

## Grainland buys the year 2011 in NJC's Club 1941

Written by Susie Schaefer

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Grainland Cooperative began its merger with CHS Inc. in 2011, so general manager Rick Unrein agreed that 2011 was the perfect year to purchase when the company was approached about joining Northeastern Junior College's Club 1941 in support of the Hope for Northeastern Colorado Scholarship program.

The latest merger is making Grainland part of a truly global company, and Unrein is very excited about the future.

Back in 1997, Farmers Cooperative Elevator Company of Fleming and the Haxtun Cooperative Association merged to form Grainland Cooperative. A decade later, Grainland merged with Holyoke and Amherst Cooperatives, adding to the company's coverage of Northeastern Colorado.

Like many agriculture operations, you have to go big or go broke. Today, Grainland Cooperative has made the necessary transitions to continue to thrive. In its present structure operating as a business unit of CHS, a global presence has been brought to the operation.

Grainland Cooperative currently has over 20 million bushels of storage in seven locations: New Haven, Fleming, Haxtun, Holyoke, Amherst, Stateline and Julesburg.

The business offers two full-service agronomy locations, one feed mill, three car care centers, two convenience stores, full-service farm fuel delivery, eight cardrol fueling stations and an auto/truck repair shop. There are approximately 117 employees at any given time, with over 150 employed during harvest.

Grainland's annual sales range from \$160-\$200 million, depending on the grain price and bushels harvested. Grainland's average harvest receipts amount to seven million bushels of wheat and 13 million bushels of corn, but they continue to buy farm-stored and farm-delivered bushels throughout the year.

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Grainland also handles between one to two million bushels of millet (about 10 percent of the U.S. crop) along with sunflowers, milo and soybeans.

Unrein, born and raised in the Fleming area, noted “our patrons are also our owners” at Grainland Cooperative, and he said this makes customer service of utmost importance.

When asked why they support Northeastern Junior College and the Hope Scholarship fund, Unrein answered, “Being responsible stewards in our communities is very important to us.” He went on to explain 75 percent of the advertising/donation budget for Grainland Cooperative goes to youth-oriented programs, including academics, scholarships and athletics.

Grainland offers some scholarships of its own to area students.

The Grainland scholarships go to students in local communities. “We grow the best kids in the world here,” Unrein said. “We just have a hard time offering enough opportunities to keep them (here). The scholarships that Grainland supports send many local kids to NJC.”

Unrein went on to note that many of Grainland’s employees and patrons are NJC alumni. He said everyone at Grainland feels the NJC institution is a very important pillar in the community, especially with such a good agricultural program.

Currently, the college offers a more extensive agriculture curriculum than some land-grant universities.

Unrein is very active in the community and has been married to his wife, Diane, for 35 years this month. His daughter Nicole lives and works in the Denver metro area and his son Clayton works at CJ Barnes in Sterling.

The northeastern Colorado native’s personal philosophy is that it is important to be involved in community projects, especially those supporting students.

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“The Grainland team in its entirety feels very strongly about the growth and future of their communities,” Unrein said warmly, representing a much larger group.

The company has every intention of continuing to grow and continuing to employ residents of this area, serving customers well and adding as much value to the quality of life in this part of the state as possible. Giving to the Hope for Northeastern Colorado Scholarship fund is just one of many ways they'll be doing this.

For more information on Club 1941 and the HOPE Scholarship program, contact NJC Foundation Executive Director Cindy Johnson at 970-521-6603.

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