



Ag Link



Spring 2001

Linking the MSU College of Agriculture with its Alumni and Friends

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Montana wheats ranked best by buyers

A recent report of a 1999 international study ranked wheat grown by Montana farmers better than any others tested.

The Overseas Varietal Analysis Project, organized by U.S. Wheat Associates, asked commercial buyers from Asian countries to assess eight hard red spring wheats and nine hard red winter wheats. Buyers in the test made whatever products they normally would from the wheat, including noodles, steam bread or loaves of bread.

"McNeal appears to be the variety that is preferred, most probably because of its mixing properties coupled with a high (water) absorption," said the summary of the spring wheat project written by scientists at North Dakota State University.

"Rampart ranked best overall in baking quality of the 19 samples evaluated," said the summary of the winter wheat project written by scientists at the



Harvey Teslaa, back, and Jackie Kennedy at work in the MSU Cereal Quality Lab.

USDA-Agricultural Research Service in Manhattan, Kan. Both are wheats developed at Montana State University and grown commercially by Montana producers.

"It's really a pat on the back for Montana wheat producers," says Luther Talbert, MSU spring wheat breeder. "It also is a credit to MSU's Cereal Quality Lab." The lab, managed by Deb Habernicht, is the proving ground for both Talbert's spring wheat breeding lines and the winter wheats developed by Phil Bruckner.

The popularity of McNeal also has led to identity-preserved shipments of the grain both within and outside of the United States. Such "identity-preserved" shipments generally mean a bonus to the grain growers involved.

For more information, contact Luther Talbert, 994-5060 or Phil Bruckner, 994-5127.

Libby ag student stars for Lady 'Cats

Jinnifer Jeresek is a natural on the basketball court and in her academic pursuits.

A 5'10" guard/forward on the Montana State University women's basketball team, Jeresek had a season to remember. She averaged 6.1 points and 3.0 rebounds per game, while leading the team in three-point field-goal percentage. Jeresek started in seven games and helped guide the Bobcats to an 18-10 overall record, which was the fifth-best turnaround at the NCAA Division I level this winter.

A native of Libby, Jeresek was raised fishing the Kootenai River and backpacking in the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness. Her dad, Jon, works for the forest service and many of her friends have strong timber ties. She was a two-time all-state basketball player for the Libby Loggers.

"All my best friends came from logging families," said Jeresek, a land resources/environmental sci-

ences major. "My dad working for the forest service was kind of on the other side of that. I got to see both sides and really got a chance to discover my own views."

"I visited the MSU campus and really liked what I saw," Jeresek said of a visit during her senior year. "I talked to some professors and really enjoyed it. And, all the girls on the team were really nice, so I



Jinnifer Jeresek

photo by R. Dean Hendrickson

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From the Dean

By the time you receive this newsletter, the legislative session will be concluded. As we go to press, however, many issues are still under debate. The Montana University System is facing shortfalls in funding that may result in changes to tuition and fees. The Montana Agricultural Experiment Station funding has fared slightly better. MAES received \$230,000

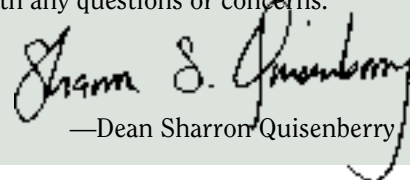


per year of the biennium 2002-2003 for capital expenditures to address equipment shortfalls at research centers. The new biobased program was funded by the legislature at \$200,000 each year of the biennium (see article, back page). MAES is obligated to raise an additional \$140,000 each year of the biennium for the program. The combined \$340,000 per year will be used to start an institute to explore biobased products for Montana agriculture. If you are interested in supporting the new biobased program, please contact Sandra Germann at 994-7671.

We have reached another milestone in our year and in our lives. Graduation is a time for reflection and a time for plan-

ning. On May 12, 159 undergraduate and 40 graduate students will receive degrees from the College of Agriculture. I would like to congratulate each and every graduate for their accomplishments and commend their families for their support of the graduates' dreams and efforts.

I look forward to traveling the state this summer to various field days. I hope to see you at a field day near you. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.


—Dean Sharron Quisenberry

Taking the (beef) show on the road

The College of Agriculture “took the show on the road” to Washington D.C. in March to show Congressional staff and federal agency personnel just what tax dollars and contributions do for consumers as well as Montana’s beef industry.

