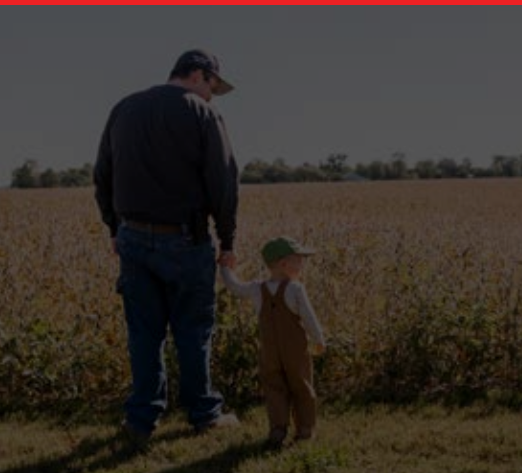
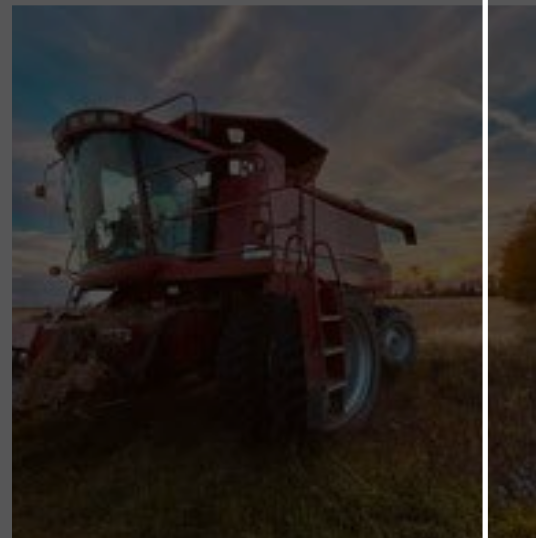
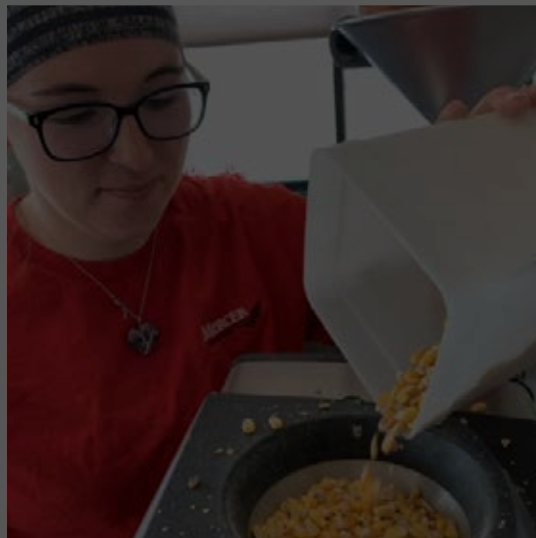


THE MARK

EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER



VOLUME
5



AUGUST 2023 ISSUE

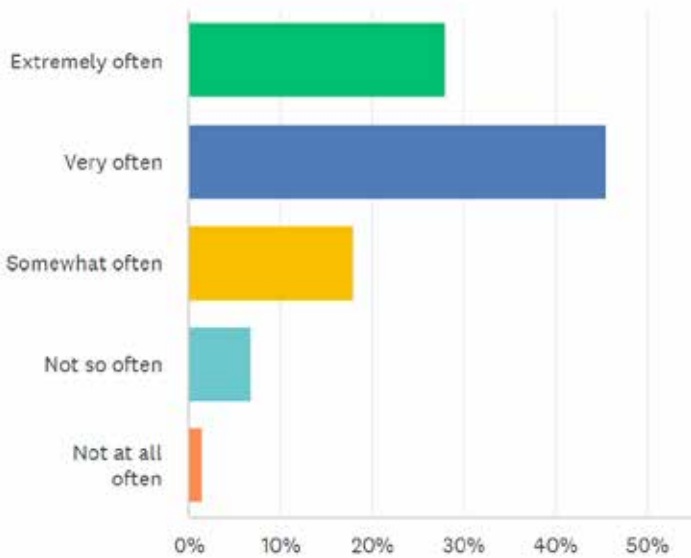
CEO UPDATE FROM HEATH BARNES

As we savor the last days of summer, we have exciting updates to share in this edition of THE MARK. Let's delve into the latest news, insights, and developments from our workplace.

