



Volume 10, Number 6

June 7, 2022

OLSON STRIVES FOR CAREER THAT BLENDS FARMS, FAITH — For most, life outside of work is just that. However, **Matt Olson** is finding a way to connect his passion for agricultural communication and his faith.

Olson, who works for C.O.nxt as an account supervisor, is preparing to graduate with his Master of Divinity from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Most of his degree was completed online; however, he completed in-person “intensive” courses one week per semester. He felt led to pursue ministry in 2018 and quickly realized how he can combine his two passions of agriculture and ministry.

“Faith and farms are values. I want to figure out how the two weave together and how I can best use my resources to help farmers,” Olson said.

Olson also noted that through his ministry studies, he began realizing the intersection between small, rural communities and the challenges the agriculture industry is facing.

“I learned how to be a good listener, and it helped me realize that one of the forefront issues in the agriculture industry is facing is increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts,” Olson said.

He also said he is paying more attention to the sustainability, education, and community involvement sectors of the agriculture industry.



Olson always has been passionate about agricultural communication and has worked in the industry in some form since high school. He helped create an internship position for himself at an agriculture news network in Wisconsin, where he then developed a student news correspondence program that has now grown to benefit six school districts in the area. Students are able to identify, develop, and broadcast one story per week to share on-air.

His internship experience sparked his love for communications, but he learned he could be more beneficial working in a different role.

“I knew communications was something I wanted to do, but it was a matter of figuring out how and where,” Olson said.

Olson is a new member of NAFB, and he is looking forward to working with its member broadcasters to help them in their mission to serve farmers and ranchers. He plans to remain in his agriculture marketing role with C.O.nxt as well as serving as a pastor at a local rural church.

BARNETT FINDING NICHE IN FARM BROADCASTING — The path to becoming a farm broadcaster looks different for everyone. Some are passionate about communications and then learn the agriculture side. Some are passionate about agriculture and learn the communications side. Others fall somewhere in between.

Brent Barnett, anchor/reporter for Brownfield Ag News currently based in Pella, Iowa, first found his passion for radio broadcasting, then found his niche in farm broadcasting.

Barnett grew up in Burlington Junction, Missouri, where he gained an agricultural background. In college and immediately after, he said his goal was to be a sports broadcaster. He left his first job in the sports sector to work for an agriculture radio network and hasn't looked back.

"Everyone in the farm broadcasting world is on the same page. We're all working together to share what matters most with farmers," Barnett said.



When reflecting on what motivates him in his day-to-day role, Barnett said he feels like he is making a difference. He feels there is a strong mission and meaning to what he, and other farm broadcasters, do.

"We're essential; people rely on us," Barnett said.

Though Barnett has worked in farm broadcasting for eight years, his first NAFB event was the 2021 Annual Convention in Kansas City. He noted that he's looking forward to future NAFB events because of the opportunity to meet and network with the tight-knit group of farm broadcasters.

"The convention provided good conversations, great friends, and good networking," Barnett said.

The path to farm broadcasting isn't alike for any two individuals although they share a common mission.



YOUNG RECEIVES HONORARY MISSOURI STATE FFA DEGREE

— Farm broadcasting has roots that run deep with **Cyndi Young**, director of Brownfield Ag News. Young has enjoyed a rewarding career of more than 30 years in the industry and has been an NAFB Broadcast Council member for 35 years.

Throughout her career, Young has received many recognitions, including NAFB Farm Broadcaster of the Year (1997), the Oscar in Agriculture (2009), and the NAFB Hall of Fame (2021). Most recently, she was awarded the Honorary State FFA Degree at the Missouri State FFA Convention.

“It holds a very special place in my heart for many reasons, not the least of which is that it comes exactly 20 years after I received the Honorary Illinois State FFA Degree,” Young said.

While the agriculture industry has always been part of Young’s life, she did not always have plans to work as a farm broadcaster. She grew up in a multi-generational farm in west central Illinois. In college, she majored in agricultural education with an emphasis in animal science.

“I remember listening to farm radio in the kitchen, the farm trucks, tractors, and the car. My sister and I used to have contests to see who could best mimic the livestock market reporter on one of the many local radio stations that carried farm programming,” Young added.

