

Bob Haselwood

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

"So how are donations coming in for your most recent fundraiser?" I asked. "Well," he replied, "you might say they are coming in by the truckload." That sounds like a successful fundraising campaign. In this case, those words might be interpreted literally. This is the story of an agricultural producer who has not just donated money to worthy causes, he has chosen to donate some of his crops. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Bob Haselwood is a farmer near Berryton, just south and east of Topeka. Berryton is an unincorporated town with a population of perhaps 300 people. Now, that's rural. Bob grew up here and came back to the farm after college. Today the farm is a nearly 1900 acre cash grain operation consisting of soybeans, corn, and some wheat in rotation.

Bob became active in Kansas Farm Bureau. One year while at the state annual meeting in Wichita, he heard someone discuss a new opportunity called the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership program, or KARL for short.

KARL was a newly created, statewide, independent, privately funded leadership development program. It consisted of a class of 30 individuals from around Kansas who would go through a two-year long leadership development experience, including trips around the state, to Washington DC and overseas. The program is led by a Board of Directors and staff, with headquarters space provided as an in-kind gift by K-State at Manhattan.

Bob decided to give it a try. In 1991, he applied and became part of KARL Class 1, the inaugural class of the KARL program.

Today, the KARL program is on Class XI. During the intervening years, more than four million dollars have been raised and spent on this program from over 800 entities including individuals, farm and civic organizations, businesses, foundations and corporations.

That money has been invested to put over 300 agricultural and rural leaders through more than 5,000 hours of training and experience in Kansas and Washington DC, as well as overseas. KARL classes have traveled to Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Belgium, France, England, the People's Republic of China, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand, Mexico and Costa Rica, Brazil, Ghana, India and Vietnam. Wow.

That type of support requires a constant effort to recruit donors and supporters. The KARL Board and staff work hard to solicit donations and fund-raise through special events. KARL hosted a dinner for donors in Topeka, for example. One of those who attended was Bob Haselwood. After that dinner, he made a donation to KARL, but instead of money, he donated a load of soybeans.

"I do this for our church as well," Bob said. "I harvest a load and when I deliver it to the elevator, I just put it in the name of the church. It's a time to give back," he said.

"Bob is one of the top people in our county on leadership development," said Leroy Russell, K-State Research and Extension – Shawnee County. "He is very active in farm organizations."

“I’m always thinking about things from KARL that helped me,” Bob said. “It opened my eyes and broadened my experience.”

These experiences have helped propel Bob into positions of leadership. He has been President of the Shawnee County Farm Bureau, a Farm Bureau state committee member, and now serves on the Kansas Soybean Commission. At the national level, he is Treasurer of the United Soybean Board. These latter organizations use checkoff monies to promote soybean consumption. The United Soybean Board, for example, has a 94 million dollar budget to promote soybeans, self-funded by soybean producers.

Fittingly, Bob made his donation to the KARL program in soybeans. When the price of soybeans went up, Bob’s donation became the largest single personal gift from an alumnus to the KARL program. For more information about KARL, go to www.karlprogram.com.

Yes, the donations are coming in by the truckload – or at least in Bob Haselwood’s case, he has chosen to make his donation in soybeans. We salute Bob Haselwood and all those involved with the KARL program for making a difference by investing in leadership. To them I say: Keep on truckin.’

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.