



## It's All About People

I know this is a statement that is used over and over, but for your cooperative, it is certainly true: People make the difference. With the continued growth we have experienced, Farmers Ranchers Co-op will have more than 100 combined full-time and part-time employees working at multiple locations in the near future. With all of the various daily tasks the co-op handles, it takes a lot of people going about their job—serving you.

### Welcoming new staff

In this issue of *Trailhead*, you will meet employees who are new to the company. One of those we welcome is Micah Graff, our new agronomist/salesperson in the agronomy department. Micah's family has been involved in agriculture in our area for several generations. I am grateful Micah has shown his openness to a career change in coming to the cooperative system. He is looking forward to working with you and finding solutions for your farming operations.

You will also meet David Dodson, the cooperative's new propane manager. David's previous job allowed him many years of involvement with propane/refined fuels. Some of David's family have lived in our region, so I continue to be amazed at the connections he has. We welcome him and his family to our community. Stop by the Propane and Appliance Store in Ainsworth and introduce yourself.

### Saying, "thanks" to retiring directors

I must also take a moment to say goodbye to a couple of producers who have decided to retire from the board of directors. Thanks to Monte Frauen and Ron Heerten for their service. If you added up the miles they have driven—just to attend the monthly meetings alone—it would be a large number. Monte has been a great board member. I also have appreciated his insight when we were pondering the big issues. (Maybe it is the gray hair!) And I can't express in words how much of a positive impact Ron has had upon

### MANAGER'S MOMENT

By Kent Taylor  
President & CEO  
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the cooperative. He has served 12 years on the board—10 of those as board chairman. Ron, we thank you for your service. Gentlemen, you will be missed!

### Join us at the annual meeting

Finally, I want to invite you to the annual meeting. It will be held on Tuesday, March 1, at the Brown County Community Building in Johnstown. The meal starts at 5:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7 p.m. This past year was a great one for Farmers Ranchers Cooperative; we will look forward to the future with some of our exciting plans. We remember that our future in agriculture is promising because of excellent employees, board members and patrons. It will be a wonderful journey! ■

## ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 1

**WHEN:** Tuesday, March 1

**TIME:** Dinner, 5:30 p.m.  
Meeting, 7 p.m.

**WHERE:** Brown County  
Community Building,  
Johnstown

Farmers Ranchers Administrative Programs Assistant Bryce Hasenohr had his camera handy on a recent wintry Nebraska morning.



# NEVER A DULL MOMENT IN FEED

By Rocky Sheehan, Feed Division Manager, [rsheehan@frcoop.com](mailto:rsheehan@frcoop.com)

As we watch the continued construction of the expansion to our state-of-the-art feed mill, it is good to know that it's "business as usual" when it comes to serving our customers with quality products and services. The mill is currently running 24 hours a day, six days a week, with an eight-to-ten day lead-time in delivery. When you consider that we have nine delivery trucks in motion—eight hauling bulk orders and one with bagged feed—you know that our feed is in demand.

Construction of the expansion is on target for a November completion date, with all concrete poured and steel going up. To handle the larger capacity of feed that will be manufactured and sold through the larger facility, we will be adding top-quality team members. We will be searching for production, outside sales, and delivery staff.

## Mineral promotion underway

Farmers Ranchers is running its annual mineral promotion through May. With every 2 tons of FRC

mineral you purchase, you'll receive a very nice jacket, free!

We're also pleased to announce that we're introducing a new line of trace mineral complex. We will be utilizing Micronutrients' IntelliBond® C (copper), Z (zinc), and M (manganese), as well as Zinpro's Availa®4—all designed to make the essential minerals more biologically available to your cattle, which can improve pregnancy rates, weaning weight and cow health. Talk to our feed team sales staff for more information.

## New look to feedbags

You'll notice a new look to FRC's feedbags. With the installation of a new printer in the mill, we're printing the guaranteed analysis of the product right onto the bag rather than on an attached tag. The look is much more professional and legible. Just one more step your feed team is taking to provide the best product possible! ■

# WELCOME, MICAH GRAFF

Micah Graff knows farming. He also knows Farmers Ranchers Co-op. After all, this Brown County born-and-bred Nebraskan grew up farming with his dad, Marty, and brothers, Jake and Noah, on their operation outside of Johnstown—all loyal patrons of their local cooperative.

Now, as Farmers Ranchers Co-op's new sales agronomist, he'll be putting what he's learned over the years to good use by helping the co-op's farm customers with their agronomy needs. At the same time, he says, he's also learning the trade from the other side of the counter. "There's a lot to learn, but I'm fortunate to be with a great sales team," says Micah, who started in December. "Justin [Nelson] and Mark [Ewert] have been great resources, and Mark and I have been traveling around the area visiting with farmers about their fertilizer needs and farm plans for the coming year. I'm learning a lot and enjoying it very much."

After graduating from Ainsworth High School, Micah joined the National Guard, serving in a transportation company based in Columbus, Neb. He also attended Central Community College in Columbus, graduating with a degree in agri-business in 2011.

An avid golfer who also loves to fish, hunt and boat on Merritt Reservoir, Micah is now focused on how he can best serve the area's farmers. "I appreciate the opportunity Farmers Ranchers has given me, and will work to grow the co-op's agronomy business, and build

relationships and trust with our customers," says Micah. "That's my goal."

