



Volume 2, Number 3, March 3, 2014

by Larry A. Quinn

"AIRING ON THE SIDE OF AGRICULTURE" GOES INTERNATIONAL...Over the past two years, **Leslie Smith** (KRVN Rural Radio Network, Scottsbluff, NE) has been a member of the 32nd class of the Nebraska LEAD program. This program prepares farmers, ranchers and those in agribusiness for future leadership roles. Through seminars, LEAD fellows learn about state, national and international issues, like the economy, health care, water and education.



In January, Leslie's class (shown with U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia **Theodore Sedgewick**) completed a 14-day international study travel seminar in Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. In their meeting with Ambassador Sedgewick, he shared how Slovakia is increasing global efforts to boost the nation's economy. The group also heard from diplomats at the American Center (U.S. Embassy) in Prague, Czech Republic. **Felipe Macias** of the U.S. Meat Export Federation spoke to the group about the export potential to the European Union (EU). With 28 countries and 500 million customers, the EU is a larger market than the U.S.

Landing in Vienna, Austria...the group began travels by bus through the three countries. Fellows were able to see how these countries have developed since Communism fell more than 20 years ago. "These countries are making strides to paint and remodel the old Communist-style buildings as their economies are starting to grow," Leslie said. "In all three countries, agriculture makes up less than four percent of the nation's GDP. We were also able to see how their agricultural industry has progressed over the past two decades. Community or communist farms have been broken apart."

In Slovakia today...67 percent of the farms are private farms, 26 percent are owned by legal entities, 7 percent by coops, and .05 percent are state-owned farms. Arable land represents about 27 percent of the country's land with more than 60 percent of the land covered by forests. Crops are grown mostly in western Slovakia where the soil is more fertile. Slovaks grow wheat, corn, barley, forages, sunflowers, sugar beets and rapeseed. To a lesser extent, the country also grows oats, hops and grapes for wine production. Slovakia also has cattle, dairy, hogs and poultry production. Dairy is the country's largest sector, but it is not the most profitable. "In central Slovakia, we toured the largest export company in the country. Isokman Trading buys high quality dairy cattle and prepares the cattle for shipment to Russia, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The vast majority of the bred heifers are being shipped to Russia, as that country strives to boost their domestic milk production," Leslie said. This farm also has 750 sheep, raised for milk production. It is more profitable than raising them for wool. They use the milk to make sheep cheese, which is very popular in Slovakia.

Moving north into Poland...the LEAD group learned that Poland has the smallest farms of the three countries. Ninety percent of the farms there are considered small to very small. A large farm in Poland is 30 hectares, which is 74 acres. "After the fall of communism, many farmers had to learn to farm again. Poland has worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in educating their farmers. U.S. consultants come for 6 to 12 months to share information, and Poland consultants will also spend two weeks in the U.S.," Leslie said. "One of the biggest struggles Poland farmers have had is learning to market their crops and livestock. Farmers are encouraged to market their crops and livestock together to get better prices. An organic farmer shared his story on how his small farm is marketing directly to consumers, and his farm supports 20 families."

In the Czech Republic...the Nebraska group visited two diversified farms with dairy cattle, along with wheat, corn, barley, alfalfa, rapeseed and sugar beets. Both farms also generate electrical power from a bio-gas generator, which consumes animal waste mixed with forage products. Part of the power generated is used on the farm, and the remainder is sold for public use.



Lesany Farms has a dairy herd of Fleckvieh Simmental cattle as well as a unique blend of crops, including poppy seed and cumin. "This farm also operated a small beef product fabrication plant. The owner also shared just how much the EU influences agriculture. He often has an EU inspector or veterinarian visit his farm two to three times a month. This was a reality check for our group in just how much the government could be involved daily on farms," Leslie noted. The group also toured a local farm implement dealership and service center, P&L, which has several locations across the Czech Republic where they sell New Holland, Kinze and Great Plains

American equipment lines, as well as other European machinery. The dealership sells 20 to 30 tractors annually. The average tractor size is 200 horse power.

Through this experience... it became more apparent that America's farmers and ranchers have huge opportunities in Europe, Leslie observed. "Throughout the 14 days, we ate extremely well... eating traditional food in each country. I loved their breads, soups and chocolate, but a steak in Europe is not the same as corn-fed steak. As their economies continue to grow and expand, I believe they will also become a larger customer for U.S. beef. In meeting several ag producers in Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic, our concerns are the same (with the weather, commodity prices, regulations, an aging producer population and urban sprawl). Overall, this experience showed me how much central Europe is trying to keep up with the U.S. in producing crops and livestock. It also was a glimpse into the regulations that American ag producers will be dealing with in the future."