The College of Agriculture, Extension Service, Montana Stockgrowers Association and Montana Beef Council took a display called “Where’s the T-Bone?” to a session organized by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. The display included a description of the Montana Beef Network and outlined ways Montana ag families are working to maintain high standards of production and improve both the taste and safety of beef.

The display was developed by John



Lisa Duffey and Jim Peterson represented MSU at a March exhibition in Washington, D.C.

Paterson and Lisa Duffey of the College of Ag and Suzi Taylor and Marla Goodman of MSU Communications Services. The display will be at county fairs and other public gatherings throughout the year.

Precision ag students learn new tech

College of Agriculture students in the new “Technologies in Precision Agriculture” course (AOT 405) are so far ahead of the curve that industry representatives have sought them out for jobs, said instructor Van Shelhamer.

The course, new this year, covers technologies ranging from how yield monitors work to monitoring soils using electronic systems. Students also learn about applications of GPS, such as designing prescription maps to better control fertilizer and pesticide applications, as well as

the principles of guidance for farm equipment and aircraft.

The course is one of just a handful across the U.S. that covers the new technologies in such depth, said Shelhamer.

Shelhamer had researched many of the precision ag topics while developing a national curriculum for secondary ag teachers. He also saw a need for the information back home at MSU.

“The students were demanding it, and we see the industry heading in that direction,” he said.

Lady ‘Cat star, cont. from p. 1

thought that this would be a good place for me. There’s no better university that I could think of than Montana State.”

Jersek relishes her role as a student-athlete, and is a three-time All-Big Sky Conference academic honoree.

“I want to be more than just a basketball player,” Jersek said. “I like to be involved in the University and want to know how I can help the students. I like diversity in my life, and I know there’s more to life than just basketball.”

Jersek’s future plans include law school and, possibly, politics. She would also like to get into consulting involving land resources/environmental science.

“I’ve always been interested in how the environment works,” Jersek said. “Because I grew up in Libby, I’ve been aware of land-management issues, and I’ve always been interested in this field.”

“My professors have been real helpful and understanding,” Jersek said. “They’re really cool, cooperative and great teachers. They use true-to-life examples and talk to you like you’re a person. They’re really easy-going, but yet you learn a lot from them.”

Whether it’s in the classroom, on the court or in her future ambitions, Bobcat women’s basketball standout Jinnifer Jersek will most likely succeed.

—by Tom Schulz, MSU Sports Information

Western Triangle Ag Research Center helps producers cope with Montana's most prominent soil

The Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center near Conrad was established in 1977 to represent Montana's largest soil type: Scobey clay loam. It is the only Montana Agricultural Experiment Station research center to be established at a specific place in order to represent



A field-day crowd looks at crops at the Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center near Conrad.

specific growing conditions.

"We have to develop specific no-till planting systems to seed through that soil," says Greg Kushnak, the center superintendent and agronomist. "It's less forgiving than, say, the soils at Kalispell and Bozeman. You can't get on it when it's very wet or soil compaction will be a real problem. On the upside, this soil holds onto a lot of water. We can have a drought year and still get a good yield because of stored water."

Unfortunately, unless there are good spring rains, Western Triangle ARC will face its second consecutive drought year, though the center will hold its summer field day as planned on July 10.

The unit also has Soil Scientist Grant Jackson and two research associates: John Miller and Ron Thaut.

While covering a broad array of research suited to the area's growing conditions, two of the center's research emphases are soil fertility and wheat stem sawfly studies.

"A Montana Wheat and Barley Committee survey showed that sawfly is the number one insect concern of Montana farmers," says Kushnak. "We are one of the key places for evaluat-

ing sawfly-resistant varieties and management practices, because we have a lot of them here."

Western Triangle ARC also does important work with cereal grains and production practices.

"We're working a lot on durum and other wheat varieties. There's been a tremendous increase in durum use worldwide, so the acreage is increasing," says Kushnak. Work on hard white wheat is also growing.

"The second largest grain company in the world told us the other day that they will go 100 percent to hard white wheat within five years," says Kushnak. The center tests all wheat lines being developed by Montana's spring and winter wheat breeders, both of whom have released hard white wheat varieties. More are being tested for future release.

The center also runs over 20 off-site experimental trials in a seven-county area surrounding the center.

The Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center is one of eight regional research centers of the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station. It is located nine miles north of Conrad just off I-15.

For more information, contact Greg Kushnak at (406) 278-7707.

Retired ag professor wins international volunteer award

Doug Bishop, who taught agricultural education at MSU for 25 years before retiring in 1993, recently received the Cooperative Agricultural International Volunteer Award for his work establishing business and agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia. Bishop has visited Africa nine times to help government officials teach farmers and small business owners how to band together to purchase equipment and share supplies.

High cutworm count predicted

Last fall's pale western cutworm moth count was the highest ever recorded in Glacier and Liberty Counties, and high levels are predicted for most of Montana's "Golden Triangle" counties this year, says MSU Entomologist Sue Blodgett. Last year's dry weather is to blame, and dry weather again this summer will favor the pest even more. If producers find pale western cutworm larvae at more than one-to-two per foot of row, Blodgett says, they should consider treating to reduce their numbers. The treatment threshold level for the foliage-feeding army cutworms is two-to-four larvae per foot of row.

For more information, call Blodgett at 994-2402 or visit <http://www.montana.edu/wwwwpb/ag/cutworms2001.html>

AgEd, AOT return to College

Since Jan. 1, the agricultural education and agricultural operations technology programs are again part of the College of Agriculture, rather than the College of Education, where they had been for eight years. No classes or degree programs will change, and the move should not affect students, said Greg Johnson, administrative director of the programs.

Use e-mail to fight pests!

An email service called MontPIN (Montana Pest Information Network) links producers, researchers and others interested in exchanging pest control ideas via the Internet. To subscribe, send an email to rpetroff@montana.edu. Type "Subscribe MontPIN" (without the quotes) in the subject line, and enter your email address in the body of the message.

Ag Ambassadors reach out

Mix a recruiter with a teacher and a researcher, add a dash of college-student humor and a passion for agriculture, and you've got the makings of an Ag Ambassador. The Montana State University Ag Ambassadors are a unique student-run organization that goes far beyond the bounds of the traditional college club.

Ag Ambassadors are MSU students from various colleges and majors who teach children and teen-agers about agriculture. They are advised by Lynn Schledorn and Clayton Marlow from the College of Agriculture.

Ambassadors use games and interactive discussions to test kids' knowledge of agriculture and its associated careers. Younger kids are fascinated to know the real source of products like rubber and Jell-o, while older kids don't realize that careers like golf course superintendent fall within the realm of agriculture. Melissa Kovanda-Kramer, Ag Ambassador coordinator and a senior in ag education from **Columbus**, says high school students are most surprised to discover that



Ambassadors Lexi Newman of Columbus and R. Kurt Voss of Circle man the College of Ag display at a recent event at MSU-Bozeman

some starting salaries for agriculture grads are as high as engineering grads.

Ag Ambassadors train extensively before hitting the road. Fielding questions on everything from "Where does gum come from?" to the ethical issues of biotechnology, Ambassadors must stay on top of news and research. Kovanda-Kramer says several College of Ag department heads work closely with the Ambassadors to offer updates on particular classes, programs and field research.

MSU ag grad goes from Winifred to Washington D.C.

Moving to Washington D.C. has been a happy transition for Chris Heggem. The **Winifred** native and Montana State University grad may have found the move easier because her most direct comparison to Washington D.C. wasn't Winifred or **Bozeman**, but her six months in Bulgaria with the International Four-H Youth Exchange (IFYE).

"When somebody said, 'What are you going to do next,' and I said I thought I'd move to Washington, D.C., people reacted as if it would be scary. But I'd say, 'Everyone there speaks English. How hard could it be?'" Bulgaria, she is quick to add, was a wonderful experience, just not an easy one.

"The experience of being without any knowledge of the language and unable to communicate with people was really challenging," says Heggem. "Living with nine different families over six months forced me to adapt to new situations quickly. Along with the cultural differences, going outside what is normal and

comfortable to do made me pretty fearless by the time I got back."

Heggem, who is a legislative aide for Sen. Conrad Burns, has a diverse background. From Winifred, she came to MSU and majored in agricultural business, working as an undergrad in the state 4-H office. After graduation in 1996, she continued in applied economics, earning a master's degree in 1998. That degree involved developing a method to value the use of technology in rural health care systems.