1. Manager Survey Results: Fostering Effective Communication

At Mercer Landmark, we value your feedback and believe in fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. Every two years, we conduct a comprehensive manager survey, providing you with the opportunity to offer unfiltered feedback on your direct managers or supervisors. Your insights are invaluable as they shape the foundation of our organization's growth.

HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR EMPLOYER LISTEN TO EMPLOYEES?

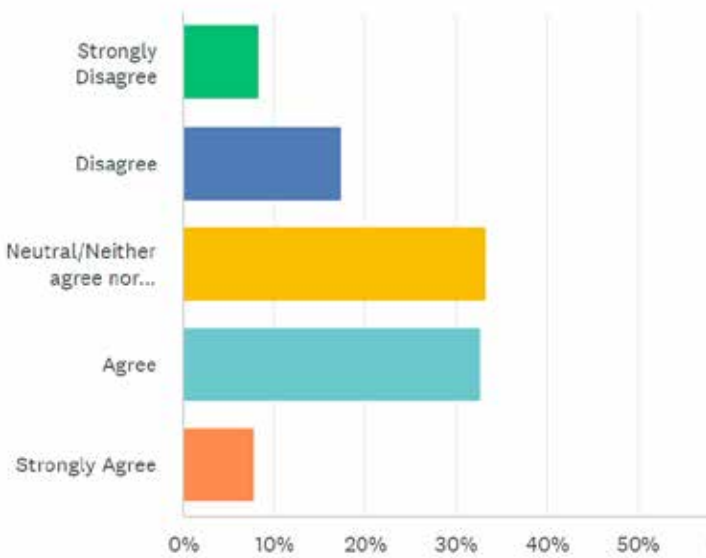


The graph above illustrates the survey responses, highlighting the percentage of employees who feel their managers actively listen to their opinions when making decisions. We are delighted to see that a significant majority of our team members feel heard and valued. This outcome is a testament to the dedication and attentiveness of our managers.

While the results are positive, we recognize the importance of continuous improvement. At Mercer Landmark, we firmly believe in open communication and active listening as fundamental pillars of a successful and

harmonious workplace. Your voices matter, and we are committed to creating an environment where every employee feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas.

OPEN COMMUNICATION EXISTS WITHIN ALL COMPANY LEVELS.



The graph above depicts the survey results on whether open communication exists within all levels of the company. While the results indicate progress, we acknowledge that there is still room for improvement. Transparent and inclusive communication channels are vital to our success, and we are dedicated to enhancing them further.

Your feedback and suggestions are invaluable to us. We will use these survey results as a catalyst for positive change, working actively to strengthen communication across all levels of the company and ensure that every voice is heard and respected.

2. Financial Performance Update

As we near the end of the fiscal year in August, we are eager to share some promising financial projections. Our Feed LLC's performance has been remarkable, with MPS expected to achieve profits nearly double that of the previous year, projected to surpass \$4 million. Heartland LLC is also showing a positive trend, with net profit projected to exceed \$1 million for the year. Mercer's performance is equally promising, with net profit projections significantly above last year's levels.



Going Above

THE
MARK

Grain and Energy continue to be strong contributors, and Agronomy has experienced substantial growth in volumes. Our application team has had an outstanding year, with total acres covered likely to surpass 400,000 acres, on track to beat the record set two years ago. While crop nutrient margins have posed challenges due to market fluctuations, we remain optimistic and eagerly await final numbers after completing agronomy inventory.

