakota Chase Heidt, Sparta
Kaitlynn Rose Heussner, Hale

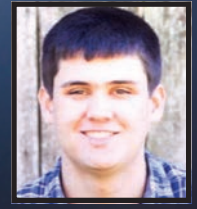
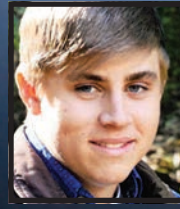
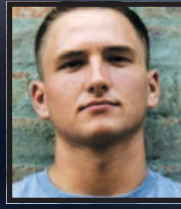


Justin Ray Hickman, Keota, OK
Camden Shane Hoelting, Olpe, KS
Meredith Mae Hoeper, Centerview
Timmy Drew Hoffman, St. Clair
Malachi Luke Hoffman, Rogersville

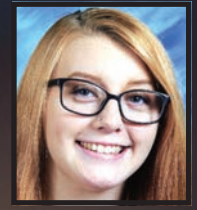
Benjamin Joseph Holtman, Maryville
 Dylan Dwight Homer, Queen City
 Ashtyn Renea Howard, Windsor
 Kody Michael Howard, Green City
 Stephen G. Hubbert, Republic



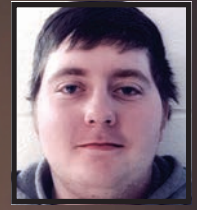
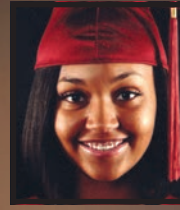
Matthew William Huchteman, Dadeville
 Logan R. Hughes, Rosendale
 Chase Aaron Hultgren, Willard
 Allison Ruth Hunter, Annada
 Austin Earl Lee Hunter, Cabool



Chandler W. Hurst, Chelsea, OK
 Elizabeth Grace Illa, Palmyra
 Abigayle Marcene Jackson, Osborn
 Paige Kathryn Jennings, Stoutland
 Sarah Nicole Jensen, Disney, OK



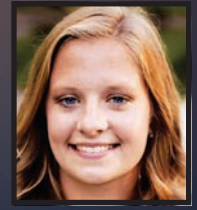
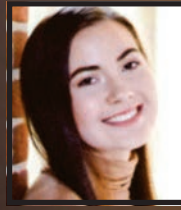
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 Jennifer Ann Johnson, Gravity, IA
 Madelyn Leigh Johnson, East Prairie
 Izeanaye M. Jones, West Helena, AR
 Isaac Dene Kagarice, Adrian



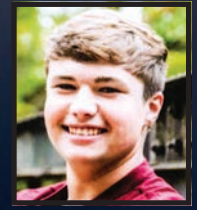
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 Cassidy Jo Keeven, New Haven
 Anthony Joseph Keilholz, Chamois
 Rachel Michelle Kennedy, St. Clair
 Darby Elizabeth Kiesling, Stuttgart, AR



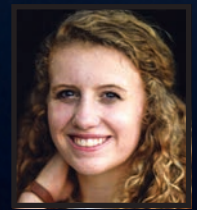
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 Abigail D. Koepke, Cuba
 Ethan James Kohl, Harrisonville
 Lyndsey Ryann Koll, Lincoln
 Hannah Noelle Konen, Council Grove, KS

