

# MID-COUNTY MESSENGER

Spring 2011 • Vol. 19

www.midcountycoop.com

## A 'team approach' to success at



"We serve our customers by working to improve their operation – not just by selling them products," said Bill Reimers, Mid-County Coop's general manager.

Throughout Mid-County's 75 years in business, the company has always focused on building positive relationships with the people it serves.

"Our staff has quite a bit of experience," Reimers said. "Our key people have been around a long time, and they know our customers."

In the past five years, Mid-County has developed an even greater focus on providing information and education.

"We've intensified our seminars," Reimers said. "Recently, we

took a large group of customers to a training session about crop production."

Mid-County's seminars are offered on an "as-needed" basis. The messages are targeted to specific groups of customers, so that they can be as relevant as possible.

Mid-County's goal is to help businesses succeed, and providing useful seminars is one way to do that.

"It's win-win on both sides," Reimers said. "We rely on having partnerships; we work together to benefit each other."

Agronomists, sales representatives, and other Mid-County employees strive to maintain a close relationship with their clients.

Reimers said people often comment on the dedication and helpfulness of employees at Mid-County.

"We have a team approach to things," Reimers said.



General Manager Bill Reimers and board members Brian Kraus and Paul Stuewe work together preparing for the Mid-County Annual meeting held in January.



Staff members Julie Clemensen and Angela Jacques welcomed and assisted patrons at the January annual meeting.

### Continued Financial Strength

Due to our continued financial health for 75 years, Mid-County patrons will receive their dividend checks in May for purchases through last fiscal year.

Also, after completing the first 6 months of our new year, we are several hundred thousand dollars ahead of last year, and our bottom line continues to grow.

Because of your support we will continue to strengthen and grow your cooperative.



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## Rafael Lozada promoted to CHS

In everything he does, Rafael Lozada puts forth 110 percent effort.

“I don’t settle for mediocrity,” Lozada said. He loves looking ahead to new challenges and working hard to accomplish his goals.

For four and one-half years, Lozada served as the Certified Energy Specialist at Mid-County Coop.

In January, he was promoted to the position of Account Manager for Propane Equipment at Cenex a division of CHS, a diversified grain, food, and energy sources.

“I do inside sales for propane equipment on a national level,” Lozada said. About 40 percent of his job involves travel throughout the US.

Lozada, a native of Hector, hadn’t always planned to have a career in energy.

After high school graduation, he served as an infantry soldier in the military. Three years later, he got a medical discharge due to a knee injury, so he decided to pursue other interests.

Initially, Lozada served as a per-

sonal trainer and manager of a Snap Fitness club.

Later on, he accepted the certified energy specialist position at Mid-County Coop, a job he thoroughly enjoyed.

“It was amazing,” he said. “It was a fun time. You learn to do everything – not just sales, but also installation. My main job was to provide knowledge on fuels, lubricants, and propane to the end user.”

Even though he’s no longer at Mid-County, Lozada still keeps in touch with his former clients.

“The relationships you build with the customers go beyond work,” he said.

People he knew while working at Mid-County still contact him when they’re looking for advice on energy-related topics.

“I like to help out at Mid-County every once in awhile,” Lozada said. “I’m happy to answer customers’ questions.”

Mid-County Coop’s energy division has its own bulk storage facilities. As a Cenex Propane Partner, the compa-



In January Mid-County Certified Energy Specialist Raf Lozada was promoted to account manager for propane equipment for CHS.

ny does delivery of propane and other bulk fuel oils for residential, commercial, and agricultural applications.

Cenex is the energy brand of CHS, which ranks as North America’s largest cooperative refiner and manufacturer of lubricants, and also one of the largest propane wholesalers.

For more information about CHS, go to [www.chsinc.com](http://www.chsinc.com).

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## Steve Solmonson has rhythm and drive

Some may know Steve Solmonson as a Mid-County Coop fuel delivery driver, but music is his major claim to fame.



**Steve Solmonson**  
Fuel Delivery Driver

“I’ve been in a lot of bands,” Solmonson said.

The group from his college days, The Young Raiders, was recently inducted into the Kansas Music Hall of Fame.

Solmonson is also well known as a member of The Daisy Dillman Band, which is still together after more than 30 years.

“We used to tour the whole country, but now, we just play part time for fun,” Solmonson said.

In the early 1970s, Solmonson had been part of Blackwood, a precursor to The Daisy Dillman Band. After a few years, some of the members got together to start a new group.

When deciding what to name the band, one of the members reached for a book written by Daisy Dillman, a relative of bass player Steve Seamans.

“Someone said, how about The Daisy Dillman band? And everybody said, ‘no, no, that stinks,’” Solmonson recalled. “But, a few days later, it wound its way into our heads.”

### Fame and travel

They started off playing at local clubs, but soon attracted national attention.

In 1978, the talented group scored Minnesota Music Awards for best band, best vocal group, and best violinist. They also released an album with United Artists Records.

