



COMMENTATOR

PLAINS COTTON COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION >>>>>>>>>> SUMMER 2009



Textile Division Update
Find out what's happening!

Building Relationships
One family's way of giving back

The Hand That Feeds U.S.

COMMENTATOR

Volume 42, No 2 >>>> Summer 2009



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On the cover...

In late-August, it appeared that timely rainfall and pleasant growing weather would result in an outstanding cotton crop in most of the Texas Rolling Plains area. Frank Long's cotton field borders PCCA's new warehouse facility near Big Spring, Texas, and he was optimistic that his cotton yields would be better-than-average this season if the weather continued to cooperate.



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Providing a Face for

Administration and Human Resources provide diverse services for members and employees

By Mica Graybill



Administration and Human Resources employees at PCCA work hard to ensure the well being of fellow employees and coordinate many functions related to our members and business partners. It consists of several individual departments with diverse duties to ensure an efficient work environment and effective communications.

Several employees work to keep PCCA's management well prepared and organized. Administration and Human Resources are under the direct supervision of Vice President Jim Taylor.

The administrative staff, led by Executive Administrator Jan O'Boyle, serves as the liaison between PCCA President and CEO Wally Darneille, the cooperative's vice presidents and the board of directors. Preparing monthly meeting notices, agendas and packets for PCCA's Board of Directors, Delegate Body and Marketing Pool Committee meetings are just a few of O'Boyle's duties. "I really enjoy the work and diverse nature of my job," she said.

Administrative Assistants Dana Brown and Valerie Hearon also help keep things running smoothly. In addition to providing assistance to PCCA's president and vice presidents, these employees prepare reports, meeting documents and coordinate travel arrangements for management and board members. Hearon is impressed by the work environment and commitment that employees provide to PCCA's members and customers.

"My favorite thing about PCCA is the feeling that everyone is working toward a single goal," said Hearon. "I have never worked at a company

where the people are so dedicated to ensuring that their customers, or in our case the members, are well cared for and their interests are our main priority."

PCCA's Payroll Department employees pride themselves on confidentiality and accuracy. Their specific duties include making sure employees get paid on time, are paid accurately and that all personal information is maintained in strictest confidence.

Payroll Supervisor Carri Lindsay is in charge of internal auditing of payroll processes as well as overseeing that PCCA maintains accurate records and complies with all payroll related laws and regulations. Lindsay is assisted by Payroll Clerks Michelle McKinney and Carol Miller. McKinney is responsible for processing and maintaining ACG's payroll and records while Miller is accountable for processing and maintaining the same for the Warehouse and Marketing Divisions.

Personnel Manager Lee Phenix is proud of his team and the amount of hard work and effort they put into making their department a success. "Our department plays a more prominent role in PCCA than most people realize," said Phenix. "The staff works hard to give our employees the full advantages that employment with PCCA offers."

Another important responsibility of this department is managing employee benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans. This important and time-consuming job is the responsibility of Benefits Administrator Jan Owens and Benefits Assistant Lacey Ainsworth.

Owens enjoys helping others because she feels it is a way to give back to people.

"Helping others gives me a good feeling about the work I am doing, and it helps take stress out of people's lives," said Owens.

Maintenance of the building and grounds at PCCA also is an important duty of the Personnel Department. Maintenance Assistant Delmer Harris keeps everything up and running, from taking care of the landscape and servicing company vehicles to working on general maintenance jobs around the building.

In addition, two other people contribute their efforts to ensure efficiency on a day-to-day basis. Banking and Mail Courier Gary Smith ensures that vital documents are handled efficiently and that PCCA gets the best value for the money spent to handle correspondence and shipping. Receptionist Janette Greenfield efficiently answers between 300 and 400 phone calls per day and greets visitors.

The Public and Legislative Affairs department at PCCA is responsible for maintaining much of the communication with members, employees and the general public. These efforts include publications such as the member magazine, *Commentator*, and the employee newsletter, *The Common Thread*. This department also produces news releases for the media, creates PCCA's Annual Report and produces advertising to promote PCCA's products and services.

"Our job is to keep everyone informed about the activities of this cooperative and developments that affect this industry," said John Johnson, Director of Public and Legislative Affairs.



Public and Legislative Affairs (L-R): Amy Dromgoole, Mica Graybill, Emma Matkin, Lynette Wilson and John Johnson.



Administrative Staff (L-R): Valerie Hearon, Jim Taylor, Jan O'Boyle and Dana Brown.



Payroll (L-R): Michelle McKinney, Carol Miller and Carri Lindsay.



Personnel (Back, L-R): Lee Phenix, Delmer Harris, Gary Smith. (Front, L-R): Janette Greenfield, Jan Owens, Lacey Ainsworth.

Johnson works closely with organizations such as The National Cotton Council, Southwest Council of Agribusiness, National Council of Textile Organizations, and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. He also works in close contact with staff of numerous congressmen and senators in Washington, D.C., regarding legislation moving through Congress.

