

McLEAN COUNTY FARM BUREAU

April 13, 2014



100th Anniversary



Est. April 13, 1914



Making a **Difference** *for 100 years*

*A*s McLean County Farm Bureau eclipses the centennial mark, a fitting tribute to the organization's work during its 100 year history might be summarized by borrowing the theme from the 1933 Chicago World's Fair 'A Century of Progress.'

From its start as the McLean County Better Farming Association on April 13, 1914, the organization sought to improve the economic well-being of agriculture and enrich the quality of farm family life.

As a voluntary membership organization, McLean County Farm Bureau has served the interests of local farmers and farmland owners through ten decades of changes and challenges to the business of agriculture.

Farm Bureau's history is woven together with a strong thread of service and the organization has made significant contributions to McLean County through the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

As former Farm Advisor, Harrison Fahrnkopf, wrote "Something ought to be said, however, about the PEOPLE, for without those fine individuals in the office, the members of the boards of directors, the men and women, boys and girls of the membership itself – the organization would be just a piece of paper."

The highlights of McLean County Farm Bureau's accomplishments contained in these pages are dedicated to the generations of members who have shaped the organization.

Leadership ♦ Membership ♦ Service



Establishing Roots McLean County Farm Bureau Beginnings

Fueled by interest in improving agriculture, a group of local farmers established the organization that would become McLean County Farm Bureau on April 13, 1914.

The McLean County Better Farming Association, as it was initially called, tackled farm challenges and worked to improve rural life.

By 1914, McLean County Farm Bureau's founding year, all of the available land in McLean County was being cultivated for crops and livestock.

The plow had successfully broken the prairie and the installation of clay tile had drained excess water from thousands of acres of land in central Illinois, making it farmable.

About 40 percent of the nation lived on farms and agriculture was enjoying a period of prosperity, since known as the 'Golden Age' of agriculture.

AG RESEARCH GAINS GROUND

Farmers were beginning to show interest in learning about agricultural research and improved farming methods from land grant universities, including the University of Illinois.

Annual 'Farmer Institutes' brought university researchers to speak and teach farmers across the state. A Farmer's Institute Committee coordinated the program locally

and Claytor Mays, a Bloomington farmer, served as chair.

After seeing the benefits of the university's farm research, McLean County farmers looked to build on the successful model established in DeKalb County and hire a farm advisor to serve the county full-time.

The Bloomington Commercial Club lent support to the idea and appointed an Agriculture Committee chaired by Bloomington farmer, G.C. (Lyle) Johnstone.

Working with the Farmer's Institute Committee, the groups set to work recruiting a minimum of 300 farmers to pledge \$10 each year for three years as dues to match USDA and University monies to hire a Farm Advisor.

In 1913, a temporary organization formed to begin collecting dues pledges. On April 13, 1914, McLean County Better Farming Association was established as a 'permanent organization' with about 30 members.

G.C. (Lyle) Johnstone was elected President and Claytor Mays Vice President. Within six months, 300 farmers had signed,

the Bloomington Commercial Club donated office space and the first Farm Advisor, Dave Thompson, began work in April 1915.

The Better Farming Association supplied Thompson with new Ford car, purchased for \$478.75, and he set to work "convincing those farmers who were 'sheepish' about a college man telling them how to farm."

FARM MOVEMENT SPREADS

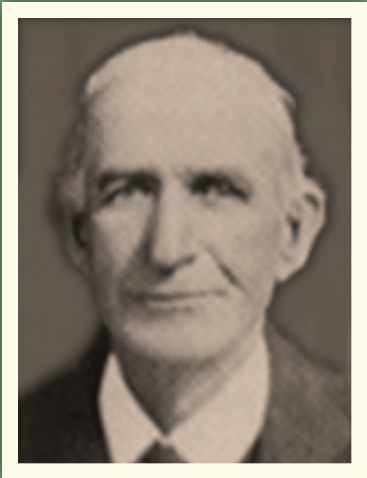
The Better Farming Association was an early example the local farm organization movement occurring across the country and would eventually become part of the largest farm organization in the country – the American Farm Bureau Federation.

