

Family orchard, co-op packing house work together

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

CALDWELL, Idaho — The Mountainland Cooperative was originally formed in Utah to provide long-term storage, packing and marketing of fruit produced by member growers.

The co-op does no direct sales; all sales are to the retail, foodservice and wholesale trade, mainly in the Intermountain area, but some of the fruit is shipped to other regions of the U.S.

Brad Goodloe manages the Idaho packing house at Caldwell.

“The orchards were started in Utah. We are now the third generation of our family orchard business. A packing shed was started by the co-op in Utah. As the co-op grew and some of the growers grew in size, they moved to Idaho about five years ago and started a packing shed here, rather than shipping the fruit to Utah,” Goodloe said.

Mountainland Idaho works with orchards in the area, including Williamson Orchards and Gary Garret, a grower near Homedale, he said. “We also pack a lot of fruit for Caldwell Idaho Orchards. They are



Courtesy of Mountainland Apples
From left, Jeff and Sean Rowley and Brad Goodloe of Mountainland Apples.

part of the co-op but located here in Idaho. They are part of a welfare program for the LDS Church, supplying fruit to needy people. As members of the co-op, they use us to package their fruit.”

On the farming side, his cousins Sean, Jeff and Daniel Rowley grow fruit at Cherry Hill Farms.

“At the beginning of harvest we do apricots, then peaches and nectarines. The apples ripen later,” he said. Different varieties of apples ripen at dif-

ferent times, spreading out the harvest.

Their family orchards in Idaho grow Gala, Honeycrisp, Fuji and Reds. After being sorted and packed at Mountainland, the apples are shipped to Wal-Mart stores and Associated Foods.

“We also sell apples to a few smaller outlets. Wal-Mart likes to promote local growers, however. We see our products in many grocery stores around here. Associated Foods distributes our products in Utah and the Northwest,” he said.

Goodloe and his cousins all have children, and though they are still young, some of them are interested in the fruit business. Daniel’s children range from 1 to 10.

“They enjoy coming out to the farm, especially the boys. I have all girls and they come with me whenever possible, but are mainly exposed to the

packing side of things because that’s what I do,” said Goodloe. “There may eventually be a fourth generation involved with the fruit business.”

Their orchards include long-term leases as well as land they own.

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“We look for opportunities to keep expanding. This means buying ground and finding leases. We try to get 20-year leases, to give enough time to get trees

into production,” he says. Some trees today can come into full production quicker than traditional varieties, he said.

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