

Celebrate Wyoming Agriculture 2017



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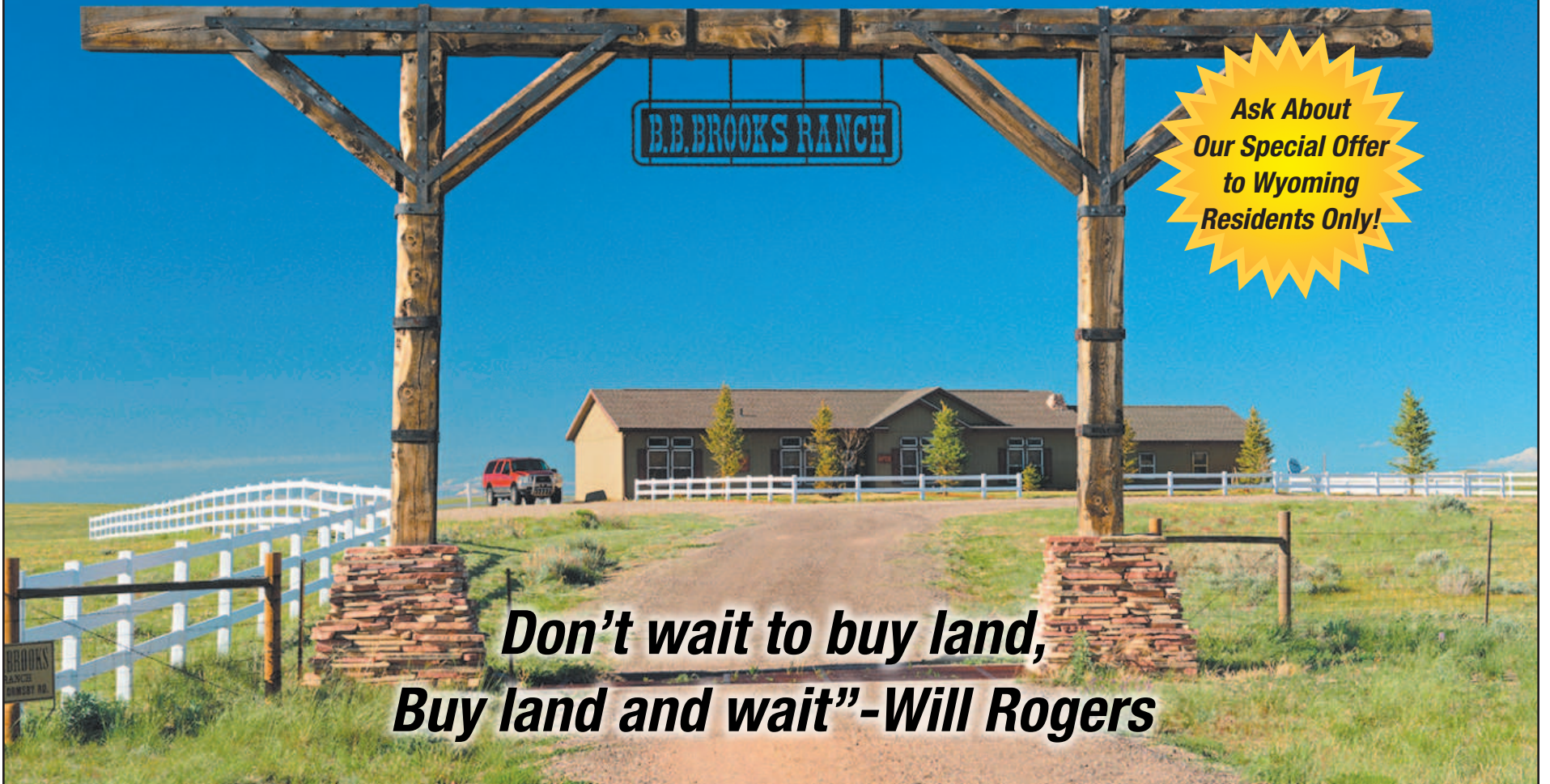
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COURTESY

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Wyoming honors Wyoming agriculture and the college's award recipients each fall during Ag Appreciation Weekend.

Hats off to Wyoming agriculture

On National Ag Day and every other day, I take my hat off to the Wyoming agriculture industry. It is, reliably, Wyoming's 3rd largest industry.



GOV. MATT MEAD

It is a cornerstone of Wyoming's financial stability with more than 11,000 farms and ranches and \$1.6 billion

in annual farm and ranch income. It continues to provide a wealth of benefits to our state, citizens, and nation – food for the table, open spaces, wildlife habitat, a pleasant western style of living, and much more. Thank

you, Wyoming ag producers, for all you do.

Agriculture is a challenging business. Whether it is drought, grain scarcity, disease, predators or commodity prices, there's always something that tests the industry and the industry perseveres. The centennial farm and ranch families we recognize annually show the long-term commitment of so many to Wyoming agriculture.

Even in constrained budget times, we press ahead as best we can. Implementation of the state water strategy, issued two years ago, continues. One of the initiatives in the strategy is the 10-in-10 project to build ten new reservoirs in ten years. The 1st four of these projects,

in 5 counties, have been funded by the Omnibus Water Bill – Construction this session. We support agriculture and make the most of a precious resource when we plan well for water storage.

The ENDOW Initiative, which I announced last November, is underway. The Legislature took up the initiative, passing a bill this session which gives it structure, deadlines, continuity, and funding. In the coming months and years, the focus will be on developing and executing an economic diversification plan for Wyoming. This is an all-inclusive, all-industry effort and I know the Wyoming ag industry will provide input and great

ideas. Our kids and their kids will be beneficiaries of what we accomplish.

The calendar tells us spring is here. In Wyoming, spring brings not only moisture but also a sense of renewal. The land greens up, plants and animals fill the fields, and like every spring, it feels like a new beginning. This year there is more of that feeling than usual – with the prospect nationally of pro-growth economic policies, fewer federal regulations, and more authority for the states. We are ready for this change in direction.

Here's to a great 2017 for Wyoming ag!

Matt Mead is the governor of Wyoming.

Working for agriculture and the citizens of Wyoming

The value of agriculture to the state of Wyoming cannot just be measured through the direct economic impact to the state of Wyoming.



DOUG MIYAMOTO

While the agriculture sector brings a significant direct economic impact, the value of open spaces, heritage, wildlife conservation, and more provide immeasurable positive impacts for the citizens and state of Wyoming.

Because of this, the goal of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture is to do everything we can to ensure the strength and vitality of the agriculture industry in the state of Wyoming. As part of that effort, we have

six divisions who work hard in a wide variety of areas to help reach this goal. We are responsible for enforcing several statutes and rules, administering various grants, producing the State Fair and maintaining the fairgrounds year round, making sure the agriculture industry voice is heard during the development of policies, and more. Below you will find a small sample of how the WDA works for agricultural producers and citizens of the state of Wyoming.

Administration Division

The Administration Division administers the Specialty Crop Grant program for producers throughout the state to help grow their business. Administration also communicates the

message and work of the Department to citizens of the state and ensures the business of the WDA runs smoothly.

Analytical Services Laboratory

The Analytical Services lab works with Conservation Districts, producers, and others to provide the sound chemical and bacteriological analysis to help citizens make informed decisions for their business. They also make sure fertilizers are accurately labeled, test meat and other food products for harmful bacteria, and test well water for citizens of the state.

Consumer Health Services

CHS helps protect the food supply across the

state through restaurant inspections, state meat plant inspections, pool inspections, child care facility inspections, and food safety education for all interested parties. This division not only protects consumers through making sure food establishments understand and follow food safety rules, but protects the agriculture industry by helping ensure consumer confidence in the products they sell.

Natural Resources and Policy

The Natural Resources and Policy division administers funding and training for Conservation Districts across the state and makes sure that Wyoming agriculture has a seat at the table during the develop-

ment policy at all levels of government. They make sure the voice of agriculture is strong when policies that impact the industry are being considered.

Technical Services

Technical Services is one of our most diverse divisions. Not only do they administer the Weed and Pest program, oversee predator control, and nursery stock inspections, they also run the Weights and Measures program to help ensure that there is confidence in the livestock market by making sure producers get accurate weights when selling their livestock.

