

WIU AGGIES



WIU AG STUDENTS WIN NATIONAL COMPETITION FOR FOURTH YEAR IN A ROW

For the fourth year in a row, a group of Western Illinois University School of Agriculture students have won the College Aggies Online (CAO) competition and \$2,500 in scholarship funding. The money was used for recruitment and to fund ongoing projects within the School of Agriculture.

A group of 60 WIU agriculture students participated in this year's competition, which included numerous educational components on campus and around the region. The students also won two smaller challenges within the competition, which will bring in another \$500 in scholarship funding.

The WIU club is made up of students in the Communicating Agricultural Issues class at Western, taught by School of Agriculture Instructor Jana Knupp.

"One of my favorite aspects of this contest is that it shows students they can have a conversation about agriculture anywhere," said Knupp. "People are genuinely curious to know more about agriculture; we just have to be ready to provide factual information."

Projects completed as part of this year's competition included:

- Handing out 800 cartons of chocolate milk through the Homecoming 5K and the Fallen Soldiers 5K at WIU to promote drinking chocolate milk after a cardio workout
- Visiting four grade school classes to teach lessons about agriculture
- Hosting two preschool student field trips to the WIU Farm
- Hosting two WIU farm tours
- Meeting with legislators
- Dispelling common agricultural myths on campus
- Collecting nearly 3,000 pounds of food for the WIU student-run food pantry

Over the last four years, nearly 260 WIU students have participated in the competitive events, which provide the real-life application of communicating agricultural topics with the general public.

School of Agriculture Director Andy Baker said this year's recognition solidifies why the University has competed in this event for the last four years.

"We are always looking for positive ideas to enrich the educational opportunities within our curriculum," said Baker. "National competitions are a great way to benchmark the value of a particular activity or assignment, especially when it is integrated into the curriculum."

Baker added that the national event allows WIU students to "practice and apply a specific skill set sought by the industry, which is advocacy."

"This event has enhanced the marketability of our students in securing future employment in the agriculture industry," he said. "Our students have worked incredibly hard to secure national recognition for the last four years, which has created a lasting legacy within our department. Special thanks is given to Ms. Jana Knupp for her guidance and expertise, as well as the students who competed in this year's event."



WIU LIVESTOCK JUDGING TEAM FINISHES FIRST AT NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW



"This win is a tremendous milestone for our program. It marks the first time that the WIU judging team has won Denver in many, many years. This group of students has worked incredibly hard for the past month. They are absolutely dedicated to progress and improvement - I believe that is the key reason they were able to experience so much success right out of the gate. Looking forward, we will need to put this win behind us and keep working harder than ever, because the field is extremely competitive this year."

- Hayden Wilder

The Western Illinois University Livestock Judging Team finished first in the senior college livestock judging contest at the National Western Stock Show in Colorado.

WIU students who placed during the competition include:

- **Swine:** 3rd place team; Drew Lamle, a junior agriculture major of Fort Wayne, IN, was third individually; and Blake Hennenfent, a senior agriculture major of Gilson, IL, was fifth individually.
- **Sheep and Goats:** First place team; Morgan Carrick, a junior agriculture major of Blanchard, MI, was fourth individually; and Jeremiah Cupps, a junior agriculture major of Burlington, KY, was seventh individually.
- **Cattle:** Third place team; Gage Hank, a junior agriculture major of Aledo, IL, was sixth individually. Team was fourth in cattle reasons.
- **Reasons:** Third place team; Hennenfent was fifth; and Lamle was sixth.
- **Overall:** Carrick was seventh overall and Lamle was eighth overall.
- **Carload Judging Contest:** Fourth overall team and Cassie Perrin, a junior agriculture major of Coopersville, MI, was second high individual and Devon Boyer, a junior agriculture major of Blandinsville, IL, was 10th.

The team is coached by WIU Associate Professor of Agriculture Dr. Mark Hoge and WIU MBA student Mr. Hayden Wilder of Remington, IL.

