



**MOMENTUM**

**Understanding Cow  
Inventory to Build a  
Marketing Strategy**

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**ARE AT A CROSSROADS**

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Most forests in Missouri are controlled by private landowners. Conservation officials urge property owners to become active stewards of their woods to protect the future of Missouri's forests. *Photo by scgerding.*

# Managing Stress on the Farm

**FARMING IS ONE OF THE MOST** stressful professions with many uncontrollable variables, like this year's drought. Farmers are constantly exposed to situations that pose a risk to their physical, mental, spiritual and financial health.

As a farmer-owned cooperative, MFA Oil knows it's critical to support the farmers and ranchers in our agricultural community. After all, agriculture remains the backbone of America's economy, and our nation depends on the men and women who raise our crops and livestock.

It's often been said, "Take care of the farm, and the farm will take care of you." But the reality is that farmers can't count on the farm to take care of them. They need to prioritize self-care. Farmers tending to their own health and wellness is just as critical as caring for the farm or ranch. Additionally, research has shown that when farmers are healthy, their farms may be more productive.

The lack of mental health support in rural areas is an ongoing challenge. It has been difficult to address for cultural and financial reasons, but there is a clear need for better access. The MFA Foundation, which is managed by MFA Incorporated, MFA Oil and local affiliates of both companies, recognizes that need and has committed to providing resources to address this critical concern.

The MFA Foundation has made a four-year commitment to MU Extension's efforts to support rural communities in need of



Jon Ihler

mental health assistance. The university's Psychological Services Clinic offers up to five free teletherapy sessions for farmers, ranchers and members of their immediate families. You can learn more about these services at [muext.us/PSCFarmRanch](https://muext.us/PSCFarmRanch), or contact the clinic at [adpsc@missouri.edu](mailto:adpsc@missouri.edu) or 573-882-4677.

The Missouri Department of Agriculture's AgriStress Helpline also offers free, confidential help to farmers and their families. Producers can call or text 833-897-2474 to speak to a healthcare professional. The helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I mention these resources because I want you to know you're not alone. During this harvest season, you will likely experience increased stress, and things may not always go as planned. Farm life is never easy, but help is available. If you are in crisis or know someone who is, please take advantage of these resources.

Have a safe and healthy harvest.

Jon Ihler,  
President and CEO



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# Clock is Ticking on Farm Bill Reauthorization

**THE PROSPECTS OF A NEW FARM BILL PASSING IN 2023** appeared increasingly slim as Congress returned for a potentially chaotic fall session.

Following a monthlong summer recess, legislators faced a long to-do list, including preventing a government shutdown, reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration, replenishing disaster relief funds, deciding how to handle Ukraine aid moving forward, and passing a new farm bill.

As time dwindled before a crucial Sept. 30 deadline to fund federal agencies and reauthorize the farm bill, legislators looked to stopgap measures to maintain the status quo until legislative logjams could be broken.

During a press conference at the Missouri State Fair following a farm bill listening session on Aug. 14, the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee acknowledged an extension of the farm bill was likely.

“The clock is ticking,” Rep. Glenn “GT” Thompson, R-Pa., told reporters. “There’s a lot of competition for weeks on the (House) floor for the weeks in September because of all the appropriations bills and some other ones that expire just like the farm bill.”

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees have yet to advance a bill or even release the language of their respective bills. Thompson said he won’t mark up his farm bill draft in committee until House leadership is committed to floor time on a specific week.

Congress has been late to pass recent farm bills, including the 2018 Farm Bill, which was signed into law on Dec. 20, 2018. Each new iteration of the farm bill lasts for five years and sets the nation’s food and agriculture policy. The broad legislation covers everything from federal crop insurance, agricultural trade policy, conservation initiatives, rural development and nutritional assistance.

The nutritional component of the farm bill is its most expensive provision, accounting for more than 80% of the overall bill’s spending. The high cost has prompted some conservative Republicans to suggest splitting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from the farm bill, but Thompson quickly dispelled that notion.



Rep. Glenn “GT” Thompson, R-Pa.; Rep. Mark Alford, R-Mo.; and Missouri Governor Mike Parson participated in a farm bill listening session at the Missouri State Fair on Aug. 14. *Photo courtesy of Rep. Mark Alford’s office.*

“That’s not going to happen in terms of splitting the nutrition title from the other 11 titles,” Thompson said. “That’s my opinion. That’s a line I want to hold. I take great pride in the fact that farmers feed the nation and nutrition matters. So, the most appropriate place for the nutrition title is in the farm bill.”

During the listening session held at the Missouri State Fairgrounds, farmers representing a broad coalition of Missouri’s agricultural interests shared their opinions and concerns with several members of the House Ag Committee, including Thompson; Rep. Mark Alford, R-Mo.; Rep. Monica De La Cruz, R-Texas; Rep. Jonathon Jackson, D-Ill.; and former committee member Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer, R-Mo. The legislators listened to questions and requests from the Missouri agricultural community for nearly two hours. Farmers expressed a need for maintaining risk management programs, support for rural development, increased funding for conservation tools to strengthen on-farm resiliency, enhanced international marketing support and more.

Thompson said his committee will consider this feedback when crafting its bill.

“My goal is that the 2023 Farm Bill will be one that strengthens national security, restores the farm safety net and revitalizes rural America,” he said.

When farmers will ultimately see the passage of the 2023 Farm Bill remains unclear, but Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., says she hopes to have it signed into law prior to 2024.

“The committee is continuing to work toward a bipartisan bill that can be signed into law by the end of the calendar year,” Stabenow said. **M**



# Missouri Forests ARE AT A CROSSROADS

By Adam Buckallew



The dense forest at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park outside of Columbia, Mo., is peaceful and beautiful. The woods are filled with sights of awe-inducing natural wonder. One thing about the forest is a bit worrisome, though, and it's a shared concern for more than 60% of Missouri's forests—it's getting old. And with advancing age comes mortality concerns.

"Trees don't live forever as much as we might hope they would," said Robbie Doerhoff, a forest entomologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). "The closer trees get to the end of their lives, the more susceptible they become to health issues."

Woodlands throughout the state are filled with mature oak and hickory trees. Red oak group trees like black and scarlet oak begin declining around 70 to 90 years of age, while longer-lived white oaks have lifespans upwards of 150 years. Hickory trees, like pignut or shagbark, and Missouri's only native pine, the shortleaf, could live up to 200 years.

Doerhoff paused when asked if the state's forests are in good health.

"That's a tough question," she said. "Our forests are becoming older. The droughts and extreme rainfall events we've seen in recent years can and will wreak havoc on old trees. It's an issue for sure."

Hiking along the park's Shooting Star Trailhead, Rebecca Blue, an MDC forester, accompanies Doerhoff. The two women scan their surroundings as they make their way along the path, looking for distressed trees while the sound of trilling insects fills the air. Standing on a rocky bluff to survey the verdant forest canopy, Blue points out signs of trouble. Patches of browning leaves and skeletal tree crowns can be seen on a ridge in the distance. It's early August, too soon for trees to shed their leaves under normal conditions.

"There's decline out there," Blue said. "We're seeing more and more mature oak trees dying."

## OAKS IN DECLINE

The phenomenon Blue described is known as oak decline, a slow-acting insect and disease complex occurring in mature red and black oak species.

Many factors cause oak decline, but it is relatively easy to understand. It begins with a predisposing situation like overly mature trees on dry, rocky sites and is set off by inciting events such as extreme droughts, ice storms or spring freezes. Once these older trees are stressed to a tipping point, they become highly susceptible to diseases such as Armillaria root rot and damage from insects like carpenterworm and red oak borers. These native organisms play essential roles as decomposers of dying trees and do not pose a threat to vigorous, healthy trees.

