

SOURCE

Fall 2025

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SUNRISE 



A STRONGER LOCAL COOPERATIVE

Sunrise FS and Illini FS join forces under the Sunrise FS brand

Serving the people of the GROWMARK System

GROWMARK

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Ashley McClintock
Executive Vice President,
HR & Corporate Services
Phone: (309) 557-6289
amcclintock@growmark.com

Beth Fannin
Director, Communications Services
Phone: (309) 557-6133
bfannin@growmark.com

Sabrina Burkiewicz
Manager, External Communications
Phone: (309) 557-6184
sburkiewicz@growmark.com

Julie Fontana
Graphic Designer
Phone: (309) 557-6171
jfontana@growmark.com

www.GROWMARK.com

Do you know an employee, program, or story that should be published in SOURCE? Do you have feedback on the magazine? Email story ideas, comments, or questions to SOURCE@growmark.com.

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1705 Towanda Ave.
Bloomington, IL 61701

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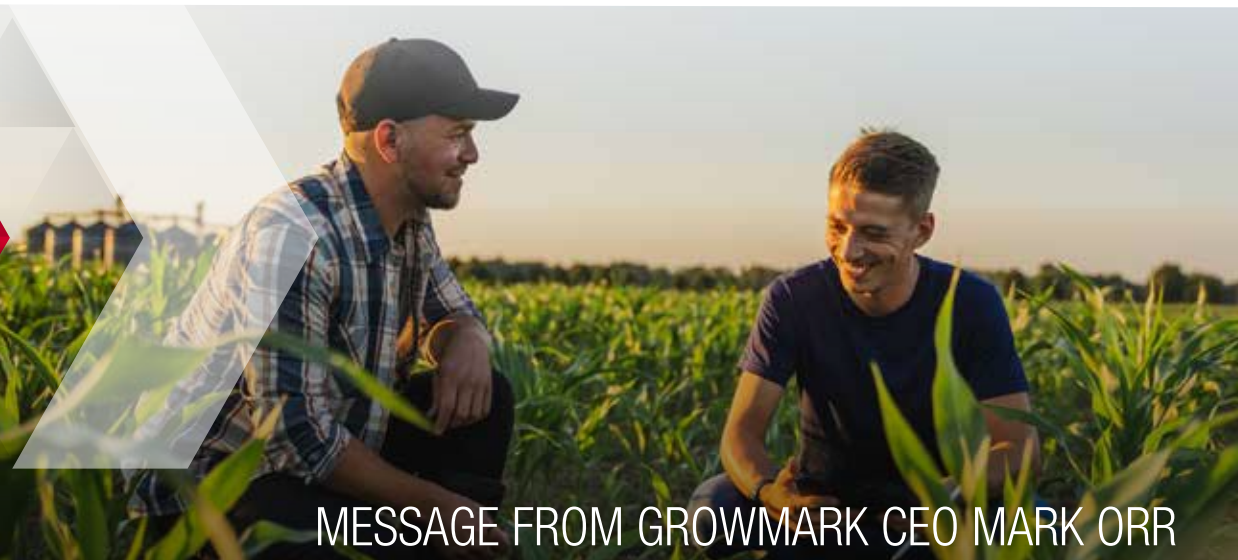
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MESSAGE FROM GROWMARK CEO MARK ORR

DELIVERING ON OUR PROMISE: **FROM START TO FINISH**



This July, GROWMARK launched a new FS brand campaign, our first in nearly a decade. The campaign, “Start to Finish,” is

more than a refreshed message; it’s a reaffirmation of who we are, what we stand for, and how we deliver value to our customers and member companies every day.

The timing of this campaign launch is intentional. As we advance toward the goals outlined in GROWMARK’s strategy, it became clear that an investment in the FS brand was essential. This campaign directly supports GROWMARK’s goal to develop and execute plans that support FS growth objectives by strengthening the brand’s presence in established markets and expanding its reach into new, high-potential territories identified by FS members.

The “Start to Finish” theme reflects the comprehensive value FS offers its customers. Whether serving farmers, homeowners, or commercial businesses with agronomy and energy products, FS is uniquely positioned to meet customer needs across the entire spectrum of their operations. It’s a message that reinforces our competitive advantage: a trusted, full-line partner with deep local knowledge and a commitment to long-term success.

What makes this campaign especially meaningful is how it was built. Each element, from the creative development to the placement of media buys, was developed and executed in-house by GROWMARK’s Enterprise Marketing division. Last summer, the team began looking into focus group research, collaborating closely with product divisions and Member Resources, and ensuring that the campaign’s structure and targeting aligned with individual member growth strategies. This approach ensures that the campaign is not only brand-aligned but member-driven.

You’ll see “Start to Finish” come to life across a wide range of channels:

social media, radio, print, third-party websites, and even through targeted outreach from major universities like the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin, and Iowa State University. We’ve also equipped our members with customizable assets—direct mail pieces, social graphics, and a dashboard widget to help them amplify the campaign locally and track its performance in real time.

As we approach our 100th year, this campaign is a timely and strategic investment in our future. We’ll be measuring its impact through traditional marketing benchmarks: impressions, click-throughs, and lead generation, as well as more meaningful business outcomes like customer conversion, cross-line growth, and increased sales in both core and emerging markets.

“Start to Finish” is more than a tagline; it’s a reflection of our promise to customers and our commitment to helping our member companies grow.

And this is just the start.

Harvest is Underway!

Share your harvest photos with us

Sabrina Burkiewicz, GROWMARK External Communications Manager, sburkiewicz@growmark.com

Harvest is often a family affair for farm families throughout the Midwest. From the long days, late nights, and plenty of field meals, families work together to bring in the harvest for as many weeks as it takes. It’s also an opportunity that many farm families use to capture the beauty of farming.

Whether it’s sunsets and sunrises, photos of grandpa riding with his grandkids, farmer selfies, or maybe four or five generations farming together, field meals being eaten on the tailgate, or tractors and combines adorned with the American flag, we want to see your harvest photos.

Share your harvest moments with us, and we’ll feature some of them in the Winter edition of SOURCE. Be sure to include a caption of what’s happening, as well as the county and state. Photos can be emailed SOURCE@growmark.com.

Photo by GROWMARK Photographer, Katelynn Baer





2025 GROWMARK Annual Meeting

The annual business meeting covered the state of the cooperative and some inspiring advice from a Savannah Banana

GROWMARK Staff

The 2025 GROWMARK Annual Meeting was held August 12th and 13th at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

The event featured GROWMARK’s annual business meeting, and attendees heard from GROWMARK Executive Vice Presidents about the state of the cooperative and its enterprise strategy.

- This year’s GROWMARK speakers included:
- Mark Orr, Chief Executive Officer
 - Kevin Malchine, Chairman of the Board & President
 - Brad Drake, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
 - Karmy Kays, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
 - Mark Weilbacher, Executive Vice President, Member Resources
 - Jeff Lynch, Executive Vice President, Retail Business
 - Matt Lurkins, Executive Vice President, Grain and General Counsel

External speakers invited to speak or be part of a panel included Corey Resenbusch, President & CEO of The Fertilizer Institute, David Zimmerman, CEO of Big River Resources, Emily Skor, CEO of Growth Energy, Tim Hassinger, CEO & Chairman of Intelinair, Jason Dorsey, President & Co-Founder of The Center for Generational



Kinetics, and Jesse Cole, Owner of the Savannah Bananas.

The two speakers who had the audience laughing most and feeling inspired were Jason Dorsey and Jesse Cole. Jason’s take on the quirky characteristics of each generation and how they interface in the workplace captured the audience’s attention, while his poking fun at audience members who had watches on, cash in their pockets, and a pen in their hands, taking notes, brought on the laughs. Jason said that the primary trends shaping generations are parenting styles and technology, and reminded the audience that “technology is only new if you remember the way it was before.”

Jesse Cole, founder and owner of the inspiring Savannah Bananas minor league baseball team, shared his journey of not knowing what to do with his life to becoming the owner of the team and their flawed, funny, and meteoric rise to extreme popularity as the “Bananas.” Jesse said every business owner should focus on the five “Es” to create raving fans: Make it easier for customers, entertain always, experiment constantly, engage deeply, and empower action.

