

# Event plants seeds for future ag careers

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

The Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum wants to inspire the next generation of agricultural career seekers.

The annual "Connecting Students with AgriBusiness 2017" career fair will be 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, at the Expo.

According to Expo orga-

nizers, the event is designed to inform high school students about business careers in agriculture.

Business people that participate at the career fair include accountants, lawyers, marketers, bankers, real estate brokers, high-technology experts, sales representatives and managers.

Tim Cobb, broker with Hatley/Cobb Farmland Management and Real Estate in Spokane, has participated in the

career fair since it began at the Expo in 2015.

"It is important to look to the future in our industry and the career fair helps students — the actual future of the industry — to consider the many options available in agriculture," Cobb told the Capital Press.

Cobb recommends high school students prepare for the career fair by bringing three questions specific to their field of choice.

# Volunteer remembers early days of Spokane Ag Expo

The agricultural show 'seemed like it would be a go from the beginning'



Ernie Becker

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SPOKANE — Ernie Becker was involved in the early days of the Spokane Ag Expo, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

"As I remember, the first two Expos, we hired outside management," he said. "(When) we decided we had learned enough, we decided we could put on the show ourselves."

Becker was a member of the Agricultural Bureau and

chamber of commerce — now called the Greater Spokane Incorporated AgriBusiness Council — when they decided to start the Expo.

"We had a lot of interest in it," he said. "It seemed like it would be a go from the beginning, and I think it's proved out to be so."

The Expo gives farmers a chance to see things they wouldn't otherwise see, he said.

Exhibitors and equipment dealers appreciate the show because it provides an enthusiastic audience.

The retired certified public accountant can still be seen

volunteering at the Expo each year.

"It's the type of show that you have to have some interest in farming to enjoy," he said.

Becker's father was a farmer in Colton, Wash., raising "a little bit of everything," including grain and livestock — cattle, dairy cows and chickens.

"Anything we could make a dollar on," he said.

Becker was managing partner at McFarland and Alton for about 40 years before he retired in 1993. During that time he did a "fair amount" of work with farmers, he said.

Becker, 88, still volunteers at the Expo, although he missed the 2016 Expo due to a "bad cold."

How has the Expo changed since the early days?

Becker said one big change was moving into the Convention Center, allowing the event to take place at a single location.

The technology has also changed, he said, and the industry along with it.

"I think it's going to follow the technology," he said of the Expo's future.

Involvement in the Expo runs in the Becker family. His son Matt has been involved with the Expo for more than 20 years, with his father's encouragement. He is also a past chairman of the Pacific Northwest Farm Forum committee, and is now with Northwest Farm Credit Services.

"His influence has been very deep and involved," Matt Becker said of his father.

Matt Becker enjoys seeing his father volunteering at the Expo.

"I feel great when I see him and proud that he's still involved," he said.

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