



CABOT CORPORATION'S Tuscola site provided a \$1,000 donation to the Douglas County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff Department and Cabot Corporation are partnering to provide materials (swag) to kids of all ages at events throughout Douglas County such as "Touch the Truck," "Kid Sheriff for a day," local fairs, playing basketball in the park, participating in the Special Olympics Torch Run, and many more positive interactions throughout the County. Don Eisenmenger, Air Force veteran and Cabot WPS operator, left, presented the donation on behalf of Cabot to Sheriff Nate Chaplin. Submitted photo.

Illinois farmer to ag lawmakers: Farm credit reforms needed for beginning producers

By Timothy Eggert
FarmWeek

One of Adam Brown's most painful financial decisions was selling the first tractor his father rode.

"While that was a difficult and emotional step to take, the survival of my farm for the next generation is my top priority, just like it was for the generation that passed it on to me," Brown told federal lawmakers July 14, his voice cracking.

But trading the 1950 Ford Ferguson T20 for cash was not enough.

"I still needed some help to keep things running and the loan programs that were available for young, beginning and underserved producers came through for me in one of the most difficult and stressful times of my life," he said.

Brown, who grows corn and soybeans in Macon County, testified before the U.S. House Ag Committee on behalf of Illinois Farm Bureau. He was one of five panelists advocating for reforms to the credit title of the 2023 farm bill.

Brown recounted his difficult experiences navigating the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Direct Farm Ownership Joint Financing Loan and Marketing Assistance Loan programs and the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), in which he enrolled to finance buying out other heirs to his late grandfather's farm estate.

While Brown was able to acquire some land through

the lending programs, he still faced the "inefficiencies of government that oftentimes prevent new and beginning farmers from gaining access to the programs they need to stay afloat until they have their feet under them."

When lawmakers rewrite the farm bill credit title, Brown said, they should ensure everyone who could qualify for a federal farm loan has equal access to it, and that farm operating and farm ownership loan limits keep pace with surging input and land costs.

Brown also said USDA should revise and align its definition of a beginning farmer and rancher and better communicate and educate farmers on ag lending programs.

Nathan Kauffman, Kansas Federal Reserve Bank vice president, said those changes will be vital as farm loan interest rates continue to increase, as demand for farm loans are expected to "rise notably" and as capital spending is expected to decline for the first time since 2020.

"Some producers may face more substantial credit challenges than others," Kauffman said. "While the strength of farm income these past two years is likely to sustain credit conditions in agriculture for some time, some borrowers may face heightened financial stress in the year ahead if costs continue to rise, and commodity prices ease further."

Many members of the committee echoed the reforms offered by Brown, including U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Taylor-

ville, who said limiting access to ag lending entities like the Farm Credit System "will only discourage individuals ... from seeking careers in farming and agriculture."

Brown agreed, noting about 35% of new operating and real estate notes that come to Farm Credit Illinois are from young, beginning and small farmers.

Despite receiving initial financing, those evergreen farmers are forced to seek more loans to keep growing and to remain competitive with other, larger farms, Brown said. But because they are new to the industry, those farmers don't have the production or credit history required by FSA to qualify for a lending program.

That cycle has hit even harder with soaring fertilizer, equipment and land costs — some Illinois ag land sells for \$20,000 per acre and cash rents keeping rising — Brown said, telling the panel that loan limits and caps on operation notes should be increased in the upcoming legislation.

"And I would ask that we have predictability going into the next farm bill," Brown said. "We have so much volatility throughout my operation, throughout the ag economy. If we know what we're dealing with we can better shape (our operations) ...we can plan better, and that provides us peace of mind."

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

Illini Prairie CEO welcomes new Howrey as co-facilitator

The organization, Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) is announced Mick Howrey as the new co-facilitator of Illini Prairie CEO. Howrey joins Hannah Myers, who is in her second year as co-facilitator for the program.

Howrey is from the east central Illinois area and has had a long and varied business career while also dedicating over 14 years to the college classroom. Howrey has both a bachelor's and a master's degree. He is the proud father of one, Jim, an executive at Wells Fargo. Jim's family is made up of Christina, a consultant and Michael, who will be starting his senior year at the University of Missouri in August. Mick is an active volunteer in numerous civic and social organizations.

The CEO program is an accredited entrepreneurship education course available to high school juniors and seniors from Arcola, ALAH (Arthur/Lovington/Atwood/Hammond), Sullivan and Tuscola. The class is never held in school; rather, participants meet at 7:30 a.m. five days a week for 90 minutes in local businesses.

