

Our Hidden Strength >

By Bill Ahlbrecht, CEO/General Manager

Here are a couple of facts:

- ⇒ A TALL TREE WILL NEVER SURVIVE IF IT ISN'T SUPPORTED BY A VERY STRONG ROOT SYSTEM.
- ⇒ A BUILDING IS ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS FOUNDATION.

At Ag Partners, a very hidden strength of our company are those staff members who are depended on daily by our customers, board, management, and employees to keep us operating seamlessly. They have specialties in accounting, human resource, customer service, credit assistance, salesclerk, information technology, accounts payables, finance, billing, sales assistance, dispatchers, communications, grain accounting, marketing, business analyst, cyber security, and so much more!

As we approach another very busy spring season it gives me great pleasure knowing that these amazing employees will be there for you and to keep a very professional eye on everything that makes Ag Partners special!

Join me in appreciating all of these special employees that are often hidden behind the management, sales staff and other front-line employees that benefit the most from their amazing knowledge and help!

-Bill



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Ag Partners #FarmerStrong

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SPOTLIGHT: Ag Partners Stewartville >

By Terra Wierson, Communications Specialist

On the southern side of Stewartville, MN stands a towering feed mill, expansive grain bins and crop input storage, offices, trucks and loads of equipment. This Ag Partners facility is nestled right alongside a quiet neighborhood, and not far from downtown.

Stewartville itself is a small but bustling southern Minnesota town of 6800 people just south of Rochester. Our facilities in town provide around 50 full time jobs and up to 30 seasonal and part time jobs over the course of a year. These jobs fill the needs of the community and rural growers and producers with grain marketing, livestock and animal feed, agronomy services and energy.

Our grain team tracks markets and makes customer marketing recommendations all year, as well as having a year-round receiving bay. "In the height of harvest, we'll take in a steady 100 loads a day on average," says Amber Merkel, Grain Customer Service Specialist. Stewartville's grain storage capacity is currently right around four million bushels.

So what happens to the grain taken in at Stewartville? Around half of the grain that is received in Stewartville is used for feed production. The corn that doesn't go to the feed mill gets shipped out to river terminals for export or ethanol plants to make fuel. The feed mill here in Stewartville is the only Ag Partners mill which manufactures feed for all livestock species: swine, beef, dairy, poultry, sheep, goats and specialty animals.

The twelve full-time feed department employees together have 191 combined years of experience with Ag Partners and legacy All American Co-op. This feed mill is also the only Ag Partners mill which produces pelletized feed. In fact, in the past year, the 5,500 tons of the 12,000 total tons of pellet feed sold through Ag Partners, comes out of the Stewartville mill.

Ingredients and micro-nutrients are precisely mixed and measured by computer including with our own roasted soybeans for select

dairy and specialty feeds. Final product feed is sold by tote, bag and in bulk. Also available are pre-packaged Purina products. Our feed truck will deliver any of these to the farm.

Despite the warm winter, our agronomy department won't hit the busy season until early spring. For now, preventative maintenance is being done on our machinery so it's ready to go when the time comes. One of the most impressive parts of our agronomy business is the amount of ground our custom applicators cover. In 2023 in the Stewartville area, 72,000 acres were custom sprayed, and 77,500 acres of dry fertilizer was spread. This acreage was covered by eight applicators while supported by 15 operations staff and four agronomists. Stewartville operated five sprayers, four dry fertilizer machines and a dry fertilizer side-dress machine for in-season nitrogen application. The AYS team helped to manage 39,350 acres in 2023.

In the spring and fall when our agronomy department is running hard, making sure our customers can keep moving, we keep the employees going with potlucks or grilling lunch on the weekends... even some special meal deliveries are to the field.