AGR CHAPTER RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION AT ANNUAL CONVENTION



The Western Illinois University Greek organization Alpha Gamma Rho (AGR) was recognized recently as a Gold Award Chapter and their advisor was honored as one of the top in the country.

The awards were presented during the 65th AGR National Convention Aug. 2-5 in New Orleans, LA. The Gold Award is the highest recognition a chapter can receive and is given to chapters who meet at least six of the seven requirements of academic excellence, lifelong membership development, continued alumni engagement, chapter crescents, recruitment excellence, and communications. Twenty-three of the 77 national chapters received the recognition.

AGR chapter advisor and WIU School of Agriculture Professor Kevin Bacon was recognized with a high honor award during the convention, recognizing him as one of the top three advisors in the country over the past year.

The WIU AGR chapter also received an honorable mention award for "best feature story" in the Alpha Tau Crescent magazine about its annual "Smokin' Hog" event.

"Much of what we were recognized for is what we do on an ongoing basis," said Bacon. "I was simply fortunate enough to have a leadership team that followed through on applying for the awards. I would like to offer special recognition to Tyler Wilson (Class of 2018) who headed up that team – without his leadership, I am not sure we could have pulled it off. We also had several alumni board members writing letters of support and providing input to undergraduate members on specific sections of the application – it truly was a team effort."

Attending the bi-annual conference for WIU were AGR Alpha Tau Chapter members President Carson Bloomberg, a senior agriculture major from Moline, IL; Cyle LaFollett, a senior agriculture major from Maquon, IL; Kevin McCutchan, a senior agriculture major from Aledo, IL; and Jake Foy, a senior agriculture major from Taylor Ridge, IL, as well as alumni members Wayne Whipps, a 1977 agriculture graduate of Cedar Falls, IA, who was an alumni delegate and former chapter president, and Gerry Salzman, a 1971 agriculture economics graduate who is the current director of the National AGR Educational Foundation and a former chapter president.

WIU ALUMNUS WINS IPPA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Western Illinois University alumnus Jeff Galle, of Pittsfield, IL, was awarded the Illinois Pork Producers Association (IPPA) Distinguished Service Award at the IPPA's February annual meeting.

"I am grateful to the Western Illinois Pork Producers Association for nominating me and to the Illinois Pork Producers Association for selecting me for this honor," said Galle. "I was very surprised and humbled to be considered for this award. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time and efforts working in the pork industry. There are a lot of great people involved with the pork industry and I have enjoyed working with them over the years."



After receiving his bachelor's degree in agriculture education from WIU in 1978, Galle received his master's degree in agriculture education from Southern Illinois University in 1986 and his Ph.D. in animal science from the University of Illinois in 2006. Just after his graduation from WIU, Galle and 34 of his fellow graduates spent 34 days on an agriculture field study in eight countries of Western Europe. After the trip, he returned to WIU as a graduate assistant, teaching animal science labs. He also taught and coached the WIU Livestock Judging Team and served as an advisor for the WIU Hoof and Horn Club.

Galle, a more than 50-year veteran of the pork industry, is a founding member of the Western Illinois Pork Producers. He is a professor emeritus from the animal science department at John Wood Community College (JWCC) and continues to teach there as a part-time faculty member.

Throughout Galle's life, he has been involved in all aspects of the pork industry at the local, state, and national levels. His interest began while involved with the Henry County Pork Producers, where his father served as president.

Galle later became president of the Pike County Pork Producers, which led to his role as the District Nine director for the IPPA and eventually becoming IPPA president from 2000-01. He was also a delegate for several years at the American Pork Congress, now known as the Pork Industry Forum, and served for several years on the National Pork Board.

