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Star Eagle

*Happenings
in the
local
ag
community*

A Day in the COUNTRY



Star Eagle photo by Jim Lutgens

INSIDE:

Old Farmall returned to former glory *Page 2*

Jared Knutson's passion for farming *Page 8*

Sam Morgan puts his dreams into old metal

Restored antique tractors earn multiple honors for area 4-H'er

By JIM LUTGENS
Editor

When Sam Morgan was preparing for the 2014 Minnesota State Fair, he told his parents he didn't care if he brought home a purple ribbon or not, he already was bringing home a nice tractor to show for his efforts.

He brought home both.

Morgan, a senior at NRHEG High School, was awarded 4-H Grand Champion honors at the state fair for his restored tractor, a 1948 Farmall H. It was the second year in a row he was state fair Grand Champion, following last year's purple ribbon for his restored 1944 Farmall M.

"After doing good at the county and state fair, I just feel good my hard work has paid off," said Morgan, who put hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars into the project.

It's a big achievement for a kid who returned to 4-H just two years ago.

"A lot of kids, their wish is just to get up to the state fair," he said. "To win state fair Grand Champion two years in a row, in the same category, you don't hear of it very often."

Morgan plans to have both tractors in this year's NRHEG homecoming parade Friday, Sept. 26.

Last year's Grand Champion tractor was dedicated to former classmate Dylan Johnson, who was killed in an ATV accident at age 13. He continued the tradition this year, with a twist. He bought the tractor — which once belonged to Dylan — from Al Fenton, Dylan's stepdad, for \$400.

"I actually bought it during the state fair last year," said Morgan. "I



DECORATED SENIOR – Sam Morgan with his collection of awards from 4-H and from NRHEG Marching Band, including the two back-to-back State Fair Grand Champion purple ribbons for his restored tractors.

Star Eagle photo by Jim Lutgens

remember Dylan mentioning to me back in seventh grade that he would possibly like to restore it someday. He loved anything to do with engines."

And, according to Morgan, he loved people.

"He was the kind of person who would do anything for you," he said.

At first, Morgan wasn't sure if he'd be able to do anything for his old friend's old tractor.

"When I first saw the thing, it was pretty much a parts tractor," he said. "It didn't run."

But before he could work on it, he had to get it home. So he and a buddy, Dylan Arnold, went to the Fenton farm with a car trailer.

"We winched it on there," he said. "It was about a two-hour job."

Morgan managed to get the tractor running on his own, though he did get help restoring it from his dad, Dean Morgan, and uncle, Keith Morgan.

They disassembled the tractor, ordered parts off e-Bay, and restored it to near-mint condition. Morgan put on the finishing touches himself with his painting skills, applying three coats.

"To paint like that, it's really an art," he said.

Morgan already has a 1957 Farmall 450 lined up to restore for next year. It's been in his family for decades.

"I can't remember what year my grandpa bought it, but it was one of their main tractors," he said.

Next in line to restore? A Farmall 400 and a 1944 Massey Harris he

inherited from his great-grandfather.

Morgan enjoys helping his uncle Keith in the fields and dreams of farming for a living but, considering the start-up costs, he's doubtful it will ever happen.

He does, however, have one plan. After graduating from NRHEG next spring, he's seriously considering going on a "wheat run," harvesting crops throughout several states, something his father did a day after graduating from high school.

For now, much of the time you can find Morgan on the family farm on Hwy. 30 near the Waseca-Steele County line, quietly transforming next year's 4-H tractor, one piece at a time, with thoughts of an old friend on his mind.

Star Eagle "A Day In the Country" Special

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Reed Waller, Editor • Tracie Rosacker, Advertising Manager



TWIN ACHIEVEMENTS – Sam Morgan stands between the 1944 Farmall M and 1948 Farmall H tractors he restored for 4-H projects. The tractors won him Grand Champion honors at the Minnesota State Fair two years running. Watch for the tractors in this year’s Homecoming parade. Star Eagle photo by Jim Lutgens

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Minnesota apple orchards open for picking

(M N A g C o n n e c t i o n) Minnesota apple growers are reporting orchards full of big, high quality apples for fall family fun. Orchards are open for picking across the state with many ripe varieties on the trees.

