



# TAKE FIVE

A five-minute summary of industry activities for members of the largest state agribusiness association in the nation  
The Agribusiness Association of Iowa

## **AAI Completes District Meetings**

AAI staff traveled to all six of the districts in the last week to meet with members and discuss issues that are important to ag retailers. The meetings were sponsored by Helena. Also presenting at the meetings were EBS Holmes Murphy staff to talk about employee benefits/insurance and Ross Chambers who was newly appointed to the IDALS fertilizer bureau. Issues discussed included: local control of livestock, pesticides, fertilizers and seed; water quantity and quality issues; livestock odor regulations and proposals; grain elevator air quality permitting; grain truck weight limits and hours of service for ag products. Also included were new anhydrous ammonia tank regulations, underground piping for anhydrous ammonia tanks, fall commercial fertilizer and manure application, and DOT weight limits on floaters and changes were discussed. Lastly, aerial application and maintaining that opportunity, funding for the installation of E-85 and biodiesel tank wagon opportunities and ethanol issues. Thank you to those who were able to attend the meetings and if you have questions on what was discussed, please contact Mona at the office. 800-383-1682

## **Skilled Worker Shortage Recommendations**

The Skilled Worker Shortage Interim Committee has had their final meeting and developed recommendations to be considered for the 2008 session. In addition, the Governor's Workforce Summit is December 18th, which may lead to further proposals. The 22 recommendations developed by the committee are divided into three categories: Connecting Young People to the World of Work. The committee recommended a review of "model" core curriculum in Iowa schools, specifically employability skills and encouraged the development of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

They encouraged looking at ways to increase graduation rates at all levels of education, and the use of teacher internships developed in collaboration and partnership with private industry and business. They also felt that participation in AmeriCorps, Job Corps, and Jobs for American Graduates program should be increased. Iowa should encourage partnerships with employers, school districts, local governments and state agencies to prepare students for the workplace and create awareness of the types of rewarding careers available locally. This could include efforts such as job shadowing, encouraging manufacturers to host field trips starting in middle school, and the development of an Iowa employer ambassador program that provides outreach services to parents and career counselors. They also felt that more needs to be done in the development of programs which allow youth to acquire on-the-job experience and "soft skills" needed to keep future jobs.

Local governments and state agencies should better promote and market Iowa's current programs aimed at developing working adults' skills and financial incentives available to employers. Ways should also be found to eliminate the gap between traditional education grants and loan programs for the unique financial needs of Iowa's adult workers. The committee suggested enhancing initiatives and education opportunities to ensure that Iowa has more diversity and diverse talents in the workforce, and the capacity of colleges should be increased to train and retrain the existing workforce. Also, there should be an increased awareness of and involvement in Iowa's apprenticeship programs.

The committee recommended marketing Iowa's high-tech job opportunities to targeted audiences, and to use all post-secondary institutions as a recruitment tool to bring in out-of-state students. The capacity of Iowa communities to create a better quality of life for residents should be increased, and veterans should be encouraged to stay in Iowa and be recruited to Iowa by marketing Iowa's Military.

Regional marketing should be promoted using collaboration of state and local resources. The Legislature should also consider partnerships of loan forgiveness and grant programs to reduce the debt of Iowa's graduates whom remain and work in Iowa. Efforts should be made to increase Iowa's housing capacity to aid in the recruitment of workers, and finally, Iowa should raise the visibility, awareness, appreciation of, and opportunities for, mature workers in their communities. Policies should be reviewed to see if there are barriers for re-employment of mature workers.

