



# MOMENTUM

## Family Tradition

Clay Farms Has a Rich, 200-Year History

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We live where you do.

# Legacies

## IN LEATHER

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Winter 2024



Use of BOSS Performance Diesel results in engines lasting longer, better fuel economy and a decrease in swearing by equipment operators who like their equipment operating.



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**On the Cover:**  
Ty May of Sullivan, Mo., grew up around the leather trade and opened May's Custom Leather in 2013. He creates handcrafted boots and other leather goods. *Photo by Jason Jenkins.*

# Thanks for Your Trust

## MFA OIL WAS FOUNDED ON THE

belief that farmers and ranchers would be best served by working with a cooperative. Fast forward 94 years, and that core belief and our purpose remain the same: to drive the success of our customers and communities through exceptional products and services. For us, everything starts and ends on the farm with our trusted services to you.

Thank you for putting your trust in MFA Oil Company. We know that trust is built and maintained through actions over time, and we're proud to have earned your trust.

Overall, 2023 was another great year. The results reflect our focused efforts to deliver exceptional customer service and maintain good employee morale. I credit the commitment, work ethic and passion of our employees with our success.

Understanding what attracts potential employees and keeps existing employees connected requires commitment. Everyone has their own values, aspirations and goals. Providing the right work-life balance to employees so they may thrive in the workplace is increasingly important. We've worked hard to establish and maintain our position as an employer of choice in a very competitive economy. Employee development is critical, and we will continue to look for ways to support our employees in their pursuit of personal improvement.

Within MFA Oil Company, we have made concerted efforts to improve our local presence and image this year with new or refurbished bulk fuel and propane offices and Petro-Card 24 locations. We believe in continuous improvement and have made internal enhancements that allow us to grow our traditional operations without adding overhead at the corporate level.

In MFA Petroleum Company, our Break Time and Big O Tires divisions continue to do well. Our Break Time team has worked hard to make our breakfast program a



Jon Ihler

signature offering and something customers look forward to as part of their morning routine. We made a significant investment in our Big O Tires operations last December with the acquisition of 13 existing Big O Tires stores in the Kansas City metropolitan market. Growing our Break Time and Big O Tires businesses not only creates value but also aligns with our long-term strategy.

Our 2024 strategy is not just to get bigger; it's about getting better. We want to be the long-term petroleum provider of the future. We continue to invest strategically in our people, internal support infrastructure and cooperative longevity. These investments benefit the entire company and create additional value for the cooperative.

Our business will continue to evolve. Rapid advancements in technology are powering innovation around the world. Rest assured that MFA Oil will adapt to the world ahead. We've adapted our business many times in our nearly 100-year history and will continue to do so as needed.

Thank you again for your trust and support.

Jon Ihler,  
President and CEO



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# Setting a Grain Marketing Game Plan

## BEN BROWN MEETS MANY FARMERS

in his role as an agricultural economist for the University of Missouri and MU Extension. During these interactions, he has discovered an unfortunate reality: Many farmers lack an exit plan for selling their grain.

“I always encourage people to create a plan,” Brown said. “Farmers need to think intentionally about what they will do with their crops and the risks they will face regardless of their chosen plan. Every option has tradeoffs.”

Brown said too many farmers are reluctant to consider pre-harvest grain marketing, which limits their profit potential.

“I’m a big believer in early-season marketing,” he said. “Taking advantage of pre-harvest marketing allows you to be more strategic with your sales. If you miss out on that window, you’re stuck with whatever the market is willing to give you.”

Seasonal marketing opportunities routinely arise in the spring and early summer. In most years, corn and soybean futures prices rally in spring and peak by late May or early June. These rallies occur when uncertainty about the next crop is most significant. Typically, by mid-July, the highest seasonal prices for both crops have occurred, and futures prices tend to sell off.

From 2000 to 2019, corn futures were higher on May 15 than on Oct. 15 in 14 out of 19 years, or 74% of the time. In those years, prices fell an average of \$0.73 per bushel from spring to fall. In the five years when prices were higher in the fall, prices rose an average of \$0.83 per bushel. A farmer who took the May 15 price versus the Oct. 15 price in those years would have netted an additional \$0.32 per bushel.

The same seasonal trends apply to soybeans. From 2000 to 2019, the price on May 15 was higher than on Oct. 15 in 13



of 19 years (68%) by an average of \$1.91 per bushel. In those 19 years, following a plan of taking the May 15 price would have netted a positive return of \$0.96 per bushel.

Brown recommends creating a simple, straightforward grain marketing plan with decision dates and price targets to help farmers make selling decisions. He uses a benchmark (cost of production plus about 4% management expense) to determine when prices are too low to sell.

“I recommend picking dates that are easy to remember,” he said. “When you hit those dates, and there’s an opportunity to lock in some profit on a percentage of your expected harvest, go ahead and do it. This will help you prevent putting excessive risk on unpriced grain later in the season.”

Gaining a better understanding of basis is another way farmers can improve their grain marketing. Futures prices and basis follow different seasonal patterns, so the ability to manage futures price risk and basis risk independently creates an opportunity to improve returns.

“Basis is probably one of the most important components of grain marketing,

but it is also the one thing that farmers know the least about because they tend to focus on cash prices,” Brown said.

Past basis data can help farmers anticipate future forecasts in their local market. Brown advises farmers to analyze basis using a three-year average for corn and a two-year average for soybeans.

“Basis gives us great insight into the supply and demand picture in an area and is a signal we can use to determine the right marketing tool,” Brown said. “That tool may be a hedge-to-arrive contract, a basis-only contract or a futures-only contract.”

Brown said there’s a huge emotional component to grain marketing that can’t be ignored. Farmers must weigh their personal risk tolerance when deciding grain marketing timing and do what works best for their farming operation.

“Ultimately, it comes down to what will make you lose the most sleep,” he said. “Would you rather sell, and the market goes up afterward, or would you rather wait to sell but have the market go down?” **M**

# Legacies

IN LEATHER





OPPOSITE PAGE: After harvesting an ostrich on a hunting trip to Namibia in 2014, Billy and Margy Eckelkamp of Washington, Mo., commissioned Ty May to craft custom boots from the tanned hide. ABOVE: Though May grew up around the leather trade, it wasn't until he moved to Missouri in 2013 that he opened May's Custom Boot and Leather.

## Sullivan Bootmaker Crafts Unforgettable Footwear

Photos and Story by Jason Jenkins

When telling the tale of Andy Dufresne's prison escape in the classic 1994 film, "The Shawshank Redemption," actor and narrator Morgan Freeman explains how Andy wears the warden's shoes back to his jail cell, shoes that he had buffed to a "high mirror shine," as instructed. Yet neither the guards nor Freeman's character, Ellis "Red" Redding, notices the out-of-place footwear.

"I mean, seriously, how often do you really look at a man's shoes?" asks Red.