Charlie Johnson, President of the Minnesota Apple Growers Association, said the 2014 crop will be good for growers and consumers, despite the especially harsh winter, "Many varieties will be as big, or bigger than last year. The harsh winter weather has affected some varieties, in some orchards, but most producers have come through the winter with an excellent crop!"

Minnesota is known for flavorful apple varieties specifically bred to thrive in our climate. This includes University of Minnesota cultivars such as the

Zestar!, Honeycrisp, SweeTango, Haralson and Sweet Sixteen.

Most growers report varieties are ripening slightly later than typical, due to the late spring. Because there are so many delicious apple varieties to choose from, and seasonality depends on weather, please call your orchard to determine what is ripe and ready for picking.

Minnesota Grown Spokesman, Paul Hugunin, said a trip to an apple orchard is a fun activity for families, "Apple orchards provide many ways to engage families and children of all ages. It's a wonderful way to introduce kids to how delicious fresh picked produce can taste! Many orchards also offer fresh apple cider, pumpkins, fall raspberries and fun fall activities like hay



APPLES – Many varieties are now available near you.

rides, crop mazes and petting zoos."

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Minnesota Grown Directory is a free statewide guide to more than 100 apple orchards. The directory also

includes a comprehensive list of fall raspberry patches, corn mazes, wineries and more. You can search the directory online at www.minnesotagrown.com or order your FREE printed copy by calling 1-888-TOURISM.

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‘We have a passion for farming’

Jared Knutson exemplifies the commitment to the family farm

By KATHY PAULSEN
Staff Writer

“J” is for Joy, as in “the joy of farming.”

It also stands for Jared, a member of this farm family of distinction.

The letter “J” is predominant in the family of Jim and Julie Knutson, who farm with their two sons, John, 28; and Jared, 24. Jared’s brother, Jake, 22, works for Cyclone Trace Cattle Company in Clarion, IA. Jed, 19, is a student at Riverland College majoring in Construction Electrician, and a sister, Jorgen, works as a day treatment therapist in Minneapolis. She also volunteers as a leader for the Christian youth organization, “Young Life.”

The Knutsons are a busy family who work together. Farming has its ups and downs, and each new growing season presents challenges and risks, but they try to work it to their advantage.

But Jared alone is enough to fill a book. Jared is single and lives on the former David Eastvold farm located between Hartland and Geneva. He was able to purchase the farm site when he was 22.

“I tell everyone that I have the best neighbors in the world who are constantly watching out for me,” he said.

For the past two years Jared has hosted a neighborhood block party in his farm shop that was originally started by Janet Eastvold at their farm.

“February is a slow time, and it’s a great way to get everyone together for a party,” said Knutson. “So far it has been a great success!”

Jared has a free spirited dog, Mic, raises feeder cattle on his “ranch,” and has two quarter horses. His favorite summer pastime is participating in ranch rodeo events – some with the Hagen boys, Randy and Chuck.

After Jared graduated from high

school he attended Alexandria Technical College for two years, receiving a degree in Marine, Motorcycle and Small Engine Mechanics. He always knew he would farm, but farming has many facets, and the more skills you have, the easier it is to be independent.

“I wanted to get a degree that could diversify me both on and off the farm,” he said.

In his spare time Jared repairs anything from ATVs to chainsaws.

“If you have a mechanical mind-set you can pretty much figure out how to fix anything,” he stated. Farm equipment, chain saws, four wheelers and other mechanical things need repair from time to time, and Jared has learned how to fix most of them.

After getting his degree, Jared moved to West Yellowstone, Montana, working at a snowmobile rental business repairing snowmobiles. But when spring arrived, he headed for home to work on the family farm.

Jared says he is grateful to wake up and have something to do every day. He welcomes the many challenges that farming brings.

Jared started farming in 2011 with his dad and brother John. It was a good year, with good yields and fair prices, but Jared knows that you can’t always control the markets or the weather. Farming can be a gamble, but it is also a case of having faith and hope in tomorrow.

Typically it takes about a month to get the equipment ready for spring planting. Being able to work the ground and smell the fresh worked soil is why Jared loves to farm.

