

Single best farming decisions net fuel for essay winners

BY SUSAN HAYHURST

THE 2015 Indiana Prairie Farmer/CountryMark adult essay contest garnered 17 entries. Honoring loved ones, listening to your spouse and employing ingenuity were just a few of the explanations given for the essay's theme, "What is the single best decision you have ever made in farming?"

A panel of three judges reflected on the essays, which were required to be 250 to 300 words. The judges' decisions are final.

This year's adult essay contest winners are: Mike Feitshans, Arcanum, Ohio, first place and 500 gallons of CountryMark Super Deselex-4 fuel; Michael Moore, New Castle, second place and 250 gallons of Super Deselex-4 fuel; and Ed Shirey, Mooreland, third place and 100 gallons of Super Deselex-4 fuel.

4-H and FFA are also winners. CountryMark is donating \$20 per essay to the organization selected by the entrant. Here are the winning essays.

Hayhurst writes from Terre Haute.

1st Place

Mike Feitshans

The advice of 3 fathers helps me farm better



THE best decision that I ever made in farming was to learn to follow in my three fathers' footsteps. At an early age, I followed my grandfather, as he taught me the physical part to farming. I was by his side from morning to dusk, in those summer months, as we carried out daily farm chores.

He taught me safety on the farm, and how important it was to think about the consequences of your actions. He taught me to operate the tractors, hoe in the fields, maintain equipment and build things with my hands. He was a patient man that had great abilities to teach and encourage.

With his passing, my own father became the teacher. He taught me the business end of farming. He involved me with the planning, marketing and farm ownership issues. My father also instilled in me the quality of life that farming brings to our lives. He emphasized the ethics in farming and the importance of relationships.

He knew the importance of teaching responsibility and the work ethic that farming develops. He realized that "a family that works together, stays together," and would often use this phrase in getting something done around the farm. He would often say, "Isn't this family together time fun?" He was a smart man, full of life, and gave of his time for the benefit of others.

With his passing, I now took more to Our Savior and Our Father God for his guidance. As Proverbs 3:6 states, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path." Our Father has taught me to give thanks every time a field is planted and every time a crop is harvested. There are times when farming struggles do occur, but leaning on his guidance and word can generate a calming effect that often leads to a resolution.

In conclusion, sometimes you make decisions in life and sometimes decisions make you. I am so thankful that I have three fathers that were willing to let me follow them and give me the opportunity to be a farmer today.

Feitshans writes from Arcanum, Ohio.

2nd Place

Michael Moore

How I put 'horse sense' to work for my farm



THE best decision I ever made in my farming operation was to listen to my wife and buy a horse.

Before you think I am insane and recite the financial disaster that a horse entails, let me explain why this expenditure was a sound investment into the success of my operation.

I farm a grain operation producing soybeans, wheat, corn and hay. Until recently, I fed beef cattle and spent my winter driving a school bus.

After 43 years, I retired last year from the bus and anticipated a winter full of reading, equipment repair and attending farm meetings.

My wife had a different idea. She wanted a horse. I explained that a horse was out of the question. Our fence had been removed. It was simple — no fence, no horse. She was not convinced and enlisted the aid of our granddaughter to add additional pressure. I caved.

We began building fence together in 90 degree temperatures. Next we had to build a stall in our cattle barn. It was hard but rewarding.

We finally brought home our paint gelding and my wife has been smiling ever since. These days, my wife cheerfully goes to the barn each morning while I go to the coffee shop to mull over the latest downturn in corn prices. We are both delighted with the arrangement.

For Valentine's Day I moved a light switch in the barn to make it more reachable and she swears she smells roses each time she flips the switch.

Now when I begin to talk about the new hay conditioner I am considering purchasing, her eyes do not glass over in boredom. Instead she says, "Will it save time in hay production? Buy it."

Do you see what I mean? That horse was the very best purchase I ever made.

Moore writes from New Castle.

3rd Place

Ed Shirey

Our own software simplifies recordkeeping



THOMAS Edison is credited for saying, "Necessity is the father of invention." Little did we know in 1986, developing our own farm recordkeeping software would be our single best farming decision ever. It has revolutionized our ability to access our records and utilize our resources efficiently and agronomically.

It provides us with an instrument to fine-tune our analysis of crop mix, equipment purchasing, money saving and stress management. Land purchases, equipment upgrades and a multitude of smaller purchases are decided upon with black-and-white clarity.

We can anticipate challenges in a timely manner and use our known history to create an efficient and productive game plan. It has virtually eliminated end-of-the-year tax stress. Our computerized bookkeeping provides us with a projected and retrospective view of our farming history, a consistent teaching tool and the means to transfer a legacy of effective, documented farming decisions. Combined with daily availability of market prices, our bookkeeping gives us a real-time snapshot of our financial position.

This same recordkeeping concept has instilled creative and critical thinking for entrepreneurial ideas, helping our family discern between big dreams and financial reality. Through accurate records, many ideas have become profit centers.

Born out of necessity, our system provides our family with a strong platform to launch any new innovative farming initiatives.

Shirey writes from Mooreland.