In 1920, the Better Farming Association changed its name to McLean County Farm Bureau and the organization officially incorporated in 1921.

The name was changed to achieve consistency with other county organizations joined under the umbrella of the Illinois Agricultural Association, formed in 1916.

Reflecting on Farm Bureau's legacy, former President, Joash Stutzman said, "The Farm Bureau experience has added greatly to the heritage of McLean County Farmers. It has proved that profit and satisfaction may be harvested from co-operative action; 'In unity there is strength'."

Founding Farmers Paved the Way for Farm Bureau



Claytor Mays

- Farmed in Normal township near present day 'Mays' Drive
- Chaired local Farmer's Institute committee
- Served as President of the 'temporary organization' set up to collect dues pledges, then Vice President of McLean County Better Farming Association
- A fitting historical coincidence: the site of May's farm lies across the street from the current Illinois Farm Bureau building, constructed in the 1950s



G.C. 'Lyle' Johnstone

- Farmed in Dale Township
- Chaired Bloomington Commercial Club's Agriculture Committee
- President of McLean County Better Farming Association in 1914-21
- Delegate to the founding meeting of the Illinois Agricultural Association and served as Secretary 1919-21
- Johnstone's farm served as a research site for corn-ear tests, demonstration plots and the development of the McLean County System of Swine Sanitation

Major Milestones

1910s

- 1914 - **McLean County Better Farming Association** established, offices with Bloomington Commercial Club
- 1915 - **Dave O. Thompson**, first Farm Advisor hired
- 1916 - **Illinois Agricultural Association** (Illinois Farm Bureau) formed
- 1918 - Offices moved to Durley Building



- 1920 - Offices moved to Hoopes Building, name changed to **McLean County Farm Bureau**
- 1924 - **Pioneer Farm Bureau Farm Management** formed
- 1925 - Farmers Mutual Reinsurance Company started by IAA (now COUNTRY Financial)
- 1926 - McLean County Service Company formed (now **Evergreen FS**)



1920s

1930s

- 1932 - **McLean County Fair Association** formed
- 1934 - First fair at **Fans Field**
- 1938 - CornBelt Electric Cooperative formed (now **CornBelt Energy**)
- 1938 - Offices moved into Locust St building,
- 1939 - **Largest county Farm Bureau** in the nation for 5th year



- 1940 - **McLean County Supplies, Inc.** created to handle animal health product sales
- 1941 - Assisted with the creation of **McLean County Soil Conservation District**
- 1947 - McLean County is the leading corn producer in the nation
- 1948 - **McLean County Health Improvement Association** formed

1940s

1950s

- 1954 - Farm Bureaus **officially separated from Extension service** by Executive Order
- 1956 - County Fair & 4-H Show moved to **Farm Bureau Field** on East Empire St



- 1961 - **Illinois Agricultural Association & Affiliate Companies** relocate to Bloomington
- 1964 - Membership expanded with new **"Associate" member** option added for non-farmers



1960s

1970s

- 1971 - Bylaws changed from township representatives to a **12 member Board of Directors** elected at large
- 1978 - **McLean County Crimestoppers** established with support from Farm Bureau
- 1979 - **Farmland Assessment Law** passed, offices moved into new building on Hershey Road



- 1980 - **Prime Timers** group established in McLean County, first in Illinois
- 1985 - McLean County Farm Bureau **Political Involvement Committee** established
- 1988 - **McLean County Farm Bureau Foundation** established



1980s

1990s

- 1995 - **www.mcfb.org** website launched
- 1997 - McLean County Fair moved to new **Interstate Center** grounds



- 2002 - McLean County Service Company merges with Livingston and Woodford counties to become **Evergreen FS**
- 2009 - **Educational exhibit** established at McLean County Fair
- 2012 - Farm Bureau sells Hershey Road building to Evergreen FS
- 2014 - Ground-breaking for **new building** on West Market St



2000-10s



Sprouting Success Tackling Farm Problems

For 100 years, McLean County Farm Bureau has worked to address the agricultural issues and challenges of the day.