Communications Manager Lynette Wilson calls this group the “creative” department. She said the department is full of new projects, constant changes and creative ideas. Wilson does everything from graphic design to advertising, and is an avid writer and photographer. She also represents PCCA by volunteering with a number of organizations including United Way and the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce. According to Wilson,

she likes the fact PCCA and her department have a family atmosphere.

“The people at PCCA are wonderful because they enjoy their work and the camaraderie of the other employees,” said Wilson. “I was lucky to find my niche’ in this department.”

Communications Specialist Emma Matkin is busy producing and managing new projects including SAFEDenim jeans. She also is busy creating a new Web site for Denimatrix, the latest addition to PCCA’s Textile Division.

Communications interns Amy Dromgoole and Mica Graybill are Texas Tech students training for careers in the communications field. Their duties in the department involve writing for the publications, graphic design and taking on challenging special projects.

According to Johnson, the people who work

in his department work well together and make a positive and productive team. “I am blessed to have a highly competent and dedicated team to ensure that our department meets its goals and responsibilities,” said Johnson.

Success at PCCA is accomplished by the hard work and dedication of each of the employees in these departments. “I believe that our employees demonstrate exceptional talent, dedication and commitment,” said Taylor. “We can have great plans and ideas, but it takes a real person doing real work to make plans and ideas a reality. This group of employees does just that. They do good work on behalf of our members and our employees. It is a pleasure to be associated with them.” ☺



TEXTILE DIVISION UPDATE

TEXTILE DIVISION UPDATE

With the addition of Denimatrix and continuing advancements at the American Cotton Growers (ACG) denim mill, the Textile Division at Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (PCCA) is working hard to sustain positive cash flow and maintain a steady work environment despite the rough economic times.



ACG's Weave room includes 161 Air Jet Looms



ABOVE: A ring spinning frame at ACG.

American Cotton Growers: Weaving efficiency, a key factor in textile mills, has increased in the last six months as ACG achieved 92.24 percent weaving efficiency compared to 90.53 percent in fiscal 2008. This is a significant and remarkable increase by weaving efficiency standards.

Bryan Gregory, PCCA's Vice President of Textile Manufacturing, explained that weaving efficiency is probably the best indicator ACG has to indicate how well the mill is running.

"The higher the weaving efficiency, the lower the overall operating cost," Gregory said. "It is kind of like the grade on a report card; anything over a 90 is considered pretty good." Even though productivity is on the increase, the economy did cause a great impact on ACG.

"It was a very tough year for us. Business was slow," Gregory said. "We took more downtime (92 days) than we have taken in several years due to slow denim sales."

The denim mill also went through a major change when the operating schedule was cut from a seven-day, four-shift operation, to a five-day, three-shift operation on March 23.

"The reduction in force from seven days to five days was difficult," Gregory said. "We regretfully eliminated 159 hourly jobs and 13 salaried positions."

Despite the economic hardship, ACG has managed to report other positive results. In addition to improved weaving efficiency, improvements also were achieved in beaming yards, up 15 percent per hour.

The Yarn Manufacturing Department at ACG also successfully changed its cotton
continued on page 6...

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blending philosophy from cotton blending at draw frames to blending at the bale laydown. The new blending method will provide much needed flexibility.

Product Development produced 385 samples this year, and new technology was added to maintain shrinkage control which will, in turn, improve yield as well as improve fabric performance. ACG is the first denim mill in the world that automatically measures, monitors, and truly controls shrinkage.

Gregory said the mill is running better than it has in the past 10 years. He said the employees at ACG have “really stepped up and committed to running the mill as well as possible during these rough economic times.”

“I can’t say enough about how proud I am of our people. They just keep giving all they have,” Gregory said. “At the end of the day, it’s the people that make the difference – and ours are the best.”



Preparing jeans on mannequins to begin the sanding process.

DENIMATRIX: The main goal and major reason for the creation of Denimatrix always has been vertical integration. As PCCA continues to promote this concept, Denimatrix President Carlos Arias has noticed apparel customers are beginning to understand the advantages of total vertical integration.

Total orders at Denimatrix have exceeded expectations, and a large majority of them are represented by Abercrombie & Fitch, Gap, Inc., Rock & Republic, Buckle, Banana Republic, and Guess.

Operations at Denimatrix are beginning to expand in the Cut and Sew, Dry Process, Wet Processing, and Packaging and Finishing stations. Growth in direct, indirect, and administrative labor also is projected to increase to meet demand.

Arias also explained that Denimatrix has been working with ACG to create new “sales tools” that will help portray the full potential of ACG fabrics and allow customers to visualize them in garment form.

“Denimatrix has continued to develop according to plan. We have been able to reach our production goals and expand our customer base,” Arias said. “We are confident that we will be able to grow the participation of ACG fabric in our orders which will strengthen the synergies for PCCA.”

