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Participant Biographies

Leadership Class of 2024



Bryan Bender

Grower Leader

4th generation grower, Bender Potatoes
Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

Bryan Bender is 39 years old and is the 4th generation grower of Bender Potatoes. Bender Potatoes grow 140 acres of round white potatoes in Chambersburg, PA on 500 acres of farmland. Bender Potatoes grow 70 acres of Atlantic and Snowden for out of the field chipping and 70 acres of Norwis, Reba, and Waneta for table stock. While 30 acres of Waneta are put into storage to be packed and sold on demand, Bryan oversees sales, shipping, and procuring for repacking to provide local customers with year-round supply. They sell to a few local grocery stores and restaurants, but most of the table stock goes to food service distributors. As a small family farm, Bryan is involved in the entire operation but his focus is growing, buying, and selling potatoes.

Bryan also helps manage the everyday activity of 7-10 year-round employees. To help keep his life busy, he and his wife of 13 years, Betsy, have three kids - an 12-year-old son, 9-year-old daughter, and 6-year-old son. As a family they enjoy eating, watching and playing sports, travel and exploring new places, friendships and family. He is a member of a local church, coaches basketball and football, and loves his hometown of Chambersburg.

Bryan went to Coastal Carolina University hoping to play basketball and as a math major, but mostly to go party at college near the beach. After becoming a Christian through a campus ministry called Campus Outreach, he went to work for them in 2007 at NC State University in Raleigh, NC. In 2012 he moved back to the family farm where he grew up trying escape. Bryan serves on the boards of the Pennsylvania Co-operative of potato growers and the Pennsylvania State Potato research. He also enjoyed serving on the Potatoes USA board where he was on the research and industry outreach committees from 2016-2022. Finally, Bryan was the grower leader from the 2023 Leader Institute class.



Adam Nielsen

President, Ridgeview Farms, Inc.

Jackson, Idaho

Adam Nielsen is a 5th generation farmer who was born and raised in Paul Idaho, working on the family farm and cattle operation. He was fortunate to work alongside his best mentors at a young age; his father Dean Nielsen and grandfathers, Ron Nielsen and Richard Blincoe. Adam has been farming for the past 24 years in the Magic Valley area, growing barley, sugar beets, alfalfa, and potatoes.

Adam is married to his beautiful wife, Amy Nielsen, for 23 years. Together they have two wonderful children, Jack Nielsen (21) and Adalyn Nielsen (15). To complement their family farm, Adam and Amy also own and operate Double Check Supply, an agricultural retail business since 2002.

Throughout the day, Adam usually spends his time on the farm, and when he is not occupied there, he stays engaged by participating in various ag-related boards. For 4 years, he has been a member of Potatoes USA, served on the Ag West Farm Credit advisory committee for 3 years, and contributed to the Southern Idaho Potato Cooperative (SIPCO) for 2 years. This past harvest, Adam and his wife had the honor and privilege of meeting both McCain Foods and McDonald's Foods senior management at a private dinner. That was quite an exciting experience for both of them!!



Aurora Hollenbeck

Executive Sous Chef, Potatoes USA

Denver, Colorado

Aurora Hollenbeck has a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Scranton and a master's degree in human nutrition and dietetics from Metropolitan State University of Denver. She has experience in bakery management, culinary and nutritional education for primary aged children, as well as private culinary work.

Aurora is currently the Executive Sous Chef at Potatoes USA under Culinary Director Chef RJ Harvey, working in the Spud Lab to ideate fun and creative dishes that incorporate potatoes. She loves to utilize plant-forward ingredients and truly tries to make potatoes the star of the show. Aurora is also working on becoming certified in culinary medicine, which will provide a unique opportunity to teach others that potatoes not only taste amazing in many dishes but also have a plethora of nutritional benefits.