Early on, Farm Bureau focused on improving farming production methods, soil fertility and animal husbandry.

Tractors were a new technology and a Midwest Tractor Demonstration held in 1916 drew a crowd of 75,000 people.

To encourage soil improvement, early farm advisors preached the 'Illinois System of Permanent Fertility.'

In 1921, Farm Bureau helped set up a USDA research project on hog sanitation and pasture rotation at President Johnstone's farm in Dale Township.

The resulting 'McLean County System of Swine Sanitation' was published in a USDA bulletin, included in a national movie reel and adopted by farmers around the world.

Economic concerns became paramount with a farm depression that began in 1920, preceding the Great Depression of the 1930s. Farmers struggled to pay membership dues

and board members signed personal notes to keep the organization afloat.

During the war years, Farm Bureau assisted with scrap metal drives, farm labor shortages and a Food for Defense program.

ADAPTING TO CHANGING TIMES

By the 1950s and 60s, focus shifted to market promotion to support farm profitability.

New technologies prompted an Ag Computer Club to explore farm applications of personal computers.

Farm Bureau increased education and efforts with farm tours for legislators, business leaders and elementary students.

McLean County Farm Bureau also provided leadership and funding for an AgMazing Agriculture exhibit at the Children's Discovery Museum first located at College Hills Shopping Mall.

Reaping Results Advocating for Agriculture

McLean County Farm Bureau, as part of Illinois Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federation, serves as an advocate for agriculture on legislation and regulations.

Efforts of Farm Bureau volunteers and staff have shaped farm policy, Farm Bill negotiations, property taxes and many other issues of importance to agriculture.

The involvement of members at the county level serves as the true grassroots of Farm Bureau. From 'Hello Neighbor' meetings to 'Viewpoint' Breakfasts, McLean County Farm Bureau members have met to discuss issues and craft policies.

Farm Bureau has also encouraged active participation with Get Out the Vote campaigns, Farmers to Springfield and Leaders and Marketers to Washington trips.

At the local level, McLean County Farm Bureau has promoted the interest of farmers on zoning, taxation and land use.

FARMLAND ASSESSMENT VICTORY

In the 1970s, McLean County Farm Bureau leaders identified property taxes as a major issue and championed efforts to

change farmland assessments. Local Farm Bureau board and committee members helped shape the 1979 Illinois Farmland Assessment Law, that remains intact today.

ENGAGING POLITICAL LEADERS

As a voice for agriculture, Farm Bureau provides information to elected officials, policy makers and regulatory agencies at the local, state and national levels.

In 1985, McLean County Farm Bureau established a Political Involvement Committee to cultivate, endorse and support candidates who are proponents of agriculture.

McLean County Farm Bureau also actively participates in the 'Adopt a Legislator' program, building relationships with a Chicago area legislator. Our urban legislators have included Rep. David Miller and Rep. Thaddeus Jones from the 29th District on the south side of Chicago.



McLean County Farm Bureau Presidents



G.C. Lyle Johnstone
1914-19



Fred Blum
1922



Simon Moon
1923-27



Sam Elkins
1928-29



Frank Moberly
1930-31



Floyd Thomas
1932-33



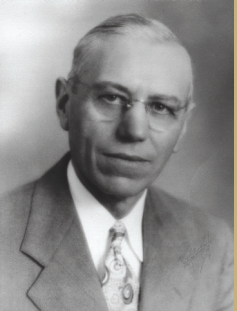
John Scholl
1934-35



George Wissmiller
1936-37



Joash Stutzman
1938-39



Frank Hubert
1940-41



Byron Kline
1942-43



L.J. Sutter
1944-45



Clarence Ropp
1946-47



L. Parke Kerbaugh
1948-49



Ernest Schirch
1950-51



Dwight Stephens
1952-53



Growing Grassroots

Members Move Farm Bureau Forwards

At its core, Farm Bureau has always been a grassroots organization that draws its strength and longevity from the involvement of members at the local level.

From the earliest years, a large and active membership provided direction for policy, programs and projects.