3. Nurturing Talent: Development and Training Opportunities

We are deeply committed to fostering growth and excellence among our team members. The Ambition in Action emerging leaders training has been a resounding success, with the second class presenting their projects to the board of directors. Our sales staff has been actively participating in the "Center of Excellence" program, in collaboration with Land O Lakes, focused on improving business acumen and success at the farm gate.

In the coming months, we are excited to launch a new round of Ambition in Action, concluding next March. Additionally, our year-long leadership training program for managers will commence in September and conclude next spring. The internship program has been incredibly successful, attracting talented college students, and we remain committed to providing purposeful training opportunities to strengthen our teams.

In closing, we extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering dedication in delivering a world-class experience to our customers. As we continue to grow, learn, and support each other, let's embrace progress and success on this journey together. Thank you, and have a fantastic rest of your summer!

-Heath Barnes, CEO

Employees Making a Difference

On Tuesday, July 11th, I was traveling from Payne to Convoy to help for wheat harvest. As I entered Convoy from the North, I saw one of our customers on the side of the road with a wagon leaning to one side on the berm. I soon noticed that both wheels had come off the wagon, and wheat had spilled onto the road. I stopped and told the customer that I would run up to the elevator to get some help.

When I got to the Convoy elevator, **RICK MOLLENKOPF**, CPA, had already backed his truck up to the barn and was hooking up to a wagon, while **DYLAN GIBBONS**, Convoy Location Manager, was getting the Loader from the Agronomy building to help. I didn't have to say anything as they had already sprung into action.

Rick delivered Convoy's wagon and then went to Glenmore to pick up a gas-powered auger to off load the customer's wagon. After Dylan went back with Convoy's Payloader to clean up the street, he drove back to Convoy, retrieved the forks and loaded the upset wagon onto a flat bed, broken axle and all, to deliver back to the customer.

Just a good demonstration of how Mercer Landmark employees are willing to stay late, past normal working hours, to help a customer out. They went "Above the Mark"!!

- Submitted by Kirk Roetgerman





EMBRACING THE 'DEVELOP' MINDSET

Our commitment to DEVELOP is focused on investing the time and resources into unlocking the full potential of each member of the Mercer Landmark family. The goal of our DEVELOP focused culture is to enable every team member to deliver excellence for their customers, colleagues, and community.

You should notice a common theme as you read through the articles in this edition of "The Mark." Our organization is definitely committed to the principle of DEVELOP. As soon as I finish writing this article, I will be on my way to deliver invitations to the candidates for the 2024 Ambition in Action Class starting in August. However, rather than highlight and brag about all the broader DEVELOP initiatives we have going on....I'd like to challenge each of us to think about how we embrace and implement the DEVELOP mindset on a daily basis.

Applying the DEVELOP principle on a daily basis in the "heat of the battle" is harder and takes more discipline than attending a meeting, reading a book, or presenting a project. Why? Because "it's easier if I just do it myself." Have you ever said those words? Me too!



If we really want to "move the needle" as an organization in this area, then I think the principles and mindset of DEVELOP must be applied on a daily basis between individuals as well as groups when necessary. Instead of jumping in and completing a task when someone is struggling to do it right, we should invest the time to demonstrate and teach the right way to do it.

Developing each other is an investment. It might cost us something (i.e. time) in the short term, but its ROI is exponential for our organization. Make an effort to ask those you work with how you can help them be better every day. Work with your managers to identify tasks that your team can cross-train on. Remember, the best way to ensure we maintain our standard of excellence is that everyone is enabled to do whatever they're qualified and capable of doing.

- Neal Horrom, COO

TRAIN PEOPLE WELL ENOUGH

SO THEY CAN LEAVE,

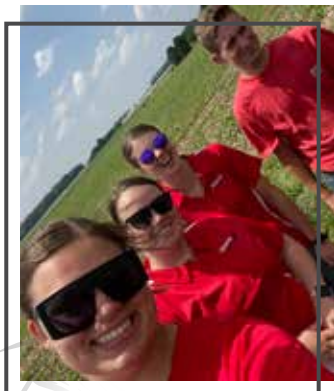
TREAT THEM WELL ENOUGH

SO THEY DON'T WANT TO.

