

Legendary program thanks U of I ACES

Commentary

By HOLLY SPANGLER

SINCE its 1925 inception, *Prairie Farmer's* Master Farmer program has honored hard-working, salt-of-the-earth Illinois farmers for doing what they do better than anyone else. They are the folks who manage their farms with the savvy of a Fortune 500 CEO, while at the same time sitting on the boards and committees that make rural communities and the agricultural industry tick.



it became necessary to seek outside sponsorship to help defray some costs. Two years ago, *Prairie Farmer* entered into a partnership with the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences in sponsoring the 2007 and 2008 awards. It was a successful partnership, but it also placed an extra burden on staff and resources at the university. Therefore, *Prairie Farmer*, with full support of Farm Progress management, will resume direct responsibility for managing the Master Farmer program in '09 and continuing forward. *Prairie Farmer* deeply appreciates Dean Robert Easter and his crew at the College of ACES for their sponsorship of the program, which helped keep the award going during a difficult transition for the magazine's editors. Easter's staff added a greater degree of professionalism to the award ceremony, and their resources made for a top-notch event.

What's right about ag

As the only award of its kind in Illinois, and the oldest in the nation, the *Prairie Farmer* Master Farmer program is unparalleled in its ability to recognize the heart of Illinois agriculture. Ten years ago, Editor Mike Wilson wrote that Master Farmers "represent what's still right about farming and rural community service. In these times of turbulent change and questionable moral or ethical judgment, our honorees demonstrate through their attitudes and deeds that there's still hope for the human race." Today, that sentiment is ever more true.

Since 1925, more than 300 Illinois farmers have been named Master Farmers. Over the years, Farm Progress publications like *Wallaces Farmer* and *Indiana Prairie Farmer* have taken up the cause, and Master Farmer awards and programs are now conducted in 12 states.

The Master Farmer program has not been immune to tighter financial resources, though. As costs escalated,

New winners next month

The University of Illinois has supported the Master Farmer program since the 1920s, both in providing expert judges and in developing future Master Farmers through their degree programs. We are indeed fortunate in Illinois for the knowledge base provided through our state's land-grant university.

And so we begin 2009 on a new footing. The *Prairie Farmer* Master Farmer program returns to its spring time line, and you can look for complete coverage of our 2009 winners in the March issue. We are proud of the award's long and prestigious history, and we trust that those Master Farmers who are added to the ranks each year will continue that legacy of excellence.

Ethanol reaches a landmark as 1,900th E85 station opens

THE first public E85 retail gas station in Virginia is also the 1,900th E85 station in the U.S. The station is located in Charlottesville, Va.

"We are pleased to own the first public E85 retail location in Virginia and proud to offer a clean alternative transportation fuel," notes Tom Turner of Stop In Food Stores. The facility was assisted with funds granted through the Virginia Clean Cities Coalition.

The location has 16 fuel pumps: 12 gasoline, two E85 and two biodiesel. A 10,000-gallon compartment tank holds 4,000 gallons of biodiesel and 6,000 gallons of E85. The station is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"It's encouraging to see the number of E85 stations continue to grow even as we deal with issues relating to testing lab certifications and the low price of gasoline," says Phil Lampert, National Ethanol Vehicle Coalition executive director. "The NEVC and all our national partners look forward to working with the Obama administration and Congress to continue advance the role of ethanol in reducing our nation's dependence on imported petroleum."

At this time last year, there were a total of 1,430 E85 stations across the U.S.

Source: National Ethanol Vehicle Coalition

■ For a complete listing of E85 fueling locations in the U.S., go online to www.E85Refueling.com.

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