By 1939, McLean County had been recognized five times as the largest county Farm Bureau in the nation by the American Farm Bureau Foundation.

Despite changing demographics and a declining farm population, McLean County continued to maintain strong membership numbers and boasted more than 5,000 members at its 50th Anniversary.

In 1964, memberships were split into two categories to add associate memberships to allow non-farmers access to benefits like COUNTRY Financial insurance products and services.

Today, McLean County has about 1,870 voting members and more than 10,000 associate members.

COMMITTEE CONTRIBUTIONS

As the needs of the organization and interests of members changed, different types of committees evolved to address issues and provide opportunities.

An active Women's Committee with chairwomen representing each township

sponsored efforts like a 'clear corners' project, an annual food poster contest, make it with wool competitions and grocery store food demonstrations.

The Legislative and Policy and Local Affairs committees examined issues and worked to find solutions with policy recommendations.

Today, the Governmental Affairs Committee builds relationships with elected officials and addresses farm issues like federal regulations and local ordinances.

A Marketing Committee promoted agricultural products and offered programs providing marketing tools to farmers.

Today those efforts have shifted to consumer education and leadership development with the IMPACT Committee.

A Public Relations Committee, now called Member Services, works to recruit and maintain Farm Bureau members, communicate the value of membership and create membership incentives with a local discount program.

Recognizing a need to keep past leaders and retired farmers engaged in Farm Bureau, McLean County established a 'Prime

Timers' committee in 1980, that served as a model for other counties around the state.

The Young Farmer committee, today known as Young Leaders, works to encourage the next generation of Farm Bureau leaders with social events, educational tours and service opportunities.

CHOSEN LEADERS

In its 100 year history, 32 farmers have served as McLean County Farm Bureau President.

For many years, members elected a board of 30 township delegates. In the early 1970s, a bylaw change streamlined the leadership to a 12 member board of countywide representation.

Involvement in Farm Bureau prompted some local members to pursue elected or appointed positions at the local, state and national levels.

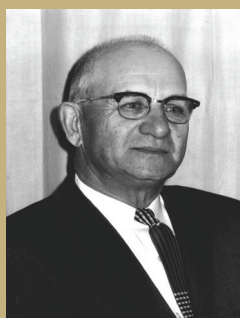
Past and present McLean County Farm Bureau leaders have served on school boards, on the county board and as township officials.

John Maitland, Jr. and Gordon Ropp served as state legislators. Ropp was also the Illinois Director of Agriculture and another local farmer, Kenneth Benjamin, served as Assistant USDA Director.

100 years of Leadership



Edwin Miller
1954-55



Joseph Pfeiffer
1956-57



John Grimes
1958-59



Lowell Risser
1960-61



Francis Wilken
1962-64



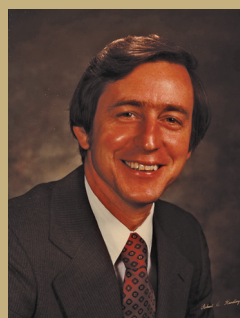
Wilbert Donovan
1965-66



Karl Mays
1967-69



Eugene Miller
1970-73



John Maitland, Jr.
1974-77



Roland (Gene) Yeast
1978-80



Enid Schlipf
1981-85



Darwin Builta
1986-91



Gerald (Jerry) Singley
1992-97



Patrick Bane
1998-2001



Paul Schuler
2002-07



R. Scott Hoeft
2008-present



Producing Progress

MCFB Branches Out

Throughout its history, the entrepreneurial spirit and visionary leadership of McLean County Farm Bureau has contributed to the creation of a long list of organizations, cooperatives and business ventures.

Farm Bureau has played an active role in growing the community by aiding in the development of new businesses and groups.

A few of the most notable include Pioneer Farm Business Farm Management (FBFM), McLean County Service Company (now Evergreen FS), Corn Belt Energy, the McLean County Fair Association and the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District.

In the early years, focus on improved animal husbandry lead to the formation of several livestock groups like a Percheron Horse Association and the Eastern Co-op Breeding Association.