Wyoming State Fair

The Wyoming State Fair hosts the fair each year where they showcase Wyoming's agriculture

by providing a platform for statewide youth competition and agriculture education. Along with this, they maintain the fairgrounds year round for a variety of community events like 4H shooting sports, roping events, ice hockey and more.

This is just a small sample of the work the WDA does for the citizens of Wyoming, producers and the agriculture industry. As you can tell, the depth of work the WDA does for Wyoming is vast and we take pride in the value we provide the state of Wyoming. The agriculture industry is vital to our state and we are going to do everything we can to support it.

Doug Miyamoto is director of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Wyoming centennial ranch helps tell story of beef to global audience

WYOMING BEEF COUNCIL

While already recognized nationally for its environmental stewardship and conservation achievements, Thaler Land & Livestock Co. is attracting attention worldwide by being featured online as part of marketing efforts to increase beef demand.

The Wyoming Beef Council capitalizes on the interest in the state's ranching culture and heritage to educate people worldwide about beef production by featuring stories about producers like Thaler Land & Livestock Co. along with recipes. So far the Beef Council has spotlighted 13 ranching families on the "Meet Our Ranchers" section of wybeef.com and through social media.

The Meet Our Ranchers page is the most frequently visited part of the Beef Council website. Visitors come from Wyoming, throughout

the nation and as many as 68 other countries.

Beef Council Executive Director Ann Wittmann explained that Wyoming ranching stories help consumers have a better understanding of where their food comes from and a deeper appreciation for the dedication ranchers show to their land and animals.

"We chose Thaler and Livestock as one of our featured ranching stories, because this ranch demonstrates to consumers how ranches operate in a sustainable manner and have for decades," Wittmann said.

She pointed out what attracts readers is the 100-year evolution of this ranch over five generations from a simple homestead to business that continues to be successful today.

In the early 1900's, Joe Matje left Hungary to put down roots on a

320-acre homestead in Wyoming, that would become the Fox Creek Land and Livestock Co., and later the Thaler Land and Livestock Co. Matje eventually managed to convert that his original one-dollar investment into a 28,000-acre ranch and become one of the most influential ranchers in Goshen County.

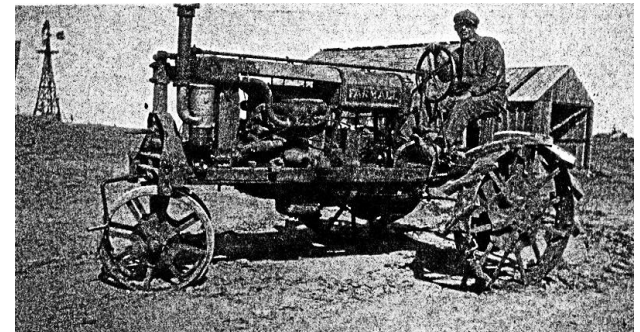
Matje often said, "I'm not hard to work for, but I'm hard to loaf for." His success and work ethic were well known throughout the state.

Today, Dennis and Sandy Thaler and their daughter Brandy and son-in-law Kevin Evans manage this cow/calf and yearling operation using lessons handed down from the Fox Creek Land & Livestock ancestors. These lessons include, "Value your family and your neighbors. Pull together. Work hard and never

Please see **RANCH**, Page 6



For his 70th birthday, Brandy and Sandy gifted Dennis a Farmall tractor very much like the one Joe Matje first used on the ranch.



Joe Matje on one of the first tractors ever on the Fox Land and Livestock ranch. In 1916 Matje homesteaded the first acreage that would become the Fox Creek Land and Livestock Co. and later the Thaler Land and Livestock Co.



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BILL CASTLE, WYOMING FARM BUREAU

For generations, farmers and ranchers will continue to care for the land and their animals all while producing food and fiber and providing habitat for wildlife. Ninety-seven percent of farms/ranches are operated by families.

Agriculture: Food for life

KERIN CLARK,
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation

When you think about agriculture, food is the first thing that comes to mind for most people. Food is definitely important for life; however, farmers and ranchers provide for much more than food alone. Plant and animal biotechnology have resulted in new antibodies for immunizations. Agriculture has also contributed to research that has helped develop surgical techniques and pharmaceuticals that help save lives.

And that is just the beginning of how agriculture is food for life. Agriculture protects and provides for open spaces, clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat and local economies.

Agriculture: Food for life and working to keep

Celebrating agriculture

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation invites all Wyomingites to “celebrate agriculture” and learn more about its role in your daily lives and recognize the issues impacting agriculture. We proudly celebrate Wyoming agriculture and its people every day of the year and specifically on Wyoming Agriculture Day, March 21, 2017. Visit us at www.wyfb.org.

Wyoming strong! Farmers and ranchers are truly stewards of the planet. In agriculture, we have the grand responsibility of not only making it work while we are here on Earth but making it work for future generations. To be a good steward means to implement the kind of management that works. Making

careful and responsible choices for the land that we have been entrusted to care for is important and necessary.

Looking at the number of years a particular business has been operating can be a good indicator of success. Hundreds of Wyoming farms/ranches have celebrated their centennial anniversaries; meaning their farm or ranch has been in the same family for multiple generations. Now, that is representation of good stewardship.

The land and its resources must be managed well in order to continue to thrive. Using advances in technology as well as knowledge of the land, farmers and ranchers are doing more with less. They also feed their families the same food they grow and raise.

Farmers and ranchers play a large role as stewards of the land. They do this in many ways including: caring for the land by practicing best management practices, providing wildlife habitat, open spaces and fresh air. I challenge you to see for yourself. Ask a farmer or rancher in your community to tell you the true story about how they are stewards of the land all while providing food for life.

While you are enjoying your favorite food remember to “Celebrate Agriculture,” and its people who care for the animals and the land seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

Kerin Clark is media and member relations director for the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation.

What's growing in Wyoming?

TED CRAIG,
Wyoming Department of
Agriculture

Driving Wyoming interstates you might get the impression that agriculture in Wyoming is only about cattle and sheep ranching. Ranching is the largest part of Wyoming agriculture, but livestock is not all that is raised here. Wyoming also grows an unex-

pected variety of crops.

For example, in southeastern Wyoming along the interstate you can see dryland grain farming. Get off the interstate onto our state highways and you will see what else Wyoming produces. Depending on the area, you could find alfalfa, grass hay, sugar beets, dry beans, barley,

Please see **GROWING**, Page 8



COURTESY

Cabbage

Ranch

From 5

give up. Find ways to improve what you have.”

In 2005, the ranch was awarded the Wyoming Stock Growers Environmental Stewardship Award, followed in 2006 by the National Environmental Stewardship Award from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. In 2016, Dennis Thaler was inducted into the Wyoming Agriculture Hall of Fame.

The ranch's resource management goal is to maintain the health and vigor of plant communi-

ties on irrigated, dryland and native range, which will maintain the resource base and support a long-term operation. By maintaining good health and vigor of all plant communities, erosion is held to a minimum. The only farming is through crop rotation to maintain permanently introduced species for grazing and haying. With the improvement of their natural resources and proper management of their cowherd through better genetics and vaccination programs, the Thaler and Evans families will continue to ship beef around the world for generations to come.

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UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING EXTENSION

This grazing isn't fast and furious but faster and more intensive. The management-intensive grazing approach emphasizes grazing livestock for short periods at high densities to improve range condition and sustainability.

At University of Wyoming Extension's a two-and-a-half-day grazing school in Glenrock last year, ranchers used grazing sticks to measure grass height and estimate how much forage cattle consumed in 24 hours.

At the end of the course, participants reported adopting the practices could save them an average of \$30 per animal.

"Wyoming's land base is 80 percent rangeland," said Ashley Garrelts, UW extension range management educator for Converse, Natrona and Niobrara counties. "This means rangeland health and profitable ranches equate to economic stability in many parts of the state."

Contact Garrelts at 307-358-2417 or ashleyg@uwyo.edu.



KERIN CLARK, WYOMING FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Wyoming ranks first of all states in number of acres per farm/ranch. Keeping this land in production agriculture is important for many reasons. Those include providing open spaces, habitat for Wyoming's wildlife and strength in economy.