During the summer, Ag Partners employs agronomy interns to help with many of the in-field activities. They will stay busy from May to August. This gives the individuals some hands-on experience and provides us a great way to work with the next generation of people entering agriculture. Each of the interns is given a summer project that is presented at our wrap up session in August, and many will also present to members of the industry at the Land O'Lakes wrap up in Arden Hills. This event provides some excellent exposure along with

113 4th Street SE
Stewartville, MN 55976
507-533-4222

Location Managers:

Grain - **Greg Siems**

Feed - **Brent Vorpapel**

Agronomy - **Pete Doherty**

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Feed Grain Careers
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1908- Articles of Incorporation for Farmers' Elevator Co.

1917- Cribbed elevator built

1920- \$7K spent on 25K bu concrete storage tank

1938- Elevator fire

1945- Feed mill cap. doubled

1955- Became a cooperative & built Elevator B

1958- Built Elevator C

1960- Built fertilizer building

1965- Added 120K bu of storage

1971- Built 3 new grain bins at 400K bu, upgraded dryer, added to elevator now 115' high

1974- Terra-Gators arrived

1976- Built liquid fertilizer plant

1978- Built chemical warehouse

1980- Name changed to All American Co-op

1986- Built new feed mill

1988- Built office building

1990- New bulk liquid fert. plant

1998- Developed Progressive Ag Center, LLC

1999 & 2000- Added 568K bu storage, Zimmerman dryer, soybean system installed

2006- 300K bu storage added

2021- Merger with Ag Partners

To date- Many upgrades to grain handling and feed handling. Advanced Yield System program added.



This is a picture taken "away back" when Stewartville had passenger train service. The picture shows the train pulling into the depot from the north, with a number of people standing on the depot platform waiting to board the train. Agent George Jochimsen can be seen standing at the extreme left, and Elmer Rhode, helper at the depot, is standing in the doorway of the baggage and freight car. The grain elevator shown at the left is the old farmers elevator. The picture was taken at 45 years ago and was loaned to the Star by Mrs. Emil Zellmer.

115 years ago there wasn't much more than a main street with shops, a few homes and a new elevator built by local farmers and large and modest farms as far as the eye could see. These farmers built the elevator by pooling their money as an investment into their own operations as well as for the economic vitality of all area farmers.

developing their network.

Throughout the year we enjoy supporting our surrounding communities through local sport and community club sponsorships, regional FFA and 4-H volunteering and donations, classroom visits, Stewartville Chamber of Commerce membership (115 years in 2023!), Olmsted County's Days of Yesteryear, facility tours, fire department training space, festival parades, livestock show sponsorships, public informational seminars and more.

Helping each other: We want to make our spring application schedule as efficient as possible, so we ask customers to work with their agronomist early to give us as much lead time as possible. Having a plan early will set expectations on both ends and help to put your spring planting season in motion at the right time.

A special thank you goes out to Amber, Pete, Brent, Greg and Ridge for providing current & historical information for this article!



2023 Interns



BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEW LINE UP >

Pat Judd of Kilkenny retired from the Board at the annual meeting in December, and Board leaders have changed. Below is a photo from the annual meeting. Left to right: Recently Retired CFO: Joel Eichelberger, Board Members: Greg Piller (Kenyon), Keith Saemrow (Waterville), Andy Buckwalter (Mantorville, Board President), Zac Johnson (Rushford), Isaac Nellessen (Spring Valley, WI, Board Vice President), Joe Horstmann (Stewartville), Chris Buck (Goodhue), Todd Myren (Nelson, WI), CEO/General Manager Bill Ahlbrecht, Jim Grobe (Millville), former General Manager Greg Schwanbeck, former Board member Patt Judd (Waterville), Mike Thompson (Oronoco), Ron Regenscheid (St. Peter, Secretary) and Eric Nigon (Eyota).



From Hardware Hank to ACE Hardware New brands & more built-in convenience in Belle Plaine >

By Susan George, Town & Country Farm Store Manager

In late November, we announced our decision to switch our Town & Country Store from Hardware Hank to ACE Hardware, and in the 11 weeks that followed leading to today, we have liquidated our Hardware Hank inventory and completed a five-week remodel. With all big decisions, especially those that impact the community, our company and our patrons, it doesn't come without careful consideration.