Gold Star FS Coordinates Donation to the Wounded Warrior Project

Learn how the GROWMARK Foundation can support your charitable gifts

GROWMARK Staff

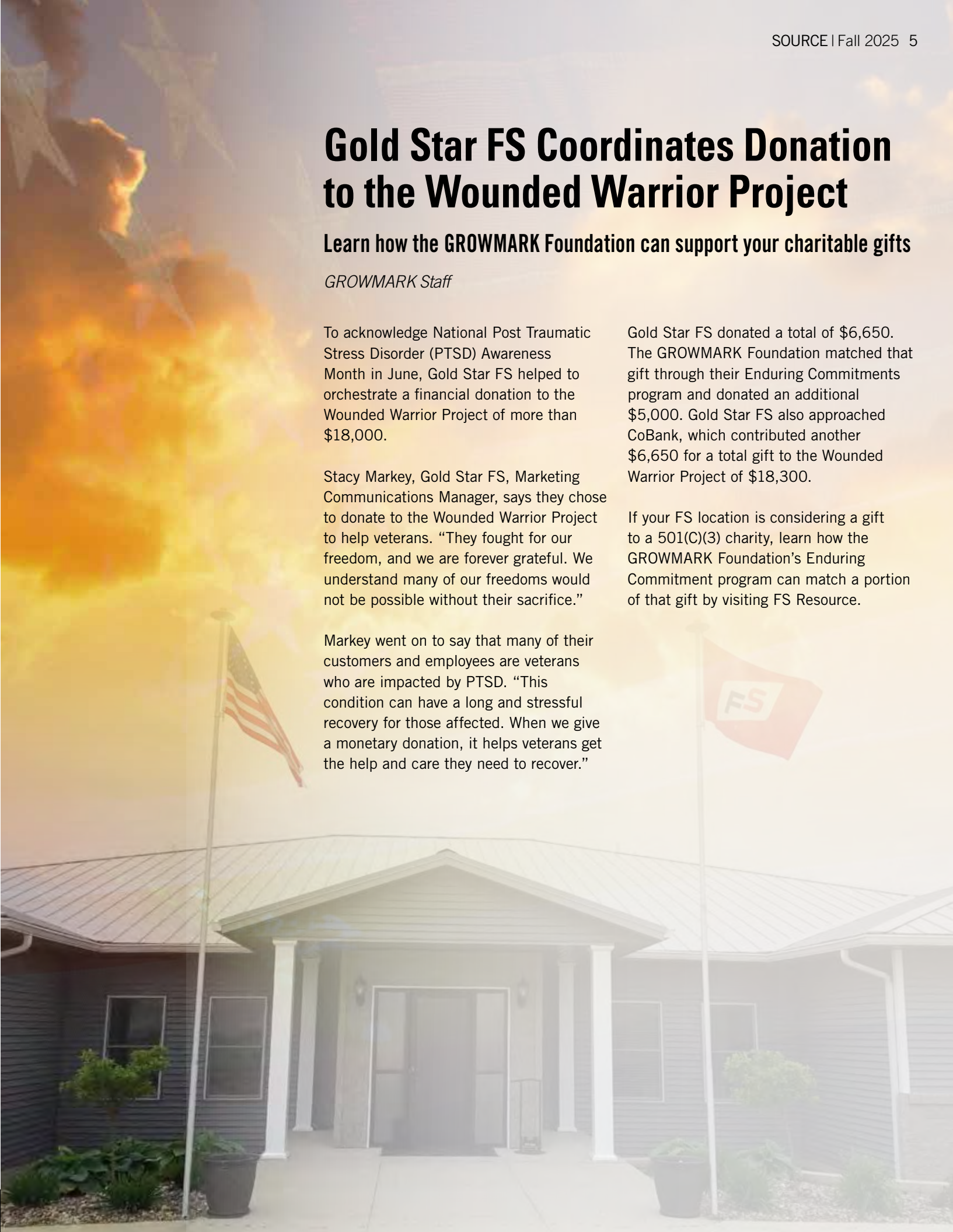
To acknowledge National Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month in June, Gold Star FS helped to orchestrate a financial donation to the Wounded Warrior Project of more than \$18,000.

Stacy Markey, Gold Star FS, Marketing Communications Manager, says they chose to donate to the Wounded Warrior Project to help veterans. “They fought for our freedom, and we are forever grateful. We understand many of our freedoms would not be possible without their sacrifice.”

Markey went on to say that many of their customers and employees are veterans who are impacted by PTSD. “This condition can have a long and stressful recovery for those affected. When we give a monetary donation, it helps veterans get the help and care they need to recover.”

Gold Star FS donated a total of \$6,650. The GROWMARK Foundation matched that gift through their Enduring Commitments program and donated an additional \$5,000. Gold Star FS also approached CoBank, which contributed another \$6,650 for a total gift to the Wounded Warrior Project of \$18,300.

If your FS location is considering a gift to a 501(C)(3) charity, learn how the GROWMARK Foundation’s Enduring Commitment program can match a portion of that gift by visiting FS Resource.





This year’s EMERGE Conferences brought together more than 700 FS employees and crop specialists, with events stretching from the East Coast to Central Iowa.

It was more than just a meeting; it was a chance to recharge, connect, and get fired up for the 2026 seed season.



Crucial Conversations: The Training That Helps Teams Move Forward

First East Coast session brings GROWMARK FS, SEEDWAY, Southern States, and EverGRO FS together

Kristine Esdale, GROWMARK FS, Regional Sales Manager - Solu-Cal, kesdale@growmarkfs.com

In July, GROWMARK Corporate Training hosted its first Crucial Conversations session in the Eastern Region, bringing together employees from GROWMARK FS, SEEDWAY, Southern States, and EverGRO FS of Central Virginia. The program focuses on building the skills to hold honest, respectful dialogue – especially when the topics are high-stakes, opinions differ, and emotions run high.

What makes a conversation crucial? When teams get stuck, it's rarely because of a lack of knowledge or resources; it's usually because of a conversation that isn't happening. Maybe it's a sensitive issue no one wants to address, a disagreement no one knows how to resolve, or a decision no one feels safe enough to question. Left unspoken, these moments lead to frustration, stalled progress, and strained relationships.

That's exactly the kind of situation Crucial Conversations training is designed to fix.

Building Confidence to Speak Up
"Anytime you're not getting the results you want, whether it's in customer service, safety, or teamwork, it usually comes back to communication," said Brian Dennis, GROWMARK FS Eastern Field Trainer.

"Crucial Conversations teaches you how to stop avoiding the hard talks and start having productive ones. It's about creating an environment where people feel safe to speak up but also know how to do it respectfully."

The course helps participants learn how to:

- Speak persuasively without being abrasive
- Create shared understanding instead of conflict
- Resolve disagreements quickly and constructively
- Make better decisions together, and act on them

Learning Together Across Teams

As the program rolls out across GROWMARK companies in the eastern region and Canada, the goal is to build stronger communication skills that can help improve daily operations, whether that's in the field, in customer service, or in leadership.

As Dennis explains, "If we can get better at talking to each other, we'll get better at everything else we do. Communication is the gateway to trust and solutions; it's at the heart of the FS Way."

Two participants shared their thoughts on the experience:

**BRANDY JEWELL,
BUSINESS PROCESS SPECIALIST,
GROWMARK FS**

"Attending Crucial Conversation training gave us the tools to hold those conversations, ensuring a psychologically safe environment and stating the facts in a caring manner."

**CHRIS METZ, CCA
DELMARVA REGION MANAGER
GROWMARK FS**

"This is my second time going through Crucial Conversations. It has helped me to be able to separate the stories from the facts and be able to have a conversation with someone while also being honest and kind, with the intended result being a win-win situation for everyone. Before crucial conversations, I would have probably tried to avoid these types of conversations."



Employees from EverGRO FS, GROWMARK FS, SEEDWAY, and Southern States gathered for the first training in July

GROWMARK's Training & Development Team Takes Training on the Road

The bus tour is an enriching time for new employees to learn about the GROWMARK System

In June, new-to-the-System home office employees hit the road for a GROWMARK System bus tour, visiting three key locations: the Alpha Distribution Center, West Central FS, and the Morton Tank and Truck Center. The tour was designed to provide employees with a comprehensive understanding of business operations and to bring them closer to the customer.