Market development efforts prompted the establishment of Producers Stockyards, a wool marketing pool, McLean County Milk Producers and Farmer's Creamery.

To address farmer need for access to credit, McLean County Farm Bureau administered Federal Land Bank loans in the 1920s and set up Bloomington Production Credit Association in 1933.

New food preservation technology prompted construction of a locker plant

called McLean County Cold Storage Company in 1937. The adoption of home freezers lead to the company's eventual demise in the 1950s.

As early as 1922, Farm Bureau sold livestock vaccinations and animal health products and in 1940, McLean County Supplies, Inc. was created to handle the business.

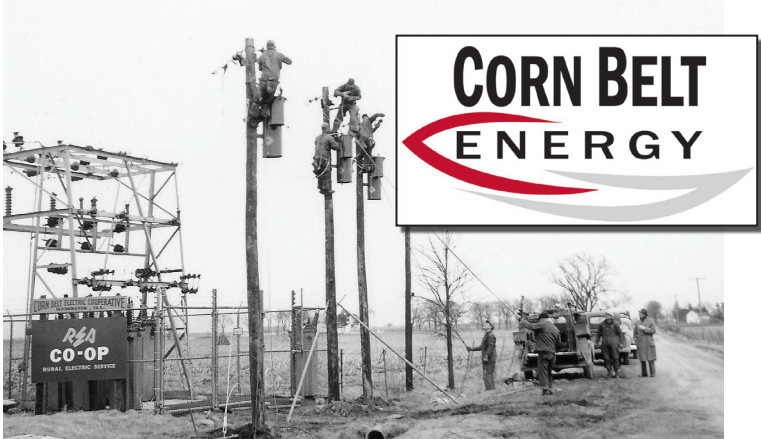
McLean County Health Improvement Association was also formed in 1940 to provide better access to group health plan benefits for farmers.

In 1978, McLean County Farm Bureau helped establish a Crimestoppers program and played an active role in the McLean County Crime Prevention committee for a number of years.

As part of the new fairgrounds completed in 1997, McLean County Farm Bureau created an indoor exposition and conference center called the Interstate Center.

Increased competition from new venues in the area and an economic downturn prompted the sale of the large building to Birkey's Farm Store in 2009.

Electrifying Rural Areas



McLean County Farm Bureau helped bring electricity to farms with the formation of Corn Belt Electric Cooperative in 1938. Today Corn Belt Energy continues to provide utility services in McLean County and beyond.

Improving Farm Management



In 1924, Livingston, McLean, Tazewell and Woodford counties formed a farm record keeping cooperative service. As the first in Illinois, it was originally called Pioneer Farm Bureau Farm Management. In the 1950s, word the 'Bureau' was replaced by 'Business.'

Insuring a Strong Future for Farmers



COUNTRY Financial began as a fire reinsurance company created in 1925. Illinois Agricultural Association established Country Life Insurance Company in 1928 and the first agent was hired to serve McLean County in 1929.

COUNTRY Financial remains a strong partner providing insurance and financial services to Farm Bureau members.

In 2014, the McLean and Livingston county agencies merged as part of a statewide reorganization.

Preventing a Dust Bowl



Concerns about soil erosion prompted Farm Bureau to help create McLean County Soil Conservation District in 1941 covering nine townships. The district expanded to the entire county in 1945 and continues to serve farmers today with the addition of 'Water' to its work.

