

Fort Morgan's Nicholas Erker recipient of Colorado Young Farmer Agri-Business Award

The tall concrete silos on the outskirts of Fort Morgan bear the Erker Grain name and make a strong statement about the company's presence and enterprising activities. The company has experienced some significant growth in recent years and Nicholas E. Erker is one of the primary catalysts behind the progress. For his outstanding accomplishments in agri-business, he has been named the recipient of the 2011 Outstanding Colorado Young Farmer Agri-Business Award.

This award is presented each year to recognize a Colorado Young Farmer member who has demonstrated huge competencies in ownership of an agri-business operation from which he or she derives at least 50 percent of his or her income. The recipient may receive the award only once in his or her lifetime. Winners are selected based upon their overall business program, leadership activities and civic, church and community service work.

Erker Grain is a world-wide supplier of in-shell and hulled confection sunflower products and has become a major exporter of these products. The original company was established in 1976, but has since expanded its operation to include two additional entities, Erker Trading Company and Smirks. The "trading" spin-off was designed to oversee the domestic and global market management portion of the business. Smirk's on the other hand, is an import export company specializing in dried fruits, nuts, seeds and other ingredients. Nicholas Erker plays a triple role, serving as executive vice president of Erker Grain Company and as president of both of these secondary operations.

Erker, 27, began his career with the family's company in 2005 when he came on board as director of sales and operations. In those early days he attended trade shows and helped load and unload trucks and rail cars—work he now says helps him understand and appreciate the various positions at the company. In 2008 he was promoted to vice-president and took over the responsibility of coordinating the overall marketing and sales efforts. In 2010, Erker Grain Company merged with two other sunflower processors when it bought out Agua Dulce Grain of Alice, TX and Prairie Sun Seeds of Souris MB Canada and as part of this expansion, Erker received his current titles.

The Erkers employ 35 people in two states and Canada including hourly employees, quality managers, accountants,



Nicholas Erker
Outstanding Colorado Young Farmer
Agri-Business Award
(l tor) Nicholas Erker and Tim Jordan representing
Channel Bio.

logistical experts, and sales and support staff. The company currently has a very aggressive debt structure with a highly capitalized infrastructure. The family has carved out a very good niche selling sorted, sized and bagged seeds all over the world. They take pride in the fact that they sell seed to and contract seed back from producers growing 45,000 acres of sunflowers each year.

With much of the product now being shipped overseas, resolving issues related to storage and delivery is a constant as Erker's operation functions day to day in a global market. His

daily routine includes tracking inventory, collecting samples, maintaining position reports, monitoring pricing, payroll and any other aspects of company efficiency. One of his most recent accomplishments was figuring out that a change in the shipping process from the farm area to Denver alone would save the company nearly \$170,000 a year. One of their biggest customers is a company in Turkey so sending product across the ocean is a daily occurrence.

Erker has been involved with the Young Farmer organization for several years. He has a sideline passion, being a disc jockey, and has provided his services for several of the group's dances and other events. He is active on the Fort Morgan Chamber of Commerce. The company frequently opens its door to schools and other group for tours. Nicholas really enjoys helping with Cajun Boils and in the last few years, has helped put these on as fundraisers for local charities including Hospice, churches, FFA and 4-H.

Center Pivot Irrigation, LLC



Serving Northeastern Colorado for 10 years

Irrigation System
Sales

Dan Ross
CEO/Owner

Parts and Service
on all brands



506 E 8th ave
Yuma, CO 80759
970-848-3787 office
970-630-1026 cell