The first stop at the Alpha Distribution Center showed employees intricate logistics that ensure System products are efficiently distributed. Kyle Zehr, Alpha Distribution Center Manager, emphasized the importance of precision and coordination in maintaining the integrity of our supply chain. Employees saw the advanced technologies they use in the warehouse and processes that keep the distribution network running smoothly.

Next, the tour went to the West Central FS Technology Learning Center. Employees observed seed test plots and toured innovative projects in action, learning about the research and development efforts that drive advancements in agriculture. Jim McNelly, West Central FS General

Manager, guided employees through the services offered to farmers, from crop protection to nutrient management. Jim and his team shared first-hand expertise about the challenges facing growers, which left employees with a deep appreciation of their commitment to supporting farmers.

The final stop was the GROWMARK Tank and Truck Center, where Terry Aeschleman, Manager, Fleet Maintenance & Compliance and Seth Keller, Shop Manager, led the tour. Employees observed the maintenance processes used to maintain equipment at the center and learned the importance of reliable machinery to the success of GROWMARK and FS operations. Terry and Seth's dedication and expertise were evident, leaving employees with a newfound respect for the hard work that goes into maintaining our equipment.

The System bus tour was a valuable learning opportunity for corporate office employees. It enhanced employees' understanding of the System, reinforced the importance of every role within the organization, and showcased the collective effort required to achieve the organization's goals.



GROWMARK Summer Bash 2025

The first Summer Bash was a hit with GROWMARK families

GROWMARK Staff

Family fun was the highlight of the first GROWMARK Summer Bash held in June at the GROWMARK corporate office in Bloomington, Illinois.

With nearly 400 employees and their families registered to attend, the warm summer night was everything a summer fun bash should be.

Children enjoyed getting their faces painted and climbing on giant inflatables while wading pools of bubble soap provided endless fun creating giant bubbles. The trackless train and mini golf were also a huge hit with kids.

Adults enjoyed music from the Outland Band while dining from food trucks lined up in the parking lot serving up baked goods, Kona Ice, and pork chops.

The highlight of the event was the whipped cream pie-covered face of Executive Vice President Jeff Lynch.

Jeff succumbed to the pie-in-the-face for a great reason – he raised more funds for his charity of choice, the Alzheimer's Association, than any other member of the executive team.

Each member of the Executive Leadership Team chose a charity to raise funds for, with the person raising the most funds earning the pie-to-face moment.

Employees also had the opportunity to stuff cash into boxes corresponding with each charity in the hours leading up to the main event to make the contest more exciting.

The GROWMARK Foundation also matched those contributions from employees to raise an additional \$1,500. A total of \$5,428.11 was raised for the Alzheimer's Association.



GROWMARK's LoadCheck Application is Changing The Way The System Delivers

LoadCheck upgrades help drive enterprise adoption

Lyndi Patrick, GROWMARK, Wholesale Project Manager, lpattick@growmark.com

Once simply a way to validate order numbers for truck drivers before arriving at GROWMARK's Crop Nutrients facilities, GROWMARK's LoadCheck app, developed in 2020, continues to expand its functionality across the System, reducing time spent at terminals for drivers, increasing order accuracy, and improving efficiency for the terminal employees and their customers.

Following the rollout to GROWMARK's Energy Division in the Summer of 2024, GROWMARK has been working on new features for the app and introducing it to more GROWMARK

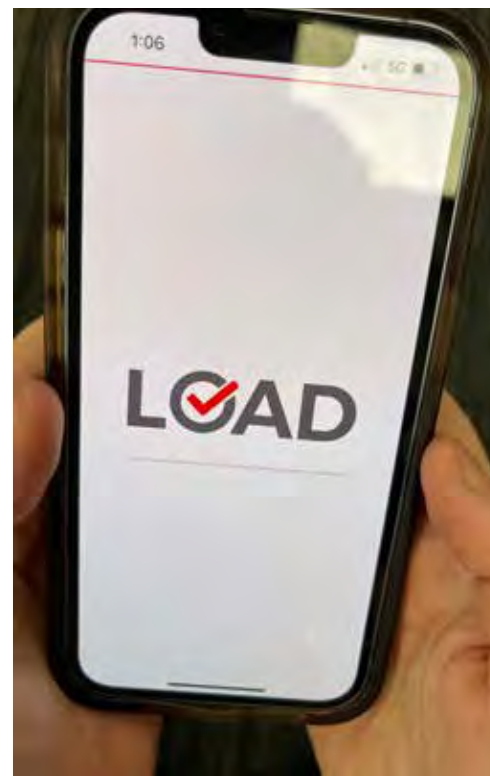
locations. In July, GROWMARK's Crop Nutrients Division expanded the LoadCheck requirement to include all third-party facilities.

How does it work?

Drivers are required to check in before they arrive at a location with the LoadCheck app using their GROWMARK sales order number.

Drivers receive a release number.

Drivers can easily report any invalid order numbers through the app and receive a new one without making a phone call to talk with an employee.



Some new implementations include:

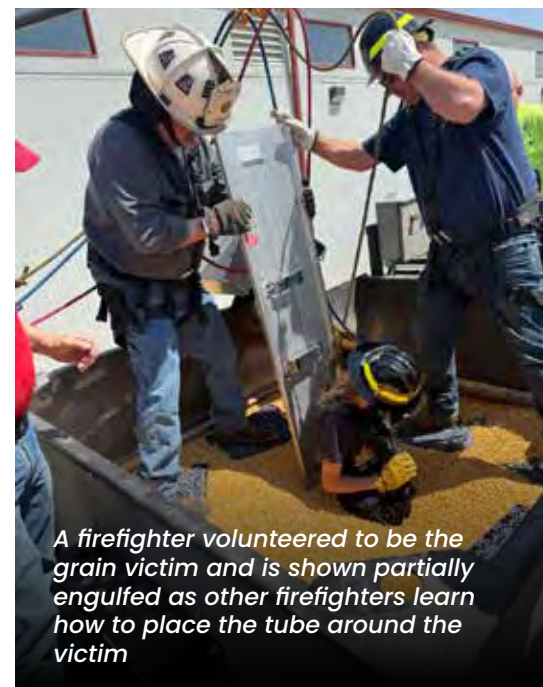
- **St. Louis, Missouri** - At GROWMARK's St. Louis Crop Nutrients terminal, the Easy Automation software is now available, helping to reduce truck loading times by approximately 50%. A similar and successful rollout was completed at the Seneca, Illinois, dry fertilizer terminal in the of fall 2023.
- **Albany, Illinois** - GROWMARK's Crop Nutrients terminal in Albany is now using a similar integration with the Kahler Automation system. Kahler customized software enabling the LoadCheck app to transmit load information from a LoadCheck QR code to their system.

What's next for the LoadCheck app?

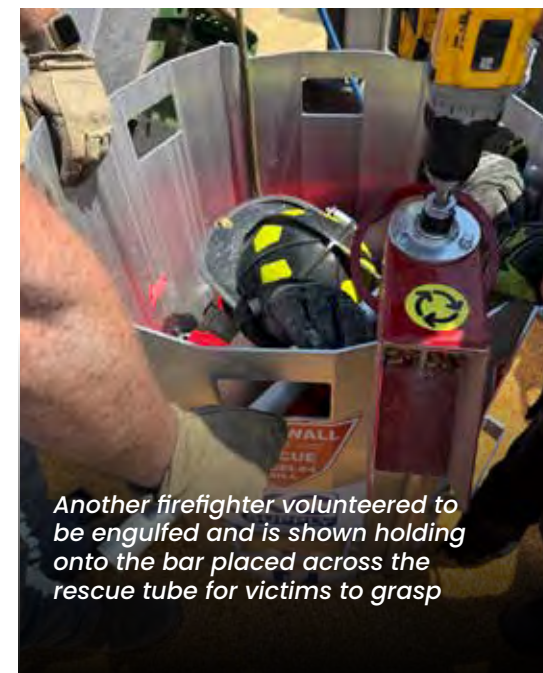
Dry Cargo loads for seed and crop protection will soon be available on the LoadCheck app, enabling efficiency to grow at even more terminals throughout the GROWMARK System.