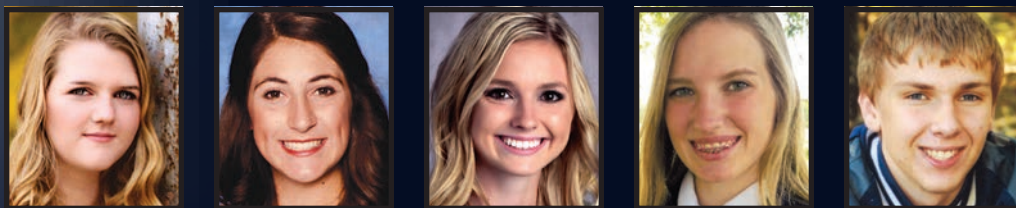


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 Sophie Grace Kussman, Dalton
 Aubrie Dawn Lambertson, Carthage
 Brock William Lange, Advance
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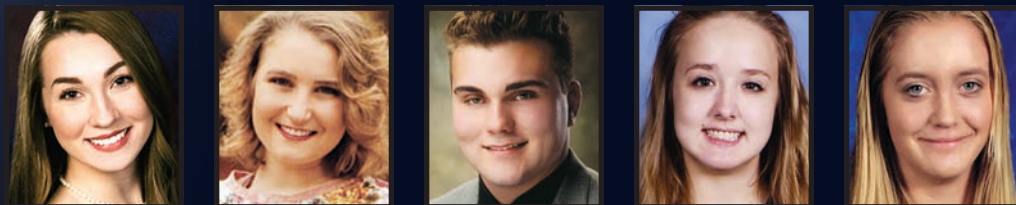


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 Megan McKenzie Lee, Tarkio
 Makenzie Rose Lester, Bakersfield
 Koby Russell Linder, Green Castle
 Anna Kate Link, Moberly

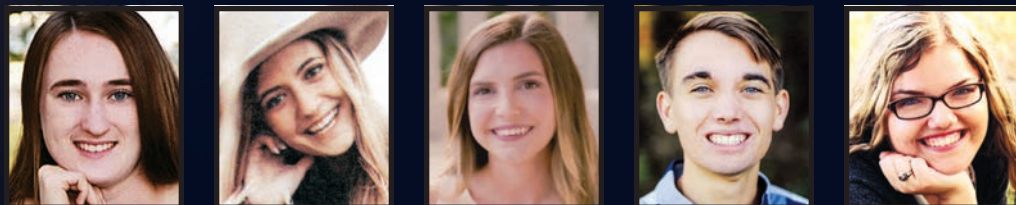




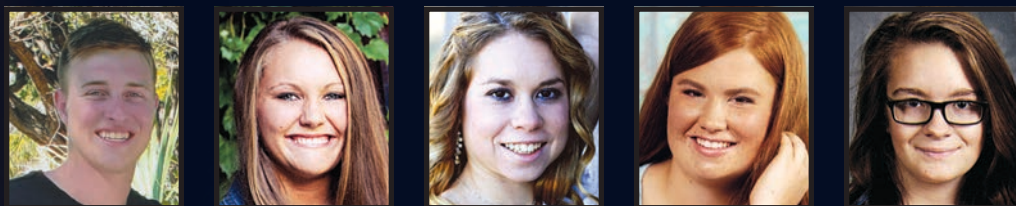
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Marlena Lily Long, Paris
Kara L. Lovelace, Elsberry
Claire Anne Luebbering, St. Thomas
Matthew Lawrence Luerksen, Cabool



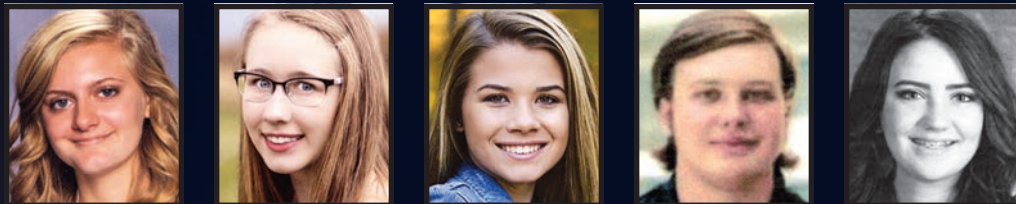
Hannah Marie Marshall, Malta Bend
Julie Ann Martin, Cherokee, KS
Lane Daniel Mashburn, Bolivar
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Hannah Lynn Mathes, Unionville