Austin Lenssen

Farm Manager, Ebe, LLC

Ferndale, Washington

Austin Lenssen is 27-years-old and the Farm Manager at Ebe Farms located near Lynden, WA. Ebe Farms is a seed potato farm that produces high-quality, thin-skinned table varieties, including reds, yellows, whites, purples, and fingerlings. As Farm Manager, Austin oversees all operations of the farm including every agronomy input that goes into growing the crop. Austin also manages NuGen Seed, the seed company that supplies Ebe Farms with Field Year 1 and 2 seed to be sold and planted for Ebe Farms. Each year, NuGen Seed grows, trials, and bulks up 80 protected varieties from several breeders to provide our customers with a wide range of the best genetics to give our growers a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Austin is also the head of variety development and provides assistance to sales and shipping as well.

Austin has a strong background in agriculture, having graduated from Washington State University with a degree in Integrated Plant Sciences in 2019. His family settled in Lynden, WA as dairy farmers 4 generations ago and he grew up with knowledge of dairies before working in the red raspberry industry. He has been with Ebe Farms since graduating from WSU 5 years ago. He is involved in agriculture advisory boards at local high schools to try to help develop programs to keep the next generation interested and involved in agriculture. Austin got married to his wife Corrina in 2023. In his free time, Austin enjoys hiking, fishing, traveling and working outside around the house with his wife.



Becky Eddy

Superintendent/Program Manager, UW-Madison
Rhineland Agricultural Research Station
Rhineland, Wisconsin

Over the past 20+ years, Becky Eddy has been a key advocate for research initiatives and managed field and greenhouse operations for university and private potato breeding programs. Currently, Becky is the Station Superintendent and Program Manager at the UW-Madison Rhineland Agricultural Research Station. Rhineland ARS has been the primary field site supporting potato breeding and variety development for the UW system since the 1940s. This ongoing effort is for the benefit of the Wisconsin Potato Industry and for the advancement of the scientific community. The primary goal of this station program is the production of novel potato varieties for the Wisconsin potato industry.

Becky graduated from Manitowoc Lincoln High School in 1992 and went onto UW-Stevens Point where she obtained a B.S. degree in Biology in 1997. Becky earned her M.S. in Weed Science from UW-Madison in 2002. Following graduation, she spent 13 years at the Frito Lay Agricultural Operations and Development Research Station in Rhineland. For nearly 9 years, Becky has held her current position. She and her husband Sam, who have been married for 16 years, reside on the station premises with their 15-year-old daughter Lucy.

Becky has had professional and honorary affiliations with Potato Association of America, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA), Weed Science Society of America, North Central Weed Science Society, and the American Society of Agronomy. She is an active member of Wisconsin's SpudPro industry advisory committee, WPVGA Powered by Potatoes team, and Potatoes USA Team Potato athlete. She holds credentials as a Certified Professional Agronomist, Certified Crop Advisor, and a licensed Commercial Pesticide Applicator.

When not occupied with responsibilities, Becky likes to keep herself busy outside alongside her family and friends. Her go-to activities include single track mountain biking, swimming, running, waterskiing, Nordic skiing, golfing, and her personal favorite, downhill skiing.



Brent Harrison

Owner/ Assistant Manager, Harrison Farms and
Brian Harrison Farms

Center, Colorado

Brent Harrison is a potato farmer in southern Colorado. Brent and his Dad Brian Harrison operate a potato and grain operation on 720 acres in the San Luis valley. Brent is a 4th generation potato farmer growing mainly russet varieties due to rocky soil. As a kid he spent most of his time on the farm or in the mountains. At a young age he was involved in tillage work, loading bulk trucks, and spreading dry fertilizers. Brent graduated high school in 2017 and attended CSU for one semester then transferring to Adams State University that spring to be closer to the farm. He attended Adams state from spring 2018-fall 2021 studying Ag. Business. At Adams state Brent was the treasurer of the Ag. Business club. In the fall of 2021 he withdrew from school during harvest to take more of a managerial role on the farm.