“We played with a lot of big names,” Solmonson said. The band has appeared with Brooks and Dunn, Clint Black, Diamond Rio, Alabama, Chuck Berry, and many other famous artists.

“One of the coolest memories was

when we were touring, and Charlie Daniels stopped by to visit,” Solmonson said. “He sat down in our tour bus and just talked. It was like he was your grandpa.”

In 1981, The Daisy Dillman Band released its second national album with RCA Records, and also cracked the top 50 on Billboard’s “Hot 100.”

In 2006, the band was inducted into the Minnesota Rock and Country Hall of Fame.

The group is widely admired for its unique blend of country and rock and roll, with a thunderous rhythm section and sweet vocals.

Each member has an instrumental specialty, but many also act as lead singers.

Anyone who’d like to hear Solmonson’s music can listen to a sampling on his website, [www.daisydillman.com](http://www.daisydillman.com). This summer, he’ll also be performing in a few shows.

“We do mostly original songs,” Solmonson said.

Songwriting inspiration can strike at any moment, but some times are more convenient than others.

“One time, I had an idea for a song while I was in a deer stand,” Solmonson laughed. “It was literally 18 degrees below zero, and the deer weren’t coming out. They were smarter than I was.”

Since he didn’t have a pen or paper along, Solmonson had to memorize the song. Later, when he got back to his truck, he wrote it down right away so he wouldn’t forget.



Mid-County Coop fuel delivery driver Steve Solmonson does vocals and guitar for the Daisy Dillman Band. Shown here performing on the Winstock stage in 2006.

“The song is called ‘Radio,’ and it’s about living on the road,” Solmonson said, adding that it will be featured on his website soon.

### On the road

Solmonson knows a lot about being on the road, not only from his band travels, but also from his fuel delivery experience.

He started driving for Mayer Distributing in Long Lake more than a decade ago. In 2008, when Mid County Coop became the owner of the fuel portion, Solmonson expanded his territory.

“I start in Cologne, and I’d say that the seven-county metro area is my stomping ground,” he said.

Many of his stops are for longtime clients.

“My customers know me, and I know them,” Solmonson said. He especially enjoys serving the elderly people, who look forward to his visit.

“It’s a good job, and the people I work with are great,” he said. “What else could I wish for?”

## Bob Fritz Trucking: Living a legacy

As the owner of a successful trucking company, the wheels of life are always in motion for Robert (Bob) Fritz of Cologne.

“My dad started the business in 1947,” Bob said.

Bob’s father, Robert G. Fritz, was 16 when he began hauling milk cans for Bongards’ Creamery.

“It’s just progressed from there,” Bob said, explaining that after his father passed away, he and his two younger brothers, Donald and Daniel, took over.

His brothers eventually went on to pursue other interests, but Bob had developed a passion for the trucking industry.

“I rode with my dad when I was younger, and it was in the blood,” he said.

Now, Bob Fritz Trucking has 16 trucks, 13 trailers, and 14 full-time employees.

In addition to transporting milk to Bongards’ Creamery and a few other plants, the company also does cheese and wastewater hauling.

Bob said he depends on quality employees to keep his company strong.

“I have a good group right now,” he said.

Having reliable equipment is also paramount.

“We take our trucks to Mid-County Coop every 5,000 miles

for a quick checkup, and every 10,000 miles for complete service,” Bob said.

With regular maintenance on his trucks, Bob said he doesn’t have to worry as much about unexpected breakdowns.

If something is about to wear out, the technicians at Mid-County Coop let him know right away.

“That way, we’re ready for it,” Bob said.

Bob estimates that his trucks travel a total of 9,500 miles per week, covering the counties of McLeod, Meeker, Wright and Carver, as well as surrounding counties.

Each day, the trucks carry about 500,000 pounds of milk and about 200,000 pounds of cheese.

“Milk hauling is seven days a week, so the trucks have to go out on Saturdays and Sundays, too,” Bob said.

For Bob, one of the best parts of owning a business is the independence it provides.

“It’s also the daily challenge of being able to make things more efficient,” he added.

Throughout the years, Bob has grown accustomed to dealing with blizzards, fog, icy roads, and reroutes due to spring weight restrictions on bridges.

“There can be days when I want



“The truck travels 9,500 miles per week and carries about 500,000 lbs. of milk and 200,000 lbs. of cheese each day.”

to pull out all 13 hairs that are left on my head,” he joked; but all in all, Bob wouldn’t trade his job.

“I can’t complain,” he said.

Bob still drives part time, but much of his effort is focused on management.

His business has grown and changed in many ways, but he’s always stayed with the same company for equipment repair and maintenance.

“As long as I can remember, we’ve been doing business with Mid-County,” he said. “They’re local, and the quality of service has been excellent.”

Two of Mid-County’s staff members – Corey and Zach – have been especially helpful, Bob said.

