



THE MICHIGAN SUGAR COMPANY / SUMMER 2023 / VOLUME 37 • ISSUE 1

NEWSBEET

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Investment



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Neil Juhnke named President and CEO of Michigan Sugar Company
- Employee Service & Ernest Flegenheimer Awards
- 2023 Michigan Sugar Queen & Court Crowned



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OUR MISSION: Creating Growth & Opportunity
OUR VALUES ARE EPIC+:
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AN EVEN SWEETER FUTURE

By Neil Juhnke, President and CEO

As I take over the role of President and CEO from Mark Flegenheimer, I've taken the opportunity to reflect on Michigan Sugar Company's rich history and cast a vision for its future. What a sweet ride this will be.

Michigan Sugar Company has a long and storied history, having its roots during a mid-19th Century period just after the "lumber barons," as they were known, completed harvesting the region's timber resources. This left a fertile landscape perfect for agriculture. German and Polish immigrants to the region started growing sugarbeets. Small processing facilities sprang up across the region and growers were supported by a "bounty" paid by the state government for each ton of sugarbeets produced. By 1900, there were several new beet sugar factories processing the regional crop, with Michigan Sugar getting its official start in 1906.

The industry grew and consolidated through time to become what it is today. Of course, Michigan Sugar Company became a grower-owned cooperative in 2002 and two years later the growers from Monitor Sugar Company joined in a historic merger. Today, Michigan Sugar Company is the third largest cooperative producing sugar from sugarbeets. Our business benefits from several natural strategic advantages, including some of the best sugarbeet growing conditions in the United States, low-cost, efficient transportation, and a location close to the major Midwest sugar markets. Wise investment in packaging and warehousing operations and a molasses desugaring facility, have provided additional added value.

While these are remarkable strengths on which to grow a company, challenges exist. Our factories, having been founded in the late 1800s and early 1900s, are older and have lower capacity than the industry standard, leading to an ever-present demand for investment in process equipment, infrastructure, and environmental compliance. Our workforce demographics have shifted as the typically long-serving boomer generation retires. On the agriculture front, new pests, weeds, and diseases seem to crop up from time to time, requiring constant innovation from our agronomy team and industry partners.

One of the unique and beneficial aspects of a grower-owned cooperative structure is the alignment of goals between the grower and the processor. Agronomic practices can be optimized to produce a crop that yields better operating results and improves asset utilization. Sugar content can be increased while components that lead to molasses creation can be reduced. Harvest, transportation, and storage innovation can lead to further improvements and reduce storage losses. Finally, a renewed focus on the very technically demanding "art" of sugarbeet processing and increased focus on training and technical education can provide higher sugar yields and factory throughput. Automation, process controls, and data analytics can be leveraged for their benefits as well.

So, after just a short time in my new role, I am excited about our future. The folks I've met have an authentic pride and enthusiasm for the business, and a family ethic that inspires. I find myself perfectly aligned with our mission: *Creating Growth & Opportunity*, as well as our EPIC+ values of *Excellence, Pride, Integrity, Compassion, and Trust*. What a great set of principles by which to live and work.

I also find myself passionately engaged in the opportunity before us. We will not rest until Michigan Sugar Company is achieving its full potential, leveraging our strategic advantages, and operating at industry best standards across the board from sugarbeet production, harvest, storage, and processing to sugar packaging, sales, distribution, and customer service.

Our "Pioneering" heritage, forging a vibrant industry from raw frontier land, has provided us with both a solemn obligation and an exciting opportunity for *Making Life Sweeter* well into the future.

Oh, what a journey it will be. ■

Our "Pioneering" heritage, forging a vibrant industry from raw frontier land, has provided us with both a solemn obligation and an exciting opportunity for Making Life Sweeter well into the future.





Michigan Sugar's New President and CEO Bullish on the Co-op's Future

NEIL JUHNKE LOOKING TO CREATE THE 'BEST DAMN SUGAR COMPANY IN THE WORLD'

By Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

Neil Juhnke isn't shy about telling folks about his goal for Michigan Sugar Company: to be the "best damn sugar company in the world."

While he has been laser focused on that mission since taking over as President and CEO in early April, Juhnke has come to gain a deep appreciation for the history of the company and its strengths. He speaks openly and honestly about areas where improvements are expected to be made, but equally about the many things he believes work well.

Spend a few minutes talking to him and it's difficult to not be excited about the future.

"We wake up and get out of bed 3 miles ahead of the competition each morning," he states matter-of-factly. "We are blessed with one of the best sugarbeet growing regions in the country; we grow a high-yield crop with high sugar content and low production costs because we don't need to use irrigation; we have advantages with beet transportation and logistics because there are laws in place that allow us to do what we do cheaper than other places in the country; we are closest to major markets for sugar — Midwest food production facilities; and we are an independent, professional marketer of our products, which differentiates us from our competitors."



LEFT Michigan Sugar Company President and CEO Neil Juhnke speaks at a Tool Shed meeting in April.

BELOW Neil with Michigan Sugar Company Co-op Board Chairman Jim Roggenbuck.

On top of that, Neil is bullish both on Michigan Sugar's grower-owners and employees.

"We have very progressive and forward-thinking growers and sugarbeets aren't the only difficult crop they know how to grow," he said. "They also grow pickles, dry beans, and vegetables ... which gives our growers a world class agronomic skill set. Combine that with our very family friendly, strong, and talented work force and you have a recipe for success."

A CAREER IN AGRIBUSINESS

A native of North Dakota, Neil comes to Michigan Sugar Company to continue a career in the agribusiness sector that stretches back to 1990. He takes over for now-retired President and CEO Mark Flegenheimer, who led Michigan Sugar since the mid-1990s.

"My family and I are incredibly excited for the opportunity that lies ahead," said Juhnke, who began his career at American Crystal Sugar Company in Moorhead, Minnesota, and spent 15 years there working his way up to become Ag Operations Manager, where he was responsible for the harvest, storage, and transportation of the company's sugarbeet crop and served on the company's Executive Operating Committee.

Neil earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in 1990 from North Dakota State University and in 2002 completed the Essentials of Management Program at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

After leaving American Crystal in 2005, Juhnke pursued opportunities in the biofuels sector and formed his own consulting engineering company called Genesis Technology Group that specialized in guiding and advising clients in the areas of process engineering and improvements, greenfield business plan evaluation and development, and financial modeling.

He was instrumental in the founding and development of Northstar Agri Industries where he led the development and construction of a successful canola processing and refining plant near Hallock, Minnesota. In 2010, he became President and CEO, overseeing the processing of more than 400,000 tons of canola seed annually into canola oil and canola meal.

Most recently, Neil served as Vice President of Manufacturing and Operations for Fargo, North Dakota-based Red River Commodities Inc., a food processing company, with four divisions — including the well-known SunButter LLC — and seven factories spread across Kansas, North Dakota, and Texas. During his time there, Juhnke led a strategic operations initiative, improving the company's safety, capital deployment, plant maintenance, and production management processes.

"Michigan Sugar Company is fortunate to have found someone to lead our cooperative who has a resume of diverse business experiences and a proven track record in the agribusiness and food sectors," said Jim Roggenbuck, Michigan Sugar's Co-op Board Chairman. "Neil's manage-



ment strengths include strategic planning, business development, operations excellence, team building, problem solving, communications, shareholder relations, leadership, and development of enhanced employee engagement generating fundamental business success.

"Most importantly, he has a career rooted in the sugar industry. He knows how to make sugar and that is where our focus needs to be."

continued on page 8

The Juhnke File

ROOTS

Neil grew up in Larimore, North Dakota, 25 miles west of Grand Forks. He graduated from Larimore High School, whose mascot is the Polar Bears.

FAMILY

Neil married his wife Heidi in 1987. They have four children — Aaron, 34; David, 33; Daniel, 31; and Hannah, 28 — as well as four grandchildren — Madeline, Clara, William, and Frida.

Aaron lives in Moorhead, Minnesota, and Daniel lives in Ashville, North Carolina. Together, they are co-founders of Junkyard Brewing, a craft brewery based in Moorhead with a second location coming later this summer in West Fargo, North Dakota. Daniel also operates New Origin Brewing in Ashville.

David lives in the Detroit area and works as an Application Engineering Specialist for Graco, which specializes in the electrical vehicle market. He is engaged to Katelyn Graham.

Hannah is married to Marius Grossarth and lives in Duisburg, Germany. She has a degree in marketing and finance and works in the legal and contract procurement group for GEA, a global provider of food processing plants and technology.

PETS

Neil and Heidi are now living in Freeland with their bird dog, a Weimaraner named Wilma, and their cat named Simon.

FOOTBALL

Neil cheers for the North Dakota State University Bison and the Minnesota Vikings.

HOBBIES

In his free time, Neil enjoys a variety of outdoor activities, including hiking, hunting, fishing, golfing, and offroad motorcycle riding.

QUOTE

The sugarbeet industry flows in my veins, so to speak. And there is something intrinsically rewarding about working for a cooperative because you know the fruits of your efforts are going to the bottom line of farm families who are as invested in the community as anyone else. I've experienced every model of business — from publicly traded to privately owned — and I can't tell you how many benefits I see in working for a grower-owned company.

RIGHT Michigan Sugar Company President and CEO Neil Juhnke speaks during the 2023 Employee Service Awards.

BELOW Neil and his wife Heidi at the 2023 Michigan Sugar Festival in Sebawaing.



NO TIME TO WASTE

As he begins his tenure at Michigan Sugar, Neil says his most important initiative lies in making sugarbeet processing improvements inside Michigan Sugar's factories. He knows there will be challenges.

"We have the oldest fleet of factories in the sugarbeet industry," he said. "We also must revamp the way we hire, recruit, and retain our factory workforce as sugarbeet processing acumen and experience are two of the keys to our future success."

Specifically, Neil is looking for improvements in sugar boiling, beet end operation, maintenance and reliability, and planned outages. He's also working with senior leaders of the company to develop something called Michigan Sugar University where workers will be cross trained on different processes throughout the factories. And he's interested in onboarding more help in the form of experienced workers. Already, Neil has hired Randy Axtman, a 29-year sugar industry veteran, as Director of Operations, and Sean Richards, who also has significant experience in the sugar industry, as Director of Process Engineering. Neil also has plans to embed an additional training supervisor at each plant.

"It is vitally important our factories run effectively and efficiently so we can extract as much sugar as possible and return the most money possible to our grower-owners," he said. "We're in a very positive global sugar market environment right

CLOSING REMARKS

NEIL JUHNKE
PRESIDENT & CEO



now; market prices are historically high, so there is no time to waste in making sure we are capitalizing on the great potential we have."

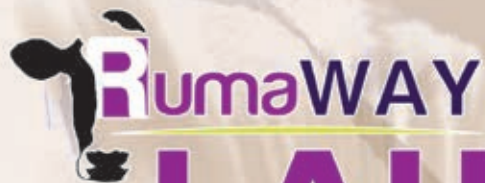
MEASURING SUCCESS

So, what does Neil mean when he says he wants Michigan Sugar to be the "best damn sugar company in the world?"

"It will be evidenced by the beet payment compared to domestic competitors," he said. "Internally, folks will feel it as a very well planned, non-chaotic, and efficient operation backed by strong communication, detailed planning, and precision execution.

"We have a very bright future ahead of us. To harvest and attain that future will take a lot of hard work, discipline, and attention to detail," he continued. "Everything we are talking about right now, from our molasses desugarization (MDS) project to how we recruit and train employees, starts with teamwork. Getting our crop in and under the best conditions is a team effort between our grower-owners and our management team. Extracting, packaging, selling, and shipping sugar is another area where teamwork is critical. And bringing our new MDS facility online and then delivering future capital projects on time and on budget will also take a team effort.

"It's about finding opportunities to improve upon things where we are underperforming and taking good things we are doing and making them great. It's all about raising the bar for a company that already does so many things well." ■



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SUGAR INDUSTRY OFFICIALS WORKING TO STRENGTHEN FARM BILL

By John Boothroyd, Manager of Government Relations

It feels like the Farm Bill has just passed, but believe it or not, it's that time again.

The 2018 Farm Bill expires on Sept. 30, and we have been diligently working to ensure that the Sugar Program is not only maintained but strengthened in the next Farm Bill. We are operating in tandem with the rest of the sugar industry to identify ways the Sugar Program can be updated to ensure continued growth and excellence in the domestic sugar industry.

In the wake of the significant supply chain issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the sugar industry has a powerful argument for why domestic production of sugar is integral, not only to the food supply chain, but to our national security. Our grower-owners and employees should take pride in the fact that of the many products that were hard to come by over the past three years, sugar was not one of them.

Without the Sugar Program, the United States would have been at the mercy of sugar imports coming in through clogged ports, with limited refining and packaging capacity to accommodate it. Had that been the case, American consumers would have had shortages, not just of bags of sugar, but products containing sugar, which importantly includes many medicines, notably most vaccines.

That is the message we are delivering to our elected officials, and it is being well received. However, the opponents of the Sugar Program are being equally diligent in their efforts to eliminate the program and make our country completely dependent on foreign dump-price sugar.

I am confident that if we stay active, and continue to invest in advocacy, we will successfully defend our industry once again.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

In 2021, the sugarbeet crop was subject to disastrous weather conditions. Excess rain and heat in September and October caused the crop to be extremely low quality.

Working with the United States Department of Agriculture, Michigan Sugar Company has come to an agreement to make our grower-owners partially whole from the losses experienced that year. More details on the agreement and the funds available is forthcoming.



Representing Michigan Sugar Company at the American Sugarbeet Growers Association's annual Summer Meeting held July 10-11, 2023, in Portland, Oregon, are, from left, Adam Herford, Clint Hagen, Dean Haubenstricker, John Boothroyd, Scott Smith, and Ben Wilson. They are shown here touring a seed production field near Salem, Oregon.

ASGA SUMMER MEETING

On July 10 and 11, representatives from Michigan Sugar Company traveled to Portland, Oregon, for the American Sugarbeet Growers Association's annual Summer Meeting. The group took tours of sugarbeet seed fields and sugarbeet seed production facilities.

Additionally, Michigan Sugar's representatives — grower-owners Adam Herford, Clint Hagen, Dean Haubenstricker, Scott Smith, Ben Wilson, and Manager of Government Relations John Boothroyd — participated in ASGA's board meeting. This was the last board meeting before the Farm Bill and served as an opportunity to finalize the sugarbeet industry's priorities for maintaining and improving the Sugar Program and the farm safety net. ■



John Boothroyd is Michigan Sugar Company's Manager of Government Relations. He joined the company in 2018 after working four years for U.S. Rep. John Moolenaar. He and his wife Katherine have four children and live in Midland.

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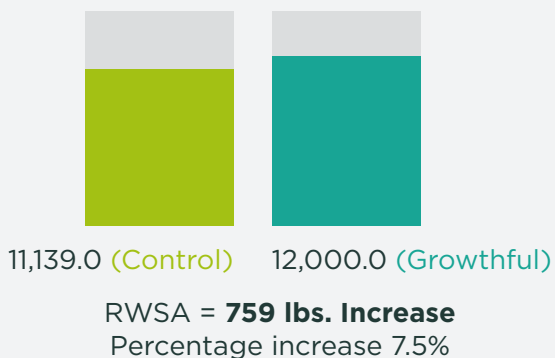
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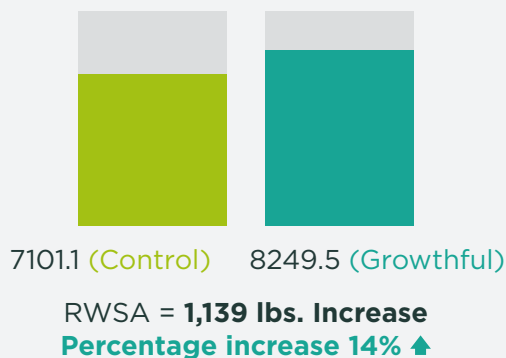
Michigan Sugar Company conducted replicated field trial testing, using various applications with successful results on all.



