

Growing LEADERS



Andrew and Brittnei Cossette came from different backgrounds. Andrew was raised in the Fargo area, and in 1992, he and his parents moved to the family farm that was started by his great grandfather in 1869. Brittnei was raised in Montgomery, Minnesota, a community known for its rich Czech heritage.

Andrew Cossette earned a degree in farm management from the North Dakota State College of Science while Brittnei got a bachelor's degree in health care administration from North Dakota State University and then earned a master's degree in the same area from Minnesota State University-Moorhead. The pair met during Brittnei's last semester of college.

"It isn't a secret I played hard to get, but we bonded over common interests, and he opened my mind to the farming way of life," Brittnei Cossette says. "I loved his excitement for agriculture and that helping with the family business is something we could experience together and, at that time, raise a family."

"My grandfather, my uncle and my dad took over the farm for many years, but when my uncle decided to

retire, it allowed me to step up in his place," Andrew Cossette explains. "Now, my dad, my brother and I work the operation together, where we rotate between soybeans, barely and corn on about 3,500 acres."

Brittnei and Andrew Cossette are raising two sons, Wyart and Weston.

The Cossettes were selected to participate in the Corteva Agriscience Young Leader Program, a two-part educational program for individuals and couples with an interest in agricultural leadership. The Young Leader Program recognizes the value that both partners play in a farming operation even when one person is employed off the farm.

The Cossettes' family friends Ryan and Jess Richard went through the program a few years ago. The Cossettes noticed a difference in the Richards' communication about the business and their relationship after their participation in Young Leader Program, so the Cossettes applied.

Due to COVID-19, the previous Young Leader Program met virtually. The 2021 class is meeting in person, which helps with one of the program's primary missions of network building.

"I think everyone has suffered a little cyber fatigue over the last year

and a half, so our trip to Vancouver, Washington, to attend Phase One of the Young Leader training was refreshing and needed," Brittnei Cossette states.

The Young Leader Program trains participants in many areas of communication, but also helps the class to develop its leadership skills.

"One thing we would like to get out of this program is increased self-efficacy and the development of skills relevant to success in the modern ag industry," Andrew Cossette says. "Building self-advocacy and self-determination skills, as a couple, will help our business and, most

importantly, our relationship, last and survive."

The Cossettes know that, as young farmers, it's important for them to hone their skills and to become involved with the future of the agriculture industry. As a Young Leader for North Dakota, Andrew Cossette has been participating in board meetings with the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association.

"It's important for farmers, especially young farmers, and their families to get involved because it provides the opportunity to find avenues and outlets that will listen to ideas, concerns, and find other individuals who are passionate about acting on the collective needs," Andrew Cossette contends. "This experience has only helped us have a better understanding of agribusiness and current farm programs and organizations that are out there for us to lean on."

"The truth of it all is," Brittnei Cossette says, "we all face different challenges from one another no matter what type of farming operation we run. We are proud to be a generational farm, and we work hard every day to be able to carry on that legacy. In order to do that, we need to be involved."

To learn more about the Corteva Agriscience Young Leader Program or to apply, visit ndsoygrowers.com.

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke



Fargo-area farmers Andrew and Brittnei Cossette are excited to meet fellow young farmers from across the country as part of the ASA Corteva Agriscience Young Leader Program.