Currently, Galle serves as a member of the Industry Services and Production Tech committees for the IPPA and is a member of the Swine Extension and Educators group for the National Pork Board. He is also a founding member of the Western Illinois Pork Producers. Locally, Galle serves with the Extension Council, on the 4-H Livestock Sale Committee, and is a judge for 4-H and FFA record books, proficiency awards, and master showmanship contests. Since his retirement from JWCC, Galle established his own company, Global Pork Production Enterprises, Ltd.

WIU SCHOOL OF AG OPENS LEATHERNECK COUNTRY MEATS

Students in the Western Illinois University School of Agriculture have found a unique way to raise money for the department while learning valuable career skills by starting Leatherneck Country Meats – The Purple and Gold Standard of Western Illinois University, a pork sales operation run from the University Farm.

Hogs are among the animals raised at the University farm as part of the University's academic offerings, including classes on swine science and as part of WIU's nationally-successful Livestock Judging Team.

According to Jay Pittman, an assistant research technician at the University Farm, seven students are employed by the center to handle all aspects of animal care, from feeding to farrowing. While some of the pigs who are raised are sold to individual buyers to raise for judging in 4-H and FFA events, there are several that are typically sold off to processing plants.

"The goal is raising show pigs," said WIU senior agriculture business major Dalton Humphrey, of Eaton Rapids, MI. "We also have a few online sales a year."

The majority of the Leatherneck Country Meats operation is run by students. Faculty from the WIU School of Agriculture advise the students.

"We are excited to make WIU pork available to the public," said WIU Instructor Jana Knupp. "Our students work hard to raise high quality livestock in a responsible way. Purchasing WIU pork provides the customer with a premium product, while also supporting the animal science program at WIU."

Once the hogs are ready for processing, they are taken to the new Farmhouse Meat Company in Carthage. The owners of the new meat locker include WIU alumni Kristin Huls and John Carroll.



WIU junior Paige Skinner, an agriculture science major from Roseville, IL, said she has learned new skills through the Leatherneck Country Meats project.

"There is no change in the production side because of the new business," she said. "This is really just finding a new way to market the product."

Humphrey said he believes the new program is an opportunity to get a glimpse of what students in the WIU School of Agriculture are working on.

"It makes me more conscious of understanding different ways of marketing," he said. "This is also a way to add value to our product."

The business will offer meat for sale several times a year.

If you are interested in supporting this venture, please follow us on social media or call the main agricultural office at 309/298-1080.

WIU CANCER PREVENTION TOMATO RESEARCH GETS BOOST FROM USDA GRANT

An exciting faculty/student research collaboration to investigate the cancer prevention qualities of heirloom tomatoes will be enhanced with this week's news that two Western Illinois University faculty have been awarded a nearly \$32,000 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant to expand the project.

The research, being conducted by WIU Assistant Professor of Chemistry Dr. Mette Soendergaard and Assistant Professor of Agriculture Dr. Shelby Henning, along with their graduate and undergraduate students, began in Spring 2018. The project was born when Soendergaard and Henning found they had similar research interests involving work with vegetables.

The study began with looking at a handful of varieties of heirloom tomatoes, which were grown in the University's new greenhouse facilities. The harvested tomatoes were then taken to the laboratories of WIU's Currens Hall, where they were sliced, freeze dried, and ground into powder. The finished product was tested with a variety of solvents.

Henning said the grant will help him obtain better equipment for growing the tomato crop, including pumps, fertilizer, trellising materials, the water/fertilizer solution, analysis meters, and growing media. The greenhouse tomatoes are grown hydroponically in volcanic rock, instead of soil.

"The grant is also going to allow us to expand what it is we are looking at in terms of root stock and scion combinations," he said. "At this point, we have only looked at two heirlooms and a commercial standard grafted to four different rootstocks. We can now expand the scope of our research. I may even put some plants in the field, but still grown hydroponically. I'm excited for what possibilities the grant is going to allow for."