Brent started Harrison Farms in the spring of 2022. He grows potatoes and grains with his father owned of Brain Harrison farms. The operation grows 480-600 acres of potatoes depending on yearly rotations. The irrigation used on the farm is center pivots on quarter sections of land. Russet potatoes are rotated on a 2:1 year rotation with Coors barley or cover crops depending on soil health. Brent will also rotate fields in to 5-year periods of grass or alpha with his cousin Todd Harrison owner of quarter more farms and part owner of quarter moon hay company. Brent also helps his Brian Harrison farms grow seed potatoes for the farm they plan on expanding in the seed market with new rule seed certification standards on the horizon in Colorado.

Outside of the farm Brent enjoys anything outdoors. His favorite things to do in his spare time is to hunt, ice fish, and fly fish! As a young farmer Brent is excited for any opportunity to network and learn more from other farmers.



Christopher Flewelling

Grower/Operator, Flewelling Farms, Inc.

Easton, Maine

Christopher was born in 1992 and was Raised on his Family's potato farm in Easton Maine where they grow 1000 acres of potatoes and 900 acres of grains. The Farm was started by Chris' Grandfather Gerald Flewelling in 1957. The farm has continued to grow and thrive on the original ground he purchased. Chris' Father Bruce continued and kept expanding the farm to what it is today. Christopher now grows his own potatoes alongside his father Bruce and brother Nick. They grow all processing potatoes for McCain Food in Easton. Chris helps to direct the day-to-day operations and keeping up with machinery maintenance.

Christopher was an active member of FFA all throughout high school. He attended multiple state conventions and one national convention, he also went to Washington D.C. for the leadership convention his senior year. He attended the Norther Maine Community College studying Diesel Hydraulics. Where he learned many skills he uses daily in his operation.



Cody Richins

Raw Procurement, Wada Farms
Idaho Falls, Idaho

Cody Richins was born in Idaho falls and grew up on a small farm in Coltman, Idaho. When he was Senior in high school his family bought a farm in Terreton, Idaho. Cody worked there for a couple of years before for he went on a 2-year service mission for his church. After his service mission he attend BYU-Idaho and achieved his bachelor's degree in Agriculture business in 2004.

Cody has been working in the Agriculture industry for the last 20 years working in several roles. Potandon (Quality Control), Eagle Eye Produce, (Potato Buyer) John Deere (Store Manager) and Currently at Wada farms (Potato buyer). His experience in the potato industry has been mainly in the fresh packing industry.

He has been married for 23 years to High School sweetheart Sheandi Richins who currently works as a Registered Nurse and have been blessed with 4 children. Cody likes to spend his down time with family doing activities that involve the outdoors and their kids sporting events.





Colin Szawlowski

Owner, Valley Spud LLC

Hadley, Massachusetts

Colin Szawlowski, a 33-year-old first-generation grower from Hadley, Massachusetts, leads Valley Spud LLC, a farm that cultivates 300 acres of both table and process potatoes. Operating out of Hadley, the farm ships its products year-round to local customers. Colin spearheads the overseas sales, manages transportation logistics, and oversees the day-to-day operations on the farm. Despite being a small-scale operation, Colin is deeply involved in every aspect of the farm's activities. However, his primary goal and focus lie in expanding the farm's operations and increasing potato sales. This dedication underscores his commitment to the growth and success of Valley Spud LLC.

Colin Szawlowski, hailing from Massachusetts, was raised by his parents Christina and Carl, alongside his two older brothers. Straight out of high school, Colin joined his family's farm, dedicating 14 years to honing his skills and knowledge in agricultural practices. After gaining valuable experience, Colin decided to embark on his entrepreneurial journey, venturing out to establish Valley Spud LLC. This leap of faith marked the beginning of his endeavor to carve out his own path in the farming industry, leveraging the expertise he acquired from his years of experience on his family's farm.