Growing

From 6

lentils, chick peas, millet, oats, cattle corn and sunflowers. Traveling on county roads you might stumble upon a field of seed potatoes, sweet corn or a grape orchard. Also scattered around the state are small acre farms growing raspberries, apples, carrots, beets, potatoes, strawberries,

pumpkins, squash, or cabbage. Some of these farms have built high tunnels or low tunnels to extend their growing season and are using them to raise tomatoes, cucumbers, salad greens, mushrooms, and even artichokes. This produce is often sold at local farmers markets.

Sugar, processed in Wyoming from sugar beets grown in Wyoming, can be found on local



Market garden

COURTESY

grocery shelves, but not all of what is grown in Wyoming is consumed in Wyoming. Wheat is shipped out of state to be turned into flour or feed. Barley is often contracted to large breweries in Colorado and turned into beer. Wyoming seed potatoes are sold to growers in surrounding states to grow table potatoes for grocery stores. Some Wyoming dry beans are sold as certified seed, and

some even end up feeding hungry people in third world countries.

Given the size of Wyoming and its varied landscapes and microclimates, you may be surprised at what you find growing here. The real surprises are often found on the roads less traveled.

Ted Craig is agriculture program coordinator at the Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Ensuring a safe food supply for Wyoming

THE WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CONSUMER HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

While state meat plant inspections may not be the first thing you think about when you hear about the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, it is an important part of the work we do for citizens and the agriculture industry in Wyoming. As the buying local movement continues to grow, the need for a safe and quality product from Wyoming producers becomes even more important.

Considering that cattle is the biggest sector of Wyoming agriculture, accounting for more than half of all cash receipts, the ability to send livestock to state meat plants for harvest and processing provides a valuable business option for producers in Wyoming. While producers sell meat in a variety of ways like direct sales to other citizens or sending animals to USDA plants outside of Wyoming, many producers use one of the 18 state inspected meat plants located throughout Wyoming. Sending animals to state inspected meat plants allows producers to sell directly to grocery stores, restaurants, and citizens in the state of Wyoming. Producers across Wyoming are choosing this option for some of their cattle because it opens the possibility to build strong business relationships and opportunities within the state for those who wish to buy locally grown and safe beef.

When an animal is sent

to harvest at a Wyoming meat plant, Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) Consumer Health Services (CHS) inspectors are there to help ensure the safety of the products that will be sold to consumers of Wyoming. CHS inspectors are on hand in the state-inspected meat plants whenever the slaughter and processing of an animal occurs. The inspector reviews the slaughter process of all animals from the time they are received at the plant to the time the carcass is placed in the cooler. In some instances, this means a CHS inspector will be in the plant on a daily basis. The USDA oversees all meat processing in the country and the work CHS inspectors do at the state inspected meat plants helps Wyoming maintain and "equal to" status with the USDA. This system not only protects consumers, it also protects producers by helping maintain consumer confidence and lowering liability by ensuring the products they sell are safe and inspected.

Even though the majority of cattle in Wyoming are sent out of state for processing, the state inspected meat plants give producers more business opportunities within the state of Wyoming to keep their products local. With the growth of local food and the drive for consumers to buy products closer to home, this inspection at the state meat plants gives producers a safe and viable way to fill that demand.

Local food grows Wyoming economy

TOM DIXON,

Wyoming Business Council

The local food movement is burgeoning in Wyoming.

Consumers' desire to know the origin and care of their food has created opportunities for small farmers in the Cowboy State to expand their businesses.

Traditionally, farmers' markets scattered statewide have been the best way for buyers to know produce was grown locally. The system has swelled to more than 50 weekly events. Today, few towns lack a weekly summer market nearby, and some areas have several options.

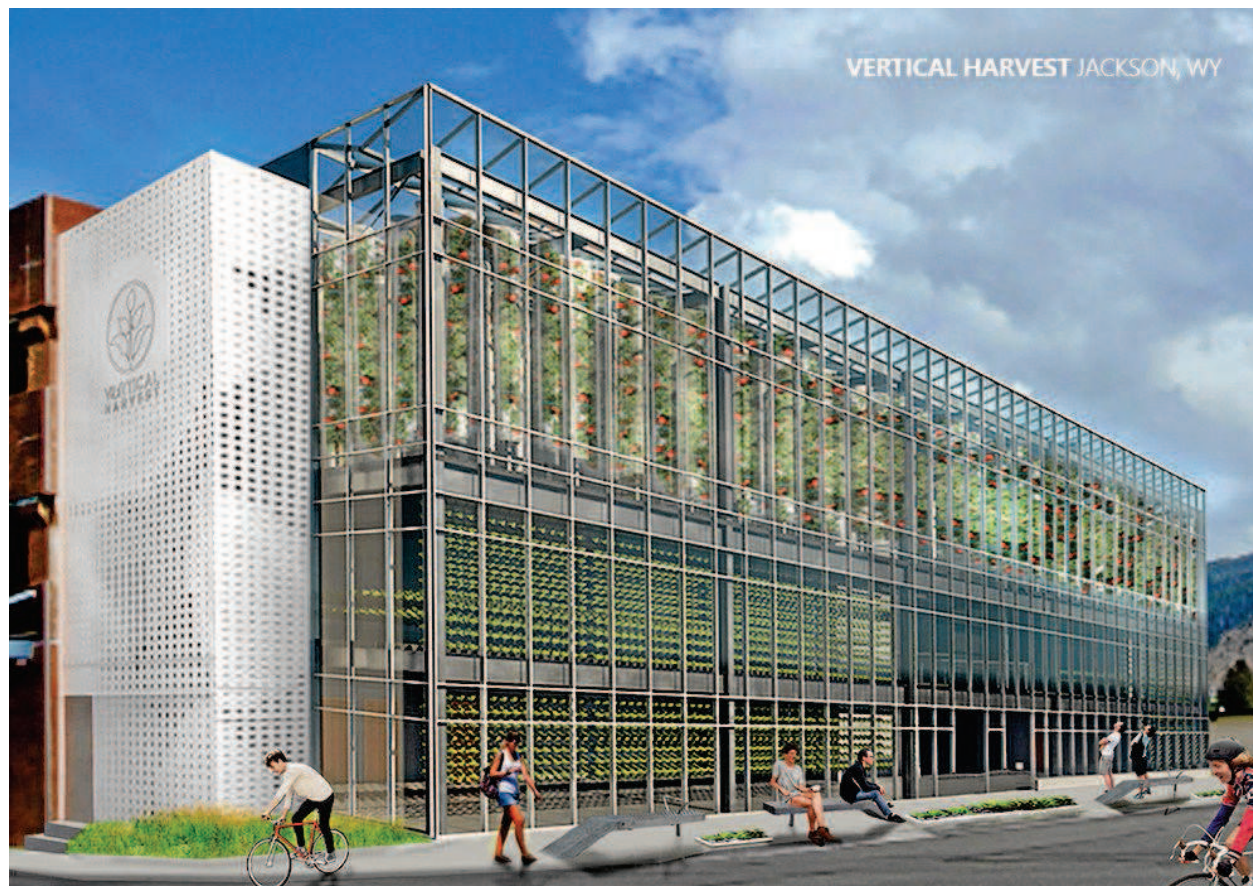
The Wyoming Business Council, the state's economic development agency, has aided that growth through a reimbursable grant designed to help local food advocates advertise and promote their farmers' markets.

Wyoming farmers' markets generate more than \$506,730 in annual sales.

Meanwhile, farmers are finding new ways to reach consumers directly through community-supported agriculture. In the community-supported model, consumers buy subscriptions to farms and farmers deliver weekly boxes of produce to them. Companies like Wyo-Fresh are connecting wide swaths of farmers with buyers throughout central and southeastern Wyoming through online sales.

Other farms, like Evergreen Farm in western Wyoming and Meadow Maid Foods in southeastern Wyoming, target area restaurants and local grocery stores on their own.

"People are more conscious of healthy eating



COURTESY, VERTICAL HARVEST

An artist's rendering shows the Vertical Harvest three-story hydroponic greenhouse built on the side of a parking garage in Jackson.

habits than ever before," said Lisa Johnson, agribusiness director at the Business Council. "Eating local is part of that. Consumers know where and how food was raised, and they develop a relationship with the farmer.

"The Business Council has also supported a number of projects that boost demand for produce from area farmers.

A young Powell entrepreneur, Forrest Smith, built a high school project into an agricultural manufacturer called Gluten Free Oats. The company ships internationally to places like Australia, the United Kingdom and South

America, in addition to wholesalers in the United States.