-SIR RICHARD BRANSON



A SUCCESSFUL 2023 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



See page 14 for more details and comments from our interns.



GRAIN



I hope everyone has been enjoying the summer this year. Summer is one of my favorite seasons. I get to cook on the grill, sip on a refreshing drink and watch or listen to the Cincinnati Reds. If anyone has been watching the Reds this year, they are starting 4 to 6 rookies each night. As the rookies learn the speed of the MLB game it has been fun to watch them DEVELOP into a team. We are also seeing the corn and soybeans developing as we drive by the fields every day. The corn has begun to pollinate, and the soybeans are setting pods.

The grain business unit has also been focusing on the DEVELOP pillar, not only internally, but also with our customers. This can be a win/win experience when we are able to DEVELOP and educate our producers and our employees about the different tools/contracts that Mercer Landmark offers.

Grain Marketing Educational Series:

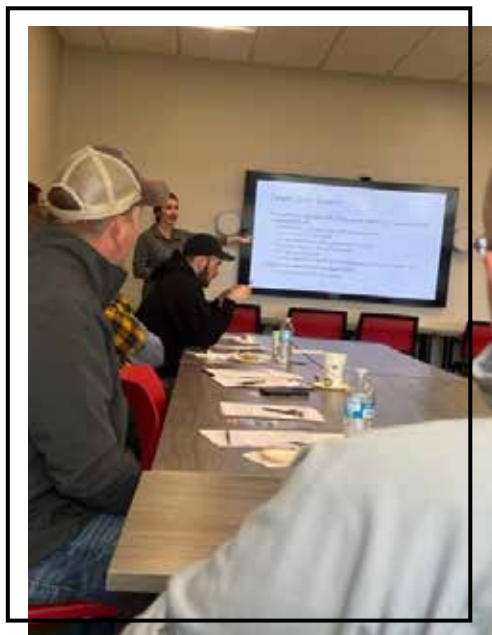
This innovative concept was spearheaded by Jill Emenhiser, Grain Marketing Advisor at Latty. One of Jill's performance goals was to present 3 to 6

grain marketing presentations to the producer. The goals set were to educate the producer on grain marketing and the tools that we offer, strengthen the advisor client relationship by learning together, and overcome the fear of public speaking and presentation skills. The collaboration of the grain marketing advisor team consisting of Jill, Virginia Missler, and Rachel Muhlenkamp has grown this educational series to three locations in 2023, (Latty, Elgin, and Convoy) with the goal to offer this series at another three locations in 2024.

There are five sessions in the series and the response from the producers and employees has been wonderful.

The sessions include a current market outlook, basic marketing concepts and contracts, future spreads, rolling contracts, introduction to solution-based contracts, explanation of technical terminology and charting.

(Pictures below are from Latty, Elgin, & Convoy.)





CliftonStrengths Finder Session

The grain leadership, associate operation managers, operations superintendents, marketing advisors, and marketing associates spent a day together with Mark Roeth, Director of Organizational Development. Mark led a very intuitive meeting for the grain leadership team to better understand themselves and the members of the grain team by exploring, understanding, and describing their top CliftonStrengths themes. This development tool and exercise was very informative, and the group had a lot of laughs and “Ah Ha” moments during the session. Powered by Gallup, the CliftonStrengths themes represent how uniquely talented each team member is and the starting point for living your strongest life possible. Your greatest chance to succeed at work or anywhere else lies in strengthening what you naturally do best. Thus, in order to maximize your potential, we want our team to do what you do best, and in return you’ll feel more engaged, empowered, and energized!! I recommend all business units to utilize Mark Roeth as he is great at what he does. I look forward to our follow up session in September.

Mercer Landmark’s Sustain Wheat Program was a Success.