Colin Szawlowski's commitment to the potato industry extends beyond his role at Valley Spud LLC. Currently serving his second term on the board of Potatoes USA, he contributes his expertise to the domestic marketing and industry outreach committee. Through his involvement with Potatoes USA, Colin actively participates in initiatives aimed at promoting the consumption of potatoes domestically while also engaging in outreach efforts to strengthen the potato industry as a whole. His dedication to the industry's growth and sustainability is evident in his proactive role within Potatoes USA.



Damon Christensen

Grower, Del Christensen and Sons

Mattawa, Washington

Damon Christensen is a fourth-generation farmer in Washington State, the third generation to work in the Columbia Basin. Together with their father, Damon and 3 of his siblings manage a fresh pack operation with 2000 acres of potatoes and 700 acres of onions. Damon and one of his brothers manage the farm, while Damon primarily works with the agronomy side of farming, he helps with the technology side.

Del Christensen and Sons has a wide network of customers, potatoes and onions are marketed to grocery stores, and being one of the closest sheds to the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, there are onions and russet potatoes exported to various countries across the Pacific Ocean.

When not farming, Damon enjoys spending time with his kids ranging from 5 to 11 years old. The family enjoys the outdoors and spends several weekends through the year camping and fishing. Damon's family has began an adventure in having horses and starting to raise their own livestock.

Damon is a member of the Government Affairs Committee in the Washington State Potato Commission. He enjoys learning and being an advocate for the industry.

Damon initially attended Rocky Mountain College on a football scholarship, but due to injuries that ended after a season. After attending other universities and meeting his wife, Damon attended the University of Idaho and studied Sustainable Cropping Systems. Upon returning home, Damon worked for a small independent fertilizer retailer as a consultant, then moved to management after a few years. His heart was in farming, so he decided to return to the family farm in 2021 and has been farming since that move.



Drew Thorlund

Farm Labor, Thorlund Brothers Farms
Greenville, Michigan

Drew got his associates degree from Montcalm Community College and Michigan State University in Agricultural Operations in 2021. He now works full time on his fourth-generation family farm alongside his father, uncle, and two cousins. On this farm they grow a variety of different crops including: Corn, Wheat, Dry Edible Beans, Soybeans, and potatoes.

Drews has become more and more involved with many operations on this farm every year. His biggest role on the farm is running the sprayer which is used for all the crops on the farm and takes up the majority of his time at work throughout the summer months but he also runs the corn and wheat combine as well as runs a harvester for dry beans. We currently farm about 4000 acres and grow about 950 acres of potatoes a year. We store them in large bins after harvest and start shipping around November and throughout winter until early to middle of June.

Drews farm grows one hundred percent chipping potatoes and ships to a variety of different companies mainly across the east side of the US from Pennsylvania to Florida. Although Drew doesn't do as much on the potato side of the farm operation as his two cousins and uncle, he's always there to drive trucks or run a windrower when the fields are in the worst shape usually later in the year. He also spends a lot of time helping out the crew when its time to start shipping potatoes but prefers to stay in the nice warm combine picking corn.



Dawson Mast

Farmer, Mast Farms

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Dawson Mast is proud to call himself a fourth-generation potato farmer. The family farm is located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. While they pride themselves in their potato heritage, they also grow pumpkins, strawberries and field crops. In 2022 Dawson purchased the neighboring farm from his grandfather and together they raise cattle on the property.

Dawson graduated from Lancaster Mennonite high school in 2019. He was very involved in his FFA chapter serving on the officer team. Mast earned many awards during his time in FFA including the keystone degree. Following high school Dawson went on to pursue a degree in electrical technology at York Technical Institute.

After graduating he returned to the farm full time to officially kick off his farming career. Machinery repairs and modifications to equipment are Dawson's playground. While he would prefer things to run smoothly he finds great joy in the challenge of getting the machinery backup and running.

If Dawson's not farming chances are you'll find him hunting or snowboarding.