The Business Council provided \$1.6 million in grants to the city of Powell to help build a mill and warehouse for Gluten Free. An estimated \$1.6 million will be returned to the community for future economic development.

Gluten Free Oats' recent expansion has created increased demand for gluten-free oats raised by area farmers.

"Companies like Gluten Free Oats introduce Wyoming food and products to the rest of the world," said Leah Bruscano, Business Council director of field

operations and Northwest regional director. "That's new money coming into our state's economy. Those exports also represent a new revenue stream for local businesses."

On the other side of the state, Wyoming Malt-ing Company just started construction on a 20,000 square-foot manufacturing and warehousing facility in Pine Bluffs. The Business Council contributed a \$3.4 million grant and loan package to Laramie County for the project. In exchange, Wyoming Malt-ing will create nine jobs. The facility will have the capacity to produce 600,000 pounds of malt a

year from area grain farmers. That product can then be sold to the dozens of brewers and distillers in Wyoming or the hundreds of craft alcohol makers in Colorado.

A portion of the malt will also be used to make the company's own craft whiskey. Waste products can be sold as feed to local farms.

"This is one of those examples of a project taking advantage of multiple strengths in Wyoming's economy. It's agriculture, it's manufacturing, it's adding value to local products" said Heather Tupper, Business Council Southeast regional direc-

tor. "Wyoming Malting touches on many different industries, and it's going to boost businesses in many different regions of the state.

"Most of Wyoming is known for its vast expanses, but there are still some places that find themselves landlocked. Jackson Hole is one of those locations, but entrepreneurs there still saw an opportunity to meet demand for locally-grown produce.

Vertical Harvest is a three-story hydroponic greenhouse occupying 4,500 square feet built on the side of a parking garage in the middle of town. The Business Council supported the project with a \$1.5 million grant to the town of Jackson.

Founders Nona Yehia and Penny McBride said the recently opened operation will produce 20 varieties of fresh food year-round in one of the harshest climates, and highest elevations, in Wyoming. The company already employs 20 workers.

A first-floor market will sell produce, local crafts and art. Most of the produce is already spoken for by local restaurants like Snake River Grill and Café Genevieve, along with grocery stores like Aspens Market and Jackson Whole Grocer and Café.

"Agriculture has always been a vital part of Wyoming's economy," Johnson said. "The new emphasis on eating local food is just an extension of that. It brings money to our farmers, our restaurants and our towns."

Tom Dixon is senior communications specialist for the Wyoming Business Council.

The value of the fair

WYOMING STATE FAIR

After a year of hard work and preparation, the Wyoming State Fair serves as the culminating statewide event for 4H and FFA members across the state. Much like the Wyoming State Science Fair Competition, All State Music Groups, and others, the state fair is the final competitive event for 4H and FFA kids in Wyoming. It is also the only statewide agricultural event that showcases the industry and the work being done on farms and ranches across Wyoming.

A lot of time and hard work by youth who qualify to participate in the state fair goes into the projects they showcase. With a focus on youth competition, the Wyoming State Fair provides a setting to showcase the career skills young people developed working on their projects like time management, organization, responsibility, public speaking, and confidence. The skills these kids develop will not only help them succeed at the

Wyoming State Fair, but in their chosen career and workplace down the road.

Along with this, the Wyoming State Fair fills an important role in the agriculture industry by providing educational opportunities for participants and the general public alike. Sectors of the agriculture industry, such as cattle and hay are major components of the fair and being showcased in August supports the advancement of those, and many other industries.

Even in a more rural state like Wyoming where a large portion of the population still has some connection to agriculture, the general public continues to move further and further away from the industry. The fair is a hands-on and tangible way for the general public to connect with agriculture on a personal level. Consumers can see where their food comes from. Visitors can still see, touch, taste and smell agriculture. They can see a market steer on the hoof and begin to connect the steak on their table with the animal and

the producer who raised it. Visitors can see beautiful fruits and vegetables and crops lined up for display and learn that all of it was grown right in their own backyard. It is an opportunity to showcase Wyoming's agriculture industry to the public and allowing members of the industry to advocate for their own future.

The State Fair is a vital thread in the fabric that makes up Wyoming's culture and heritage. The intrinsic value of the fair to young people, the agriculture industry, and the culture of Wyoming is easy to see even without taking in the significant economic impact of the Wyoming State Fair on Converse County. We encourage you to make the trip to Douglas this year to walk through the barns to visit with some of the great kids who are the future of the agriculture industry in Wyoming, eat some of the great food from our vendors on the Midway, and experience the overall fun of the fair. See you in August!

Cast your vote

WYOMING AG IN THE CLASSROOM

Wyoming Agriculture in the Classroom is celebrating National Agriculture Week by highlighting student creativity and their understanding of Wyoming's resources through the Bookmark Contest. Students from across the state have diligently worked to showcase our resources.

We need your help to select the People's Choice bookmark. Visit www.wyaitec.org and vote for your favorite artwork.

Your participation encourages students to learn more about Wyoming's resources. Make sure to cast your vote by March 24!



COURTESY

2016 bookmark finalist, Madelyn Robertson, from Worland with Gov. Matt and first lady Carol Mead, state superintendent Jillian Balow, Director Doug Miyamoto and supporters.



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Wyoming agricultural producers share soil practices in videos

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING EXTENSION

Farmers and ranchers in five Wyoming counties in a series of videos describe innovative soil practices they say are cost-effective and help maintain profitability.

Producers in Big Horn, Fremont, Goshen, Hot Springs and Washakie counties are featured in the eight videos, "Soil Management on Wyoming Farms and Ranches,"

available at bit.ly/wyomingsoils.

University of Wyoming Extension educator Caitlin Youngquist developed the videos of farmers and ranchers showing practices specific to Wyoming.

They offer a convenient reference for local practices that truly function in Wyoming, said Youngquist, who is based in Washakie County and serves northern Wyoming.

She says the idea was

to answer the questions of what is possible in Wyoming – what people are doing in terms of innovative or interesting soil practices, soil fertility, tillage, cover crops and what people are experimenting with.

"Ag professionals can expand their knowledge because these videos explain current conditions and ways to improve production. Viewers can then spread these new strate-

gies to other growers," noted Youngquist.

According to Youngquist, the UW Extension YouTube channel was created as an in-office field day for extension educators but is now growing into a platform available to all ag professionals, such as farmers and ranchers, agronomists, conservation district members, extension educators and other industry folks.



COURTESY, CAITLIN YOUNGQUIST

Mike Fabrizius of Mile High Ranch in Fremont County and extension educator Caitlin Youngquist examine how organic matter has increased over the years due to Fabrizius' soil management practices.

Wyoming ranchers, state agencies partner to create more value for local beef

TOM DIXON,

Wyoming Business Council

Consumers increasingly want to know where their food came from and how it was produced.

Many Wyoming ranchers and farmers are responding by certifying their operations through third parties so their products can be marketed to these growing niche markets.

The state of Wyoming provides a variety of programs designed to help ease the costs of meeting the higher demands of labels like organic or grass-fed.

A reimbursement program managed by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture assists with up to 75 percent of the inspection and issuance of a certificate to become organic. Without the aid, costs to producers could run into the thousands of dollars, according to department officials.

To date, about 70 farmers, ranchers and proces-

sors are certified organic in Wyoming.

Dr. Robert Taylor is one of those ranchers. For him, the pros of organic ranching ultimately outweigh the cons. Chief among those advantages are the premiums organic producers receive.

"They're in it because it provides greater economic yield than conventional production, because people will pay more for that product," said Taylor, a veterinarian and owner of Lonetree Ranch in southwestern Wyoming. "My calf sales can see a 20 percent premium (over nonorganic)."

United States organic sales have quadrupled in the last decade, to \$39 billion in 2014, according to the Organic Trade Association.

The ability to place an organic label on Wyoming beef is a boon to marketing efforts, ranchers say.

Organic certification comes with third-party verification of how the



COURTESY, WYOMING BUSINESS COUNCIL

The Wyoming Business Council's Wyoming Verified and Wyoming Premium Heifer programs are designed to add value to feeder cattle and replacement calves by ensuring the animals were raised to certain standards that meet the requirements of buyers.

cattle are raised, and that translates into consumer confidence, Glenrock rancher Wendi Lankister explained.