Within the first two weeks of July there were over 430,000 bushels delivered to Mercer Landmark or Heartland Feed Services locations that were a part of the program. That’s over \$85,000 of added value to the producers in the program. Wheat yields this year were averaging very close to 100 bpa, which means an additional \$20 per acre in revenue. Campbell’s has made another commitment for the 2024 season and we are actively looking

for additional acres for this program. If you have a producer interested, please let one of the grain advisors or Michael Watercutter know. This program is the epitome of our Pillars – Innovation, Grow, Development, Performance – and is bringing great success to numerous business units.

- Kirk Roetgerman – EVP Grain

**THE GROWTH
& DEVELOPMENT
OF PEOPLE
IS THE HIGHEST
CALLING OF
LEADERSHIP.**

-HARVEY S. FIRESTONE



LOGISTICS

As we continue to burn through summer, we continue burning fuel as our trucks move up and down the roads. Since we have finished the bulk of the spring agronomy work, we have been staying busy moving grain as we make space for the upcoming fall harvest. We have continued to add farm pickups to our schedule and have heard great feedback from our members who greatly enjoy working with our drivers. Wheat harvest came and went without a hiccup. We had good truck availability, so the few areas that had some space restrictions were able to stay open. We also had the opportunity to pick some grain up directly out of the field.

As we continue to evaluate our fleet and our needs, we have requested to purchase some new equipment and the board approved our requests. We will be purchasing one semi to replace one of our older ones. We will also be purchasing three new 24-ton dry tender trailers for use during dry fertilizer season. As part of this, we will be selling two of our older ones. This will net us an extra tender than what we have today to help us better and

more efficiently serve our members. After much evaluation we have decided to purchase a belt trailer that we will be using to haul poultry litter and lime with. We have been outsourcing all of our belt trailer work, so this will allow us to bring some of this work back in house.

I would like to highlight one of our employees in this article. Jammie Hughes recently had the opportunity to attend "train the trainer" training at Vantage Career Center. This training now gives Jammie the certification to help train our employees that would like to pursue getting their CDL. Since completing the class Jammie has been dedicating a fair amount of time to training a couple of employees that are working on getting their CDL. We greatly appreciate that Jammie took this opportunity to DEVELOP himself further and to spend the time helping to DEVELOP other employees as well. I would like to personally thank Jammie for his work.

- Cody Mabis, EVP of Logistics



FEED

I would like to take a moment to update the employees of Mercer Landmark on some restructuring we recently put in place in Feed.

I am delighted to announce that **Graham Helmlinger** has been promoted to the role of Vice President of Feed Operations at our organization.



In his new position, Graham will be responsible for overseeing milling operations at both Heartland and MPS locations. He will collaborate closely with all the location managers, ensuring they have the necessary resources for their day-to-day activities.

Graham's extensive experience and expertise will play a vital role in maximizing our operational efficiency as a feed organization.

One of Graham's key objectives will be to focus on the big picture, evaluating our overall performance and identifying opportunities to optimize our efficiencies at Heartland and MPS. His strategic vision and attention to detail will greatly contribute to our ongoing success.

Please join me in congratulating Graham on this well-deserved promotion. His dedication, hard work, and commitment to excellence have made him an invaluable asset to our team, and I have no doubt that he will excel in this new role.

In our continuous effort to harness everyone's talents and streamline our operations, we have decided to implement a reorganization within our Customer Service Administrative staff. These changes will optimize our workflow processes and distribute workloads more effectively.

I am delighted to announce that **Jodi Clune** will be assuming the role of Director of Customer Service Administration, overseeing both the Celina and Minster locations. Jodi's exceptional leadership and dedication to our company have been instrumental in our success, and I have no doubt that she will excel in this new capacity.



Furthermore, it is my pleasure to introduce **Grace Maurer**, who will be taking on the position of Manager of Customer Service Administration, reporting directly to Jodi Clune. Grace's wealth of experience and commitment to excellence make her an ideal fit for

this role. Moving forward, all Customer Service Administrative staff at Celina and Minster will report directly to Grace.

