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## **Minnesota Crop Improvement Association Presents Awards**

**FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA, January 8, 2020** Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) today presented its highest honor, the Achievement in Crop Improvement Award, to **Dahlco Seeds**, of Cokato. The award, presented annually since 1972, recognizes exemplary service to the seed industry as well as outstanding leadership in agriculture and the local community. Dahlco Seeds is headed by brothers Kevin, Duane, and Craig Dahlman.

MCIA also recognized two Premier Seedsman awardees, **Darius Thiel**, of Wendell, and **Mike Zabel**, of Plainview. Each year since 1928, MCIA has presented this award to recognize individuals or partners involved in quality seed production, active in MCIA, and who provide excellent service to the seed industry. **Paula Mohr**, editor of *The Farmer* magazine, received MCIA's Honorary Premier Seedsman Award, which recognizes individuals not directly involved in the seed industry but who have actively supported the seed industry, MCIA, and their local community. MCIA has been presented this award annually since 1930.

Candidates for the awards were nominated by members and staff of MCIA; the MCIA Board of Directors then selected the winners. The awards were presented at the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association's 117<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. The event was held at the Bigwood Event Center, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, January 8, 2020.

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Kevin, Duane, and Craig Dahlman of **Dahlco Seeds**, Cokato, are the third generation of the Dahlman family to produce hybrid seed corn. The family business was started in 1922 when their grandfather Albin began producing seed; their father Stanley took over in the 1940s. The three brothers purchased the business in the 1980s. Over the years, the Dahlman brothers have produced seed corn, soybeans, and wheat and oat seed. Today, they concentrate on producing, conditioning, and packaging a wide variety of traited and conventional hybrid seed corn for the wholesale market.

The Dahlman brothers have served various ag organizations, including MCIA, the Independent Professional Seedsman Association, the Wright County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the state FFA organization. They have also demonstrated a commitment to area youth by dedicating time to 4H, FFA, and athletic organizations, as well as the local school board. In addition, they are involved in community events and church-based activities.

**Darius Thiel**, of Wendell, has farmed and has operated an approved seed conditioning facility in Grant County for over 35 years. Darius is the third generation to manage Thiel Seed Service, which was started in the 1940s by his father and grandfather. Today, his seed production consists of soybeans and certified wheat. Darius runs the Thiel seed plant with some very good help from his two employees and his wife, Terri, the primary bookkeeper.

Darius serves on the MCIA board of directors and on the association's Approved Facilities Committee. Darius has also served his local community as a volunteer firefighter, secretary of the Wendell Farmers Elevator, and an elder in his local church.

**Mike Zabel**, of Plainview, is the third generation to operate Zabel Seeds. Mike's grandfather Arnold and Arnold's brother Clarence began producing seed in the 1940s, growing small grains. Today, Mike continues a family tradition of producing and conditioning high-quality soybeans and certified oat and barley seed.

Mike has served on the MCIA Board of Directors. He is a member of the Southeast Minnesota Forage Council and the Minnesota corn and soybean grower groups. He is also a board member of his local corn growers' organization. The Zabel farm has been a site for corn production and nitrogen utilization studies by University of Minnesota and USDA researchers. Mike also cooperated with Regional Extension Educators to encourage local testing of fungicides as a management tool for oat producers.

Mike is a very active member of his local church, including roles on various boards, and as a Sunday school teacher, website developer, musician, and singer. Locally, he also serves as a Township Supervisor, and on the High Plains Cooperative Board, and the Wabasha County Extension Committee.

**Paula Mohr**, Editor of *The Farmer* magazine has spent over 35 years covering state and national agricultural issues. An award-winning writer, she has dedicated her career to informing, educating, and entertaining readers both on and off the farm. Paula grew up on a dairy farm in Michigan. During high school, and again while at college, she worked for the school newspaper. Paula earned a BS degree in ag communications from Michigan State University.

She began her career as a reporter/photographer for the local newspaper in Cadillac, Michigan. Paula then moved to Minnesota where she became associate editor for Farm Journal's *Dairy Today* magazine. After 20 years reporting on issues related to the dairy industry, Paula became editor of *The Farmer* magazine. From Hallock to Harmony, Paula has traveled to all corners of Minnesota to tell the varied stories of agriculture.

Paula is involved with the Farm Bureau and Farmers Union organizations. In her free time, she volunteers at the Oliver Kelly Farm and serves on the Minnesota FFA Foundation board.

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Since 1903, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) has provided programs and services to meet the needs of an ever-changing agricultural world. These services include seed certification, organic certification, foundation seed production, and a variety of customized third-party verification programs for seed and identity-preserved grains. MCIA operates from facilities on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus with field staff located throughout Minnesota.

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If you would like more information on this topic please contact Roger Wippler at 612-625-7766 or [wippl002@umn.edu](mailto:wippl002@umn.edu).