RWSA 2021 — Foliar Results



RWSA 2022 — Foliar Results



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LEARN MORE

Corey Guza Earns The Nature Conservancy's 2022 Conservation Excellence Agribusiness Award

By Ben Wickerham, The Nature Conservancy

As Michigan Sugar Company's Director of Research and Agronomy, Corey Guza, Ph.D., is working to advance the company's sustainability efforts while at the same time increase production and profitability on the cooperative's nearly 850 family farms.

For his efforts, Guza was honored earlier this year as the recipient of The Nature Conservancy's 2022 Conservation Excellence Agribusiness Award. The award was presented Tuesday, Jan. 10, during the Michigan Agri-Business Association's 90th annual Winter Conference and Trade Show at The Lansing Center.

"At The Nature Conservancy, we are proud to partner with innovators across the agriculture sector to help implement healthy soil practices that grow better crops, improve water quality, and help protect fields against severe weather events like drought and downpours," said Ben Wickerham, Agriculture Program Director for The Nature Conservancy in Michigan. "Corey has been a leading voice in supporting sustainable sugarbeet farming practices and his efforts have made an indelible impact on Michigan agriculture."

Last year, The Nature Conservancy, in partnership with Michigan Sugar, received a \$1.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help offset costs for farmers who want to implement strip tillage on their sugarbeet farms. Over the next four years, The Nature Conservancy and Michigan Sugar will work to convert up to 10 sugarbeet farms in the Saginaw Valley to strip tillage and treat more than 6,000 acres with strip till and cover crops.

"My focus on sustainability at Michigan Sugar Company has been studying production practices that improve sugarbeet production and profitability in an environmentally sound manner. The focus in this area includes studying nutrient management and the relationship between nutrients, the environment, and sugarbeet production," said Guza. "It is an honor to be recognized by The Nature Conservancy and I accept this award on behalf of the entire Michigan Sugar team that is working toward a more sustainable future."

"It truly is a team effort."



Corey Guza, Ph.D., left, receives The Nature Conservancy's 2022 Conservation Excellence Agribusiness Award from Ben Wickerham, Agriculture Program Director for The Nature Conservancy in Michigan, during the Michigan Agri-Business Association's 90th annual Winter Conference and Trade Show held Jan. 10 at The Lansing Center.

Guza was raised on a sugarbeet, dry bean, corn, soybean, wheat, and dairy farm near Harbor Beach. He earned his bachelor's degree in crop and soil sciences from Michigan State University, his master's degree in crop science from Oregon State University, and his doctorate in crop and soil sciences focused on extension and studying the relationship between corn and weeds from MSU.

He came to work as an Agronomist at Michigan Sugar in 2003. He later worked for Winfield United, a division of Land O'Lakes, as a Region Agronomist covering Michigan, Ontario, Quebec, and parts of Ohio and Indiana. He returned to Michigan Sugar in the fall of 2016 as the Director of Agronomy.

MSC'S DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND AGRONOMY A LEADER IN HELPING SUGARBEET FARMS IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE GROWING PRACTICES

During his time at Michigan Sugar, Guza has worked with staff to identify research opportunities, evaluate data, and assist field consultants and growers with educational training and support. His long-time support for and dedication to Saginaw Valley farmers has positioned him as a trusted advisor to both sugarbeet growers and his research peers.

"Corey has spent more than a decade supporting Michigan's sugarbeet growers and we have no doubt his efforts will be felt by generations of family farmers," said James Ruhlman, Executive Vice President at Michigan Sugar Company. "The sugarbeet industry is quickly becoming a champion for sustainable agriculture, and here in Michigan that credit goes to Corey, along with our world class research and agronomy team, and our farming families."

Last year, Guza led Michigan Sugar in co-developing a conservation proposal that netted nearly \$1 million to support education and training, promotion, and technical assistance for the adoption of climate-smart practices in Michigan's sugarbeet-growing region. These efforts will help the cooperative better estimate climate-smart practice benefits within sugarbeet production.

Guza also has been advancing Michigan Sugar's sustainability mission through the exploration of conservation-related research trials, including using compost as a nematode deterrent, rye cover crops as an invasive weed deterrent, and multiple 4R-related fertilizer application methods for sugarbeets.

"I applaud Corey and Michigan Sugar Company for earning this recognition," said Chuck Lippstreu, President of the Michigan Agri-Business Association, and a member of The Nature Conservancy in Michigan's Board of Trustees. "I want to thank them for their commitment to advancing Michigan agriculture, and for partnering with farmers and organizations such as The Nature Conservancy to advance on-farm stewardship. ■



Ben Wickerham joined the Nature Conservancy in August 2015 and currently serves as Agriculture Program Director in Michigan. Before joining TNC, he spent two years as a Watershed Technician for the Gratiot Conservation District, implementing a sediment-reduction project in the upper Saginaw Bay watershed.



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DESIGN YOUR SPRAY PROGRAMS FOR CERCOSPORA AND ALTERNARIA BASED ON THE VARIETY OF SEED PLANTED

By Kevin Messing, Agronomy Leader

Cercospora and Alternaria leafspot are two of the largest causes of economic loss to sugarbeet growers and Michigan Sugar Company. Over the last 10 years, we've seen the impact poor control can have on sugarbeet quality, storage, and grower return. However, leafspot can be effectively managed through a multi-step approach.

Selecting varieties with strong genetic tolerance to leafspot is the most important step in building a successful plan. Next, designing a solid fungicide program to keep the crop clean is crucial. When both varieties with good genetic tolerance and an effective fungicide program are used, growers have a high chance of successfully controlling leafspot.

Due to the direction set by Michigan Sugar Company's Seed Committee and the company's variety approval process, we've seen significant improvement in genetic tolerance brought to market by seed companies. Since the introduction of CR+ varieties with increased leafspot tolerance, we've seen quick adoption of this trait by Michigan Sugar's grower-owners. This year, approximately 60% of acres were planted to these highly tolerant varieties. While these varieties require fewer fungicide applications for season-long control compared to standard

varieties, several things remain constant regardless of variety:

COVERAGE

Good coverage is key to increase disease control with crop protection products. Protectant products such as tin, EBDC, and copper especially benefit from good coverage as they are only active where they land on plant leaves.

Results from Michigan Sugar Company research suggest a minimum of 20 gallons of water per acre should be used to optimize spray coverage. Growers should select nozzles and pressures to produce medium to fine droplets size. This will allow maximum coverage without losing active ingredient to fines that evaporate before reaching the target.

FULL-SEASON PROTECTION

While starting applications early has become standard practice, we need to remain vigilant to ensure the crop is protected to provide season-long control. Going into the season with a strong plan for fungicide application is key, however, weather can have an impact on its performance and growers should be ready to adapt.

In general, variety tolerance can help determine how long fields may need to be protected during the growing season. Varieties with

high genetic tolerance will need to be protected until mid-September. Moderately tolerant varieties should have protection until late-September, and susceptible varieties will need protection through late-September and possibly October during times of high pressure.

The 2022 growing season saw the eastern growing region suffer severe drought through a large portion of the growing season. As a result, grower programs were very effective and very little leafspot was observed. Contrast that with some western growing regions where there was ample rainfall that resulted in higher pressure. As a result, some growers observed fields that could have benefited from one more application of fungicide at the end of the growing season.

As genetic tolerance of varieties continues to increase and fungicide applications are less frequent, scouting will be essential for determining the need for late-season applications. Beetcast is a tool that will become more important to understand disease pressure to determine when to apply fungicides and whether extra applications are required for season-long control.

continued on page 14

RESISTANCE MANAGEMENT

To maintain our current fungicides, all growers need to practice resistance management.

The most important step to combat leafspot becoming resistant to systemic fungicides is to always use a protectant tank-mix partner such as EBDC or copper. In some cases, Topsin can be used as a third tank-mix partner to increase effectiveness of an application. Protectants are very important because they offer a different site of action compared to systemic fungicides like triazoles or strobilurins. This takes pressure off the systemic while adding another defense against leafspot infection.

Rotating systemics is also vitally important to combat resistance and it is not recommended to use triazoles in back-to-back applications. Premixed products that include multiple modes of action are very effective, however

it can become difficult to develop a proper rotation. In those cases, the use of Tin is a great tool to combat leafspot while rotating between modes of action.

STANDARD VARIETIES

Applications should start early to prevent infection, often in late June. Fungicides are preventative and applications need to be made before symptoms are observed. On standard varieties, fungicide applications should take place every 14 days, or less, depending on weather and products used. Most products have a 14-day re-application interval with normal conditions, but when EBDC or coppers are used alone, re-application should take place in 7 to 10 days. This approach of making applications on the 1st and 15th of the month has been successful for several years.

CR+ VARIETIES

While CR+ varieties require fewer overall fungicide applications, they should be treated like any other variety at the beginning stages of a control program. An early EBDC application in late June is crucial to setting yourself up for season-long control. The late June application should be followed by a tank-mix application in early July, early August, and a final application in early September. Since CR+ varieties were introduced, trials have shown that making applications the 1st of every month has provided adequate control in most situations.

BEETCAST IS BACK

With lengthened re-application intervals of CR+ varieties, a calendar program doesn't consider the weather conditions and disease pressure we see over four weeks. Another strategy that can take weather into account

BELOW On the left is a standard variety of sugarbeet that is resistant to leafspot and on the right is a highly tolerant CR+ variety.





ABOVE LEFT An image of *Alternaria* on a sugarbeet leaf.



ABOVE RIGHT A look at active *Cercospora* on a sugarbeet leaf.

is using a Beetcast-based plan of tank-mix applications starting at 55 DSVs and re-applying every time another 55 DSVs accumulate. This plan would consider periods of time with higher rainfall and humidity that are conducive to disease development.

BUILDING YOUR PROGRAM

The wide range of genetic tolerance to leafspot can create a challenge when putting together a program that is easy to follow depending on the variety mix that growers chose to plant.

For those growing all standard varieties, the 1st and 15th program has become the norm and has performed well (Table 1). For farms that planted all CR+ varieties this year, an early EBDC followed by the first of each month is an easy program to follow that has shown good results (Table 2). For growers utilizing both CR+ and standard varieties, it may be beneficial to design a program that allows for the same fungicide to be applied during weeks when both CR+ and standard varieties are getting an application (Table 3). ■



Kevin Messing is an Agronomy Leader at Michigan Sugar Company overseeing the agronomy staff in the East District. He has been with Michigan Sugar since 2013. He and his wife Sarah have two daughters and live in Ubyly.

2023 Example Spray Programs

Three example spray programs based on whether a grower planted standard seed varieties, CR+ varieties, or a combination of the two:

TABLE 1. STANDARD SPRAY PROGRAM

DATE	PRODUCT
June 26	EBDC
July 6	Triazole+EBDC
July 20	Tin+Topsin+EBDC
Aug. 3	Triazole+EBDC
Aug. 17	Tin+EBDC
Sept. 2	Triazole+EBDC
Sept. 16	Copper+EBDC

TABLE 2. CR+ SPRAY PROGRAM

DATE	PRODUCT
June 26	EBDC
July 5	Triazole+EBDC
Aug. 3	Tin+Topsin+EBDC
Sept. 2	Triazole+EBDC

TABLE 3. STANDARD & CR+ SPRAY PROGRAM

DATE	STANDARD	CR+
June 26	EBDC	EBDC
July 6	Triazole+EBDC	Triazole+EBDC
July 20	Tin+EBDC	
Aug. 3	Stobilurin+Topsin+EBDC	Stobilurin+Topsin+EBDC
Aug. 17	Triazole+EBDC	
Sept. 2	Tin+EBDC	Tin+EBDC



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Proper Nutrient Ratios Can Increase Profitability

MICHIGAN SUGAR RESEARCH FOCUSES ON STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE TONNAGE, SUGAR CONTENT

By Corey Guza, Ph.D., Director of Research & Agronomy

Increasing recoverable white sugar per ton (RWST) by 1 pound in sugarbeets throughout Michigan Sugar Company's growing area can result in an increase in the beet payment to grower-owners of \$15 per acre.

This assumes the price of sugar sold is 50 cents per pound, yield is 30 tons per acre, and total acreage grown is 145,000.

Focusing on potential revenue gained by increasing RWST can change the way return on investment is calculated. This is especially the case with inputs that have an impact on RWST such as nitrogen and potash.

continued on page 20



Corey Guza, Ph.D., is Director of Research and Agronomy at Michigan Sugar Company. He works with staff to identify research opportunities, evaluate data, and assist field consultants and growers with educational training and support.

Balancing nitrogen (N) input rates with potassium (K) is a reliable strategy to improve sugarbeet tonnage and positively impact sugar content at harvest. The elected ratio will impact nutrient partitioning to above-ground biomass and below-ground root development. When N availability is high relative to K, the nutrient balance typically delivers increased tonnage with more impurities and decreased sugar content.

Over the last couple years, Michigan Sugar Company conducted research with the objective of identifying N:K ratio input strategies that improve both tonnage and sugar content/quality. The initial protocol included three N rates (0-, 80-, and 160-pound actual N) each combined with three potassium rates (0-, 150-, and 300-pound actual K) for a total of nine treatments with 0-pound N x 0-pound K serving as the untreated check.

A relationship between N and K was demonstrated in early research trials. As expected, tonnage and recoverable white sugar per acre (RWSA) generally increased as the N rate increased (Table 1). When K was added to the treatments however, RWST tended to increase and, often, RWST and tons per acre together resulted in an overall higher RWSA.

Subsequent research then shifted to study the impact K rate had on N rates as high as 200 pounds per acre actual N (Table 2).

Increased RWSA generally equals increased revenue for both Michigan Sugar Company and its grower-owners. However, additional profitability can be realized when the increased RWSA is a result of increased RWST.

Currently, the beet payment per acre is calculated by multiplying the grower's RWSA by cents per pound. To find the potential additional

value of a nutrient that can increase RWST to overall revenue per acre, multiply RWSA gain from applying the nutrient by beet payment cents per pound. Then, add to that RWST gain from the added nutrient multiplied by \$15 per acre to result in a Gross Potential Profit per Acre (Table 3.)

To calculate Net Potential Profit per Acre, subtract cost of the nutrients applied from Gross Potential Profit per Acre. Prices for UAN (urea-ammonium nitrate) 28% and potash, the source of N and K in this study, were \$599 and \$650 per ton, respectively. The beet payment used in this study was 18 cents per pound.

Data thus far explains that K applications with adequate N availability can improve sugarbeet tons per acre, sugar content, and profitability. Balance in nutrition may be as important as amount of nutrients when it comes to potential revenue per acre from a sugarbeet crop. ■



TABLE 1. **N&K – 2020 & 2021**

N RATE	K RATE	RWST	T/A	RWSA
160	0	-3	15.5	3,951
160	150	19	14.2	4,164
160	300	14	14.9	4,191
80	0	10	10.8	3,019
80	150	13	11.9	3,409
80	300	27	10.8	3,473
0	0	0	0	0
0	150	-1	1.9	540
0	300	22	1.2	692

- a. 150 lbs. actual K (250 lbs. potash), 300 lbs. actual K (500 lbs. potash) applied PPI in the Spring
- b. Total N Rate = 0 or 40 lb. N applied 2x2 + Remainder side dress at 6-lf (40 lb. or 120 lb.)
- c. 40 lbs. actual N (13 gal/A UAN 28%), 120 lbs. N (40 gal/A UAN 28%)
- d. RWST, T/A and RWSA are expressed as the difference between the 0 rate and added nutrients.

