



UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY 17-20: WILL COUNTY THRESHERMAN'S SHOW, SPIESS FARMS

JULY 25: WCFB YOUNG FARMERS GOLF OUTING

AUGUST 16: TRACTORS FOR A CURE, MEMORIAL TRACTOR RIDE

AUGUST 15-17: SYMERTON HOMECOMING

AUGUST 16: LISA PANICI AND JASON BEEN MEMORIAL VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT AT SYMERTON TAP

AUGUST 20-24: WILL COUNTY FAIR, PEOTONE FAIRGROUNDS

SEPTEMBER 10: FIRST BANK OF MANHATTAN FALL AG DINNER



Jean Phelps | NMLS# 887262 Agricultural Loan Officer First Bank of Manhattan 815.314.1984

WILL COUNTY THRESHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION HOSTS 2025 VINTAGE TRACTOR DRIVE FUNDRAISER

The Will County Threshermen's Association (WCTA) participated in its annual Vintage Tractor Drive Fundraiser this past Saturday. June 7. 2025. This beloved tradition brought together vintage tractor enthusiasts for a scenic 40-mile drive through the picturesque countryside of Will County, Illinois. Jean Phelps and Sue Casagrande from First Bank of Manhattan were fortunate enough to be a part of this tradition

The route began at the WCTA Showgrounds at Spiess Farm in Manhattan and wound through rural roads to Steve Issert Farm in Wilmington. where participants enjoyed a hearty lunch prepared by WCTA Director Brian Kestel and

member Brain Hennings. The event highlighted the beauty of Illinois farmland and the community spirit that fuels the WCTA's mission. All participants brought and ractors. All proceeds are for the benefit of the Will County Threshermen's Association, in supporting its ongoing work to preserve and promote

QUESTIONS? CONTACT ME!

230 S. State Street, Manhattan 550 W. North Street. Manhattan 815,478,4611

836 W. Laraway Road, New Lenox 815.462.9201

www.fnbmanhattan.com

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SUMMER 2025

I am pleased to share the news that Jean Phelps has been promoted to the position of Loan Officer. Jean's responsibilities will include coordinating our agricultural banking efforts along with consumer and real estate lending.

Jean is a seasoned banker who joined First Bank of Manhattan in 2015. Prior to that Jean has worked in various capacities in the banking business since 2006.

Jean and her husband, Brad Phelps, and their four children live in Jackson Township. When she is not busy with her career and as a mom of four active children Jean and her family help on her parents' farm when needed, raise bees, chickens, and ducks, are active in their Church and just enjoy spending time together.

John Kramer President First Bank of Manhattan





AN EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT





Market Psychology: Britt O'Connell

Maybe you haven't seen the movie, but you know how it ends. Pick your favorite genre or series, and they almost always follow a similar, predictable pattern. There are slight twists and turns and a few surprises, but in the end, the guy gets the girl, Ethan Hunt saves the world, or Indy survives near certain death. While at times less riveting, the grain markets tend to follow a similar plot line year after year. Understanding these patterns, tendencies and historical behaviors can give you an upper hand in your marketing efforts and help alleviate some of the stress and anxiety that it invokes. Coincidently, people are also easily patterned.

Let's look at corn as an example. The plot starts with preparing to plant the best crop ever. Growers spend a good amount of winter meeting with their seed guy, crop protection specialist, fertilizer salesmen, and independent agronomist. They look back at mountains of unorganized data, including various plot and trial results and yield maps. The plan starts to come together – we have just the right hybrid for each acre, a chemical package that's cheaper and better than last year, and we applied fertilizer with precision. What could go wrong?

Then, right on que, enters our kryptonite: weather. With a split personality, the weather can be hard to predict, and we are often faced with the season of "too" – it's too cold, too wet, too dry, too hot, too early, too late, and so on.

Each of these too much of something applies to the various stages in the growing season from planting to harvest. If we get the crop in early or on time but then it was too warm and too dry, that reminds me of 1988. If it gets in late, there's probably no way we get this crop harvested in time, and that feels just like 1993. We call the crop insurance agent, double check that we have prevent plant and replant coverage, and we determine the guarantee on our investment.

We play through these various episodes of "too" until about July. By mid-July, we are able to start sizing up this crop, and risk premium starts to slowly eke out. August heat pushes the crop through maturity. Crop tours start across the Midwest, and harvest results from the Mid-South start to roll in. It seems like, despite all of the twists and turns, a surprise here and there, and a brush or two with near death, the hero prevails – and that hero is the American farmer! He or she grows the crop, and a hell of a crop at that!

We know not every year perfectly follows the script. There are years with major disruptions to either supply, demand, or both that cause deviations. However, by in large, there is a rhythm to our markets. Understanding these tendencies can aid greatly in your marketing efforts. Know the tools at your disposal and how and when to use them. Over the decades, grain producers adopted the use of innovation and technology well as it relates to production and agronomics. Can you say the same about your marketing efforts? Or are you still selling cash corn when you need the money instead of proactively marketing it and trusting your crop insurance?

I will leave you with this last thought. If you are still active in production agriculture, you are elite. Over the last decade, we have seen the number of farmers decrease by about 10%. Some leave the business by their own choosing, but others do not. You likely have the production element down. If you're not growing 200 bushel corn in the heart of Illinois on a regular basis, the odds of being successful aren't in your favor.

The new frontier is marketing. This is where the seed will be sifted from the chaff. Those who are able to effectively manage risk and market their crops well on a consistent basis will increase the odds of their survival and growth.

If you think you know all there is to know about pr

If you think you know all there is to know about practicing safety around grain bins, you can stop reading here. But chances are good there is one or more points on this 10-point checklist that you may not have thought about.

Whatever the size of your bins, good standard operating practices still apply. See if your operation is up to par based on these 10 points:

Physical elements. Is the condition and shielding of mechanical, electrical and safety equipment properly kept up to keep injuries from occurring.

Grain condition. Proper management of the loading and storing of grain should be paramount so there is never a need to enter a bin until it is empty and time for the final cleanup. Zero entry is difficult to attain, but it is very important to make every effort to make it happen.

Safe workspace. Have an area and equipment that are clean and well-policed will make for a safer place to work.

Safety shields. Inspect all the mechanical equipment to make sure all safety shields on motors and drives are in place and secured. Thinking you will replace a shield after making a repair later when you have more time won't cut it. You'll never have enough time. Do it immediately.

Covers and gates. Make sure all pit and below-ground service area entrance covers, ladder platform gates and swinging safety gates are in good condition and can be secured in place.

Gas train components. Inspect all gas train components for damage or leaks and replace immediately if any are found.

Conduits and wiring. Inspect all electrical conduits and wiring for damage and breaks that would allow rodents or water to enter and cause damage.

Structural checkup. Inspect the bin for structural issues. This includes ladder rungs and fasteners, as well as foundation fasteners used to attach the bin to the concrete foundation.

Foundation. Inspect the concrete for cracks or movement compared to its original position. Variation in concrete level or uneven subsidence of the pad can lead to failure of the bin.

No forgotten tools. As you build commercial-level systems on the farm, make sure no loose tools or parts are left on catwalks, and pay attention to ice and snow on bucket elevators and bins. These items can fall and kill someone on the ground.

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Grain Bin Safety Checklist: First Bank of Manhattan cares about you!