That confidence lends her Bar Double L Beef an edge over its nonorganic competition and opens opportunities to sell to

more wholesalers.

Producers can also find verification programs through the Wyoming Business Council, the state's economic development agency.

The Wyoming Verified and Wyoming Premium Heifer programs are designed to add value to feeder cattle and replacement calves by ensuring the animals were raised to certain standards that meet the requirements of buyers.

"The programs help producers reach out-of-state markets, and certifying heifers provides added value for their cattle," said John Henn, livestock and meat marketing program manager for the Business Council. "Buyers will find some of the best replacement heifers in Wyoming."

Those buyers hail from Texas, Oklahoma, South Dakota and points beyond. The program reassures them the cattle have been managed, vaccinated and bred as advertised.

Wyoming Verified began a decade ago. Last year, 9,760 calves were verified through the program. Premiums amounted to \$200,000 for producers.

The younger Premium Heifer Program sold 595 head of bred heifers in its fourth year. The animals averaged a \$44.57 premium compared to regional sale barn and video sales.

"I see the Premium Heifer Program growing over the next five years, as awareness gets out there to producers," Henn said.

One of the verified beef buyers is David Fales, owner of Wyoming Authentic Products.

Fales founded the Cody-based company after more than 30 years in the food business. His mission was to introduce Wyoming Angus beef to the world. His cattle are fed grass and grain on a Torrington feedlot inspected by the Business Council as part of the agency's age verification

Beef

From 11

program.

Wyoming Authentic Products has used funding support from the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association and grants from the Business Council's Trade Show Incentive Grant program to reach new markets.

Today, Fales sells Wyoming Gourmet Beef in more than 40 states and Canada. The company is also eyeing Japanese markets.

The rapid expansion over the last two years follows Wyoming Authentic Products' move into a new 6,000 square-foot processing facility, partially paid for by a \$1.2 million Business Council grant. Forward Cody, the local economic development group, owns the one-acre lot and building and leases it to the company.

Since the move, Wyoming Authentic Products has created 14 jobs and opened new opportunities for other producers to co-pack products because it is the state's only U.S. Department of Agriculture-inspected facility.

"People value that we're all-natural," Fales said.

The company can trace its steaks, jerky and beef sticks back to the ranches from which the beef came. Wyoming Authentic Products even puts the name of the ranch on every box it ships.

Consumers have shown they are willing to pay more when the beef they buy is proven to have been raised in a healthy, sustainable manner. Partnerships between ranchers and the Business Council are helping Wyoming agriculture rake in additional revenue while meeting those needs.

Tom Dixon is senior communications specialist for the Wyoming Business Council.

Soil health nuggets

There are some amazing things going on underground

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE WYOMING

Nugget 1:

There are more soil microorganisms in a teaspoon of healthy soil than there are people on the Earth!

Millions of species and billions of organisms—bacteria, algae, microscopic insects, earthworms,

Soil health

For more information about soil health, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov.

beetles, ants, mites, fungi and more — represent the greatest concentration of biomass anywhere on the planet! Microbes, which make up only one half of 1 percent of the total soil mass, are the yeasts, algae, protozoa, bacteria, nematodes, and fungi that process organic matter into rich, dark, stable humus in the soil.

Please see **SOIL**, Page 13



COURTESY

Four landowners receive awards for access recognition

WYOMING GAME AND FISH

Landowners from Colony, Jeffrey City, Wheatland and Baggs are recipients of the 2016 Access Recognition Program. The program honors landowners who provide access to or through their lands to hunters and anglers.

Each year, the Wyoming Board of Agriculture, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, and Wyoming Wildlife Foundation partner together to recognize four landowners who contribute significantly to the hunting and fishing tradition of the Cowboy State. In addition to recognition at the winter Stock Growers Association luncheon, each landowner will receive a check for \$2,000. The 2016 recipients were recently recognized and presented their awards at the Wyoming Stock Growers Association awards luncheon in Casper.

Landowners receiving recognition this year are:

The Jensen Ranch

Owned and managed by Thorval and Janet Jensen, the Jensen Ranch is a working cattle ranch near Colony. The Jensen Ranch is located along the Belle Fourche River and is comprised of very productive lands, including ir-



COURTESY

Laramie Regional Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood speaks in Casper.

rigated hay meadows. Each year the Jensens allow access to hunt white-tailed deer, mule deer, and antelope, charging a minor fee to access their lands.

The Graham Family Ranch

Since 1892 the Graham family has lived and ranched near the Sweetwater River northwest of Jeffrey City. The Grahams have always been welcoming of public access, from hunting and fishing to rock collecting and photography. Approximately 1,480 acres of the ranch are enrolled in the Game and Fish's Walk-in Area programs for antelope, deer, elk, and rabbit hunting. They also enrolled their portions of the

Sweetwater River and Long Creek in the fishing walk-in area program, including a small reservoir for fishing. By doing this, the ranch provides year round use for hunting and fishing recreation to sportsmen and women.

The Bard Ranch

The Bard Ranch is an extensive ranch in Platte and Albany Counties, including several discrete parcels and encompasses many acres of deeded land. Ranch Operation Leaders, Amy Miller and her husband Brandin, enrolled 11,670 acres of their property in northern Albany County in the Game and Fish Hunter Management Program. The McFarlane Hunter Management Area provides unlimited permission slips for antlerless elk hunting in Elk Area 7. In 2014, the Millers expanded a walk-in area to include a large pasture, increasing this access to nearly 6,700 acres. The area now includes a large portion of the Goshen Rim and provides much needed access opportunity.

The Weber Ranch

Ray and Kathleen Weber are owners and operators of Weber Ranch, running from the Colorado State line to just south of Interstate 80. Habitat on the

Weber's ranch is diversified from sagebrush grasslands to juniper forests. The ranch also contains riparian wetlands, cottonwood groves, and grass meadows. The Weber partnered with their neighbors, the Bureau of Land Management, the Little Snake River Conservation District, the Army Corp of Engineers and the Game and Fish to create a premier wetlands know as the Muddy Creek Wetlands Project. The Weber property remains open to the public to all sorts of recreational activities, including hunting and fishing, asking only to "close the gates behind you."

Funding for the program is provided by the sale of Commissioner licenses and donations made specifically in support of the award.

Wyoming Game and Fish Project Coordinator Mark Nelson said the Access Recognition Program is a way to show appreciation for landowners who allow sportsmen and women on their property to hunt or fish. "Thanks to these landowners, there are more places for individuals and families to get outside to enjoy the wildlife and hunt and fish in Wyoming, in addition to helping Game and Fish manage the state's wildlife resources," Nelson said.

All in a year's work

Casper Greenhouse Project gets kids playing in the dirt again

TRAVIS GRAY

Students at Evansville Elementary will get the chance to develop their green thumbs when the school holds the grand opening for its new student-run greenhouse on July 19. Students enrolled in the summer school session will be the first to start using the greenhouse, a project two years in the making.

"It's nice because the idea came out of a summer school session two years ago," said current Evansville Elementary Principal Wayne Tuttle. "So this will be our 'soft opening' and a chance to iron out any remaining kinks." Summer school students will be finalizing the drip system and building the remaining planter boxes so that the greenhouse will be in full operation by the start of the school year.

The 1200-square-foot structure, located just north of the school building, is specifically designed for educational purposes and is built to withstand Wyoming's high winds and often extreme weather conditions. The greenhouse features lights, both heating and a cooling wall system for temperature control, indoor and outdoor growing systems, and an aquaponics system wherein the waste produced by fish supplies nutrients for the plants. Future expansions may include a hydroponics system to grow plants without the need for soil, and possibly acquiring additional space for a community garden open to any Evansville resident.

Each grade level at the school will have its own planters so that students and teachers can determine their own levels of involvement.

"I imagine some of the involvement will come from

More information

To learn more about the Casper Community Greenhouse Project, visit www.growcasper.org.

after school activities," Tuttle said, "but our vision is to incorporate it into the curriculum as much as possible. We want kids to understand how food is grown and where their food comes from. We see this as giving them life-long skills, whether it inspires a future career path or just gives them the tools to be weekend gardeners."

"For some students, this may even be better suited to their learning styles than a traditional classroom setting."