For decades, large numbers of northern red, southern red, black and scarlet oaks have been dying throughout southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. The die-off is strongly tied to European settlers' large-scale burning and land clearing from 1880 to 1920. The settlers used repeated burnings so often that they changed the composition of forests in the region, which are now dominated by fire-resistant trees in the red oak species group. Large populations of those red oaks are nearing the end of their lifespans.

Weather events such as the 2007 spring ice storm and the drought of 2012 pushed a significant number of red oaks into decline.

"My family has a farm in southwest Missouri, and we got hammered by that 2007 ice storm," Doerhoff recalled. "Many of our old black oaks lost big branches, which is hard on aging trees. But it took a good ten years for some of them to die. Trees grow slowly, but they often die slowly, too."

Oak decline is among Missouri landowners' most common issues in their forests. Oaks in severe decline are often easily identified by large dead branches, numerous trunk sprouts and insect borer damage.

"People come across a bunch of dead trees in a particular area and get worried," Doerhoff said. "We assure them that what they are seeing is a natural process and advise them that they are going to have to do some management of their woods to get ahead of it or get past it."

## FORESTS NEED MANAGEMENT

Approximately 15.4 million acres of the state are covered by forest, a land mass equivalent to the state of West Virginia.



Missouri forests generate \$10 billion in annual revenue for the economy while providing clean air and water, high-quality wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. These woodlands are incredibly valuable but are also increasingly imperiled by existing and emerging insects and diseases, an ever-growing list of invasive species, and other dangers.

Perhaps the most pressing threat facing the state's forests is that they are "often misunderstood, mismanaged or taken for granted," as Lisa Allen, the state's former chief forester, wrote in 2014. Unfortunately, that assessment still holds.

Private landowners may assume the best way to care for their woods is to leave them alone. Doerhoff said that's the wrong approach.

"That sentiment is something we frequently encounter with private landowners," she said. "People who own forest land may want to support wildlife, have a timber harvest at some point, or simply preserve the land for their kids. But if they don't start acting on those goals now, they will never achieve them."

Missouri's aging forests have also caused concern for wildlife species relying on young forest habitats. MDC has observed bird populations declining due to the lack of early forest habitat. Even turkeys and whip-poor-wills have been impacted.

**Missouri forests generate \$10 billion in annual revenue for the economy while providing clean air and water, high-quality wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.**

Blue worries that inaction is increasingly putting the future of the state's forests at risk.

"You've got to do something," she said. "Too many landowners are doing nothing."

That's a huge issue, considering 81% of Missouri's forest land is controlled by private landowners, many of whom have little or no forest management knowledge.

According to the USDA Forest Service, few private landowners in Missouri—only 16% of those with 10 acres or more—have

received advice on forest management. Fewer still—less than 5%—have a written plan they follow.

## HELP IS AVAILABLE

MDC offers a variety of programs, many of which are free, to private landowners to assist with forest management. Whether scheduling a visit from a private land forester, creating stewardship plans, or assisting with federal or state cost-share program applications, Blue wants people to know MDC can help.

"If you've never talked to someone about the management of forests on your land, please reach out to us," Blue said. "We have foresters available throughout the state to offer technical assistance. It's important to have a professional inspect your land, especially if you are considering doing anything drastic."

Landowners interested in caring for their woods can greatly benefit from working with a forester to help with the process. Foresters can assist with various activities ranging from tree planting, control of invasive species, thinning woods, managing crop trees, conducting harvests, and establishing the next forest.

Though much of the focus of active forest management is on long-term sustainability, Doerhoff said several short-term benefits can be realized in just a few years.

"If you thin out overcrowded areas in your forest, you may see more wildflowers on the forest floor. You should see more oak regeneration, and more browse will be available for wildlife like deer. Quite a bit of positive change can occur in a short period of time."

Blue recommends landowners walk their woods at least twice a year to scan for potential issues. Spring and fall, when invasive plants are most likely to stand out from natives, are ideal times to check a forest's health.

She also strongly encourages forest owners to phone the state's Call Before You Cut hotline for advice before allowing a logger to harvest trees. The sale of timber can be an excellent tool for sustainably managing forests when done thoughtfully.





TOP: Early browning of leaves, thinning canopy cover and loss of branches are signs of oak decline. BOTTOM: Robbie Doerhoff ages a tree in an area of oak decline. OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Hypoxylon canker is a fungal disease and one of several factors often responsible for red oak deaths. MIDDLE: Late-stage Hypoxylon canker is highly noticeable and resembles thick silver-gray paint on the side of a tree. BOTTOM: Groups of dead oaks are not uncommon. *Photos courtesy of Missouri Department of Conservation.*

“Timber sales can be good for owners and the forest, but they can also be done in the wrong places at the wrong times,” Doerhoff said. “You need to be cautious about the logger you choose and the trees you allow them to cut. There also needs to be a plan in place to manage invasive plants before and after a harvest. You can wreck your woods if you aren’t careful.”

## PROTECTING FUTURE FORESTS

Getting landowners to invest their time, effort and money into managing their woods is more important than ever. The consequences of poor forest management are too dire and widespread to ignore.

While the advancing age of the state’s forests is a growing concern, there is still time for landowners to take on the role of forest stewards. Forestry and natural resources experts are available to create sustainable management plans so that future generations can enjoy the priceless benefits forests provide.

“Forest management is pretty altruistic,” Blue said. “It’s not for me. It’s not really for you. It’s for our kids and the generations that will come after them. If you want them to enjoy the forests we have now, you’ve got to manage it.”

Though the needs and expectations of private landowners may differ widely, they all share one thing in common: responsibility for the future of Missouri’s forests. **M**

## FOREST BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

### *Develop a plan*

Healthy woods start with a plan. Developing a forest management plan helps landowners understand what they have, what they want and the practices they will need to employ to meet their goals.

### *Maintain diversity*

Healthy forests have a mix of tree species, ages and sizes. Foresters recommend stocking no more than 25% of any single species. The conservation department and consulting foresters are available to help landowners determine the species best suited for their property and aspirations.

### *Right species, right place*

Trees survive and grow best when planted in conditions similar to those where they occur naturally. For example, shortleaf pine and post oaks do well on dry, upland sites in the Ozarks, while white oak may be appropriate for north-facing slopes.

### *Thin to win*

Regular thinning helps maintain the health and vigor of forest trees. Removing undesirable trees reduces competition for light and water. The remaining trees will live longer, provide greater wildlife food value and produce higher-quality lumber when mature.

### *Protect den trees and snags*

Retaining snags (dead or partially dead standing trees) and den trees (live trees with existing cavities) helps maintain woodland wildlife populations.

### *Walk your woods*

Forests should be examined periodically to check for tree pests and invasive plant species. Scouting during the spring and fall is recommended.

# UNDERSTANDING COW INVENTORY TO BUILD A MARKETING STRATEGY

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research  
and Extension news service



Photo from K-State Research and Extension



For many, investing in the stock market is a long-term retirement strategy that takes discipline to avoid reacting to changes in the market.

In much the same way, making a profit in the cattle business requires a long-term approach, said the Kansas State University's Beef Cattle Institute experts on a recent Cattle Chat podcast.

"Having a strategy to deal with fluctuating prices is much better than reacting; it is much like the stock market in that you don't want to buy in or buy out on a whim," said K-State veterinarian Brad White.

White's observation is related to the July USDA report that showed beef cow numbers at 29.4 million head, which is down 2.6% compared to the same time last year, and the cattle and calves total inventory was 95.9 million head, which is down 2.7% from the previous year.

