

Get to Know Us

'Get to Know Us' is a feature of some of our Farm Bureau Young Leaders and volunteers. We hope to share what agriculture means to those featured, share the variety of agricultural jobs/careers in our surrounding areas, and have our communities get to know us a little better! This month's feature is on: Jacob Baker.



Tell us about yourself:

I currently farm east of Kirkwood on my family farm. My wife and daughter, Gayle and Brooke, and I reside outside of Berwick. The farm consists of corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and a cow/calf operation. I have also just recently started selling corn and soybeans for Stine Seed, the largest privately owned seed company in the United States.

Did you grow up in agriculture?

Yes. I started helping on the farm when I was around 3. One of my first tasks on the farm was to catch piglets when we were giving them shots. Having pigs on the farm was short lived and we moved to a cow/calf operation. I have experience with cattle, corn, soybeans, and hay. I was an active member in FFA where I participated in judging events and completing SAEs, Supervised Agricultural Experiences (Record Book). I showed beef steers at the Prime Beef Festival and the FFA show. Some of my most memorable experiences were unloading square bales while being in the barn on 95-degree days. I also followed a sweep auger in a grain bin during those same 95-degree days. Believe it or not, I enjoyed doing those jobs.

Where did you go to college? What is your degree in?

I attended Iowa State University where I graduated in May 2010 with my Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Engineering.

How many years of experience do you have in agriculture? What areas of the industry have you worked?

I'm going to say I started to help on the farm when I was 3 years old, so 28 years of experience. While working on the farm, I was mainly involved with the cattle and hay operation. During college, I worked for a professor helping with research studying vegetative treatment areas for manure runoff. In short, liquid manure runoff would be captured in a solid settling basin and then slowly released onto the vegetative area.

After I graduated from Iowa State University, I worked as an Agricultural Engineer for USDA-NRCS from August 2010 to March 2016 in three different locations: Carbondale, Decatur, and Springfield. I designed soil and water conservation practices such as waterways, terraces, wetlands, and grade stabilization structures. I obtained my Professional Engineering license in 2014 and have maintained it to date.

What advice would you give students considering a career in an agriculture related field?

Determine whether or not your career will require a college degree and what kind: bachelors or associates. If a bachelor's degree is required, consider starting at a community college and then transferring. This will lower the cost of college significantly. But look at the major carefully, as I personally started at Iowa State University my freshman year and am glad I did. It would have been difficult to transfer in and keep moving right along in my major as "engineering" courses require prerequisite "engineering" courses. If transferring, make sure your class credits will transfer to the 4-year college/university.

Agriculture is a very hands on, learn by doing field. You will not pick up everything you need to know from a classroom. Experience is key. I would recommend getting some experience in agriculture prior to choosing your career path. Also, the nice thing about an agriculture career is it's not difficult to change career paths within agriculture as you walk through life.

What benefits do you get from the Farm Bureau Young Leaders?

There are many benefits from the Young Leader committee: meeting new people in the counties, attending agriculture conferences, learning about legislation that affects agriculture, and agricultural industry tours.

As I get more involved with Young Leaders, I'm starting to learn more on how Farm Bureau benefits its members. The main benefit I see is Farm Bureau's interaction with legislatures. State House and Senate Representatives look to see Farm Bureau's stance on a bill or topic before making a vote. Farm Bureau will also host events where members will go and socialize with these representatives.

If anyone has any questions or comments for Jacob, or would like to learn more about Farm Bureau and our Young Leader committee, please give us a call at 309-734-9401 or email whfb@whfarmbureau.org.