The volunteer engulfment victim smiles as her rescue begins with firefighters placing the interlocking walls of the rescue tube around her



A firefighter volunteered to be the grain victim and is shown partially engulfed as other firefighters learn how to place the tube around the victim



Another firefighter volunteered to be engulfed and is shown holding onto the bar placed across the rescue tube for victims to grasp

Grain Rescue Tubes Save Lives

The GROWMARK Foundation donates a tube to a rural fire department in Illinois

GROWMARK Staff

The GROWMARK Foundation partnered with the National Educational Center for Agricultural (NECAS) Safety to purchase a grain rescue tube for the Forreston Fire Protection District located in Forreston, Illinois. NECAS provided hands-on training to Forreston firefighters as well as firefighters from the nearby Polo Fire Protection District in Polo, Illinois.

Grain engulfments take the lives of farmers every year, and grain rescue tubes can make the difference between life and death during an accidental grain engulfment.

To learn more about NECAS and its safety programs and additional grain rescue resources, visit NECASag.org.



Heritage FS Breaks Ground In Indiana To Further Serve Hoosier Customers

The Heritage FS team found their field of dreams at a new Indiana location

Whitney Cole, Heritage FS, Communications Coordinator, whitneycole@heritagefs.com

In the movie “Field of Dreams,” Kevin Costner’s character, Ray, hears the famous line, “If you build it, they will come.”

Ray is looking out over an expansive corn field, envisioning what could be. At Heritage FS (HFS), the board of directors and staff had a similar moment just a couple of years ago. Through the strategic planning process, the group identified a piece of farmland nestled outside of Goodland, Indiana, that seemed like the perfect place for a new Heritage FS facility.

At the HFS annual strategic planning meeting in 2023, the company’s board of directors made the decision to utilize GROWMARK’s stock redemption program as a jumping off point. The financial backing from the program bolstered everyone’s enthusiasm for the new facility.

“The stock redemption came at just the right time for Heritage FS and our Goodland greenfield site,” said Bill Romshek, HFS General Manager. “When our board heard about the program and

the funding available through it, it was a proverbial home run to be able to use some of our stock to fund the project. A program like this is what makes the cooperative model what it is and we’re proud to be a part of that. We’re proud to have this partnership with GROWMARK that leads to such mutually beneficial growth.”

Positioned off two major roads and with close proximity to the interstate, this 20-acre parcel would allow HFS to reach more customers with quality products and excellent service.

“It wasn’t really so much a big leap of faith,” Romshek said. “We already have two facilities in Indiana in Rensselaer and Morocco, but it was time and there was a need for a larger, more centralized hub on that east side of our territory.” With that need in mind, Heritage FS jumped headfirst into building a facility to serve energy and agronomy needs in western Indiana. The site will be developed in three phases and, this July, the first phase was deemed complete, and a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held.



Front row, left to right: HFS employees Joel Lambert, Kevin Wendt, Josh Wurmnest, HFS Director David Meyer, HFS General Manager Bill Romshek, HFS President Gary Boehrnsen, HFS Director Mike Nelson, HFS employees David Pluimer, Pete Hornstein. Back row: HFS employees Juan Romo, Marc Tebo, GROWMARK Engineering/Construction Site Superintendent Mike Peters, GROWMARK Engineering/Construction Senior Project Manager Jake Rosendale, and HFS employee Paul Heideman.

Phase one focused on energy. By working with the GROWMARK Engineering and Construction department, Heritage FS now has eight 30,000 gallon fuel tanks to house Dieselelex Gold, both clear and dyed, and gasoline to be hauled to customers either through tankwagon or transport loads. There is a new load out system utilizing Junge technology to ensure accuracy. There are also monitors on all the tanks for remote observation of levels and use. The facility will even allow access to the full line of packaged energy products available for farm and business delivery.

The initial phase also included the installation of a 30,000 gallon liquid propane tank and 50,000 gallon NH3 set up with two risers.

“We are excited to have this new facility in Goodland,” said Chris Claussen, Heritage FS Energy Marketing Manager. “This area has a need for service, both energy and agronomy, and we are a full-service solution for the farmers, businesses, and LP customers.”

Heritage FS has a trade territory that includes five counties in Illinois and also Benton, White, Jasper, and Newton in Indiana.

“We say we’ve dipped our toes in Indiana in the past, but now we’re diving in,” Romshek said. “We are here to provide the best products to our customers, and not just the same things they’re used to. Heritage FS has a powerhouse of offerings from energy, agronomy, and seed to in-house financing and crop insurance all with the power of the co-op behind us.”

Phase two of construction is beginning now and is expected to include a dry fertilizer building, a one-million-gallon UAN tank, and T-shaped building that will house the chemical mixing, a warehouse, and an office.

“Our goal is to have it ready to fully serve our agronomy customers by spring of 2026,” Romshek added. “But that’s not to say we can’t serve those customers this fall, too, utilizing our nearby facilities including the one in Milford.”

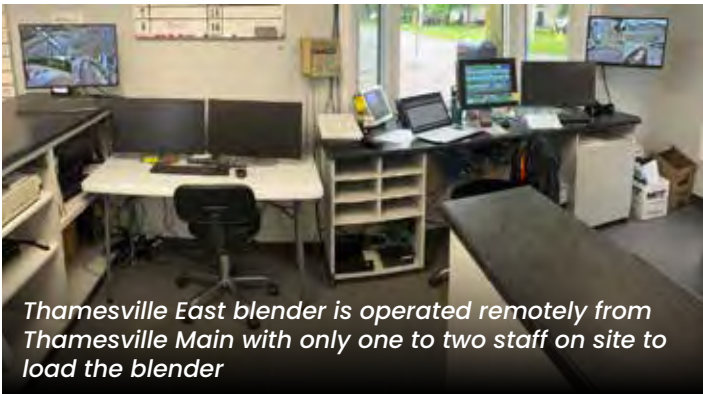
The Milford facility was completed in 2018 and is being used as a model for the Goodland facility’s agronomy portion.



The building before the renovation



The building after the renovation



Thamesville East blender is operated remotely from Thamesville Main with only one to two staff on site to load the blender



Inside Thamesville East

AGRIS Co-operative Welcomes New Leadership and Expands Operations in Thamesville

AGRIS Co-operative is looking to the future

Corinna Ward, GROWMARK, Ontario Business Manager, cward@growmark.com

AGRIS Co-operative is entering a new chapter marked by a leadership transition and strategic growth. After 25 years of dedicated service, long-time General Manager Jim Campbell retired in March 2025. Following a thorough search, the AGRIS Board of Directors appointed Don Kabbes—former General Manager of Great Lakes Grain—to lead the organization into its next phase.

Kabbes brings a strong vision and a clear focus on AGRIS’s ambitious 2030 growth strategy. “The thing that excites me most at AGRIS is implementing our 2030 growth goal,” he shared. “We have an aggressive plan at AGRIS, and I want to be able to execute on this strategic goal.”

A key component of this growth strategy is the expansion of AGRIS’s warehousing and blending capabilities in Thamesville,

Ontario. With limited space available at the existing site, AGRIS made a bold move—purchasing and renovating a facility just three kilometers away. This new site, dubbed Thamesville East, is designed to enhance service capacity and efficiency for the surrounding agricultural community.

One of the most innovative aspects of this expansion is the decision to operate the new blender remotely from the original Thamesville office. “Our teams already operate three of our blenders remotely—from just a few hundred meters away,” Kabbes explained. “The new blender in Thamesville East is only three kilometers away. The team’s attitude was, ‘Why wouldn’t it work?’”

This forward-thinking approach has already paid off. As shown in the

accompanying photo, the original Thamesville blender is controlled by the computers on the right, while the new Thamesville East blender is operated from the left. This setup has significantly increased throughput, improved efficiency, and enhanced service speed for customers.

Kabbes sees this as just the beginning. “We’ve seen great success with this project and we’ll continue to add automation and remote access to many of our grain and agronomy sites,” he said.