TABLE 2. **N&K – 2021 & 2022**

N RATE	K RATE	RWST	T/A	RWSA
200	0	-34	14.3	2,864
200	150	-21	14.2	3,350
200	300	-5	16.7	4,421
160	0	-17	10.5	2,392
160	150	3	14.0	3,952
160	300	2	13.0	3,589
80	0	5	8.9	2,521
80	150	6	11.8	3,420
80	300	22	8.2	3,860

- a. 150 lbs. actual K (250 lbs. potash), 300 lbs. actual K (500 lbs. potash) applied PPI in the Spring
- b. Total N Rate = 40 lb. N applied 2x2 + Remainder side dress at 6-lf (40 lb., 120 lb., 160 lb.)
- c. 40 lbs. actual N (13 gal/A UAN 28%), 120 lbs. N (40 gal/A UAN 28%), 160 lbs. N (53 gal/A UAN 28%)
- d. RWST, T/A and RWSA are expressed as the difference between the 0 rate and added nutrients.

TABLE 2. **N&K – 2021 & 2022**

N RATE	K RATE	GROSS \$/A	NET \$/A
200	0	5.52	-202.23
200	150	295.50	6.50
200	300	720.78	350.53
160	0	182.97	17.67
160	150	748.77	502.22
160	300	676.02	348.22
80	0	521.28	438.78
80	150	705.60	541.85
80	300	1,024.71	779.71

- a. 150 lbs. actual K (250 lbs. potash), 300 lbs. actual K (500 lbs. potash) applied PPI in the Spring
- b. Total N Rate = 40 lb. N applied 2x2 + Remainder side dress at 6-lf (40 lb., 120 lb., 160 lb.)
- c. 40 lbs. actual N (13 gal/A UAN 28%), 120 lbs. N (40 gal/A UAN 28%), 160 lbs. N (53 gal/A UAN 28%)
- d. Prices for UAN 28% and Potash, the source of N and K in this study were \$599 and \$650 per ton, respectively. Grower beet payment used was 18 cents per lb.

AGRONOMY





ABOVE Ventilated sugarbeet piles are started at a Michigan Sugar Company piling ground.

LEFT A closer look at the ventilation system used to regulate the temperature inside sugarbeet piles. These piles were at Michigan Sugar Company's Blumfield Township piling station.

RIGHT Non-ventilated pile of sugarbeets at Michigan Sugar Company's piling ground in Sandusky.



Examining Beet Storage Methods at Michigan Sugar

By Tommy Bignall, Vice President of Agriculture

As Michigan Sugar Company officials look at factory performance and slice rates, it is understood that beet quality going into the factories plays a big part in factory performance.

Michigan winters are without a doubt getting milder each year and winter temperatures, on average, are increasing. In fact, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration — or NOAA — the average winter temperature in Michigan has risen by about 5 degrees since 1970. On top of that, we've seen massive temperature swings during the slicing campaign, including a recent year when temperatures ranged from -15 degrees to 55 degrees. These types

CHANGES IN WEATHER, DESIRE TO IMPROVE BEET QUALITY, FACILITATING THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL VENTILATED PILES

of swings make it very challenging to maintain a high level of beet quality in Michigan Sugar's beet piles.

Furthermore, NOAA reports that since 1970, our area of the state has seen a 7-day drop in the number of nights below 32 degrees recorded each year. It's no secret sugarbeets in storage prefer cold temperatures, so this, too, is reason for concern and diligence.

We must always examine how we are storing beets and look for ways to improve storage conditions.

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MICHIGAN SUGAR COMPANY EMPLOYS THREE TYPES OF BEET STORAGE METHODS:

- 1. TRADITIONAL, NON-VENTILATED PILES** these are normal storage piles that are built to a height of 18 feet. They are the most common type of storage at Michigan Sugar and require no additional cost to operate. These non-vented beets are always the first beets to be processed and they generally last until early or mid-February.
- 2. TRADITIONAL VENTILATED PILES** These piles generally have 30- or 32-inch tubes and manifolds/plenums with fans that force air into the tubes and out into the beet piles. These systems have been engineered by Techmark, a long-time partner of Michigan Sugar Company. The general concept is to try to maintain 34-degrees inside these beet piles. The fans will run between 28 and 40 degrees, but only if the internal pile temperature requires cooling.

For example, if it is 34 degrees outside and the pile temperature is at 33.5 degrees, the fans will not run. However, if it is 34 degrees outside and the pile temperature is 37 degrees, the fans will run to lower the pile temperature closer to 34 degrees. Again, the goal is to consistently maintain a 34-degree temperature inside the pile throughout the storage season. Michigan Sugar generally begins processing these beets in February.
- 3. HOOP BUILDINGS** Michigan Sugar has hoop buildings in Sebewaing and Crosswell. These buildings are approximately 200 feet wide by 600 feet long. Beets are piled inside to a height of 30 feet. Michigan Sugar targets the same internal pile temperature of 34 degrees for the hoop buildings as is maintained for traditional ventilated piles. The plenum systems used to force air into the piles can draw in colder air from the outside or warmer air from inside the buildings. By capturing the warmer air inside of the building and blending it with outside air, more run-time on the fans can be attained, which helps maintain the target temperature of 34 degrees.



ABOVE, TOP Sugarbeets are piled inside the hoop building at Michigan Sugar Company's Sebewaing piling ground. **ABOVE** Hoop buildings are set up with a ventilation system that can draw in both interior and exterior air to regulate the temperature of the sugarbeet piles inside. The goal is to maintain a temperature close to 34 degrees.



Tommy Bignall is the Vice President of Agriculture for Michigan Sugar Company. He joined the company in the early 1990s before serving in the United States Army from 1994 to 1999. He returned to Michigan Sugar in 2008. He and his wife Guadalupe live in Sebewaing. They have four children.

There are eight air plenums on each hoop building — four on each side of the building. Each plenum is equipped with four fans, for a total of 32 fans in each of the buildings. The hoop building beets are the last beets processed each campaign in Sebewaing and Croswell. While this is by far Michigan Sugar's most quality storage method, it is important to note the cost of constructing each building now is estimated at about \$7 million.

Michigan Sugar Company currently stores about 30 percent of its permanent-piled beets (long-term storage) over a ventilation system. By comparison, Minn-Dak Farmers' Cooperative is at about 70 percent, Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative is at 50 to 55 percent, and American Crystal Sugar Company is at about 45 to 50 percent.

The consensus at Michigan Sugar is that we should target piling 50 percent of our beets over a ventilation system each year. That would be an increase of 20 percent, or roughly 600,000 additional tons of vented beets.

Everything done at Michigan Sugar on the beet storage and beet piling side of the business revolves around getting the best raw material into the factories. The higher the quality of the beet going into the factories, the higher the extraction and sugar production will be on the other end. Higher extraction and higher sugar production lead to more sugar to sell.

The last few years, Michigan Sugar has seen a drop in beet quality between the non-ventilated and ventilated beets, and between ventilated and hoop building beets. Adding some ventilated storage systems to the existing beet storage assets would result in higher quality beets going into the factories, which, in turn, should help produce a better return to the company's grower-owners. ■



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INAUGURAL MICHIGAN SUGAR BEET SUMMIT A SWEET SUCCESS

SECOND ANNUAL EVENT SET FOR FEB. 8, 2024, AT SVSU *By Michigan Sugar Company*

On the heels of a successful, first-ever Michigan Sugar Beet Summit that drew more than 280 Michigan Sugar Company shareholders, employees, and industry professionals, a second summit is being planned for Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024, at Saginaw Valley State University.

The inaugural summit took place this past February at SVSU and included a variety of sugarbeet-related sessions.

The morning began with a keynote session featuring Michigan Sugar Company Director of Research and Agronomy Corey Guza, Ph.D., who reviewed the year's research results and provided recommendations for the next year. His talk included clear insights on the 2022 crop and trends the Michigan Sugar research team saw going into 2023. Guza reviewed weather conditions and trends for 2022 and provided thoughts on what impacts weather had on the crop quality.

That led nicely into the second keynote session featuring Mark Torregrossa, Chief Meteorologist for MLive Media Group. Mark provided a lively, entertaining, and informative update on Michigan and regional weather patterns, upcoming trends, and predictions for spring planting and the summer growing season.

As the keynote sessions concluded, event organizers cut the group loose in SVSU's Curtiss Hall. Armed with the summit brochure containing the session locations and schedule, attendees had the freedom to plan their day as they wished, with 10 different breakout session topics running at multiple times during the day. Conversations of "Where are you going next?" and "I don't want to miss this next session" were heard throughout the day. Session topics included:

- Improving Sugarbeet Planting
- Building and Running Effective MAUS and Harvest Groups — panel discussion
- Sugarbeet Advancement Reporting
- Maximizing Crop Insurance in Sugarbeets
- MSC Cooperative Governance, Structure and Stockholder Expectations
- Leafspot Strategies and Fungicide Efficacy in Sugarbeets
- Variable Rate Planting
- MSC Factory Processing Updates & Details
- Understanding the Beet Payment
- Farm Succession Planning



ABOVE Michigan Sugar Company Agronomist Cassie Sneller and Agronomy Leader Kevin Messing lead a session titled "Variable Rate Planting" during the 2023 Michigan Sugar Beet Summit.

While all the sessions provided great information and were well attended, some clear favorites stood out. The MAUS and Harvest Groups panel discussion was so well attended it was standing room only, and even ran over on time with all the conversation and questions. Other favorites included Leafspot Strategies and Fungicide Efficacy in Sugarbeets, MSC Factory Processing Updates & Details, Variable Rate Planting and Understanding the Beet Payment.

The day continued into the afternoon, and Michigan Cream & Sugar Ice Cream Company was on hand to give shareholders a needed pick-me-up of locally sourced ice cream (made with Pioneer Sugar, of course).

By late afternoon, attendees headed out, armed with loads of new information and plans for the spring. It was a day of collaboration, education, and conversation and truly representative of the cooperative spirit.

Stay tuned for more details about the second Michigan Sugar Beet Summit coming in February 2024. ■

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MDS RISING

WHERE WE STAND WITH ONE OF MICHIGAN SUGAR COMPANY'S MOST SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS IN HISTORY

By Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

It's a warm, mid-April morning in Bay City and the sun has just begun to ascend in the eastern sky.

Today, presents a window of opportunity.

Just a stone's throw from Michigan Sugar Company's 122-year-old Bay City sugarbeet processing factory, a project of historic proportions is rising — one that will help ensure the success of the cooperative for generations to come.

Around the office and at the construction site, it's known as the "MDS" project — a 22,000-square-foot, three-story molasses desugarization facility that when completed will allow Michigan Sugar Company to process 100% of the molasses it produces as a byproduct of the sugar extraction process. "Desugaring" all the molasses will allow Michigan Sugar to produce up to an additional 80 million pounds of pure, all-natural sugar annually without planting another acre of sugarbeets.

With temperatures pushing above 70 degrees on this beautiful spring day, a crew of more than a dozen workers from MDS civil and structural contractor Pumford Construction Inc. has arrived early to begin pouring concrete on one of the upper-level decks of the new facility.

Though each person on the crew has their own duties, the team works in unison much the way a symphony performs music. They are aided by

a new, high-tech piece of equipment called a Somero Line Dragon — a small, remote-controlled cart on wheels that helps maneuver the lines pumping concrete to the site. The carts replace six to eight workers who otherwise would be maneuvering the heavy lines by hand.

In stark contrast, the members of the finishing crew who are present work with simple tools like screeds, bull floats, finishing trowels, and even good old 2-by-4 pieces of wood to help smooth the concrete.

"It is like an orchestra where the director is taking all the parts to make great music," said James Jacobs, Vice President of Corporate Accounts at Saginaw-based Pumford Construction. "If someone is off, it throws the whole thing off."

The crew moves quickly and efficiently. In less than a day's time, the floor is placed and begins curing.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

When the new facility begins coming online in July 2024, it will allow Michigan Sugar Company to process as much as 650 tons of molasses daily, up from the current amount of 325 tons per day. With equipment installed in the 1990s, the Bay City operation can currently extract additional sugar from only 60% of the company's molasses byproduct.

continued on page 30



LEFT Foundations and pads for equipment were poured in the fall of 2022 at the MDS project site in Bay City.

MDS BY THE NUMBERS

\$109 MILLION
COST OF PROJECT

766 TONS
OF STRUCTURAL STEEL

18 MILES OF CABLE

3,000 FEET
OF FIBER FOR NETWORK

22,000
SQUARE FEET OF FACILITY

10.4 MILES OF PIPING

180 MOTORS

500 INSTRUMENTS

6 EVAPORATORS

4,866 CUBIC YARDS
OF CONCRETE

3 PROGRAMMABLE LOGIC CONTROLLERS
— industrial microprocessor-based controllers with programmable memory used to store program instructions and various functions

33,000 TONS
OF CAPACITY IN
NEW EXTRACT TANK

24 SEPARATOR COLUMNS

3,400 FEET OF CABLE TRAY



LEFT Michigan Sugar Company's new MDS facility features 24 separator columns.

From an economic standpoint, the difference is significant: once operational, the new facility is expected to add on average over a 10-year period, roughly \$18 million annually to the beet payment — the money paid to Michigan Sugar's nearly 850 grower-owners. That's up from initial estimates of more than \$14 million annually when ground was broken on the project in June 2022.

"From a capital investment standpoint, given current and projected sugar prices, this is simply the best opportunity to implement new technology for the cooperative, both in terms of sustainability and the bottom line," said Michigan Sugar Company President and CEO Neil Juhnke. "Simply put, using this technology, we can extract and sell more sugar without planting, grow-

ing, or harvesting any more sugarbeets, extracting significant value from our byproduct molasses.

"And we'll be able to produce that added sugar without any additional passes over our farm fields with our equipment, without any further spraying of our crops to ward off disease and pests, and without burning any additional fuel on farms to expand operations. From both an economic and environmental sustainability perspective, this project is a home run."

Juhnke explained that 1 ton of molasses contains about 1,000 pounds of sugar. Michigan Sugar's current desugarization equipment captures about 700 pounds of sugar from molasses.

"The new equipment will capture 800 pounds, an increase of more than 14%," Juhnke said. "This is one of the most substantial investments made in the history of our company and will put Michigan Sugar Company in the lead in comparison to other sugar producers across the United States."

CHANGING COST PROJECTIONS

When Michigan Sugar Company announced the MDS project during a public celebration in August 2021, the estimated cost to build the new facility was about \$66 million. It soon became clear that due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing global supply chain issues — including a 20% increase in wages and 15% increase in materials expense — the cost of the project was going to rise.



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COVER STORY

ABOVE A crew from Pumford Construction Inc. works to place a concrete floor at Michigan Sugar's MDS facility in April 2023.

Estimates in the spring of 2022 put the cost of the project at about \$76.5 million.

Upon more recent analysis, however, Michigan Sugar Company officials now estimate the total investment will be about \$108.9 million, a \$32.4 million increase from 2022 estimates. In addition to significant upticks in wage rates and material costs, there are four primary drivers of the projected cost increase:

- Electrical distribution and transformer work.
- Piping and valve systems materials and installation.
- Molasses unloading, not included in the original project cost.
- Juice softening equipment and installation in two of Michigan Sugar's other factories that will produce "soft" molasses that is required to enable the new technology to operate properly.

"This is certainly difficult news to learn and digest, but the budget we are now working with is comprehensive and we feel confident taking it to our grower-owners," said Juhnke.

The project cost increase has been presented to both the company's Co-op Board of Directors and its lead lender. The additional funding will be sourced from a combination of bank debt and unit retains from shareholders.