A common question that has been asked throughout this process is: What led you to this switch? I can confidently say that Ag Partners is committed to providing the best products, when you need it and

at the best price, to service our customers. Switching hardware suppliers to ACE provided us with the opportunity to better fulfill our commitment and elevate our customers' shopping experience. The remodel was an investment not only in our community, but in our company and team as well.

As I write this article in early February, we are working on the final touches throughout the store before our Grand Opening set for early April. We are excited to expand on National Brands such as Craftsman, Milwaukee, Weber and Traeger. We've introduced to our store Stihl, EGO, Benjamin Moore, Magnolia Home, and Yeti - to name a few.

We will continue as always to provide the same great Feed, Pet Food, Farm Supplies, and Garden Center, along with the same great staff. Once we are fully switched over, customers will be able to enjoy the perks of ACE Rewards, monthly sales, and have the ability to shop online and pick up in-store for even more convenience.

Throughout the remodel, we have remained open, so stop on in to see the newly remodeled store. We are stocked and happy to help you find the products that you need. We appreciate the dedication our town of Belle Plaine has shown, and look forward to serving your needs.



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AGRONOMY CONNECTION...



By Tyrell Treptow, Agronomist

Crop farming cannot consist of sitting in your tractor alone all day, every day. Like it or not, we are social animals, and to grow in our field (yes, pun intended) we must connect with other producers and crop specialists of all kinds. We find winter to be a good time of year to get out and about and do just that.

One of our most recent social events was our **BIG BUSHEL CLUB** banquet where local success is celebrated with a Yield Competition.

The 2023 growing season's Big Bushel yield contest was at Treasure Island Casino. All participating producers were invited to an evening of good food, conversation, and recreational blackjack. Thank you to all who participated in making it a success again!

Yields are taken from continuous 1/2 acre parcels and verified with a weigh wagon. It is our hope that producers would use this competition as a reason to try new production methods in growing better corn. The Big Bushel contest is open to anyone who purchases 25% or more of their corn seed from Ag Partners. Results are to the right.

For our up and coming generation of growers, our RoCrop program is expanding - recently to Wisconsin, and now in Southern Minnesota. These gatherings are meant to educate and familiarize the "next generation" with best practices and more.



- 1st Place:** Kevin Koepp, DKC 59-82 SSRIB, 320.4;
2nd Place: Brandon Lexvold, DKC107-33 SSRIB 315.2;
3rd Place: Josh Koepp, DKC56-65 SSRIB, 314.4;
4th Place: Dan Fohrman, DKC105-33 SSPRO RIB, 313.6;
5th Place: Dennis Hinsch, DKC105-35 VT2PRO RIB, 303.3.

Honorable Mentions by location

- Belle Plaine:** Owen Gohlke, DKC56-65 SSRIB, 300.1
Elgin: Chad Schumacher, DKC56-65 SSRIB, 295.8
Goodhue: Erickson Farms, DKC56-65 SSRIB, 300.3
Lake City: Circle K Farms, DKC105-33 SSPRO RIB, 297.2
Lewiston: Brian Fohrman, DKC101-35 VT2PRO RIB, 297.3
Pine Island: Mike Thompson, DKC101-33 SSPRO RIB, 278.4
Wanamingo: Gary Borgschatz, DKC101-33 SSPRO RIB, 273.2
Stewartville: Roy & Sue Edge, B01Z88Q, 247.7

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Social/educational events from the U of M Extension office

LET'S GET GROWING SPRING EXPO is an event for home gardeners of all skill levels. This event includes classes on a wide variety of gardening topics, a keynote speaker, lunch, a silent auction and a chance to win door prizes. Classes are taught by U of M Master Gardeners and horticulture professionals. **Saturday, February 24th**

ROSEMOUNT 8 am - 2:30 pm [lets-get-growing-spring-expo](#)



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

IS YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR SUCCESS(ION)?