"What I take from this report is that we haven't bottomed out yet with the inventory numbers because people are still liquidating the herd," said Dustin Pendell, K-State agricultural economist. "As the herds continue to shrink, cattle prices are going to stay high a little longer and possibly go a little bit higher."

From a cattle producer's perspective, there are choices to make. K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said, "As a producer, I may want to retain the four- to eight-year-old cows that are going to produce the best calves that I can sell into a market with high calf prices."

White agreed and added that heifers retained can contribute to the financial success of the herd, but it will take a longer period of time compared to cows.

"Once we start saving heifers, it is a long-term investment because it takes months before they can contribute offspring to the herd," White said.

One factor that influences the liquidity of the cattle market is drought, Lancaster said.

"If you are in an area that has been getting rain, you may be able to keep extra heifers and cows that can add to the herd, but if you are experiencing drought, then there will be feed costs that need to be accounted for in the decision to keep or sell," Lancaster said.

White called that knowing the "resource availability?"

"If I have the resources available, I can be more selective about which females I keep, and I can sell the ones I don't want at a reasonable price," White said.

Along with the production cycle, Pendell said the consumer demand can also influence cattle prices.

"We are starting to see that the consumer beef demand is softening as consumers were not willing to pay as much for their beef in June as they did in May," Pendell said. "Eventually, that will translate down to cattle prices along with the influences of international trade."

The K-State experts agreed that producers need to think about the marketing opportunities for the long term.

"Every operation is going to be different depending on where you are located in respect to drought; prices are going to be high for the foreseeable future, so you need to figure out where those marketing opportunities are and then run with them," Pendell said. **M**

# Q&A with Randy Pace of the MFA Oil Board of Directors



**Q** How would you describe yourself and your farming operation?

**A** I was raised on a 167-acre beef cattle operation outside West Plains, Mo., in Howell County. After high school, I attended the University of Missouri, Columbia, and obtained a bachelor's degree in agriculture in 1977.

After graduation, I accepted a job with the Federal Land Bank of St. Louis and continued with the Farm Credit System for 40 years, retiring in 2017. During my 40-year tenure, I had the opportunity to work throughout the states of Missouri and Arkansas.

My wife, Sherry, and I have been married for 32 years and have three children, Anna, Tanner and Brayden, and three grandchildren, Parker, Miles and Maxon, all of whom live within six miles of our farm. Our oldest son, Tanner, and his wife, Kelsey, have a farming operation adjacent to ours. We combine the two operations, which solves many of our labor issues.

Our farming operation started with the purchase of 40 acres in 1979 and has grown to approximately 750 acres owned and 600 acres rented. We run around 200 commercial Angus cows and sell calves



Photo by Kelsy Cook, Remember When Productions

after weaning. Our operation changed considerably after Tanner graduated from college. We now have a forage double-cropping system that centers around high-moisture baleage that we utilize and sell commercially. We typically raise triticale and Sudan grass for forage.

In 2019, we expanded our farming operation by creating Pace Valley View Farm, LLC, with Tanner and Kelsey being 50% owners. PVVF is a 20,000-hen laying operation producing approximately 7 million eggs annually. These eggs are delivered to Springfield, Mo., and processed by Vital Farms Inc. With the addition of PVVF, our operation changed considerably. No more retirement!

**Q** You worked in the Farm Credit System for 40 years. What's your current assessment of the agricultural economy?

**A** During the last five years, many of us have experienced conditions

within our agricultural economy that we may not have seen in the past. On this list would be the geopolitical issues we are currently experiencing that are affecting our grain prices, rising fuel costs, and the uncertainty of our supply chain interruption. Additional areas of concern would be increasing interest rates, which will continue until inflation is controlled; drought-like conditions that have limited our yields, not to mention the potential restrictions of barge traffic on our rivers; and finally, the lack of a current farm bill.

The most significant concern I see on the horizon would be the cost of capital required to start a new farming operation. As we know and many have experienced, the price of land is at unprecedented highs, not to mention the cost of equipment it takes to get started.

With all this said, there doesn't seem to be a happy medium anymore when it comes to the prices we receive for our commodities or the costs we have to pay for our inputs. Farming operations remain viable when

commodity prices are favorable, but when those prices drop while input prices remain high, things can become stressful. Regretfully, we have seen this in the past.

**Q What would you tell other farmers about the importance of taking on leadership roles in their cooperatives and the agricultural industry?**

**A** As generations of farmers pass, we find ourselves becoming further removed from that day in 1929 when MFA Oil was created. Without being there, it is hard to imagine all the hard work and coordination that went into this effort. We must not forget this.

As we all know, the agricultural industry is constantly changing. Due to this ever-changing environment, MFA Oil needs its members to remain focused

on why MFA Oil exists and not become complacent. This can be done through strong and active delegate members at the local level providing feedback to management and the Board. We need to know what MFA Oil is doing right and what we can do to make things better.

**Q What do you think sets MFA Oil apart from its competitors?**

**A** The main things that set MFA Oil apart from our competitors are our employees, who strive to offer quality customer service daily, and the high-quality products the co-op provides to our agricultural communities. Another differentiator is that MFA Oil is governed by elected farmers who understand the potential impact of decisions made in the board room.

**Q What motivated you to serve on the MFA Oil Board of Directors?**

**A** Having worked for a farm cooperative for 40 years that provided financial services to rural America, I understood why cooperatives were essential, especially for the farm sector. Personally, I thought my experience and knowledge of farm financing could bring benefit to the board room. **M**

» Randy Pace co-owns a diversified family farming operation in West Plains, Mo. He is an MFA Oil delegate and was elected to the MFA Oil Board of Directors in 2023.

# NOTICE

## MFA OIL COMPANY ANNUAL MEETING

**MONDAY,  
DEC. 11, 2023**

9:30 a.m. • Holiday Inn Executive Center  
Columbia, Missouri

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of MFA Oil Company, as represented by delegates elected in accordance with the bylaws, will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center, 2200 Interstate 70 Dr. SW, Columbia, Missouri, on Monday, December 11, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. for the purpose of presenting the annual report, approving the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes and the transaction of such other business as may come before the meeting.



Tami Ensor, Corporate Secretary



# » The Big Picture



Photo courtesy of Little Dixie Construction



# Break Time to Open Truck Stop in Jefferson City

**CONSTRUCTION IS UNDERWAY ON** a Break Time truck stop in Jefferson City, Mo. The convenience store and travel plaza will be located at 207 Militia Drive, just off Highway 50 on the city's east side. The new location is expected to open in November.

The 6,500-square-foot store will be Break Time's fifth truck stop. The front passenger car area will have seven fuel dispensers, while the trucking area behind the store will offer six high-flow dispensers, a diesel exhaust fluid dispenser, a CAT scale and parking for up to 40 tractor-trailers.

The state-of-the-art convenience store will offer food service options such as smoked meats from Smokestack Bar.B.Q, premium ice cream from the Ice Cream Factory, Cooper's fried chicken, Hunt Brothers pizza, breakfast sandwiches and many grab-and-go items. Truckers will have access to a laundry center, showers and a lounge with free WiFi.

"We are very excited about our opportunity in Jefferson City," said Curtis Chaney, senior vice president of retail for MFA Oil. "The location will be the only truck stop that will service the community. Our food offerings will also be the first in the Militia Drive area and should fill a void for those working there. We are also looking forward to the completion of the rail spur that is currently under construction and will drive even more truck traffic past our store."