It's important to note that while Jodi Clune takes on this new role, she will continue to perform her other duties for our other Heartland locations, as well as our MPS location. Jodi's commitment to excellence and her ability to handle multiple responsibilities are commendable, and we are confident that she will continue to bring the same level of dedication to all her areas of responsibility.

These changes are not only about maximizing our team's potential, but also fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support. Together, we are a group of highly talented individuals, and I am confident that these adjustments will reinforce our unity as a team.

Let us take a moment to congratulate Graham, Jodi and Grace on their new roles, and express our appreciation for their contributions to our company. Your continued dedication is invaluable to our shared success.

- Heath Barnes, CEO



AGRONOMY

Development is a key component of the success of our organization. The agronomy team is focused on training to be the most trusted advisors that our customers work with. We want customers to choose to call our advisors first when a question arises.

We have engaged with the Center of Excellence training program through Winfield United, which offers a wide range of training opportunities. Many of our crop production advisors have completed the Situational Leadership training. This training focuses on different styles of leadership and how they apply to unique situations and varying levels of comfort and experience with a process or product. This is valuable for customer interactions as well as for internal team dynamics.

We have also completed agronomic training at Bayer's Conover research farm and have additional training planned with Syngenta at their GrowMore site and BASF at Buckeye Ag Research. These trainings will make sure we are up to date on the latest agronomic research. All of this training empowers our team to make solid agronomic recommendations that lead to maximum yields and profits for our member owners.

Looking ahead, we have Business Acumen training scheduled for later in August to be sure we're

asking the right questions and understanding the financials of our customers and our cooperative. When we're working with our customers, it's critical to understand their goals, their challenges, and their financial outlook. Understanding these pieces will help us to ensure that we are offering solutions to the challenges they face rather than running through the features and benefits of the products and services we offer.

In addition to understanding business acumen, we plan to learn more about the importance of disciplines. These disciplines include execution and creating a cadence of accountability. Creating a plan is great, but executing on the plan is our path to success. We'll also review the different behavioral styles of our team and discover ways to quickly determine the behavioral styles of our customers. We will use our understanding of behavioral styles to build sales calls that meet our customers where they are and help them quickly understand the concepts and solutions we offer, in a style they prefer.

We're excited about Mercer Landmark's commitment to developing the best team in ag retail and are looking forward to the future sales growth that will be a result of our commitment to continuous improvement.

- Greg Culp, VP of Agronomy Sales + Marketing





ENERGY

The Energy Business Unit has been evolving over the last few years. We have worked on breaking down our internal walls of Lubes, Fuels, and Propane to become "Energy". We strive to cross train employees in all three areas. The Energy Business unit has had several employee retirements in the last couple of years and has spent a lot of time training new and current employees for new roles. All but 4 Energy team members (office personnel) have CDL's with Hazmat/tanker endorsements. On February 7, 2022, the State of Ohio changed the requirements to obtain a CDL. The new rules require CDL candidates to have classroom theory training and 40 hours of behind-the-wheel training with an approved trainer. Mercer Landmarks Safety Director, Doug Duerr, has developed ML's Entry Level Driver training program. This program has allowed us to hire great candidates and assist them in receiving their CDL's while working and learning their new job responsibilities. The driver training program is also allowing employees with a Class B CDL (Straight Truck) to train for a Class A (truck and trailer) during our non-peak times. The Class A CDL increases our

employees' availability to assist other Business units (agronomy tenders, feed trucks, etc.) to share labor and drive efficiencies.

The Energy Office Team has been working hard cross training on daily tasks and evaluating them to see if there is a better way. They have digitized several processes, including filing Propane System Checks and contracts. The savings in time, space, and paper have been outstanding. The office team has been crucial in the creation, implication and the roll-out of ML Connect Energy portal. They worked through mountains of data to make it possible.

My aim is to give each employee the tools they need to excel and to make their job their own. I want to expose the Energy Team to training, trade shows, open houses, etc. to expand their Energy IQ. We all have different talents and abilities. My goal is to identify them and to help the employees be the best they can be.