Being able to wear a pair of jeans or to know the denim you are buying is “friendly to the environment” and made from American-grown cotton gives the customer a more special and personal experience. It is another result of the exciting synergies between ACG and Denimatrix. 🌱



Denimatrix employees design the destruction and tooling of denim jeans.

Expanding to NEW HORIZONS

BY: AMY DROMGOOLE

As the beams go up in Big Spring, Texas, Howard County's largest city is getting even bigger. In an effort to better serve Plains Cotton Cooperative Association's (PCCA) members, the construction of a new cotton warehouse has begun and is projected to finish in time for the 2009-10 cotton crop.

For more than 40 years, PCCA owned only two warehouse facilities; one in Sweetwater, Texas, and another in Altus, Oklahoma. However, a combination of new seed technology, increased volume, boll weevil eradication, PCCA's growing market share, and the strong financial advantages to store cotton indoors, made warehouse growth a vital commitment.

Currently, PCCA's Warehouse Division operates cotton storage facilities in Rule and Sweetwater, Texas, Altus and Frederick, Oklahoma, and Liberal, Kansas. PCCA's TELMARK Division also owns a facility in Memphis, Texas. With the Big Spring warehouse, PCCA's Warehouse Division will have storage capacity in excess of one million bales.

"Increased cotton production in recent years necessitated an expansion of our cotton warehouse operations in the western areas of our trade territory," Dean Church, Vice President of Grower Services for PCCA said. "We evaluated several good sites and determined the Big Spring site best fit our needs."

In this first-year phase, the cooperative has plans to employ at least six people and construct two warehouse buildings in Big Spring. Upon completion, a total of 100,000 bales easily can be stored in the 330,000 square-foot and 170,000 square-foot buildings.

"We're very excited about the new warehouse facility," said Church. "Our latest expansion will be a great benefit to our members due to the fact that we'll be able to store bales more economically and efficiently." ☺



A nearby cotton field owned by Frank Long borders the new warehouse in Big Spring, Texas.



Upon completion, the largest of PCCA's warehouses in Big Spring, Texas, will store roughly 65,000 bales with an additional 6,000 bales in its staging area.



Together, the 10 older warehouses hold a total of 75,000 bales.



Bales in an existing warehouse await shipping.



Building Relationships and Bright Beginnings:

Keeping a close
connection with
West Texas roots

By Mica Graybill

Sitting across the table talking about hot West Texas summer days, I gathered my notes and struggled to contain my excitement about speaking with Kendon and Wendy Wheeler. The couple's unique story of love and compassion and their determination to help children succeed in the world was inspiring.

Kendon and Wendy have run and operated New Life Children's Home in Villa Nueva, Guatemala, since 1988. Since moving to Guatemala, the Wheelers have made an incredible impact on the children who have entered their lives. According to Wendy, they strive to provide the children in the home with a good education and "an established relationship with the Lord."

New Life Children's Home was established in 1976 after a civil war and tragic earthquake left hundreds of orphaned Guatemalan children in need of a safe environment. Even decades later, children who arrive at New Life come from broken families or extreme poverty and are in need of better care.

"We are working toward a change for future generations because these kids are going to have kids one day," said Kendon. "Hopefully, we can build a strong, solid foundation where it turns things around for future generations."

Wendy always had known she wanted to be a missionary nurse. While growing up and going to school in Brownfield, Texas, Wendy attended a summer camp called Camp One Way held at Ceta Canyon. This inspired her to study nursing at Texas Tech University where she and Kendon began dating. She then went on to graduate from Baylor School of Nursing in Dallas, Texas, in 1981.

Kendon was raised on a cotton farm near Southland, Texas, where he attended school. Kendon and his family were members of the First United Methodist Church in Slaton, Texas, a church with a history of supporting missionaries. Kendon also spent his summers at the Ceta Canyon camp where he, like Wendy, was exposed to missionaries and their work. Kendon studied crops and agricultural education at Texas Tech and obtained his degree in 1980. He then went to Nigeria for two months to work specifically in agricultural missions and agricultural development. Wendy worked the same summer at an orphanage in Haiti.

After they were married in 1981, Kendon and

Wendy began applying for jobs with different organizations that offered mission work. After several years of searching, they were unsuccessful at finding an opportunity that fit their desire, but in 1988, they were offered the chance to work for New Life Children's Home.

"When we went to Guatemala, we connected with this organization because they wanted a couple like us to work there," said Wendy. "Very early on there was need for our involvement at the children's home, so that is how we moved into that realm."

Currently, New Life provides residence for 51 children, and more than 400 neighborhood children have enrolled in the program's school. Construction for a new housing unit will enable New Life to provide housing for up to 70 children.

When Wendy and Kendon first arrived at New Life, the school was offered only to the children living at the home. Now, it is registered with the government, and children who are not living at the home have a chance to obtain a better education. According to Kendon, other school directors tell them New Life has the best school system in Villa Nueva.