While a pair of black wingtip brogues may have gone unnoticed, it's safe to say that Andy wouldn't have made it out of Shawshank and to the beaches of Zihuatanejo, Mexico, had the warden wore a pair of Ty May's custom cowboy boots.

For the past decade, the former rodeo bull rider and biomedical research facility manager has handcrafted unique boots to

his clients' exact specifications from his shop located on his family's Century Farm near Sullivan, Mo.

"I've been around the leather trade my entire life," May said. "My dad was a farrier and saddle maker, so knowing how to work with leather was a necessity of life. He made us boys do our own boot repair, but I never had any desire to learn leather when I was growing up."

### RODEOS & MONKEY FARMS

Born in Carlsbad, N.M., May moved to Albuquerque with his family when he was six years old. When his father, Rusty, had the opportunity to join a family member's saddle-making business, the May family headed north to Loveland, Colo. May finished high school there and met his future wife, Lisa.

In high school, May excelled as a rodeo bull rider, earning a rodeo scholarship at Oklahoma Panhandle State University in Goodwell. He stayed there for two years before transferring to the University of Wyoming in Laramie, where Lisa was a student. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in biology.

"I rodeoed full-time for two years after that, mostly as a circuit rider," May said. "I got busted up more than I ever made any money. I really wanted to get my graduate degree in marine biology, so I rodeoed across the country, going around and checking out different schools."

His travels landed him in Oregon, where he worked in construction for some cousins in the Portland area while continuing to rodeo on the weekends. When he was laid off during a slow period, a rodeo buddy offered an employment suggestion.



LEFT: These tooled top boots won Ty May the Artistry Boot award in the intermediate category at the Boot and Saddle Makers Round Up in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 2018. TOP RIGHT: May uses a pattern to trace out the upper front part of a boot known as the vamp. BOTTOM RIGHT: To shape a boot, May pulls the leather around a form called a last, tacking it in place with small nails. OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Tooling leather with intricate designs takes time and patience. OPPOSITE PAGE CENTER: May uses various stamping and carving tools to create his designs. OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: May carefully skives the boot leather where two pieces intersect, creating a smooth transition.

“He kept telling me that I needed to go out to the ‘monkey farm’ and apply for a job,” said May, referring to the Oregon National Primate Research Center. “They hired me for a temporary position, and I eventually worked my way up to assistant operations manager.”

In 2001, May accepted the position of operations manager at the Southwest National Primate Research Center in San Antonio, Texas. The move rekindled May’s love of rodeo and cowboy culture. His daughter, Kylee, began competing in high school rodeo events. He said

that one Saturday morning, he woke up with the desire to try his hand at leather carving and tooling.

“I started messing around and discovered that I really have a passion for it,” May said. “When I get to carving, I can lose an entire day.”

The jump to making boots wasn’t a big one for someone living in south Texas, where the footwear is quite prevalent. He took a boot-making course from Tex Robin, a legendary custom bootmaker from Abilene, Texas, who passed away in 2023.

“Other than that, I’m pretty well self-taught,” said the 59-year-old. “Pardon the pun, but I’m one of those monkey-see, monkey-do kind of people.”

May crafted a few pairs of boots during the family’s time in San Antonio. After Kylee graduated high school and elected to attend the University of Missouri, he retired from the research center. The family moved to a farm in Franklin County that had been in Lisa’s family since the Civil War. He converted a two-car garage into his boot shop and opened May’s Custom Boot and Leather in 2013.



## CRAFTING A PERFECT FIT

In a world of mass-produced goods where speed and cost-effectiveness are emphasized, May offers the opposite for his customers.

“They crank out factory-made boots as fast and as cheap as they can,” May explained. “They’ll cut corners and skimp here and there. I don’t know how to do that. I won’t cut corners. I do it right, or I won’t do it at all.”

Doing it right begins by measuring a customer’s feet—something May prefers to do himself in the shop. He’ll trace the outline of each foot and take measurements at the ankle and the heel, as well as several measurements of the foot, including the high instep, low instep, waist and ball.

**Various types of leathers—cowhide, buffalo, bison, lizard, snake, alligator, ostrich, elephant, hippo and even shark—are available in a rainbow of colors.**

“The ball is the widest part of your foot and the most important when making custom boots,” May said. “The ball of your foot and the ball of the boot need to line up. You could try on a hundred pairs of factory boots and not find one that fits you. A custom boot, when fitted properly, is unlike anything else on your feet because it’s properly fitted to the ball.”

May then selects forms, known as lasts, around which the boots will be shaped. The last will be built up with pieces of leather that create the exact shape of each foot. Every boot is composed of around two dozen separate pieces; ornate boots can have many more.

Various types of leathers—cowhide, buffalo, bison, lizard, snake, alligator, ostrich, elephant, hippo and even shark—are available in a rainbow of colors. While he offers standard “everyday” boots, May also can adorn boots with “fancier” options such as inlays, tooled leather, unique stitching patterns and more.

It takes May about 40 hours to completely handcraft a pair of boots. He currently offers his standard boot with a round toe, 12-inch top and one row of decorative stitching for \$1,600. Adding adornments

adds to the price. His most expensive pair sold to date cost the customer \$3,000.

Custom cowboy boots allow May’s clients to express their personalities and individuality. For Billy and Margy Eckelkamp of Washington, Mo., the custom cowboy-style boots they commissioned him to create became functional mementos of a hunting trip the couple took to Namibia in 2014.

“We each had taken an ostrich on the trip, and we decided to get boots made from the tanned hides,” Margy said. “We had learned about Ty through the grapevine, and it was a pleasant surprise to find someone who had such skill and craftsmanship so close to home.”

Though she has owned many pairs of boots throughout her life, the ostrich boots were Margy’s first custom pair. She said they fit and feel distinctively different than any other shoe she’s worn.

“They’re incredibly comfortable, and every time I wear those boots, somebody compliments them,” Margy said. “I never wear pants over them because I want to really showcase them. They turned out exactly how I envisioned. I’m so proud we’ve got this amazing craftsman in Missouri.”

May’s skills have been recognized within the custom boot community. In 2015, he won the Journeyman Award at the Boot and Saddle Makers Round Up in Wichita Falls, Texas. The honor identified May as an up-and-coming bootmaker. In 2018, he won the Artistry Boot award in the intermediate category with a tooled top boot.

Beyond boots, May creates other leather items, including wallets, belts, knife sheaths, rifle slings and anything else a customer might request.

“This past spring, I made a tooled leather mortarboard for a young lady who graduated from Mizzou,” he said. “With every boot and every project, I’m still learning and trying to improve. I’m nowhere near being a master yet.” **M**

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**For more information on May’s Custom Boot and Leather, call 636-208-1099 or visit [www.maybootandleather.com](http://www.maybootandleather.com).**



# MEETING MEMBERS' NEEDS

## 94th Annual Delegate Meeting

Photos By Casey Buckman



MFA Oil Company had good tidings to share with its members this past holiday season. The company announced that members would receive a combined \$19.9 million in cash and equity in exchange for doing business with the co-op.