The company operates more than 70 Break Time convenience stores, including six existing locations in Jefferson City. [M](https://www.mfaoil.com)

# 2023

## 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 more than 15,000 students, totaling more than \$17 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, 274 high school seniors received a total of \$548,000 in scholarships.



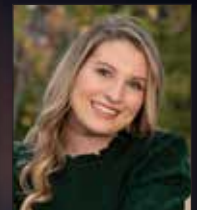
Noelle Marie Abend, Rich Hill  
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Rachel Kathleen Ancell, Macon  
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Dylan J. Aufdenberg, Burfordville



Abigail May Bachura, Alta Vista, KS  
Emma J. Baepfer, Jamestown  
Aislynn Denise Baker, Atlanta  
MacKenzie Dawn Baker, Kirksville  
Riley M. Baker, Parma







Carson L. Ball, Bruner  
 Ethan Charles Ball, Lamar  
 Rachel Marie Baretich, Bland  
 Jonathan M. Bax, Eldon  
 Ryce Caden Bennett, Clarendon, AR



Kahl Justice Berry, Bolivar  
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 Tate Levi Boles, Marshfield  
 Jacob Louis Boone, King City  
 Braden William Booth, Fair Grove



Hunter James Boots, Moberly  
 Tyler Robert Borgmeyer, Fulton  
 Lily G. Boschert, O'Fallon  
 Trey Brakensiek, Wright City  
 Garrett Mason Bray, Maysville



Bailey Nicole Brewer, Oak Ridge  
 Wyatt Tony Bridgeman, Owensville  
 Maggie Jo Brockmeier, Hale  
 Blaine Xander Brodersen, Florence  
 Darcy Lee Broglin, Holcomb



Ali Marie Brown, Grant City  
 Makenna Lynn Broyles, Olpe, KS  
 Breckyn RaeAnn Brummett, Lockwood  
 Ella D. Bruno, Macon  
 Kirstin Kimberly Buck, Nevada



Cole William Burch, Walker  
 Brady Beau Burgess, Richmond  
 Rafe Jeffery Byassee, East Prairie  
 Lindsay Byrd, Sikeston  
 Claire Jane Carpenter, Millerton, IA



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 Madelyn Chiarottino, Bevier  
 Erin Lee Clouse, Ava  
 Samuel Allen Coin, Pattonsburg  
 Destiny Collins, Novinger



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 Tucker James Cox, Martinsburg  
 Alex Brayden Criswell, Hartsburg  
 Elizabeth Nicole Crocker, Ashland  
 Lily Grace Crosson, Eolia

Ryan Allen Cruse, Salisbury  
 Peter Garrett Dampf, California  
 Emma Daniels, Hornersville  
 Cameron James Davis, Appleton City  
 Ryan Matthew Davis, Lamar



Weston Shawn Deering, King City  
 Harper Starr DeMoss, Columbia  
 Samuel Joel Derks, King City  
 Mikayla Dawn Dibben, Junction City, KS  
 Gracie Jo Dickson, Milan



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 Jackson Edward Dill, Marshfield  
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 Logan M. Dove, Green Ridge  
 Emmalee Ann Drebes, Palmyra



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 Allison Kaye Dunwoody, Moberly  
 Lydia Kay Eaton, Harrisburg  
 Kyle Dale Eckhoff, Lincoln  
 Gracyn Lyn Eifert, Cole Camp



Daci Re'Ann Elbrader, Frontenac, KS  
 Sidney L. Engelmeyer, Iberia  
 Lily Rae Falconer, Linneus  
 Hannah E. Fehring, Neosho  
 MaKenzie Marie Felten, Fayette



Gavin Cooper Ferguson, Willow Springs  
 Erin Christine Fick, Freeburg  
 Jocelyn Marie Finley, Gardner, KS  
 Cash C. Fisher, Dunnegan  
 Brooklyn Foreman, Walker



Lance Gregory Fort, Martinsburg  
 Harrison Benjamin Fowler, Hallsville  
 Mauriana Elizabeth Frame, New Hampton  
 Lillianne Grace Franklin, Perryville  
 John Clayton Frazier, Lebanon

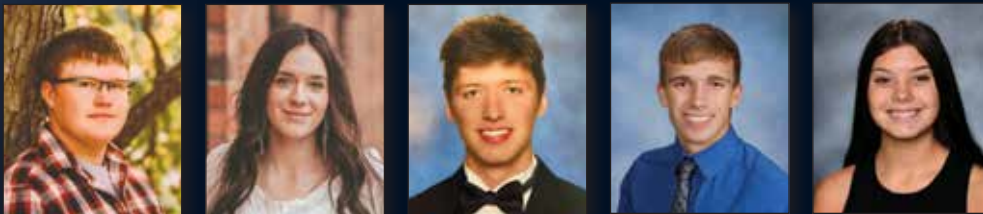


Ian Blaise Freiburger, Verona  
 Collin Joseph Fritsch, Sainte Genevieve  
 Abigail Rose Fry, Mountain Grove  
 Tori Dawn Fuemmeler, Armstrong  
 Braeden William Fuller, La Plata





Billi Jacqueline Galliher, California  
Samantha Michelle Gallivan, Half Way  
Mason W. Gibson, Reading, KS  
Jenny Hope Glueck, Chaffee  
Madison Michelle Haley, Queen City



Ryan Michael Hall, Novelty  
River L. Hamaker, Leon, IA  
Parker Evan Hammond, Meadville  
Clay Alan Hanson, Graham  
Marissa Harkey, Sedalia



Kyla Breanne Harms, Mora  
Jaxon Andrew Harper, Tina  
Kayley Anne Hauber, Grant City  
Alli Jo Mae Hayes, Monett  
Brayden C. Headrick, Salem



Natalie Elizabeth Hedlund, Fairfax  
Marissa Ann Heins, Concordia  
Clayton Heinze, Kahoka  
Maggie Elaine Hickman, Princeton  
Audrey Katherine Higgins, Deepwater



Kade Newton Hodge, New Hampton  
Harleigh Jane Hodges, Taneyville  
Samuel Peyton Hodges, New Madrid  
Larissa Hoelmer, Hermann  
Konnor Neil Hoerrmann, Browning



Trey Austin Hoffman, Archie  
Gracie Renae Holcomb, Albany  
Wendell Louis Hoskins, Steele  
Anisten Evelyn Houghton, Hamilton  
Garrett Edward Hundley, Boonville



Taryn Elizabeth Hunter, King City  
Benjamin Dean Ipock, Winona  
Lane Charles Irwin, St. Elizabeth  
Gavin Lee Isch, Gridley, KS  
Owen Thomas Ives, Cole Camp

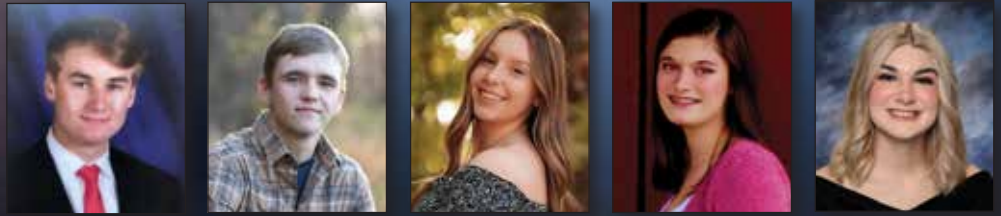


Kaycie Lynn Jackson, New Boston  
Mara Jensen, Vandalia  
Matthew Paul Jermain, Conception Jct.  
Levi Johnson, Trenton  
McClane D. Johnson, Savannah