Noelle Clark, a third-grade teacher at Evansville Elementary, is excited about the learning opportunities the greenhouse will provide and said they will align well with Common Core State Standards.

"For language arts, students can read informational and procedural texts and apply that knowledge in the garden. Students will be able to write research papers and carry out plant observation logs for writing. Math students can use measurement to plan garden boxes and growth charts," she said. "The greenhouse can be a way to take abstract ideas and make them tangible for students. This will give students a real-world application for why they are learning what they are."

The idea for a community greenhouse was first raised by students in the 2014 summer school session.

Please see **GREENHOUSE**, Page 14

Soil

From 12

Nugget 2

The best soil on most farms is found in the fence row.

These undisturbed remnants of what soil properties were once like is no surprise to farmers who have dug into that soil. It's crumbly, dark, and loose, and it's a model of soil structure and organic matter for farmers who are trying to make their soil healthier.

Nugget 3

Tillage (or plowing) destroys the soil's structure!

Tillage destroys "aggregation" or the soil's structure – the habitat soil microorganisms depend upon to ensure critical soil functions like nutrient cycling. Tillage also reduces organic matter content and increases erosion, which reduces the sustainability of our food production system.

Nugget 4

Tilling the soil up does NOT allow more water to soak into it.

Don't believe it? Fill two containers with untilled and tilled soil and simulate rainfall on them. Watch the water stand on top of the tilled sample, but soak down through the untilled sample. Or, give them the slake test (placing clods of untilled and tilled soils on wire mesh at the top of water filled jars). You'll find if you submerge tilled soil just below the surface it will soon collapse in a heap at the bottom of the jar, but untilled soil will still be intact for the most part even 24 hours later. Tilling soils causes pores to collapse and seal over, causing more rain to runoff than soak in.

Nugget 5

OMG! Organic Matter (half) Gone!

The Morrow Plots on the campus of the University of Illinois indicate soil organic matter content in prairie

grass borders was 5.5 to 6.5 percent in 1876. Less than half of that is left. That's the case with most prairie soils—oxidation of organic matter from tillage for row crops has reduced organic matter levels to between 2 and 3 percent today.

Nugget 6

A farmer's favorite cocktail mix might not be what you think.

Innovative farmers are breathing new life into their soil by seeding a "cocktail mix" of 6-12 plants to get diversity above-ground, which creates much-needed diversity below the ground. Through that diversity, farmers are mimicking the soil-building and microbial-friendly conditions of the diverse native prairies.

Nugget 7

If you want your soil to be healthy, you shouldn't see it very often.

That's because you want that soil to be covered all the time, preferably with living plants. Keeping the soil covered all the time makes perfect sense when you realize that healthy soils are full of life. The microorganisms living in the soil need food and cover to survive – just like other living creatures.

Nugget 8

Roots of some plants can grow 3 feet deep in 60 days!

That's right – roots of daikon type radishes are a biological alternative to deep ripping to alleviate soil compaction. After radishes winter kill the channels created by the roots tend to remain open at the surface, improving infiltration, surface drainage and soil warming. The popular cover crop also is an excellent nitrogen scavenger.

Nugget 9

What did President Thomas Jefferson know that we don't?

More than 200 years ago, Thomas Jefferson, a farmer and conservationist, used vetch, turnips, peas, and clover as cover crops and in rotation. He used these crops on his Virginia plantation to build soil that he knew was being depleted with his tobacco cash crop.

Nugget 10

Multiple "bennies" through multiple species.

The below-ground synergy created by crop rotations and multi-species cover crops can actually accelerate biological time by increasing organic matter, allowing crops to flourish in dry times while monocultures struggle. And as an added bonus, diverse cover crop mixtures work together to crowd out weeds, improve nutrient cycling and reduce plant diseases.



CALEB CARTER
UW Extension Educator,
Goshen County

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ask 
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Trade show incentive grants available from Wyoming Business Council

TOM DIXON,

Wyoming Business Council

The Wyoming Business Council has money available to help businesses attend industry trade shows regionally and nationally.

Trade shows are designed to boost sales, broaden export opportunities and spread brand awareness for small businesses.

The Business Council, the state's economic development agency, helps Wyoming businesses by offering the Trade Show Incentive Grant

to a broad range of qualifying companies. The agency focuses on a core set of advanced industries, including advanced manufacturing, energy and natural resource technologies, information technology and data, research and development, advanced engineering, outdoor products, agricultural technology and food products.

Businesses with products made in Wyoming attended 31 different shows between July 2015 and June 2016. These 27 different Wyoming

More information

To learn more about the grant or to request an application, contact Barr at 307-777-2807 or terri.barr@wyo.gov. Go to <http://bit.ly/1IDF4nb> to see the Trade Show Incentive Grant guidelines.

businesses reported about \$1.37 million in sales with total trade show awards of \$46,000.

Past shows included the Fly Fishing Show in Denver;

ABC Kids Expo in Las Vegas, Nevada; Academy Awards Gift Suite in Los Angeles; Global Pet Show in Orlando; International Sportsmen's Expo in Denver and Scottsdale; Oasis Gift Show in Phoenix; Progreen in Denver; Rocky Mountain Gift Show in Denver; Western Design Show in Jackson; and, ISPO in Munich Germany.

The Trade Show Incentive Grant reimburses companies up to 50 percent of approved expenses to attend a show. Reimbursement options in-

clude event and booth fees, transportation costs and pre-approved event-specific marketing materials. This money is limited.

Registration procedures for trade shows require advance planning by the businesses. The Trade Show Incentive Grant program was designed to be flexible and allow companies the opportunity to apply up to one year prior to the first day of an event and as few as 60 days prior to a show's start.

"This grant is welcomed

support to many Wyoming companies. Some could not attend these shows without this assistance, and they greatly appreciate the opportunity," Business Development Coordinator Terri Barr said. "Applicants attend both wholesale and retail shows. As long as the show has a regional, national or international audience, we will consider the application."

Tom Dixon is senior communications specialist for the Wyoming Business Council.

Greenhouse

From 13

"We were teaching a water conservation unit, and each group of students was tasked with presenting a project to promote water conservation," said Dirk Andrews, an Evansville Elementary primary instructor who led the summer school unit. "A lot of the groups wanted to do a community garden, which didn't necessarily fit with the idea of water conservation. But I was impressed by their enthusiasm, so I encouraged them to research different options and make a presentation to the principal."

Mike Britt, the principal at the time, liked what he heard and wanted to make the students' vision a reality. He and Andrews reached out to Sinclair Oil, a longtime supporter of Evansville Elementary, who provided initial funds to get the ball rolling and who is sponsoring the open house. Britt also coordinated with a private donor whose support allowed Evansville Elementary to purchase the greenhouse kit. A team of volunteers — ranging from teachers and school staff to parents and local businesses — was assembled, and the city of Evansville committed to doing whatever it could to

facilitate the project.

That's when LeAnn Miller, her son Jesse Miller, and the Casper Community Greenhouse Project (CCGP) came on board. "We had previously worked with Mills Elementary, which already had a student-run greenhouse but needed help running and organizing it and was looking for guidance on how to implement it into their curriculum," Jesse said. "The CCGP was able to help with that."

"We were pleased with how successful it was," LeAnn said of the partnership with Mills Elementary. "So we were looking for another school to become involved with when we heard about Evansville Elementary. It was perfect timing."

Volunteers slowly constructed the greenhouse over the course of the next year. The building phase took longer than anyone initially thought, but Tuttle said the project is now on schedule and that the volunteers have remained committed throughout. "We appreciate the passion of everyone involved," Tuttle said. "The kids who have been involved are the most excited. They see the greenhouse but aren't sure how it's going to work yet. Once they have a chance to get in there, I suspect their excitement will continue to grow."

A goal team composed of Evansville teachers will ensure that the greenhouse is used to its fullest potential to benefit students, their families and the Evansville community. But students will be the driving force behind the greenhouse, Andrews said. "The kids will be deciding what to plant, whether that's vegetables and fruits or flowers and plants or a combination of both."

With the construction done, the only future costs should be electricity and water, plus general maintenance. But Andrews said that students will be responsible for the ongoing sustainability of the greenhouse.

"Mills Elementary holds a Mother's Day flower sale each year, which is very successful for them, and we don't want to step on their toes in that regard. But students will look into other sales or maybe a farmers market to help the greenhouse pay for itself," he said. "We're even looking into the idea of establishing a pumpkin patch for Halloween."

