

Meet Sarah Hastings of Champaign County

From Grain Farming to Building Grain Bins, She Gets the Job Done



Sarah Hastings' petite 5-foot-2-inch frame can pack a punch when it comes to pulling her weight working on the family farm and grain bin management business alongside her husband Brandon. Whether it's hauling seed, driving a tractor, drawing up grain bin plans, or replacing parts on a combine, Sarah says "on a farm, you keep working until the job's done."

Sarah grew up with dreams of owning a horse farm or even raising cattle and sheep because that's what her grandparents, Patrick and Rosalie Phelan, did. They purchased a 100-ewe farm near Bloomington right after they were married in 1950 and farmed until 2006 when they retired. Sarah remembers sleeping on the couch while staying at her grandparents' house and jumping up, throwing her overalls on top of her pajamas when she heard her grandpa preparing to go out and feed the livestock early in the morning. "I didn't want to miss it," Sarah recalls.

But her sights changed when she met Brandon while attending University of Illinois College of ACES and learned he was a corn and soybean farmer. After marrying in 2003 shortly after graduation, they moved to his family farm. It was then that Sarah's love for livestock turned into a love for the land – grain farming and the exciting challenges of learning the grain bin building business. She quickly proved her value by learning to do any



job presented to her. "One day I might be doing payroll and the next day pouring concrete or driving an auger wagon," Sarah says, "and I love every minute of it."

Sarah and Brandon, along with Brandon's parents, Mike and Vicky, split their time farming 1,600 acres of corn and soybeans in Champaign County (**hastingsfarming.com**) and operating a successful grain bin building and management business called Hastings CCI Equipment (**hastingscci.com**), which services farms within a 60-mile radius.

What unique challenges do women in ag face today?

You stay in really good shape farming; it's hard physical work. Even something as simple as a hitch pin is big and heavy on some of the larger tractors. There have been occasions when I drive in to pick up fertilizer or show up on a job site, people act visibly surprised. They probably question whether I can do the job because of my size. But I actually fit better in the small spots. For instance, the guys always laugh when it's time to change an air filter on one of our tractors that only my hands can fit into. I call it job security.

What advice do you have for young women interested in an ag career?

I've learned that knowledge is power. Sometimes women are hesitant to speak up, but I hear men question why things are done a certain way all the time. The more you know about something, the more assertive you can be. Learn as much as you can, and if you don't know something, ask and figure it out; you'll be the smarter for it.



What female role models most influenced you in your career?

My mom, Betty Connour, and my grandmother, Rosalie Phelan; they both grew up farming. My grandma was always the first one out there catching sheep to vaccinate, cutting tails off lambs, and then preparing a three-course meal at dinner time. After dinner, she was back out driving the tractor while the grandkids were baling hay. The fact that I saw her do it all had a tremendous impact on me. My mom was the second oldest of six girls my grandma raised, and she had that same strong work ethic and passed it on to me.

How do you "lead" as a woman in agriculture?

I've tried to be a spokesperson for agriculture by dispelling myths and correcting misinformation. A lot of people seem to find me approachable. And when they find out I'm involved in agriculture, they like to ask me questions. I try to be really knowledgeable so I can answer questions about where the corn we sell at our local elevator is likely to go, or how our farm impacts the food chain and the economy. I also try to stay current on issues not directly related to our farming operation. A lot of people are very worried about their food supply, and I try to keep that in the back of my mind.

What core values guide you in your work?

Hard work and putting my family first. I know we have a job to get done, but at the end of the day, Brandon and I and our 5-year old son, Ryan, are still a family. We try to do the best we can while being kind to the land and kind to our neighbors.

What do you appreciate most about doing business with FCI?

Definitely the people. They are the easiest and most responsive people to work with. You don't have to explain why you need to buy inputs even though you haven't taken out this year's crop or how capital-intensive farming is. They understand farming.



Marking 100 Years of Service to Rural America

by Tom Tracy, President & CEO

For the past 100 years, Illinois farmers and rural communities have looked to Farm Credit for financial support through thick and thin.



What began with President Woodrow Wilson signing the Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916 – which provided a reliable source of credit for real estate loans to farmers and ranchers – remains a successful financial network that is still cooperatively owned by you, the farmer-borrower. You're the reason Farm Credit has reached this significant milestone, and the Association is proud to mark this centennial in ways that give back to those most important to us.

Commencing the Celebration

The centennial celebration will kick off at the Farm Progress Show in Decatur, Sept. 1-3. In partnership with 1st Farm Credit Services, FCI will celebrate 100 years with a \$100,000 contribution to Illinois agriculture. Farm Progress Show attendees can help "Designate the Dollars" by voting for one of 10 Illinois agriculture organizations in an electronic survey during the show. The \$100,000 investment will be disbursed based on the percentage of votes each group receives. This support helps ensure a bright future while celebrating a prosperous past. Visit Page 4 for more on what to expect at the Farm Progress Show.

Each FCI member-owner can also go online to help allocate the \$100,000

farmcreditIL.com

donation. When members receive an invitation in the mail to order a Farm Credit centennial keepsake, part of the online order form includes the opportunity to help designate the \$100,000 centennial contribution. On your next visit to any FCI office, check out the Farm Credit centennial display, which will be featured in lobbies from September 2015 through December 2016. Special centennial traditions and giveaways will be included at member appreciation events throughout the celebration.

And for more on Farm Credit System history, visit **FarmCredit100.com**.

Fresh Perspectives

The centennial celebration reminds us of the rich history of Illinois agriculture and the ever-changing needs of our cooperative's owners. We appreciate the vision and commitment that it takes to remain successful over time in our constantly evolving rural communities and in the agriculture industry. To celebrate the promise and potential of the industries we support – while commemorating our centennial milestone – the Farm Credit System wants to identify and honor 100 leaders who are changing the future of agriculture and rural communities through their individual, fresh perspectives. Farm Credit 100 Fresh Perspectives is a nationwide search to honor these visionaries.

Farm Credit will seek nominees who demonstrate influence, leadership, and innovation in the following categories:

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- Leadership (over 21)
- Youth Leadership (21 and younger)
- Rural Policy Influence
- Beginning Farmer or Rancher Achievement
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Sustainability and Natural Resource Conservation
- Financial Stewardship
- Mentoring and Volunteerism
- Agriculture Education and Community Impact
- Rural and Urban Connection

We know many Farm Credit Illinois member-owners and those in our rural communities fit this description.

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