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by Larry A. Quinn



Nicole Heslip broadcasts from the Wisconsin Public Service Farm Show this past March.

BROWNFIELD REPORTERS IN MICHIGAN AND MINNESOTA – It's been one year since Brownfield Ag News expanded its on-the-ground coverage into Michigan and Minnesota. **Nicole Heslip** and **Mark Dorenkamp** are the newest Brownfield reporters in those two states. Michigan anchor/reporter Nicole Heslip says the year has been full of changes. Nicole had previously been with the Michigan Farm Radio Network for five years. Nicole has traveled the state and beyond covering ag news for Brownfield. She broadcasts from home, reporting on Michigan's diverse agriculture landscape of more than 300 commodities as well as national ag news. She also

contributes to the Brownfield consumer education program *Healthy Living*. Soon after transitioning to Brownfield, Nicole's husband, **Kyle**, finished his PhD in medicinal chemistry at the University of Michigan. Turning his favorite pastime into a full-time career, Kyle joined Michigan's booming craft beer industry and is now the head brewer at Tapistry Brewing in Bridgman, MI. The couple moved to Michigan's great southwest and currently are renovating a 125-year-old farm house in Stevensville, MI, just two miles from Lake Michigan. Inspired by last year's Case IH Farms and Legs Ragnar Relay Race experience, Nicole plans to run a half marathon this August through the Michigan Lake Shore Wine Trail.



Mark Dorenkamp with the Floyd of Rosedale trophy at Minnesota Farmfest in August 2015.

The transition has also gone well for **Mark Dorenkamp** and his family. After spending more than two years in the farm department at WHO radio in Des Moines, IA, the Dorenkamps have relocated to Kasson in southeast Minnesota. Year one with Brownfield will be remembered as the year of the devastating avian influenza outbreak in Minnesota. Mark worked hard to report accurately on the story as it developed and says he learned a lot about the poultry industry along the way. Mark is proud to say the opportunity with Brownfield has stretched him professionally, as he's enjoyed the new challenge of story writing in addition to his on-air responsibilities. Mark enjoys working from home because it allows him to spend more time with his wife, **Melissa**, and two sons, **Gavin** 4, and **Hudson**, almost 2. Mark grew up in Iowa, not far from the Minnesota border, and is enjoying the small-town and farm-oriented surroundings he's been familiar with his entire life. Mark appreciates the opportunities Brownfield has given him to get out and cover agriculture, whether it's an hour away or several states away. Covering Commodity Classic earlier

this year brought him to New Orleans for the first time. Regardless of where he is, Mark says the best part of the job remains the people. "Getting to talk with farmers about issues important to them; to hear that passion and conviction they have for what they do. It's very special to me." About her colleagues, **Julie Harker** adds, "We are so grateful that **Nicole** and **Mark** are on the Brownfield Team!



HANSEN RETIRES FROM RFD-TV – Mike Hansen, long time employee of RFD-TV retired effective May 1. Hansen has been in agricultural marketing and communications since 1974, having worked in both radio and television in a variety of roles. For the past 16 years, he has been with the Rural Media Group, first with RFD-TV and continuing when it added *RURAL RADIO* on SiriusXM Channel 147. Hansen has been a member of NAFB since 1974. He played an important role in the early stages of marketing and research at NAFB as the industry set standards and metrics depicting the impact farm broadcasters had on the agriculture audience. For his efforts, Hansen was awarded the *Dix Harper Meritorious Service Award*, which is given to a member who "demonstrated exemplary and committed service to NAFB." Also, he is a longtime member of the National Agri-Marketing Association. "I have been with RFD-TV since the early days and have witnessed the amazing growth the Network has experienced," Mike said. "Having been there

from the beginning, I now look back fondly at what it has become, and I'm proud to say that I was part of it all." RFD-TV Founder and President **Patrick Gottsch** praised Hansen's time with the company saying, "Mike Hansen was the very first employee for RFD-TV. For years, this company has grown and benefited from Mike's dedication to our goal of making RFD-TV rural America's most important network. In addition, Mike's past experience in radio was instrumental for the launch of *RURAL RADIO* on SiriusXM Channel 147. Mike has also been a good friend to my daughters and myself, and someone that I have relied on for advice many, many times. We wish Mike and **Heidi** the very best with his retirement. Happy Hunting!"



NAFB SCHOLARSHIP HAS LASTING BENEFITS – In 2007, **Liz (LeSatz) Lauck** was an Agriculture Communications major at the University of Wyoming working hard to get through college when she was honored with an NAFB Foundation Scholarship. “Not only was the money a huge blessing, but my experience at the NAFB convention was so wonderful. The farm broadcasters won me over!” At left, **Liz (LeSatz) Lauck** with past NAFB President **Pam Jahnke** at the NAFB annual convention.

Now, almost nine years later Liz is not a farm broadcaster, but her experience with NAFB and the

benefit of the scholarship made a lasting impression. Liz said, “I was able to graduate debt-free from college and build a career in agricultural public relations before shifting full-time to work on our 2,000-acre farming operation in Wheatland, WY. My husband, **Tyler**, and I raise corn, dry beans, malt barley and our daughter, **Rozella Mae**, who we welcomed Christmas Eve 2015.” As a farm wife and new mom, she’s busy offering support in any way she can to the operation. “Maybe a day is just full of laundry and running lunch to the field, maybe I’m on the tractor, or maybe I’m working on projects through Liz Lauck Public Relations. Either way, I’m able to contribute to our production agriculture business and stay at home to raise our daughter.” She added, “My life may seem distant from NAFB and the great work of its members, but I am a lot farther ahead due to the generosity and commitment the NAFB Foundation shows to students. Your support of a college kid eventually helped a young farm family and for that we are very grateful.” Liz invites you to keep up with their farming adventures at www.farmpaparazzi.com. **Lauck Family: Tyler, Liz and Rozella** at their home in Wheatland, WY.