Breanna Charli Jo Kellum, Grovespring  
 Ava Deann Kemper, Hawk Point  
 Elsie Elaine Kigar, Greentop  
 Kaden Kinsler, Elsberry  
 Lane C. Klein, Versailles



Mason John Kliethermes, Loose Creek  
 Dylan Joseph Koenigsfeld, Morrison  
 Andrea Suzanne Korte, Bowling Green  
 Emma Kraenzle, Ste. Genevieve  
 Jewley Annette Kraus, Memphis



Brooks Dean Kreisel, Concordia  
 Marci Marie Lammers, Pilot Grove  
 Mason Wayne Lampkin, Hermann  
 Lindsey Faith Lancaster, Malden  
 Brody Langfitt, Gilman City



Ben Robert Lause, Washington  
 Truman Lee Ledbetter, El Dorado Springs  
 Austin Scott Lee, Lee's Summit  
 Daniel Dean Leshner, Tarkio  
 Braden Lee Lichtenberg, Brookfield



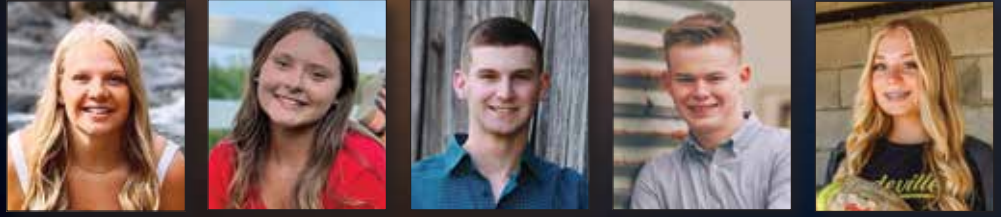
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 Peter Joseph Littlefield, Exeter  
 Caleb David Lucas, Rock Port  
 Bailee Jo Luttrell, Ellington  
 Shayla Kay Lynn, Cross Timbers



Rhease Danyelle Manier, Houston  
 Justus Blaine Martin, Fulton  
 Skylur Emil Mashek, Richards  
 Harlee Maxwell, Walnut Grove  
 Lauren Elizabeth McIntyre, Ravenwood



Aliciah Marie Mefford, Moberly  
 Joslynn Mae Mefford, Clarence  
 Oliver Midyett, Salem  
 Shane Charles Minor, Pleasant Hill  
 Ellie Rian Mitchell, Dadeville



Reid Monsees, Alma  
 Macie Jean Morris, Butler  
 Ryleigh Rae Morris, Walnut Grove  
 Hailey Elizabeth Morton, Macomb  
 Mallory Morton, Ash Grove





Owen Abraham Neely, South Greenfield  
 Avery Lynn Neidholdt, Keytesville  
 Kiera R. Neighbors, Troy  
 Allison Marie Newman, Slater  
 Jeret Nichols, Pleasanton, KS



Trey Matthew Noakes, Lowry  
 Corbin Odle, Pomona  
 Keaton Odle, Pleasant Hill  
 Olivia DeLora Oerly, Jamestown  
 Austin Marcus Orth, Centralia



Cameron Lee Oswald, Fairfax  
 Noah Ryan Oswald, Mound City  
 Abigail Leigh Overshon, Dixon  
 Taylor Jax Palenske, Strong City, KS  
 Adelynn Grace Palmer, Center



Hunter Parris, Kingsville  
 Mia Elizabeth Pemberton, Parsons, KS  
 Audrey Mae Peterson, Elkland  
 Chloe Ann Petree, Bunceton  
 Griffin Mark Phillips, Farmington



Tanner Hall Pierce, Kennett  
 Ashlynn Danielle Presley, Malden  
 Zoe Jane Priggel, Portageville  
 Ashley Louise Rankin, Bedford, IA  
 Ayren Mariah Rapp, Schell City



Ryan Rauh, Perryville  
 Olivia Dawn Reed, Washington  
 Andrew Ross Rhoades, Princeton  
 Hannah Nicole Rice, Brunswick  
 Danielle Marie Riedel, Pickering



Rebekah Reagan Riffle, Garden City  
 Dylan Robertson, Platte City  
 Tucker Cahill Robnett, Laddonia  
 Taylor Willows Rode, Fair Grove  
 Benjamin Nathan Roehrig, Washington



Gabrielle Ruth Rohrbach, California  
 Aliyah Renee Rojas, Gideon  
 Audrey Marie Ross, Center  
 Kadie Lynn Rounkles, Tina  
 Grayden Ely Rowbotham, Gainesville

Molly Rushing, Sparta  
 Helen Addyson Salmon, Franklin  
 Ruby Schmidt, Carrollton  
 Brooklyn Riley Schrag, Farmington  
 Makena Ray Scott, Marlow, OK



Molly Elizabeth Scott, Wellsville  
 Kylie D. Scrivner, Ava  
 Abigail Nicole Shaffer, Moscow Mills  
 Jenna Shanks, Centerview  
 Libby R. Shaver, Grovespring



Bradley Allen Shaw, Stoutland  
 Ebanie Ann Shaw, Windsor  
 Blake D. Shelton, Conway  
 Chase Simmons, Unionville  
 Ahna Sinclair, Montgomery City



Ashley Renee Sjostrand, Hartsburg  
 Cali Jo Smith, Success  
 Lillian Frances Smith, Bolckow  
 Rylan Cooper Snodgrass, Beaufort  
 Ashley Lauren Spry, Edwards



Katelyn Michelle Stoll, Stanberry  
 Carsyn Elizabeth Swain, Cape Girardeau  
 Avery Edson Tallman, Glenwood  
 Hailee Jo Tarpenting, Marceline  
 Brunson Tenholder, Adrian



Drake A. Thompson, Lexington  
 Emma Carmen Thompson, Laredo  
 Brecca Claire Thornhill, Clark  
 Zoe Renae Thornton, Noel  
 Frank Todaro, Holden



Gabriel Richard Todd, Mountain Grove  
 Jori Leigh Todd, Seneca  
 Kennedy Nicole Travis, Saint Clair  
 James Jathan Ungles, Skidmore  
 Aidan Lee Vaught, Crane



Ainsley Nicole Viets, Girard, KS  
 DeLana Brooke Vogelsmeier, Sweet Springs  
 Kylin Elaine Wagner, Sarcoxie  
 Lily Opal Wagner, Vienna  
 Ava Marie Walker, Kirksville





Mary Grace Warden, Bolivar  
Eli L. Warren, Ludlow  
Gracie Marie Waterman, Lebanon  
Rylee Paige Watson, Monroe City  
James Brendan Weaver, Marshall



Madeline Rose Weber, Saint Charles  
Abby Dayle Welch, Bolivar  
Presley A. Wells, Jamesport  
Bryson John Wessing, Boonville  
Alaina Whittington, Diagonal, IA



Kiser Kelc Wiatrak, Saint Paul, KS  
Emily Paige Willman, St. Clair  
Joshua Caleb Wilson, Bunch, OK  
Caden D. Winters, Sioux City, IA  
Jaidyn Renee Wood, Independence



Olivia Wooden, Dawn  
Cooper David Wright, Ozark  
Autumn Lynn Young, Koshkonong  
Hannah G. Youngblood, Berryville, AR  
Corbin Dale Zimmerschied, Sweet Springs

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Apply for the MFA Foundation scholarship being offered in your community.

The amount of the scholarship is \$2,000. The scholarship may be used to pursue any course of study that leads toward an academic degree such as Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science or Associate's Degree at an accredited college or university.

Eligible high school seniors can apply for the scholarship online between **December 1, 2023 and February 15, 2024** at [mfafoundation.com](http://mfafoundation.com). For additional information, see our web site or contact your local MFA or MFA Oil location.



