

Mason Blickenstaff will be among those welcoming visitors to WIU



College with my Associates I had no idea what I wanted to do, so I just started working. I found myself working 14 months for the Illinois Department of Corrections, before I realized how much I missed being outside around agriculture and working with my hands," he said,

That is when he decided to go back to school and get his Bachelors degree.

"While at Western I have been blessed with an amazing experience and have had the pleasure of studying under some amazing professors," Blickenstaff said.

"Western isn't your typical D-1 University. There are small classroom sizes where you are encouraged to interact and participate in class," he said.

Blickenstaff noted that the professors in the Ag department, including Ag Instructor Mrs. Knupp and Agronomy Professor Dr. Bernards genuinely care, not only about their students, but doing everything they can to challenge them and push them so that they can be successful long after graduation.

"Their passion and commitment is what has made my experience here so memorable and has made me fall in love with the Ag department here," Blickenstaff said.

He added that it was that passion and commitment that led him to join the Ag Vocators.

"I thought to myself, that if I could just

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reach out, to even one prospective student and get them to come to Western and experience what I have, then that would make my heart happy.

"I simply wanted to share my love and my passion for this Ag program to show others that even though me way be small, we have one of the best ag programs around."

During the upcoming open house Blickenstaff's duties will include cooking

and bringing breakfast for his fellow AgVocators prior to the open house, then, along with two other Agronomy students, he will be giving greenhouse tours at the livestock center.

"We will be showing students our different undergrad research projects and going over the different hands-on opportunities students will receive, if they choose to attend WIU," he said.

Mason Blickenstaff is a Senior at Western Illinois University and will be among the School of Agriculture representatives who will be welcoming prospective students to the department Open House on March 20 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Blickenstaff will be graduating this coming May with a Bachelors in agricultural Science, with an emphasis in Agronomy.

He is a 2013 graduate from Astoria.

"I am not the typical college student and didn't take the traditional route," he said.

"After graduating from Spoon River



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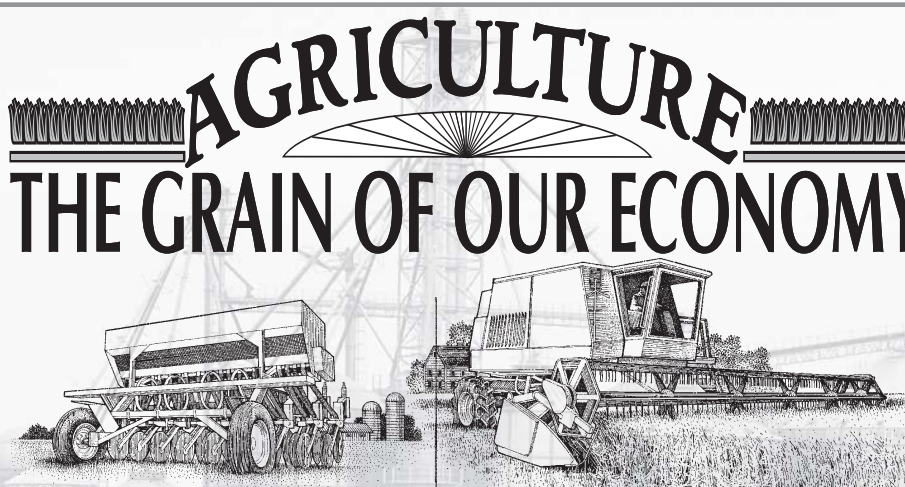
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