The company announced the planned distribution at its 94th Annual Delegate Meeting on Dec. 11, 2023.

Chief Financial Officer Jeff Raetz reported the cooperative realized a net income of \$42.1 million for the fiscal year ending Aug. 31, 2023, compared to \$14.3 million

for fiscal year 2022. Approximately \$22.9 million of 2023 net income came from regional patronage that MFA Oil received from other cooperatives. MFA Oil had a strong year, with companywide earnings of \$19.9 million from its own operations.

“It was another great year for MFA Oil across all of our business units,” said Jon Ihler, president and CEO. “We credit the support, commitment, work ethic and passion of our employees with our success.”

Based on 2023 earnings, the company’s board of directors approved the retirement

of 100% of 2009 member equities (\$4 million), retirement of 2010 member equities (\$2.2 million) and retirement of 50% of 2011 member equities (\$1.7 million). The board also approved \$8 million of qualified cash patronage, which represents two-thirds of allocated qualified patronage for the 2023 fiscal year to be paid to members. Together, those figures equal \$15.9 million in cash distributions. Additionally, MFA Oil will issue \$4 million of member equities for 2023—bringing the total cash and equity distribution to \$19.9 million.



OPPOSITE PAGE: (L to R) Farm broadcaster Max Armstrong, MFA Oil Board Chairman Glen Cope and Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe. TOP LEFT: President and CEO Jon Ihler updated delegates about the cooperative's operations in Fiscal Year 2023. TOP RIGHT: MFA Oil delegates and employees gathered for the meeting in Columbia, Mo., at the Holiday Inn Executive Center. BOTTOM: Meeting attendance was strong with more than 370 delegates participating.

Over the past five years, MFA Oil has returned \$45.7 million in cash to members of the cooperative.

Glen Cope, chairman of the MFA Oil Board of Directors, said the company's strong results were "a collaborative effort shared between employees from every level of the company" and made possible by the co-op's loyal member-owners "who continue to see the value of doing business with MFA Oil year after year."

"We take great pride in meeting the needs of our farmer-members who own the cooperative," he said. "We reward their business with cash patronage and equity redemptions so that our member-owners can share in the co-op's successes."

MFA Oil members are eligible for patronage based on a percentage of the total money they spend on gasoline, diesel, propane, and lubricants purchased through the company's refined fuel and propane plants and at Petro-Card 24 stations. Customers who are agricultural producers or owners

of land used for farm production and purchase at least \$1,000 of product from MFA Oil during its fiscal year (Sept. 1 through Aug. 31) are eligible for membership in the cooperative.

Cope told the more than 370 delegates who attended the meeting at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia, Mo., that the Board of Directors has three primary areas of focus: maintaining a strong balance sheet, growing the business and meeting the needs of member-owners.

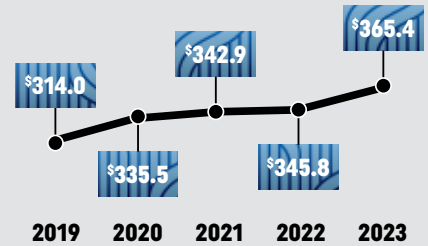
"Effective growth and risk management are top of mind in the boardroom every time we meet," Cope said. "This drives the board in our strategic thinking as we look to position the co-op for long-term success and navigate volatile markets."

In addition to receiving reports on the company's financial standing and operational performance, delegates heard from guest speakers Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe and farm broadcaster Max Armstrong. [M](#)

# FINANCIALS

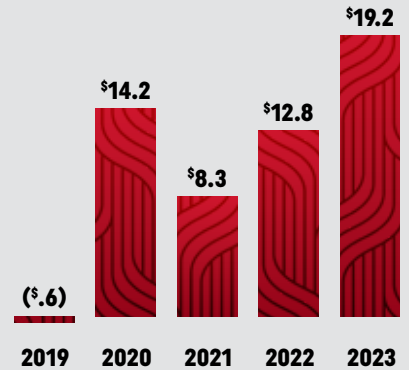
IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

## NET WORTH

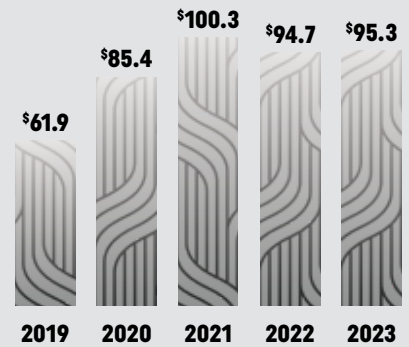


## EARNINGS ON MFA OIL OPERATIONS

EXCLUDING PATRONAGE

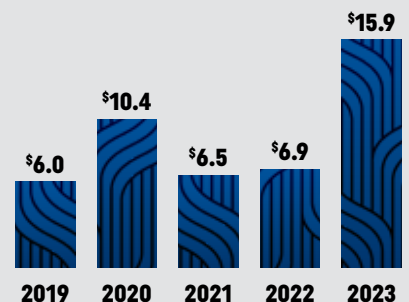


## WORKING CAPITAL



## PATRONAGE

RETIRED PAST EQUITIES AND CASH PAYMENTS



# MFA Oil Company 2023 Fiscal Year Audit Report

Our auditors, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP from Bloomington, Ill., recently completed our fiscal year audit for the period Sept. 1, 2022, through Aug. 31, 2023. Following is a summarized balance sheet and a consolidated statement of operations for our past fiscal year.

CliftonLarsonAllen LLP provided the following statement: “In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as of Aug. 31, 2023, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles.”



Jeff Raetz, Chief Financial Officer



Photo by Sara Reeves

**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS**  
**AUGUST 31, 2023 AND 2022**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Sales	\$1,514,796,973	\$1,565,513,419
Cost of Sales	1,232,357,948	1,305,187,430
<b>Gross Margin</b>	<b>282,439,025</b>	<b>260,325,989</b>
Other Income	7,004,514	4,184,062
Operating Expenses	279,260,436	250,592,714
<b>Income from Operations</b>	<b>10,183,103</b>	<b>13,917,337</b>
<b>Other Income/(Expense)</b>		
Patronage Dividends	22,875,665	1,480,751
Interest Income	2,006,894	1,646,822
Interest Expense	(119,073)	(169,978)
Other, Net	7,121,698	(2,623,478)
<b>Net Income Before Tax</b>	<b>42,068,287</b>	<b>14,251,454</b>
Income Tax	5,883,943	3,086,967
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$36,184,344</b>	<b>\$11,164,487</b>

**CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET**  
**AUGUST 31, 2023 AND 2022**

<b>Assets</b>		
	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Current Assets	\$239,175,341	\$227,440,119
Investments	95,597,643	91,373,590
Property, Plant & Equipment, net	159,609,434	149,966,230
Right of Use Assets	78,058,881	-
Intangible Assets	20,593,132	21,454,345
Other Assets	120,011	74,316
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$593,154,442</b>	<b>\$490,308,600</b>

**Liabilities, Members' Equities  
and Retained Savings**

Current Liabilities	\$143,836,638	\$132,696,760
Long-Term Lease Liabilities	73,184,364	-
Other Long-Term Liabilities	1,822,369	1,430,635
Deferred Income Tax	8,910,651	10,363,815
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>227,754,022</b>	<b>144,491,210</b>
Allocated Equities	45,752,976	50,040,642
Deferred Patronage	-	3,361,419
Nonqualified Notices of Allocation	14,035,738	14,310,976
Retained Savings	305,611,706	278,104,353
<b>Total Members Equity and Retained Savings</b>	<b>365,400,420</b>	<b>345,817,390</b>
<b>Total Liabilities, Member's Equity and Retained Savings</b>	<b>\$593,154,442</b>	<b>\$490,308,600</b>



# Growing Together

## MFA Oil and MFA Incorporated Hold Third Annual Emerging Leaders in Agriculture Conference

By Adam Buckallew | Photo By Allison Jenkins

More than 80 young farmers and ranchers from Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa and Kansas traveled to mid-Missouri for the third annual Emerging Leaders in Agriculture Conference. MFA Oil and MFA Incorporated jointly hosted the event on Jan. 10-12 at Camden on the Lake Resort in Lake Ozark, Mo. The two-day, all-expenses-paid event brought together farmers who will lead the next generation of agricultural production with industry experts to discuss crucial farm issues and offer peer networking opportunities.

John Wright, who raises row crops and hay in Cincinnati, Iowa, was impressed by the level of educational programming at the

conference. He says the speakers were “top-notch,” and he picked up several ideas from the presentations he plans to consider in his farming operation.

“The Emerging Leaders in Agriculture Conference blew me away,” Wright said. “The whole experience was wonderful and rewarding. I’m grateful I had the opportunity to attend.”

### FERTILE BONDS

David Strobel and his wife, Kim, attended the conference for the second time. The Strobels operate a Concordia, Mo., farm



where they raise corn, wheat, soybeans and cattle. He said the networking and bonding at the meeting is essential.

“We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with other young farmers who share and understand many of the same challenges that we face on our farm,” Strobel said. “One of the things I appreciate is the chance to talk with farmers from other areas. It’s interesting to hear how farmers from different areas of Missouri or different states operate their farms and how that compares to how we run our farm.”

The Strobels have kept in touch with some attendees they met at the inaugural Emerging Leaders in Agriculture Conference in 2022 and hope their fellow attendees made similar connections. Strobel recommends the conference to any young farmers considering applying to attend next year.

“It’s definitely worth the trip,” Strobel said. “The overall conference is excellent, and we’ve had a great time both years we have attended.”

## VALUABLE TAKEAWAYS

Since she was a young girl, Brooke Schnarre has farmed with her family in Centralia, Mo. She recently graduated from Northwest Missouri State University with a bachelor’s degree in agricultural science and decided to return to the family farm.

“Deciding to come back home to work full-time on the family farm was easy,” Schnarre said.

Schnarre raises cattle and row crops with her parents and two siblings, and she has taken an active role in many areas of the farm. She and her sister manage the family’s cow/calf operation, handling everything from spring calving to hay mowing and silage chopping. On the crop side, Schnarre helps with tillage, planting and harvest. She also manages the farm’s financial accounts and works closely with landlords and bankers to ensure the farm’s success.

She appreciated the conference’s diversity of topics and said the sessions on commodity marketing and family succession planning were especially informative.

“I’ve enjoyed my time at the conference and would recommend it,” Schnarre said. “It’s been an eye-opening experience, and I’ve learned things I can take home and incorporate into our farming operation. I plan to discuss what I learned with my family.”



**We enjoyed the opportunity to meet with other young farmers who share and understand many of the same challenges that we face on our farm.”**—*David Strobel*

## ENGAGING OPPORTUNITY

Amanda Schuster farms in Blackwater, Mo., with her husband, Dustin. They raise cattle, sheep, corn and soybeans and run a custom spraying business.

She said the strong lineup of speakers was a compelling reason to attend.

“Any time we are away from the farm for an extended period, we have to weigh the time commitment we are making,” Schuster said. “The agenda for this conference was strong, and we enjoyed the speakers. We were especially interested in the soil health presentation because it fit our operation well.”

Like the Strobels, the Schusters attended the conference for the second time and encouraged young farmers and ranchers to participate in future conferences.

“It’s a great opportunity to grow, learn new things and broaden your network,” Schuster said. “Meeting other couples in our age range and connecting with them is incredibly beneficial. A wide variety of farming operations were represented, and we enjoyed getting to know the farmers who run them.”

Schuster said she was glad she and her husband could attend the conference together.

“It’s nice to be able to reflect together, as a couple, on what we heard from the speakers immediately afterward. It’s a great conference, and I would tell anyone considering applying to make the effort. We are glad that we did.” **M**



# *Family Tradition*

**Clay Farms Has a Rich, 200-Year History**

By Jennifer Truesdale | Photos by Casey Buckman



Can you imagine what it takes to run a farm that has been continuously operated since before Missouri earned its statehood? What steps would it take to ensure its survival and safeguard its legacy?

John Clay and his wife, DaLana, are well-acquainted with these questions. The Clay family, who are MFA Oil members, have operated Clay Farms in Jamestown, Mo., since 1816. Seven generations of Clays have worked the land in northeast Moniteau County near the Missouri River. Throughout the family's history, diversification and conservation have kept the farm going for over 200 years.

John and DaLana operate the farm with their son, Andy, and his wife, Kacey. Andy and Kacey, who represent the seventh generation, oversee the daily operations of the row crop and commercial cow/calf operation.

Inside the farm's administrative office sits a display case filled with family treasures. The case holds valuable heirlooms and historical documents that detail the family's history as far back as the English ancestors who helped colonize Jamestown, Va., in the 1600s. The collection includes relics such as the hat of Jeremiah Walker Clay, John's ancestor who founded the farm.

Jeremiah was born in Chesterfield County, Va., in 1765. He moved to Kentucky and then to St. Charles, Mo. From there, he led a band of Kentuckians to settle Lupus, Mo., around 1799, where he established an 80-acre farm in Lupus. Missouri became a state in 1821, five years after the farm's founding. The land grant for the farm was eventually signed by President John Quincy Adams in 1828, and the original grant is among the prized possessions in the family's display case.

While soybeans, corn, and cattle are Clay Farms' primary focus today, Andy said farming was different in Jeremiah's time.