"We are fortunate to have an excellent relationship with our bank group," said Michigan Sugar Company Chief Financial Officer Brian Haraga. "It's one thing to finance a project before ground is broken; it's another to make this type of adjustment after you are well into construction. We have worked hard to build up a lot of credibility with our bank group over the course of our nearly 20-year relationship."

Haraga said the loan for the additional funding is expected to be paid in full around August 2027.

Juhnke scheduled CEO meetings in July with grower-owners in each of Michigan Sugar's growing districts — including a meeting in Canada for the cooperative's 85 shareholders there — to further discuss, among other topics, the current state of the MDS project.

NEXT STEPS

For Nick Klein, Michigan Sugar Company's Vice President of Operations, watching the MDS facility rise from an open swath of dirt has been amazing and rewarding.



ABOVE RIGHT Stairs are installed at the MDS facility in Bay City. **ABOVE** A look at the tops of some of the separators at Michigan Sugar's MDS facility in Bay City.

"As each week passes, you see the project advance in both big and small ways," said Klein. "One week, it might involve constructing block walls or adding siding to the structure, other weeks it involves erecting steel or installing the impressive equipment that will make this facility run."

Among those installations is new juice softening equipment installed at Michigan Sugar Company's factories in Caro and Sebewaing, Klein said, noting that when factories desugar molasses, they need the molasses to be soft.

"We have juice softening equipment already in Bay City and we installed juice softening equipment at our factory in Croswell as part of a recent capital upgrade of that facility," Klein explained. "Now, we have added that equipment in Caro and Sebewaing, which means those factories, and those communities, also are benefiting from the MDS investment."

Other equipment of note being installed in the new MDS facility are 24 separator columns, six evaporators, and numerous pressure vessels that arrived in Bay City on Nov. 22, 2022, aboard a 475-foot-long general cargo vessel called the BBC Song. The equipment was designed in Germany by ESCON Engineering Services & Consulting GmbH.

Also being constructed near the new MDS facility is a 33,000-gallon extract tank that will hold the juice containing the sugar once it is extracted from the molasses. That sugar will then head to the Bay City factory for granulation.

The civil and structural construction of the MDS facility is now nearly complete and the project team at Michigan Sugar is preparing to enter the next phase of the project that involves electrical and mechanical contractors working in a phased approach to install power distribution, instrumentation, and controls cabling, as well as lighting and the main cable trays that hold all the wiring.

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COVER STORY



Installation of the motor control center will follow that. Then, on the mechanical side, piping and valve installation will begin on multiple levels with contractors working in coordination to limit scheduling conflicts.

"We'll have to leave some openings in the building, so we are able to fly in additional equipment as the project moves forward," said Klein. "Those openings will be covered by removable doors for future maintenance work — big bay doors we can lift off with a crane, so we don't have to tear apart the building like is required when we do major upgrades at our other, much older, buildings"

Michigan Sugar Company has contracted with the firm Questant Inc. to support cost management efforts, as well as develop an earned value plan for contracts, focus on change order reduction and management, and provide monthly performance and metrics reporting. Michigan Sugar has also brought on McGough, a construction management company, to provide on-site superintendent and scheduling services and oversee the coordination of contractors, among other tasks.

Furthermore, Michigan Sugar Company recently hired Randy Axtman as its new Director of Operations, overseeing processing at the Bay City factory, as well as the MDS project. Randy comes to Michigan Sugar after working 29 years at American Crystal Sugar Company, most recently as Factory Manager at the company's factory in Moorhead, Minnesota. During his time at American Crystal, one of the projects Randy was involved with was the construction of a molasses desugarization facility in Hillsboro, Minnesota, in 1999.

"We have learned a lot about a project of this magnitude," said Klein. "As we move into the next phase of construction, it will be beneficial to have experts from Questant and McGough working alongside our team to help manage this project."

Work on the new facility is expected to be wrapped up by March 2024 at which time a 75-day process will begin to shut down and modify the existing desugarization equipment in Bay City, complete tie-ins with the new facility, and move some of the existing equipment into the new facility.

The new facility is expected to come online by July 2024 with production being ramped up over several months and full capacity expected by October 2024.

"For me, it's been a dream come true to be part of the largest investment in the company's history in a project that checks all the boxes for sustainability," said Klein. "It's been rewarding, and I've been proud to be part of it."

LEFT Crews work on one of the decks surrounding six evaporators, three of which are pictured here.

'IT'S BEEN A LOT OF FUN'

It's now mid-June and a crew from MDS project subcontractor Wendling Sheet Metal is taking advantage of another picture-perfect day to install siding on the north side of the facility.

Large slabs of siding are easily lifted into place by a machine called a Clad-Boy that uses suction to clamp down on the pieces before they are secured into place.

It's another visible sign of progress.

"We've been doing business with Michigan Sugar and its predecessors since the 1970s or 1980s. Being part of your largest investment to date is extra special to us," said Pumford Construction's James Jacobs. "We have watched Michigan Sugar grow over the years, and we have grown significantly as a company as well. It's an evolution of progress in our local region for both our companies."

Jacobs said it has been a pleasure to see the project coming together like a puzzle.

"The fact that the equipment was engineered in Germany, and you had a large vessel arriving from the other side of the world, all coming together here in Bay City, is really cool. This project has taken a lot of coordination and these parts and pieces have come together quite smoothly.

"It's exciting to use our crews the way we like to use them and cater to their strengths," Jacobs added. "We really do appreciate having the project and it has been a lot of fun over the past year." ■

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THE INSIDE STORY: FACTORIES

Bay City

By Nick Klein, Vice President of Operations

During the 2022-2023 campaign, more than 4 million tons of sugarbeets were processed through Michigan Sugar Company's four factories in 217 days. It was a high sugar content crop that translated to an incoming factory sugar content of 17.50% for the campaign.

Infection management was the most notable challenge stemming from equipment interruptions and elevated glucose levels. Significant biocide applications were conducted where heat cycles proved to be the most effective method of control but at the cost of degraded press-ability of the pulp and increased fuel consumption in the dryers. Fortunately, beet storage in the hoop sheds provided significant benefit giving the factories a boost as the campaign neared the finish line.

On April 5, the final sugarbeets of the campaign were sliced in Sebewaing, thus bringing an end to the slicing campaign, and transitioning the factories in Caro, Croswell, and Sebewaing into maintenance mode, while the Bay City factory — which sliced its final beets on April 3 — continued with an extract and standard liquor campaign for 63 more days, processing more than 94,000 tons of juice.

Inter-campaign work is now well underway at the Bay City factory. Beyond general maintenance, process and mechanical downtime data was analyzed and additional plans were made to improve reliability on related equipment.



ABOVE A look from the middle section of the lime kiln at Michigan Sugar Company's Bay City factory shows where the skip hoist track runs down to the bottom of the lime kiln. It is being replaced during this inter-campaign.

BELOW Jaime Aton, left, Lime Kiln Foreman at Michigan Sugar Company's Bay City factory, and Dan VanSumeran, a welder at the Bay City factory, work to perform maintenance on one of three sets of cable sheaves that are part of the lime kiln.



Standing 192 feet tall, the lime kiln was literally at the top of the to-do list. During this year's inter-campaign, Michigan Sugar Company is investing nearly \$750,000 to replace the entire 150-foot skip hoist track used to convey limestone and coke into the lime kiln, which was built in 1986. This

project expands further, including replacement of the upper distributor and liquid ring seal inside the kiln. The upper distributor discharges limestone into the kiln in a 360-degree dispersion and the liquid ring seal keeps carbon dioxide gas from escaping the process. ■

BELOW During this year's inter-campaign, Michigan Sugar Company is investing about \$750,000 to replace the entire 150-foot skip hoist track used to convey limestone and coke to the top of the lime kiln, which was built in 1986.



BAY CITY BY THE NUMBERS

Days of Campaign:
215

Last Day of Slice:
April 3, 2023

Total Tons Sliced:
1,492,181

Sugar Produced:
3.94 million pounds

Molasses Produced:
74,133 tons

Pulp Pellets Produced:
43,458 tons

Pressed Pulp Sold:
131,464 tons

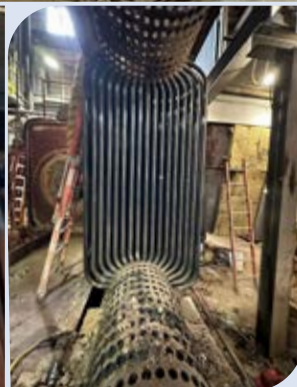
Caro

The Michigan Sugar Caro factory has several projects taking place this inter-campaign, including replacement of a 16,000-pound carbon steel beet tub washer. At the end of its life span, the Caro factory maintenance team has completely rebuilt the 40-year-old carbon steel asset out of CR12 stainless steel, increasing reliability of this critical piece of equipment. New paddles for the agitator were also fabricated out of stainless steel to lengthen asset life.

After more than 50 years of service and following emergency repairs during the campaign, both the first and second carbonation gas distributors are also being rebuilt. Significant improvements in separation of non-sugars, heating, and evaporator capacity are expected with this project.

Capital investments include a \$200,000 turbine generator switch-gear upgrade, now in its final phase. Modernizing this equipment will increase its capacity from 800 to 1,200 amps, providing 50% more power availability on the generator. This upgrade has also eliminated several electrical meters resulting in a four-year return-on-investment for the project, in addition to the energy savings operations is expected to see.

Another significant capital investment being completed this inter-campaign is a \$585,000 boiler retube project on the original dual fuel natural gas and oil-fired boiler. This 1970's era boiler that produces 150 pounds of steam, underwent a controls upgrade in 2014 when the coal boilers were removed. Now, after years of oil slag and coal dust buildup on the tubes, they have exceeded their life expectancy. In an impressive reconstruction, except for the mud drum and top drum, all tubes have been removed and new tubes prefabricated for installation. This upgrade will improve efficiency and increase total steam production once completed. ■



ABOVE A \$585,000 boiler retubing project is taking place this inter-campaign on the dual fuel natural gas and oil-fired boiler that has been part of the Caro factory since the 1970s. The boiler produces 150 pounds of steam.

CARO BY THE NUMBERS

Days of Campaign:
213

Last Day of Slice:
March 31, 2023

Total Tons Sliced:
634,947

Sugar Produced:
1.76 million pounds

Molasses Produced:
32,863 tons

Pulp Shreds Produced:
27,444 tons

Pressed Pulp Sold:
41,000 tons



ABOVE Paul Regnerus, left, and Tom Gracias, both Electrical-Instrumentation Technicians at Michigan Sugar Company's Caro facility, stand next to the newly upgraded turbine generator switchgear.

RIGHT The shaft of a 40-year-old, 16,000-pound carbon steel beet tub washer is removed from the Caro factory during the 2023 inter-campaign. The Caro factory maintenance team has rebuilt the beet tub washer out of CR12 stainless steel.



THE INSIDE STORY: FACTORIES

Croswell

The Croswell factory sliced 873,603 tons of beets and set several records over the course of the factory's 214-day campaign, including:

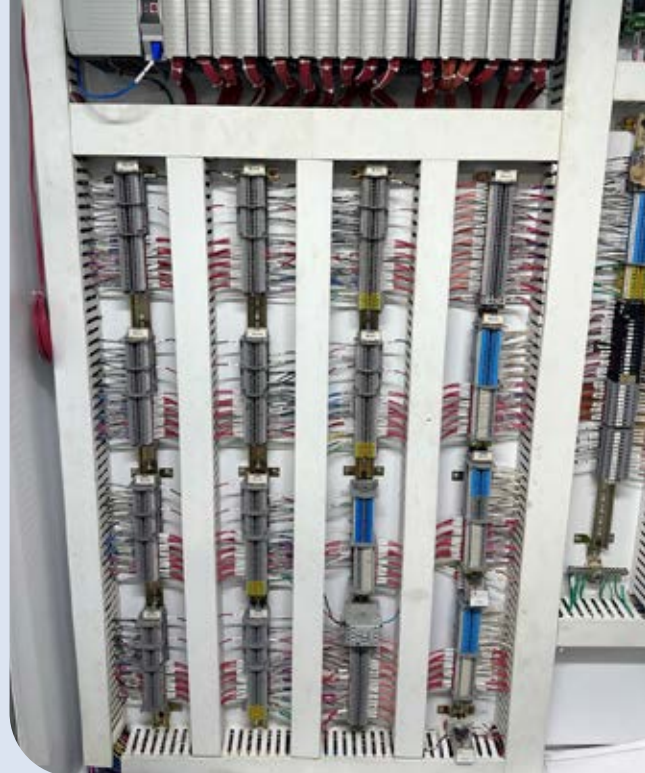
- Daily slice rate: 5,839 tons.
- Daily sugar pack: 1,810,800 pounds.
- Weekly sugar pack: 1,618,200 pounds.

Capital investments being made during the inter-campaign include a \$1.7 million expansion to the diffused air system and installation of a pipeline network between the ponds. This will further increase the wastewater treatment system capacity.

An obsolete diffusion tower computer used to manage the diffusion process caused several shutdowns during the campaign and more than \$100,000 in capital was spent upgrading the system to the latest technology. Another \$1.2 million is being spent to upgrade the

inbound and reclaim sugar elevators to meet the National Fire Protection Agency dust explosion code and insurance company recommendations. A prior-year pellet elevator project, delayed due to global supply chain issues, is also moving forward to improve pellet handling and equipment maintenance with elimination of an exterior elevated belt conveyor.

Further improvements are also planned for the gas-fired lime kiln system. This includes installation of new carbon dioxide blowers with increased capacity, hydraulic upgrades, and limestone screening enhancements to the external and internal shaker systems to provide a cleaner rock to the kiln for clinker avoidance. ■



ABOVE A programmable logic controller — a specialized industrial computing machine used to manage the diffusion process at the Croswell factory — received a system upgrade at a cost of about \$100,000.

CROSWELL BY THE NUMBERS

Days of Campaign:
215

Last Day of Slice:
April 2, 2023

Total Tons Sliced:
873,603

Sugar Produced:
2.27 million pounds

Molasses Produced:
38,784 tons

Pulp Shreds Produced:
9,995 tons

Pressed Pulp Sold:
137,500 tons

RIGHT A pellet elevator project, delayed during 2022 due to global supply chain issues, is moving forward at the Croswell factory. The new elevator superstructure eliminates an exterior elevated belt conveyor.

BELOW Here is a look at the headers of the lateral lagoon aeration system being expanded at the Croswell facility. The headers are connected to drop lines that convey air to the bottom of the pond and through fine bubble diffusers.

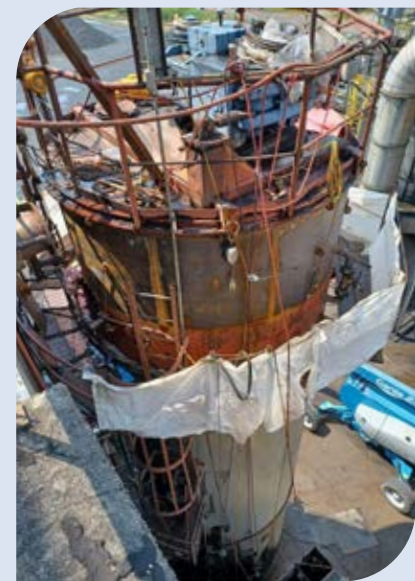




At the Sebewaing factory, a \$300,000 capital investment was approved to replace a section of exterior wall on the second body evaporator. Through wall thickness testing, it was discovered that after several decades of service, the carbon steel body had worn thin. In addition to extending asset life, this project also included asbestos abatement to remove the asbestos the vessel was insulated in when built.

