

# Student joins our team

**S**PRING is a busy time. Our team is growing, and we recently hired an undergraduate student, Kyle Wester, to help us with several of our energy efficiency projects for Iowa State University Farm Energy.

Wester grew up on a family farm near Cleghorn in northwest Iowa and is a senior in ag engineering at Iowa State. He brings with him lots of practical work experience from the farm, as well as new skills from his recent internship at Kinze Manufacturing. I asked him to share some of his thoughts with our readers this month.

■ *How does energy management affect Iowa farmers?*

As energy prices continue to rise, I feel energy management will continue to play a bigger role in modern farming practices. It's often difficult to monitor energy consumption on farms, which is why energy efficiency can be easy to forget about.

■ *Why did you choose ag engineering for your major?*

I'm interested in math and physics, but it actually took me a little while to decide on the ag focus. I considered mechanical engineering, but during my campus visit, I discovered I was a perfect fit in the ag and biosystems engineering department. I knew I would enjoy it much more.

■ *Why did you choose ISU?*

I wanted to study engineering, and ISU is highly regarded in that field. I never would have admitted it at the time, but another important reason I chose ISU is I'm a huge Cyclones fan. I even traveled to see the Big 12 inaugural football game versus TCU in Fort Worth last fall. ISU is reasonably affordable, and being from western Iowa, I have a lot of friends here.

■ *When was your internship at Kinze Manufacturing?*

I worked as a manufacturing engineering intern at Kinze for eight months in 2012. It was my first experience with a large company, and they allowed me to be very involved and very hands-on. I did everything from sizing the letters on their new sign above I-80 to designing center-frame weld fixtures on their new 4900 planter. I used Autodesk Inventor for designing and also welded prototypes of my designs in the shop. My favorite part was working with the prototyping department and learning to do metal work professionally.

■ *What is the most useful thing you learned there?*

Innovation is a product of having an idea and having the guts to actually try it. It sounds like common sense, but I learned to have confidence in what I'm good at and to take chances to push innovation.

Another skill I learned at Kinze is how to communicate with co-workers. I collaborated with as many as 10 different people during the design phase of the weld fixture — talking to design engineers, requesting part modifications for easier weld-ups, collaborating with welders who use the weld fixture, and the prototyping department workers making the fixture.

■ *Would you like to return to farming in the future?*

I feel I'm still years away from it, but few professions have the same allure as farming, and I do hope to return to the family farm eventually. Farming is more than a job; it's a lifestyle — no quitting



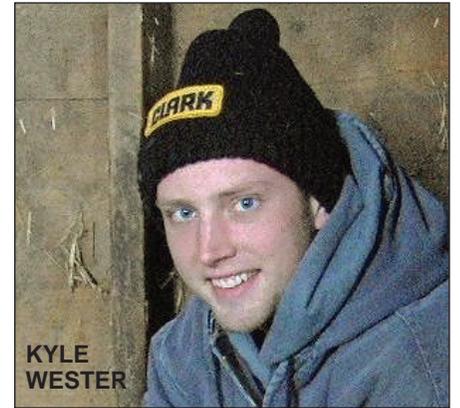
## Farm Energy

By DANA PETERSEN

until the job is done. No one tells you how many cattle to buy, what color tractor to

drive or what crops to plant. You make the calls. Sometimes you make money, and sometimes you find yourself eating a lot of potatoes. The idea of that kind of lifestyle is scary to a lot of people, but it doesn't scare me.

*Petersen is program coordinator for ISU Farm Energy in collaboration with the Iowa Energy Center.*



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