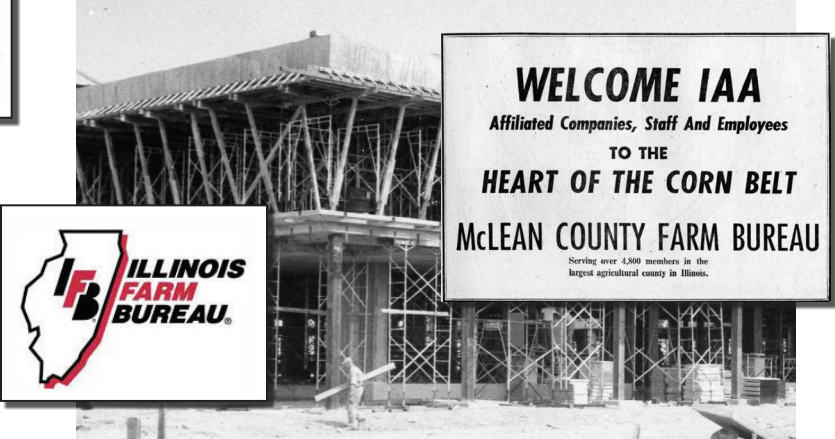
Supplying Farm Needs Cooperatively



In response to the growing need for fuel with the introduction of tractors, Farm Bureau leaders formed a supply cooperative called McLean County Service Company in 1926.

In 2002, the company merged with Livingston and Woodford counties to form Evergreen FS. Today it serves a five county region with fuel, agronomic supplies and grain elevators.

IAA Moves to Bloomington



In the late 1950s, McLean County Farm Bureau successfully lobbied state leaders to pick Bloomington as the new headquarters for Illinois Farm Bureau and its affiliates. Today, the IAA Family of Companies including GROWMARK, COUNTRY Financial and the IAA Credit Union remain a prominent presence in the community.

Bongo Park



Fans Field



Farm Bureau Field



Interstate Center



Cultivating Youth Facilities for the Fair

Farm Bureau established the McLean County Fair Association and has provided fairgrounds for the County Fair and 4-H Show since the 1930s to support youth development.

Early on, Farm Bureau's Farm Advisors helped establish 'corn clubs' or 'boys and girls clubs' to cultivate learning opportunities for rural youth.

In the 1920s, the clubs became known as 4-H and the first 'official' fair was held on the Coolidge Farm west of Normal in 1923.

Bongo Park, now the location of State Farm Park in Bloomington, was the site of the fair in the early 1930s and the Illinois State University Farm also served as the host site for one year.

The fair moved to Fan's Field in south Bloomington next and McLean County Farm Bureau purchased the site in 1938.

As 4-H programs continued to expand, the fair outgrew Fans Field and Farm Bureau purchased 78 acres of land east of Bloomington on Route 9 in 1955.

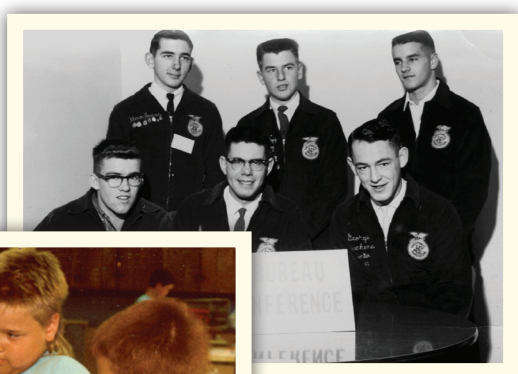
Called Farm Bureau Field, it was McLean County Fair's home for the next forty years.

In 1954, Extension services were legally separated from Farm Bureaus by USDA executive order. Despite the change in structure, Farm Bureau remained a strong supporter of 4-H and the County Fair.

Encroachment from development as the city of Bloomington expanded east prompted Farm Bureau to explore options for moving the fair once again.

A series of real estate transactions led to the purchase of property on the west side of Bloomington and development of the Interstate Center grounds. The fair moved to the new location in 1997.

The McLean County Fair and 4-H Show is the largest in the country with more than 8,000 projects exhibited annually.



Sowing Seeds Growing Future Leaders

To build and maintain a strong agriculture sector, Farm Bureau remains committed to growing the next generation of leaders through leadership development and educational programs.

In addition to support for 4-H and the County Fair, McLean County Farm Bureau is also a long-standing supporter of local FFA chapters.

Farm Bureau offers financial support through a grant program and an Annual Acquaintance Day program focused on team building, leadership development and career exploration.

The FFA Service Award, established in 2008, recognizes one student from each local FFA chapter that demonstrates outstanding leadership and service.

In 1988, McLean County Farm Bureau Foundation was created to support ag-related education efforts.