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## SETTING AN EXAMPLE: BOONVILLE FFA

Not every student gets to take classes with the president.

President of the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE), that is, a role Deanna Schnuck, agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor for the Boonslick Technical Education Center, recently added to an already impressive resume. The center is part of the Boonville (Mo.) School District, educating area students grades 9-12 in more technical and professional subjects. She and co-instructor and FFA advisor Doug Henke share the course load.

Schnuck is also on the National FFA Board of Directors and previously held several positions with the NAAE and the Missouri Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association including president. She has been awarded both Honorary State and American FFA Degrees, serves on the University of Missouri Alumni Association, is certified in Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education and helps run the Veggie Patch, the fresh fruit and vegetable business she helped start nearly 20 years ago as a supervised agricultural experience (SAE).

Does she ever sleep?

“Not much, some days,” she said. “You have to balance your time. Our students do it every day, so I need to set an example of how to be involved, in Boonville, statewide and nationally ... We must set the example for the future of our profession.”

Henke, no slouch himself, agreed. He is a 20-plus-year teaching veteran with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in agricultural education from the University of Missouri. He also steps in as auctioneer in his family’s auction business as needed.

The two teach 13 different classes and supervise SAE internships. The classes include agricultural science, conservation of natural resources, floriculture, greenhouse operation and management, landscaping, and turf grass management. Students can earn high school and college credits and industry-recognized credentials.

These are somewhat unusual ag classes, but the fact is fewer students get their start in production agriculture in Cooper County, the state or the nation today.

“In the past, we taught a stand-alone crop science course, but that doesn’t fit today’s demographics,” Schnuck said. “Sure, we’ve had to evolve. We try to integrate new ideas in classes based on student career interests and community needs.”



TOP LEFT: Boonville FFA students (l to r) Jonah Hawkins, Georgia Hendrix and Casey Bedell weigh soil mixtures to determine pH in the Boonslick Technical Education Center. BOTTOM LEFT: Boonville FFA students Maggie Davenport, Virginia Senor, Sunny Cook and Sydney Joy create boutonnières and corsages in a floriculture class. RIGHT: Doug Henke (left) and Deanna Schnuck (right), Boonslick Technical Education Center agricultural education instructors and FFA advisors, hold plaques honoring the service of Tyler Schuster (center), a retired Missouri FFA state officer. Such gifts are often presented to FFA advisors at the Missouri FFA State Convention.

These needs and interests have yielded unusual student projects. For instance, one project centered on creating a video about the 2019 Missouri River flood that devastated parts of Cooper and Howard counties and its effects on the family farm. Other projects have included a video on the problem of abandoned horses, students helping elderly in the community, a Toys for Tots drive, and creating blankets, name tags and onesies for premature infants in the local neonatal intensive care unit.

It is no surprise the Boonville FFA was named the top state chapter a few years back. They have also won the state FFA Ag Issues Forum for the flood video, and Schnuck recently won the Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City’s Distinguished Service Award.

But is a rigorous ag education still relevant when the most pressing community needs are not agricultural?

“Definitely,” Henke said. “It challenges students not being challenged in other programs. The soft skills we teach, the competitions they enter, all culminate to drive students to be successful in areas they never thought they could be.”

Henke added that there is always something new to learn.

Like what?

“Patience,” he laughed. “What they can accomplish, given time, can surprise you.” **M**

— 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.**



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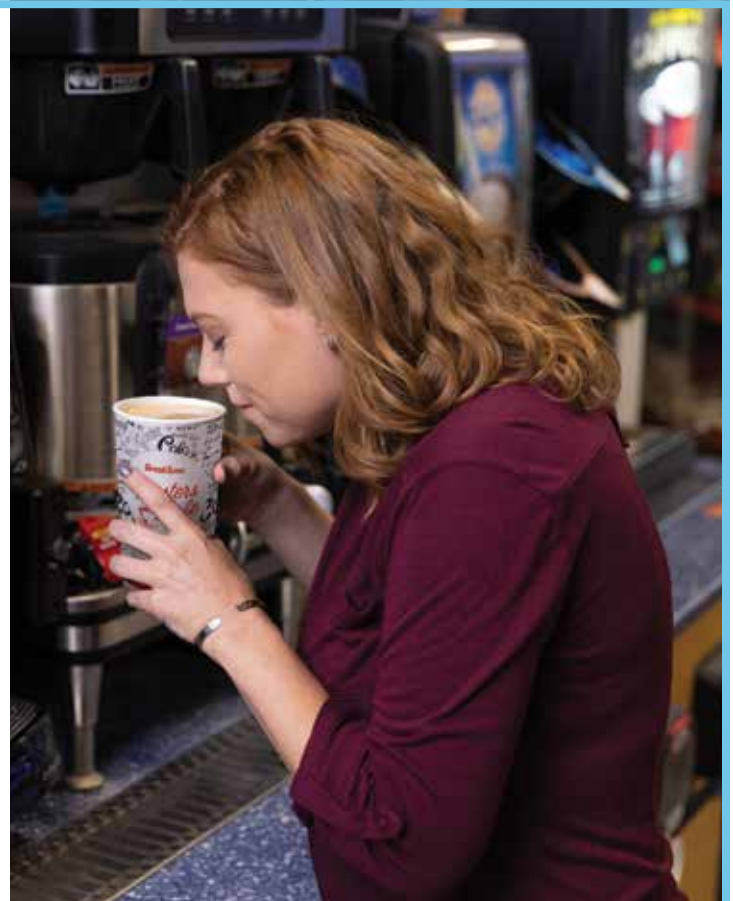
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# MFA Oil Foundation Celebrates 25 Years of Giving Back

**IN 1998, MFA OIL PRESIDENT DALE CREACH SET THE** wheels in motion for forming a charitable foundation to support local nonprofit organizations where MFA Oil had a business presence.

The goal—strengthening the communities where the co-op’s members and employees lived and worked—was straightforward, with the potential for MFA Oil to become a pivotal contributor to countless local projects and causes throughout its trade territory.

Fast forward 25 years, and Creach’s idea to create the MFA Oil Foundation has resulted in more than \$3.5 million in grants supporting local organizations dedicated to serving education, youth, humanitarian services and civic endeavors.

James Greer, senior vice president of supply and transportation, is chairman of the MFA Oil Foundation. He says the co-op is proud to have provided hundreds of nonprofits with funding to address vital community needs. Grants from the MFA Oil Foundation are frequently used to help nonprofits complete major projects or make significant purchases.

“We are all about empowering the local organizations that are working to improve life in the communities we serve,” Greer said. “We’ve provided grants for various projects throughout the years, from helping booster clubs construct practice fields for track athletes to aiding preschools with purchasing kitchen equipment and assisting rural fire departments with life-saving equipment purchases. When I drive through these communities and see the tangible impacts of our grants, like a baseball game being played under lights we helped purchase, it’s incredibly satisfying.”

In recognition of the 25th anniversary of the foundation, MFA Oil reached out to organizations that received grants over the past quarter century. Many, including several from the foundation’s early years, still benefit from the grants they received.

For example, the FFA chapters in Paris, Mo., and Winston, Mo., were chartered in 1998 and 2003, respectively, with funding from the MFA Oil Foundation, which has benefited more than two decades worth of students at each school.

“The initial MFA Oil Foundation grant launched a program symbolic of the essence of farming,” said Aaron Vitt, Paris R-II superintendent. “What started as a tiny seed has been cultivated, fertilized and nurtured into a flourishing farm that produces amazing results annually. Our FFA program has become one of the cornerstones of our school and the community.”