"Corn was probably always a crop in the creek and river bottoms," Andy said. "But originally, a lot more hogs were raised in this area. The meat hogs were crucial for the families to feed themselves. Hogs and cattle have always been important livestock for the Clays. Oats and wheat were among the farm's prominent crops in more recent generations."



LEFT: Andy, Hadley, Hudson, John and Hayden Clay. ABOVE: John and Andy are proud of their family's farming heritage. The display case in the farm's administrative office showcases valuable heirlooms and historical documents such as the original land grant signed by President John Quincy Adams.

Diversification has long been essential to the longevity of the Clay family farm. The examples provided by Jeremiah, who diversified through agriculture and the trading post, and subsequent generations who added different crops to the family's fields laid the groundwork for today's Clays, who generate revenue from several sources. The family owns and operates Jamestown Agri Service, Inc.; offers custom earthmoving services to build drainage solutions; and more.

"Diversification has been a key to our success over the years, and that lesson has been repeated to me many times since I was a kid," Andy said. "My wife loves horses, so we have some retired racehorses that she boards on the side. We also have a small outfitting business offering hunts on some of our owned and rented land. Hunters have taken some impressive bucks out there."

In 1976, the farm was in the University of Missouri Extension's inaugural class of the prestigious Century Farm designees for farms owned for 100 years or more by the same family. In 2021, to celebrate Missouri's Bicentennial, MU Extension and the Missouri Farm Bureau recognized the farm as a Missouri Founding Farm, one of only 30 in the state to be operated by the same family for 200 years or more.

Besides their longevity, the Clays are known for their passion for conservation. They use cover crops to protect their soil,

plant habitat for wildlife and monarch butterflies on field edges, and participate in conservation programs to preserve their agricultural heritage.

"For our family operation—and this is true for many of our neighbors as well—we care very much for the environment, and we strive to protect it the best that we can for future generations," John said. "Some people (who don't understand farming) think we're out here to hurt them or the planet, which couldn't be any farther from the truth."

Andy said farming sustainably is just as important for the Clays and their legacy as diversification.

"Kacey and I have been blessed with three children," Andy said. "The oldest is Hudson. He's 16 and showing a lot of interest in returning to the farm. I hope that's what he decides to do. And then also we're blessed with a set of twins, a boy, Hayden, and a girl, Hadley. They turned 13 last summer."

John beamed as Andy talked about the potential for an eighth generation of Clays to take on the family tradition of farming.

"I really hope all three of them decide to return [to the farm]," John said. "There's definitely room for them if they decide to do so. And back to the diversification part, we'll explore other avenues. But it's got to be their choice—they've got to have the love to do it, or it's not worth doing." **M**

# 10 Tips to Bulletproof Your Beef Operation

By Linda Geist, University of Missouri Extension



Beef producers can use a window of profitability to make their farm business more bulletproof.

University of Missouri Extension agricultural economist Joe Horner said successful beef producers can make small changes in three areas to make their farm less vulnerable to risks: plants, animals and business. Being good in just one of those three areas is not enough.

Longtime producers see the big picture and plan to withstand cycles in the industry. Drought is a recurring theme for Missouri farmers, Horner said. Producers should not look at drought as an emergency. "Drought is going to happen. Build a standard operating procedure on your farm to manage it," he advised. "Prepare yourself to glide through it."

One safeguard against drought is to invest one time in making or buying 50% more hay than you normally need. Carry that hay inventory over every year. That becomes a strategy to keep drought from forcing you to buy hay or sell cattle in a drought.

A 50% hay cushion you can rotate through every year comes as a one-time investment that is tax-deductible. With high calf prices projected for 2024, farmers will be looking for deductions.

**2024 will be as good as any time we've seen since 2014. Periods like the next two to three years only happen a few times in a 50-year farming career."—Joe Horner**

Younger farmers are looking at interest rates they've never seen in their lifetimes, Horner said. Since the great recession in 2008, lending rates were artificially low until this year. Normal times have returned. Older producers have seen these high-interest cycles before and will manage differently than younger producers. Managing cash and reducing debt becomes more important, Horner said.

Livestock producers are now 10 years into a 10-year cycle, he said. Cow inventories are tight. Feeder calves available to feed will get tighter as higher prices encourage people to keep more heifers on-farm. Economists are forecasting good prices ahead. "2024 will be as good as any time we've seen since 2014," he said, with producers holding back heifers. "Periods like the next two to three years only happen a few times in a 50-year farming career."

Horner predicted that these higher margins will lead farmers to look for tax deductions. Rather than buying a new pickup or farm equipment, Horner recommended that producers first invest in a Top 10 list to make their farm business more profitable and resilient when the cattle cycle inevitably turns with lower prices.

## **HORNER GAVE 10 TIPS TO INCREASE PROFITS:**

### **1 Have a separate bull pasture.**

A defined breeding season reduces odd lots at the sale barn. Lots of like calves sell at higher prices. Batch calving is easier to manage.

### **2 Follow your veterinarian's advice.**

Follow vaccination schedules and test for bull soundness. "Veterinarians create value on your farm because of what they know. Pick your vet's brain and follow their suggested protocol," Horner said.

### **3 Invest in good cattle handling facilities.**

Properly designed and maintained handling facilities make cattle working easier. Easy jobs get done, and good facilities lead to fewer injuries. "You can't put a price on your family's safety," Horner said.

### **4 Invest in good fences for weaning.**

Bawling calves bring less money at the sale barn, so do the extra work. Wean calves before selling. Buyers pay more for weaned calves.

### **5 Carry 50% extra hay inventory.**

Add 50% more hay stock once and rotate out hay yearly. The carrying cost is a good investment. "That's your drought insurance, and it is easier than finding hay, and it makes life less stressful," Horner said.

### **6 Do soil tests.**

A soil test will tell you if you need to add nutrients to boost yields. Lime is a cheap, undervalued nutrient.

### **7 Convert some pastures to native warm-season grasses.**

Warm-season grasses make your operation more drought-resilient, need less fertilizer, boost summer calf gains and can improve herd reproduction performance. State and federal incentives are available to plant natives.

### **8 Convert to rotational grazing.**

Rotational grazing systems make managing cattle and forages easier. A system allows producers to mitigate drought, improve soil health, increase forage production and extend the grazing period. Contact the Missouri Center for Regenerative Agriculture at [regenerativeagriculture@missouri.edu](mailto:regenerativeagriculture@missouri.edu) for more information on federal cost-share funds for rotational grazing.

### **9 Understand risk insurance programs.**

Study the MU Extension publications "Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) Insurance in Missouri" and "Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) Insurance," and work with a trusted insurance agent. PRF insures against drought. LRP insures against low prices.

