

## **Farming Runs Deep in Schrock Family History**

*by Jessica Chambers, Rushlight Agency*

On Mike Schrock's farm, there is a flower bed filled with a collection of rocks that originate from his mother's family homestead located in the northeastern corner of Montana. It was not until he began researching online that Mike Schrock discovered his maternal family's farming history. He learned that they had established their roots in Montana.

Through his research, he also found homesteads that belonged to his great-grandfather on his father's side in central Colorado. They moved back to Nebraska for a few years before settling in the Willamette Valley. Mike is now the fourth generation to farm on their land, with the fifth and sixth generations to hopefully follow.

Mike has lived on this farmland all his life. Over the years, he expanded the original acreage his grandfather and father purchased, by buying a farm next door. Combined with the land his stepson, Cody, owns, he now farms 700 acres, growing soft white winter wheat and grass seed. In 2004, he also started a small trucking business to supplement his farming income.

Over the years, Mike has relied on Oregon State University's research programs to improve his wheat crops. He has used varieties nearly every year since the 1980's and tries to put as much of their research to work as time and resources allow.

"I think they are beyond valuable," he said. "The research that has come out of Oregon State keeps us farming. And I don't think they get enough credit."

Mike currently serves on the Oregon Wheat Growers League Board as the South Willamette Valley County President. Initially, Mike concedes that he was somewhat hesitant to get involved. However, he was inspired by Cody's participation on the board of the local irrigation district. He says that helped push him to take a leap out of his comfort zone and join. And while he says he is a quiet voice in Board meetings, he has made meaningful connections and found camaraderie with fellow producers who have similar experiences - and learned a lot in the process.

"That's what I like about this," he says of his involvement on the Board. "I'm learning. I'm meeting new people. I'm learning what they do and that's huge for me to connect with other people."

There are many challenges facing the agricultural community, some coming from the state legislature. One thing he would like to see from lawmakers is for them to experience first-hand what farmers across the state face on a daily basis.

"I think that our lawmakers need to step out of their realm and come to the farm and come see the things we do," he says. "We all get our perception of what we think about other people, and what they do. And I think we need to involve ourselves, and other thoughts, and other processes, and all work together."

But Mike believes that one of the biggest challenges is getting younger farmers more involved to better understand what's ahead for them in the future. Personally, he is excited to see Cody come back to the family farm after taking a few years away. Mike believes that Cody's generation will take the lead with putting new technology to use in order to create solutions facing farmers today.

As he looks to retire in the next few years, Mike says he is doing what he can to prepare for the future of his family's farm.

"I think my goals are to move this to the next generation," he says, stating that he is stepping sideways to let younger farmers begin to blaze the trail ahead. "I just want to set up as best as I can so they're not struggling."

And with any luck, the fifth generation of his family will continue this farming legacy on their land.