

Mid America CropLife Association

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MACA Honors Industry Leaders

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St. Louis, MO — The Mid America CropLife Association (MACA) honored several industry, media and academic leaders at its recent annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois. The Association's Industry Vision Award was presented to **Vern Hawkins**, Syngenta Regional Director, North America and President, Syngenta Crop Protection, LLC.

The award is presented to an individual who's devoted their career to promoting and protecting the interests of the entire crop protection industry that supports American and Midwestern agriculture and has shown leadership roles within their company and in other industry-wide organizations.

Hawkins is an Indiana native who worked as a farmhand for neighbors and was active in FFA and 4-H. He graduated from Purdue University with a degree in Agronomy and earned an executive master's degree in Business Administration from Temple University.

Vern has been with Syngenta since he was in college, he did a summer internship and then spent two years with its predecessor ICI Americas. He's been with Syngenta for more than 26 years. When Syngenta formed, he headed the Product Portfolio Management team. In 2010 he was named president which also includes serving as the North America regional director for integrating the crop protection and seeds business in North America.

Two examples of his leadership include serving as the current chairman of the CropLife America Board of Directors, as well as former member of the FFA Board. As CropLife America board chairman he's led the effort on three key issues including local issue management, better integrating issues across the Crop Protection

channel and the modern ag message outreach by more communication by the industry. He's also supported MACA and encourages Syngenta employees to be active in MACA.

The MACA Educator of the Year Award was presented to **Dr. Fred Below** from the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign. The award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated significant contributions to American agriculture, especially in the MACA region. Also, the person has evidence of consistency in educating the public on the values of production agriculture.

Dr. Below serves as Principal Scientist and Professor of Plant Physiology since 2001. He earned his Ph.D., in 1983 in Agronomy, his MS in 1981 in Agronomy and BS in 1978 in Agricultural Science, all from the University of Illinois

During his career he has made original research contributions focused on understanding factors limiting crop productivity, particularly corn and soybean. His knowledge of multiple agronomic management practices and their relation to crop physiology and yield for both corn and soybean is considered state-of-the-art as demonstrated by the consistent requests for advice from both industry and growers.

Dr. Below developed the 'Seven Wonders of The Corn Yield World' as a tool to teach farmers and agricultural professionals the value of their individual crop management decisions, and he has been actively using this concept to develop a systems approach to high yield corn production.

Recently, he launched a similar concept for high-yield soybean termed 'The Six Secrets of Soybean Success' which shows considerable promise for increasing awareness of how to improve management practices for this important crop.

His leadership is demonstrated through his students, whom are well prepared and highly sought after by top agricultural companies.

The Ruth White Media Award is presented to an individual who's demonstrated an evidence of consistent, objective and accurate reporting on American agriculture and the myriad of issues involved in modern agriculture, including the CropLife industry. This year's winner is **Willie Vogt**, Executive Director, Content and User Engagement, **Penton Agriculture**.

For more than 30 years Willie Vogt has covered the "hardware and software" of agriculture from hard iron to biotech to crop protection. Vogt is responsible for the content team at Penton Farm Progress, including the production of 17 state/regional and leading vertical agricultural publications including Farm Futures, Corn+Soybean Digest, Farm Industry News, and several others.

His specialties include crop biotechnology, computer technology, farm equipment, food systems and food production. He's also editor of Farm Industry News, a leading agricultural technology publication.

Willie graduated from Iowa State University and joined Farm Progress full time in 1996 as technology editor and was promoted to his current position in 2013.

The CropLife Ambassador of the Year Award was first presented in 1993. It is designed to recognize an ambassador for their efforts in promoting the crop protection industry through presentations to students or consumers. This year's recipient is **Greg High**, from Monsanto, where he is the US Commercial IT Support Lead.

Greg grew up around agriculture spending his weekends and summer breaks helping out on his uncle's farm in south central Missouri. Greg obtained his bachelor's degree in Management of Information Systems from Webster University in St. Louis.

His professional career started with Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis Missouri providing training and implementation of computer systems. Several years later an opportunity at Monsanto allowed Greg to combine his IT skills with his love of agriculture.

High spent five years with the DeKalb Swine business helping drive many technology advancements. Currently, Greg leads the IT team that supports Monsanto's US Row Crops business and he helps align business initiatives with IT directives.

Greg became a Crop Life Ambassador in 2009 and enjoys challenging students to think critically about sustainable agriculture and how they can be part of the solution. Since starting as an ambassador, he has made 17 presentations to more than 1,500 students and recruited 7 new ambassadors.

Finally, MACA President Tom Quade presented the Association's most coveted award – the Dean Roy Achievement Award – named in honor of one of the organization's founders for "Exceptional Service to MACA and the CropLife Industry" for contributing the most by their selfless service.

The 2015 recipient winner is **Tim Riley**, AMVAC Chemical Company. Quade cited Riley's service to the Crop Production Issues (CPI) Committee for several years including serving as the vice chair and the committee chair for the past two years.

The CPI committee has been instrumental in developing the MACA Young Leaders Scholarship Program as a way to help college students, through a scholarship, learn about the crop protection industry and many career opportunities. The scholarship requires demonstrated leadership, an agriculture internship plus participation in the MACA annual meeting, which provides an opportunity for prospective employers to meet the scholarship recipients/prospective employees. Currently, Riley serves as the Key Accounts Manager for AMVAC and lives outside Kansas City, Missouri.

"Riley is committed to the crop protection industry and works for its betterment through MACA," stated Quade. "He sees the crop protection industry as a way to encourage young people to consider a career in agriculture."

"Riley works with the committee and challenges the group to think about what else can be done to provide opportunities and benefits that will help MACA," concluded Quade. "He is a part of the MACA membership who has stepped up and helped."

Riley is the 34th person to receive the Dean Roy Achievement Award. Photographs are available from the MACA office upon request.

The Mid America CropLife Association (MACA) is a non-profit association of manufacturers, distributors/formulators and allied industry of crop protection products in 13 Midwestern states. MACA works to research issues relating to crop production and to work together to improve the crop life cycle, via health, safety and public education. Check our web site at www.maca.org.