### **10 Seek the advice of a farm tax preparer.**

The IRS has new resources to measure compliance. Talk to your tax preparer to make sure your farm is bulletproof. Comply with reporting rules for contractors and laborers who need to receive 1099 or W-2 forms. **M**



# »» The Big Picture



Matyas Rehak / Shutterstock.com



# Drought Creates Traffic Jam at Panama Canal

**A WITHERING DROUGHT HAS** crippled one of the world's most crucial maritime trade routes. Ships hoping to cross the Panama Canal have experienced significant delays since August 2023, when an unprecedented dry spell forced canal officials to limit traffic on the waterway.

The Panama Canal requires 52 million gallons of freshwater—enough water to fill 104 Olympic-size swimming pools—to lift and lower ships into and out of its waterway. The water is sourced from artificial lakes that rely on rainfall to recharge the reservoirs.

The severe drought prompted Panamanian authorities to slash daily ship crossings to 24, down from 38 per day in a normal year. Vessel traffic has been dramatically slowed or stalled due to the drought-induced bottleneck.

The traffic jam on the canal has forced shipping companies to choose between three options, all of which are painful. Option one, they can wait in line for days or weeks for an open slot in the schedule to make the 50-mile crossing. Option two, they can pay millions of dollars to jump the line if a booked reservation is canceled. Or option three, they can reroute their ships around South America or Africa. Every option adds expense, pushing costs for crew, fuel and freight leases higher. Additionally, sailing the longer routes can add up to two weeks to shipping times.

In an interview with DTN Progressive Farmer, Jay O'Neil of HJ O'Neil Commodity Consulting said he expected shipping restrictions imposed by the Panama Canal Authority to remain in place through mid-summer. "The vessel booking slots will remain

at 24 for the foreseeable future; at least until June-July," he said in late January.

As traffic on the Panama Canal remains limited, disruptions on the Suez Canal, which connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, have further complicated shipping options. Attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthi rebels have rerouted vessels away from the crucial corridor connecting Europe and Asia and around Africa's Cape of Good Hope.

The disruptions have been especially tough for bulk grain exporters hauling crops from the U.S. Gulf of Mexico to Asia. Container vessels and ships on more regular schedules are given priority crossing the Panama Canal, and bulk commodity carriers are generally among the last customers to be given passage. Dry bulk vessel transits on the Panama Canal have dropped by roughly 60% since the restrictions began.

Unfortunately, the bottleneck is unlikely to improve any time soon. Panama's annual dry season began in December and usually lasts until April or May. Traffic congestion and draft restrictions are expected to linger even if the rains return on time.

"I don't think anyone is optimistic about a near-term solution in the Red Sea," O'Neil said while discussing the current challenges of agribulk exporters. "Without free movement for transit through the Panama and Suez canals, global shipping is now back to living in the 1800s. Some logistical supply chains are almost double what they used to be."

Traders and analysts agree that international grain shipments will have to take the long way around for the foreseeable future. **M**

## TEACHING LIFE SKILLS

In the far reaches of northwest Missouri, there's an FFA program where students operate two full greenhouses, an 8-acre row crop farm raising corn and soybeans, and a 3-acre livestock farm. This organization has two, 300-gallon tanks to raise catfish and tilapia and an aquaponics system that uses water from the fish tanks to grow lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers and marigolds. The organization can generate \$8,000 each spring from plant sales alone.

This prodigious program is Tarkio FFA, helmed by Dustin Lambertsen, agriculture education instructor and FFA advisor at Tarkio R-I School District. With the help of his students, Lambertsen has secured funding to build a livestock learning lab, purchase a 30-foot livestock trailer and purchase an ultrasound machine.

"When I came here (in 2014), there were 10 students, only one of whom showed livestock," Lambertsen reflected. "Now we have grown the program to 40 students, 14 of whom show their livestock, and we have gotten far more involved in the community."

Lambertsen said he's had up to 15 students try their hand at grant writing in a given year. One grant allowed a student to grow his Supervised Agricultural Experience lawn care business from a handful to 60 customers today and, soon, a full-time business. Lambertsen believes the often-laborious grant process instills students with the patience, discipline and literacy to secure external funding and generate support for their projects.



Dustin Lambertsen (left) and Tarkio FFA members visit a farm trade show. Lambertsen works to expose his students to varied experiences that may pique their interests.

"If we can get money to help our program without the school paying for it, that's big," Lambertsen said, noting he's applied for as many as 10 grants in a year.

For community involvement, Tarkio FFA participates in highway trash pick-ups, a downtown beautification project, a food drive, low-cost fish fries and fruit sales, and other projects. As a result, the community is now solidly in its corner. Seven of the 8 farm acres the chapter works with were donated, and local seed dealers, co-ops, nutrient firms and parents provide planting, fertilizer and harvesting for the farm.

Lambertsen, who hails from Shenandoah, Iowa, about half an hour north of Tarkio, teaches seven classes every day, from Exploring Agriculture and Animal Science (including reproduction and genetics) to the high school and college dual-credit Ag Mechanics (plumbing, electrical systems, concrete, small engines, structures, ag power, welding, soil surveying), Ag Business (record books, fixed and variable costs, return on investment,

grants) and Greenhouse Management. He also leads bistate tours of custom bull collection facilities, equipment manufacturers, sawmills, apple orchards, honey farms and genetic firms.

That's a lot of ag engagement for a small-town FFA. Tarkio's population is less than 1,500. Lambertsen acknowledged that agriculture may not be a full-time career path for many of his students.

"It's more like gaining essential ag, business and other skills and applying that learning, taking large-scale business concepts, simplifying them and learning life skills along the way," he said. "If you are raising chickens, for instance, you have to get up and care for them daily. They depend on you. If one of your animals is sick, you need to know what to do to get them better."

He says the end game isn't just teaching these varied skills but creating well-rounded individuals.

"I want to challenge them, teach them life skills," Lambertsen said. "For me, FFA is about forming a complete person." **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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“I don’t have to worry about sourcing products from different companies. **Having that one-stop shop is really important for us.**”


– Clayton Thompson, MFA Incorporated member



# MFA Oil Employees Give Back

**MFA OIL EMPLOYEES RAISED NEARLY \$62,000 FOR** charity while engaging in 2023 Week of Giving festivities from Oct. 30 to Nov. 2. A company donation of \$16,000 boosted the total to almost \$78,000 that will be distributed to the Central Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association, Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition, Second Chance Animal Rescue, and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

The Week of Giving campaign will result in the following charitable contributions:

- The Central Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association – \$18,036.85
- Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition – \$14,449.53
- Second Chance Animal Rescue – \$14,789.33
- St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital – \$31,085.90 

## MFA Oil Foundation Grant Recipients

The MFA Oil Foundation provides cash grants to non-profit organizations that are working to improve communities where MFA Oil has a significant concentration of members and employees. In October, the foundation approved \$95,650 in grants to 53 organizations.