Throughout the school year, the CEO program takes students out of the classroom and



Howrey



Myers

into local businesses, allowing them to meet with community leaders, exposing them to over 100 guest speakers, and providing them with mentors who coach them through the process of starting and running a business.

The role of the CEO co-facilitator in the program is to facilitate the learning environment that these young people experience and collaborate with the local board to ensure program essentials are being met.

The facilitators encourage program participants to explore, discover and push themselves through the real-world learning activities they are exposed to. Asking questions, supporting curios-

ity, and encouraging problem solving are at the core of the role as they provide guidance through each participant's CEO journey.

The facilitators must also demonstrate a passion for learning and possess an ability to connect with the high-school-aged participants, as well as the community.

Howrey recently completed his facilitator training provided by the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship, the provider of the CEO Program nationwide, in advance of the 2022-2023 program year.

For more information about the local CEO Program, visit our local CEO Program website www.illiniprairieceo.com.

IFB President: Agriculture, transportation sectors face similar challenges across the country

By Richard Guebert, Jr.
Illinois Farm Bureau President

American farmers continue to see slimmer margins after three years of pandemic-induced shipping delays and supply chain disruptions. And high fuel prices caused in part by the war in Ukraine have only squeezed margins tighter.

During a July trip to Savannah, Georgia, the Illinois Farm Bureau Board of Directors toured shipping terminals in the third busiest port in the country to learn more about major barriers affecting the transportation sector. We also visited with area farmers about challenges they're facing.

Transportation costs, labor shortages impact trade

The Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) operates the country's largest single-terminal container facility of its kind in Savannah. Merchandise containers from China and other parts of Asia travel through the port's deep-water terminals, where shipments are distributed by rail and truck to the south, Midwest and north-eastern parts of the country.

It's estimated that nearly 45% of the U.S. population can be served by rail from the port at Savannah but that requires area facilities to work at full capacity.

We met with GPA staff to tour the Garden City Terminal and Ocean Terminal to find out how a backlog of materials has impacted transportation com-

ing and going from the port.

Like many American ports, shortages of truck drivers and chassis (the base frame of a motor vehicle), along with general workforce and warehouse shortages, have stunted growth opportunities for the Savannah location.

To alleviate some of the mounting pressures on the transportation sector, GPA is investing \$4.5 billion to increase port capacity by a third. New warehouses are also being built within 30 miles of the shipping center to create a resting spot for materials waiting to be trucked to other locations.

Urban sprawl impacts rural areas, decreases cropland

Of the 10.7 million people who live in Georgia, nearly 60% live in the Atlanta metro area. To support urban communities, new warehouse developments continue to take farmland out of production.

Pete Waller, owner and operator of Ottawa Farms in Bloomingdale, invites visitors to his agritourism operation to pick blueberries, strawberries and blackberries each year. He told the IFB Board his farm looks different today than it did when

it started in 1870, largely due to area development.

Waller has already sold acreage for one warehouse and has committed to sell more for additional warehouses in the future. His farm is one of only two remaining farms in Chatham County, near Savannah.

Just like in Georgia, we see an urban-rural divide in Illinois.

While infrastructure investment is important, and supported by IFB policy, our organization also aims to protect landowner rights and the preservation of farmland for future generations. This trip offered an opportunity for IFB Board members to see both sides of the issues surrounding ag trade in the U.S.

No one solution will work to solve the many obstacles Illinois farmers face, but there is value in having these conversations with people across state lines. Growth creates new challenges, but the hope is that a balanced approach can move the farming and transportation industries forward.

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BRIEFS

Tourism grants announced

Gov. JB Pritzker's office announced Friday that \$10 million in funding is being awarded for tourism projects throughout the state. The funds come from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Trickle down are two grants in Douglas County — one for \$184,000 for Aikman's Wildlife Adventure and one for \$305,000 for the Illinois Amish Heritage Center between Arthur and Arcola.

Tractor pull Aug. 12

The ITPA Tractor and Truck Pull will be held on Friday, Aug. 12, at the fairgrounds in Arthur. The pull will begin at 6 p.m. with Classics, 6,850 Pro Farm, Pro Stock Diesel trucks,

9,500 Limited Pro Stock, Pro Stock, and 11,000 Pro Farm. The Arthur-Atwood Lions Club is sponsoring the event.

Rodeo Aug. 12

The Fairgrounds in Arthur is the site for a rodeo Aug. 20. Join the wrestling and racing along with barrel rolls and roping. See the ad on the back page of this section.

Evening out on the county line

Six stores on the county line are staying open late Wednesday, Aug. 1. There will be prizes and specials throughout the evening. See the ads on the front page of this section.

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