Leslie Smith received the prestigious National Horizon Award at the 2012 NAFB Convention. The Horizon Award is given annually to recognize rising talent among farm broadcasters who have been NAFB members for five years or less. She serves as the Farm News Director for KNEB AM/FM in Scottsbluff, NE, and is a key contributor to agricultural news stories across the Rural Radio Network of stations including KNEB, KRVN in Lexington, NE, and KTIC in West Point, NE.

OVER 96 INCHES OF SNOW AND COUNTING...Rick Shields (WKZO, Kalamazoo, MI) said, "What a winter! Our normal is around 80 for the year. It's not just the depth; it's the persistence. Before a very brief warm-up Thursday (February 20), Grand Rapids registered 23 days with over 20 inches or more of snow on the ground. Their previous record was nine days with that amount. Most of southwest Michigan saw readings Wednesday (February 19) above 32-degrees for the first time since January 20." Rick added, "In the fruit belt, some readings got down in the minus 15-degree area in the first polar vortex episode in early January. That's at the threshold for doing damage to more cold-sensitive plants like apples, cherries and wine grapes." When we contacted him, he was waiting for a return of that system from north of Hudson Bay in the closing days of February. "There's a major concern for an eventual fast melt and possible flooding, plus ice dams on rivers." Also, fields deep in snow may take longer to melt and dry out so there's even some concern about a delayed planting this spring.

One good thing about the cold...Rick noted that the *Washington Post* recently had a feature with a Virginia Tech entomologist who has been studying stink bugs and their overwintering ability. It seems their natural internal anti-freeze wasn't up to the severity of this winter. In a bucket experiment the entomologist had designed, 95 of the 100 stink bugs were found frozen. Rick exclaimed, "I'd predict a victory with the score at the third quarter of the season...winter 95...stink bugs 5. I just hope that trend holds around here with our Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, which for the past three seasons has proven a major economic issue for Michigan fruit. We'll know in a few months." Rick originates the Michigan farm reports out of Kalamazoo for broadcast on WKZO and in Battle Creek, Lansing, Holland and Coldwater. In addition, he's doing reports for their Midwest Communications' stations in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. **Cassandra Basore** is in charge of the digital effort at the *Michigan Ag Now* website.

EMCEES FOR "MAKE IT WITH WOOL" PAGEANT...were **Rick Haines**, left, (Independent Ag Network, Twin Falls, ID) and **Russell Nemetz** (Northern Ag Network, Billings, MT). Each year at the American Sheep Industry Association (ASIA) final banquet (held this year on January 25 in Charleston, SC), the "Make It With Wool



(MIWW)" pageant is presented. Each year, the association invites two broadcasters to serve as emcees. **Marie Lehfeldt** of Lavina, MT, said, "As the National MIWW Coordinator, one of my obligations for the past 18 years of competitions was to organize and execute a public fashion show involving more than 65



contestants. It's important for me to have competent narrators for that show. **Rick Haines** and **Russell Nemetz** have served as narrators for nine of those years, either separately or as co-narrators. Their broadcaster backgrounds give them the expertise to fill that position well. They work perfectly together, alternating the narrations to keep it interesting for the audience. They are comfortable with each other, they are lively and they can handle the unexpected." Contestants, ranging from teens to adults, were vying for the best of their category (Junior, Senior or Adult). They select their own wool fabric, patterns and designs. Sewing and modeling are done by the entrants and, after several days of judging, they walk the runway with a choreographer's help. Rick explained, "Our job is to read the script provided without mispronouncing names, fabrics, designs and styles. Trust me, there are easier ways to make a living!"



THIS YEAR'S PROPANE SHORTAGE IN INDIANA...has challenged Hoosier Ag Today (HAT) network to "air on the side of agriculture" to bring balance and understanding by the public regarding the causes of the shortage. Some local media and the public were blaming agriculture for the shortage for residential users. **Gary Truitt** said the network has been working to bring balance to the issue and to educate the public on how agriculture and residential users can work together to share the propane supply. For instance, some farmers who had an excess of propane not needed to dry grain were willing to sell this unneeded supply back to propane suppliers. Besides network broadcasts, HAT uses Internet and email newsletters to augment available information for farmers.

One of the pioneers of electronic dissemination...Gary is one of the three farm broadcasters who are the voices of Hoosier Ag Today. **Andy Eubank** and **Cayla McLeland** round out the trio. They are supported by regular reports from meteorologist **Rob Wasson**. Gary and his wife, **Kathleen**, founded the 55-station network in 2006. Gary said, "HAT is dedicated to telling the story of Indiana agriculture. The daily HAT programs and podcasts cover the news and issues impacting Indiana agriculture and Hoosier rural communities. In 2012, the AMR media research study found Hoosier Ag Today to be the most listened to farm broadcast source in Indiana." The Hoosier Ag Today website, **www.hoosieragtoday.com**, has become a popular resource for Indiana farmers and rural residents.