Garrett Hemphill

Vice President, Hemphill Farms Inc

Presque Isle, Manie

Garrett is 29 years old, he farms with his father and three brothers in and around Presque Isle, Maine. Hemphill Farms was started in 1920 by Garrett's Great-great Grandfather. As the fifth generation Garrett manages the farms six potato storages and markets the potatoes to over 30 seed customers.

Garrett currently resides in the farms original homestead with his wife Alexandra, 5-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son. They are expecting their third child in May 2024. Garrett enjoys spending time with his family and snowmobiling in the winter when time allows.

Hemphill Farms grows 600 acres of mostly seed and a few processing potatoes. Hemphill's grow mostly Russet Burbank and Caribou Russets; they also grow Atlantic, Lamoka, Snowden and Waneta. Hemphill's sell a majority of their seed to local growers, they also ship seed to Florida, North Carolina and New York. Their processing potatoes are shipped to McCain foods in the neighboring town. In the past decade Hemphill's have increased their acreage dramatically purchasing land and buildings when it becomes available. They currently farm in four towns centered around Presque Isle. Hemphill's recently stopped growing grain to focus on potatoes, as a rotation they now land swap with their cousins who own and operate The Maine Malt House. They utilize 800 acres of Hemphill's farmland to grow Malt Barley and Wheat to be used in beer production in New England.

Garrett attended Northern Maine Community College with a major in diesel hydraulics and a minor in business administration. Garrett is the chairman of the Maine Seed Potato Board. He also serves on the board of the Maine Seed Potato Council, Maine Potato Growers and the Agriculture Bargaining Council.

Jeremy Clark

Farm Manager, CSS Farms

Bliss, New York



Jeremy Clark is 45 years old and is the Farm Manager for CSS Farms in Bliss, New York. CSS Farms operates 17 farms in 10 states growing seed, chip, and specialty potatoes. This location grows over 4,000 acres of chip potatoes. There are 7 varieties that are grown here that are stored and shipped for 10-11 months out of the year. Most of the acres grown are sold to regional chip processors in the East. Jeremy manages a team of over 30 year-round employees and more than 100 during peak operating seasons. He oversees all day-to-day potato production activities and farming operations.

Jeremy has been married to his wife Bridget for 25 years. They have two children, Brooklyn (24) and Aiden (22). Brooklyn is a 2022 graduate from Colby College in Waterville, Maine and Aiden will graduate in April of 2024 from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. They enjoy spending time together as a family when everyone is home on breaks, especially sitting around the table playing games. They are very proud of the accomplishments of their children and have enjoyed watching them become adults.

Jeremy is from the San Luis Valley in Southern Colorado. He was introduced to the potato industry by his dad. He worked in the shop of his dad's potato implement business during school breaks while in high school and college. Jeremy graduated from Adams State University with a degree in Elementary Education in 2003. He passed on a career in the classroom and instead pursued a career in farming. Jeremy was the 2012 Coors Barley Grower of the Year. He has 20+ years of experience farming potatoes and over 30 years of experience in the potato industry.



Jonathon Springstead

Director of Zone Operations, Castle Rock
Farming, LLC

Boardman, Oregon

Jon Springstead is 52 years old and has been farming since 2007 with Castle Rock Farming, located in the South Columbia Basin near Boardman, Oregon. Since his promotion to Director in 2017, Jon oversees the operation of over 28,000 acres of a variety of crops, to include about 3,000 acres of russet potatoes for processing. He is involved with whole seed delivery, seed cutting, planting, harvest and storage of all potatoes grown on the farm.

Jon has seven managers/ supervisors that each work in a zone where they manage irrigation, fertilizer, specific departments, planting, and harvest. His team consists of personnel that has farmed for over 20 years to new supervisors right out of college. When Jon is not farming, he likes to spend time with his wife, Amy, of 24 years and their 2 Sons, a 13-year-old, and a 20-year-old in his second year of college. Jon has always liked the outdoors, whether it is hunting or fishing and loves to just hike in the mountains. He and his wife enjoy going to all the sporting events the boys and nephews participate in.

