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by Larry A. Quinn

HAMMERICH AWARDED NAFB FOUNDATION GRANT — The NAFB Foundation has awarded **Tim Hammerich** (Ag Information Network of the West, Eagle, Idaho) a 2021 Continuing



Education Grant to take **Jay Acunzo's** "Growable Shows" online course.

The NAFB Foundation Continuing Education Grant provides NAFB farm broadcasters support for professional growth opportunities. For example, a grant may be used to partially fund a farm broadcaster's costs to participate in an international trade mission, provide tuition for a college course or leadership development training (state ag leadership program) or registration fees for the Ag Media Summit or educational webinars. Other ideas are welcome. For more information on the Continuing

Education Grant program, go to: <https://nafb.com/foundation/continuing-education-grant>.

"My career journey has been anything but linear," Hammerich said. "In 2016, I started a weekly podcast called *Future of Agriculture* to promote my recruiting business. I caught the podcasting wave at the right time, and others started reaching out to me for help with their podcasts. Some even started paying me. Eventually, I moved on from the recruiting business, but the podcasting remained. It provided a foundation onto which I could build a communications consulting clientele, and it opened the door for me to get into radio.

“Today, I am the senior director for strategic communications at Cogent Consulting + Communications. I help clients with communications strategy, produce a handful of podcasts, and report two daily radio segments for the Ag Information Network.

“I remember the moment when the idea of being a communicator first appealed to me. In freshman ag class, my teacher recited all five paragraphs of the FFA Creed from memory. I was inspired! The motivation from that day took me on an unexpected journey and, ultimately, to serving as a national FFA officer.

“Leaving that year of service, I knew I had gathered valuable communications skills. But frankly, I had nothing to say. I decided I needed a strong background in the science and business of agriculture if I was ever to put my communications skills to good use. I was very fortunate to attend the University of California, Davis, to earn a bachelor’s degree in crop science and management. Years later, I attended the masters of agribusiness program at Kansas State University (where finishing that thesis continues to haunt me).

“While my career took me in different directions of grain merchandising, agribusiness management, and recruiting, I think deep down I have always wanted to be a communicator. This recurring theme and these diverse work experiences have led me to where I am today.

I believe in the power of radio to reach agricultural audiences. I also think these messages can be further extended by repackaging them for digital audiences. However, I’m learning it’s not so simple as distributing the same content in multiple channels. The message format must feel right for the medium.

“To get better at this, I have become a student of how to make better podcasts. Thanks to the generous support of the NAFB Foundation, I will be taking a continuing education course called ‘Creating Growable Shows.’ The idea is to better understand how to improve the reach and resonance of our agricultural content to digital audiences.

“I see podcasting as a complementary medium to the skilled communicators who already have a radio audience. However, the consumption habits are different. For most of us, that means we will want to adapt our approach if we want to also appeal to this digital consumer. I appreciate the NAFB Foundation for supporting me in this endeavor.

“The path forward is likely to be just as winding as the path that led me here, but I believe in the future of agriculture and the power of storytelling, so I am very grateful to be a part of this esteemed organization.”

Contact Hammerich at thammerich@cogentcc.com or phone 979/220-6102.



FARMERS UNION HONORS WICK FOR COMMUNICATIONS EXCELLENCE —

On March 1, 2021, the National Farmers Union (NFU) awarded Farm Broadcaster **Don Wick** (Red River Farm Network, Grand Forks, North Dakota) with its 2021 Milt Habel Agriculture Communications Award in recognition of his seminal coverage of farm stress and rural mental health.

Wick is president of Red River Farm Network and has worked for mega-stations over the course of his nearly four-decades-long career, including WCCO (Minneapolis,

Minnesota) and WNAX (Yankton, South Dakota). His reporting has examined a wide range of rural and agricultural issues and has taken him all over the world, including Cuba, China, Russia, Japan, and Afghanistan.

“In his time as a farm broadcaster, Don has reported on a remarkable number of subjects with a keen eye and balanced perspective,” said NFU President **Rob Larew**. “Though his catalogue is full of valuable observations, his series on farmer mental health is particularly prescient. Don has approached a difficult, uncomfortable topic with sensitivity and respect, and in doing so done a great deal of good. Not only has he improved awareness of mental health challenges, but he has also helped eliminate some of the stigma around these matters and highlighted resources available to those who are struggling,” Larew said.

The Milt Habel Agriculture Communications Award is presented to reporters or news outlets that demonstrate exceptional coverage of agricultural issues. The award was named in honor of Milton D. Habel, a highly respected Farmers Union communicator.

“Every year, we recognize journalists who go above and beyond to provide impartial, thorough, and insightful coverage of the issues most relevant to Farmers Union members,” Larew added. “During his impressive career, Don has certainly done all of that and then some, making him a more than worthy recipient for our Milt Habel Agriculture Communications Award.”

“Thanks to the National Farmers Union for recognizing the importance of agricultural journalism,” Wick said.



HARDING CAMPBELL REJOINS

NAFB — After three years of developing her communication skills outside of agriculture media, **Jesse Harding Campbell** is back — except this time she’s an Allied Industry Council Member. Campbell joined the *Agri-Pulse* team as an executive assistant in January.

“I recently described my job transition to a friend that ‘I’m back with my people,’” Campbell explained. “Returning to agriculture media and being an NAFB member is like coming back home after an extended trip. It just feels right.”