Everyone involved said that the benefits of the Evansville Elementary greenhouse will be immeasurable. "Research shows that when a community really 'adopts' a school, as the town of Evansville has done with us, the overall performance of the school

increases," Andrews said. "So this greenhouse will be another way to really help our school and our students."

Clark said she appreciates how the greenhouse will help students, their parents and the overall community alike. "Students will develop a healthier relationship with food and activity and learn the value in hard work and commitment. They will become vested in their community and deepen their understanding of their role in the environment, making them global stewards. Parents will get the satisfaction of volunteering and hopefully some free food. And the community will have volunteer opportunities and the benefits of neighborhood children who have something and somewhere constructive to spend their time," she said.

LeAnn Miller echoed that sentiment, saying that communities become healthier and more engaged when they rally around community gardening. "Mills Elementary is a prime example," she said. "The kids got ecstatic and really got into the fundraising and then selling their flowers and produce. It's become so engrained in their curriculum that when they began discussing the construction of a new elementary school, everyone agreed that the plans had to include a greenhouse."

Furthermore, she said

she has seen students adopt healthier eating habits of their own volition. "We've seen students saying, 'Oh, we would rather have carrots than sugar' and 'Don't send us chocolate milk anymore.' And healthier communities is really our goal, so we'd love to see more people with greenhouses and buying locally grown foods." She said the CCGP is committed to making this happen. "Wyoming is unique in that we've got rural communities that have lots of producers but not always the market for their goods, and then we have towns and communities that have the markets but not the producers. So we want to connect the two together."

Though he has stepped down from the CCGP board to finish up his medical degree, Jesse Miller plans to continue his involvement with bringing more greenhouses to schools in Casper and eventually throughout the state. "Our goal is to build experiential learning facilities for children — something beyond reading about it in a book," he said. "We want to give kids tangible experience with growing things and nutrition and even entrepreneurship. You know, I've read about students who don't know where food actually comes from; they think it just comes from a store or a box.

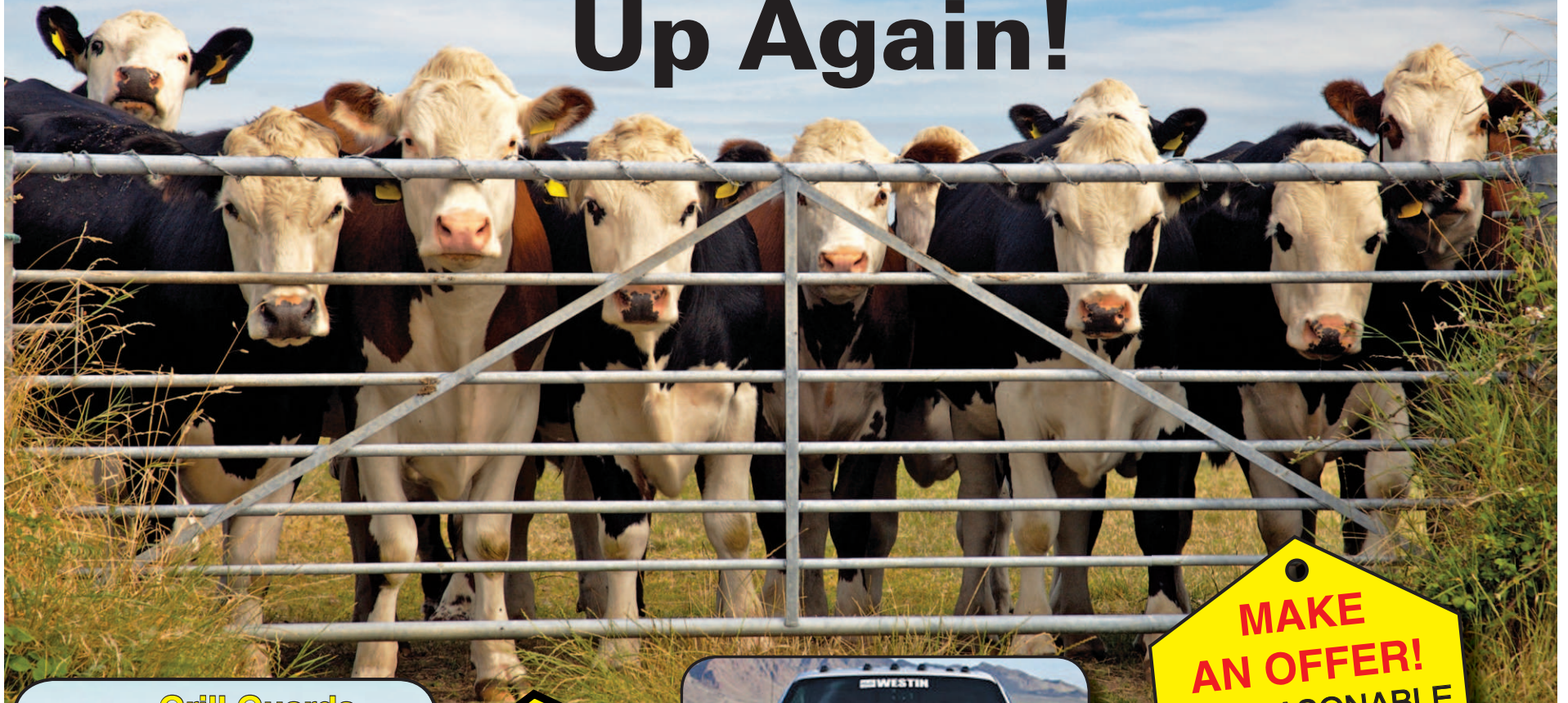
We want them to understand the process and become a part of it and take ownership of it."

He added that he has seen community gardens change the dynamic of families who participate in them. "Initially, people are kind of skeptical. They aren't sure how it's going to work or what impact it will have on their families. But we know that parents usually make decisions based on what's in the best interest of their children, so when the kids are going home and saying 'We want more vegetables,' the parents become very interested and supportive."

Frontier Middle School is the next school with plans to develop a greenhouse, and Grant Elementary has also expressed interest. Other schools and communities will likely join in as they see the results. "This is a real trend," Andrews said. "If we can change how people think about food, and if we can change some of the state policies so that more people have access to locally grown goods, everyone will benefit."

"Greenhouses offer so many opportunities for learning, whether that is math or writing or science," LeAnn Miller said. "Plus, they have shown that digging in the dirt has antidepressant qualities. And who doesn't want that? Let's get kids digging in the dirt!"

"Oh No! They're Gearing Up Again!"



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New export training open to Wyoming entrepreneurs

TOM DIXON,

Wyoming Business Council

A stone cistern and evidence of a potato cellar are all that remain of the Fales homestead near Deaver.

David Fales frequently walks the 87 acres his great-grandparents once called home. Heart Mountain dominates the landscape to the east. Sometimes, he comes across rusty old tools his ancestors used to work the land a century ago.

The Fales family came from Missouri on the heels of the Buffalo Bill Dam project, which opened this part of northwest Wyoming to farming and ranching.

"They came out here with nothing. No roads, no telephones," Fales said. "Nothing but a patch of land, and they had to build it all from scratch."

Fales sat in his office about an hour from the old homestead on a January day. Outside, a foot of snow blanketed the parking lot, reminding him of pre-dawn days spent cracking the ice in the cows' water trough so the animals could drink.

Family history is paramount to this son of a rancher. From a young age, he dreamed of working with Wyoming Angus beef. Today, he is on a mission to introduce the state's high-quality meat to the world.

Fales has also built a livelihood from scratch. Cody-based Wyoming Authentic Products, the state's only U.S. Department of Agriculture-approved beef processing facility, produces many beef products, including the 1.3 million beef sticks made in 2016.

Since July 2015, many of those beef sticks have made their way to Canada. Hundreds of health food stores in Vancouver, Toronto, Nova Scotia, Hali-

More information

For more information, visit <http://www.wyomingbusiness.org/step>.

fax and Calgary are home to packaging bearing the iconic Wyoming bucking horse and rider symbol, with wording in both English and French.

The exports are a boon to Wyoming, pumping outside money into local circulation. State economic experts have worked hard to help more companies achieve the kind of success Wyoming Authentic Products is enjoying, and now those officials have a new tool in their belt.