The foundation provides scholarships to local students pursuing ag-related careers. Five \$1,000 scholarships are awarded annually to students who demonstrate leadership and a strong commitment to agriculture.

In a new effort to develop the next generation of leaders, McLean County Farm Bureau assisted with the formation of a Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter at Illinois State University, launched in the Fall of 2013 by Illinois Farm Bureau.

McLean County Farm Bureau has also actively supported Agriculture in the Classroom programs like 'Chick it Out' and educational workshops for teachers.

40 YEARS OF LEADERS

Past and present McLean County Farm Bureau Presidents representing 40 years of leadership:

Standing (from left): Darwin Builta (1986-91), Enid Schlipf (1981-85), Gene Yeast (1978-80), Pat Bane (1998-01), Paul Schuler (2002-07), and Scott Hoeft (2008-present).

Seated: Sen. John Maitland, Jr. (1974-77).

Not pictured: Jerry Singley (1992-97)



Lasting Legacy
Celebrating a Century of Service

McLean County Farm Bureau has served its members, contributed to the community and worked to advance agriculture for 100 years.

Thanks to leadership and active membership from generations of local family farmers, the organization remains a powerful and effective voice for agriculture at the local, state and national levels.

McLean County Farm Bureau has endured through tumultuous times including two world wars, the Great Depression and the farm crisis of the 1980s.

By embracing technology and adapting to change, the organization has continued to be on the forefront of important issues, providing relevant information for farmers and developing services to meet the evolving needs of members.

McLean County Farm Bureau has been part of ground breaking efforts to keep agriculture moving forward.

The grassroots strength of member involvement has contributed to a significant number of accomplishments.

Despite its record of success, Farm Bureau does not settle for resting on its past laurels, but works to address the issues and challenges facing agriculture today.

As we celebrate the past, McLean County Farm Bureau continues to cultivate the future by working for the benefit of our members, our local farmers and our communities.

Reflections from McLean County Farm Bureau Presidents:

“I think the changes as far as agriculture have really been a lot broader than they used to be... and so it makes it a challenge for Farm Bureau to keep up with all these changes, but I think our local McLean County has done a great job in doing this.”

-Joanne Maitland, on behalf of Sen. John Maitland, Jr.

“I think its lasting legacy is its ability to represent farmers. One of the problems in agriculture is the fact that every farmer is an individual businessman and alone they have very little clout. Through Farm Bureau they’re able to bring the individuals together and have a strength in numbers.”

-Roland (Gene) Yeast

“When people outside of agriculture ask about Farm Bureau in McLean County, they think of an organization that is honest, that brings integrity to every discussion and that its a group that does its homework.”

-Enid Schlipf

“When I think of Farm Bureau’s and its legacy for members - is that it has kept agriculture strong. Agriculture is one of the largest engines of economic and social progress in the state of Illinois and I think that with Farm Bureau that will continue to be.”

-Darwin Builta

“The value of Farm Bureau to me is the programs they’ve had - just getting to know people all across the country and across the state. I think back to all the people I’ve met...it’s just something you can’t replace. It’s a great experience.”

-Gerald (Jerry) Singley

“The value of Farm Bureau membership to me, probably first and foremost is legislative - the connection to our local, state and national government. I think the information we gain by being Farm Bureau members is critical and gives us timely information when we need to take action.”

-Patrick Bane

“I think Farm Bureau has adapted to a changing environment and that we’ve been progressive in promoting agriculture in our county and at the state level. There’s a common thread between our local, state and national organization that is a voice for all farmers of every commodity or aspect of agriculture.”

-Paul Schuler

“I think the legacy that Farm Bureau would want to leave behind is that they look at all the issues - ag issues and other issues that affect the community and they try to make good, open minded decisions that are not only best for the ag community, but for the community in general.”

-R. Scott Hoeft

Acknowledgements:

100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Mouser, co-chair
Jerry Singley, co-chair
George Benjamin
Tim Bittner
Brian Dirks
Pat Gustafson
Don Meyer

Linda Olson
Roger Risser
Gordon Ropp
Enid Schlipf
Jim Wick
Gene Yeast
J.C. Zimmerman

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