

Membership *Matters*

At an early age, Kasey Bitz learned the value of being involved. The LaMoure, North Dakota,

farmer and online instructor didn't have to look far to see examples of people who were not willing to stand on the sidelines and watch others take the lead. Kasey's father, Jim, has served on the local cooperative board, and his mother, Connie, has been involved with the electrical co-op and local credit union.

Bitz farms with his parents in the James River Valley, raising corn, soybeans, hard red spring wheat and yellow field peas while also raising cattle and sheep. Although he's a young farmer at age 27, Bitz has already jumped headlong into leadership roles. He serves as the North Dakota Farmers Union policy chair and is on the National Farmers Union policy committee. Bitz applied and was accepted into the American Soybean Association's (ASA)

DuPont Young Leader program. He recently completed Phase 3 of the program. Only 10 of the ASA Dupont Young Leader participants from across the country were selected to participate in this phase.

Bitz is fully immersed in farm policy and leadership because he recognizes the need for farmers to speak for themselves. Because fewer people have a direct agriculture connection, rural voices become increasingly vital.

"If we're not telling our story, someone else is, and we probably won't like what they're saying," Bitz says.

Bitz has been to Washington, D.C., six times to talk with lawmakers about farm-related issues. He also went to the state capitol in Bismarck three times during the past session.

Bitz has been a North Dakota

Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) member for several years. He serves on the NDSGA board as the ASA DuPont Young Leader.

The NDSGA represents North Dakota soybean farmers in Bismarck and Washington, D.C., on issues that affect North Dakota soybean farmers, including conservation challenges, tiling and much more. NDSGA membership lends strength to the NDSGA's voice.

Becoming an NDSGA member also means that farmers and affiliated businesses become part of the American Soybean Association (ASA). NDSGA members receive an even greater return for their membership dollars because they're funding advocacy and policy achievements at both the national and state levels.

Membership benefits include

receiving pertinent information about legislative activity at the county, state and national levels. Members can stay up-to-date on issues through the North Dakota Soybean Grower magazine, which is published six times a year, and the quarterly American Soybean magazine.

Members also receive discounted registration for the annual Commodity Classic Convention and Trade Show; discounts on Cabela's gift cards; and preferred pricing on the purchase or lease of most new Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Dodge or Jeep vehicles.

NDSGA membership also includes scholarship eligibility for children and grandchildren as well as opportunities for students pursuing agriculture-related degrees to compete for an annual \$5,000 NDSGA and \$5,000 ASA Secure Optimal Yield Scholarship.

Most farmers don't have the time and resources to attend all the meetings that are held on issues that could affect their operations. NDSGA membership gives farmers the confidence that fellow North Dakota soybean farmers are offering a collective voice on their behalf.

"Who else is going to tell our story? Why not bring rural North Dakota to Bismarck and Washington," Bitz asks.

To learn more about the value of an NDSGA membership, visit www.ndsoygrowers.com.

—Story and photos by
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LaMoure farmer Kasey Bitz may be a young farmer, but he's quickly learned the value of membership and farmer involvement.