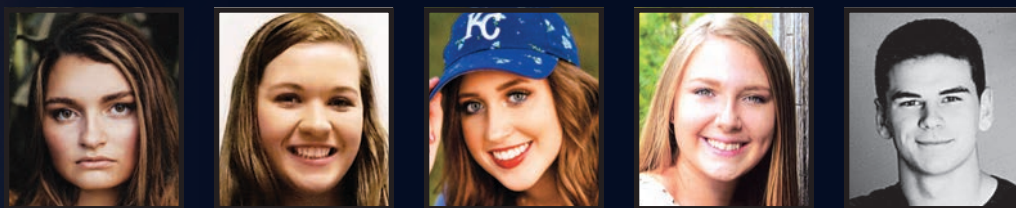
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Julia Bernice McIntyre, New Haven
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Katelyn Elizabeth McLemore, Green Ridge



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Emily Lynn Meyer, Bowling Green
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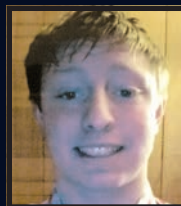
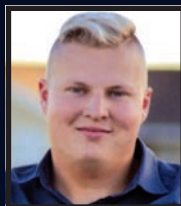


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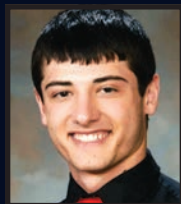


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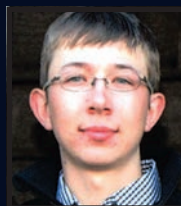
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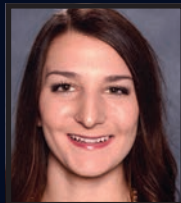
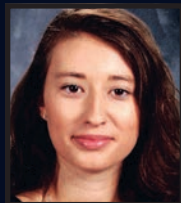
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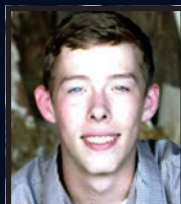
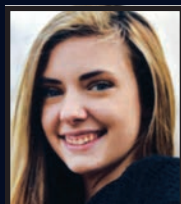
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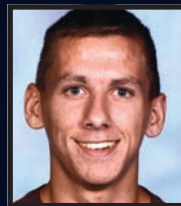
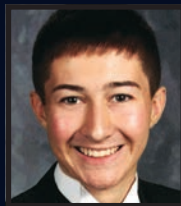
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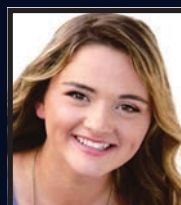
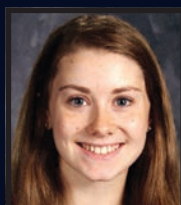
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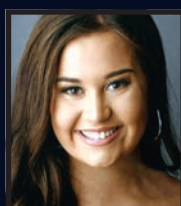
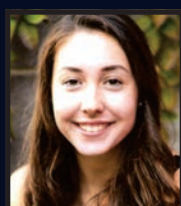
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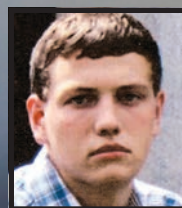
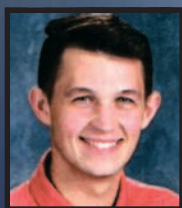


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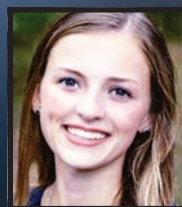
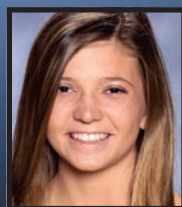


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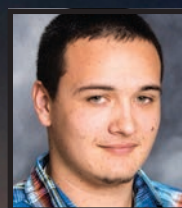
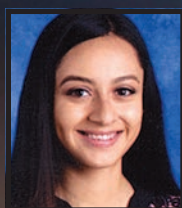
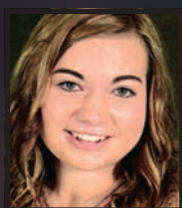




