

Wheat Growers head makes cooperation work

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Working together. That’s something that is often hard to do for farm organizations as they compete for scarce resources in Washington, for example.

Yet according to one national agricultural leader, working together can sometimes help those organizations accomplish even more. This national leader is making cooperation among farm organizations a priority, just as he has practiced back in his home state of Kansas.

Jerry McReynolds, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, comes from rural Kansas, where he grows wheat, sorghum for grain and forage, corn and soybeans and has a commercial cow herd. His farm is south of Woodston, population 114 people.

Jerry graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in agricultural economics and was a member of the very first Kansas Agricultural and Rural Leadership class. He joined the Kansas Association

of Wheat Growers and worked his way up.

“One time, Sen. Pat Roberts really challenged us,” McReynolds said. “He was speaking at a meeting several years ago and pointed out that Kansas is a big contributor to the national wheat organizations because of our large production, but we hadn’t had a national president ... in many years. So he encouraged us to get involved and become national officers. I thought to myself, ‘Well, he’s right. Somebody ought to do that.’”

At the time, he didn’t realize that he would become that somebody.

McReynolds said he got involved on committees, was asked to serve as president of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, and eventually, to serve as national president.

“I never felt I had the time, but I’m concerned about policy issues and the future of our profession,” McReynolds said.

In March 2010, he became president of the national association. One of his recent predecessors was Kansas’ John Thaumert, who also took up the challenge from Sen. Roberts.

In Kansas, McReynolds was involved in the pro-

cess that culminated in Kansas Wheat, an innovative operations and staffing arrangement between the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers and the Kansas Wheat Commission.

McReynolds said believes in cooperation among farm organizations where possible and is drawing on his experience in his home state. When he was president of the Kansas association, he said, many organizations were gearing up for the 2008 Farm Bill. He led the effort to create a Farm Bill Coalition from every commodity group and general farm organization he could get to participate. They identified policy statements on issues where all the organizations could agree.

“If anybody had disagreement with a position, we wouldn’t go there,” McReynolds said.

A neutral moderator launched their discussion, and the organizations took turns providing the chairman for each meeting so that no one group would dominate. They found a surprisingly high level of agreement.

“We agreed on 34 statements of policy, and then we shared those with the Kansas Congressional delegation and others on the Hill,” McReynolds said. “I

think they were impressed that we could come with some unified issues.

“We’re not going to agree on everything. We’re working hard for wheat growers’ best interest, but in doing so, we find we can agree with other commodity organizations more than we disagree.”

Now at the national level, McReynolds is again working to create a dialogue with other grower groups.

“We’ve met with representatives of corn, soybeans, grain sorghum, cotton, peanuts, and rice,” McReynolds said. “We’re making an effort to build relationships so we can pull together on this farm bill. We hope to work together for all of agriculture.”

“It’s not about me,” McReynolds said. “It’s about the organization and how we can contribute to make things better.”

Working together. That’s not always easy for farm organizations in a time of scarce resources, but this national ag leader from Kansas is making cooperation a priority. We salute Jerry McReynolds for making a difference by finding ways for farm organizations to arrive at common ground.

Oldest worker to be recognized

Nominations for America’s Outstanding Oldest Worker for 2011 will be accepted until April 15.

Nominees must be at least 100 years of age, currently employed, working at least 20 hours each week for pay and involved in the community. Information and nomination forms are available at www.experienceworks.org.

Last year’s honorees were 104-year-old Emilio Navarro of Ponce, Puerto Rico, and 101-year-old Sally Gordon of Lincoln, Neb.

The last surviving member of the Negro American League, Mr. Navarro is considered the world’s oldest former baseball player, softball player and coach. Known as “Millito,” he has been inducted in the Puerto Rican Baseball Hall of Fame and the Puerto Rican Sports Hall of Fame.

He works as comptroller for a company he founded that his baseball career which distributes

gaming machines.

The first female sergeant-at-arms for Nebraska, Ms. Gordon continues to serve the state’s legislators. With an employment history that spans 84 years, she has worked for three of Nebraska’s governors and several other government agencies. Her experience also includes court reporting, advertising, retail work and professional modeling – a career she began at age 56.

Sponsored by Experience Works, the search is to raise awareness about the contributions older individuals make and to break down barriers to employment.

Experience Works operates the Senior Community Service Employment Program to provide opportunities for low-income older workers.

Formerly known as Green Thumb, it is a national nonprofit organization. For information visit www.experienceworks.org.