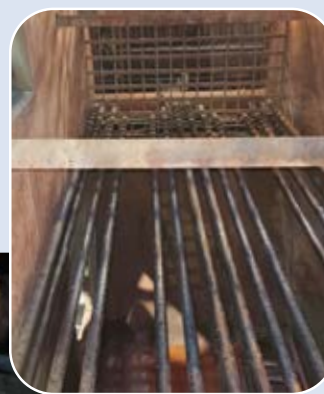
Pulp Press reliability was an issue throughout the 2022-2023 campaign and impacted downtime. Improvements made this inter-campaign include a press gearbox replacement, flight rebuilding on two of the pulp presses that will provide improved performance, and upgrades to 17 pressed pulp conveyors.

Other improvements taking place this year include retubing the economizer on the natural gas boiler to address shut-downs for tube leaks, structural repairs on the vertical crystallizer, and enhancements to the Detroit stoker coal feeders and over fire air system for even bed distribution, air flow, and carbon dioxide destruction. ■



ABOVE/LEFT Structural repairs are being made to the vertical crystallizer at Michigan Sugar's Sebewaing factory during this summer's inter-campaign.

RIGHT Retubing work being completed this inter-campaign on the economizer that is part of the natural gas boiler. The work is expected to limit shut-downs due to tube leaks.



ABOVE A closer look at pieces of the exterior wall removed from the second body evaporator that had become very thin.

LEFT During the 2023 inter-campaign, Michigan Sugar is investing \$300,000 to replace a section of exterior wall on the second body evaporator at the company's Sebewaing factory. After several decades of service, it was discovered, through testing, that areas of the carbon steel body had worn thin.

SEBEWAING BY THE NUMBERS

Days of Campaign:
217

Last Day of Slice:
April 5, 2023

Total Tons Sliced:
1,031,837

Sugar Produced:
2.62 million pounds

Molasses Produced:
42,887 tons

Pulp Shreds Produced:
23,453 tons

Pressed Pulp Sold:
141,761 tons



Nick Klein is Vice President of Operations for Michigan Sugar Company. He is a 2003 graduate of Ferris State University and joined Michigan Sugar Company in 2009. Nick serves on the Board of Directors for the American Society of Sugar Beet Technologists. He and his wife Megan have three children.

How Sweet It Is! High

GINGRICH FARMS LLC IS TOPS IN CENTRAL DISTRICT

By Adam Maurer, Agronomist

The Central District 2022 High Sugar Producer Award went to Troy Gingrich of Gingrich Farms LLC of Bad Axe. The winning field had recoverable white sugar per ton (RWST) of 344.10 pounds and 22.45% sugar. Gingrich Farms also earned the award in 2021 with RWST of 294.04 pounds.

Troy and his wife Linda operate the farm that comprises 2,000 acres in Huron and Sanilac counties, including dry beans, wheat, corn, soybeans, and 700 acres of sugarbeets. Troy started farming with his father Mel, who still helps in the spring and fall, along with Troy's brother, Todd, and full-time employee Ben.

The winning sugarbeet field was planted on May 8, 2022. The field was conventionally tilled and the sugarbeets were variable-rate planted with Hilleshög 2361. The year before, after corn was harvested, the field was sampled, variable-rate spread, then worked in with rye as a cover crop. A 2x0x2 starter fertilizer was put down at planting along with a 6-26-6 pop-up fertilizer and Quadris.

Streaming his 28% to get the remainder of his nitrogen on, Gingrich then moved to leafspot control rotating triazoles, Strobis, and tins along with his tank-mix partners.

Troy harvested the field in October with his Ropa Tiger as part of a MAUS group that loaded the beets and delivered them to the Sebewa factory.



ABOVE Troy Gingrich, left, of Gingrich Farms LLC in Bad Axe, accepts the 2022 Central District High Sugar Producer Award from Central District President Clint Hagen at the Central District Annual Meeting held Dec. 5.

RIGHT From left, brothers Jason and Matt Volmering of Volmering Family Dairy Inc. in Harbor Beach, along with longtime farm employee James Emming, accept the 2022 East District High Sugar Producer Award.

EAST DISTRICT AWARD GOES TO VOLMERING FAMILY DAIRY

By Adam Maurer, Agronomist

The East District 2022 High Sugar Producer Award went to Volmering Family Dairy Inc. of Harbor Beach. The winning field had recoverable white sugar per ton (RWST) of 353.84 pounds and 20.87% sugar.

Established in the late 1950s by Eugene and Diane Volmering, the farm was passed to Steve and Donna Volmering and is now operated by brothers Jason and Matt Volmering and their sister Jacki Wolschleger. Aside from about 500 head of dairy and beef cattle, Volmering Family Dairy grows about 1,550 acres of sugarbeets, corn, soybeans, dry beans, wheat, and alfalfa. They have been growing beets since 1994.

Matt and his wife Erica have three children — Cody, Caden, and Wyatt; Jason and his wife Chelsea have two children — Parker and Esme; and Jacki and her husband Derek have two children — Carter and Shelby. Jacki and parents Steve and Donna care for milking and beef cows, while Matt, Jason, Cody and long-time farm employees Joseph Bruan and Jim Emming take care of the crop and shop side of the operation.

In the farm's crop rotation, sugarbeets typically follow wheat with a radish or clover cover crop and alfalfa, giving the team time in the fall to put down slurry and fit the ground for the next spring. Along with soil sampling to variable rate their lime and P&K, the Volmerings have seen the benefits of nitrate sampling to make in-season adjustments. The farm also utilizes variable-rate seeding to set the crop up for success.

The winning field was planted May 11, 2022, with Crystal 932 and Hilleshög 2361 with 2x2 fertilizer and Quadris and Mustang T banded with the planter. Utilizing post-herbicide tank mixes with soil residuals for weed control and a rotation of EBDCs, Strobis, and tins for leafspot, the field was kept clean for harvest. The beets were conventionally harvested during permanent pile in 2022.



ABOVE Pincik Farms of Corunna in Shiawassee County was honored with the 2022 West District Top Producer Award during Michigan Sugar Company's West District Annual Meeting held Thursday, Dec. 8. Representing the farm at the meeting were Ed Pincik, right, and his sons Brian, left, and Jordan.

PINCİK FARMS EARNS HONORS IN WEST DISTRICT

By Charlotte Ombry, Field Consultant

The West District 2022 High Sugar Producer Award was earned by Pincik Farms of Corunna. The winning field had recoverable white sugar per ton (RWST) of 340.05 pounds and 22.12% sugar.

Established in 1910, Pincik Farms is a 2,000-acre operation where corn, wheat, soybeans, and 200 acres of sugarbeets are grown. Ed Pincik is the third generation of the family to grow sugarbeets and his sons Brian and Jordan are the fourth generation. All three were present to receive the award at the 2022 West District Annual Meeting, held Thursday, Dec. 8, at Horizons Conference Center in Saginaw.

The winning field was planted in 30-inch rows on May 11, 2022, with Crystal 049. Sugarbeets followed wheat planted in the field the previous year. Dry fertilizer micros were spread, and anhydrous ammonia was knifed in before planting and a traditional spray program was utilized throughout the growing season.

The field was harvested on Nov. 11, 2022, using a ROPA self-propelled harvester. ■



Adam Maurer is a Michigan Sugar Company Agronomist serving growers in the Ruth and Verona areas. He joined Michigan Sugar in 2019.



Charlotte Ombry is a West District Field Consultant for Michigan Sugar Company. She earned her associate degree in agricultural industries from Michigan State University in 2017. She joined Michigan Sugar Company in September 2022 working in the Bay City Packaging & Warehousing Department and took her current position in December 2022.

Sugar Producers 2022

MICHIGAN SUGAR COMPANY TOP PRODUCERS

WEST DISTRICT

RANK	NAME	RWST
1	Jordan Pincik	340.05
2	Brian Pincik	331.06
3	Leona B. Abraham Trust	316.72
4	Kerrek A. Griffes	314.15
5	Chris L. Chant	312.24
6	Indian Trails Farm	311.53
7	Cole R. Lynch	311.22
8	Kimberly J. Griffes	308.84
9	Edward Pincik	307.56
10	Jacob E. Knochel	305.71

CENTRAL DISTRICT

RANK	NAME	RWST
1	Schaper Farms LLC	327.65
2	T.L. Bushey	321.08
3	T.L. Bushey LLC	318.19
4	Nancy C. Schuette	317.58
5	Spezia Farms LLC	317.15
6	Mark R. Sylvester	314.81
7	Nicholas G. Heleski	314.69
8	John B. Tait	314.50
9	Jed Bushey LLC	313.67
10	Louis T. Bushey	313.53

EAST DISTRICT

RANK	NAME	RWST
1	Burm Agri Inc.	349.01
2	Gerald Opificius	339.73
3	Timothy B. Brown	339.46
4	Triple A Feedlot	338.16
5	Just Beginning Inc.	336.82
6	Shea Farms Limited	333.38
7	Steven L. Moffatt	332.43
8	A. Noorloos LTD	330.34
9	Matthew F. Noorloos	330.14
10	Schoeley Ridge Farms Inc.	328.04



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The **A B C**'s of Michigan Sugar Company's Recently Elected Directors



ABOVE From left, Adam Herford, Bill Herford, Luke Herford, and Brandon Herford own and operate W.A. Herford & Sons Inc. in Elkton.

Director profiles by Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

Adam Herford

Ask Adam Herford if it's possible to take a photo of the four men who run W.A. Herford & Sons Inc. in Elkton, and you're likely to get a nice little tour of the Huron County countryside.

Adam's cousin Brandon Herford is spraying pre-emergent herbicide on Elkton Road. He's the first to be picked up in gathering the quartet.

Father William A. "Bill" Herford is rolling a field along Hartsell Road. He's the next to hop in Adam's pickup truck.

And then the group meets up with younger brother Luke Herford who on this sunny June day is planting navy beans in a field on Grassmere Road.

"We don't have a lot of recent photos like this," says Adam, who was elected for a second time to Michigan Sugar Company's Co-op Board of Directors in January 2023 and will serve a four-year term. "This is good, though, because this farm is about all of us."

The photo is taken only a short distance from the farm's headquarters on Berne Road, where members of the Herford family have been farming the

land and raising cattle since 1890. The farm was incorporated in 1971 by Adam's grandparents Welland and Grace Herford.

"Sugarbeets have been part of the operation as long as we can remember," says Adam, who has fond memories of hoeing beets as a young boy and may have skipped a day or two ... or more ... of school to work in his family's fields. "It was a struggle back in the mid-1980s. The new technologies the past 20 years has made planting and harvesting much more efficient, not easier necessarily, but more efficient."

He sees technology, especially as it relates to new CR+ (Cercospora-tolerant) seed varieties, continuing to drive the future.

"This will make it even easier to grow beets, which is important because we need to be competitive with other crops."

Herford, who served on the Co-op Board from 2018 to 2021, including one year as Chairman, said he is honored to be involved once again at this level.



FAR LEFT Adam Herford checks on the beef cattle at W.A. Herford & Sons Inc. in Elkton.

LEFT Adam Herford checks the health of a young sugarbeet at his farm in Elkton on June 7, 2023. W.A. Herford & Sons Inc. grows sugarbeets, alfalfa, corn, hay, navy beans, and white wheat. The farm also has a cattle operation.

"I'm glad to be part of the process of moving our cooperative forward," he said. "Sugarbeets are a big part of our operation, and we need to make sure beets can compete. We need to capitalize on opportunities while the sugar market is strong, we need to be active in D.C., we need a sugar program that is in touch with what growers need, and we need growers and management working together to do the best we can."

Read on to learn a few more of the ABCs about Adam.

A – ALLIED FARM ENTERPRISES INC.

In 1999, W.A. Herford & Sons Inc. became part of an ownership group called Allied Farm Enterprises Inc. that supplies feed to four dairies located in Michigan's Thumb, three owned by the Zwemmer family – Zwemmer and Z-Fresh dairies in Elkton and Z-Star Dairy in Caseville – and one owned by the Protzman family – Delcath Dairy in Caseville.

All the farms involved in the Allied ownership group also have ties to sugarbeets.

"The value in having this group is that we were able to grow with the dairies," said Adam. "The founders started by providing feed to one dairy and now it's four. Allied now has seven employees and we are looking into other business ventures."

C – CATTLE

Just as sugarbeets have been part of the Herford family's farming operations for as far back as anyone can remember, the farm has also had a cattle operation since the beginning.

"Cattle have always been part of our farm," said Adam, adding, "we have a lot of cattle."

The farm's animals are finished at various locations and delivered to the JBS Beef Plant in Plainwell, Michigan.

E – EDUCATION

Adam graduated from Laker High School in 1997 and earned his bachelor's degree in agribusiness management from Michigan State University in 2001. He was in the same graduating class as fellow Co-op Board Director Michael Houghtaling. Adam said he always knew he wanted to be a farmer but took a job after graduation with a local CPA firm, which cemented not only his desire to be a farmer, but also his knowledge about the importance of farm financials.

G – GERMANY

In the summer of 2018, Adam, along with a handful of other Michigan Sugar grower-owners, was part of a trip, sponsored by BetaSeed, to Germany. The experience was eye-opening as participants had the opportunity to tour the KWS seed research facility, some farming operations, and a Nordzucker AG sugar company factory built in 1997.

"The factory is the newest in Europe and can slice 22,000 tons per day," said Adam, adding he especially remembers the tile floors inside the factory. "But they run a 100-day campaign and aim to be done in January."

He said he was happy to see tremendous investments being made into beet seed and disease research and learned a lot from seeing farming operations where conventional seed is still planted.

"They had smaller farms, but it was equally intense work," he said. "It gave me a greater appreciation that we farm where we do."

M – MAUS

Today, W.A. Herford & Sons Inc. grows 2,300 acres of sugarbeets. They've been using a MAUS to help harvest those beets since 2010.

"We were the fourth farm in the company to MAUS beets and the first to deliver MAUS beets to the

Sebewaing factory," said Adam. "It wasn't an easy decision because a MAUS is a high capital item and brings a big change to the farm operation, but it really made our beet operation easier to manage."

Adam said he believes MAUS operations will be a big part of Michigan Sugar's future.

"Maybe not 100%, but definitely part of the equation," he said.

O – OLIVER TOWNSHIP

Though W.A. Herford & Sons Inc. has an Elkton mailing address, the farm, technically, is in Oliver Township. In Spring 2022, Adam was appointed to the Oliver Township Board of Trustees, serving alongside fellow Michigan Sugar grower-owner Tom Ziel, who serves as township Supervisor. In fall 2022, Adam won election to the township board.

W – W.A. HERFORD & SONS INC.

The Herford family farm was established by Adam's great-great grandparents Andrew and Elizabeth Herford. The ancestry of the family starts in Germany and France and at some time, the family name was shifted from Herffort to Herford.

Adam is among the fifth generation of his family to operate the farm. His great grandparents, Edwin Sr. and Frieda Herford passed it to his grandparents (Welland and Grace Herford), and then the farm was passed to Adam's parents Bill and Pauline Herford. Pauline died in 2000 and Bill married Barb Herford in 2004. They operated the farm with Bill's brother and sister-in-law Jim and Kim Herford.

Today, the farm is operated by Bill, along with Adam and Luke and Jim's son Brandon. Aside from sugarbeets and cattle, the farm also produces alfalfa, corn, hay, navy beans, and white wheat. ■



Rob Clark is Director of Communications and Community Relations for Michigan Sugar Company. He is a 1995 graduate of Knox College and worked for 22 years as a journalist before joining Michigan Sugar Company in 2018. He and his wife Claire have four sons and live in Bay City.



The **A B C**'s of Michigan Sugar Company's Recently Elected Directors

Michael Houghtaling



ABOVE Michael and Erin Houghtaling with their children Felix, 13, and Phin, 16.