4th Street Theatre, Inc. ....Moberly, Mo.	Kaleidoscope Discovery Center ..... Rolla, Mo.
Aurora R-8 School District .....Aurora, Mo.	Lewistown Fire Dept. Auxiliary ..... Lewistown, Mo.
Bevier C-4 School District ..... Bevier, Mo.	Lyon County Fire District #5 ..... Hartford, Kan.
Beyond the Walls Outreach of Arkansas ..... Maynard, Ark.	Madison County Senior Citizen
Blackwater PTO .....Blackwater, Mo.	Council on Aging ..... Fredericktown, Mo.
Blue Jeans Community Center.....Monroe City, Ind.	Mark Twain FFA ..... Center, Mo.
Chariton County Cupboard/ Brunswick Food Pantry ..... Brunswick, Mo.	MLV Foundation ..... Carthage, Mo.
City of Exline ..... Exline, Iowa	Moms Breaking the Silence ..... Brookfield, Mo.
City of Refuge ..... Columbia, Mo.	Moniteau County Nutrition Center ..... Tipton, Mo.
City of Richland..... Richland, Mo.	On My Own Inc..... Nevada, Mo.
City of Walker..... Walker, Mo.	Open Door Service Center, Inc. .... Sedalia, Mo.
Community Childcare Learning Center .....Moberly, Mo.	Ozark Mountain School District ..... Western Grove, Ark.
Dade County Youth Fair Inc. .... Lockwood, Mo.	Pleasant View R-VI Community Club ..... Trenton, Mo.
Earthwise Industries..... Troy, Mo.	Rainbow Abilities Center ..... Union, Mo.
Freeburg Community Fire Association, Inc. .... Freeburg, Mo.	Randolph County Fair ..... Pocahontas, Ark.
Friends of Mid-Missouri Fisher House ..... Columbia, Mo.	Riverside School District ..... Lake City, Ark.
Good Neighbor Food Cupboard ..... Diamond City, Ark.	Russell House ..... Rolla, Mo.
Good Samaritan Boys Ranch ..... Brighton, Mo.	Salem Area Community
Green City Historical Preservation ..... Green City, Mo.	Betterment Association ..... Salem, Mo.
Greenville R-2 School .....Greenville, Mo.	Shelby County Food Pantry..... Shelbina, Mo.
Hamilton Fire Protection District ..... Hamilton, Mo.	Shelby County Senior Citizens Association ..... Shelbina, Mo.
Hammond Mill Camp, Inc..... Pottersville, Mo.	South Harrison Elementary School ..... Bethany, Mo.
Holliday C-2 School .....Holliday, Mo.	Southeast Missouri Food Bank..... Sikeston, Mo.
Independent Living Resource Center..... Jefferson City, Mo.	Town of Carrollton Police Department .....Carrollton, Mo.
Jamestown Rural Fire Protection District ..... Jamestown, Mo.	Unionville Fire Department .....Unionville, Mo.
Jasper Elementary PTA ..... Jasper, Mo.	Vernon County Youth Fair ..... Nevada, Mo.
Johnson County Adult Literacy Program ..... Warrensburg, Mo.	Warren County Pathfinders..... Warrenton, Mo.
	Wellington-Napoleon R-IX School District..... Wellington, Mo.





# Cooperative Spirit

### WHEN TYLER MILLER WAS ASKED

by his local bulk plant manager to consider becoming an MFA Oil delegate, he embraced the opportunity. Miller, 29, appreciated the chance to get more involved with the cooperative and deepen his understanding of the company's operations.

"I saw it as an important opportunity to be a part of something that benefits us all," Miller said. "We as farmers need lots of fuel, oil and grease to do our jobs. Being a delegate for the cooperative gives me better insight into how the company serves those needs and allows me to represent our local farmers in the co-op's governance."

Miller raises corn, soybeans, hay and cattle near Pleasant Hill, Mo. He started farming in 2013 with 15 acres of land and has steadily built that acreage up to 800 acres of row crops and 400 acres of grazing land. A custom hay baling business and a small herd of cattle add diversity to Miller's operations.

In December, Miller attended his first MFA Oil Annual Delegate meeting. He enjoyed meeting farmers from around the state; listening to the speakers, especially Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe; and hearing from Glen Cope, chairman of the MFA Oil Board of Directors. Miller also appreciated the opportunity to talk to staff from various business units within the company.

"I had a good conversation with the representatives from the MFA Oil Laboratory," Miller said. "We discussed the oil analysis services that they offer. I'm planning to start collecting oil samples so that I can send them in for analysis. That's a great service the company offers, and I want to start taking advantage of it."

Though he has only been an MFA Oil member for a few years, Miller has quickly grown to appreciate the co-op's products and services.



Photo by Dan Videtich

"We got started with MFA Oil because they offered us an attractive leasing option for our bulk fuel tank," Miller said. "Since then, I've found the quality of the fuel and lubricants is great, we have built good relationships with the staff, and the convenience of the Petro-Card 24s is nice as well."

**Being active in county organizations and serving my local bulk plant allows me a chance to make a local impact."**  
—Tyler Miller

In addition to serving as an MFA Oil delegate, Miller is the Cass County Farm Bureau vice president, and he was recently elected to the Cass County Farm Service Agency Committee. He credits his involvement with FFA for kickstarting his

interest in agricultural leadership roles. Miller said he makes time to get involved in agricultural organizations because it offers him a chance to make a difference at the local level.

"There are many things that we, as farmers, can't control," Miller said. "Being active in county organizations and serving my local bulk plant allows me a chance to make a local impact. That's something I've learned from my dad."

Miller looks forward to serving his local community and representing Cass County farmers in various volunteer roles.

"Getting involved is the best way I can see to make a difference," he said. "Whether it be locally or in the broader agricultural community, we need farmers who are willing to take on leadership roles outside of their on-farm responsibilities. I'm proud to do my part." **M**



# Biodiesel is a Reliable Component of Our Fuel Supply

**IN 1993, MFA OIL BECAME THE FIRST** fuel marketer to distribute biodiesel in the country. While the performance of the biodiesel was a success, the price of the biodiesel did not allow the program to continue.

In the latter half of the 1990s, numerous soy-based biodiesel plants were constructed across the Midwest. Many plants were built in partnerships between corporations and Midwest farmers called new-generation cooperatives. MFA Oil invested in one such plant with farmers to form Mid-America Biofuels in Mexico, Mo., which is 51% farmer- or cooperative-owned, to create additional local demand for soybeans.

MFA Oil began working to add soy-based biodiesel to our bulk plants in the early 2000s. We received biodiesel deliveries by rail at our warehouse in California, Mo., and transported the fuel to strategic locations to meet farmers' demands. Most of the off-road diesel we sold contained a B2 blend (98% conventional diesel and 2% biodiesel). Farmers began to ask for higher blends, which we mixed at our bulk plants.