Soendergaard said the USDA grant will allow her and her students to expand their study to include more tomatoes and rootstocks. "Overall, that means that we have more confidence in our results, so that we may eventually share our data with farmers and the research community," she said. "Also, the grant provides a research assistantship for a graduate student. This student will get his/her tuition waived and receive a monthly stipend to work on the project." The research project specifically studies tomatoes and the antioxidants they contain in terms of cancer prevention. Research goals include looking further into whether heirloom tomatoes have different disease prevention qualities than more commonly encountered, commercially grown varieties. "We are trying to see whether we can grow the heirloom tomatoes efficiently and how it impacts the health benefits," said Soendergaard.

Additionally, Henning was awarded a nearly \$46,000 USDA grant for a separate research project, "Variety Selection and Integrated Pest Management for Production of High-Value Crops in High-Tunnels in Illinois."



WIU ALUMNA HELPS STUDENTS OPEN FLORAL BUSINESS IN THEIR CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL

Western Illinois University alumna Kaylyn Davenport, who is a floral design teacher at a California high school, has created a unique learning opportunity for her students to run their own floral shop through her class.

"Falcon Floral" was started in Atwater High School in Atwater, CA, and allows students to learn not only floral design abilities, but also managerial and leadership skills. When Davenport, a 2014 Agriculture Education graduate, took over the program, there were three sections of introduction to floral design and one section of advanced floral design, with only 21 students. Now there are five sections of introduction to floral design, with about 40 students per class. Davenport teaches three of those sections, as well as two sections of advanced floral design to 57 students.

The floral shop, staffed by 19 students from Davenport's floral program, was recently added to the curriculum. Five shop managers each oversee the shop for one weekday. Students from the floral classes create a variety of arrangements, with orders placed online and money raised benefitting the Atwater High School Agriculture Department and its floral program. Davenport said students must apply to be a part of the floral shop, including developing a portfolio of their work and practicing interviewing skills.

"They had to go through this full process when applying for a job in the floral shop," said Davenport. "Students submitted a cover letter and resume, filled out an application, and interviewed for a position. Only students enrolled in my advanced floral classes were eligible to apply. I have worked with each of the applicants for at least a year in my intro to floral class, and knew that all applicants would be good workers in the shop. They all received a position, but I thought it was important that they went through the process of applying for a job."

Davenport said business is "booming," but sometimes she has to remind people the floral shop is not her full-time job. "There are many customers who forget I am also a teacher," she said. "I love working with brides and doing large events for community members, but the need to communicate with them can get overwhelming. My first priority is being the best teacher I can be, so I don't want to let anything take away from that."



The class designs the floral shop orders outside of class time, using techniques used in class. The larger arrangements, or wedding flowers, are created in class.

The buy-in from the students has been a source of pride for Davenport and she said she feels thankful to be a part of a program like this. "I have been able to see them in a work setting outside of class, and I am beyond impressed," she said. "Students are leading, working as a team, and taking charge to get things done. The main purpose of the floral shop is to expose students to work experience opportunities, and it is doing just that."

Davenport said while she was a student at WIU, she was impressed with the passion and pride the School of Agriculture professors showed toward students. She said the hands-on learning opportunities provided during her classes helped prepare for her future career.

"Dr. Baker had us observe and teach classes in my first ag ed class during my freshman year," she said. "I discovered my passion for teaching, and was able to build on that over the next three years. I felt ready and excited to earn my first teaching position. I never took a floriculture class in college, but Dr. Baker showed me the importance of working hard to learn content and teach it in the best way possible. My teaching strategies stem from the time spent in my agriculture education courses at WIU. I am so thankful for my time at WIU, and hope I am showing that same passion and pride in my program that my agriculture professors showed for theirs."

WIU SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE PARTNERS WITH ILLINOIS CORN MARKETING BOARD FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING



For the second year, the Illinois Corn Marketing Board (ICMB) is partnering with the Western Illinois University School of Agriculture on a program to benefit high school agriculture classes across Illinois.

