

# Valley Ag Supply Celebrates 15 years; Reflects on Humble Start

By Katie Clausen  
For the Plain Talk

Valley Ag Supply has officially been in business, serving the agricultural community in South East South Dakota, for 15 years. Although the ag retailer now employs upwards of 50 people during the busy summer season, their humble beginnings are not forgotten. Greg and Tara Pirak started off small.

"Greg started out by buying a sprayer and a truck," Tara Pirak said. "When I graduated I got my CDL and I started working with Greg."

Pirak stuck with the idea of the two of them working together and creating their dream, and she wasn't afraid to get dirty. Pirak has a degree in finance, but she put her CDL to work first.

"I did all the hauling, the water hauling and fertilizer," Pirak said. "He did all of the spraying. There wasn't really anyone else to do it. That was in the spring of 2000."

In 15 years, the Piraks have come a long way from that two person spaying operation. They now have two locations, the main office in Gayville and a second new location in Spink. They are continuing to expand their operation to ensure their customers are taken care of.

"The Spink location is right on highway 48," Pirak said. "We put up a dry fertilizer plant and an office over there, so now our second location has been up and running about a year now."

There have been a lot of changes in the years Valley Ag Supply has been operating and serving local famers with their fertilizer, chemical, seed and agronomy needs. Valley Ag Supply provides much needed services such as field scouting, soil sampling, and crop advice.

"The precision ag has changed a lot," Pirak said. "The whole time we've been in business it has gone from absolutely nothing to quite sophisticated."

Precision agriculture is the use of technologies such as GPS, precise soil sampling, harvest data and other

information gathered from technological tools to pinpoint input application and other processes in farming. It has changed the way in which farmers perform their jobs. The growth of the producer has also been observed by Valley Ag Supply.

"Farmers and growers have 16 and 24 row planters now," Pirak said. "We've had to grow and expand with them and now we have multiple machines to do it. We've purchased more machines and put more trucks on the road to keep the farmers rolling."

In addition to adding infrastructure and machines, the Piraks actually brought on Greg's father who serves as the precision agriculture specialist for the facility. He is the man behind the technology.

"We needed somebody to write our prescriptions and create our maps," Pirak said. "He has worked with us for four years now."

In 2007, to ensure the best service possible for their customers, Valley Ag Supply also teamed up with Madsen Spraying, a local father and son team.

Although Valley Ag Supply is focused on growth that benefits the farmer and the business, they also focus on community.

"We are family owned," Pirak said. "We give back to our community a lot. The money doesn't go someplace else, it stays in town. We are active with things like the fire department, the church, and the cub scouts."

In addition to community groups, Valley Ag Supply is involved with agriculture education as well.

"It's called Field to Table," Pirak said. "It was started by Ray Hall, and then Greg volunteered and took it over one Ray retired."

Each year, students from several school districts in the area come to the agronomy facility to learn about a multitude of agriculture related issues.

The program has continued to grow.

"Now there are 320 kids that come the first week of



Valley Ag Supply's office is located in the heart of Gayville, and a second location in Spink.

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September," Pirak said. "They come out and learn about agriculture at different stations. They learn about careers, livestock production, and all sorts of things in our test plot. We even bring equipment out so they can learn how it works."

It takes a group effort to make sure Field to Table is a well rounded event for local youth. Students learn about corn and soybean growth and

development, livestock, dairy, and machinery.

"It isn't just us," Pirak said. "There are bankers, local farmers and industry representatives who come and pitch in."

To show their appreciation, Valley Ag Supply will be hosting a party for their customers.

It is the best way they know how to say thank-you to those who have supported them.

"We are having supper and a band is playing so there is a dance as well," Pirak said. "That will be at our shed."

For Valley Ag Supply, the 15 year marker is an honor to share with those in the agriculture community.

"We are so grateful that people have supported us, we just want to continue to do a good job for people and we love what we do," Pirak said. "We are here for the long haul."

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