The Knutsons raise corn and beans, and buy the majority of their seed and fertilizer from local dealers and businesses. Supporting local business and the community is something the Knutsons do as



Jared Knutson is saddling up to haul his family’s corn to make room for more, in one of the family’s semis.

Star Eagle photo by Kathy Pausen

much as they can.

Jared says they usually plant 2/3 of their total acreage in corn and the remaining 1/3 in beans. Watching for those first green rows of corn and beans emerging in the field is always a thrill.

Jared and his brothers are busy in the spring helping prepare the fields, but he says his dad and John generally do the planting, typically in mid-April.

Jared says farmers put the seed in the ground, and have to trust that God will supply it with sufficient sun and rain the seeds need to grow

throughout the season.

At his parents’ farm south of Hartland the Knutsons have a large grain-handling facility they built themselves to store the corn and beans they grow. A semi holds between 900 to 1000 bushels of corn, and the Knutsons usually haul to the local ethanol plants, so they are already busy moving corn left in their bins before they start harvesting. Jared said that driving semi is really enjoyable and he looks forward to hauling corn each year.

Knutson continued on 7

■ Knutson

from Page 6

Farming gives a person a wide range of things to do as well as independence. Jared compares himself to a gopher in the spring because he does a lot of running around the farm making sure the planter is full of seed and driving the tractor, digging the ground.

"I think many people take for granted where their food comes from and how much work goes into producing it," Jared says. "We need to make sure people are educated about agriculture and their food, where it comes from and how we care about our product. Farmers are very conscientious about how they apply fertilizer and chemicals. We have a passion for farming and we are trying to do our best to sustain the land through different tillage and planting practices for specific types of soil. It is always our goal to be the best stewards of the land and try to do our part to keep our family farming legacy going."

But there's more to farming than being in the field. Jared commented that marketing grain, bookkeeping, and accounting are equally important. As a young farmer, Jared is enrolled in the South Central Farm Management Program at South Central College in Mankato. He works with a farm manager to keep his accounting and book keeping skills sharp.

The Knutsons practice conservation tillage on the more highly erodible soils, and will plow or use a disc ripper on the more flat ground.

Jared comments that most farmers like the fall best because they can see the results of all their hard work.

"Our goal is to get the tillage work done in the fall before the winter snows start to fly," he said. "Also, last year we purchased a tiling machine and spent a lot of the summer pattern tiling farms that were too wet to plant. If we have time in the fall before the ground freezes we will try to tile as much

as we can. It has been a great piece of equipment and tiling has long-term benefits being able to drain the fields."

Most generally the Knutsons can make their own repairs to their machines and equipment. They work at maintaining and repairing their equipment during the winter season. Generally they put the tractors away at the end of November. Between the three farms they can house their equipment inside for the winter – a big plus.

The Knutsons bale hay and store it in their barn to feed their small beef cow/calf herd and their sheep. The extra hay is sold. Currently, Jared, John, and Jim are hauling corn to the local ethanol plants and hope to get all the grain bins cleaned out soon. Then they will focus on getting the equipment ready for the fall harvest.

With all this, Jared still finds free time to enjoy other things. He still enjoys snowmobiling and spending time with friends. He likes to travel out west, and was able to get to

Colorado this past summer for the Fourth of July. Most times he's in the mountains it's winter, and this year he enjoyed seeing what the Rockies looked like without snow.

He is a member of the Hartland Fire Department and likes to volunteer for the community in any way he can.

Jared has recently been helping to launch a new church in Albert Lea called Hope Church. It is being "planted" through Crossroads Evangelical Free Church in Albert Lea. Pastor Kaleb and a core group of about 40 young people meet at the Marion Ross Theatre on Sundays. The mission of the church is outreach – to spread the gospel to more people and help those who have been disconnected from the church.

Jared believes God watches over us and helps farmers provide food and hope for His people.

"We can't grow more land," he said. "Farming is a privilege, and it is our job to preserve and protect what God has given us."