She originally had planned to work promoting the beef industry, but when a job opening at her local radio station became available, she took it. That was 37 years ago, and Young is still using her role at Brownfield Ag News to help farmers and ranchers.

Young, along with the rest of her team, are charged with providing agricultural news, markets, weather, and feature programming that is relevant and timely for their farmer/rancher listeners.

With a lifetime of experience in the industry, Young offers newcomers some advice on how to have a successful career in farm broadcasting.

“Listen. Ask questions. Stay abreast of current issues in agriculture. Show your gratitude to those who help and support you. Be respectful. Be bold in seeking new opportunities,” Young concluded.



HEINRICHS RECOGNIZED FOR OUTSTANDING FARM WORK — Husband-and-wife duo **Richie** and **Sarah Heinrich** strive to advocate for the message of agriculture in everything they do. The two run a registered Gelbvieh cow/calf operation near Medina, North Dakota. They also grow cash grains, such as wheat, corn, and soybeans.

To recognize all the hard work the Heinrichs have done both on- and off-farm, they were named one of the National Outstanding Young Farmers for 2022. They were nominated for this award by Doug and Maria Bichler, 2020 National Outstanding Young Farmers winners from North Dakota. This award is given to farmers who have made lasting contributions in their communities, as well as on their farms.

Sarah has always been interested in agriculture, especially communicating about the industry using mass media platforms.

“My uncle, Al Gustin, was also active on our family farm and served as an agriculture broadcaster in Bismarck, North Dakota. Watching him over the years instilled a love for farm news within me,” Sarah said.

In college, Sarah majored in agricultural communications and public relations at North Dakota State University. Following college, she began her first job as an agriculture reporter.

“I’ve always had a passion for telling agriculture’s story,” Sarah said.

Sarah began her involvement with NAFB during her time working as an agriculture reporter at KXMB News. Throughout the years, she has maintained her involvement and service to NAFB and the farm broadcasting community. Currently, Sarah serves as an NAFB mentorship program coordinator.

“Being a mentor has been extremely rewarding. It’s been fun to form a bond with a young member and to be able to offer any advice that I’ve learned over the years,” Sarah said.

In addition to their off-farm involvement, the Heinrichs also devote their time to ensuring their farming operation is the most efficient and in-line with the purebred cattle industry. They implemented technological improvements, ranging from artificial insemination and ultrasounding cows to installing cameras to monitor cows when calving. They also utilize more sustainable farming practices in their grain farming by using a variable rate fertilizer application.

No matter if it’s working on or off the farm, the Heinrichs always are looking to grow and make new connections. Sarah said her favorite part of working in the agriculture industry is, by far, the people with whom she gets to interact.

“It’s doesn’t matter if it’s ag broadcasting or the cattle business, the people I’ve met throughout my life and career are fantastic,” Sarah said.



HOWELL USES FFA SAE TO CREATE INTERNSHIP — Internships are a staple experience for college students to have in any industry. For **Jordan Howell**, combining her love for agriculture and need to complete a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) for her FFA chapter was a natural fit.



Howell, a recent high-school graduate, wanted a unique SAE experience compared to the other students in the Howells-Dodge FFA Chapter, in Howells, Nebraska. Using her personal connections, she was able to grow and develop a customized SAE project that then served as a three-year internship with KTIC Radio in West Point, Nebraska.

Throughout her program, Howell experienced the full scope of operations at a radio station. She also was able to perform some projects independently, such as keeping the farm calendar up to date. Over the course of her three years with the station, Howell shadowed farm broadcasters, wrote online news stories, and covered local events, among many other things.

Howell recently graduated high school and has plans to attend Iowa State University in the fall, majoring in meteorology.

She said she was inspired to pursue a career in meteorology based on an NAFB farm broadcast and seeing how agriculture and meteorology are intertwined.

“I am very interested in studying how meteorology and weather patterns effect animal agriculture. I want to combine my background in communications and my passion for agriculture,” Howell said.

Though she has yet to begin her college career, Howell is hopeful to remain in the broadcasting and mass-media world during her time at Iowa State. She noted the connections she made during her time at KTIC Radio were invaluable and have helped shape her professionally.



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