

Business of the Month-Gold-Eagle Cooperative Wesley Branch Manager: Lynn Ostendorf

What made you decide to pursue this profession? I was raised on a farm southeast of Klemme, Iowa and I always enjoyed the farm life. I graduated from high school and was looking for a summer job. I applied at Klemme Coop Grain and was hired. I loved my job working with farmers and when fall came, I decided to stay working at the coop and did not go on to college.

How long have you been with this company? I have worked for Gold-Eagle Cooperative for 17 years at the Wesley location.

What did you do before this? I worked for Terra International which has its home office in Sioux City, IA. I sold wholesale crop protection chemicals for 3 years and then was promoted to the Environmental, Health & Safety division for the next 12 years. I traveled the United States reviewing mainly OSHA, EPA and DOT compliance programs for the Terra owned Distribution Centers and Retail Agriculture facilities. It was very much an educational experience learning about the different types of agricultural practices throughout the United States.

What is your favorite thing about working here? I really have two things that are my favorites. The employees! I am so blessed to be able to work with a group of top notch, second to none employees at Wesley and throughout the entire Cooperative. Teamwork is what makes our company successful. The second thing is the customers. Wesley is a community that consists of great people that are always there when there is a need for help.

Who do you consider your top competitor, and why? We have several good strong competitors that surround us. They are all good strong companies with very good services therefore I cannot single out a main competitor.

Where do you think the company is headed in the next 5 years? I think that Gold-Eagle will continue to be a financially strong company in the future resulting in positive growth in the next 5 years. Gold-Eagle is going to have several employees retiring in the next couple years. The people that have been hired to replace some of these people are very sharp and very driven individuals. They bring with them the desire to keep Gold-Eagle a strong company. It would be easy for the next group of employees to stay the current course of this company but they have new ideas that they would like to try to improve services for the members. I feel the future for this company is very strong and positive.

Can you tell me more about the day-to-day responsibilities of this job? My job is to manage the employees and operations of the Wesley location. We receive corn and soybeans, we ship corn and soybeans out of Wesley, we spread fertilizer, supply agricultural chemicals, sell seed and feed. We do not have very many slow days in our business.

How do the economic environments impact your business? The agricultural business is impacted by local, regional and worldwide events. Weather, politics, society, etc. impacts the supply, price and quality of products.

How many employees work in the Wesley branch? We have 14 fulltime and 2 part time employees.

What is your management style? Teamwork concept. It is important to have all employees focus on the same goal, we are much stronger together than we are as individuals.

Does your company help the community where it is located? We donate to local groups for special activities. We also donate to the local fire department, the first responders, the school systems, community functions, etc. Gold-Eagle is very supportive of the communities that they are located in.

Why do your customers select you over your competitors? I think it is our business culture. The business decisions made by Gold-Eagle are made with our customers operations in mind. Please take a look at the improvements that Gold-Eagle has completed in Wesley.

1. A one Million gallon Liquid Nitrogen storage tank
2. The purchase and demolition of the old Livestock Sale Barn.
3. A 15,000 ton Dry Fertilizer plant
4. A new greenfield grain storage facility east of Wesley
5. 120,000 gallon NH₃ Storage plant.
6. 75 X 240 Hoop storage building
7. Demolition of old feed mill and main office.
8. Building of new main office

These improvements have resulted in additional tax dollars for the City of Wesley.

What are the biggest issues for running this business? There are several issues but the main one is employees. It is so hard to find people that would like to work the hours we do. It is very common for our employees to work 80 to 100 hours a week in the spring and fall seasons. In my early years, there were people raised in an agricultural environment and understood that you have to "Make hay when the sun shines." They understood why we had to work the long hours. Now, it is much more difficult to find employees that understand and value this culture of agriculture. We are very lucky that the employees we do have are very good when it comes to the seasonal work and long hours.

Anything you would like to tell your customers? THANK YOU! THANK YOU customers for your patronage and THANK YOU to the community for your continued support.