This five-week online course will guide you through a business succession planning process to learn, discuss and plan your transition.

Tuesdays, March 5 - April 9

ONLINE COURSE 12 - 1:30 pm [your-business-ready-succession-spring-2024](#)

DAKOTA COUNTY CROPS DAY For the 18th year, Crops Day will bring University of Minnesota and Dakota County Soil & Water experts to Dakota County to share local research results and crop management strategies. Free to attend, pre-registration is requested. **Wednesday, March 13th**

FARMINGTON 9 am -1 pm [dakota-county-crops-day](#)

Ag Partners Coop
101 Broadway
PO Box 218
Goodhue, MN 55027



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Building Strong Calves for a Stronger Market >

By Mark Werner, Beef Specialist



The building blocks for a calf's development starts at conception, but 2/3 of fetal development occurs in the last trimester of gestation. This is the time when the cow's nutrient requirements are on the increase. Furthermore, at the time of this stage, the size of the calf-in-utero increases and the cow's abdominal/rumen capacity proportionally decreases. Fluctuation temperature and weather can also increase her nutrient requirement. Those cows require additional protein, energy and minerals to make nutrient-rich colostrum, meet the needs of the calf's accelerated development, as well as maintaining her body condition. Adequate body condition ensures that she can support lactation to feed the calf *and* get pregnant again within 90 days to maintain a twelve-month calving cycle.

A calf getting colostrum is the pinnacle of success for its outlook on life. A calf should receive 10% of its body weight in colostrum as quickly after birth as possible. Our calf specialists say, ideally, in order to maximize colostrum absorption, the calf should have that amount within two hours of birth. In a typical beef operation that equates to actively observing the birth, evaluating the mothering ability of the cow and the calf's vigor. Good practice includes:

- The navel needs to be dipped in the iodine tincture as soon after birth as possible.
- Minimize your direct contact with the pair after tending to the naval.
- Observe from a distance that the cow is not showing concern of your presence.
- At this point, do not interfere unless needed.



There are multiple factors to consider when **evaluating colostrum uptake**. With a vigorous calf, watch how long the calf is in a that same general position (hence it's latched and nursing), listen for suckling, evaluate if the teat has been latched onto without entering the pen. Heck, keep a pair of binoculars handy to get a closer look! At 30 feet, a pair of binoculars can give you a clear view if that udder has been latched onto. If the cow has questionable mothering ability - including a bag that is difficult for a calf to access, missile teats, sag bags, excess mud or tags - or if the calf is exhibiting low vigor, then you need to intervene sooner than later by either assisting with nursing or administering a colostrum replacement.

After the new calf has been given the best opportunity for colostrum uptake, it needs to stay healthy and dry. Work with a **knowledgeable** calf vet on any health concerns with your calves - and be sure to keep that line of communication open! The vet should be updated on the current health status of your calves, especially when something changes. As fast as the tables can turn in terms of health in a young calf, **more caution is better** than the alternative. Keep your calf in loafing areas and bedded with clean, dry bedding (preferably straw) deep enough for the calf to nestle in and stay warm. Make

this calf area as draft free as possible, while keeping the air as fresh as possible, especially down low at the calf's level. Do not box it in to the point of compromising the air quality. This can increase the chances of respiratory upset in young calves.

A healthy, comfortable calf will gain weight quickly. Starting them out strong will help them to utilize every pound of feed more efficiently throughout their whole life. The **U.S. beef herd is reporting** all time record low cow inventories, coupled with the cattle on feed reports posting the first decrease in inventories in years, the stage appears to be getting set for tightening supplies of feeder cattle. This in turn can lead to shortages of market-ready fat cattle in the corresponding timeline. The impact that these inventory figures and trends will have on prices is yet to be realized, but evaluating the position of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange fed cattle and feeder cattle futures, the potential looks promising for the cattle market to strengthen and materialize into what **may be the best markets some of us will ever experience**. With that outlook at hand, we should all be excited to build a strong calf!!