"My thesis research and working at the Trade Research Center after my master's were both useful for what I do now. They taught me how to think about federal investment and how the result should provide some public good. At some point you have to be able to justify these dollars and decide which programs should be funded."

To get the aide job, "I basically called up Conrad Burns' office and said, 'Can I

"They are a tremendous group of young people," says Sharron Quisenberry, College of Agriculture dean. "They're out there, and they are professional. They are effective recruiters as well as promoters of the College of Agriculture."

Quisenberry adds that Ambassadors are often present at commodity group meetings, furthering the relationship between MSU and agriculturalists around Montana.

Kovanda-Kramer says her biggest challenge as an Ambassador has been waiting several years to see the fruits of her labor. Since Ag Ambassador teams visit lots of sophomores and juniors, "we have to wait two to three years to see if our work has paid off. It's tough to qualify and quantify whether what we do is working."

However, that question was recently answered, she says. This year, while selecting the new crop of Ambassadors, several recruits cited a high school visit from Ag Ambassadors as their inspiration to go to MSU and study agriculture.

For more information, contact Lynn Schledorn, 994-5744.



MSU Alum Chris Heggem stands in front of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C.

please have a job," said Heggem. She was hired about a year later.

"The best part of my job is the people I work with and the opportunity to work for Montana every day. It helps me remember who I am and where I came from."

Chris' parents are Donna and Alan Young of **Butte**. Her father was Jack Heggem.

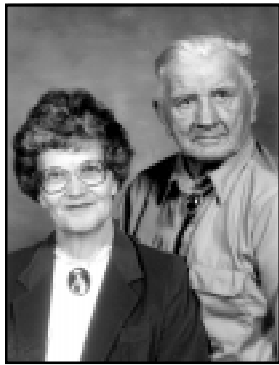
Sobotka, Hilger Ranch scholarships established

Two new scholarship endowments will serve as lasting memorials to loved ones while rewarding and assisting students working towards educational excellence in agriculture.

Mary Sobotka of Glendive created a scholarship in memory of her husband, August, who died in 1997. Mary chose an agriculture award because August, 86, had spent his life as a farmer and rancher. The son of John and Louise Sobotka, August was born on his parent's homestead near **Stipek**. He attended rural Dawson County elementary schools and was a student at Glendive High School when his father died in 1927. August then began running the family's farm and ranch with his mother until her death in 1960. He continued to farm and ranch until his death in 1997. August and Mary (Currie Knutson) were married in June 1961.

August was a charter member of the Dawson County Farmer's Union and was instrumental in organizing the Dawson Livestock Protective Association. He belonged to the Moose and Elks Lodges. Recognition of his philosophy of land stewardship came in 1962 when he was named "Conservation Farmer of the Year" for Dawson County and the state of Montana.

The Sobotka Memorial Agriculture



Mary and August Sobotka

Award will provide scholarships to worthy students in agriculture. First preference will be given to students from Dawson, Richland, McCone, Wibaux and Prairie Counties.

The Hilger Ranch Memorial Award was recently established in memory of Bryan Hilger and his siblings, Dan, Susan and Amelia (Babe). The Hilger

Polled Hereford Ranch, located north of **Helena** at the Gates of the Mountains, was established in the early 1870s by Nicholas Hilger. Bryan Hilger and his siblings were third-generation ranchers dedicated to good range management and purebred Polled Herefords.

The scholarship will go to worthy students studying animal husbandry or a livestock-related field in Animal and Range Sciences. An additional award may be made each year in the name of the Hilger Family Ranch to support agricul-

ture-related activities in animal and range sciences, such as student activities and judging team expenses.



The Hilger siblings. At top: Amelia, Bryan and Dan. At left: Susan.



By Sandra Germann, Director of Development

When all the scholarship applications for Fall 2001 were received Feb. 1,

290 College of Agriculture students had applied for awards. The 341 scholarships the college is privileged to give out went to 165 different students. In 1999, the College of Agriculture awarded \$109,000 in scholarships, last year's total was \$150,000, and 2001's is a whopping \$390,000! **Thank you** to college alumni and friends for this continuing growth.