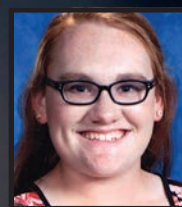
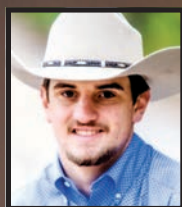
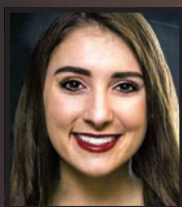
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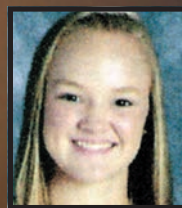
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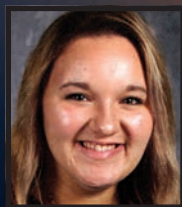
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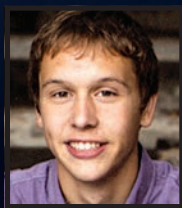
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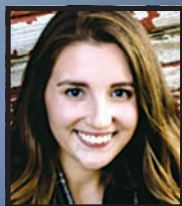
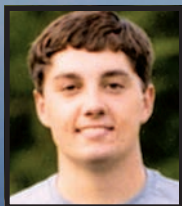


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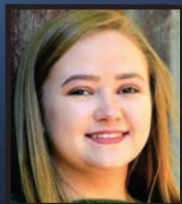
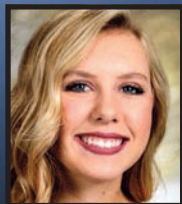
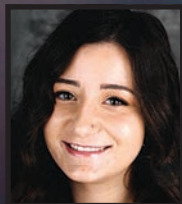


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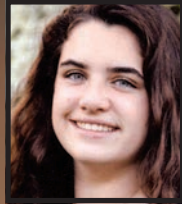
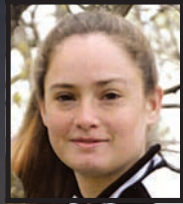
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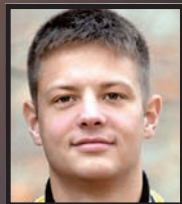
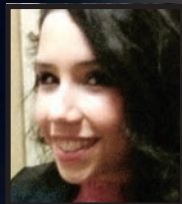
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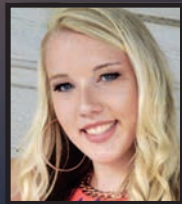
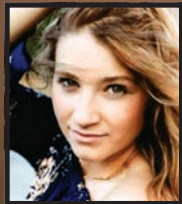
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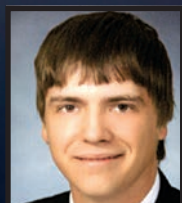
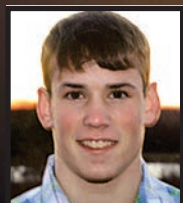
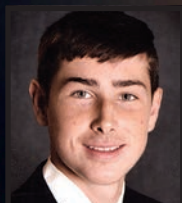
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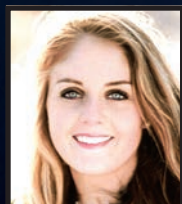
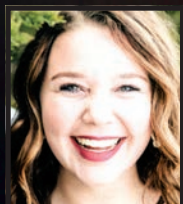
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THE MAN ON THE TRACTOR

Like many Missourians, Phillip Martin, agricultural education instructor at Meadville R-I High School in north-central Missouri, grew up on a farm. Unlike most Missourians, he went on to teach in several mid- and northern Missouri high schools after graduating from the University of Missouri, first with a bachelor's degree in science education then a master's degree in agricultural education. He then returned to farming for nearly two decades before going back to teaching.

It's not a standard teaching path, but Martin says it's given him invaluable perspectives he passes on to the students he teaches and those he mentors as the school's FFA advisor.

