

## Special Award – *Growing Strong* Diversified Seed Producers, LLC

“If you take care of the land, the land will take care of you.” Those were the words Anton Kaltenberg lived by as he started his quality seed corn company in 1906, and ran it for many years after. Through three generations, his family company prospered, with grandson Fred joining the company in 1975. But as large seed companies consolidated, and genetically altered seeds became the norm, the economics made it difficult for the business to continue. While the original company liquidated after 100 years, Fred Kaltenberg, having worked in the business all his life, established a new company, Diversified Seed Producers. The year was 2007.

The name, Fred says, comes from the variety of seed he produces, including organic. In addition to conventional hybrid seed corn, Diversified Seed Producers grows organic hybrid seed corn, non-GMO hybrid seed corn, soybean seed, sweet corn for canning, and high quality organic processing vegetables. This diversity also provides protection during the ups and downs of supply and demand. The organic farming trend continues to gain strength.

Starting with four of his former employees, and working out of a small office in his home’s basement, Fred reconnected with many of the farmers and growers with whom his family had established strong relationships. The business took off. Fred’s sons Matthew and Michael joined the company in 2011, after finishing college. Michael’s strengths lie in the production side of the operation, while Matthew shines on the business side. In fact, Matthew used his computer skills to develop software that allows field inspectors to input results into iPads rather than record by hand. This allows much quicker turnaround when making decisions about when to detassel and process seed corn. Now, the unique software, called FieldScan, is used by companies in Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska.

Today, the company has a dozen full-time employees and twice that many seasonal workers in summer to help with field work. And after ten years, last November, DSP was able to move from its small basement home office to a new, spacious office building near DeForest.

Fred has high hopes for his company’s future. A succession plan is already in place for Michael and Matthew to eventually own the company. Both are committed to producing a quality crop for their customers and adjusting to seed corn industry changes as they occur. And Fred shares decision-making responsibilities with his future leaders.

The judges admired Fred Kaltenberg’s dedication to carrying on the family legacy by adopting innovative and diversified methods.

This Special Award titled “Growing Strong” goes to Diversified Seed Producers, LLC, of DeForest.

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