Through the Soil Health Bucket program, 90 schools will receive a five-gallon bucket of supplies for evaluating soil functions and a comprehensive curriculum for engaging students in employing the interacting impact of soil type and soil management. Topics covered in the curriculum include water filtering and storage, nutrient provision and cycling and conversion of crop residues into soil organic matter.

In 2018, the Illinois Corn Marketing Board provided funding for buckets for 40 classrooms. This year's \$17,000 grant will allow for the distribution of an additional 50 buckets in 2019. "We're pleased to once again support this collaborative educational effort between the Illinois Corn Checkoff program and WIU," said Don Duvall, ICMB chair. "We're making significant checkoff investments in research and on-farm projects as they relate to soil health and nutrient management. By bringing an education program to high school classrooms about soil health, we're really hoping to build a new generation's awareness of the value of our

Illinois soils and how, when we carefully engage with our soil resources, we can maintain value for farmers and for the general public too."

The WIU program is run by Associate Professor of Agriculture Joel Gruver, who said its goal is to provide every secondary and post-secondary agriculture program in Illinois with a bucket and to "foster a science-informed and youth-led dialogue within agricultural communities across Illinois about the benefits of soil health enhancing practices."

WIU School of Agriculture Director Andy Baker said last year's educational partnership was a huge success. "We were able to develop several lab activities that emphasize the importance of soil health principles, which complement the traditional soil science curriculum taught by Illinois agriculture educators," said Baker. "We are extremely thankful for this opportunity to continue our efforts and the support received from ICMB. It is truly exciting to have an innovative, educational construct come to life through our collaborative efforts with ICMB."

One of ICMB's 11 strategic goals is to invest in research, demonstration, adoption, measurement, and modeling of natural resource issues to promote science-based voluntary solutions to environmental regulatory concerns.



SCHOOL OF AG AND UNIVERSITY UNION BOARD HOSTED BBQ COMPETITION AT WIU SEPTEMBER 15

As part of Family Day at Western Illinois University, the School of Agriculture and the University Union Board hosted the inaugural Food, Family, Farming, Football BBQ Competition Saturday, September 15, to kick off the 2018 Leatherneck football season.

The event was held during tailgating in Q-Lot, from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

The event included a ribs and brisket competition for teams using a wood, charcoal, electric, or propane smoker. Guests purchased tasting tickets to sample ribs and brisket and voted for their favorite.

A "People's Choice" category was available for competitors to cook their own specialty items. A panel of judges selected the grand prizes in a variety of categories.

Tasting tickets were sold for \$3 each, or two for \$5. Tickets to the Leatherneck football game against the Montana Grizzlies, which began at 3 p.m., were also available for \$10 each, as well as t-shirts for \$10. Discounted family packages, including t-shirts and tasting and game tickets, were also available.



"We feel that there is no better way to kick off the Leatherneck football season than with an event of this size", said Agriculture Instructor Jana Knupp, co-organizer of the event. "This will be a great day celebrating agriculture and the Leatherneck families that make Western Illinois University a place we are proud to call home."

In addition to the BBQ competition, entertainment was available for all ages. The Rockn' Papas were on stage to entertain the crowd, along with face painting, lawn games, Kona ice, and activities for children.

The event was sponsored by Smithfield Foods, the Hancock County Beef Association, Compeer Financial, and Refreshment Services Pepsi.

The 2019 event will take place on September 14, 2019.

For tickets or to participate, visit the website at <http://www.wiu.edu/cbt/agriculture/football>

WIU ALUMNUS WINS REGIONAL AG AWARD, MOVES ON TO NATIONAL COMPETITION



A Western Illinois University School of Agriculture alumnus, who was awarded the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) Outstanding Early Career Award this spring, has now won the competition's regional honor and is one of six finalists for the national award.

Bryan Schullian, an agriculture education teacher from Southeastern High School, represented six states in the regional competition, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, Indiana, and Missouri.