With strong leadership and a clear commitment to innovation, AGRIS Co-operative is well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of its members and the broader agricultural community.



Southern FS Builds Ultramodern Dry Fertilizer Building

The new dry fertilizer building was built with the future in mind

Doug Fox, Southern FS, Operations Manager, Dfox@southernfs.com

When Southern FS broke ground on a new dry fertilizer shed at its West End location, it was the culmination of years of careful study and planning. This move was part of a broader three-stage plan to consolidate three aging locations into a single, strategically located facility. Southern FS engaged the services of GROWMARK, Stueve Construction, Doyle Equipment Manufacturing, and Murray Equipment, among others, to lay the groundwork for the master plan.

Studies were also conducted to analyze customer needs, map delivery points, pinpoint a location, and consider the features the new facility needed. Volume, speed, and maintenance rose to the top of the needs list for the new building.

The building, constructed in 2025, is equipped with these features:

- 7,400-ton capacity facility
- New elevated drive over pit accommodates dump and hopper trucks at 200 tons per hour
- One 24" x 44' conveyor and bucket elevator
- One 145' Tri-slide conveyor
- Two new outbound equipment systems, both rated at 200 tons per hour
- Auto batch system consisting of two 13-ton hoppers
- One 13-ton rotary blender with loadout conveyor
- Declining weight blending system consisting of six 12-ton hoppers
- Two, two-ton Micro Bins
- Blending auger
- Loadout conveyor

Careful consideration was also given to the overall building design to ensure it would work well for the wheel loader operator, manager, and dispatch personnel, as well as for inbound and outbound traffic. One unique aspect of the project was the decision to place the elevated office outside the loadout area, 12 feet above the outbound truck loading zone, allowing the manager to have the best visual possible of the entire operation inside and out.

Controlling inventory shrinkage is a day-to-day process in the fertilizer business; to help combat shrinkage, a monitored heat floor was installed in both the operational area and the loadout area. In addition, all the bins have vertical feet measurements painted on the side walls. This allows for more accurate measurements of the bins since they are so large that it is difficult to enter and measure them.

The Southern FS team is proud of this new facility and the effort that was invested to ensure it will meet the needs of their customers and employees both now and into the future.

FS Employee Champions the Return of FFA to Macomb High School

Starting from scratch, then soaring to national recognition, this FFA Alumni chapter was led by a passionate FS employee

Sabrina Burkiewicz, GROWMARK External Communication Manager, sburkiewicz@growmark.com

When Shannon Chenoweth attended high school in the 1980s, the FFA and ag programs had been cut due to the funding troubles brought on by the financial crisis that befell many farms in the United States during the 1980s. When it was time for his own son to attend high school, Shannon took action to bring ag programs and FFA back to Macomb, ensuring a new generation of students could find their future careers in agriculture.

Shannon, who began his career in 1993 with the Schuyler-Brown FS as a GROWMARK Intern, currently works as a Certified Crop Specialist for Prairieland FS. However, his life outside of work has been dedicated to reviving the FFA programs in Macomb. For the last ten years, Shannon and a group of devoted parents have focused their time and energy on helping jump-start agricultural education at Macomb High School. "It's something I was passionate about making sure the students had. I really missed it when I was in high school, and I wanted to make sure it was there for my son and his classmates," Chenoweth said.

Shannon and the group of motivated parents first started an alumni chapter to help

generate funds to revive the programming. In September of 2016, the alumni chapter held its first fundraising events, and by 2023, the Macomb FFA Alumni Association was recognized as one of the top four alumni associations in the nation at the 2023 National FFA Convention.

The alumni association has compiled a list of achievements that have benefited Macomb students.

- In 2015, the alumni association, along with the Macomb school district, started the new FFA program at the high school with one ag teacher and 50 students.
- In 2020, a second ag teacher was hired.
- In 2023, a middle school ag teacher/ advisor was added.

What's been the result of the association's work for students? In the Spring of 2025, the high school saw student FFA enrollment skyrocket to 175 students, which represents about one-third of the student body, and 215 students at the middle school, which represents about 50 percent of the student body. This period of growth was also marked



Macomb FFA students pose with flowers from their greenhouse flower sales

by the incredible achievements of Macomb students, including a National FFA officer position, an Illinois State FFA officer position, 17 American FFA degrees, one American FFA Star candidate, and 37 Illinois State FFA degrees, as well as numerous other state and section-level accomplishments.

"We could not be prouder of how people in this community came together and backed these programs starting and look at the result, our kids have soared, and we know they're only going to continue to great things," Chenoweth said.

Shannon went on to say these accomplishments would not have been possible without the support, strong will, and dedication of the Macomb Agriscience Association, Macomb FFA chapter advisors, Macomb FFA Alumni Association members, and the local businesses and residents of the Macomb area. "The Macomb School District is also to be commended for recognizing the benefits of a strong agriculture and FFA program for students, and the important contributions agriculture brings to the community," he said.



Macomb High School FFA students pose for a chapter photo



Advisors pose with Grace Murphy from the Macomb Chapter who was elected to a National FFA officer position

POLICY APPLICATORS | THE FS SYSTEM CONNECTED WITH THE POLICY WORLD

Connor Kaeb, GROWMARK, Associate Manager, Government Relations, ckaeb@growmark.com

It took the strength of the System: 199A success demonstrates the impact of advocacy

A broad scope of efforts helped get the permanent extension passed

With the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, GROWMARK and the FS System celebrated a major legislative victory: the permanent extension of Section 199A.

For months leading up to the bill's passage, GROWMARK and FS System members engaged in sustained, coordinated advocacy efforts, making the case that Section 199A levels the tax playing field between cooperatives and other business structures, encourages local investment and economic development, supports job creation in

rural communities, and strengthens the overall health of local economies.

This clear and consistent message resonated with lawmakers — but it was the strength and scale of our advocacy that truly carried the day. Across the System, members stepped up, spoke out, and made sure their voices were heard. This grassroots momentum was instrumental in pushing Section 199A over the finish line.

Let's take a look at the scope of our efforts:

- **96 congressional meetings** were held in Washington, D.C., where System representatives advocated directly for Section 199A.
- **3 congressional visits** were hosted by FS members at local member locations, each featuring Section 199A as a central discussion point.
- **2 coordinated action requests** were launched by the Government Relations team, with **190 participants** generating **297 unique congressional connections**.

- **2 employee advocacy events** were held to raise awareness and generate momentum, drawing **102 engaged attendees**.
- **11 members** submitted real-world success stories and economic data, helping illustrate Section 199A's tangible benefits to rural America.
- **29 members** added their names to a national letter urging congressional leadership to make the provision permanent.

This win is a testament to what is possible when we work together. It highlights how impactful your voice can be — whether through hosting visits, attending events, responding to action requests, or simply sharing your story.

As we look to future legislative challenges, this victory should serve as a powerful reminder: advocacy matters. We thank everyone who participated, and we encourage all members to stay engaged and be ready to act when the next opportunity arises to support the future of agriculture and the communities we serve.



Stephenson Service Company Makes Strides Toward Centralized Future

Investment in new buildings brings more value to customers and community

Brooke Hass, Stephenson Service Company, Marketing Coordinator, bhass@stephensonfs.com



For 95 years, Stephenson Service Company has served the farm families of Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties with pride. Now, a new home office is being constructed, and renovations at the local FAST STOP in Lena, Illinois, will centralize operations, providing more value to the local farm families they support and the Lena community.

"We are very excited about our new main office move to Lena, Illinois," said Jay Kempel, Stephenson Service Company General Manager. "This is a very central location for many of our current team leaders, and we are also looking forward to being much more accessible to our farmer patrons and our employees."

Stephenson Service Company's Structures Department took the lead on the project, assisted by team members at Lingle Design Group, Timberlyne, and EPS Buildings. The new office building is expected to be completed in 2026. "I think it's great that we can use company resources, experience and talent to work on this project," said Richard Haijenga, Stephenson Service Company Structures Department Manager. "It's exciting for us to craft the new office from start to finish."

While the newest building location is certainly a new and exciting addition, Stephenson Service Company is no stranger to new and exciting developments. Most recently, the local

FAST STOP location was renovated to include a larger kitchen, updated bathrooms, and an attractive new retail space, which was completed in July.