As state and federal dollars are reduced and tuition and board increase, many students need assistance to pursue a college degree. Of the 122 students who applied but didn't receive money, 42 percent were incoming freshman, 30 percent were continuing students and 28 percent were transfers. The college most needs scholarships in the new agriculture science areas and for new degrees such as biotechnology and horticulture (including turf grass management, nursery and landscape design).

Thank you to the following Steer-A-Year donors who gave a steer, or proceeds from the sale of a steer, to the College of Agriculture last year. The donors will receive an embroidered jacket in appreciation. **Last year's Steer-A Year-donors were:** Sieben Ranch Co., **Helena**; Smith 6-S Livestock, **Glen**; Double D Ranch, **Clyde Park**; E.L. Peterson Ranch, **Judith Gap**; Montana Livestock Ag Credit, **Helena**; Higgins Brothers Ranch, **Ringling**; Skinner Ranch Salers, **Hall**; Jim Peterson, **Judith Gap**; and Edwards Angus Ranch, **Denton**.

Sandra Germann

Class of '89 (BS), '91 (MS) AgEd/ Extension

For information on ways you can contribute to college programs, contact Sandra Germann at 406-994-7671. Or check the college's web site at www.montana.edu/agriculture

Steers will be ready for auction May 19

Custom-fed steers donated to MSU in the Steer-A-Year program this fall will be auctioned May 19 to benefit student programs.

"We're hoping buyers will attend the auction on campus and support students by bidding on these steers," says Lisa Duffey, MSU College of Agriculture special projects director. The College Regional Playoffs Rodeo is also that weekend.

Last fall, Montana producers donated 42 steers to benefit students in three MSU programs: the College of Agricul-

ture, the Rodeo Club and MSU Athletics (See donors in column at right). About half of those were sold in January after they were background-fed. Eighteen remaining steers are now being fed-out to attain market condition, and of those, eight to 10 should be in perfect condition by the auction. College of Agriculture students care for the steers until sale time.

After the auction, the meat will be processed by Gallatin Meats, Bozeman. Bids start at market price plus cutting and packing.

Calendar

MAY

- 12 **MSU Graduation**, Bozeman
- 17-19 **Regional rodeo**, Bozeman
- 19 **Steer-a-Year auction**, Bozeman

JUNE

- 19 **Mint Tour**, Northwestern Ag Research Station, Kalispell
- 19-21 **SpurgeFest II**, Medora, ND.
- 20-22 Western Section of the **American Society of Animal Science** meeting, Bozeman
- 21 **Central ARC Field Day**, Moccasin
- 28 **Herb and Specialty Crops Tour**, Western Ag Research Center, Corvallis

JULY

- 9 **Cereal Grains Variety Tour**, Central Ag Research Station, Moccasin
- 10 **Western Triangle ARC Field Day**, Conrad
- 11 **Northern ARC Field Day**, Havre
- 18 **Eastern ARC Field Day**, Sidney
- 23-27 **International Safflower Conference**, Sidney, MT and Williston, ND

Biobased institute proposed

The Montana legislature has approved \$200,000 per year during the 2002-2003 biennium for a new agricultural center. In turn, the College of Agriculture must raise \$140,000 each year in matching funds. These private funds will be used for operations and equipment.

The **Institute for Biobased Products and Food Science**, in conjunction with the Montana Agriculture Experiment Station (MAES), will provide educational research on issues like biobased product/value-added alternative crops (e.g., plants that produce fuels, oils, lubricants, pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, fibers); value-added meats (beef, lamb, etc.); food safety; risk assessment and product development.

The Institute will collaborate with MSU-Bozeman (Colleges of Agriculture; Business; Education, Health and Human Development; Engineering; and MSU Extension); MSU-Billings (fuel cells), MSU-Northern (co-


operatives program), MSU-Great Falls (technology), University of Montana (carbohydrates), Montana Manufacturing Extension Center, USDA-ARS (Agricultural Research Service) units at Miles City and Sidney, State Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, and others. The Institute will provide user-friendly expertise to producers and ag-based industry, as well as frequent training seminars and short courses.

MAES offers expertise in biobased product/value-added alternative crops, cropping and animal systems, value-added meats, product development (e.g., cereals and meats), biotechnology, marketing, agri-business, trade, development and human, plant and animal nutrition. The center will hire personnel with expertise in food science, food safety, risk assessment and value-added livestock that includes genetics and diseases.

To offer matching funds for this project, contact Sandra Germann at 994-7671.

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