

*Kansas*  
**AGSUMMIT**  
GROW SMARTER. GROW STRONGER. GROW KANSAS.

# AG HEROES



*Grow Smarter. Grow Stronger. Grow Kansas.*

## **Rick McNary, Shop Kansas Farms**

When COVID-19 hit, Rick McNary realized there was an opportunity for farmers and ranchers to connect directly with consumers when grocery store shelves were empty. He created the Shop Kansas Farms (SKF) Facebook group, and created a movement that has not only taken off in Kansas but also in other states.

With more than 143,000 members, the group continues to provide one-on-one connections and opportunities for learning. A website is in the works that will provide an even more robust opportunity for buyers and sellers to connect with each other.

Rick McNary has been and continues to be a voice for agriculture across Kansas, the United States and the world.



## Bob Morando, Farmer Direct Foods

In March, we faced a shortage of flour on the shelves, but there was no shortage of wheat. Bob Morando, CEO of Farmer Direct Foods, realized that the bottleneck in the supply chain was a need to package flour into smaller bags for retail sale. Bob acted quickly to bring back a few retired employees and hire and train a couple of Kansas State University milling science students. Soon, the mill was running two shifts, six days a week. Not only had they doubled production to meet retail demands, Farmer Direct Foods established an internship program with Kansas State University that Bob plans to maintain in the coming years.



## Scott Thellman, Juniper Hills Farm

Scott partnered with a local protein distributor to launch an online grocery store for locally and regionally sourced products called Sunflower Provisions. Since their launch, in mid-March, Sunflower Provisions has served over 5,000 customers with non-contact delivery and pickup options and has created a new marketplace for local foods. Juniper Hill Farms also rose to the challenge of sourcing and distributing food to grocers during the pandemic, picking up national and organic national accounts to help distribute to grocery stores in need of additional distributors.

The farm also saw a need to serve its community during this uncertain time and received contracts through the USDA CFAP Farmers to Families good box program to pack and distribute food boxes for food insecure individuals and families in the region. By the end of its option one contract, Juniper Hill will have distributed 20,000 boxes containing nearly 400,000 lbs. of food. They have worked to source as much local produce as they can for this program and have become a marketplace for many local growers who lost their markets to the pandemic.



## Gaeddert Farms Sweet Corn

Gaeddert Farms has been a strong supporter for many years of the Kansas Food Bank. In their twelve-year history with the food bank, they have donated over 454,000 pounds of fresh produce and they are still going strong.

This year, with the increased need due to the pandemic, Gaeddert Farms' produce donations have been especially important. The Kansas Food Bank has experienced a 30% higher demand in service since March. Many people are seeking assistance for the first time ever.

The Kansas Food Bank says they could not do what they do every day without the agriculture community. Gaeddert Farms has stepped up tremendously this year to help provide missing meals for our neighbors in need.



## **Ashley Goss** **Kansas Dept of Health & Environment**

When calls started coming in from meat processing facilities in Southwest Kansas, Ashley Goss immediately understood the threat to the food supply in Kansas and beyond. Ashley serves as the Deputy Secretary of Public Health at Kansas Department of Health and Environment; Ashley and the team she leads were implemental in advocating for additional resources and support to Lyon, Seward, Finney and Ford counties.

With her focused efforts, meat processing facilities had expanded access to local testing services and safety guidelines that enabled meat processing employees to continue working in a safe manner.





## Farmers Coop — Matt Case, manager

Matt Case, manager of the Farmers Coop, saw the local food pantries in Cherokee County struggling with empty shelves and came up with a plan.

The two-week County Food Fight brought in nearly five times the expected amount as over five tons of non-perishable foods were donated. The Farmer's Co-op challenged community organizations in the five areas in Cherokee County to see which community could produce the biggest food collection in their area, and the Co-op matched every pound of food up to 2,000 pounds.

The Columbus community won the competition by donating 3,480 pounds and Baxter Springs was second with 2,760 pounds. Food was delivered to eight different locations throughout the county.



## Hayes Kelman, Boot Hill Distillery

Hayes Kelman is a corn farmer and co-owner of Boot Hill Distillery in Dodge City. This spring when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Kansas and sanitizing products were gone from store shelves, Hayes quickly started doing research to convert his distillery's production away from vodka and whiskey to a CDC-approved hand rub.

Hayes and the Boot Hill Distillery staff delivered hand sanitizer out to the local communities of southwest Kansas at no cost and they partnered with local businesses to continue making the sanitizer and eventually began taking orders from the large production facilities in the area. For a donation back to the cause, they supplied sanitizer to employees of large companies such as Cargill and Sunflower Electric.





## Keri Harris

Keri is the district manager for the Franklin County Conservation District and has been sewing masks for anyone who asks during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has sewn more than 400 masks, letting people choose fabric, style and size, and she donates these masks to anyone who is in need.

Keri is well-known in her county, as well as throughout Kansas, for her steadfast promotion of agriculture, conservation and environmental education. She is the president-elect of the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE).



## **K-State Hal Ross Flour Mill and Kansas Wheat**

When flour was in high demand this summer, the Kansas State University Hal Ross Flour Mill brought the mill online this summer to manufacture flour for those in need in the community. Kansas Wheat donated 20,000 pounds of wheat, all of which was locally produced. The wheat was milled into flour and packaged into 10-pound bags. All of the bags of flour were distributed free of charge in a community giveaway in mid-June.

This project was a truly collaborative effort of the wheat farming community, providing Kansas-grown, Kansas-milled wheat to meet the needs of Kansans.



**KANSAS  
WHEAT®**

*Rediscover Wheat*



## Haskell County 4-H Ambassadors

*Ashley Kennedy, Sean Wagner, Dalton Winfrey,  
Kara Kunselman, and Bailey Briggs*

When the COVID-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of the Haskell County spring livestock show, these 4-H Ambassadors were inspired to convert it to a virtual livestock show. They identified the technology, created the online registration, handled fees digitally and promoted the event on social media.

The show was open to 4-H and FFA members across Kansas and was a huge success with 221 head of livestock entered.



# More Kansas Ag Heroes

---

**Dr. Fadi Aramouni**

**Dan Biedenbender**

**Randy Bunnell**

**Andrea DeJesus, A&H Farms**

**Jason Elliot**

**Richard Little**

**Dave Lorson**

**Musil Farms, Inc.**

**Wendel Nicholas**

**Mark Pringle**

**Dennis Ruhnke**

**Stephanie Smith, USD 383**

**Thanks to all of you who nominated these amazing  
Kansas Ag Heroes!**



*Grow Smarter. Grow Stronger. Grow Kansas.*