

Large cooperative partnership pays dividends

By TOM J. BECHMAN

ONE large, Indiana-based cooperative recently did what many county co-ops struggled to do even in better years: return healthy patronage in both cash and equity to customers. Co-Alliance is actually a limited liability partnership that now includes five local cooperatives. Most of these local co-ops are themselves large entities.

Earlier this year, that fifth member, Excel Co-op, located in north-central Indiana, made plans to join the four existing partners of Co-Alliance.

The other four members include Midland Co-op, Danville; Impact Co-op, Frankfort; LaPorte County Co-op, La Porte; and Frontier Co-op, Lebanon. Kevin Still, the leading executive of Co-Alliance, formerly led Midland Co-op. It's one of the largest of the five part-

ners, with business extending into Ohio. LaPorte County Co-op in northwest Indiana extends into Michigan.

Still felt privileged to announce good news when the group held its joint annual meeting recently. The co-op business returned more than \$5.3 million in cash and a total of \$8.3 million, counting equity, back to members.

Co-Alliance typically returns profit back to members annually. Members are usu-

ally local farmers.

Co-Alliance encompasses a number of ventures, Still notes. They include selling seed and fertilizer, plus providing swine and animal nutrition services. The cooperative also offers grain marketing services; has a tie to the crop insurance business through Top Land Crop Insurance, based in Seymour; and is also active in the fuel market.

LaPorte County Co-op has been strong in swine and livestock feed. Each partner has flexibility to meet the needs of the customers they serve.

Learn more at www.co-alliance.com.



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