

## **Getting to know Board Vice President: Wayne Soren**

### **Q: Tell us about your farm and how you got started?**

**A:** I'm a third-generation farmer. I raise corn, soybeans and wheat and operate a cow/calf herd near Lake Preston.

The way I got into farming is different than most because I didn't grow up on a farm. My dad is a civil engineer who grew up on the farm where I now live.

I grew up in Denver and the Kansas City area, but spent some of my summers as a youth on my Grandpa Chester's farm. When I was in high school, my grandpa had a heart attack; he knew he would not be able to continue farming, but didn't want to sell in case one of his grandsons was interested. He called my dad, and my dad sat us boys down and asked us if we were interested. I said I was. So, my grandpa held on to the farm for 10 years - leasing the land to neighbors - until I was ready to start.

It was 1980 when my wife, Vicki, and I moved to South Dakota. Grandpa Chester helped me get started because I could not get an FHA loan since I didn't grow up on a farm. If it wasn't for him, my life would have been completely different. There are many days when I think of him and hope he is looking down with a smile as he sees what we've done here on the farm.

As all farmers my age will attest, we went through some really tough times – even with my grandpa's help. I did whatever I could to bring in extra income and I learned a lot. Basically, when farming is easy, you don't learn much about what you have to do to make it. I learned a lot from those challenges.

### **Q: What do you see for the future of your family's farm?**

**A:** At this point, it is unclear if one of my sons will come back to farm full-time or not. Both of my sons have careers off the farm; however, my oldest does come home each spring to help. I always think that once they have children of their own and realize what a great place Lake Preston is to raise a family, maybe one of them will be interested in taking it over.

### **Q: How did you get involved in Farmers Union?**

**A:** Dallas Tonsager and Dick Pastian encouraged me to get involved. It was during the state convention that I was hooked. I discovered that the Farmers Union philosophy and policy aligned with my own.

Growing up, I always had thoughts of becoming involved in politics; perhaps becoming a legislator. Then, I realized that it wouldn't work for me because of the time commitment – which for me and my operation was too much. However, through my

involvement in Farmers Union, serving on County Counselors, as a District President and now as State Vice President, I realize that I can be involved in policy development and make a positive difference for South Dakota's farmers and ranchers.

**Q: Since we're visiting during the 2014 Farmers Union Fly-In, tell us why you see fly-ins as a valuable event for members to participate in?**

**A:** I'm very encouraged by the number of young farmers and agri-business people who took time away from their farming operations and businesses to participate in this year's fly-in. We need young producers here to learn how the process works and understand how they can be influential in D.C. policy just by showing up.

I know that many young people look at D.C. and just see how flawed and dysfunctional it is. However, through this fly-in they can actually see how showing up as a group to present issues that impact us as a collective group, can make a positive difference for our state and its agriculture industry.

This fly-in will be number 15 for me.

I am still impressed at the way that Congressmen and their staffers take the time to listen to us because we are the individuals who are actually doing the work and have the calluses on our hands to prove it.

**Q: What issues are you watching closely?**

**A:** COOL and the current rail issues are very close to my heart. When you look at the current state of the rail system and the anticipated big harvest that will be unloaded at elevators across the Midwest, while there are still all the bushels waiting to be shipped to market, the rail issue seems urgent at this point.

It was eye opening to me how many folks in D.C. didn't even know about the rail issues facing those of us in the Midwest. Another reason why the Farmers Union Fly-In is so important – we don't just meet with our representatives, we share the issues impacting South Dakota's farmers with Congressmen and their staffers from other states as well.