The Wyoming Business Council, the state's economic development agency, recently received a \$158,000 State Trade and Expansion Program (STEP) grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration. The federally-funded initiative aims to introduce business owners to exporting so they can expand into new markets and increase foreign direct investment in the state.

The program began with a free webinar in January for interested entrepreneurs. The educational series continues at 2 p.m. on Feb. 15 when trade show expert Russell Hood explains how to make the most of limited money and time to have a productive international trade show experience.

Trade shows have been lucrative for companies like Wyoming Authentic Products.

"Taiwan, Japan, Belgium, Denmark, all over the world there is interest in what we are doing," Fales said. "It's just a matter of time and capital, as any small busi-



PHOTOS COURTESY, WYOMING BUSINESS COUNCIL

GF Harvest co-founder Forrest Smith stocks his products on the shelves of Mr. D's Foods in Powell.

ness knows, to make that a reality."

The Business Council understands the challenges small businesses face. That's why the agency offers trade show incentive grants to help companies pay up to half their expenses to attend trade shows. Another program provides local public organizations with money to help build infrastructure like streets, sewer and buildings. The organization can then lease that property to businesses like Wyoming Authentic Products.

"The \$1.2 million grant to the city of Cody was essential for us to get where we are today," Fales said. "The key was building a U.S. Department of Agriculture certified plant."

Thanks to the new facility, Wyoming Authentic Products can manufacture beef sticks, jerky and other products, which add value to meat trimmings otherwise destined to be sold as hamburger for far less money.

The process gives dozens of Wyoming ranchers a new market for their beef. It also turns raw natural resources into new products with better profits.

The business has an an-

nual payroll of \$547,000 and employs 20 people.

Wyoming Authentic Products' path resembles that taken by another company in the region. Powell-based GF Harvest uses Wyoming-grown oats to make more valuable gluten-free products like granola and oatmeal.

GF Harvest also has its origins in family values.

Smith is a celiac. It means his body mistakenly attacks a certain protein found in wheat, rye and barley, which makes him sick. His mom has it. So does his dad, and his grandmother.

A high school project to start his own business flourished into what is today a factory employing 18 people.

Growing up, Smith remembers shopping trips taking hours. Every time a new product hit the shelf, or an old product was revamped, the family would take down a phone number on the back of the box and call to find out what ingredients were used and how the food was processed.

He personally inspects every step of his process to ensure other families don't have those concerns when buying his products.

It starts in the mill before



Powell-based GF Harvest uses Wyoming-grown oats to make gluten-free products like granola and oatmeal.

the sun rises. Smith and a crowd of seasonal employees gather to discuss the morning's duties. They carpool to one of the farmers who grows crops for GF Harvest. Nearly all of the company's product is grown within 40 miles of Powell.

The workers begin walking the field at sunrise because the golden rays of early morning light glint off barley and other invading crops, making them shine like fiberoptic cables amid the oats. It makes it easier for Smith and his employees to root out the offending plants.

"From planting to packaging, we control what is in our oats. I give seeds to the growers, I'm inspecting the fields, I pull out the bad plants, I check the truck before it unloads in our facility, I check the storage," Smith said. "Everything is dedicated gluten free."

The extensive process means GF Harvest is twice as stringent as federal guidelines dictate for gluten-free food.

Wholesalers internationally have taken notice. The company has exported to Australia, Scotland and England and is currently working to send product to Canada.

"As we grew, I realized we needed more expertise and resources to learn about equipment, about paperwork, so we reached out to the Wyoming Business Council and other state groups to find out how to export."

The Business Council helped send GF Harvest to Natural Products Expo West in California, one of the country's largest agriculture trade shows. There, Smith and his family met interested wholesalers.

The agency also connected the business with organizations like the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association, which could help pay for some of the costs associated with exporting.

"Exporting brings new money into our area, and that's good for everybody here," Smith said. "We add value to the crops our neighbors grow and create demand for Wyoming products all around the world."

State officials hope to attract about 35 firms like GF Harvest and Wyoming Authentic Products to the free webinars on exporting. Companies interested

Please see **TRAINING**, Page 18

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Training

From 16

in taking the next step after listening to those classes can receive mentorship in creating export plans during a three-month education session.

The STEP grant provides the Business Council with money to send businesses to targeted international trade shows in the mining, outdoor and firearms industries.

The Business Council's goal is to double export sales for companies participating in these shows.

Another facet of the STEP grant will be the International Trade Show Incentive Grant. Participating businesses can receive up to \$3,500 in reimbursements for travel to international expos designed to increase exposure and sales.

The STEP grant will also fund a trade mission to the Pacific Rim specifically to help agricultural producers increase export sales by holding personal meetings with international buyers.

Exports are a key driver of any economy because they bring outside money into local circulation. Wyoming's export market is small, but growing fast. International trade in Wyoming grew 19.4 percent from 2010 to 2015, according to the International Trade Administration. Wyoming businesses now sell about \$1.2 billion in exports in 2015.

Exports feature prominently in the Business Council's strategy to grow Wyoming's economy. The agency intends to double foreign direct investment and increase the state's exports by 50 percent.

Business Council staff will accomplish those goals, in part, by coordinating and developing foreign trade efforts like those planned under the STEP grant.

Tom Dixon is senior communications specialist for the Wyoming Business Council.

Conservation assistance just a click away

Online access now available to LLCs

BRENDA LING,
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service Wyoming

Remember the time you had to drive to your local NRCS office to sign some paperwork? Sure, you probably still had to run into town anyway. However, as a busy rancher and/or farmer, you have many things that need to get done and you only have so many hours in a day.

NRCS offers Conservation Client Gateway, a secure website that allows you to request assistance, sign documents and interact with field staff online. This service is available not only to agricultural producers but also to business entities, such as LLCs.

Questions?

Visit with your local district conservationist or go online: www.nrcs.usda.gov/client-gateway.

With Conservation Client Gateway, you can:

- Request conservation technical assistance;
- Apply for financial assistance through the Farm Bill's conservation programs;
- Review and sign conservation plans and other documents;
- Document completed practices and request practice certification;
- Request and track payments for completed contract items;
- Store and retrieve your conservation files, including documents and photographs.

This is available 24 hours



a day, seven days a week. All the information you need will be at your fingertips.

NRCS field staff will still come out to your operation and provide one-on-one personal assistance with

conservation planning and delivery.

Using Conservation Client Gateway is voluntary. You are free to continue working with NRCS as you always have. This online

tool allows you to have more options.

Brenda Ling is public affairs specialist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Wyoming.

Landowners recognized for conservation work

WYOMING GAME AND FISH

Six landowners from across the state were recognized for outstanding practices in wildlife management, habitat improvement, access for hunters and anglers and conservation techniques on their properties with the 2015 Landowner of the Year Award.

Each year the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission and Wyoming Wildlife Foundation partner to acknowledge Wyoming landowners' conservation efforts. These landowners also cooperate with Game and Fish to provide access to hunters and anglers on their properties. Award recipients are nominated by Game and Fish employees and selected by the regional leadership teams as model citizens for the conser-

vation, ethical use and stewardship of Wyoming's natural resources.

Wyoming Game and Fish Director Scott Talbott said the Landowner of the Year award is a way to acknowledge the work landowners put forth for conservation. "Today's landowners are more than ranchers or farmers; they are key partners with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in carrying out the Game and Fish mission of Conserving Wildlife - Serving People."

Landowners receiving recognition this year are:

- The Garrett Family, Garrett Ranch (Casper Region)
- Tim and Tina Delaney, Rolling Thunder and Rim Ranches (Pinedale Region)
- Merlyn and Virginia Ballinger, Ballinger Rock-



COURTESY

Bitterroot on Ballinger Wilderness Retreat, Cody

- ing R Ranch (Cody Region)
- Todd and Darcy Kaisler, Kaisler Cattle (Green River Region)
- George and Susan Williams and Christopher

- and Kate Williams, ZN Ranch (Laramie Region)
- Carol Holding, Kathleen Holding and Ron Hossfeld, Sunlight Ranch Company (Sheridan Re-

gion)
For more information on the landowners and past winners, visit the Game and Fish Landowner of the Year award webpage.

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14' \$115⁹⁹ 7724792
16' \$127⁹⁹ 7724800



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