The Stephenson Service Company has a history of investing in the Lena community, such as when they acquired Corp Tire in 2020 and constructed a new facility to operate the Corp Tire. This facility boasts a large capacity to service a wide range of vehicles, from daily drivers to large equipment.

Stephenson Service Company works towards a successful future every day, and the new developments ensure that the cooperative's future is bright within their thriving community.

A Stronger Local Cooperative is Created After Two FS Cooperatives Combine

Sunrise FS and Illini FS join forces under the Sunrise FS brand

Sabrina Burkiewicz, GROWMARK External Communications Manager, sburkiewicz@growmark.com

Delivering more of what makes a local cooperative great is exactly what Sunrise FS and Illini FS sought to achieve when they joined forces this past September, under the Sunrise FS name.

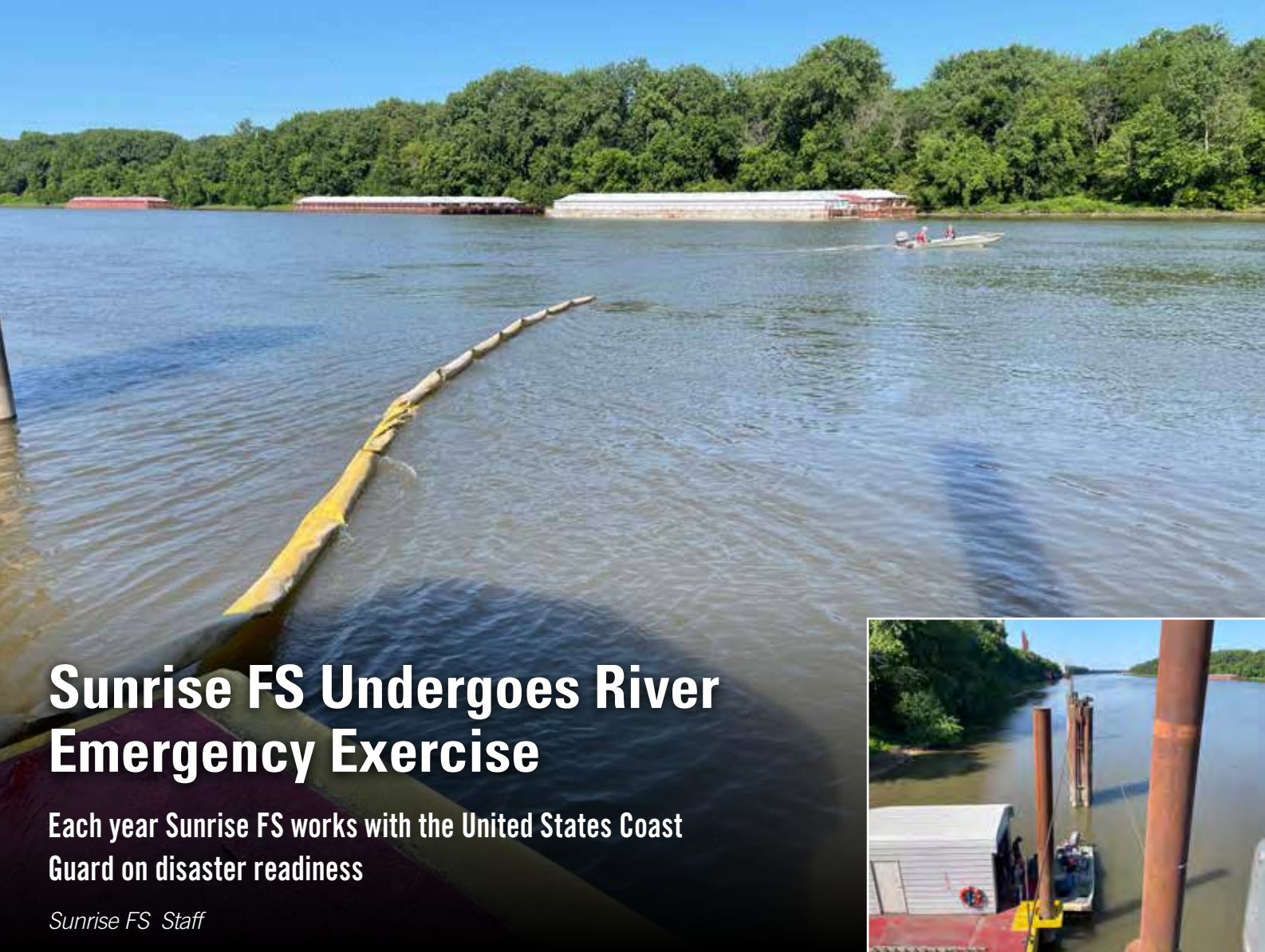
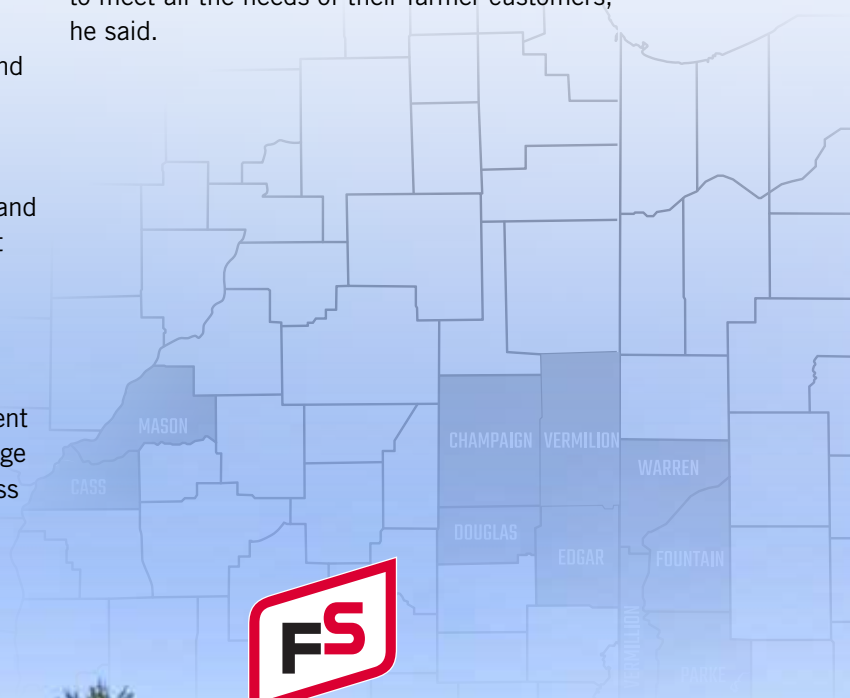
Jim Meinhart, General Manager of Sunrise FS, says the two teams have been busy sharing best practices and learning from each other. “Both teams have come together and are discovering what works better or best, and helping us build a new foundation as one organization.”

When asked how customers will benefit, Meinhart says the new organization is bigger and stronger with deep local roots. “Our customers are benefitting from the strengths of both organizations that came together and can now offer them deeper expertise, broader support, and a stronger cooperative that’s poised to do great things in the future.”

Meinhart also says in this early stage, they are looking at capital considerations, scaling their fleet, and ensuring they have the right equipment in the right places, as well as working to leverage technology to unlock maximum efficiency across the new organization.

People development is also part of the strategy. “A winning team culture is foundational to our strategy going forward. We must invest in our people and develop our talent to deliver operational excellence and profitable growth,” Meinhart said.

As for their first big initiative together, Meinhart says harvest season will keep everyone busy. “With harvest season underway, the teams will have their first big challenge of working together to meet all the needs of their farmer customers,” he said.



Sunrise FS Undergoes River Emergency Exercise

Each year Sunrise FS works with the United States Coast Guard on disaster readiness

Sunrise FS Staff

Imagine standing on a river dock and watching thousands of gallons of fuel oil spill into the water. That’s an environmental crisis that nobody wants to happen, but one that the Sunrise FS team is prepared to handle.

Every three years, the Sunrise FS team conducts a worst-case scenario spill exercise at the Havana, Illinois, terminal, located on the Illinois River, where they fuel up barge towboats, military and Coast Guard vessels, and specialty boats moving up and down the river. This year, the scenario of 9,500 gallons of #2 fuel oil spilling into the river from a broken boar during a boat refuelling was the worst-case scenario they used to facilitate the emergency preparedness exercise.