Jon went to Eastern Oregon University located in La Grande, Oregon as a biology major along with running cross country and track. After graduation, he struggled to find a job with his degree, so he took a position at a sawmill. After three months, he found a telecommunication job as an installer. In September 1999, he took a job with AT&T in Eugene, Oregon and excelled as a technician. This position lasted for almost 5 years before he received a laid off during cutbacks. On January 17th, 2005, Jon started working for the irrigation department as a wireless technician for Threemile Canyon Farms. In February 2006, he deployed to Afghanistan and returned home in June 2007. Upon his return, Jon took a position as a supervisor to grow crops and enjoys everyday being outdoors. Jon is currently awaiting an appointment to the Potato USA board in March 2024.



Kalie Christensen

Agronomist, Gumz Farms
Westfield, Wisconsin

My name is Kalie Christensen. I graduated from Fox Valley Technical College with an associate's degree in both Agribusiness Science and Technology and Horticulture. I live in Westfield, Wisconsin with my husband Zach of 10 years and my two wonderful boys Korbin and Nels. We have a family farm that consists of row crops and beef cattle.

My journey in agriculture started as a young kid shadowing my father on the weekends visiting growers and scouting fields. My father worked as an agronomist all his life until his recent retirement this year and has been the best mentor I could have asked for. After college, I worked at Agri land Cooperative as an agronomist for five years until my husband and I decided to move back home to the family farm. When we moved back home, I was hired at the local Cooperative as an agronomist. After five years there I decided to leave and start my next journey as an agronomist at a local vegetable farm.

I am very proud to say I have been an agronomist at Gumz Farms for the last seven years. Gumz Farms is a fourth-generation grower/packer/shipper located in Endeavor, Wisconsin. They raise potatoes, onions, carrots, mint, corn and soybeans on muck soil. As an agronomist I am responsible for overseeing growing decisions and have a direct hand in the outcome of the crop. I have also had the opportunity to help train the next generation getting started in the vegetable industry.

I am an active member of the WPVGA (Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association) where I serve on the Research and Vegetable Committees and Muck Growers Board. I was part of the first class to graduate from our WPVGA Member Development Program. That program showed me ways to be more involved in the industry which led me to the Leadership Institute. I am so excited to network with others and grow my knowledge on the issues we face in the industry. I hope to expand my leadership skills and push myself to the next level in the potato and vegetable industry.



Katie Vculek

Owner, Vculek Farm

Crete, North Dakota

Katie Vculek is 29 years old. She farms with her parents and brother in southeast North Dakota. They raise corn, soybeans, edible beans, and potatoes. The potatoes are irrigated and grown for the processing and seed markets. They currently raise Bannock, Dakota, Ranger, and Umatilla varieties.

Before returning to the farm, Katie majored in agricultural economics and earned a law degree, focusing on agricultural and administrative law. Her practice focused on assisting farmers with water management, drainage, and USDA programs.

Since returning to the farm full-time, Katie's responsibilities include assisting with seed potato records and sales, grain marketing, USDA programs, general records, and legal issues.



Kurt Dykema

Owner/Member, TRB Dykema LLC

Manhattan, Montana

Kurt Dykema is a fourth-generation farmer/rancher in the Gallatin Valley. He and his brothers are taking over the family farm. They began growing seed potatoes in 2012 as an added endeavor by buying the potato business of a retiring neighbor. Dykema is partners with one brother in crop farming and another brother in a beef cow/calf operation. He can be found most days just working on whatever the season brings, during harvest you will find him sitting in the tractor, during planting he can be found running the crew cutting seed, and in the winter its either maintaining equipment in the shop or out in the corral taking care of calves.