## **John Hester Receive 2007 ARA Distinguished Service Award**

The Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) is pleased to announce this year's 2007 ARA *Distinguished Service Award* goes to John Hester, owner and president of Nichols Ag located in Iowa. This is an annual award given to an individual member of the association who has gone above and beyond the traditional responsibility to support the ag retail industry and the association – making the industry better for all. The recipient of this award is selected by the ARA Executive Committee. AAI wants to congratulate John on this high honor and invite him to the AAI Annual Meeting on Jan. 15 &

16th in Des Moines. **Continued on Page 2**



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## John Hester, continued from Page 1

Hester began his career at the age of 22, as the youngest location manager with Smith Douglas. After five years of working for the company, in 1975, Hester bought an ag retail facility of his own, Walker Grain and Fertilizer located in Nichols, Iowa. Hester, and his wife, Linda, grew the modest business of less than \$300,000 in annual sales to an excess of \$3 million in annual sales before selling it in 1989. Hester has since bought back his business, Nichols Ag. The company is recognized for its environmental stewardship in the crop input business. Nichols Ag is a full-service agronomy and grain dealership.

### First Energy Independence Plan Released

On December 14th, the Office of Energy Independence (OEI) released its first Energy Independence Plan. The purpose of the Energy Independence Plan is to outline strategies so Iowa can achieve energy independence by year 2025. The report is to be updated and released annually every December 14th.

The Iowa Power Fund Board and the OEI developed the plan as part of the Iowa Power Fund legislation, which calls for the development of a long term energy strategy for Iowa. The plan, developed after four public hearings held across the state, calls for active engagement of every Iowan as the state works in partnership with others in achieving the goals. The authors admit that the term, "energy independence" can mean different things to different people. However, Iowa can chart its own course by taking advantage of its resources: a well-educated population and an abundance of natural resources, including rich soil, abundant surface and underground water, and consistent wind patterns.

The report also includes a plan implementation strategy. With only two months to develop the document, the board and office feel that this plan is a good starting point to developing Iowa's energy independence. In future years they plan on unveiling a more developed and detailed Energy Independence Plan.

The recommendations include:

- . Promote and achieve all cost-effective energy efficiency measures.
- . Direct energy providers to increase energy efficiency efforts by affecting the use and increased supply of renewable energy.
- . Improve energy efficiency of existing buildings and new construction through implementation and enforcement of energy codes, and provide incentives for energy efficient construction that exceeds the required efficiencies.
- . Adopt a statewide energy efficiency building labeling system for residential, commercial, and industrial complexes.
- . Set standards to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050 through multiple strategies.
- . Encourage Iowa's production of cost effective renewably-generated electricity.
- . Accelerate the infrastructure development and use of renewable fuels for all transportation in Iowa.
- . Join 16 states that have adopted or are considering adopting the California emission standards for passenger vehicles.
- . Establish a statewide public education, promotion, and branding initiative to create universal acceptance of the value, use, and return on investment of energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- . Establish and implement a recognition program for model energy communities, corporations, non-profits, and public entities.
- . Encourage research and commercialization of new renewable energy, renewable fuels, and energy efficiency initiatives.

### E-85 Installation Assistance Announced

The Renewable Fuels Infrastructure Program Board (RFIPB) has awarded \$563,800 to 21 Iowa retailers installing pumps for E-85 and biodiesel fuel terminals and installing biodiesel storage tanks and blending equipment. Ag members that received funding at this meeting include: Midwest Farmers Coop, Sheldon; Farm Service Coop, Story City; Heart of Iowa Coop, Story City; Heart of Iowa Coop, Kelley; Great Lakes Coop, Spencer; Farmers' Coop, Fort Atkinson; Farmers' Coop, Dows. Over the next two years, approximately \$7.75 million in grants will be allocated by the RFIPB to expand consumer access to E-85 and biodiesel. Owners or operators of retail motor fuel sites, biodiesel bulk storage terminals and tank wagons with dedicated compartments for renewable fuels can submit applications for the grants to the Department of Economic Development. Over the last two years, the program has helped finance 26 terminals, 41 tank wagons, 45 E-85 dispensers, and 23 biodiesel dispensers for a total of \$3.1 million. The RFIPB will meet to consider application again on February 19. To be considered at that meeting, applications must be received by the department by February 5th. In 2006, the Legislature appropriated a total of \$13 million over three years for this incentive program. Sandy Simpson, Western Iowa Coop represents AAI on the RFIB Board of Directors.