On the Beat

COLBY POLICE
Monday
12:20 a.m. – Walk through at Walmart.
9:51 a.m. – Water tower spray painted in the 700 block of E. College Drive.
5:07 p.m. – Assisted subject at 210 N. Country Club.
9:26 p.m. – Accident at Walmart.
Tuesday
12:43 a.m. – Garage door open, owner contacted.
3:17 a.m. – Check at Walmart.
10:06 a.m. – Welfare check. Made contact, all OK.
10:15 a.m. – Accident in the 200 block of N. Franklin.
10:26 a.m. – Supplemental report filed: gun stolen in 1979 recovered in Texas.
10:03 p.m. – Motorist assistance at Walmart.
THOMAS COUNTY SHERIFF
Tuesday
2:10 a.m. – Booked Jason W. Dodson.
10:13 a.m. – Walk through at Rexford School.
10:03 p.m. – Helped police with motorist assist at Walmart.

Centenarian delivers meals

CHRISTINE SHOW
Orlando Sentinel

CLERMONT, Fla. (AP) — When Irene Johnston turned 100 in January, she knew Meals on Wheels would remain a regular part of her life, as it has for years.

But Johnston, a Clermont resident with a sharp memory who appears decades younger, isn’t the one on the receiving end. Instead, she’s the one delivering hot meals, generally a meat-and-potatoes style meal with greens and a dessert, to seniors 40 years her junior who have trouble leaving home.

“I love it,” Johnston said about bonding with the people she encounters who don’t realize how old she is. “There’s one little lady. She got a card from one of her children. She got a picture, and she showed it to me and she said, ‘Honey, when you get as old as I am, you’ll have pictures like that to look at.’”

Like Johnston, many Meals on Wheels deliverers are as old or older than the people with limited mobility they serve in a program that feeds about 1 million people nationwide and is expected to be even more in demand as baby boomers age. Young people also volunteer on occasion, such as a teenage deliveryperson with the Osceola County Council on Aging.

Still, retirees account for the majority of volunteers because of the

commitment and timing involved in serving meals. Most programs, which receive funding from donations and government grants, hand out meals Monday through Friday mornings. That makes it difficult for people who work or go to school to volunteer. For example, a Meals on Wheels program organized for Orange County residents by the organization Seniors First depends on 350 deliverypeople most in their mid-60s to provide 1,000 meals a day as the call for the meals continues to soar.

The same can be said for other Meals on Wheels programs across Central Florida, where hundreds of people are on waiting lists for meals.

“The need has just grown exponentially,” said Sherry Fincher, executive director for Meals on Wheels, Etc., which serves Seminole County. “It’s just awful.”

The age range for volunteers in the Seminole program, based in Sanford, is evolving as the group seeks to work with corporations to engage employees of all ages to participate.

“That area has grown over the years,” Fincher said.

It’s a special treat for seniors who receive meals to be greeted by a young person, said Wilda Belisle, who directs the Meals on Wheels program run by the Osceola County Council on Aging.

“The seniors love the young people,” Belisle said. “It’s the

grandkids they don’t get to see.”

She said the Osceola program has a number of young volunteers. One is 17-year-old Ian Valentin, who volunteers every weekday.

“Some of the senior citizens, they tell us stories of what they’ve done in the past and what they did for their life,” said Ian, an 11th-grade student from Kissimmee. “It’s really interesting. It’s a learning experience.”

Logan Goulett, marketing coordinator for the Meals on Wheels Association of America, said volunteers often form a bond with those they serve.

“They really create a close connection with them,” Goulett said.

Johnston, who spent most of her life in Davenport, Iowa, and moved to Lake County in 2003, said it can be tough to lose friends she has made through the program.

“You come in some mornings and they’re gone or passed away,” said Johnston on a recent morning as she delivered a meal of spaghetti and meatballs, green beans, bread and chocolate cake to 86-year-old Dot Huber of Clermont.

Johnston, a widow with three daughters, said she hopes to continue volunteering for years to come and keeping up a youthful lifestyle that includes having pizza and a beer every Saturday night, doing her own housework and serving the community around her.

Snow shapes depend on temperature

As the state climatologist for Kansas, Mary Knapp fields questions about the weather, such as: “Can you describe how snowflakes vary depending on temperature and humidity?”

“To answer this, we must first distinguish between snow crystals and snowflakes,” said Knapp, who runs the Kansas Weather Data Library at Kansas State University. “Snow crystals are the basic shapes. The snowflakes that we’re most familiar with are generally made of several snow crystals clumped together.”

All snow crystals have a hexagonal or six-sided shape. This is caused by the way the two hydrogen molecules combine with one oxygen molecule to form water, she said.

In general, she said, the forms of snow crystals are: thin plates at 32 to 25 degrees, needles at 25 to 21, hollow columns at 21 to 14, sector plates at 14 to 10 and dendrites at 10 to 3.

Snowflakes, on the other hand, rarely come in a single form, Knapp said. For example, hollow columns may combine with plates at one or both ends. These infinite possibilities lead to the saying that “no two snowflakes are alike.”

Information about Kansas weather is available on the Weather Data Library website: www.ksre.ksu.edu/wdl/. “Weather Wonders” audio reports are available on the K-State Research and Extension News Media website at www.ksre.ksu.edu/news/.



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