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Food Plot

LEARNING SESSION

Ag Partners
1273 W Derrynane St
Le Center, MN



FREE TO THE PUBLIC

RSVP by March 1st to 507-357-6868
Refreshments and snacks will be included

Ag Partners carries
food plot seed, chemical
and fertilizer.

Calling all Wildlife Enthusiasts!

Ag Partners Le Center will be hosting a free food plot seminar, open to the public, on Thursday, March 7.

Bryan Decker from La Crosse Seed will give an overview of food plot seed and seed preparation. He will also announce new seed options for this year.

March 7, 2024
6-7 pm



TBA: Town & Country ACE Hardware Springtime Grand Opening!

Miércoles 27 de marzo
Wednesday, March 27

Phoenix Center

2095 10th Avenue, **Baldwin, WI 54002**

10:00 am - 2:30 pm

*Seminario de
Becerras
Calf Workshop* **en español**

3:00 - 6:00 pm

*Seminario de
Alimentacion
Feeding Seminar*

RSVP by 3/25/2024 to Lindsey Borst: 507-327-1246 or lindsey.borst@agpartners.net



Chick Days

AG PARTNERS FARM STORES



Lewiston: April 25

600 Debra Drive, Lewiston, MN 55952 | 507-523-2188

Pine Island: May 2

417 N Main Street, Pine Island, MN 55963 | 507-356-8313

Plainview: May 10

140 3rd Street SW, Plainview, MN 55964 | 507-534-2531

**Belle Plaine: March 28,
April 11 & 25, May 9, 16, 23 &
Ducks on May 30.**

820 E Main Street, Belle Plaine, MN 56011 | 952-873-3244

See a full list of poultry breeds on our [website](#)

Chicks available in-store. First come, first served, no holdovers.

Don't forget starter feed & supplies!

Ag Partners Farm Stores have everything you need from the brands you trust, even the chicks.



LAMPS, TRAYS, FEED, BEDDING, WATERERS, FEEDERS

Ag Partners Coop
101 Broadway
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What's a Single Bushel Worth? >

In Western Africa...

By Mark Ryan, Grain Originator, Lake City

Here in the USA, we like to think of our ag industry as a major contributor to feeding the world. With success, however, comes a level of responsibility to others. In 2022 a Southern Minnesotan company, GUS Farming, LLC, was developed around just that by using our great resources to mentor farmers half way around the world in Ghana. I have always thought it is interesting - what they're doing over there.

Over the past years working at Ag Partners I have been fortunate to get to know many people. Andy Hart and Van Larson of GUS Farming are two of them. Their passion for working to help the Ghanaian people how to grow crops more modernly is inspiring.

Most farmers in Ghana use a stick and a hoe to plant and cultivate crops on a 2-3-acre farm. Harvest is done by hand also, which is a labor-intensive process.

Field losses are high, and yields are low due to a lack of resources. There is no opportunity for storage of grain which prohibits the ability to market grain.

There is not enough crop to provide income. Without an income, children cannot go to school and families do not have enough to eat and cannot cover expenses.

The only hope of a solution to this cycle of poverty is to help change their farming practices for the better. Andy and Van's expertise of growing crops and the team they have put together are achieving their goal of educating and modernizing farmers which is making them more economically stable day by day.

I have included here is a letter from Van describing the conditions they have experienced and the efforts being put forth to help improve agriculture for the Ghanaian people.



Van Larson, left, of GUS Farming, LLC on a visit to Ghana.



Working to set up a warehouse and grain dryer in Katakya in preparation for harvest.



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A national average corn yield of 27 bushels per acre. That isn't a typo but the yield in the country of Ghana in western Africa. It is mostly subsistence farming of a few acres with hand planting and harvesting without fertilizer or weed and insect control.