The agricultural system in Guatemala was quite a change from what Kendon was accustomed. Until about 10 years ago, cotton was grown on the coast of Guatemala, but very few farmers are interested in growing it now because it is too costly to produce. The primary crops grown in Guatemala are sugar cane and

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Kendon and Kevin during an afternoon at an amusement park. Kendon and Wendy strive to provide the children at New Life with the same opportunities that other children enjoy.



With the help of Kendon and Wendy, New Life Children's Home provides a school and housing to many children in Guatemala.

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vegetables; however, coffee and bananas are the number one exports from the country.

In the 21 years they have lived in Guatemala, Kendon and Wendy have touched the lives of many people and have done tremendous things to better the lives of many underprivileged children. In fact, they are so involved in their work at New Life that they often do not realize how much they miss their roots in West Texas.

“There is nothing like West Texas. You have to grow up here to miss it I guess, but there is just a beauty here that you miss,” said Kendon. “When I come back, no matter where I am, I stop and enjoy the sunsets. It’s something that will always be a part of me.”

According to Kendon, the hardest part of living in Guatemala is having his three sons grow up away from their grandparents and missing out on experiences he had in his youth. He loved growing up on a farm which gave him the opportunity to learn skills that are now “second nature” to him.

Despite the absence of their West Texas lifestyle, Kendon and Wendy agreed that they would not give up their time in Guatemala or having the opportunity to raise their kids abroad. Their sons are bilingual and have had many opportunities that most kids their age would not have the chance to experience.

“I always tell my boys we are blessed because we have two homes,” said Wendy. “When we are here, we talk about our home in Guatemala, and when we are in Guatemala, we talk about our home in West Texas.”

Building relationships is an important part of the job Kendon and Wendy do in Guatemala. They cherish the bond they have with the children at the home and with sponsors and donors who express interest in the lives of the children and what goes on at New Life.

“We have fallen in love with the people and, of course, the kids. They are our kids,” said Wendy. “That is what we love the most.” 🍌



New Life Children's Home values education and strives to help children achieve success. Wendy and Kendon congratulate Giovanni, Angie and Sammy at their Kindergarten graduation.

“Hopefully we can build a strong, solid foundation where it turns things around for future generations.”



Kendon and Wendy are very passionate about helping children build a strong, solid foundation for a better future.

For more information about New Life Children's Home, please contact:

New Life Advance International
P.O. Box 35857
Houston, TX 77235
(806) 853-9085
NLCHGuatemala@gmail.com

Small Department receives BIG Recognition

by: Amy Dromgoole

The results from the 2009 Cooperative Communicators Association (CCA) awards are in and once again PCCA shines among the best.

CCA is an organization of 350 professionals who communicate for cooperatives. The organization's mission is to work toward helping its members excel in communications involving anything from writing and photography to editing videos and layouts. They also take great pride in emphasizing ideas and strategies aimed at making communications more successful for cooperatives.

The contest encompasses four categories: writing, programs and projects, photography, and publications.

Lynette Wilson, Communications Manager in PCCA's Public and Legislative Affairs department, received third place in the Photography category in the portrait division for her portrait "Hattie Flannigan- Mutton Buster." Wilson also received first place in the Publications category in the words and pictures division for "Celebrating Cotton's Past." Photos and a story about the Burton Cotton Gin Museum were published in the Winter 2008-09 *Commentator*.

In addition to Wilson's recognitions, Bill Curnow, PCCA's Application Infrastructure Architect and Web Administrator, received third place in the Programs and Projects category in the Web site division for the safedenim.com Web site which launched in Spring 2009. When asked about his award, Curnow believes that "combining advocacy and e-commerce together in a single website is difficult so it's gratifying to know that we managed to do that with some success."