The FFA chapter in Winston, Mo., was chartered in 2003 with the assistance of a grant from the MFA Oil Foundation. The grant has helped more than two decades' worth of students prepare for careers in agriculture, science, education and other diverse fields.

Since its founding, the MFA Oil Foundation has donated more than \$170,000 in grants to over 100 fire departments around the Midwest. Many grants help to provide equipment such as jaws-of-life and rescue saws that firefighters need to perform rescue services. Others have been used to purchase protective clothing like coats and boots and to replace damaged safety gear and aging equipment. These donations provide vital resources to the brave men and women protecting the lives of individuals across communities in which MFA Oil serves.

Kevin Speckhals, fire chief of the Hermann Area Volunteer Fire Company, says the two thermal imaging cameras his department received in 2019 are routinely used.

“We use them on all structures, for any type of alarm, to detect heat,” Speckhals said. “They are, and will remain, valuable assets to our department and the community.”

Throughout this year, MFA Oil will share stories from past foundation grant recipients on social media.

Organizations interested in applying for future grants can find eligibility requirements at [mfaoil.com/foundation](http://mfaoil.com/foundation). **M**

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<sup>1</sup>Offer valid on qualifying purchases made between 01 September 2023 and 15 February 2024. Offer limited to Multi-Use Account Agricultural customers with an available Special Terms limit. Subject to the Multi-Use Account credit agreement and approval. Fixed 0% APR from the date of purchase, which may be prior to delivery, until November 2024, when the entire transaction amount is due in full. Regular Multi-Use Account rates will apply after that date. Offer is subject to change without prior notice. Changes to offer will not impact previously posted transactions. Offer may be limited to qualifying products. \$10,000 minimum purchase required. Minimum \$50,000 prior seed purchase at MFA required. Subject to merchant participation, see your local merchant for complete details. Multi-Use Accounts are a service of John Deere Financial, f.s.b.



# Diversification Drives Success of Feemster Farms

**UNDER THE SWELTERING HEAT OF A LATE-AUGUST** morning, Jordan Feemster and his wife, Courtney, are preparing the newest addition to their farming operation. Feemster's Twisted Corn Maze, located on the northern outskirts of Springfield, Mo., is set to provide family fun and a new source of revenue for the Feemsters.

The opening of the agritourism attraction has been a learning experience for the family.

"We thought it would be easy, but it's not," Jordan said. "The hot weather certainly has not helped. We've already discovered several things we will do differently next year."

Finding ways to boost income has been critical to supporting the family's dairy farm, which has operated for at least 100 years and includes Greene County's oldest milking parlor.

"Dairying is a lot of work without much money," Jordan said.

As profit margins in the dairy industry have crumbled over the last 20 years, many small dairies throughout the United States have closed. In 2000, there were 83,000 licensed dairy farms in the country. Today, there are fewer than 30,000.

To minimize their costs, the Feemsters grow as much of the feed for their cows on the farm as possible. The family uses pasture-based rotational grazing for seven months and raises corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa, which they grind and mix to cover the rest of the herd's feed needs.

Jordan manages the dairy with the help of his sons, Dalis and Colten. They move their Holsteins to fresh grazing paddocks every 24 to 48 hours. With their distinctive black and white marking patterns, the cows happily graze on fields mixed with pearl millet and Sudan grass that border the corn maze.

## Hay and Sweet Corn

Large round hay bales have been cut to sell to beef cattle producers in an adjacent field. The Feemsters cut up to 3,000 bales of hay per year. The hay bales are a mix of fescue, orchardgrass and clover.

"We ship a lot of round bales, which is a large source of our income," Jordan said.

An annual crop of sweet corn is yet another supplemental revenue stream for the farm. The Feemsters started growing a half-acre of



Courtney and Jordan Feemster

peaches and cream corn nine years ago and have steadily increased their planting to 6 acres in 2023. Jordan says the six days of sweet corn picking are brief but intense.

"We handpick our entire crop in less than a week," Jordan said. "It's total chaos for six days but worthwhile."

The Feemsters have built up a loyal following of more than 2,000 sweet corn customers who eagerly await harvest each summer. When the family pulled up with a 24-foot trailer full of sweet corn to sell in mid-July, they were greeted by a throng of enthusiastic buyers.

"We sell our corn in a large church parking lot, and every space was full," Jordan said. "The corn sold quickly, and the trailer was empty in under an hour."

## Running the Farm

For the last two years, Jordan has been gradually giving more responsibility to his sons and letting his oldest, Dalis, make more decisions. Colten, who is studying at Ozark Technical Community College, pitches in roughly 20 hours a week between his classes.

The local MFA Oil bulk plant in Rogersville, Mo., ensures the Feemsters are well-supplied with fuel, propane and lubricants to keep their various farming operations going.

"Any time we need fuel, they get it to us quickly," said Jordan, who has served as a delegate for the company for more than 10 years. "I enjoy buying from cooperatives like MFA Oil and keeping as much of our business local as possible. We use MFA Oil lubricants in all our equipment."

With so many varied agricultural pursuits, there's never a shortage of things that need to be done on the Feemsters' farm.

"Luckily, my wife and I are both workaholics, so it works out well," Jordan said with a chuckle. "Everyone has their role to play." **M**



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# Volatility Can and Will Surprise Us

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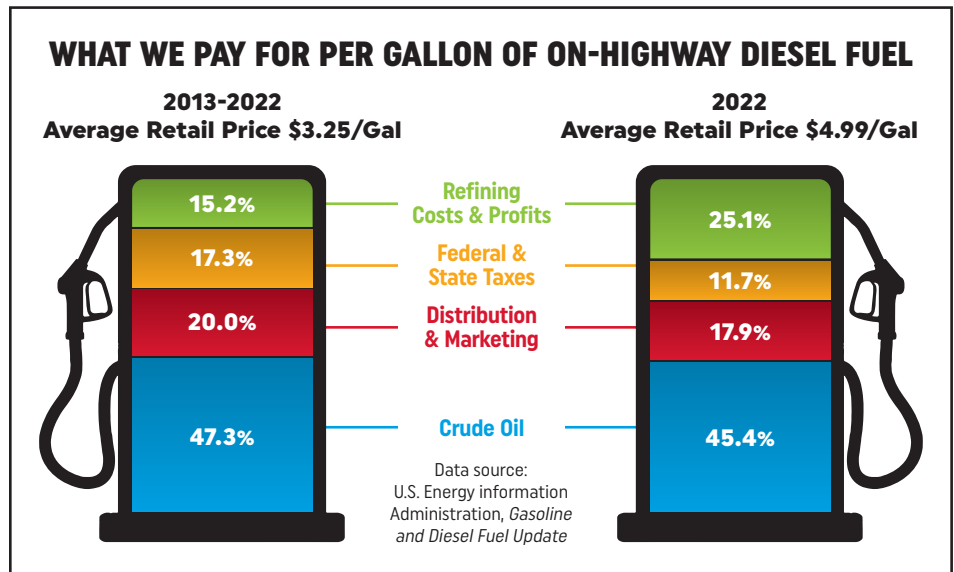
starting point for all energy products. It also accounts for the most significant percentage of energy product prices. Over the last 10 years, crude oil has made up roughly 53.93% of retail gasoline prices and 47.3% of retail diesel prices, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Most markets nowadays are global, including energy, which fluctuates based on international events. It might be easier to make a list of the things that don't impact energy prices than to make an exhaustive list of the things that do. The most significant factors are things we know and hear about in the news. Wars, global civil unrest, pandemics, terrorist attacks, supply, production, economic outlooks and financial markets all play a role and can lead to volatile swings in pricing.