We'd like to welcome Micah to the Farmers Ranchers team! If you'd like to visit with Micah about your agronomy needs, you can contact him at 402-760-1369 or at [mgraff@frcoop.com](mailto:mgraff@frcoop.com). ■



Micah Graff recently joined the Farmers Ranchers team as a sales agronomist.



# RETIRING DIRECTORS: CO-OP'S IN GOOD HANDS

Ron Heerten and Monte Frauen have known each other a long time. The two attended Keya Paha High School together years ago, but it wasn't until they rode together to Farmers Ranchers Co-op board meetings that they really reconnected. As these two directors retire from the board this March, Monte says he's going to miss those car rides. "We've known each other forever," says Monte, "but we hadn't spent much time together in years. It gave us a chance to catch up."

Ron, who runs a cattle and crop business in Keya Paha and Rock counties with his brother, is stepping down from his role as a director after 12 years. During his tenure on the board, he served as secretary and, for the past several years, as chairman. Monte, who operates a family ranch northwest of Norden, is retiring after three years.

Both men say they're making way for a new generation. "I stayed longer than I had originally planned," says Ron, explaining that the cooperative was in the midst of a manager transition when his second term was complete, and he was serving on the Nebraska Co-op Council Board when he ran for the fourth term. "It's important to make way for fresh ideas and input," he adds. "I step aside knowing that there is a great management team in place at the co-op, and that there is an extremely capable and committed board of directors."

Monte couldn't agree more. "Seeing who's on the board and having confidence that there are young people who put a lot of thought into what they're doing and ask a lot of questions—let's just say that I'm really, really impressed being around that caliber of people. I have no doubt the cooperative is going to be in good hands."

They also feel positive about the financial position of Farmers Ranchers Co-op, and its future. "The co-op has a solid record of strong local earnings," explains Ron. "Profitability has allowed the co-op to pay patronage and retire equity on a regular basis, as well as to continue to invest in the future." He ticks off a number of investments during the years he's served, including upgrading liquid storage and the dry fertilizer plant, growing the seed business, and completing several upgrades to the feed mill. "And now a major expansion of the mill," says Ron. "It's good to see investments that will serve the customers of the co-op for many years to come."

Monte summed up his feelings upon retirement. "I was interested in being on the board to learn more about the cooperative model," he explains. "I'm impressed, and I'll now be a better co-op customer, having served."

To read an extended interview with Ron and Monte, go to [www.frcoop.com](http://www.frcoop.com). ■



Monte Frauen is retiring from the board after three years.



Ron Heerten is stepping down from the board after 12 years.



# INSIDE

## RETIRING DIRECTORS TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

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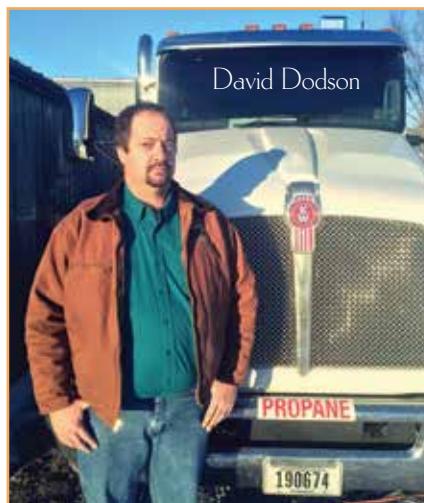
## PROPANE, THE CO-OP WAY

When David Dodson interviewed for the position of propane and appliance manager, his 17-year background in the energy field for an ag co-op in South Central Nebraska was noteworthy.

Starting out delivering propane for his home co-op in Maywood, the local co-op eventually grew through a merger, and his job evolved, too—but always on the energy side. The former ranch kid moved on to running transports hauling fuel and propane, and then into petroleum sales. He eventually ended up overseeing petroleum transportation and operations, including bulk plants for fuel and propane, and dispatching the transports and bobtails delivering propane and refined fuels to the country. During his tenure, he also initiated a regulator and safety program for propane customers.

So what convinced David to pull up his stakes and take a position with a smaller cooperative, managing a propane and appliance business? “It’s kind of funny,” said David. “You go to an interview to try to knock the socks off of

your potential employer, but it was the opposite for me when visiting with Kent [Taylor]. His kindness, honesty and the way he conducted the interview blew me away.”



David says that welcoming attitude has been pervasive since coming to Ainsworth in December with his wife, Chris, and their youngest daughter, a seventh grader at Ainsworth Middle School. The family also includes their son and his wife in Cambridge, Neb.; a daughter who will be married in June and who will then be living in Stuart; and another daughter

attending Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

David is especially thankful for the hospitable attitude of the people of Farmers Ranchers, considering he took over a role that Wes Luther held for more than 30 of his 50 years with Farmers Ranchers until retiring in January. “The expectations are pretty high for this job,” admits David. “But since the appliance side of the business is new to me, I was very fortunate to be able to work alongside Wes for about five weeks.”

As he plants his own footprints at Farmers Ranchers, he says he intends to keep safety a high priority and to encourage those Farmers Ranchers patrons who are not yet propane or appliance customers to give the co-op a try. “We have to earn a customer’s business,” says David. “We want to be a place where that happens and they want to come back.”

Stop in and meet David at the Propane and Appliance Store in Ainsworth, or contact him at 402-387-1220, 800-233-6627, or [ddodson@frcoop.com](mailto:ddodson@frcoop.com). ■