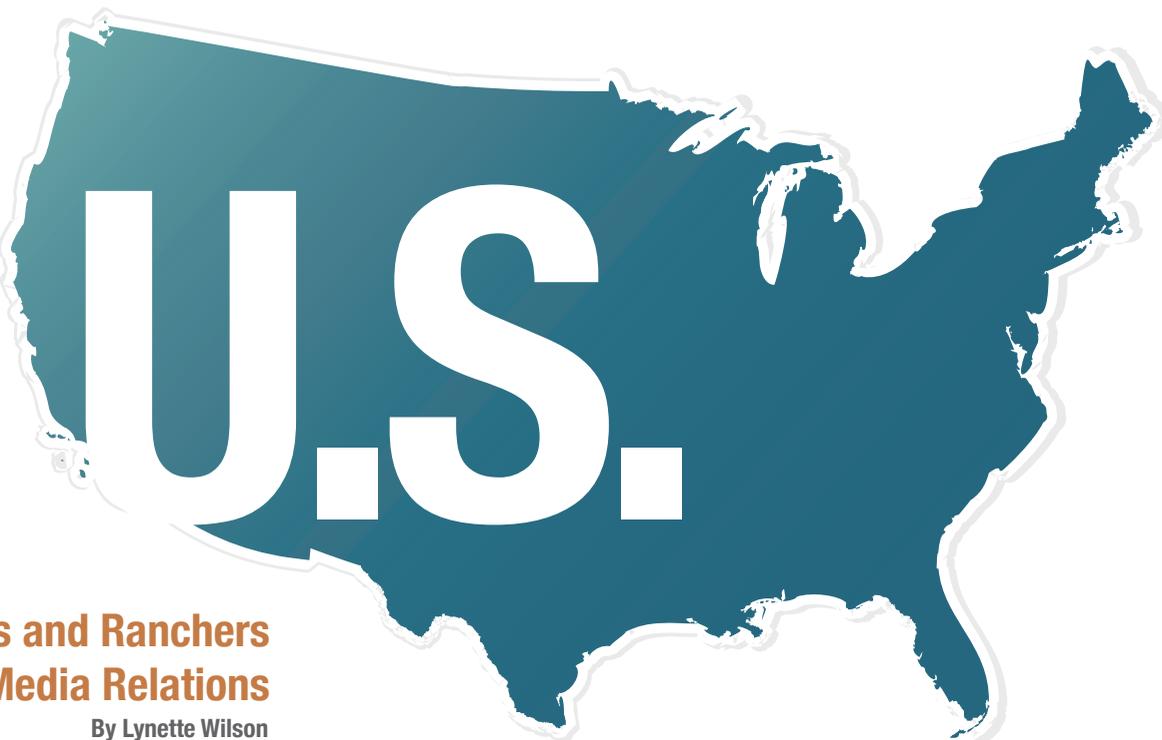
left: a screen capture of www.safedenim.com

below: The layout for the Burton Gin museum story from the 2008 Winter *Commentator*



above: Lynette Wilson's photo of Hattie Flannigan at the Post Stampede rodeo captured third place in CCA's Portrait Division.

The Hand that Feeds



America's Farmers and Ranchers Cultivate Media Relations

By Lynette Wilson

“In our country, we are two, going on three, generations removed from the farm. If farmers and ranchers don't sing their own song, no one else will.”

America's farmers and ranchers have offered an outstretched hand to those that often have been viciously critical of agriculture – the urban media. The call for a truce is being led by The Hand that Feeds U.S., a new farmer-led project to improve agricultural relations with “big-city” reporters.

The Hand that Feeds U.S. (THTFUS) is an educational resource for the metropolitan media about the importance of U.S. agriculture to the security and future of the country. A spin-off project from the www.FarmPolicyFacts.org, THTFUS provides information relevant to the nation's farming industry while striving to combat misinformation campaigns about food prices, renewable fuels, etc.

At the helm of the THTFUS is the Honorable Larry Combest. A Republican from West Texas, Combest was elected to Congress in 1984 where he served 10 consecutive terms. During his entire tenure in Congress, he served on both the House Committee on Agriculture and the Small Business Committee. As chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Combest was the chief architect and negotiator on the 2002 Farm Bill and directed the Agricultural Risk Protection Act which included the most significant improvements to the Fed-

eral Crop Insurance Act in its 67-year history. His reputation as one of the most bi-partisan members allowed him to reach across the aisle to pass much needed legislation.

“It's ironic that American farmers and ranchers are attacked for being rich agribusiness yet they lack the resources to adequately defend themselves,” Combest said. “The opposition spends millions on glossy advertisements, smear campaigns against renewable fuels, and tries to blame the farmers for high food prices while we try to scrape together the funds to fight back. The one-sided spin machine took its toll in the last Farm Bill, and we can't sit back and let the attacks go unchallenged,” he concluded.

Though farmers may never be able to match agriculture's opponents dollar for dollar, they do have some high-profile supporters on their side. Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) published an open letter to the news industry respectfully urging reporters to take the time to learn more about this effort, U.S. farm policy, and the farm and ranch families that keep America fed.

“It makes no sense that we're being demonized by many of the nation's top newspapers,”



Steve Verett



Linda Raun



Larry Combest

Groups supporting The Hand that Feeds U.S. include:

Agricultural Retailers Association
 American Sugar Alliance
 Bushmills Ethanol
 Crop Insurance Professionals Association

Growth Energy
 Minnesota Corn Growers Association
 Southwest Council of Agribusiness
 Texas Corn Producers Board

Texas Grain Sorghum Producers
 Texas Peanut Producers Board
 USA Rice Federation
 Western Peanut Growers Association

said Linda Raun, a rice grower from El Campo, Texas, who is participating in THTFUS. “It’s not completely the media’s fault because we haven’t done a good enough job telling them our story. We’ve been negligent in explaining that farmers and farm policy feed and clothe every person in this country, employ 20 percent of the nation’s workforce and will be at the center of America’s economic recovery,” she explained.

Funded by numerous state and national agricultural trade associations, THTFUS is a good first step in helping agriculture set the record straight. The multi-year effort will consist of a Website, facebook page, a twitter feed, and a series of face-to-face meetings with reporters across the country.