-Joe Hart, EVP of Energy



HR UPDATE

New Hires - Since April 1, 2023:

Danielle Dasher | PLANT OPERATIONS

Patrick Dirksen | SWINE SERVICE ADVISOR

Johnathan Dorsten | INTERN

Mack Fortman | INTERN

Tanner Freeman | GRAIN OPERATIONS TECHNICIAN

Kevin Fullenkamp | PLANT OPERATIONS

Ian Gehret | OPERATIONS SPECIALIST - 2ND SHIFT

Jeffrey Guntle | PART TIME CDL DRIVER

Keith Houser | INTERN

Devin Kline | PLANT OPERATIONS

Ross Klosterman | PLANT OPERATIONS

Samantha Knapke | INTERN

Austin Miller | MILLWRIGHT

Heather Oberlin | INTERN

Taylor Radcliffe | GRAIN OPERATIONS TECHNICIAN

Cameron Rinker | INTERN

Zachary Rissner | TANK PAINTER - SEASONAL

Ashton Ritter | INTERN

Jack Roth | PART TIME CDL DRIVER

Zachary Schlegel | CUSTOM APPLICATOR

William Sharpe | PLANT OPERATIONS

Tyler Showalter | CUSTOM APPLICATOR

McKayla Sites | TANK PAINTER - SEASONAL

Ruby Slentz | INTERN

Jeri Vantrees | CUSTOMER SERVICE ADMINISTRATOR

Madison Whitaker | TANK PAINTER - SEASONAL

Retirements:

Mike Dammeyer

Over 47 years in the Livestock Feed Industry; retired from Mercer Landmark as the Executive Vice President of Feed.

Carl (Squirrel) Eischen

Truck driver who came from Sunrise Co Op into Heartland Feed Services and had over 45 years experience in the ag industry.

Rodney Brodbeck

31+ years in both sales and service in our Energy business unit.

Retiree Meeting (Voluntary):

August 10th | 6pm

Knights of Columbus Hall
129 N Vine St, Celina, OH 45822

It is suggested for anyone planning to retire in the next 5 to 10 years, but is open to anyone. We will cover information on 401k, Pension, and Medicare. It is an open meeting if you would like to bring a spouse or significant other with you to attend the meeting.

Biometric Screenings:

Planning to host in late October.
More information to follow.



Onboarding Sessions:

Developing our employees by implementing a new Onboarding Session for new FT employees. This session will be held the second or third Wednesday of each month in the Celina Training Room. We will ask that anyone who has been hired since the last session attend this additional meeting. If for some reason they are unable to attend, we will slot them into the following month. During this session we will focus on Mercer Landmark's vision, mission, 4 pillars, further ADP training etc.

Through the end of the calendar year, these sessions will be scheduled as follows:

Wednesday, August 16th

Wednesday, September 13th

Wednesday, October 11th

Wednesday, November 8th

Wednesday, December 13th

Recruitment + Referral Bonuses:

We have several open job postings. Encourage family, friends, previous coworkers, etc to come and work for us. Reminder: Employee referrals (if hired FT) are given \$250 when the candidate has been employed for 90 days and an additional \$250 when the candidate has been employed for 1 year.

To apply: mercerlandmark.com/careers

HR Help Desk:

In an effort to streamline the process for HR questions and concerns, we have created a help desk. Please send all HR inquiries to

hrhelp@mercerlandmark.com.

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For more info, contact
Brad Harsha at
bradharsha@bankatfirst.com

-Marissa Gibbons, Director of Human Resources

THE IT CORNER

Developing Better Connectivity

As we charge down the road towards technology playing a larger and larger role in our everyday jobs, the need for improved connectivity grows. At Mercer Landmark, the IT department has been working on improving our internal connectivity for several years now and while we have made great strides, there is always room for further improvement.

One of the improvements that the IT team has been working on is building resiliency in our internal network. So far, this resiliency has been deployed to nine locations and is providing backup service coverage, should our primary network fail.

It is still a work in progress, but once dialed in it will keep our company working even when things go wrong.

