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# Michigan Sugar community relations director honored with national award

*Distinguished Service Award to Ray Van Driessche recognizes industry leadership, partnership with local community*

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. – The **American Sugarbeet Growers Association (ASGA)** today honored **Michigan Sugar Company** community relations director **Ray Van Driessche** with its Distinguished Service Award at the organization’s annual meeting. ASGA executive vice president **Luther Markwart** said Van Driessche earned the award through years of tireless advocacy on behalf of sugarbeet growers and processors, as well as his commitment to making Michigan Sugar a strong partner with local communities across Michigan’s Thumb.

“Ray Van Driessche has set a clear example of leadership that all of us in America’s sugarbeet sector can look up to, and I’m proud to present today’s award,” said **Markwart**. “Ray continues to lead the way, advocating for our industry in Washington and across the nation. Back in Michigan, he has stepped up to lead Michigan Sugar Company’s community involvement – always being proactive when it comes to interacting with the communities Michigan Sugar calls home.”

“Michigan Sugar Company is committed to being a good neighbor and a community leader every day, and this award reflects the work that our employees and growers put in to make our company accessible,” **Van Driessche** said. “I’m proud of our team and look forward to doing all I can to ensure that Michigan Sugar Company and America’s sugarbeet industry continue to thrive, create jobs and boost the economy in rural communities.”

As community relations director, Van Driessche focuses on ensuring Michigan Sugar Company is a good neighbor and strong partner with communities across Michigan’s Thumb. This includes service on numerous boards and committees, including at Saginaw Valley State University, the United Way of Bay County and the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.

He has served on technical advisory committees at the state and federal level, with particular emphasis on helping the sugarbeet industry navigate complex policy issues during 2014 Farm Bill negotiations. Van Driessche has also taken a lead role on industry trade issues, including service on USDA’s Agricultural Trade Advisory Committee.



PHOTO: Ray Van Driessche (L), community relations director for Michigan Sugar Company, receives the 2016 Distinguished Service Award from Luther Markwart, executive vice president of the American Sugarbeet Growers Association in Scottsdale, AZ.

*Headquartered in Bay City, MI, Michigan Sugar Company is a grower-owned sugar cooperative and the third largest beet sugar processor in the United States, producing an annual average of more than 1 billion pounds of sugar. We sell our products in wholesale and retail quantities under the Pioneer Sugar and Big Chief Sugar Brands.*

*For more information, visit [www.michigansugar.com](http://www.michigansugar.com).*