ROOK TO RECEIVE 2016 SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR'S AWARD – Michelle Rook (WNAX, Yankton, SD) will be recognized as the 2016 South Dakota Governor's Ag Ambassador on June 2, at the annual Governor's Agricultural Summit in Brookings, SD. "Agriculture has a tremendous advocate in Michelle," said Governor **Dennis Daugaard**. "She has devoted many years to telling the story of farm and ranch families who work hard to provide a safe, affordable food supply in South Dakota and beyond." Michelle is the farm director at WNAX Radio in Yankton, SD and a reporter for the nationally syndicated television programs, *AgDay* and *U.S. Farm Report*. She has served as a meteorologist at KSFY-TV in Sioux Falls and KTIV-TV and KMEG-TV in Sioux City, and as anchor and producer of *Today's Ag* as part of her job as the South Dakota State University Extension Radio/TV

Specialist. Through Rook's professional speaking and freelance business, she does professional videos and commercials for agricultural clients regionally and nationally. Michelle was NAFB president in 2006. She was selected as the NAFB Horizon Award winner in 2002, NAFB Farm Broadcaster of the Year in 2008 and the recipient of the first annual The Doan award in 2015. "Michelle has a love for agriculture that comes from growing up on a family dairy and crop farm near Clear Lake, SD" said interim South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture Dr. **Dustin Oedekoven**. "She is a tireless promoter of agriculture and an effective voice for the hard work, stewardship and dedication of our state's farmers and ranchers." This is the sixth year a Governor's Ag Ambassador has been recognized. Agriculture is a major contributor to South Dakota's economy, generating \$25.6 billion in annual economic activity and employing more than 115,000 South Dakotans.

Key Achievements of the Ag Ambassador – Provides visionary leadership to South Dakota's agricultural industry. Champions growth and prosperity of the state's number one industry. Advocates for agricultural practices and responsible stewardship of livestock and land; and highlights the significance of South Dakota agriculture to the global food system. Influences decision makers to develop and implement sound agricultural policies.

Michelle's Reaction – "This is such a special honor for me. I was a farmer's daughter before I became a farm broadcaster and agriculture is my passion. I consider it a real privilege to work with and represent the state's farmers and agribusiness community and provide them with the information they need on a daily basis to run their business. I am also proud to be able to share agriculture's important story of food, fuel and fiber production with consumers."

FARM JOURNAL PODCASTING – Pam Fretwell (Farm Journal Broadcasting, Quincy, IL) produces several regular podcasts each week. One is *Straight from the Heartland Show*, which airs every Tuesday and Thursday, gives a look at current events and subjects important to farmers. Another podcast is *Consumer Ag Connection*, which airs once a week and is also broadcast on radio stations in seven states. That show is targeted toward consumers and has an educational piece to explain why farmers do what they do. “A new and third podcast I am doing that I am very excited about is the *Top Producer Podcast*, where I talk about the financial and business side of farmers and target primarily larger operators. It airs every Wednesday on the web. All of my podcasts are housed within the AgWeb website and can also be subscribed on iTunes and on the MyFarmRadio App.” In addition to her radio shows, Pam is busy emceeing Farm Journal Media events all over the country. “From Farm Journal Legacy Project, Corn College Events, Top Producer Seminars, Executive Women in Ag events and many others I never have a dull moment,” Pam said. “I also get to do what I love best which is working with Agronomists **Ken Ferrie** and



Missy Bauer at the Farm Journal Test Plots. We are celebrating our 25th year in bringing farmers research and data that can keep them at the top of their game.” Pam emphasizes, “The part I love the most is getting to be in the field and, yes, help with coverage of the planting and harvest of those plots. I get my feet and hands dirty actually doing some of the work.” In case you don’t know, Pam actively farmed in production agriculture for 26 years before becoming a broadcaster. “I’m constantly amazed at the new technology and all that is in the hands of farmers that adds to their success these days.” She adds, “I am always amazed at the talented young people that we have on our editorial team, and I work closely with them in publishing audio for needs that they may have.” She notes that one of the best parts of her job is “constantly being challenged by these bright young editors and seeing how I can help to bring the best stories that are service to farmers.” Pam concludes, “Can you tell I love my job? I am proud to be a part of a great team every day.”

AGRI-PULSE HONORED BY NAAJ – The North American Agricultural Journalists presented *Agri-Pulse* with the *Audrey Mackiewicz Special Award* April 25 at the group’s annual banquet at the National Press Club. The award honors the association’s first woman president and long-time Executive Secretary-Treasurer and is given to publications who have expanded their coverage of agriculture. *Agri-Pulse* now has the largest group of editors devoted to covering agriculture, food and rural issues in Washington, DC. The coverage team includes **Sara Wyant, Philip Brasher, Bill Tomson, Daniel Enoch, Spencer Chase, Whitney Forman-Cook, Steve Davies**, and contributors **Jim Webster, Ed Maixner** and **Jeff Nalley**, who does *Open Mic* each week for *Agri-Pulse*. Sara said, “We remain a small, family-owned company but have grown steadily over the last 12 years and now reach all members of the House and Senate, key agency officials, and almost every trade association that deals with agriculture, food, renewable energy and rural issues.

WE WANT YOUR NEWS – We'd like to receive your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact me at larryaquinn@outlook.com or call me 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*.