Spend a little time with Michael Houghtaling and there's a pretty good chance the conversation will become a bit philosophical. After all, this is a guy who read Ayn Rand's groundbreaking 1957 novel "Atlas Shrugged" while a student at Reese High School and has spent time studying the personal writings — called Meditations — of 2nd Century Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who is widely considered one of history's most stoic philosophers.

"I'm always thinking about our purpose and what we're meant to do," said Michael, who was elected in January 2023 to serve a four-year term on Michigan Sugar Company's Co-op Board of Directors. "I need to be the best I can be because I only live once. We need to be life-long students of life."

A native of Reese, Michael grew up on a farm that was established in 1895 and today comprises 2,500 acres of land stretching from Saginaw to Sandusky and "everywhere in between." He and his wife Erin have two children — Phin, 16, a junior at Reese High School, and Felix, 13, an eighth-grader at Reese Middle School.

As a member of the Co-op Board, Michael is following in the footsteps of his father Kent Houghtaling, who served on the board from 2011 to 2019.

"I'm only one guy helping hold on to the steering wheel of the ship," said Michael. "But I believe I bring diversity of thought to the boardroom and that is very important. I believe I can think big and outside the box. I'm an unconventional thinker with the ability to not always follow the status quo."

If you follow Michael on Facebook, you get a glimpse of what he means by these words.

"I put stuff out there for me to come back to later," he said, regarding his often-philosophical posts. "It's also to get others thinking."

As far as agriculture goes, Michael says there has never been a time in his life when he didn't know he wanted to be a farmer. He started farming full time after graduating in 2001 from Michigan State University with a degree in crop and soil science.

"I grew up walking beet fields with a hoe in my hand pulling weeds," he said. "As a kid, I grew



LEFT Left and right, Michael Houghtaling gets a smooch from an alpaca and checks in on a young emu at Johnson's Pumpkin Farm.

beets for the Tuscola County Fair. Ag is really embedded in my DNA and I love growing food because I'm part of something greater than myself. We're contributing to our food supply and our communities."

Recently, Michael has been diving into another book on his journey to understanding himself, the world around him, and his ability to help shape it. It's the 2016 New York Times Best Seller "Originals" by Adam Grant, a book that, according to the author's website uses "surprising studies and stories spanning business, politics, sports, and entertainment" to explore how to recognize a good idea, speak up without getting silenced, build a coalition of allies, choose the right time to act, and manage fear and doubt," as well as "how parents and teachers can nurture originality in children and how leaders can build cultures that welcome dissent."

"For me, it's about how long-term and short-term thinkers can work together and how I can best deploy my knowledge and skill set in agronomy and technology to help build a stronger company," Michael said. "We have to have our finger in the wind because I want my boys and their kids to have this."

Read on to learn a few more of the ABCs about Michael.

B – BADER & SONS

If you live in mid-Michigan or the Thumb area, there's a pretty good chance you've heard of the John Deere dealerships run by the Bader family. The very first dealership was opened in Reese in 1934 by Charles Bader, Michael's great-grandfather on his mother's side of the family. In 1947 when Charles' sons Harry, Henry, and James joined the operation, the name was changed to Bader Brothers.

James (Michael's grandfather) opened a separate store in Sandusky in 1960 and the name changed to Bader & Co. He eventually passed that location to sons Jim and Don. In 1988, they sold the business to Michigan Sugar Company grower-owners Ken and Ida Wadsworth and today the dealership is operated by grower-owners Tom and Sally Wadsworth.

Meanwhile, Jim moved to St. Louis, Michigan, and opened his own dealership with his sons Mark and Paul. They recently sold that operation to Hutson Inc.

Michael's love of equipment sales, passion for innovation, and activity in the community is firmly embedded in his DNA.

H – HOUGHTALING FARMS

Michael and his brother David are the fifth generation of Houghtalings to operate the family farm. Vern and Pearl Houghtaling passed the farm to Michael's grandparents Allen and Jean Houghtaling and they turned over operations to two of their children — Kent and David. Kent and Beth Houghtaling are Michael's parents. Michael and his brother David have two other siblings — John and Kayla.

Today, corn, soybeans, edible beans, wheat, cucumbers, rye, pumpkins, hay, and about 650 acres of sugarbeets are grown on the farm, which spans out into fields located in Bay, Saginaw, Tuscola, and Sanilac counties.



ABOVE Michael Houghtaling stands in front of a decorative grain bin at Johnson's Pumpkin Farm.

J – JOHNSON'S PUMPKIN FARM

Erin Houghtaling's maiden name is Johnson — as in Johnson's Pumpkin Farm, an agritourism business located in Indiantown, just a stone's throw from where Michael and Erin now live. Erin's grandparents Wilbert and Eleanor Johnson settled the farm, but it wasn't until the mid-1980s that the focus began shifting to pumpkins.

"Erin helped sell pumpkins on the side of the road at a picnic table," explained Michael, who started dating Erin when they were in 10th grade and married her in 2002.

Michael and Erin took over operation of the pumpkin farm in 2020. Located at 4715 N. Portsmouth Road, it is open daily from early September through the end of October.

P & C – P&C AG SOLUTIONS

Calling himself a "serial entrepreneur," Michael, in 2002, established P&C Ag Solutions, a technology consulting company with a focus on high-tech

products that make farming more profitable, productive, and fun. Today, P&C has six employees and customers across Michigan. The core business is selling GPS Autosteer products and Precision Planting retrofit equipment.

Michael travels the country speaking about technology, as well as hosting various meetings locally every chance he gets.

"Showing growers why technology works, not selling is our approach," he said. "There's something magical about selling a tool to a farmer that makes their life better.

"That's why I ran for the Co-op Board. I felt I had something to give."

S – SUGARBEETS

Michael's great-grandparents Vern and Pearl Houghtaling settled and cleared the land on Reese Road that became Houghtaling Farms in the late 1800s. By the early 1900s, they were growing sugarbeets.

"Beets have been the king and the focus of this farm my entire life," he said. "We love beets because of the challenge and the possibility of a big reward. When things go right, you have the possibility of a big reward and challenge is what gives life purpose. Without struggle, life feels empty.

"Sugarbeets definitely give us challenges, but sweet isn't as sweet without the sour."

W – WOODWORKING

When he's not farming or running one of his businesses, Michael enjoys woodworking. He's happy to show off the building he shares with his wife on the family's homestead near Indiantown. One half of the building serves as Erin's art studio and the other half Mike's workshop.

"I love making sawdust," he says as he shows off several cabinets he's made over the years. "If I wasn't a farmer, I probably would have been a carpenter."

Other interests include traveling, including the family's annual trip to New York City, and playing men's league hockey in Saginaw. ■



The **A B C**'s of Michigan Sugar Company's Recently Elected Directors



TOP Jake Maurer stands with a Holmer sugarbeet harvester at Maple Grove Acres in Ruth. **ABOVE** Jake and Nichole Maurer are parents to Eli, 13; Liam, 10; and Audra, 12.

Jake Maurer

In April 2003, Jake Maurer found himself in a sugarbeet planter heading to put seed in the ground at a field located at the intersection of Minden and Mumford roads near Ruth.

At the time, he was a junior at Kettering University studying mechanical engineering.

That's when it hit him.

"I didn't think I was going to farm," said Jake, who was elected to Michigan Sugar Company's Co-op Board of Directors in January 2023 and will serve a four-year term. "It dawned on me at that moment that I was coming home every weekend to farm. I was in that planter and thought, 'What am I doing?'"

"And then ... bam!"

One year later, Jake earned his bachelor's degree and bought his first farm, now called Maple Grove Acres. Today, Maple Grove Acres is a 3,000-acre operation comprised of navy and black beans, corn, white wheat, and about 1,300 acres of sugarbeets.

Jake said his family has been growing beets since 1994.

"My dad started growing them to diversify. Contracts were hard to get back then," Jake said. "Harold Cook was our fieldman, and we got a 40-acre contract that first year. We had a 4-acre field on Minden Road and a 36-acre field on Ruth Road.

"I was 12 years old. I remember hoeing for weeds."

As a member of the Co-op Board of Directors, Jake said part of his focus is on making sugarbeets a crop farmers want to grow in the future.

"Beets have always been one of our best crops, year in and year out," he said. "Over the next 10 years, we need to make beets sustainable for the next generation."

Read on to learn a few more of the ABCs about Jake.



C – CENTENNIAL FARM

The history of farming in the Maurer family dates to 1877 when Jake's great-great-grandparents, Lorenz and Caroline Block started a farm operation that is today a Centennial Farm and will celebrate its 150th birthday in 2027.

Jake's great-grandfather, Jacob Maurer, farmed with the brothers of his wife Frieda, who was a daughter of Lorenz and Caroline.

The farm was then passed down to Jake's grandparents, Gordon and Marjorie Maurer, then to his parents Bruce and Gail Maurer. Bruce and Gail have five children — Jake, Andy, Laura, Luke, and

Adam, who works as an Agronomist for Michigan Sugar Company. All of the boys own their own family farms.

Jake and his wife Nichole have three children — Eli, 13; Audra, 12; and Liam, 10 — a dog named Jacks and horses named Gizmo and Leon.

E – EAST DISTRICT BOARD

Before being elected to serve the Michigan Sugar Company Co-op Board of Directors, Jake served for 14 years on Michigan Sugar's East District Board, having first been elected in 2008 at the age of 26. He served the last six years as President of the East District Board.

H – HOLMER AMERICAS

Since 2012, Jake has worked as an Independent Sales Representative for Holmer Americas, selling and servicing farm equipment. He has seven employees working for him on the equipment side of the business and another four working on the farm.

K – KETTERING UNIVERSITY

Jake earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Kettering University in 2004.

While a student there, he worked as a co-op at Trelleborg Automotive in Sandusky and went on to work there as a Project Engineer from 2004 to 2012, while also farming.

Jake said his mechanical engineering background and his work experience give him "a little different perspective" as a member of the Co-op Board of Directors. "I've worked in manufacturing and with international companies," he said. "I think that experience can be valuable in the boardroom."

Jake's wife Nichole also earned her bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Kettering University. She now teaches chemistry and calculus at Ubyly High School.

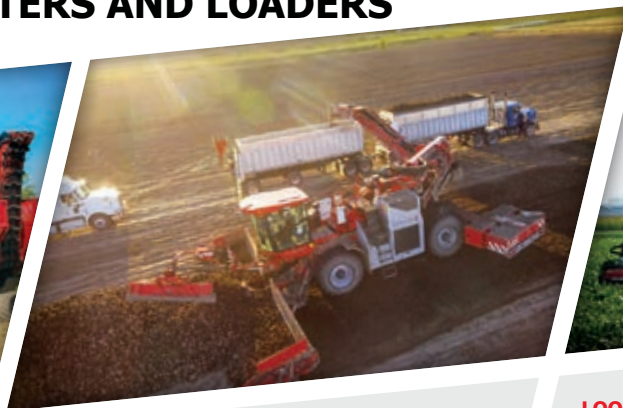
U – UBLY

Though he is a resident of Ruth, the Huron County Village of Ubyly is a significant and important part of Jake's life. In 2000, Jake graduated from Ubyly High School, where he was a member of the National Honor Society, a forward on the basketball team, and quarterback and defensive end for the football team.

For the past five years, Jake has served as an elected member of the Ubyly Community School District Board of Education.

He also has been a basketball coach for Ubyly Youth Basketball for a handful of years. ■

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Meet MSC Outside

DAVE ARMSTRONG

Dave Armstrong sees many similarities between Michigan Sugar Company and the businesses he spent his career of more than 40 years shaping and leading.

A native of Ionia, Dave graduated from Ionia High School in 1977 and enrolled at Michigan State University (MSU) that fall. He would graduate in 1981 with his

bachelor's degree in animal science. But it was an internship started during his sophomore year at MSU that would lead him to a career in the farm lending business.

During the summer of 1982, Dave went to work for the Production Credit Association (PCA) of Southeast Michigan, a division of Farm Credit Services, a cooperative organization focused, at the time, on financial and real estate loans for the ag sector. After graduation, Dave was hired as a loan officer at PCA's Monroe County branch.

"I have a familiarity with the agriculture industry," said Dave, who was appointed in January to a 1-year term on the Michigan Sugar Company Co-op Board of Directors. "The farm credit system is a co-op, much like Michigan Sugar Company, with a mission and purpose of being a dependable, competitive, and responsible source of farm credit and other financial services. That is somewhat like Michigan Sugar being a dependable place to process member sugarbeets and provide them a competitive, reliable return."

During his time in Monroe County, Dave met his wife Debra, who was working as a Registered Nurse at the time. In 1985, the couple moved to Michigan's Thumb when Dave became Branch Manager at the Imlay City office of PCA of Sandusky. The ensuing years brought a credit crisis in agriculture and the industry saw much consolidation. Dave's roles with the company changed until he landed with Farm Credit Services of East-Central Michigan, eventually serving as CEO in Lapeer.

At the time, there were only four Farm Credit Services divisions left in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

"On Jan. 1, 2000, we merged those four to form GreenStone Farm Credit Services," said Dave, who that summer became Executive Vice President of the organization. He and Debra moved to East Lansing and nine years later, on Jan. 1, 2009, Dave was named

GreenStone's CEO, the position he held until retiring last year.

"GreenStone is made up of an elected board of stockholders and we had appointed outside directors as well, so there continued to be a lot of similarities to Michigan Sugar as my career went on," said Dave. "I have experience with financial statements and financial management, as well as with corporate governance. I also have a familiarity with those farm families that grow sugarbeets."

"So, that gave me and Michigan Sugar Company some familiarity with each other. Sugar isn't money, but the concept of both is the same."

Dave and Debra still live in East Lansing and have an adult daughter named Lindsey who lives in the metro Detroit area. In addition to his duties on the Michigan Sugar Co-op Board, Dave serves as a director for Crystal Flash, a propane and fuel transportation company serving central and western Michigan and is a founding director of the Michigan Livestock Expo, held annually at MSU. He's also a past member of the MSU College of Ag and Natural Resources Alumni Board and the Michigan Economic Development Corp. Executive Board, serving during Gov. Rick Snyder's administration.

Dave also holds a diploma from the Graduate School of Banking at University of Wisconsin and his Michigan Salesperson Real Estate License.

In his free time, Dave enjoys golfing, biking, walking, and traveling around Michigan and the United States. His favorite Michigan destinations are South Haven and Petoskey, and a national point of interest is Coeur d'Alene, a city in northwest Idaho known for water sports on Lake Coeur d'Alene and trails in the Canfield Mountain Natural Area and Coeur d'Alene National Forest.

— Rob Clark ■

The farm credit system is a co-op, much like Michigan Sugar Company, with a mission and purpose of being a dependable, competitive, and responsible source of farm credit and other financial services.



Directors

TERRY LERASH

Terry Lerash was standing in a pasture while attending a wedding on an Amish farm near Houghton Lake when he was approached by a man named Dwight Gascho, who was looking to retire as President and CEO of Scheurer Health, which operates Scheurer Hospital in Pigeon and other medical-related offices throughout the Thumb Region.

Gascho asked Terry to visit the hospital and Terry obliged.

"I went up as a friend and found how charming that little hospital was and how progressive it was," said Terry. "They had a great medical staff, great finances, and they were looking for someone to take a great organization and make it better."

Terry took the job as President and CEO and spent the last seven years of his career in healthcare administration at Scheurer Health, retiring in December 2022.

He sees a lot of similarities between that job and his newest role as an Outside Director on the Michigan Sugar Company Co-op Board of Directors. He was appointed to a 2-year term on the board in January.

"I kind of feel like Michigan Sugar is where Scheurer Health was when I took over," he said. "It's a great organization and Neil (new Michigan Sugar President and CEO Neil Juhnke) has the opportunity to take the reins and run to make it even better."

