



Award winner: 'Our heart's in agriculture'

3-year-old company earns Renew Rural Iowa Leader award

By **LARRY KERSHNER**

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FORT DODGE — A rejuvenated agribusiness, which has tripled its workforce from six to 24 full time workers in three years, was awarded Wednesday the Renew Rural Iowa leader Award by the Iowa Farm Bureau.

Brokaw Supply, which describes itself as a niche company, was honored with an etched-glass plaque by Renew Rural Iowa, an entity created by Iowa Farm Bureau.

The business is jointly-owned by Gary and Dave Nelson, a father-son equal partnership. Dave Nelson, who serves as company president, credited the business growth, since purchasing in 2008, as strong local community support and a surging ag economy.

"It's been excellent," Nelson said, "It's gone faster and bigger than we ever thought."

Jon Schuman, an independent certified public accountant, who serves as the company's CPA, said there's more to the success story.

He called the Nelsons innovators in farming.

"Technologically, they are ahead of the competi-



-Farm News photos by Larry Kershner

LARRY ALLIGER, far left, president of Webster County Farm Bureau, presents the Renew Rural Iowa Leader Award to, from left, Dave Nelson, Fonda Nelson, Karma Nelson and Gary Nelson.

tion," Schuman said. "And they surround themselves with good people."

That sentiment was echoed by Craig Harthoorn, general manager, who said, "Our question to people is 'Are you willing to work hard? If you are, we have a job for you.'"

Brokaw Supply is a distributor for Apache sprayers, Blu-Jet strip-tillers, Friesen/Meridian bulk seed tenders and other equipment.

Dave Nelson said that since the family is also involved in production agriculture, they test each piece of new equipment on their own operation.

Once they see how the

machinery or programs work, they turn it over to the sales staff.

Gary Nelson, who serves as one of three sprayer salesmen, said that by testing equipment at home first, he is able to talk to prospective buyers as a farmer and as a salesman.

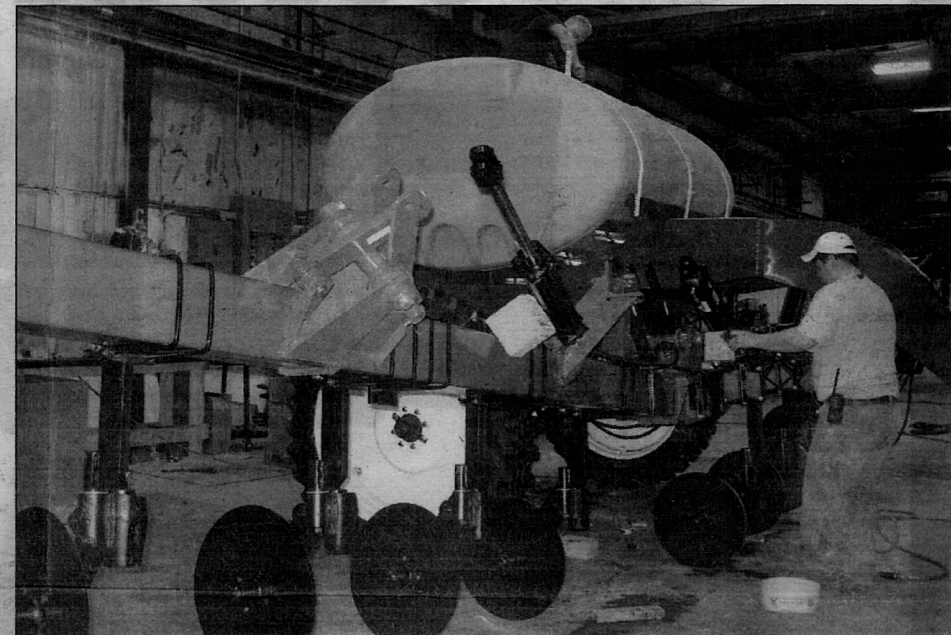
Where does the company go from here?

Dave Nelson said "There's no ceiling. We're going to keep on going."

"Between farming and this, we're loving what we're doing and what we're doing for our customers."

"Our heart's in agriculture."

He said Brokaw Supply will continue to focus on



BROKAW SUPPLY assembles most of the equipment it sells. Working on a side-dress applicator is Colby Seehusen, on floor, and Ted Prenger, working overhead.

precision agriculture and take that technology to the farming and fertilizer industries.

"We don't want to just sell steel," Dave Nelson said, "but the system."

Brokaw Supply has been in operation in Fort Dodge since 1958.

Dave Nelson left Iowa for 10 years after earning his agronomy degree at Iowa State University. He

worked 10 years for Monsanto and two years for Ziegler Cat. But wanting to return to his Iowa roots, he accepted a sales job at Brokaw Supply because he knew the business was for sale.

He said that he and Gary Nelson did "due diligence research for 12 to 14 months" before buying the enterprise.

"It's every farm kid's dream to come home and

farm with dad," Dave Nelson said. "I didn't want to be hired labor or drive a semi. I'm not much of a livestock person."

"But this — the business and family's farm — has been a good fit. It's been a blessing. It's been awesome."

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