A faith-based group from the Twin Cities named Operation Dignity International had been going to Ghana for many years and saw the need to increase corn production and wanted someone to lead the effort. In July 2019 they asked Andy Hart, who farms in Olmsted and Wabasha counties, to teach the people how to grow better corn. Andy visited the country in 2020 and asked Van Larson, an agronomist from Rochester, to work together and make a difference.

During a trip in February 2022, they saw the hunger and poverty first hand which motivated them to make it better. They realized it was going to take more capital than a non-profit could provide. Andy and Van talked with mostly farmers they knew and formed a for-profit company called GUS Farming, LLC along with raising \$2.4 million.

Starting a farm in the US from scratch is difficult. Move that idea 6,000 miles to a third world country with poor infrastructure and the challenges might seem impossible. The GUS investors saw the opportunity to grow more grain but also to employ and teach the local villagers and to do humanitarian projects.

The farm is near the Equator and receives lots of heat and rain from March to November. Corn emerges in 4 days. First crop corn is planted in March and harvested in August and then immediately planted again for harvest in early January. Soybeans will likely be planted within a couple years and possibly rice, mangos and cashews. Chickens and eggs might be in the future. The land available for production is unlimited. Even though GUS is in the early stages, people from Ghana are reaching out to partner with them to develop more farmland.

Their adventures are on YouTube so you can follow by searching for GUS Farming LLC. You can see the progress in just over a year from grass and trees to dark green corn and a farmyard with a house, equipment, grain bin and dryer.

For videos visit
[GUSFARMING.COM](https://www.gusfarming.com).

Ag Partners Mobile App & Web Portal



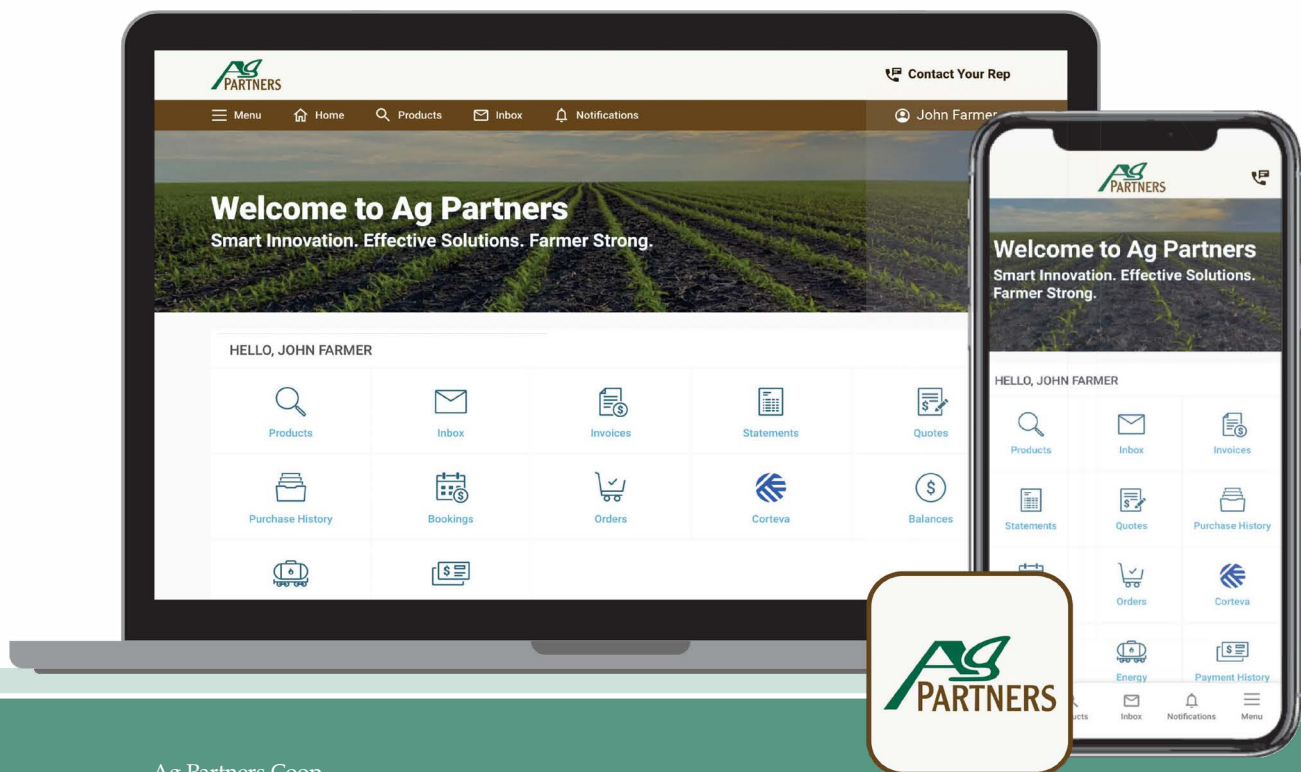
View Statements, Invoices, Pay Balances, Purchase History, Prepays, Sign Grain Contracts, View Tank Monitors, Find Past Deliveries, and Much More.