“We plan to build long-lasting relationships with journalists and show them that family owned and operated farms, not giant agribusinesses, are the true face of agriculture,” explained Texas cotton farmer and coalition member Steve Verett.

Verett, Executive Vice President of Plains Cotton Growers, Inc. and a member of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, has been active in the cotton community for more than 20 years and has held various positions with both national and global agricultural organizations. He strongly believes in the purpose of THTFUS and is happy to be involved in the project. In fact, Combest, Raun, and Verett recently visited the New York Times and CNN to introduce THTFUS and to answer questions about the project.

“We were generally well received on our visit to New York,” Verett said. “As you can imagine the CNN folks were much more interested in a human interest story for television, not debating the issue of who is getting subsidies, WTO and farm policy details. The New York Times was a bit different as you might expect, but one of the people we spoke

to had a basic knowledge of agriculture and was open to learning more. He was very open-minded about our mission,” he explained.

In the next six months, the spokesmen hope to target other media in New York, Washington D.C., Chicago, Dallas, and cities on the East Coast. The coalition plans to encourage media to seek out THTFUS to obtain facts as they write agricultural articles in order to obtain an alternative and more positive viewpoint.

“In our country, we are two, going on three, generations removed from the farm. If farmers and ranchers don’t sing their own song, no one else will,” Combest concluded.

For more information about *The Hand that Feeds U.S.*, visit www.thehandthatfeedsus.org.



The Hand That Feeds U.S.



Another **VOICE** *for Agriculture*

By Emma C. Matkin



LUBBOCK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

WORKING FOR BUSINESS. BELIEVING IN LUBBOCK.



The Lubbock Chamber of Commerce has been working for almost 100 years to serve its member businesses in Lubbock and West Texas. Affiliated with the Chamber are working committees that strive to represent a specific area in the community.

The Lubbock Chamber Ag Committee is the longest standing Chamber committee. This committee discusses current issues in agriculture and plans educational events as needed to raise community awareness on the Texas South Plains.

Mary Jane Buerkle is the Vice President of Business Development at the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce. She also plays a vital role with the Ag Committee as the staff liaison.

"The number one goal of the Agriculture Committee is to create awareness programs and promote agriculture at every opportunity," Buerkle said. "We want to educate the business community and the general public about what drives our economy."

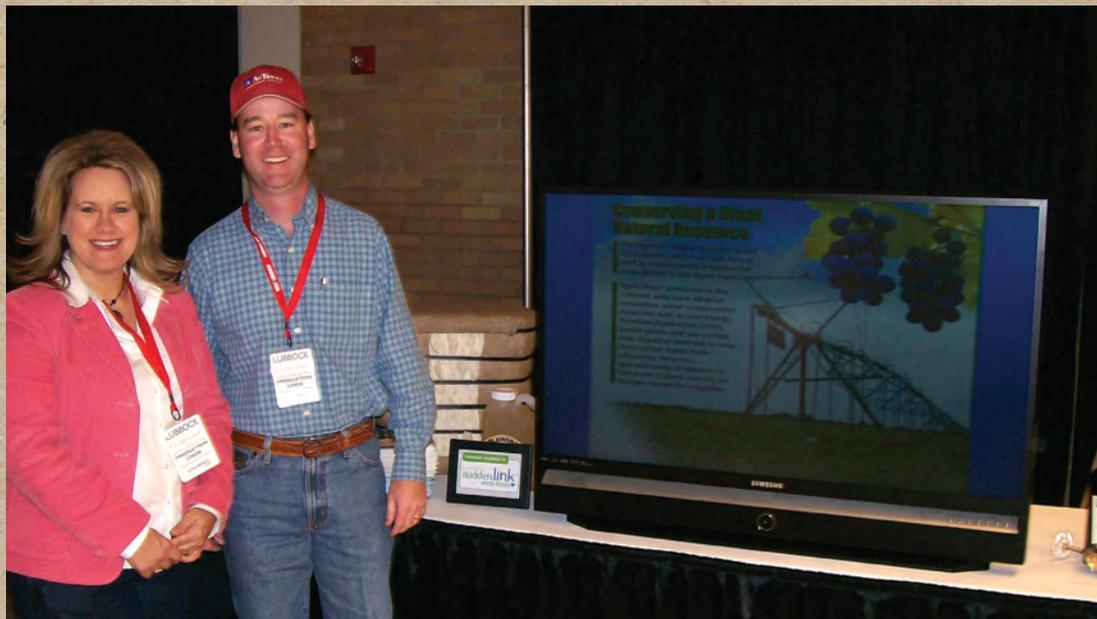
The Chamber's board of directors and committees consist of many different community volunteers who are members of the Chamber. Each committee has a Chamber staff person working with them to help direct the activities of those groups. Buerkle said the community volunteers that serve on the Chamber Ag Committee have a passion for agriculture and

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



o P Po SI t e Pa Ge: r o b e r t S c o t t (left), a t e x a s a g r i L i f e e x t e n s i o n agent from Lubbock County, teaches area students attending the Chamber's ag in the Bag program about sheep and goats. This was a favorite of the students as they each had the opportunity to touch the animals.



a B o V e : 2009 Chamber ag Committee Co-chairs, Lynette Wilson of PCCa (left) and Mike Metzger of AgTexas, manned a booth sponsored by the committee at the Lubbock Centennial Closing Ceremony.

education that shows through the quality of their events and projects.