Martin says he's just paying it back. He says William Mallory, who taught agricultural education from the 1950s-1989, and a man Martin calls one of the icons of agricultural education, mentored and inspired him. Martin's first year of teaching at Bowling Green High School was Mallory's final year of teaching, and Martin says Mallory encouraged him to take a risk and farm.

Not teach.

"He said that if I wanted to teach bad enough, I would have the opportunity later," Martin says. "And that I'd be a much better teacher if I returned to the profession when production agriculture started to make my joints hurt and when winter mornings started feeling really cold!"

Frigid cold or searing heat, Martin and his wife, Heather, operate a diversified cow/calf operation with a small herd of hogs, sheep and Boer goats in eastern Linn County, about 30 miles from the school. He's inspired all three of his children to enter agriculture professionally too.

Among the students he's inspired are Kylee Baker, Meadville FFA vice president, who says Martin has inspired her to pursue a career in agriculture education. She calls him an "unbiological dad."

"Mr. Martin not only teaches agriculture classes and gets us from Point A to Point B for FFA, but he is a farmer too," she writes. "He wakes up early to do chores before school and goes home late to help his wife with chores at night. We learn about the hardships and successes of farming straight from the man on the tractor."



Phillip Martin, agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor, Meadville R-I High School, with Kylee Baker, Meadville FFA vice president, whom he inspired to pursue a career in agriculture.

"What makes his class different is, students respect him. They listen. He uses analogies, he puts pictures in your head to make you understand. And he cares. He is the one to make sure you are doing all right in school. He is the one to take fresh tomatoes to a lady from the community that has just been moved to the nursing home."

Martin says students like Baker make the sometimes 15- and 16-hour days of activities worthwhile: "The impact I have on these kids' lives, the chance to be a part of that — it's more valuable than I ever imagined. I am around these kids six years, and I see their growth, their maturing, their victories."

Adds Meadville principal Misty Burnett of Martin, "He always gives 150 percent, provides lots of opportunities for our students, pushes them to do their best. He will make things happen for them. They just don't make them like that anymore."

Martin says his decades in farming and teaching have given him unique perspectives, such as how the three traditional Rs of education — reading, writing and 'rithmetic — no longer apply.

Today's three Rs, he says, are rigor, relative and relationships. Rigor demands students know more at the end of day than the beginning; that agricultural education must be relative and benefit students' lives now and 30 years from now; and that forging relationships with students, parents and the community is essential for everyone to excel.

"I say to my students. I don't want you to fly like hawks, I want you to fly like eagles," Martin says in reference to his school's mascot. "When you fly higher than hawks, you see more. And if I can get one student to get up there, I can get a second, because people like to travel together."

"I think I've inspired lots of kids who have flown like eagles." **M**

— STORY AND PHOTO BY NEAL FANDEK

Agriculture teachers are vital to developing their students' understanding and appreciation for the agricultural industry. In recognition of their important role, MFA Oil is profiling the amazing work ag teachers do to prepare the next generation of leaders in agriculture.

Learning Along the Way

IN OCTOBER, MFA OIL DELEGATE

Mart Thaxton wrapped up his 42nd harvest on his farm in central Arkansas. Not bad for a guy who began his farming career without any agricultural experience.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to do when I got out of school and jumped in without knowing much about it,” Thaxton recalls. “I had never sat on a tractor until I left the University of Arkansas.”

After spending a summer working on a friend’s farm in eastern Arkansas where he learned the basics, Thaxton traveled to Lonoke County in 1977. There Thaxton began to develop his crop management practices through trial and error on land that was purchased by his great-great-grandfather in 1885.

“I made plenty of mistakes, but always tried to learn as I went,” he says. “There have been lots of ups and downs, but I wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

Friendly support from a more experienced neighboring farmer helped put Thaxton on course for success.

