

## **Getting to know Board Member Jim Wahle**

### **Q: Tell us about your farming operation?**

**A:** I am a fifth generation McCook County farmer - my family has been farming continuously since my great-great grandparents homesteaded in 1882.

After high school I started farming with my granddad and my dad, Vearl. I learned a lot from them about what hard work was and the value of being honest and treating people well.

Our farm is pretty small, we raise corn and soybeans.

When I'm not farming, I spend a lot of time actively serving on several agriculture boards. I currently serve as the president of the NuGen Energy board of directors. I am also the vice president of Central Farmers Coop board of directors.

### **Q: What are some challenges you've faced?**

**A:** I took over the operation from my dad in 1986, which as anyone who farmed in the 80s and went through that downturn in the agriculture industry can relate, it was tough.

Although I didn't have a lot of equity, I lost what equity I had. The only way we kept the farm going was through determination, commitment and seriously - I don't know if we could have made it without my wife, Kathy's off-farm income. She has worked at the FSA office in Salem for 30-plus years.

Those early years taught me a lot about cash-flow and debt management.

### **Q: Tell us about your involvement in Farmers Union?**

**A:** I was invited to a young producers retreat hosted by Farmers Union about 30 years ago and that's what got me hooked.

I was impressed by Farmers Union ability to get young producers together in one place to discuss issues going on in our state and concerning the industry of agriculture. As I mentioned, earlier, this was in the middle of a really tough time for farmers and ranchers everywhere. So it was exciting for me to see an organization that could work for us at the state, as well as, the national level.

The grass roots nature of Farmers Union that continues to impress me.

I also think Farmers Union does an excellent job educating our youth about agriculture and I appreciate all the hard work that our local education director pours into planning the day camps each summer.

**Q: What have you learned as a board member?**

**A:** I've learned that if you are passionate about something and get enough people involved change can happen. The recent passage of the farm bill was due to efforts made by Farmers Union and other agriculture groups who understand the impact D.C. policy has on family farms.

Although we didn't get everything we wanted, at the end of the day we got an overwhelming majority of them – I consider that success.

**Q: Any current policy issues you have been watching?**

**A:** At this point the EPA has not come out with their decision on Renewable Fuels Standard. I am a strong believer in ethanol. I don't believe it's the magic bullet that will take care of all our energy needs. But, I do believe it will help.

I do know that it helps us corn producers out and reducing the standard will have a negative impact on the agriculture industry in South Dakota.