"I am honored to receive this award," said Schullian. "It is a direct reflection of my school, community, and students. I couldn't have worked in a better district for the past seven years. They deserve all the credit, especially my students; they have been hard working, passionate, and willing to take advantage of opportunities in the National FFA Organization."

NAAE's Outstanding Early Career Award is sponsored by John Deere as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. The award honors NAAE members who are in their third-seventh year of teaching. The award was designed to encourage young teachers to remain in the profession and encourage and recognize participation in professional activities.

Schullian will be recognized during the 2018 NAAE Convention in San Antonio, TX, where the national award winner will be announced.

"Mr. Schullian's advancement through the regional competition and progressing to the national level doesn't surprise me at all," said School of Agriculture Director Andy Baker. "Mr. Schullian is a dedicated, hard-working, committed individual, who has a passion for educating youth about the numerous opportunities in the field of agriculture. Bryan's work ethic and leadership truly reflect the type of student/alumnus we pursue. His students continually compete very well at both the state and national levels. Being selected to be among the six national finalists is truly an honor and privilege. We wish Bryan and his family the best in November at NAAE."

As part of the same competition, WIU alumnus Riley Hintzsche, of Steator, IL, won the state NAAE Teachers Turn the Key Award. Because there is no regional competition for this award, he also moves on to compete at the national level.

WIU PROFESSOR EMERITUS PART OF FULBRIGHT EVALUATION PROCESS

Western Illinois University Professor Emeritus John Carlson is working to bring the campus to the international community as he helps the Fulbright Foundation review applications for the 2019-2020 Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program. Carlson currently serves on the Fulbright Foundation's Discipline Peer Review Committee for agriculture educators. His involvement with the Fulbright Foundation began in 2012 when he was named a Fulbright Scholar and spent a semester in Russia at the Ryazan State Agrotechnological University teaching international agriculture.

"While I was there, the Fulbright group in Moscow asked me to spend a few days with them, evaluating the final round of competition for Russian graduate students wanting to study in the United States," said Carlson. "Since returning home, I have continued working on two evaluation boards for the Fulbright Foundation. One board evaluates Russian graduate students who are hoping to come to the United States, and the main emphasis is whether their credentials and proposed projects are technically sound. The other board evaluates American agricultural professors who want to be Fulbright Scholars in various countries across the world." Carlson said the evaluation typically centers on the adequacy of each applicant's credentials and how well developed their proposed program is.



"In total, I evaluate 25-30 candidates each year," he said. "It is interesting work and, while I am retired, keeps me active in my field - international agriculture."

The candidates who are recommended by the peer review committees are considered for awards to more than 140 countries around the world. The evaluation work is important, Carlson said, because those coming to the United States and Americans traveling abroad have "huge effects on the understanding people have of life and culture in other countries."

"In many cases, it is the first time that people here may get to actually know a Russian on a one-on-one basis, and people in other countries know about the United States but have very likely never gotten to really know one personally and understand why we do things as we do, which might be much different from how they live," said Carlson. "I would strongly encourage faculty at WIU to check out the Fulbright program and get engaged internationally. There are a lot of good opportunities to grow professionally and personally and to help those in other countries better understand American life."

WIU School of Agriculture Director Andy Baker said he is pleased Carlson is continuing his work with the Fulbright Foundation beyond his retirement. "Dr. Carlson's expertise in international agriculture continues to expand and broaden in scope, which is certainly reflected in his recent travels to Russia," said Baker. "We appreciate Dr. Carlson's dedication and commitment to the Fulbright program and the individuals he has influenced through his years of service."

AG LEGACY SALE TOPS \$32,500 FOR WIU'S ANIMAL SCIENCE CURRICULUM

Thanks

to all the donors, bidders, and buyers associated with this year's Legacy Sale. Your participation was sincerely appreciated.

The Western Illinois University School of Agriculture hosted its annual online Ag Legacy Sale Tuesday, April 16, 2019. This year's event had 134 lots up for sale, bringing in \$32,547 for the University's animal science curriculum.