A native of Bad Axe, Terry graduated from Bad Axe High School in 1973. At the time, he was working for his father who owned an excavating business. Times were tough and though his father urged Terry to attend college, the money wasn't there. Instead, Terry enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving from 1974 to 1977.

He completed basic training at Fort Knox in Kentucky, medical training at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, and was then stationed at Fort Ord in Monterey, California, before being shipped to South Korea, where he spent 15 months stationed near the Demilitarized Zone, assigned to an infantry division.

"It was an eye-opening, growing-up experience and the Army taught me leadership," Terry said.

With his GI Bill in hand, Terry returned to Michigan and enrolled at Saginaw Valley State University, earning his bachelor's degree in nursing in 1981. He then went to work as a nurse at the former St. Luke's Hospital in Saginaw, moving quickly into a supervisory position and eventually serving as Vice President of Clinical Services.

In 1994, Terry earned his master's degree in business administration from Central Michigan University.

After stops at the Heart Group in Saginaw — which eventually became part of the Michigan Cardio-Vascular Institute thanks, in part, to Terry's leadership — and McLaren-Flint, Terry became President and CEO of Synergy Medical, which he later divested to CMU so the university could start its medical school.

Terry then went to work for Covenant HealthCare as Director of Innovation, working to find creative ways to reduce costs and improve quality, while searching for opportunities for new product development.

And then came that trip to the farm near Houghton Lake.

"Taking the job at Scheurer Health was a return home for me in a way," Terry said. "I have an affinity for small, rural communities. I understand how much Scheurer's payroll meant to those communities in the Thumb. I think Michigan Sugar is the same way. It has a big economic impact on those rural families and farmers."

As an Outside Director on the Co-op Board, Terry says he feels right at home, again.

"Learning a new industry is exciting, but my roots are in agriculture. My grandparents were farmers, all my buddies growing up were farmers ... I'm very glad to be part of it."

Terry and his wife Carmen live in Saginaw. They have four adult children — Aaron,



“Learning a new industry is exciting, but my roots are in agriculture. My grandparents were farmers, all my buddies growing up were farmers... I'm very glad to be part of it.”

Brent, Chad, and Hannah — and two grandchildren — Noah, 9, and Harper, 6. In his free time, Terry enjoys golfing, woodburning, home improvement projects, and spending time with his family.

— Rob Clark ■

A Celebration of Service

MICHIGAN SUGAR COMPANY
HONORS EMPLOYEES,
NOTES MILESTONE
WORK ANNIVERSARIES

By Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

Michigan Sugar Company held its annual Employee Service Awards presentation on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, with a ceremony in the Malcolm Field Performing Arts Theatre at Saginaw Valley State University.

The event featured remarks from Michigan Sugar President and CEO Neil Juhnke, Executive Vice President Jim Ruhlman, Co-op Board Vice Chairman Greg Grocholski, and Keynote Speaker Carey Lohrenz, the first female F-14 Tomcat Fighter Pilot in the U.S. Navy, who gave an inspirational address about her life and times.

Dawn Premo, Inventory Specialist at Michigan Sugar’s Corporate Headquarters, was honored as the recipient of the 2023 Ernest Flegenheimer Award, given each year to honor an employee for their outstanding wisdom, integrity, and character — the same qualities Ernest Flegenheimer brought to the company as President and CEO from 1963 to 1993.

Also, during the event, 150 other Michigan Sugar employees were honored for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years of service. Here is a breakdown of those honored during the event. To them, and to all our employees, thank you for your service. ■

5 YEARS

Jeffrey Loeffler	Agriculture	Bay City
Nathan Mielke	Agriculture	Bay City
Kevin Shirkey	Agriculture	Bay City
Edward Braun	Agriculture	Sebewaing
Kyle Mowry	Agriculture	Sebewaing
Ryan Gilman	Agriculture	Research
Stanley Basner	Operations	Bay City
Josh Cline	Operations	Bay City
Kenneth Dowd	Operations	Bay City
Eric Freier	Operations	Bay City
Jeffrey Fryzel	Operations	Bay City
David Garske	Operations	Bay City
Nathan Glover	Operations	Bay City
Gregory Killey	Operations	Bay City
Edward Kirby	Operations	Bay City
Kenneth Lockhart	Operations	Bay City
Benjamin Lynch	Operations	Bay City

Michael McFarland	Operations	Bay City
Colton McGregor	Operations	Bay City
Fred Mock	Operations	Bay City
Jacyn Rau	Operations	Bay City
Jose Rivera	Operations	Bay City
Marvin Scott	Operations	Bay City
Joseph Smith	Operations	Bay City
Jeffrey Trapp	Operations	Bay City
Robert Wright	Operations	Bay City
Keith Finkbeiner	Operations	Sebewaing
Erich Gennrich	Operations	Sebewaing
Robert Kazmierczak	Operations	Sebewaing
Jeffrey Lintner	Operations	Sebewaing
Joseph Sigmund	Operations	Sebewaing
Hunter Strieter	Operations	Sebewaing
Lucas Taylor	Operations	Sebewaing
Stacy Arnold	P&W	Bay City
Sonya Bromberg	P&W	Bay City



ABOVE Honored for their years of service to Michigan Sugar Company are, from left Joseph Gillette (Carrollton, 5 years), Jacob Townsend (Carrollton, 5), Brandon Engelhardt (Carrollton, 5), Garth Hayes (Carrollton, 5), and Ken Hardenburgh (Caro, 5).

Jody Galaviz	P&W	Bay City
Victor Velazquez	P&W	Bay City
Ken Hardenburgh	P&W	Caro
Brandon Engelhardt	P&W	Carrollton
Joseph Gillette	P&W	Carrollton
Garth Hayes	P&W	Carrollton
Jacob Townsend	P&W	Carrollton
Rodney Tietz	P&W	Sebewaing
Seth Vliet	P&W	Sebewaing
Joseph White	P&W	Sebewaing
Amy Sherbino	Human Resources	Corporate
Brian Graves	Corp. Operations	Corporate
Eric Rupprecht	Corp. Operations	Corporate
Blair Huiskens	Purchasing	Corporate
Scott Stanger	Purchasing	Corporate
John Boothroyd	Gov. Relations	Corporate
Rob Clark	Communications	Corporate

BELOW LEFT Recognized for 10 years of service are, from left, Bay City Operations Department employees Nathan Bohlinger, Christopher Filcek, Joshua Laframboise, Keith Madaj, and Bret Sheltroun. **BELOW RIGHT** Celebrating 15 years of service are, from left, Bay City Packaging and Warehousing Department employees Rick Bowker, David Redmond, Brandon Zeilinger, Larry Sampson, Brian Jones, Robert Leclair, and Andrea Jacobs.



10 YEARS		
Kevin Messing	Agriculture	Croswell
Nathan Bohlinger	Operations	Bay City
Christopher Filcek	Operations	Bay City
Joshua Laframboise	Operations	Bay City
Keith Madaj	Operations	Bay City
Bret Sheltroun	Operations	Bay City
James Heckroth	Operations	Caro
David Kirk	Operations	Caro
Eduardo Hernandez	Operations	Croswell
Zachary Bursick	Operations	Sebewaing
Chris Kusek	Operations	Sebewaing
Lee Loeffler	Operations	Sebewaing
Michael Armstrong	P&W	Bay City
Timothy Hill	P&W	Bay City
Terrance Lee	P&W	Bay City
Miguel Rios	P&W	Bay City
Sean Urband	P&W	Bay City
Eury Zamora	P&W	Bay City
Ryan Curl	P&W	Sebewaing
Cindy Holzwart	P&W	Sebewaing
Sherry Kain	P&W	Sebewaing
Brian Nitz	P&W	Sebewaing
David Proper	P&W	Sebewaing
April Saenz	P&W	Sebewaing
Scott Smith	P&W	Sebewaing
Ann Kovacs	Accounting	Corporate

15 YEARS		
Enoch Sayers	Agriculture	Caro
Jason Martens	Agriculture	Sebewaing
Troy Enciso	Operations	Bay City
Keith Pahl	Operations	Bay City
Manuel Reyes	Operations	Bay City
Daniel Fritz	Operations	Sebewaing
Anthony Mullins	Operations	Sebewaing
Jerry Aikens	P&W	Bay City
Kenneth Amthor	P&W	Bay City
Camden Becker	P&W	Bay City
Brian Bedell	P&W	Bay City
Chris Boughner	P&W	Bay City
Rick Bowker	P&W	Bay City
Jamie Britton-Raines	P&W	Bay City
Reginald Bryant	P&W	Bay City
James Gallaher	P&W	Bay City
Andrea Jacobs	P&W	Bay City
Brian Jones	P&W	Bay City
Thomas Kent	P&W	Bay City
Robert Leclair	P&W	Bay City
Kurt Lee	P&W	Bay City
Larry Sampson	P&W	Bay City
Brandon Zeilinger	P&W	Bay City
David Redmond	P&W	Bay City
William Trepkowski	P&W	Bay City
Nicole Ciesielski	P&W	Caro
Francisco Gonzales	P&W	Caro
Earl Davis	P&W	Sebewaing
Michael Fritz	P&W	Sebewaing
Karen Furness	P&W	Sebewaing
Randall Hallock	P&W	Sebewaing
Brian Miller	P&W	Sebewaing
Meagen Phelps	P&W	Sebewaing
Steven Schanhals	P&W	Sebewaing
Carol Shaltonis	P&W	Sebewaing
Wendy Weisenbach	P&W	Sebewaing
Tricia DeGroat	Customer Service	Corporate
Carol Jankowski	Customer Service	Corporate
Jeff Sakon	Corp. Operations	Corporate
Tommy Bignall	Executive	Corporate



ABOVE Michigan Sugar Company Customer Service Department employees celebrating service anniversaries include Darlene Westfall, left, (25 years) and Tricia DeGroat, right, (15 years), and Human Resources Department employee Amy Sherbino (5).

20 YEARS		
John Churchill	Operations	Caro
Edwardo Pesina	Operations	Croswell
William Labuhn	Operations	Sebewaing
Shery Bedore	P&W	Sebewaing
Maria Garcia	P&W	Sebewaing
Jeffrey Kovach	P&W	Sebewaing
Susan Mardlin	P&W	Sebewaing
Jon Alexander	IT	Corporate
Tanya Richard	IT	Corporate
Brian Haraga	Executive	Corporate

25 YEARS		
Roger Helmreich	Agriculture	Bay City
Jeremy Amthor	Operations	Bay City
Dolores Salcedo	Operations	Bay City
Michael Van Hove	Operations	Bay City
Douglas Hollenbeck	Operations	Croswell
Michael Levitte	Operations	Croswell
James Bolzman	Operations	Sebewaing
Charlene Thompson	P&W	Bay City
William Woodruff	P&W	Croswell
Tim Rokosz	Accounting	Corporate
Darlene Westfall	Customer Service	Corporate
Matthew Tucker	Corp. Operations	Corporate

30 YEARS		
Mark Timko	Operations	Caro
Tracy Vancamp	Operations	Croswell
Dale Wood	Operations	Sebewaing
Lisa Hercliff	P&W	Sebewaing

35 YEARS		
Jeffrey Elston	Agriculture	Sebewaing
Randy Elizando	Operations	Caro
Kenneth Justice	Operations	Caro
James Damm	P&W	Sebewaing

40 YEARS		
Jim Ruhlman	Executive	Corporate

45 YEARS		
Luis Rivera	P&W	Carrollton

BELOW Employees from Michigan Sugar Company's Agriculture Department are, from left, Kevin Messing (Croswell, 10 years), Jeff Elston (Sebewaing, 35), Jason Martens (Sebewaing, 15), and Roger Helmreich (Bay City, 25).





Dawn Premo Honored with 2023 Ernest Flegenheimer Award

INVENTORY SPECIALIST HAS BEEN WITH MICHIGAN SUGAR 32 YEARS

By Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

Dawn Premo loves her job. Spend a few minutes talking to her and she's likely to say that at least a few times. She'll also tell you how much she enjoys the people with whom she works, regardless of which department they represent. "I love what I do," said Premo, who came to work for Michigan Sugar Company in 1991 as a Receivable Clerk and transitioned to her current job as an Inventory Specialist shortly after. "Over the years, there have been a wide variety of people I've had the pleasure to work with — in accounting, sales, IT, chemists, office

managers — and they've all been so great. It's truly like a second family." On May 17, 2023, during Michigan Sugar Company's annual Employee Service Awards ceremony, held at Saginaw Valley State University, Premo, who works at Michigan Sugar's Corporate Headquarters in Bay City, was honored as the recipient of this year's Ernest Flegenheimer Award. The award is given annually to honor an employee for their outstanding wisdom, integrity, and character — the same qualities Ernest Flegenheimer brought to the

company as President and CEO from 1963 to 1993. In announcing the award, Jim Ruhlman, Michigan Sugar's Executive Vice President, called Premo a "humble, genuine woman who is valued and respected in her field of work." "She's all about accuracy and making sure every angle, every detail, and every issue is considered when sugar is made, packaged, remelted, or reworked," Ruhlman said. "Her title includes the word 'specialist,' but perhaps we should also include the words 'first class,'

'expert,' or 'professionalism.' She has a watchful eye on processes and when something doesn't seem right to her, her instincts are usually correct." Ruhlman said Premo has brought invaluable wisdom to Michigan Sugar Company, an asset highly cherished. "While a perfectionist, she has a nurturing heart; she believes anyone can succeed. She is a patient teacher and a kind soul who lets her work speak for itself." Premo said she is extremely honored to receive the award.

Ernest Flegenheimer Award Winners 2006-2023

The following employees have received the prestigious Ernest Flegenheimer Award in recognition of their wisdom, integrity, and character while serving Michigan Sugar Company:

2006 – John Wyett

2020 – Pat Terrill

2007 – Jim Martin

2021 – Kevin Romzek

2008 – Chris Dunham

2022 – Jim Kurish

2009 – Robert Arnold

2023 – Dawn Premo

2010 – Keith Kalso

2011 – Carol Kunitzer

2012 – Julie Perry

2013 – Eugene Stewart

2014 – Rick List

2015 – George Painter

2016 – Gerald Sorenson

2017 – Ann Kovacs

2018 – Tanya Richard

2019 – Tricia DeGroat



"I was overwhelmed when I realized they were introducing me and I was hoping I wouldn't cry or have a heart attack," she said. "I'm very honored to be recognized in that way by my co-workers. My success is a result of them and the team-work we demonstrate every day. I honestly am very fortunate to work with the people I do."

Premo becomes the 18th recipient of the Ernest Flegenheimer Award, first presented in 2006. In looking at the other names on the list, Premo said she not only knows most of them, but has spent time with them either working on a big project or outside of work golfing, competing on sports teams, or crafting.

One name on the list of past recipients is Chris Dunham, who, along with Premo, was part of a team at Michigan Sugar Company that developed the "RAPID" system used to complete all orders related to production, sales, and shipping. The team worked for nearly two years to develop the system, which

eventually got its name from the members of the team.

The "P" in "RAPID" represents Premo.

"That was a fun team and to this day we are still testing it, improving it, and training others to use it," said Premo. "That was one of the projects that brought people from different departments together."

Premo and her husband Tom live in her hometown of Freeland. They had two children — a son Zack, who lives in Hemlock, and a daughter Nicole, who unfortunately passed away earlier this year. The couple also has five grandchildren.

In her free time, Premo enjoys outdoor sports like golf, volleyball, baseball, boating, and bicycle riding.

"I've seen a lot of things during my time at Michigan Sugar," she said. "I've had many bosses and we've gone through many transitions. Being here this long, I hope it is obvious that I love it." ■



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ABOVE Martin Gagnon, who retired from Michigan Sugar Company in 2004, holds a solid brass proof stick he was given as a retirement gift in this photo taken in April 2023.