Another area of resilience that has recently been added is a secondary connection to our hosted AgVantage system located in Minnesota. Since we made the switch in September 2020, we have experienced outages due to various connectivity issues taking place in Minnesota. After working with the IT team at AgVantage we will now have a secondary connection that will keep us up and running should anything occur with our primary connection.

Keeping Mercer Landmark connected is and always will be a work in progress, but Greg, Lauren, and myself will never stop working on the continuous improvements needed to keep our Cooperative at the forefront of the technological revolution.

-Adam Farmer, Chief Technology Officer



A Successful 2023 Internship Program

We kicked off the summer in May with our 2023 Internship Program. This internship program offers a two-tiered approach for students between their sophomore and junior year of college, as well as their junior and senior year of college. Each program, Apprentice and Associate, includes a 13-week program with focused time in any of four of our five business units: Agronomy, Energy, Feed and Grain. All of our Interns have also experienced time in each of the 4 Business Units, outside of their assigned area, this summer.

We have 2 Students from the Ohio State University, 2 from Purdue University, 3 from Wright State University Lake Campus and one from Ohio Northern. They will be concluding their experience with presentations to their Mentors and the Senior Leadership team at Mercer Landmark in early August. They have been a very dedicated, focused, and enjoyable group of students to be around. Please take a minute to read their comments, below.

- Mark Roeth Director of Organizational Development



"I enjoy that the experiences that come with working as a feed intern and the location that I work out of varies on a day-to-day basis. Through visiting many different operations and getting to see how each of the business units work together, I have learned about how much thought and work goes into determining the products and rations that dictate the overall nutrition of the operations we service."

-Samantha Knapke | Associate Intern | Coldwater, OH | Wright State University

"Some of my most memorable moments have occurred while traveling. While in the field, I traveled to a broad area serviced by Mercer Landmark. I have used the knowledge that I learned while attending training to identify weeds, stage crops, and stage herbicide and fungicide. I have also had the opportunity to watch full circle as fields were sprayed for herbicide and fungicide by airplanes."

-Ashton Ritter | Associate Intern | New Bremen, OH | Wright State University



"One of the best parts about my internship experience has been getting to see the result of my work. Utilizing the drone for the agronomy business unit has been most memorable, as I was able to further DEVELOP and grow my skill set. I value that the employees appreciate the work that I am doing and take the time to teach me new skills."

-Cameron Rinker | Associate Intern | Hartford City, IN | Purdue University



"Watching the crops move through their growth stages and sequences, while becoming more familiar with agronomy, are two pieces that have made for an exciting internship experience. Talking with growers, riding in machinery, and taking equipment to the field are all unique opportunities that I have been able to take part in through Mercer Landmark's Internship program."

-Heather Oberlin | Associate Intern | Antwerp, OH | The Ohio State University

"The hands-on aspect of working as a feed intern for Mercer Landmark has been the best part of my experience. The opportunity to expand my knowledge on all aspects of cattle nutrition while working with Heartland Feed's calf program, is unlike any opportunity I've had before."

-Mack Fortman | Associate Intern | Fort Loramie, OH | Wright State University



"My internship experience with Mercer Landmark has allowed me the opportunity for hands on experiences, in both the agronomy and grain business units, that you can't necessarily get while in a classroom. I have learned more about fungicide and the grain industry than I ever thought I would."

-Ruby Slentz | Apprentice Intern | Montpelier, IN | Purdue University

"My internship has demonstrated how you should go about building strong relationships between a business and its customers. The customer interaction that I encountered when I visited the Feed business unit and while helping with wheat harvest were some of my most memorable experiences and helped to reaffirm how Mercer Landmark creates strong relationships."

-Keith Houser | Apprentice Intern | Wapakoneta, OH | Ohio Northern University



"The best part about being an intern for Mercer Landmark has been the people that I get to work with. They have helped me to understand the full operation of an elevator, while also offering me unique experiences, such as riding in a locomotive to move train cars."

-Johnathan Dorsten | Apprentice Intern | Bryan, OH | The Ohio State University