"They truly go above and beyond to show people what agriculture is all about," Buerkle said. "These volunteers also have served as resources to local media on agricultural issues."

Lynette Wilson, Plains Cotton Cooperative Association Communication Manager, and Mike Metzger, Vice President of Lending at AgTexas Farm Credit Services, currently serve as Ag Committee Co-Chairpersons for 2009.

"Through the Chamber Ag Committee, I've been able to network with many amazing individuals from all walks of life who have an interest in agriculture," Wilson said. "The group's dedication to ag education in the Lubbock area and their commitment to the town they call home make me very proud to be a member of the committee."

Metzger feels that it is important that the Ag Committee continues to grow in Lubbock for the future of the West Texas economy.

"I think it is important to have the ag committee because we educate the public of the importance of agriculture to our area, and we also promote agriculture," Metzger said. "Without our ag indus-

try, the West Texas economy would be worse off, especially with what is going on today."

Some of the highlight activities that the Ag Committee is involved with include the Water Conservation Council, Ag in the Bag, and Harvest Breakfast.

The Water Conservation Council is a subcom-

The Lubbock Chamber Ag Committee promotes agriculture in Lubbock and the surrounding areas.

mittee of the Chamber Ag Committee that was formed in 2004. This committee focuses on the community awareness and importance of an adequate, affordable and quality water supply on the South Plains. The Water Conservation Council also recognizes businesses that implement water-friendly practices through their monthly "Water-Smart Business" award.

Ag in the Bag is an agricultural education program that is held for elementary school students to learn about the different aspects of agriculture. Some of the topics students learn about include cotton, corn, peanuts, wheat, sorghum, food science, beef, water, and the

Mobile Dairy Classroom.

"More than 1,500 students attend this event each year," Buerkle said. "We consider it one of our premier educational events."

The Ag Committee's Harvest Breakfast is an event that brings the agribusiness and general business community together to celebrate

agriculture. Past speakers have included representatives from commodity organizations, state agencies, and legislators. This year the Harvest Breakfast will be held October 7, 2009. Buerkle said this is the Com-

mittee's "crown jewel."

Many members of the Ag Committee also are involved in other events such as the Hub City BBQ, the Golf Classic, Ag in the Classroom, and the Business Expo. The Ag Committee is one of nine committees in the Business Development Division, some of which include Business Development, Energy, and Technology.

"Agriculture is undoubtedly the lifeblood of our local and regional economy," Buerkle said. "We need to keep promoting the relationship between agriculture, the general business community, and the public." 🍏

2010

Election Cycle Could be Critical for Cotton

By John Johnson

Perhaps no election cycle in recent memory will be as critical for the U.S. cotton industry as the one in 2010. The results of next year's elections could have a direct impact on how cotton fares in the next farm bill debate as well as other issues that may arise before then. If the contentious 2008 farm bill process is any indication, cotton will need as many friends as it can muster.

In addition to every member of the U.S. House of Representatives, nine cotton-state senators will be up for re-election in 2010, and three additional senate seats will be vacated due to retirement. A number of these senators, from both political parties, played key rolls for cotton in the 2008 farm bill.

Voting and volunteering in candidates' political campaigns are two ways cotton producers and other members of the cotton industry can participate in the political process. Another way is by making financial contributions to those campaigns, and one of the most effective means is pooling individual contributions through a political action committee (PAC). Fortunately, the U.S. cotton industry is represented by a well-established PAC.

Founded in 1975, the Committee for the Advancement of Cotton (CAC) receives contributions from approximately 500 industry members who voluntarily pool their resources to support candidates whose views and voting records are in step with cotton's needs, according to CAC's brochure. In recent years, those contributions have totaled \$200,000 to \$250,000 annually; however, CAC does not rank in the top 10 of all agricultural PACs.

Funding for campaigns has been a feature of the political process throughout U.S. history, but the cost to run a campaign has increased dramatically in recent years. According to CAC, the average cost of a House of Representa-

tives campaign was just under \$1 million and almost \$2.5 million for a Senate seat in 2008. Laws governing PACs assure an honest and transparent way of raising money for these campaigns. Yet, campaign contributions do not guarantee an elected official will vote in support of cotton every time. They will, however, assure the cotton industry will have a chance to state its case.

CAC is sponsored by the National Cotton Council (NCC), and requests for financial support from individual candidates are reviewed by a steering committee. The committee is comprised of representatives of each segment of the U.S. cotton industry and NCC's executive staff. Regulations limit PAC donations to \$5,000 per candidate per election.