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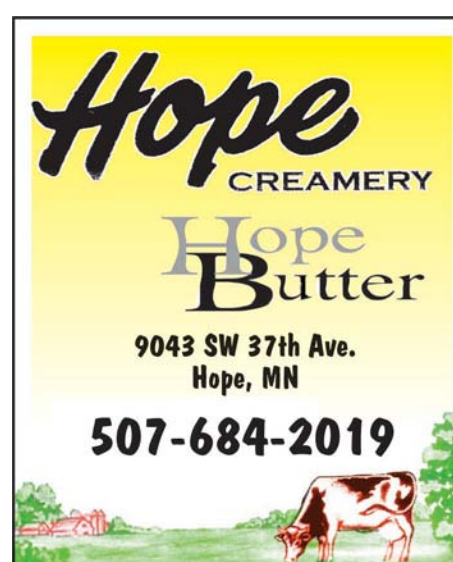
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Add value to your ag operation with grants this autumn

October 20 deadline set for Minnesota's Value Added Grant program

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has another round of funding available for projects to help farmers, producers and processors add value to their operations. A total of \$2 million in funding has been made available through the Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation Program (AGRI), established by the legislature to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries.

The MDA distributes a portion of AGRI funding through the Value Added Grant Program which aims to increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products by diversifying

markets and increasing market access and food safety. These grants are intended to:

- initiate or expand livestock product processing;
- purchase equipment to start, upgrade, or modernize value added businesses;
- increase on-farm food safety, such as implementation of a food safety plan
- increase farmers' processing and aggregating capacity to enter farm-to-school and other markets

Proposals with a meat processing, farm-to-school (or other institution) component, or those addressing Good Agricultural Practices or a



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT
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similar type of food safety plan receive priority, but all value added proposals are encouraged to apply. Small to medium sized operations also receive special consideration.

Equipment purchases or physical improvements are eligible for 25 percent of the total project cost up to a maximum grant award of \$150,000 with a completed business plan or food safety plan. A business or food safety plan must outline what equipment and

improvements are necessary to fulfill the plan.

This round of applications must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on October 20, 2014. Proposals may be delivered by mail, in person, or by email. If a proposal is emailed, the time and date it is received will be considered the received-by date. Applications are available at www.mda.state.mn.us/valueadded.aspx.

Signup has begun for Margin Protection Program

By JANET KUBAT

(AgriNews) — Dairy farmers began signing up for the new Margin Protection Program on Sept. 2.

The voluntary program replaces the Milk Income Loss Contract. It was passed as part of the 2014 farm bill.

"The Margin Protection Program is significant reform, creating a strong safety net that will help dairy farmers better manage their risk," said Rep. Collin Peterson, ranking Democrat on the House ag committee, in a press release.

The dairy Margin Protection Program is similar to the Milk Income Loss Contract in that it provides financial assistance to participating dairy producers when the margin between milk price and feed cost falls below a certain level. However, where the MILC program necessitated only that farmers sign up at the Farm Service Agency and show production history, the Dairy Margin Protection Program requires farmers to select a level of coverage and pay a fee.

Participating farmers must pay an administrative fee of at least \$100 annually. They also select their coverage level. The signup that

runs Sept. 2 through Nov. 28 is for 2014 and 2015. The program runs through 2018.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., who participated in the conference call with USDA secretary Tom Vilsack to announce the signup, said the \$100 is a great investment. He encouraged producers to look into the program and sign up.

Leahy, who has long been a champion of dairy producers, said the program was crafted so as not to create incentives for overproduction but rather to encourage sensible milk production. Producers can insure up to their highest level of milk production in the previous three years.

Milk prices are good right now, Leahy said, but it only takes a surplus of 1 percent to 2 percent to send prices into a tailspin.

Dairy producers wanted MILC to continue, but Republicans didn't support that, Leahy said. He didn't want a farm bill without some sort of protection for dairy farmers and the Margin Protection Program is a good substitute.

In the last decade, the United States has lost about half of its dairy producers, Vilsack said. Milk price drops have been more severe

and more often, so producers don't have time to catch up in between. Rising feed costs also have hurt dairy producers.

"We cannot afford to have our dairy farmers go bankrupt when there are sudden market swings, which is why we put together this new program," said Sen. Debbie Stabenow, chairwoman of the Senate agriculture committee, in a press release.

Vilsack said it's necessary to provide some kind of insurance protection so when feed prices go up and milk prices go down significantly, dairy farmers can protect their margin.