In today's world of instant information, energy markets change fast and furiously. There are many times when prices overreact to initial news only to calm down as more details or the real picture becomes more apparent. I mention this because it's an excellent reminder to all of us that, often, having patience and remaining calm are the best things we can do.

The petroleum industry is competitive and posts its prices on big signs at locations for all to see, making it very transparent. Pricing is also posted on internet sites and apps where you can find the local fuel cost across the country with just a few clicks.

Every business has unique cost structures, but most fuel supply companies must deal with expenses relating to distribution and transportation, marketing, insurance, salaries and benefits, taxes, and more. These can all vary, but most companies work hard to control these costs in this industry because of the competitive nature of retail pricing.



Local issues can also impact prices, which we recently saw in the gasoline market. Wholesale prices jumped 50 cents per gallon in one day and then another 25 cents a day later. Retail prices cannot react this quickly to keep up with price jumps like these, but retail prices did go higher. Many were shocked by this development as there was no indication of any potential concerns about pricing changes of this magnitude.

One of the major reasons prices jumped the way they did was because of the anticipated changeover from summer to winter gasoline blends. Summer gasoline has a lower Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) rating, meaning they are less volatile and less likely to evaporate. Conversely, winter-blended gasoline has a higher RVP level. The lower the RVP, the more expensive the fuel is to produce.

Many companies were trying to keep their summer gas inventories low so they could buy cheaper winter gas as the Sept. 15 switch approached. A few companies misjudged the market and, with heavy Labor Day traffic and good demand, got caught short with their supply. These companies needed to buy gas and needed it immediately. The gas available was summer-blended (more

expensive) and was in limited hands as most companies were prepared for the seasonal fuel switch.

The limited supply created higher prices, forcing companies to buy at elevated prices. It was a classic short squeeze. Wholesale costs increased by more than 70 cents in two days, which is a huge move. A day later, prices came down roughly 30 cents, and they have continued to ease downward.

Energy prices are volatile, which is the one thing we can always count on with commodities—volatility. This is yet another reminder that volatility is a significant factor for all the commodities we deal with, and, at times, we will see periods of extreme movements. Times of relative calm or normalcy can lull us into a false sense of security. As mentioned, the best course of action is to stay calm and give the market time to digest all the factors before making any rash decisions. **M**



» **Tim Danze**  
is the hedging manager  
for MFA Oil.



## MFA Oil Acquires Assets of Gygr-Gas

On June 26, MFA Oil Company acquired the assets of Gygr-Gas, an independent propane retailer based in Boonville, Mo. The deal included an office and warehouse in Boonville, trucks, and bulk storage tanks in Missouri near Desoto, Fulton, Moberly and Sunrise Beach. The Gygr-Gas office in Desoto, Mo., was not part of the acquisition.

“We look forward to the opportunity to work with any customers who previously bought their propane from Gygr-Gas,” said Kenny Steeves, senior vice president of MFA Oil operations. “This acquisition further strengthens our supply position in central Missouri and will enable us to continue to provide exceptional service to our members and customers in the surrounding areas.”

This was the second acquisition for MFA Oil in the company’s 2023 fiscal year, which ended on Aug. 31. MFA Oil previously purchased Blue Flame Gas of Marthasville, Mo., in October 2022. MFA Oil continues to evaluate strategic acquisition opportunities within its trade territory.

## Alexander and Bach Join the MFA Oil Executive Team

MFA Oil Company announced the ascension of two key employees to its leadership team in June. Charlie Alexander was named vice president of Big O Tires operations, and Jennifer Bach was promoted to vice president of Break Time operations.

Alexander leads the cooperative’s 36 Big O Tires automotive service centers and has overseen the company’s retail tire division since 2018. He reports directly to Jon Ihler, MFA Oil president and CEO.

“Charlie has the leadership and energy it takes to manage our growing Big O Tires franchise,” Ihler said. “Under Charlie’s direction, our retail automotive business continues to expand and has become a



Charlie Alexander and Jennifer Bach

significant piece of our broader company. He is a valuable addition to our executive team.”

Bach, who also reports to Ihler, has worked in the Break Time division of MFA Petroleum for 25 years, most recently serving as senior director of operations for the company’s 72 Break Time convenience stores.

“Jennifer is a proven leader with deep knowledge of the C-store industry,” Ihler said. “Her knowledge, insights and forward-thinking will be great assets to our executive leadership team.”

## MFA Petroleum Opens New Big O Tires Store in Lake Ozark

MFA Petroleum Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of MFA Oil Company, opened its newest Big O Tires store at 1819 Bagnell Dam Blvd in Lake Ozark, Mo., on June 12. The new site is the company’s third in the Lake of the Ozarks region, joining established locations in Osage Beach and Camdenton.

Big O Tires offers tire services and repairs, wheel alignment, batteries, shocks, struts, and a wide range of diagnostic, repair and routine maintenance services.

“We’re excited to bring another Big O Tires service center to the northern portion of the Lake of the Ozarks community,” said Charlie Alexander, vice president of Big O Tires operations. “The Bagnell Dam store is bigger with a pull-around lane capable of handling trailers, which our Osage Beach location doesn’t have room to offer.”

The new site boasts eight automotive service bays and is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Monday through Friday and from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. Tyler Danuser serves as the store manager.

Customers can call 573-607-3777 or visit [www.bigotires.com](http://www.bigotires.com) to schedule an appointment.

MFA Petroleum owns and manages 36 Big O Tires franchise stores in Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas.

## MFA Oil Charity Golf Scramble and Concert Raises \$147,000 for Operation Homefront

MFA Oil raised \$145,000 in donations to support America’s military families during its Annual Charity Golf Scramble and Concert benefiting Operation Homefront. The event took place on June 5, 2023, in Columbia, Mo., at The Club at Old Hawthorne, with more than 240 golfers participating. An additional \$2,000 was added to that total after golf teams from Huber & Associates and Molson Coors donated back contest winnings from the day’s on-course poker run.

“Operation Homefront is a top-rated, national non-profit agency whose mission is to build strong, stable and secure military families,” said Jon Ihler, MFA Oil president and CEO. “Thanks to our generous sponsors, vendors, golfers, customers and great employees, we have raised more than \$1.3 million in donations since 2015 to support Operation Homefront’s efforts to provide financial assistance to the families of service members.”

Founded in 2002, Operation Homefront provides military and veteran families with relief through critical financial assistance, transitional housing programs, resiliency through permanent housing and caregiver support services, and recurring family support programs and services throughout the year that help military families overcome the short-term bumps in the road, so they don’t become long-term chronic problems. **M**



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Emerging Leaders in Agriculture is a valuable program designed to help young, professional producers manage and grow your business.

- ✓ All-expenses paid conference for young farmers and ranchers
- ✓ First-class lineup of expert speakers
- ✓ Great opportunity for young farmers to build their professional network

..... **Topics Include:** .....

- Navigating tight margins & commodity markets
- Farm transitions & succession planning
- Soil health best management practices
- Identifying & mitigating farm risk
- And more!



**WE'RE SEEKING APPLICANTS WHO:**

- Are between the ages of 21 and 45
- Farm as their primary profession and are involved in the day-to-day operations
- Derive a minimum of two-thirds of their income from farming

***If you meet these qualifications, we encourage you to apply today!***

**[www.EmergingLeadersInAg.com](http://www.EmergingLeadersInAg.com)**

**Applications are due by October 31, 2023.**

*Participants will be selected and notified by November 15.  
You do not have to be an MFA Oil customer to qualify.*