“I was fortunate that my neighbor Bernie Swears would let me bother him a couple of times a day for advice,” Thaxton says. “He taught me how to do mechanical repairs and straightened me out when necessary. Bernie wouldn’t do the work for me, but he’d watch over my shoulder and tell me how to do it. I don’t think I would have made it if it wasn’t for Bernie.”

Thaxton quickly discovered he would need to be efficient if he wanted to keep farming. He learned to minimize the number of trips he would make across his fields and turned to no-till and other cost-effective practices to weather the rough times of the 1980s farm crisis.



Mart Thaxton (center) completed his 42nd harvest this fall. He farms with his sons, Clayton (left) and Keaton (right), near Carlisle, Ark., where they raise corn, soybeans and rice. *Photo by Sara Reeves.*

“Becoming more efficient is what kept us in business,” he says. “Those who couldn’t adapt are no longer in business.”

As Thaxton, 64, approaches the tail end of his farming career, he’s poised to hand the reins of the family farm to his sons, Keaton and Clayton.

“Keaton and Clayton both have their own land, but we also work together,” Thaxton says. “They have helped push me to evolve. Old guys like me like to do things the same old way we have always. My sons have brought fresh ideas to our operation.”

The Thaxtons raise a combined 4,200 acres of corn, soybean and rice with the help of three full-time employees and some part-time help during harvest. Mart’s wife and partner of 40 years, Cindy, is also actively involved in the operation and serves as the farm’s bookkeeper.

Throughout his more than four decades of row-crop production, Thaxton has made many changes to the way he runs his farm, and he encourages his sons to follow his lead in experimenting as they go.

“It doesn’t matter if you’ve been farming for 10 years or 40 years, you can still learn something new every day,” Thaxton says. **M**

What You Need to Know to Save on Fuel Contracting

THE LEAVES ARE CHANGING

colors, temperatures are dropping, and harvest has begun. Autumn has arrived and so too has the time of year when it pays to be thinking of your fuel needs.

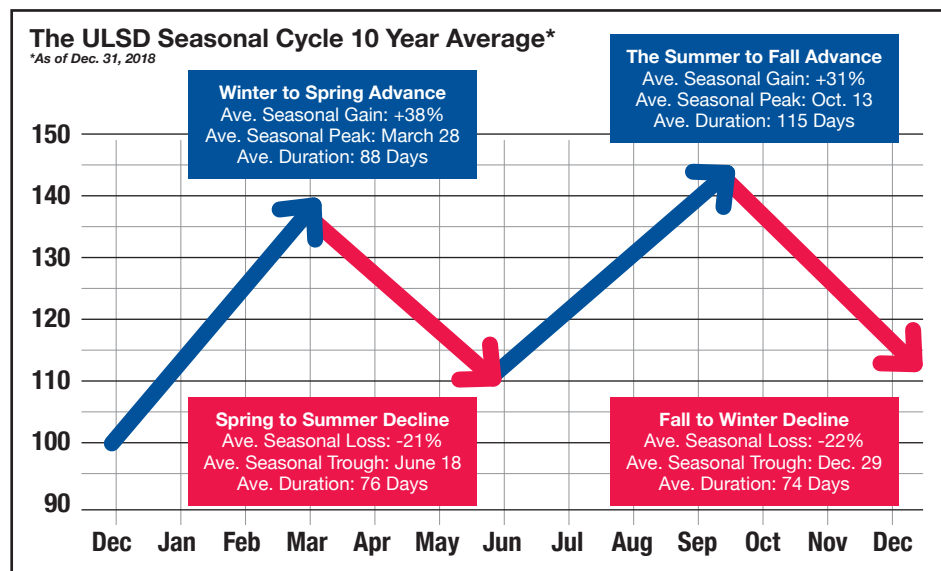
If you look back at the seasonal cycle of ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD) futures on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) over the last 10 years, you can see trends that have historically led to great buying opportunities. Now, keep in mind that each year's performance will always be unique to the circumstances at the time, and I'll be referring to averages, but the data gives us a decent idea of what to expect.