During the exercise, the team deployed a 400-foot boom to contain the fuel spill

and placed phone calls to these agencies to notify them of the exercise and the scenario they were acting out:

- U.S. EPA National Response Center
- United States Coast Guard Sector Commander
- City of Havana Water and Sewer Departments
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Havana Fire Department
- State Fire Marshall
- State Emergency Response Commission
- Local Emergency Planning Committee
- Mason District Hospital
- Green for Life Environmental Inc.

This list of organizations underscores the seriousness of preparing for an environmental disaster on the river, as well as the level of response resources

ready to help remediate the situation. In addition to the planned exercise, they also conduct an unannounced boom deployment to ensure the equipment is functioning properly and to keep all the steps fresh in everyone’s minds.

Additionally, each fall, the team undergoes an audit with the United States Coast Guard (USCG), further ensuring their readiness. To prepare for this, the team spends time each year updating our USCG binder, ensuring it’s organized, updated, accurate, and ready to go at a moment’s notice.

The Sunrise team is proud of its commitment to disaster preparedness and hopes this inspires other locations throughout the System to prepare, plan, and be ready to handle a crisis.

Enhanced Speed and Capacity Awaits Farmers at Total Grain Marketing's Neoga, Illinois, Facility

New dump pits, storage capacity, and rail facility add value for local customers

Sabrina Burkiewicz, GROWMARK External Communications Manager, sburkiewicz@growmark.com

Total Grain Marketing FS (TGM) has completed a significant renovation at its facility in Neoga, Illinois, by adding a new rail loadout facility, constructing 1.5 million bushels of additional storage capacity, and adding two new dump pits to triple grain dumping capacity.

The corn, soybean, and wheat facility ships grain via rail with CN to poultry markets in Mississippi and export markets in the Gulf. Together with its existing footprint in Neoga, TGM's renovations on the new 20-acre site will include an additional 1.5 million bushels of storage, a new 40-car railroad spur with a loadout facility, and two new, 1,000 bushel dump pits that will triple grain dumping capacity to 75,000 bushels per hour, reducing

the time truck drivers spend waiting to unload their grain.

TGM Grain Division Manager Ken Meinhart says the expansion project holds big benefits for area farmers. "I know our existing farmer customers will be excited about our increased dumping capacity because they'll be able to dump their grain and get back out to the field faster, which is critical during harvest," he said. "The new storage also raises our total storage capacity to nearly 4 million bushels, which will help ensure we have adequate bin capacity during harvest season."

TGM General Manager Joe Meinhart views the new rail loadout facility as a significant shift in how the Neoga

facility operates, as it will enable the company to transport grain to strategic markets faster, helping to ensure storage capacity is available during harvest.

"The new rail loadout facility will help us load rail cars at 50,000 bushels per hour from the two new bins, allowing us to load 105 car unit trains in 10 to 12 hours as compared to the 72 hours it used to take," he said. "This is a time savings for our staff and benefits farmers because we'll be shipping grain to markets in the south faster than ever before."

To learn more about the agricultural products and services offered by TGM, visit www.TotalGrainMarketing.com.



Tiny But Mighty

FS fuels big success for small-town FFA

Joanie Stiers, Vice President of the Williamsfield FFA Alumni and Friends, joanie@stromfamilyfarms.farm

Members of the Williamsfield FFA Land Use Team set their sights on a state title. Instead, they brought home three state championships in a landmark victory that directly links to the expertise and service mantra at West Central FS.

"The cool thing with this team at Williamsfield FFA was we started working when they were young, set goals, and they had a fire and wanted to obtain those goals," said Brandon Hall, West Central FS Plant Manager, who coached the team as a former award-winning soils competitor in college. "To be able to achieve that group goal has been more exciting and gratifying than any national championship I have won as an individual."

The Williamsfield FFA Chapter's varsity and junior high teams collectively claimed top varsity team in the state and top individual in both divisions at the 2024 Illinois FFA Land Use competition. Of particular significance, the achievement represents the first state championship by a team in the chapter's nearly 90-year history.

The historic moment adds to a tiny chapter's mighty success story. Home

to almost 100 high school students, Williamsfield has added 12 state championship banners and three national award banners on the wall since 2020. The chapter recently had its first state officer in 60 years, and the school's solo agriculture teacher quickly credits volunteers like Hall for helping to generate this momentum.

"The volunteers have been instrumental in the growth of our program in the past eight to 10 years," said Kent Rigg, agriculture teacher at Williamsfield Schools. "Volunteers have served as judges, coaches, and interviewers to help prepare our students for upcoming contests. Without the support of individuals like Brandon and companies such as FS, we would not be able to prepare students to the level that we currently do."

For Brandon, his pay-it-forward mindset continues to benefit the students he works with. "There is no greater feeling than to see those skills I have learned get passed off, passions get picked up, and students have that fire within them," Hall said. "That success is contagious and can lead to more in a multitude of ways."

New Century team from left to right: Adrianna Krieger (Agronomy Sales Intern), Kolin Sukovaty (Agronomy Sales Manager), James Anderson (Crop Specialist)



Kolin Sukovaty: Leading Growth and Excellence in Northwest Iowa

His lifelong love of agriculture helps his team stay three feet ahead of their customers

Kenny Linkenmeyer, GROWMARK Field Sales Agronomist, klinkenmeyer@growmark.com

Kolin Sukovaty serves as the Agronomy Marketing Manager for New Century FS, where he and his team in Northwest Iowa have achieved tremendous success in recent years. Kolin strongly believes that his time is best spent working alongside his crop specialists, getting “three feet in front of the grower.” Anyone who has spent time with Kolin knows he exemplifies the qualities of a great leader and has earned the respect of every member of his team.

Kolin’s passion for agriculture runs deep. Raised in a farming family, he pursued his love of the land at Iowa State University, where he majored in agronomy. After graduation, he returned home to help on the family farm and began his career as a Sales Agronomist at his hometown’s

independently owned ag retailer. It didn’t take long for Kolin’s talent to stand out. In July 2021, Bob Barker recruited him to join GROWMARK FS (GFS) as a Field Sales Agronomist. Over the next two years, Kolin and the GFS team achieved more than 20% seed acre growth each year.

Following the merger with New Century FS, New Century’s General Manager, Troy Koehler, asked him to join their team. Since then, Kolin has continued to drive growth across all business units, building a culture of success and setting a high standard for performance and service.

One of the most exciting recent developments for Kolin and his team has been the establishment of a greenfield

site in Rockwell City, Iowa. Completed in January 2024, this facility meets the seed and crop protection needs of local growers. Since its opening, the team, which includes New Century Crop Specialists, Brent Wykoff and Tyler Stockwell, has grown the seed business at the Rockwell City location to more than \$800,000, and the crop protection business has exceeded \$1,100,000.

The future is bright for Kolin’s team. Their success has made them a key contributor and focal point of the Iowa expansion project for New Century. Continued investments in locations, infrastructure, and people will provide Kolin and his team with even more opportunities to build new strategic relationships, further building upon their winning track record.



2025 Women of GROWMARK Summit

The second annual summit attracted hundreds of women from across the System

GROWMARK Staff



The second annual Women of GROWMARK Summit, held in June, in Bloomington, Illinois, offered attendees a huge array of personal development, uplifting advice, and inspirational sessions.

One highlight was a panel discussion of four women who shared their experiences working in agriculture. Heather Thompson, GROWMARK’s Executive Director of Enterprise Marketing, Andrea Brossard, owner and operator of Brossard Dairy Farm, Gayle Baker, Agriculture Services Group Manager for Maurer-Stutz, Inc., and Lauren Lurkins, Founder & CEO of Lurkins Strategies, shared stories of how they navigated their careers in ag and the challenges that come with working in a male-dominated industry.

With a huge variety of sessions to choose from, every woman found something that resonated with her. Courses focused on career development and delved into the

topics of leadership, communication, mentoring, finding your voice, developing confidence, and conquering self-doubt and imposter syndrome.

