

# voice

Your Co-op Community News from Mid America Cooperative Council

august 2008



**MACC Mission:**  
*To Promote, Foster and  
Enhance the Values of  
Cooperatives*

## June membership meeting

During the June 20 membership meeting, Dr. Michael Boehlje and Dr. Allen Gray discussed classic cooperative challenges we'll face in 2010 and beyond.

### These challenges include:

- capital constraints;
- access to high quality management;
- problems with free riders; and
- growing heterogeneous cooperative memberships.

Dr. Boehlje and Dr. Gray, both from Purdue University, believe these challenges can be managed with a clear vision, proper planning, continuous education, and transparent communication to the co-op membership.

In Director Training, held the same day, Dr. Michael Cook and other speakers covered a broad range of co-op governance issues. Dr. Cook directs and teaches at the Graduate Institute of Cooperative Leadership at the University of Missouri.

According to Joe Huffine, Tennessee Farmers Co-op, a day at Director Training is a day well-spent.

"Thanks for putting together an excellent day of continuing education. Sessions like this make you appreciate the opportunity to participate in them. I commend you on the quality of the speakers, the content presented, and the information learned," Joe said.

## Spring Disasters

June's flooding in the Midwest created disastrous situations for several MACC members, including Premier Ag (Columbus, IN), White River Co-op (Loogootee, IN), and Ursa Farmers Co-op (Ursa, IL).

Premier Ag's **Harold Cooper** puts it this way. "You know you're having a bad day when a news helicopter is flying overhead – for the third day in a row – as you try to repair your co-op from a flood or tornado." Harold also reports that some employees came to work right after rescuing their families in rowboats.

"A couple of days later, Governor **Mitch Daniels** was sitting in our boardroom asking how they could help," Harold said.

**Dave Milligan** of White River Co-op said that their facilities in Greene County were wiped out. "Many of our members have lost a significant amount of their crops. Our co-op is challenged to buy corn to feed our swine herd," Dave said.

Ursa Farmers Co-op's grain facility on the Mississippi River also experienced significant damage due to the flooding.

## COBA Award

Congratulations to MACC member COBA/Select Sires in Columbus, OH! This artificial insemination cooperative was recently honored as "One of the 10 Best Employers in Ohio" by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

The award is based on the results of two separate assessments. In the first assessment, the organization is evaluated based on workplace policies, practices, philosophy, systems, and demographics. The second assessment is based on responses from an employee survey.

One employee commented, "The organization has a good reputation with our farmer-owners. We stay true to our cooperative's values and purpose. A high percentage of people who work for our cooperative retire from our organization. I believe that says a lot."

Another employee said, "The company knows how to make money for the business and save the customer dollars at the same time. COBA is an employee and customer friendly company."

According to Bernie Heisner, general manager of COBA/Select Sires, "The bottom line is that our employees seem to enjoy working for this cooperative and its member-owner-customers."



**COBA/Select Sires representatives Bernie Heisner and Julie Ziegler (center) were awarded recognition as "One of the 10 Best Employers in Ohio" at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce in Columbus, Ohio on April 15.**



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Did you know: "Women currently hold 59% of president, CEO and manager positions in the US Credit Union System." - Source: WORLD, World Council of Credit Union Magazine, Vol 2, Issue 2, June 2000.

**Mark Your Calendar Now!**  
**Upcoming training sessions**

**Director Training:**  
**August 18-19** in Lansing, MI  
 MSU Henry Center, 3535 Forest Road

**MACC Credit Conference:**  
**October 8-9** in Indianapolis, IN  
 Radisson Hotel,  
 251 E. Pennsylvania Parkway

**Co-ops 101:**  
**August 6** in Fostoria, OH  
 Hosted by Ag Credit, 610 W. Lytle St.

**August 14** in Bloomington, IL  
 Hosted by Evergreen FS, Inc.  
 402 N. Hershey Rd.

**August 19** in Goshen, IN  
 Hosted by Farm Bureau Credit Union,  
 300 W. Lincoln Ave.

**September 18** in Louisville, KY  
 Hosted by Farm Credit Services  
 of Mid America, 1601 UPS Drive

**December 4** in Columbus, OH  
 Hosted by Ohio Rural Electric  
 Cooperative Assoc.,  
 6677 Busch Blvd.

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**Thoughts from Rod**  
**Leaders have a BIG effect on others**

In this issue, I would like to share with you words of wisdom from U.S. Navy Captain D. Michael Abrashoff.

"Leaders need to understand how profoundly they affect people, how optimism and pessimism are equally infectious, how directly they set the tone and spirit of everyone around them," said Captain Abrashoff, author of *It's Your Ship*.

Captain Abrashoff says often in his book that managers should do the right thing. I ask you—how will we always know what is the right thing to do?

The answer is found in our cooperative values and principles. We will know we are doing the right things when we follow those values. It is what sets us apart from investor-owned, "transaction-based" companies.

Bernie Heisner, General Manager of COBA/Select Sires, explained why he decided to enter the Ohio Chamber of Commerce's "Best Employers" awards competition, in which his organization was named one of the best employers in the State.

"We decided to become involved in this Chamber program as a way to have an unbiased third party evaluate the thoughts, concerns, and satisfaction level of our employees. Many times over the years, COBA directors, delegates, and customers have pulled me aside to tell me how pleased they are with their local COBA employee and ask, 'Are you treating him/her well?'" Bernie said.

Bernie is a leader who has obviously set the tone and spirit for the people who work at COBA/Select Sires. Employees are happy to come to work, to serve their member-owners, and to make a difference in their community. Moreover, Bernie cares enough about employee satisfaction to participate in a program that objectively measures that satisfaction, and points out areas for potential improvement.

Congratulations to Bernie and to all of you who sail your own ships by following the map of co-op values.

Rod Kelsay  
 Executive Director

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