“They’ll bend over backwards for you,” he said. “I had a truck issue on Saturday, and I called Corey at home, and he came and helped. It means a lot when someone’s willing to do that.”



Cory Eischens



Zach Schelhaas

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## Mid-County Coop selects new board member

Jim Dieball of rural Green Isle was recently welcomed as the newest board member of Mid-County Coop in Cologne.

“It should be a good experience,” said Dieball, who has been a Mid-County Coop customer since 2000.

Dieball shares a 120-cow dairy farm with his parents, Karl and Rosemary.

Dieball, his wife Wendy, and two young daughters all enjoy country living. The family grows several acres of corn, soybeans, and alfalfa each year.

As part of the Mid-County Coop board, Dieball will have the opportunity to provide his input regarding company decisions.

“I’ve never been on a co-op board before, so it’s going to be a great learning experience,” Dieball said.

Although this three-year term will be Dieball’s first time on a co-op board, he has also been active in his community through Sibley County’s Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA).

Dieball said he is excited to help Mid-County Coop continue to make wise, responsible decisions.



Mid County Board of Directors 2011. Left to right – Leonard Hoen Jr., Jim Dieball, David Williams, Brian Krause, Paul Stuewe, and Tim Zellmann. Not pictured Shawn Eastman.

“Mid-County Coop provides good service with very competitive rates,” Dieball said.

The company was founded in 1935 as a petroleum supplier for Carver County, but soon began to offer other products and services, as well. In its 75 years of operation, Mid-County Coop has experienced significant growth.

Because it’s a cooperative, patrons receive a portion of their purchases back in dividend checks each year.

In addition to Dieball, current board members include Shawn Eastman, David Williams, Brian Krause, Leonard Hoen Jr., Paul Stuewe, and Tim Zellmann.



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**SEED SALES**



## NYA farm family wins \$2,500 grant from Monsanto

When Duane and Elaine Wolff of Norwood Young America were selected as Monsanto's 2011 Grow Communities Program winners, Elaine knew exactly where she wanted to donate her \$2,500 grant.

"It wasn't hard to decide," she said, explaining that the Ridgeview Foundation has always had a special place in her heart.

"I used to work at Ridgeview Medical Center, in the environmental services department," Elaine said. "They have a lot of good things going in the community."

Ridgeview Medical Center has a partnership with Ridgeview Foundation, an independent, non-profit organization with a mission to make a positive difference in the quality of life for people in the community.

One of the foundation's recent initiatives was the Marie Steiner Kelting Hospice Home, which opened in the fall of 2009. Located on Lake Bavaria in Chaska, the end-of-life care facility features private patient suites, a spa room, outdoor patios and gardens, and much more.

Another recent endeavor is the da Vinci Surgical System. Until recently, patients in the west metro needing a prostatectomy or hysterectomy were referred for surgery away from home and family.

Now, Ridgeview will be able to serve them close to home, in six technically-equipped surgical suites. Through the new robotic platform, surgeons have the ability to work with unparalleled precision, dexterity, and control.

A few other current Ridgeview Foundation projects include a specialty clinic focusing on pediatric integrative medicine, a center for women and children, and a comprehensive heart center.



Submitted photo

Duane and Elaine Wolff (center) of Norwood Young America won a \$2,500 grant from Monsanto, which they chose to donate to the Ridgeview Foundation.

Hundreds of volunteers have contributed to the foundation's success. Current board members include David Adinolfi of Eden Prairie, Jean Buller of Chaska, Dermot Cowley of Watertown, Stacy Desai of Eden Prairie, Laura Flemal of Watertown, Tim Foster of Wayzata, Michael Gresser of Eden Prairie, Katherine Hackett of Excelsior, Darla Holmgren of Waconia, Brian Mark of Excelsior, Peter Nelson of Waconia, Keith Rachev of Waconia, Kate Roehl of Maple Plain, Randy Schneewind of Waconia, Charles Spvacek of Shorewood, and Larry Wilhelm of Victoria.

### Helping others

Elaine's first taste of the medical field was as a nurse's aide, before her three daughters were born.

After raising her family, Elaine returned to health care, this time in environmental services at Ridgeview Medical Center.

Her husband Duane, son-in-law

Bruce Clark, and grandson Jeremy Meuwissen all work together on the family farm.

Elaine, who is now retired, first heard about the \$2,500 contest because her family purchases Monsanto products for their family farm.

Monsanto is a company that sells seeds, traits developed through biotechnology, and crop protection chemicals.

Through Monsanto's America's Farmers Grow Communities Project, the company allowed farmers to register to win \$2,500 for their favorite community non-profit organization.

One winner was selected in each of 1,204 eligible counties in 38 states.

For every farmer who applied, Monsanto donated \$1 to the local United Way to help food banks, food pantries, Meals on Wheels, and other charitable organizations dealing with hunger.

To learn more about the program, go to [www.growcommunities.com](http://www.growcommunities.com).

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**Not pictured  
Cody Krause, Deb Kechely, Mary Pauly**