The second part of the dairy program in the farm bill is the Dairy Product Donation Program. The program authorizes USDA to purchase surplus dairy products and make them available to food banks or nutrition programs.

USDA has a web-based tool where farmers can plug in their numbers and determine which level of coverage is best for them. The tool can be assessed via usda.gov/farmbill or usda.gov/mpptool. The tool was developed by the University of Illinois, in partnership with the

USDA and the Program on Dairy Markets and Policy. DMaP partners include the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin, Cornell University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Minnesota, Ohio State University and Michigan State University.

Farmers participating in the Livestock Gross Margin program can register for the Margin Protection Program, but the new margin program only will begin once their Livestock Gross Margin coverage has ended.

The Margin Protection Program final rule will be published in the Federal Register on Aug. 29. The Farm Service Agency, which administers the program, will open a 60-day public comment period on the dairy program. The agency wants to hear from dairy operators to determine whether the current regulation accurately addresses management changes, such as adding new family members to the dairy operation or inter-generational transfers. Written comments must be submitted by Oct. 28 at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> or <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Forecast: record-high corn and soybean production

2014 cotton production also up from 2013, says USDA

U.S. soybean producers are expected to produce a record 3.82 billion bushels in 2014, up 16 percent from last year according to the Crop Production report issued today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Growing conditions were conducive for corn growers who are also expected to produce a record-high crop at 14.0 billion bushels of corn, up 1 percent from 2013 which was also a record at the time.

Today's report also included the first production forecast for U.S. cotton. NASS forecasts all cotton production at 17.5 million 480-pound bales, up 36 percent from last year's 12.9 million bales. Wheat production is forecast up 2 percent from the July forecast but down 5 percent from 2013.

NASS surveyed nearly 25,000 producers across the country in preparation for this report. The agency also conducted field and lab measurements on corn, soybeans, wheat and cotton in the major producing states, which usually account for about 75 percent of the U.S. production.

Other key findings in today's Crop Production report include:

Corn

Corn planted area for all purposes is estimated at 91.6 million acres, unchanged from the June estimate but down 4 percent from



2013

Area harvested for grain is forecast at 83.8 million acres, down 4 percent from last year

August 1 objective yield data indicate the greatest number of ears on record for the combined 10 objective yield states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)

Despite a late winter season delay in planting, more favorable spring conditions arrived allowing quick planting and largely favorable growing conditions that encouraged the record high production forecast.

Soybeans

Area for harvest is forecast at a record 84.1 million acres, unchanged from June but up 11 percent from 2013.

Despite a slow planting start, by June 1 fifty percent of the soybean crop had emerged, 21 percentage points ahead of last year's pace and 5 percentage points ahead of normal. Positive conditions in most soybean-producing areas of the

country brought on strong percentages of the crop being rated good to excellent and the record forecast. The largest decline in condition rating was in Kentucky where dry conditions this year resulted in 61 percent of the crop rated as good to excellent, a drop of 26 percentage points.

If realized, the forecasted yield will be a record high in Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Winter Wheat

Production is forecast at 1.40 billion bushels, up 2 percent from the July 1 forecast, but down 9 percent from 2013.

Based on August 1 conditions, the U.S. yield is forecast at 43.1 bushels per acre, up 0.9 from last month but down 4.3 bushels from last year.

Area expected to be harvested for grain or seed is 32.4 million acres, up slightly from last year

Cotton

Area planted to Upland cotton is estimated at 11.2 million acres, up 10 percent from last year.

Harvested Upland cotton area is expected to total 10.1 million acres, up 37 percent from 2013.

Expected harvested area of Pima cotton at 175,900 acres is down 12 percent from last year.

As of August 3, NASS rated 53 percent of all cotton acreage to be in good to excellent condition com-

pared with 45 percent at this time last year.

Record yields are expected in Arizona, Arkansas, Florida and Oklahoma.


With this report, NASS resumes apple, peach, pear and grape forecasts in the monthly Crop Production report. Numbers for these crops were not published last year due to sequestration.

NASS is gearing up to conduct its September Agricultural Survey, which will focus on wheat, barley, oats and rye growers. That survey will take place during the first two weeks of September.

The Crop Production report is published monthly and is available online at www.nass.usda.gov.


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