To Log In

- Download the App or go to connect.agpartners.net on a computer.
- Request Access to your account.
- We will update information and send an invite via email and text.
- Accept the invite and login to your account.
- Email connect@agpartners.net if you are missing an account on your portal with what accounts need to be added.

Any troubles with logging or general questions please contact Taylor in the Goodhue office or Shawn in our Le Center location.

- Goodhue 651-923-4496
- Le Center 507-357-6868



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Again this year, we are able to provide up to twenty \$1,000 scholarships. Qualifying members received a letter regarding this information during the first week of January. To be eligible, the student or recent graduate must be planning to enroll for the first time in a full-time undergraduate course of study at a two or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school - and be a dependent child of an Ag Partners qualifying member. The students do not need to be enrolling in an ag school or be working towards an ag related degree.

For more information and to apply, visit agpartners.net/scholarships and download/print the application form. The form must be completed by the applicant as well as a counselor and/or school official. **The completed application packet must be mailed in and postmarked by March 1, 2024.**



Scholarship INFORMATION

Contact Terra Wierson in Goodhue, 651-923-4496 or terra.wierson@agpartners.net with questions or for a paper copy of the application materials.

mail to:

**Ag Partners
Attn: Scholarship Committee
P.O. Box 218
Goodhue, MN 55027**

Recipe Corner: Crockpot Tortellini Soup w/ Sausage

- 16 oz Italian sausage
- ½ medium onion chopped
- 2 medium carrots sliced or chopped
- 2 sticks celery chopped finely
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- 1 (28 fl. oz.) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (14 fl. oz.) can diced tomatoes with juices
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 (9 oz.) packages refrigerated cheese tortellini
- ¾ cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 cups (packed) fresh bay spinach
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Add the sausage and chopped onion to a skillet. Saute for about 7 minutes. Add the garlic in towards the end so it doesn't burn. Spoon out most of the fat, leave some for flavor. Add sausage mix to crockpot.
2. Chop your carrots and celery and add all ingredients except for the tortellini, spinach, cream and salt and pepper to the Crockpot. Keep in mind that if want the soup to cook in 3-4 hours, the carrots will have to be chopped pretty finely. If you're cooking it for 7-8 on low or 4-5 hours on high, you can chop them larger.
3. About 30 minutes prior to serving, add in your cheese tortellini, cream and spinach. (I set the heat to high.) Season with salt & pepper as needed prior to serving.



Recipe from Connor Dolmoske, Le Center



To submit your recipe for the spring issue of Home Front, e-mail to editor:

Terra.Wierson@agpartners.net. Enjoy!

Goodhue General: 651-923-4496
Feed Orders: 651-923-6001
Energy Line: 651-923-6004
By location: agpartners.net/about

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