



Contact:
Erik Evans
AURI
612.704.1120
eevans@auri.org

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Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company Named Ag Innovator of 2017

Group Recognized for Energy Innovation and Contribution to Minnesota's Rural Economy

SAINT PAUL, Minn. – November 8, 2017 –The Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), named The Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company (CVEC) of Benson, Minn., its 2017 Ag Innovator of the Year. The award, which has been given annually for the past 15 years, will be accepted by CVEC Board Chair, David Thompson and General Manager Chad Friese at the company's Board meeting on Monday, November 20, in Benson.

Each year, the AURI Board of Directors bestows the Ag Innovator of the Year Award, the organization's highest honor, on a client company or entrepreneur it feels has made a substantial impact in the areas of product innovation, uniqueness and commercialization potential. This year's award is the culmination of 20 years of cooperative work between AURI and CVEC.

"There were a number of contenders for this year's award, but the Board of Directors felt CVEC's many accomplishments and innovations in the ethanol industry best fit the criteria," said AURI Executive Director, Shannon Schlecht. "CVEC contributes to Minnesota's economy by purchasing more than 18 million bushels of corn from local farmers and has a capacity to produce tens of millions of gallons of ethanol annually, and is notable in its constant exploration of innovative changes to its products and processes to add value for its members."

CVEC began as a dream between two Benson men more than 20 years ago. They wanted to make the most of the area's corn production while also stabilizing electricity rates. From that dream came the Chippewa Valley Agrafuels Cooperative (CVAC), a group of more than 650 shareholders that included producers, elevators, and local investors.

In 1995, CVAC became the general partner of an ethanol partnership, The Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company (CVEC), and by early 1996 was in full operation at its own facility. Among its accomplishments, CVEC was the first direct blend E85 facility in the state. However, the innovation didn't end there. Today its facility produces fuel, as well as high quality alcohols used in food and beverage applications as well as industrial and pharmaceutical applications.

Currently, CVEC has the capacity to produce 50 million gallons of ethanol annually. It is still a small-town, Minnesota company at heart, but has grown to 975 cooperative owners, with the

majority living within a 50-mile radius of the plant. CVEC is recognized at both the federal and state levels for efficient production and leadership in shaping ethanol policy.

“CVEC is focused on adding value to its coop members through the continued utilization of corn and ag-based products for fuel, feed and food, which add value to rural America,” said CVEC Board Chairman David Thompson.

Since beginning operations, CVEC has grown and diversified, counting its culture of innovation as a significant strength that has led to solid returns for its member owners. Currently the company has ownership interest in four other ethanol companies and is a founding owner of the Renewable Products Marketing Group (RPMG).

RPMG has grown into one of the premier ethanol and co-product marketing firms in North America. (For more information see www.rpmgllc.com.) With RPMG’s logistical ability and industry contacts, CVEC fulfills customer order and placement needs with product staged in terminals throughout the United States or adjacent to export facilities. RPMG’s motto is also a CVEC guiding principle, “We take care of our customers.”

AURI awarded its first Ag Innovator of the Year in 2003. Previous winners include Kay’s Naturals of Clara City (2016), EarthClean Corp. of South Saint Paul (2015) and Midwest Ag Enterprises of Marshall (2014), among others.

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About AURI

The Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI)’s mission is to foster long-term economic benefit through value-added agricultural products. It accomplishes this by using science and technology to help develop new uses for agricultural products. It collaborates with businesses and entrepreneurs to generate economic impact in Minnesota communities by helping them take advantage of innovative opportunities in four focus areas: biobased products, renewable energy, coproducts and food. AURI provides a broad range of services, including applied research and development, scientific assistance and a targeted network of resources to develop value-added uses for crops and coproducts. To learn more about AURI visit: auri.org.