RESCUED FROM THE SCRAPYARD

**RETIREMENT GIFT FOR MICHIGAN SUGAR EMPLOYEE
NOW PART OF COMPANY'S ARCHIVES**

By Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

When Martin Gagnon retired from Michigan Sugar Company nearly 20 years ago, he was presented with a unique gift to recognize his many years of service. That gift then took a journey that created a unique "History Mystery."

Martin, 82, of Saginaw, worked for Michigan Sugar Company for 35 years, first as a Shift Superintendent from 1969 to 1974 at the company's Croswell factory and then from 1974 to 2004 as Factory Superintendent in Carrollton.

When he retired, Martin was presented with a brass proof stick — a piece of equipment installed in a sugar crystallizer inside the factory that allowed workers to pull samples of sugar as it crystallized before being dropped into centrifugals, where it was spun to remove molasses before being sent for drying and cooling. Attached to this proof stick was a plaque, presumably from one of the crystallizers at the Carrollton factory. The back of the plaque was inscribed with these words:

"Congratulations Martin.

"Remember the good times.

"Dec. 1965 Maine Sugar.

"Jan. 2004 Michigan Sugar."

A native of Limestone, Maine, Martin earned his associate degree in agriculture from the University of Maine-Orono. In 1963, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and spent two years in the service, eventually being stationed in Germany. When he returned home, he found that Vahlsing Inc., well known in the potato business, was building sugarbeet processing factories around the country, including one in Easton, Maine, about 20 miles from his hometown.

In 1965, Gagnon went to work for the Maine Sugar Company, whose manager had a connection to sugar processing in Michigan. In four years with that company, Martin worked his way up to Shift Superintendent.

It wasn't long before the sugarbeet processing industry in Maine ran into huge troubles. Martin remembers one of the seemingly insurmountable challenges revolved around field stones.

"Everyone was enthused about making it go, but there were too many rocks in Maine," he recalled. "In Michigan, they claim to have a lot of rocks. You haven't seen any rocks like they had in Maine. It would just fill the flumes up full, and we would have to shut down and get out the backhoe."



ABOVE This plate, attached to the solid brass proof stick given to Martin Gagnon upon his retirement from Michigan Sugar Company in 2004, likely was taken from one of the crystallizers at the company's factory in Carrollton.



ABOVE A bit difficult to read, the back of the plaque attached to the proof stick was engraved to honor the career of former Michigan Sugar Company employee Martin Gagnon.

Two years after marrying his wife Simonne in 1967, Martin was on his way to Michigan, where he enjoyed a successful career at Michigan Sugar Company.

Now, here's where the story gets interesting.

Several years after retiring, Martin was cleaning up around the house and found the solid brass proof stick that had been given to him upon his retirement.

"I probably had it for 10-15 years," he said. "I was cleaning up and didn't have any place to put it."

So, he took it to Rifkin Scrap Iron & Metal Co. in Saginaw.

"It just so happened that day that Dave Rifkin was walking by my truck and said, 'What have you got there?'"

Dave paid Martin the going scrap price — just a little bit of money at the time — and told Martin he was planning to have dinner that night with former Michigan Sugar President and CEO Mark Flegenheimer. He was going to show it to Mark and see if he knew what it was.

At dinner that night, the proof stick was given to Mark, and he kept it in his office until his retirement earlier this year. While cleaning out his office, Mark felt the proof stick should go in the Michigan Sugar archives and gave it to Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations. He mentioned it once belonged to Martin Gagnon and shared the story of how it had been rescued from the scrap pile, so to speak.

Always interested in a good "History Mystery," Rob did a little research and was able to track down Martin. The two connected in April with Rob capturing a photo of Martin and his retirement gift from 2004. Martin was delighted to see the artifact but thought it should stay in the Michigan Sugar archives.

After retirement, Martin and Simonne traveled to Alaska and when they returned, Martin was offered a job as a vendor at Hydrite Chemical Co. out of Wisconsin. He worked until he was 75 years old. Today, he remains active as a member of the Knights of Columbus and is an avid snowmobiler. He and Simonne have two, adult, adopted children — Melissa Lincoln, a probation officer in Bay County, and Jason Gagnon, a truck driver out of Michigan.

"They gave me that proof stick because during my time in Carrollton, I bent a couple of those," he said. "We always had spares on hand just in case. This one might have been a spare."

"I thought maybe I could get it back and make a cane out of it, but it's pretty heavy." ■

Kassie Acker of Alma Crowned 2023 Michigan Sugar Queen

MARIA IVEZAJ OF MACOMB, KYLIE SPIEKERMAN OF SAGINAW CROWNED QUEEN'S COURT ATTENDANTS

By Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

Kassie Acker of Alma was crowned the 2023 Michigan Sugar Queen during a ceremony held Friday, June 16, at Sebewaing Village Park during the annual Michigan Sugar Festival.

Kassie, 20, is a senior at Michigan State University studying agriculture, food, and natural resources education. She hopes to pursue a career in ag education, teaching at the middle school and high school levels. A 2020 graduate of St. Louis High School, Acker is the daughter of Brian and Kathy Acker.

"Sometimes you just know when you've found the right ambassador for your company and this year was a perfect example of that," said Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations at Michigan Sugar Company, who oversees the Michigan Sugar Queen Scholarship Program. "From the moment I read Kassie's application, I was impressed by her knowledge of agriculture, her resumé, and her thoughts about representing Michigan Sugar."

"Speaking with her on the phone and meeting her in person confirmed those first impressions. We have found someone with an outgoing, energetic, and engaging personality, strong character, and significant experience in the field of agriculture. We are looking forward to a great year with Kassie as the Michigan Sugar Queen."

Also crowned during the June 16 ceremony were two Queen's Court Attendants — Maria Ivezaj of Macomb and Kylie Spiekerman of Saginaw. They, too, are serving as ambassadors for Michigan Sugar Company for the next year.

Maria, 19, is a graduate of Henry Ford II High School and attends Oakland University where she is a sophomore pursuing a degree in interdisciplinary studies with a minor in business. She hopes to one day work in the law profession. She is the daughter of Marko and Marija Ivezaj and the sister of 2022 Queen's Court Attendant Adriana Ivezaj.



ABOVE 2023 Michigan Sugar Queen Kassie Acker, center, and Queen's Court Attendants Maria Ivezaj, left, and Kylie Spiekerman were crowned on Friday, June 16, during the annual Michigan Sugar Festival in Sebewaing.

Kylie, 21, is a graduate of Carrollton High School and attends Saginaw Valley State University where she is a senior pursuing a degree in political science with a minor in criminal justice. She also hopes to one day work in the law profession. She is the daughter of Scott and Sedesa Spiekerman.

The new Queen and Court Attendants jumped right into their year of service appearing Saturday, June 17, in the Michigan Sugar Festival Grand Parade in Sebewaing. They were joined by members of the 2022 Michigan Sugar Queen's Court — Queen Brianna Kubik of Reese and Attendants Adriana Ivezaj of Macomb and Brooke Pagel of Birch Run.

Following the parade, the newly crowned trio were in Village Park greeting festivalgoers, passing out 2-pound bags of Pioneer Sugar, posing for photos, and helping members of Michigan Sugar's Co-op and Central District boards serve cotton candy.

Over the coming year, the new Queen and Attendants will represent the company at events like the annual Mackinac Island Fudge Festival, All Things Chocolate Baking Competition during Zehnder's Snowfest, and at the state Capitol during Michigan Sugar Day in October. They'll also take part in a handful of parades, including those at the Montrose Blueberry Festival,

Cheeseburger in Caseville, Michigan Bean Festival in Fairgrove, Munger Potato Festival, and the Tuscola County Pumpkin Festival in Caro.

"I am beyond excited and really grateful for this opportunity," said Kassie, who earned the Michigan FFA State Degree in 2020, as well as the St. Louis FFA Forever Blue Award given to a student with a passion for agriculture. "I feel like my education and background in FFA has led me to this and I'm excited to bring my background in agriculture to the position."

Kassie also serves as a Michigan Grown Michigan Great Ambassador for the Michigan Ag Council, meeting with consumers to have meaningful conversations about where their food comes from.

"One of our partners at the Michigan Ag Council is Pioneer Sugar, so I'm looking forward to helping strengthen that connection as I travel the state both with the Michigan Ag Council and Michigan Sugar," she said.

This year, Michigan Sugar Company received 17 applications through its Michigan Sugar Queen

Scholarship Program. After an initial phone interview and review of their applications, eight finalists were invited to Interview Day, where they participated in a variety of activities and completed an interview with this year's panel of judges: Mandy Kohl, a Michigan Sugar grower-owner, entrepreneur, and former Michigan Sugar Queen; Julie Perry, a retired Michigan Sugar employee; Lindy Richards, a Michigan Sugar employee, and former Munger Potato Festival Queen; and Claire Clark, a stay-at-home mom and a small business owner.

"As always, the competition to earn a spot on our Queen's Court was tough," said Rob Clark. "Kassie, Maria, and Kylie really shined throughout the entire interview process and our grower-owners and employees can look forward to great representation in our communities as we travel the state during the coming year to tell our story."

Through the Michigan Sugar Queen Scholarship Program, a Queen and two Attendants are chosen to serve for one year as ambassadors for Michigan Sugar Company. Their duties include public appearances, community service projects,

interaction with lawmakers and agricultural leaders, and helping to represent the cooperative throughout the state.

After completing the requirements of the program, the Queen receives a \$2,000 scholarship and each attendant a \$1,000 scholarship to help pay for college. ■



ABOVE 2023 Michigan Sugar Queen Kassie Acker, center, and Queen's Court Attendants Kylie Spiekerman, left, and Maria Ivezaj hold 2-pound bags of Pioneer Sugar on Saturday, June 17, during the annual Michigan Sugar Festival in Sebewaing.



ABOVE From left, 2023 Michigan Sugar Queen Kassie Acker, and Queen's Court Attendants Maria Ivezaj and Kylie Spiekerman sit atop the refreshed Michigan Sugar Company float following the 2023 Michigan Sugar Festival Parade in Sebewaing.

Michigan Sugar Company's float has been a mainstay at parades throughout Michigan for many years. Most of the time, when you see it, the float is carrying the Michigan Sugar Queen and Court.

After Michigan Sugar Company rebranded its Pioneer Sugar bags a couple years ago, changing from a white bag to a brilliant red bag, the float was in need of some updating. The project commenced earlier this year

with Exhibit Farm, a division of Zentx Media Group in Freeland, hired to give the float a refreshed look.

The float was taken down to the boards and new red and blue carpeting was installed

A Sweet New Ride...

MICHIGAN SUGAR COMPANY'S FLOAT GETS A REFRESH

to match the colors of the new red Pioneer Sugar bag that is now the centerpiece of the float. The bag itself includes several references to the fact that Michigan Sugar Company is a grower-owned cooperative, as well as the hashtag #BeAPioneer, and a QR code that directs parade-goers to the Pioneer Sugar website at www.pioneersugar.com, where they can find recipes and other information about the brand.

The updates were rounded out with new lettering on the sides of the float, including the addition of Michigan Sugar's purpose statement, *Making Life*

Sweeter, and the year of the company's founding, 1906.

The new-look float made its debut at the 2023 Michigan Sugar Festival Parade in Sebewaing. It carried 2023 Michigan Sugar Queen Kassie Acker and Queen's Court Attendants Kylie Spiekerman and Maria Ivezaj, and was pulled, as usual, by Michigan Sugar Company employees Pat Terrill and Chris Dutcher, who are the keepers of the float and always have it looking impeccable for parades.

— Rob Clark ■

FREE MEAL IN CARO BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

SPOONFULS OF PLENTY STARTED IN 2010, NOW SERVING 300 EACH WEEK

By Rob Clark, Director of Communications and Community Relations

Every Wednesday afternoon, the dining center and parking lot at the LeeRoy Clark Center in Caro comes to life as members of the community gather for a free meal served up by the Human Development Commission. It's called Spoonfuls of Plenty and since its inception in 2010, the meal has grown in popularity, survived the pandemic, and evolved to regularly serve 300 people.

"It's a free meal for anyone, regardless of need, age, or income," explained Carrie Will, Volunteer Program Manager for the Human Development Commission. "It definitely serves a need in our community, but it also is bringing people together, which is so important."

The meal is the brainchild of Human Development Commission Executive Director Lori Offenbecher. She launched the program in July 2010 as a monthly endeavor. Attendance quickly grew, doubling each month. By January 2011, the meal became weekly. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the meal was put on hold from March 2020 to August 2021 and returned in September 2021 as a takeout only meal — the first time that had been offered. Inside dining returned in May 2022 and today both dine-in and takeout options are offered.

Will said 10,311 meals were served to the Caro community in 2022.

The free weekly meals are fully funded through community support. Michigan Sugar Company became a sponsor in 2022, covering the cost of four meals that year. The cooperative is back this year sponsoring four additional meals. Cost to sponsor a meal is \$300. Sponsors also have the option of providing the volunteers to serve the meal, something Michigan Sugar has done at each of the meals it has sponsored to date.



ABOVE Greg Eremia, Packaging & Warehousing Director of Production, delivers some to-go meals to Mary Beth Garrett of Caro during the Spoonfuls of Plenty free community meal served Wednesday, March 8, 2023. Garrett served as one of two Michigan Sugar Queen's Court Attendants in 1986.

Among those who have volunteered are Ricky Annear, Georgia Chard, Nicole Ciesielski, Rob Clark, Jim Damm, Greg Eremia, Loraine Garcia, Ken Hardenburgh, Dodi Krueger, and Deana McKenzie.

"Volunteering for Spoonfuls of Plenty is such a rewarding and humbling experience," said Ciesielski, who works as the Caro Warehouse Manager. "The people are so grateful for a hot meal, such a basic need that we tend to take for granted. It really helps put life into perspective."

Greg Eremia, who works as Packaging and Warehousing Director of Production, said he loves volunteering with his co-workers.

"It is amazing to see so many people I work with volunteer their time to help those in need," he said. "This experience has positively impacted my perspective of the people around me and the community I live in."

Many Caro-area residents return each week for the meal. Some couples dine together calling the event their weekly time to catch up with friends.

Don Duggar, who served as Caro Village Manager from 1975 to 1998, said he loves the way the meal serves a need and brings people together.

"I'm a widower. I'm alone, so coming here is a way for me to socialize," he said. "I come every week to yakety-yak. That's what it's all about."

Duggar added the food is always good.

"Some weeks it's better than others ... but it's always good," he said.

Michigan Sugar Sponsored its first meal of 2023 on March 8 and its second meal on May 24. It also is sponsoring meals on Sept. 13, and Dec. 13. The meals are served from 3:30-6 p.m. at the LeeRoy Clark Center, 435 Green St., just a stone's throw from Michigan Sugar's Caro factory.

For more information about the program or to sign up as a sponsor or volunteer, call the Human Development Commission at 1-800-843-6394. ■

BELOW Nicole Ciesielski, Caro Warehouse Manager, serves up a scoop of broccoli during the Spoonfuls of Plenty meal sponsored by Michigan Sugar Company on Wednesday, March 8, 2023.





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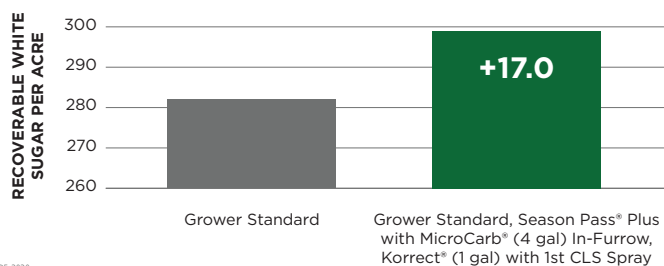
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