Dykema attended Montana state university-northern in Havre MT pursuing a bachelor's in diesel technology, and ag mechanics. Dykema is currently the president of AGAI (Association of Gallatin Agricultural Irrigators) a small association with a mission of protecting the historically decreed water rights in the Gallatin River.

When he is not working Dykema enjoys outdoor recreation with his family and chasing his kids across the state for school sports.



Kyrel Andrus

Farm Unit Manager, AgriNorthwest
Kennewick, Washington



Kyrel grew up in a small farming community in Southeastern Idaho. He found his love for potatoes and the harvest at age 12 and is still hooked. Kyrel received his Bachelors degree in Agriculture Science and Technology from Brigham Young University – Idaho. While in School he worked for Wilcox Fresh. His duties ranged from working on GAP compliance, MRL tracking for export shipping, to day-to-day operations of irrigation and field work.

Upon graduating, Kyrel received an offer from AgriNorthwest to come on as a Farm Unit Manager and become a Washington resident. Where he is currently involved in managing 4,500 acres and a handful of employees, making agronomic and irrigation decisions on all crops, and running key operations. Over the last 3 years, Kyrel has had the opportunity to be a part of a new farm acquisition and be involved in infrastructure development and major equipment procurement where he continues to work.

Kyrel is a husband and father of 3 and enjoys camping and snowmobiling.



Michael Hughes

Co-Owner, Hughes Farms, Inc.

Mount Vernon, Washington

Michael Hughes is a fourth-generation farmer in the Skagit Valley of Washington State and a partner in Hughes Farms, Inc. Michael farms with his father, three uncles, and multiple cousins. The farm has been in the potato business since the late 1980s growing fresh market red, yellow, and white potatoes. The farm controls all aspects of growing and packing for sale to retailers and wholesalers across North America. Michael manages the farm's rotation crops of wheat, barley and edible beans and works closely with his uncles and cousins in all aspects of potato production.

Michael attended Washington State University graduating Magna Cum Laude with a B.S. in Agricultural Technology and Management in 2009. The degree taught him about business, agronomy, technology, and many other important aspects in agriculture. During his time at WSU, he did a semester long internship in Brazil at a large corn, soybean, and cotton farm.

In addition to working on the farm, Michael is the current Chair of the Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board which provides input to the County's elected officials and staff on how policies will impact the Agricultural community in the fast-growing Western Washington County. Michael is also Lieutenant at Skagit Fire District #3, a volunteer fire department serving South Skagit County where he has been a member since 2010.

Michael and his wife Alis have been married since 2016 and he is the proud father of their four-year-old son, Colton, who loves spending countless hours in the tractor and around the farm with him. It is already apparent farming is in the family's genes.



Ryan Holland

Farm Hand, Holland Farms

Hooper, Colorado

An individual who grew up in the agricultural community, Ryan Holland is a 22-year-old manager of Holland Farms. This family-owned 5th generation farm has grown to include potatoes, barley, and other grains, and Ryan has been involved in the farm from a young age under the guidance of his family, who have set the example and standard of hard work for him. Holland Farms is in between small towns in southern Colorado, which has shown Ryan the importance of community, and given him the support of many.

Ryan graduated from high school with honors and set off for West Texas A&M, where he chose to pursue a degree in Agricultural Business and Economics. Throughout his degree-plan, Ryan worked as a ranch hand in Texas, and for Arcadia Ag during an internship through West Texas A&M, located in Dillon, Montana. After graduating in May of 2023 with his bachelor's degree, Ryan decided to come home and rejoin the farm he grew up on.

In addition to his work with Holland Farms, Ryan is a volunteer firefighter for the Center Fire Department, which has taught him much more than just emergency response skills.

He enjoys the outdoors and has a passion for motorsports such as snowmobiling and motocross enduro racing. He values hard work, contributing to something larger than himself, and enjoying the life he is building for himself with his friends and family.