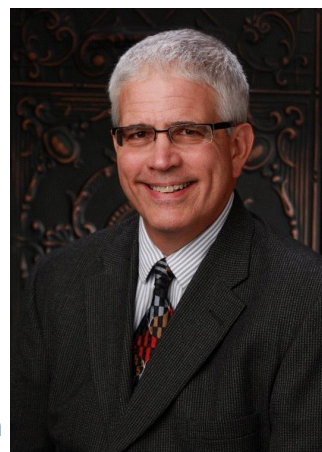


Gary began his farm broadcasting career...with the Brownfield Network in 1981. In 1985, he moved to Indiana to found the AgriAmerica Network. Over the next 18 years, the Network would grow to become the most listened to source of farm information in the state and recognized around the nation for quality and professionalism. In 2003, the AgriAmerica Network was purchased by the Brownfield Network. To fill a void that Gary saw in coverage of the dynamic changes occurring in Indiana agriculture, he left Brownfield to form Hoosier Ag Today. He has been honored with several major awards in farm broadcasting, including two Oscars in Agriculture as well as Farm Broadcaster of the Year in 1988. He has served as Regional Vice-President for NAFB and was awarded an Honorary State FFA Degree by Indiana FFA. Gary has traveled to and reported from more than 15 foreign nations and has traveled on two trade missions with the Secretary of Agriculture. He writes a weekly column that is syndicated in *Farm World* newspaper and several national websites. Two months ago, he began broadcasting a two-minute commentary on Saturday mornings where he gives his opinions while "airing on the side of agriculture." In 2006, he and his wife, Kathleen, authored a book, *The Changing Face of Indiana Agriculture*. In 2002, Gary formed his own communications consulting company and began a project that helps Indiana farmers sell products directly to consumers via a website called *Indiana Farm Direct*. Currently, more 300 producers market their products directly to consumers through this site. Gary is an alumnus of North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, and lives in the Indianapolis area with his wife of 35 years and their three children.

Andy Eubank is a veteran Indiana broadcaster who understands the power of local radio. His 30 years of radio experience in rural communities has made him a master at producing programming that enables local radio stations to reach and serve their agricultural audience. Eubank's work has been honored by NAFB and the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service. Since joining HAT in 2007, Eubank has traveled extensively covering agriculture, including accompanying the Indiana Lt. Governor on an agricultural trade mission to China in 2011.

Cayla McLeland joined Hoosier Ag Today in 2012 as a farm broadcaster and marketing representative. In this unique role, she can work with agricultural organizations on both their communication and marketing needs. Her special feature reports add interest and depth to HAT programs. Her understanding of digital and mobile media technology allow her to help organizations use these new communication tools to reach farmers. McLeland grew up in Cass County and has worked at several Indiana radio stations. She is a member of NAFB and the National AgriMarketing Association.

36 YEARS IN FARM BROADCASTING...will be celebrated this month by **Bob Quinn** (WHO, Des Moines, IA). Bob graduated from Iowa State University in 1978 and took his first broadcast job as Farm Director for KBIZ Radio and KTVO television in Ottumwa, IA. He moved to WHO Radio in March 1983 as a member of the farm broadcast team with **Keith Kirkpatrick** and **Lee Kline**. Bob worked as Head of Editorial at DTN from 2000 to 2004 and then returned to WHO radio, where he is today. He broadcasts early morning farm news and markets and is one of the broadcasters on WHO Radio's *The Big Show*, which airs from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. weekdays. Also, Bob produces and hosts segments on *AgLife*, which airs on four radio stations in the California Valley. *AgLife* is on from 5:00 to 6:00 a.m. weekdays. "I love talking about, and to, agriculture producers. They make food," Bob said. "While technology changes the face of agriculture, and we communicate on many platforms, I find that producers all across



the country want to know the same thing. How do we make food better, cheaper, and safe for our customers--the consuming public?"

HAVE YOU SHARED YOUR STORY? We want to hear from you so we can share your story of "airing on the side of agriculture." Contact me at larryaquinn@verizon.net or call me at 703-819-6532.

NAFB
P.O. Box 500
Platte City, MO 64079
(816) 431-4032

[Forward this email](#)



This email was sent to tom@nafb.com by tom@nafb.com |
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

National Association of Farm Broadcasting | 1100 Platte Falls Road | Platte City | MO | 64079