There were also many courses devoted to aspects of a woman’s life aside from her career, such as planning her financial future, navigating parenthood, self-defense, responding to challenging personal life events, and self-care.

Keynote speaker Aimee Beam gave the audience 10 unconventional but life-tested pieces of advice.

- 1. **Network in reverse** – be the person who befriends another and be good to people with no motive, and you’ll end up with an army of friends.
- 2. **Gossip the good** – spread goodness and encouragement to create allies in life.
- 3. **Shake it up** – break your routine to refresh yourself.
- 4. **Look for career bridges** – do something that gives you satisfaction, look around and out, not just up.

5. **Stand up for each other** – in meetings, in public, women should stand up and beside one another.

6. **Serve every dish cold** – nothing ruins a relationship or career faster than an angry email.

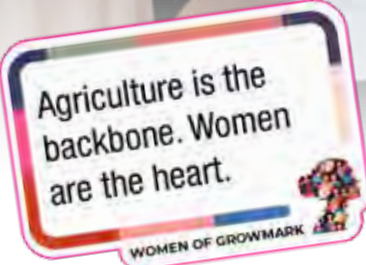
7. **Help others up the wall** – when you finally make it, look back and see who you can help up.

8. **Stay in the arena** – people will come at you, even when you get knocked down, stay in the arena of life and give them heck.

9. **Pray** – be grateful for what we have, and be mindful of your blessings to keep yourself centered.

10. **Jam** – turn up your favorite music and dance like no one’s watching – life’s too short not to.

Make a note to attend next year’s summit and stay tuned for more details in the spring of 2026 on Employee Central.





SAFETY FIRST

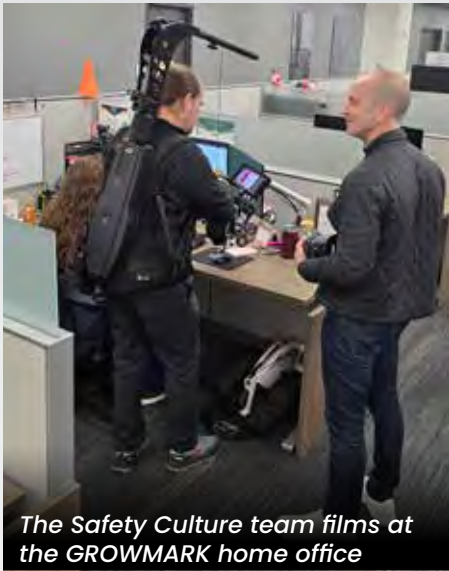
SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Matt Harken, GROWMARK, Manager, Safety & Environmental Engagement, Risk Management, maharken@growmark.com



CHANGING SAFETY CULTURE ONE TAP AT A TIME

The Safety Culture app delivers real-time data making our System safer



The Safety Culture team films at the GROWMARK home office



GROWMARK's Matt Harken left, with the Safety Culture team at AgVantage FS



The Safety Culture team working at Agriland FS in Indianola, Iowa

During my 10 years working in safety at GROWMARK, our continuous improvement efforts led us to discuss questions like:

- What if all employees could report potential safety issues and have the confidence that the right people would hear their concerns?
- What if we utilize a platform where inspections and other regulatory paperwork are digitized and then completed on a mobile app?
- What if we used analytics to fuel a continuous improvement mindset in Risk Management?

When we began exploring all the aspects of the Safety Culture application, we knew this was the tool that could make everything on our wish list possible.

What is the Safety Culture app? It's an app designed to help keep companies connected, informed, and focused. Employees can report issues on the spot and share opportunities to learn with one another. They can also receive information, updates, and training through the app.

"It's been helpful to lean on a partner like Safety Culture to assess safety performance and risk management," says Karmy Kays, Chief Financial Officer at GROWMARK. "We're able to manage, monitor, and help our members prioritize where they're going to focus their valuable attention and resources towards improving their safety posture now and into the future."

Last spring, the Safety Culture team traveled from Australia to GROWMARK to observe firsthand how our system utilizes the app. They saw how we're implementing a multi-organization system to reimagine how we approach regulatory compliance and enhance a "Choose Safe" culture throughout the System.

In addition to spending time at the GROWMARK corporate office in Bloomington, Illinois, they also spent time visiting FS locations in Illinois and Iowa.

During those tours, the Safety Culture team observed how the app is changing the way FS companies approach safety.

AGRILAND FS

"If you see a trend—maybe something keeps coming up during nurse tank maintenance—we can act before it leads to an injury," says Trenton Cheers, Agriland FS Safety and Regulatory Manager. "You can't measure the things that don't happen, but this kind of proactive approach is priceless."

NEW CENTURY FS

"Peer-to-peer is powerful," explains Troy Koehler, New Century FS General Manager. "It gets people seeing, 'If that person can do it, then I can do it,' and that's how you get things really flowing."

GROWMARK's partnership with Safety Culture is implementing a system that fosters safer teams, smoother operations, and a culture where every voice matters and every action counts.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RETIREES

Gail Jackson GROWMARK FS, LLC. 5 years	John Tipton Gateway FS, Inc. 14 years	Margaret Kur Central Ontario FS 20 years	Kevin Kuennen AgVantage FS, Inc. 28 years	Nancy Berglund West Central FS, Inc. 36 years
Raymond Rossmiller Prairieland FS, Inc. 5 years	Jeffrey Manthei New Century FS, Inc. 15 years	Brian McFall GROWMARK, Inc. 20 years	Glenn Zehr Evergreen FS, Inc. 28 years	Kenneth Alrutz GROWMARK FS, LLC. 37 years
David Eubanks Wabash Valley Service Company 6 years	David Fogle Evergreen FS, Inc. 16 years	Bradley Murphy South Central FS, Inc. 20 years	Randy Passow New Century FS, Inc. 28 years	Daniel Hall GROWMARK, Inc. 37 years
Edward Beever Gateway FS, Inc. 10 years	Bart Lubinski Insight FS, Inc. 16 years	Gary Riley Southern FS, Inc. 20 years	Kirk Seaman Total Grain Marketing FS 20 years	Jeff Baker Prairieland FS, Inc. 38 years
Michael Klahsen AgVantage FS, Inc. 11 years	David Fogle Evergreen FS, Inc. 16 years	Thomas Walsh Illini FS, Inc. 20 years	John Myers Seedway, LLC. 31 years	Joellen Short Evergreen FS, Inc. 41 years
Linda Lee Prairieland FS, Inc. 11 years	Tony Edwards South Central FS, Inc. 17 years	Steve Westrich GROWMARK, Inc. 21 years	Paul Watson AgVantage FS, Inc. 31 years	Kirk Paisley Prairieland FS, Inc. 46 years
Robert Maher Ag-Land FS, Inc. 11 years	Laura King GROWMARK FS, LLC. 17 years	Linda Christiansen Conserv FS, Inc. 22 years	Raymond Schultz South Central FS, Inc. 31 years	
William Weber GRAINCO FS, Inc. 11 years	William Gregg GROWMARK FS, LLC. 17 years	Mary Bell AGRIS Co-operative Ltd. 23 years	Edward Rauch Total Grain Marketing FS 31 years	
Alan Smith Prairieland FS, Inc. 12 years	Alan Hoyt Western Grain Marketing FS 17 years	Wendy Livengood Sunrise FS 23 years	Christopher Olson Illini FS, Inc. 32 years	
James Busby GROWMARK, Inc. 14 years	Michael Schuette Heritage FS, Inc. 17 years	Kim Prather Prairieland FS, Inc. 23 years	Jay Irwin New Century FS, Inc. 33 years	
Steve Kubsch GROWMARK, Inc. 14 years	Greg Huizengae Gold Star FS, Inc. 19 years	Timmy Craig Southern FS, Inc. 24 years	Steven Conard Evergreen FS, Inc. 35 years	
	Ralph Behlke Insight FS, Inc. 19 years	Michael Weston Heritage FS, Inc. 25 years	Kenneth Thompson Wabash Valley Service Company 35 years	
	William Baxter GROWMARK FS, LLC. 20 years			
	Tina Johnson Southern FS, Inc. 20 years			

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The Heritage FS team found their field of dreams at a new Indiana location. Read more on page 12.