Federal law prohibits corporations from contributing money to a political action committee; however, individuals and partnerships can. In the case of a partnership, the names of the partners and their percentage of participation in the partnership must be provided. CAC also is required to maintain records showing the names and addresses of all contributors. If an individual's contribution exceeds \$200 during the calendar year, the records also must include the person's occupation and principal place of business, and this information must be filed periodically with the Federal Election Commission.

Federal law also limits contributions by individuals and partnerships to PACs to \$5,000 or less during a calendar year. These contributions are not tax deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. ☺

Committee for the Advancement of Cotton



Individuals and partnerships can support the CAC by mailing their contributions to:

**Committee for the
Advancement of Cotton
P.O. Box 2995
Cordova, TN 38088-2995**

For more information, call the National Cotton Council at 901-274-9030 or visit its Web site at www.cotton.org.



Looking Forward

2009-10 U.S. COTTON CROP PROSPECTS

By Lynette Wilson

The export market changed considerably in 2008-09 when cotton consumption in China decreased for the first time in 10 years. With a monumental reduction in interest from the world's largest cotton consumer, PCCA's marketing staff worked diligently to find new markets for members' cotton. New customers were identified, relationships were formed, and by the end of the marketing year, the division sold cotton to more than 130 textile mills in 16 different countries. The cooperative observed significant increases in sales to Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Mexico, Peru, Vietnam, and Guatemala.

Despite normal crop conditions in Kansas and Oklahoma, the amount of cotton harvested in PCCA's service area was smaller due to some producers opting to plant competing crops and a large abandonment rate for the dryland cotton in West Texas. Analysts also blamed weather conditions for a significant increase in extraneous matter in the 2008 cotton crop as the amount of "barky" cotton in Texas reached the highest level since 2004. However, the marketing staff was able to find suitable buyers, and by working quickly, PCCA was fortunate enough to sell all of the cotton before the market was seriously affected by the global recession of 2008-09.

Looking forward to 2009-10, the crop year already has been laden with concerns in Texas, the largest cotton producing state in the nation. In late August, an exceptional drought prevailed in South Texas where some producers reported they received less than three inches of rain in more than 10 months. Although average yields were being reported from irrigated

fields in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, dryland production was somewhat disappointing. Due to the drought, a vast majority of non-irrigated stands in South Texas already had been plowed under by mid-July, and some gins did not plan to receive any cotton this season.

Meanwhile, the West Texas crop was developing satisfactorily under fairly favorable conditions. Soil moisture levels across the High and Rolling Plains were normal in late August, and heavy fruit loads were reported in many irrigated fields. The dryland crop, though, remained behind schedule, and as stands entered the heavy fruiting stage, water demands were expected to rise. Therefore, producers hoped for beneficial rains during late August and early September to ensure a uniform crop. While they were at it, farmers also prayed for favorable fall weather in order for bolls at the top of the plants to fully mature before the first freeze.

Cotton acreage in Kansas and Oklahoma remained constant in 2009-10, and producers in both states agreed their cotton was the best seen in years. After a trip in mid-August, Lonnie Winters, PCCA's Vice President of Marketing, said the cotton crop in Southeastern Kansas probably looked better than any of the cotton in PCCA's trade territory. He was optimistic about the number of bales to be marketed by PCCA.

"Although the drought in South and Central Texas will affect the yields and harvested acres this year, the cotton in the rest of Texas, coupled with the crops in Oklahoma and Kansas, could bring the crop in our marketing area well above the 5.7-million-bale mark," Winters said.

Nationally, most of the U.S. cotton crop was in good condition in late summer. The weather

was excellent in almost every respect, and most analysts were looking for higher yields than USDA estimated in its August supply/demand report.

"As history tells us, the crop can certainly go in either direction at this time of year," a market observer said. "I don't know anyone who thinks we will wind up with less than the 13.2 million U.S. bales estimated by USDA, and with the right odds and some decent weather, 14 million U.S. bales in 2009-10 isn't a bad bet. However, I suspect that consumption will be the key (market) figure this season," he concluded.

Meanwhile, traders also were watching the lackluster Indian monsoon which was thought to be hindering potential cotton production. As the second largest cotton producer in the world, India competes with the United States for China's cotton import market. Generating cotton sales to China is incredibly important as the nation is the world's top cotton and textile producer. If the cotton crop in India is smaller than expected, there is a chance for more U.S. exports in the upcoming year.

"This season, we expect to have a large amount of cotton in the three states served by PCCA," Winters said. "Cotton producers in India have struggled with adverse weather and pest management issues that could severely damage the crop in that country, leaving an opportunity for the U.S. to increase its export market share in Pakistan and China. We are confident in our ability to maintain the trading relationships we've gained in the past year and are excited about the prospect of expanding our market even further," he concluded. ☺



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Cotton Pickings



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Shannon Shaw	Citizens-Shallowater
Erik Spain	Halfway
John Madden	Lone Wolf
Bill Teichelman	Stamford

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