This was the fifth sale the School of Agriculture has hosted and the total raised for the program over that time is \$194,000. All ag-related items sold at the auction were donated to the program.

Each year, the program is organized by the WIU livestock merchandising class, taught by Associate Professor of Agriculture Dr. Mark Hoge.

"This year I had the honor and privilege to help plan and execute the fifth annual WIU Livestock Legacy Sale," said Anna Shupe, a junior agriculture major from Ursa, IL. "Throughout this process, I have gained valuable communication and business skills that will help me in my future career as an agriculture educator. I helped organize donor lists, make phone calls to donors, send *save the date* postcards to past buyers, collect auction items, organize the online sale, and facilitate with buyers after the sale was over. My fellow classmates and myself in our livestock merchandising class made multiple phone calls to past donors and prepared items for upcoming sales."



2019-2020 UPCOMING EVENTS

August 8, 2019

WIU's Agronomy Field Day

August 9, 2019

WIU Allison Organic Farm Field Day

August 27, 2019

29th Annual Carthage Veterinary Service Swine Conference

September 11, 2019

2019 WIU Greenhand Motivational Conference

September 14, 2019

Food, Family, Farming, Football BBQ Competition

September 18, 2019

Annual Supply Chain Management Day

October 2, 2019

WIU's School of Agriculture Career Fair

October 4, 2019

School of Agriculture Open House

October 5, 2019

WIU Homecoming

February 8 & 9, 2020

50th Ag Mech Farm Expo



WIU GRADUATE NAMED OUTSTANDING AGRIBUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR



"Western Illinois University helped prepare me for my career because of the knowledge and experiences professors in the School of Agriculture were able to offer," said Tolley. "I love everything about agriculture and still enjoy learning new things every day. I aspire to be a quality and effective teacher like those I had while at WIU."

- Mallory Swanson Tolley

The award was presented by the Illinois Agri-Women organization. It is presented to a woman who works in agribusiness or agricultural education who has exhibited high standards of service, excellence, and exceptional leadership skills in her job.

Tolley received her bachelor's degree in Agriculture Education and her master's degree in Education and Interdisciplinary Studies from Western.

Knoxville (IL) High School agriculture teacher Mallory Swanson Tolley, a 2008 and 2014 Western Illinois University graduate, has been chosen as the Outstanding Agribusiness Woman of the Year.

AGRICULTURE STUDENTS BUY GIFTS FOR 21 CHILDREN ON SALVATION ARMY ANGEL TREE

Students from Western Illinois University's School of Agriculture's 11 student clubs had a record year in raising money to buy presents for the Salvation Army's Angel Tree.

Students raised about \$1,500 to fulfill the gift wishes of 21 children on the Angel Tree, placed on the WIU campus.

Representatives from the WIU clubs, about 25 students, shopped for the gifts at the Macomb Walmart store Dec. 6. The students spent about \$75 on each child.

The previous record was fulfilling wishes for 18 children.



WIU ALUMNUS MAKES AGRICULTURAL EXCHANGE TRIP TO AFRICA



A Western Illinois University alumnus recently spent part of November in Zambia, Africa, training a small group of farmers on modern farming and planting methods.

Todd Steinacher, a 2006 agriculture graduate, is a regional agronomist for the AgriGold Seed Company in west central Illinois. One of the company's customers, who was leading the project in Africa, invited him to be a part of the project. "In the past, he had been a part of these projects across the Middle East," said Steinacher.

The project was founded by the Illinois Rotary Association, in conjunction with Rotary International and the Rotary Club in Zambia, Africa. In Africa, the traveling team was supported by Africa Vision of Hope, which is based in Edwardsville, IL, and supports schools and orphanages in the African region. The group provided transportation and translators. The group that traveled from Illinois worked with 11 African farmers in a village east of Lusaka, the country's capital.