Around the same time, the industry developed alternative feedstocks and methods to produce biodiesel. In some cases, these new methods and feedstocks produced a less reliable biodiesel, giving the growing industry a black eye. The poor-quality product and poor biodiesel versus conventional diesel economics sent the biodiesel industry backward.

Even though biodiesel sales dipped, MFA Oil stayed the course. We built a biodiesel blending facility in Carrollton, Mo. We also partnered with other distributors to expand biodiesel availability throughout Missouri in



Palmyra, Columbia, Jasper, Kansas City and Springfield while continuing to sell proven soy-based biodiesel.

The industry remained relatively stagnant in the Midwest until nine years ago when Gary Wheeler, executive director of Missouri Soybeans, brought together a group representing all facets of soy-based biodiesel to form the Biodiesel Working Group. Now known as the Biodiesel Coalition of Missouri, of which MFA Oil is a member, the organization works to educate residents and promote the success of biodiesel in Missouri. Kansas and Iowa have similar organizations working to promote biodiesel.

Today, the biodiesel industry is growing because of the commitment of many organizations, such as MFA Oil and other fuel distributors, the Biodiesel Coalition of Missouri, the Missouri Soybean Association, the Kansas Soybean Commission, and the Iowa Biodiesel Board. The Missouri Department of Transportation uses a B20 blend from April to September, and many farmers use blends from 5% to 50% of soy-based biodiesel. The support has prompted biodiesel producers to invest in production capacity upgrades and construction of new Missouri blending facilities in Scott City, Kansas City and Springfield.

Despite the proven performance of soy-based biodiesel, some common misconceptions persist about blending, quality and winter operability. From a quality perspective, biodiesel offers excellent lubricity compared to conventional diesel fuel. When the EPA enacted rules to reduce the sulfur content in diesel in 2006, lubricity additives were needed at the loading rack. Biodiesel outperforms these lubricity additives with blends as low as B2. Biodiesel also acts as a paraffin enhancer, increasing the cetane of diesel fuel and adding horsepower.

Biodiesel blends have consistently performed well during winters in several cold-weather states. MFA Oil sold a B5 blend at two Break Time stores in northern Missouri for an entire winter season and experienced zero issues. Today, there are two fuel terminals in Kansas, two in Missouri, one in Arkansas and one in Tennessee, where a B5 biodiesel blend is the standard fuel year-round. At four of these six terminals, getting B0 (100% conventional diesel) is not an option. Also, Minnesota has a year-round biodiesel mandate where B5 is the diesel fuel used in winter. Higher blends are available in the summer.

MFA Oil continues to work toward having a supply of biodiesel in our market area for the benefit of our owner-members. You grow it, and it makes sense for you to use what you grow. Biodiesel is back as a part of our daily fuel usage, and together, we can keep it growing. **M**



» James Greer  
Senior Vice President of  
Supply & Transportation



## MFA Oil Acquires Platte-Clay Fuels

On Dec. 28, 2023, MFA Oil acquired Platte-Clay Fuels, a self-service retail petroleum company and a subsidiary of Platte-Clay Electric Cooperative. The purchase includes two fueling sites located at 510 Sam Barr Drive in Kearney, Mo., and 1500 Branch Street in Platte City, Mo.

The acquired fueling sites in Kearney and Platte City will become the latest additions to MFA Oil Company's Petro-Card 24 network, with more than 180 locations in Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa and Kansas. Petro-Card 24 stations offer high-quality fuels such as MFA Oil's BOSS Performance Diesel and REVital Detergent Gasoline; are open to the public 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; and accept all major credit and fleet cards, in addition to MFA Oil's proprietary credit cards.

"We are excited to bring additional fueling opportunities to our member-owners and customers in the northern Kansas City metro area," said Kenny Steeves, senior vice president of MFA Oil operations. "We continue to expand our Petro-Card 24 network and broaden access to our convenient 24/7 fueling services."

MFA Oil members who buy fuel from Petro-Card 24 locations with a Petro-Card 24 credit card can earn patronage dividends on their purchases. Patronage is the distribution of profits paid by a cooperative to its owners. Any agricultural producer or owner of land used for agricultural production is eligible to become an MFA Oil member if they

buy at least \$1,000 of product during the company's fiscal year (Sept. 1 – Aug. 31).

Dave Deihl, CEO and general manager of Platte-Clay Electric Cooperative, said the decision to sell Platte-Clay Fuels was not taken lightly.

"It was important to us to find a buyer with a cooperative business model," Deihl said. "This opportunity will allow Platte-Clay to focus completely on our core business of providing the best, most reliable electric service possible in today's uncertain energy environment."

This is the first acquisition of MFA Oil's 2024 fiscal year, which began on Sept. 1, 2023. MFA Oil made two acquisitions in its 2023 fiscal year. The company will continue to evaluate strategic acquisition opportunities within its trade territory.

## Brandon Stoutmeyer Wins National Big O Tires Award

Big O Tires recently announced the selection of Brandon Stoutmeyer as its Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Master Technician of the Year award recipient. Stoutmeyer is a lead technician at the Big O Tires store at 1701 West Elm Street in Lebanon, Mo.

Stoutmeyer is one of approximately 50 automotive professionals recognized with this annual national achievement award, which spotlights top scorers on the ASE Certification tests from among the ranks of the roughly quarter-million ASE Certified professionals nationwide. In addition to top scores, award sponsors examine on-the-job excellence, community service and other factors when selecting honorees. A panel of Big O Tires corporate representatives selects the winner each year.

As a master ASE technician, Stoutmeyer has passed nine tests that certify his knowledge of the skills necessary to diagnose, service and repair cars, SUVs, and light-duty trucks. The testing



covers categories such as engine repair, transmissions, suspension and steering, brakes, electrical systems, and more.


"It's an honor to be recognized as the Big O Tires Master Technician of the Year," Stoutmeyer said. "I've invested a lot of time and effort to take the ASE classes and pass the tests. The certification is important because it helps my customers know I have the expertise to serve them well."

## MFA Petroleum Opens Third Break Time Location in Fulton

In December, MFA Petroleum Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of MFA Oil Company, opened its newest Break Time store at 2213 Cardinal Drive in Fulton, Mo.

"This is a great location conveniently located at the intersection of Highways 54 and HH," said Jennifer Bach, vice president of Break Time operations. "It's also near the Dollar General Distribution Center, so we expect to see good traffic."

The new store has 11 pumping positions and sells unleaded, super unleaded and premium gasoline; clear diesel fuel; and diesel exhaust fluid (DEF). Customers will find various food and beverage options inside the store, including Chester's Chicken, Hunt Brothers Pizza, Any Time Eats breakfast sandwiches, and freshly brewed bean-to-cup coffee.

Break Time now has 73 stores located across Missouri. Work is underway on another new store in Columbia, Mo. 



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