Ryan Norton

Farm Manager, Walther Farms
Vicksburg, Michigan

Ryan Norton is 38 years old and is married to his wife Kimberly and has three children. Nathan 9, Melanie 7, and Josh 3. Ryan loves to spend his free time with his family. Whether it's taking his oldest to wrestling practice, helping his daughter draw an exquisite piece of artwork, or just trying to keep up with his youngest son. The balance of work and home life is often difficult within the agricultural industry, but Ryan always finds time to be there for his family.

Ryan is originally from the Chicagoland area and grew up in the suburbs where he played football and wrestled. He attended Western Michigan University and graduated with a degree in civil engineering in 2010. After graduation, Ryan returned to Illinois and worked in the civil engineering field for only a few years. He then moved on to manage a small family owned a collision repair facility. When the pandemic hit, Ryan decided to change his profession again and came to work for Walther Farms where he found a passion for leadership and agriculture.

Ryan started with Walther Farms as the operations manager at Fresh Solution Farms where he gained hands on knowledge and expertise in the storage and shipment of the Walther russet crop. He has recently accepted a new role as Farm Manager of Three Rivers where he oversees over 4500 acres of several different varieties of chipping and russet potatoes. The white chipping potatoes will be sold to both local and national chip customers. The russets grown in southwest MI are for table stock. Ryan is also the chairman of the Michigan Potato Industry Commission where he leads a group of board members to help promote research, education, and economic growth within the state of Michigan.

Tyler Lloyd

Farm Manager, Canyon Falls Farms
Burley, Idaho



Tyler Lloyd grew up on a seed potato farm in Southeast Idaho. You could either find him on a tractor on the family farm or in the gym playing basketball where he was nominated as a McDonalds All American in high school. He served a 2-year church mission in South Carolina. He is married to Kimberly, and they have four children that range in ages 14 down to 5. In their free time they are usually hauling kids to different cities playing the sports they love. They also love to spend their free time boating on Bear Lake.

Tyler graduated from Utah State University with a degree in Business Finance and Agriculture Management. After graduation and short stint in the corporate job, he decided he missed farming and sought to return and gain outside experience at another large farming operation. He was hired as a Farm Manager at Moss Farms in Idaho and is forever grateful to the Moss Family and the passion they instilled in him for growing potatoes.

Currently he is a Farm Manager at Canyon Falls Farms which farms over 22,000 acres of potatoes, wheat, corn, beets and canola in the central Idaho region. He is responsible for the overall agronomic plan for 6000 acres of crops. The potatoes grown on his area are mostly supplied to McCains and Lamb Weston and are irrigated by pivots and wheel lines supplied by a combination of deep wells and surface water.

He is most excited for the opportunity to learn from and network with others in the potato industry on a national level and hear what fuels their passion for success in the industry.



Tyler Maughan

Operations Manager, Hardy Farms, Inc.
Oakley, Idaho

Tyler is a 27-year-old 4th generation farmer that grew up farming Sugar Beets with his family north of Paul, Idaho. Tyler was introduced to the Potato Industry when he married the love of his life, Brittany Hardy, the granddaughter of Randy Hardy in 2021. Tyler started working with Randy in the summer of 2021 on his farm located in Oakley, Idaho that totals just under 3,000 acres of potatoes, barley, wheat, alfalfa, corn, and pinto beans. Tyler learned quickly about Randy's operation and today manages in a hands-on manner the day-to-day operations of field work, equipment repairs, and spraying. Hardy Farms grows about 550 acres of Norkotah and Burbank spuds that are stored and then sent to be fresh packaged at Sun Valley Potatoes.

Tyler and Brittany live in Oakley on the family farm and have one son born in January 2023 who is the joy of their lives. They love sharing their passion for agriculture with their family. In his free time, Tyler loves spending time with his family in the mountains that surround Oakley in their jeep and camping. Tyler also loves riding dirt bikes on the many trails in Idaho and spending winters on his snowmobile. Tyler and Brittany are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and enjoy serving their community through their local congregation.