Campbell is working directly with **Sara Wyant**, founder and editor of *Agri-Pulse*. This includes the day-to-day work along with event planning, writing, promotion, and marketing. Currently, she is focused on promotion and speaker logistics for the upcoming *Agri-Pulse* Ag & Food Policy Summit in March.

“I was thrilled to accept the position and join the *Agri-Pulse* team! As a longtime admirer of *Agri-Pulse* and the reporting they provide on agriculture and natural resource policies, I am honored to support our staff and the content they produce,” said Campbell.

Campbell is returning to agriculture communications, having served as director of communications with a business-focused law firm based in Omaha, Nebraska. In conjunction with her marketing and event-planning duties, she provided strong agricultural and rural knowledge to support the firm’s extensive client base of producers and agribusinesses.

Campbell grew up on a hobby farm near Marine, Illinois, and studied agricultural and environmental communications at the University of Illinois. While in college, Campbell was an NAFB Foundation internship grant recipient and completed a farm broadcasting internship at WYXY under **Gale Cunningham**. She also served as assistant farm director at the Wisconsin Farm Report and KRVN/Rural Radio Network in Nebraska.

During her tenure at KRVN, she reported on and traveled with **Governor Pete Ricketts** on two Nebraska international trade missions to Europe (Italy, Belgium, and Denmark) and China (with stops in Hong Kong and Macau). Campbell also was the recipient of the 2015 NAFB Horizon Award.

As many Broadcast Council Members know, a lot has changed for Campbell since leaving farm broadcasting in 2017. She married **Casey Campbell** in 2018. They had a son, **Harris**, in November 2019. In 2020, Casey and Jesse started an outdoor lifestyle parenting blog, *Parenthood Outdoors*.



CHASE EARNS AN AWARD WORTH WAITING FOR — **Spencer Chase** (Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc., Washington, D.C.) received the 2020 Excellence in Public Outreach Award from the South Dakota Corn Growers after several delays.

“At the beginning of March, my landlord emailed me to inform me there was a box in my building’s entryway with my name on it. I knew right away the package was probably something I had been waiting on for a week or two, but also for about 14 months,” Chase said.

“It was an award from the South Dakota Corn Growers Association, specifically their Excellence in Public Outreach award. I had gotten the call about receiving the award back in 2019. Originally, I was supposed to go to their convention in January 2020 to accept it in person. But unfortunately, I had a previous engagement (covering the American Farm

Bureau convention taking place at the same time) and wasn’t able to make it. So, I recorded a message thanking them for the honor and arranged to stop by their office the next time I was in Sioux Falls to pick it up.

“Then, a blizzard forced the postponement of their convention until mid-March. It would have to wait again. Then, a pandemic forced their convention to be cancelled. It would have to wait again. But then, after arranging with the South Dakota Corn Growers office, it was shipped to me. And now, I have a memento from the organization my father once led sitting on a shelf in my living room. It was worth the wait.

“Let’s talk about waiting and what else is on my living room shelf,” Chase continued. On one side is a plaque from my term as a regional vice president on the NAFB board. I learned so much from my time on the board. To say I knew what I was getting into would probably be a lie.

Maybe a stretch if you're feeling generous. But I'm so glad I took a shot at learning more about the organization and learning more about what I can do to help it."

"On the other side is The Doan Award," Chase said. "I was stunned — not exaggerating, stunned — when I learned a project on which I worked with my colleague **Ben Nuelle** had won The Doan award. I

didn't know we were up for consideration, and I honestly wasn't sure if the work was up to the quality of the award. I knew we had worked hard on it, and we were proud of it. But, I also know other people who won that award and what it would take to win one of my own someday.



(Photo: **Ben Nuelle**, left, and **Spencer Chase** with The Doan award)

"I interned with **Michelle Rook** in 2012 and learned what it looks like to be a dogged and aggressive reporter that still has the unquestioned respect of an audience. I was in China with **Steve Bridge** when he was doing the award-winning reporting of his own and remember being amazed at the resourcefulness and diligence of his work," Chase said.

"Frankly, I figured I would have to wait. But the call came. And the box eventually showed up. And NAFB members voted me back on the board. It wasn't on my timing. In some cases, it was before I expected it. In some cases, there was waiting.

"We've all experienced waiting in this business. Waiting for a source to call us back, waiting in the booth for your time on air, or worst of all, waiting for a file to upload. We've all been there before, and we'll probably all be there again. But I hope we — or at least I — can learn to appreciate the waiting.

“In one case, waiting provided me with the opportunity to become a better reporter and find a ‘hell of a colleague to work with.’ In another, it gave me time to think about why I wanted to serve and convince others I was worthy of their support. And in one case, it required evolving from the annoying young pain in the neck a group of people got to know more than a decade ago and establish myself as a professional. Whatever it is you’re waiting for, I hope it arrives someday. And if there’s something I can do to make the wait a little more enjoyable, give me a call,” Chase concluded.

WE WANT YOUR NEWS — Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact Larry Quinn at larryquinn@outlook.com or phone at **703-819-6532**. *Airing on the Side of Agriculture* is included in the blog section of NAFB.com. For an archive copy of any past issues, go to **Membership** and click on ***Airing on the Side of Agriculture***.

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