"The farmers we were working with are not involved in commercial farming, or even small scale farming as you would think of in the United States," he said. "These farmers are members

In Africa, Steinacher collected soil samples and evaluated the limiting factors of the selected fields.

of a village who are given long term usage of land from the territory chief. These farms use all of their corn to feed their families, with very little sold on the open market."

Steinacher said the goal was to evaluate what practices the farmers were using and train them to influence the crop they were getting ready to plant. The group took soil samples from each field to determine the pH levels and those of other nutrients. This information would provide insight to the foundation that the crop would need to be managed.



Partnered Zambian farmers planted their 2019 corn crop with a new planter and new methods.

AGRICULTURAL EXCHANGE TRIP TO AFRICA

CONTINUED



The visiting team heads to a field for evaluation.

The visiting agronomists took one acre of land for each farmer and lined up all of the seed, fertilizer, and herbicide. Steinacher said they also found someone to hire to custom till the plot for each grower.

"We also purchased new planters for all of the growers, and we purchased one family an ox to plant and for tillage," he said.

The traveling team is continuing to monitor the progress of the farmers they worked with and they will return to Africa as harvest approaches to determine the yield improvements and explain the increased value in the methods the visitors used.

"Our last night there, the African Vision of Hope students invited us to their school for a short program that included hearing stories from the students," Steinacher said. "They also performed two traditional Zambian songs. Afterward, we had a social with the students where they could ask us questions about the United States and about our project with Zambian farmers."

Steinacher has worked for Agrigold since 2015. Prior to that time, he worked at GROWMARK/FS for about 10 years, doing agronomy sales and consulting. He said he believes his WIU education gave him a strong foundation to build on.

"While at WIU, I took an international ag class that helped me open my mind to other countries and cultures," he said. "At WIU, I was also a member of Alpha Gamma Rho, and it was this organization that helped me learn the value of professional networking. It was this network that aligned me with the customer who invited me to take this trip with him and his team."

- Todd Steinacher

"At the end of this season, we would hope that our changes will produce more yield for them, which will take them down a path of more food stability," he said. "They would only hand place a little bit of fertilizer near the seed in the furrow, so I explained to them how it's the root system that not only provides structure, but it also pulls in the water and nutrients. We told them they should hand spread fertilizer in a circle around the seed, so all the roots could grow into the zones and take in more nutrients."



William and Steinacher co-host agronomy education for local Zambian farmers. The two discussed seed germination, the importance of root development, and nutrient management.

VP OF CASE IH NORTH AMERICA SPEAKS WITH STUDENTS



Vice President of Case IH North America at CNH Industrial and Western Illinois University alumnus Scott Harris hosted a student discussion at WIU from 3:30-4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 17, in Stipes Hall 121 on the WIU-Macomb campus. Harris also spoke at the School of Agriculture banquet at 6 p.m. that evening. The events were sponsored by the WIU College of Business and Technology Executive in Residence program, School of Agriculture, and Department of Engineering Technology.

Harris was named the Vice President of Case IH North America in 2018. He oversees all Case IH agricultural activities in the United States and Canada. Prior to that role, he was Vice President of North American construction equipment operations for Case Construction Equipment.

In 2006, Harris joined CNH Industrial Capital as a U.S. sales manager for construction equipment and later served as a northeast region sales manager for both agricultural and construction equipment. In 2007, he became senior director of sales and marketing for that division. His last role with CNH Capital was Vice President of U.S. financial services and operations, where he was responsible for the overall sales growth and profitability of CNH Capital's financial products and services. Harris joined the CNH Industrial Parts and Service group in 2011 as Vice President of sales and marketing for North America, and he became vice president for the entire division in 2013.

Harris earned his bachelor's degree in applied technology from Western in 1985, and he successfully completed a three-year graduate program, Graduate School of Retail Banking, sponsored by the Consumer Bankers Association (CBA) at the University of Virginia.