When looking back from 2009 to the present, we typically see prices begin to climb in mid-June and peak in mid-October. The average gain in value of this seasonal run-up over the last 10 years has been 31 percent. Prices then historically move lower until the end of December for an average decline of 22 percent.

The most significant factor impacting demand at the moment is the trade war between China and the United States. The two countries have taken turns slapping each other's imports with tariffs since January 2018. The dispute has put a damper on the global economy, which in turn, has put pressure on energy prices.

Everyone wants to know if and when the trade war might end, and there's been talk of incremental progress through phased deal-making, but no specifics have been shared to date. Until a deal is reached, we can only speculate whether it will be enough to boost economic activity and increase fuel demand.

Since June 2019, the NYMEX ULSD price has twice rallied to new highs and sold



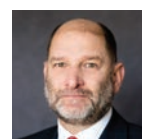
off to near the same lows. As I write this column in mid-October, the price is back in the middle of that trading range. Taking recent seasonal trends into consideration, I would think any move higher would be temporary as the cyclical influence we typically see at the end of the year grows.

As I have stated in prior columns and meetings, the best time to consider locking in the price of some of your expected fuel volume for the upcoming year is now. The stretch of time from November to March consistently offers you the most advantageous chance to book fuel for the upcoming season. This is when you need to be paying attention to the energy market and preparing to make a move.

If you want to be as informed as possible when you contract your fuel needs for the upcoming season, you need to do three things: estimate your total fuel volume needs, the timeframe when you will use your fuel and the average price per gallon you can afford to pay.

Once you determine that information, you will be ready to ask your local plant manager for a quote on contract pricing. The length of contract can be set up for the timeframe that best meets your needs. After you get a quote, evaluate it in comparison to your per-gallon budget. Knowing what the potential contract values are today gives you a point of reference that you can compare against as the year progresses.

You also need to decide what percentage of your normal fuel needs you want to protect through contracting. We generally do not advise contracting for 100 percent of your expected fuel needs except in rare circumstances. We recommend you pick a percentage that makes sense for your plan for the next five months. The goal is not to try to buy the absolute low, but rather to lock in a price that best fits your budget. **M**



>> Tim Danze
is the hedging manager
for MFA Oil.



Photo by Keith Borgmeyer

New Petro-Card 24 Opens in Marceline

Customers in Missouri's Linn and Chariton Counties have access to a new and improved Petro-Card 24 unattended fueling station on the south side of Marceline. MFA Oil built the new location at 1010 S. Missouri Ave. as a replacement for a smaller facility that was just up the road.

"The old site was inadequate in many ways and no longer met the needs of our customers or the company," says Michael Whitney, northwest district manager. "It had undersized and outdated tanks and there was no room for larger vehicles to pull in for a fill-up."

The new location has a canopy and larger 12,000-gallon tanks for gasoline, red diesel and clear diesel.

"We've got more room for our drivers and customers to maneuver large trucks and equipment at the new site," Whitney says. "From an operational standpoint, the bigger tanks mean we don't need to deliver fuel to the facility as often, which frees our drivers up to focus on servicing our customers."

Expanding Arkansas Operations

MFA Oil continues to grow its reach in the Ozarks with the opening of an office in West Fork, Ark. The company is now offering refined fuel, propane and the complete lineup of MFA Oil lubricants from the new location.



"We have seen aggressive growth in northwest Arkansas in the past couple of years and look forward to serving more members out of this location," says Kenny Steeves, senior vice president of MFA Oil operations. "This expansion aligns with our strategy to grow our market in our existing footprint across our full line of products and services offerings."

The West Fork location, which opened on Sept. 16, represents the company's 12th office in the Natural State. It's open for business at 628 N. Centennial Ave. from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, and the phone number is 479-839-2256. 

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Please contact your local MFA Oil office for details.