

Governor welcomes Grainbridge to Waterloo

by Mary Lou Rodgers

Governor Dave Heineman was in Waterloo recently for the launch of a new business in the Village and the expansion of important technology for agriculture in Nebraska.

Grainbridge, LLC, a cash grain management company, held an open house and ribbon-cutting on December 22 at their newest branch office at 301 3rd Street in Waterloo.

In an online demonstration, Grainbridge partners Pat Kroese and Mark Frank showed Governor how farmers can use their software to track prices and plan for crop production.

"One of the biggest challenges for farmers is knowing how to measure success, to give a value of what is unsold and to tell you what you need to sell it for to meet your goals," Kroese said.

They also presented the Governor with an honorary Grainbridge account.

Kroese explained that there is no other program exactly like the one Grainbridge offers. Other businesses do portions of it, but Grainbridge ties it all together. The company already has users from 23 states. Farmers can create a marketing plan; manage cash sales, futures, options and crop insurance; and receive special bids from buyers and send offers to buyers. With the Grainbridge online tools, farmers can also text and e-mail customers, send voice broadcasts and receive offers 24/7.

"In agriculture, you need to be more educated than ever before," Governor Heineman commented. "It's exciting what you're doing in terms of Nebraska and the industry."

Kroese and Frank, rural Nebraska boys from Wilbur and Verdigre, said the idea for the business started in November 2006. By January 2009, it became a full-fledged operation.

Bob Krohn, a private partner from Omaha, explained, "We wanted to find convenient ways that are user friendly to help the farmer build his plan."

Other major partners are Steve Knuth from Ag West marketing firm; Gary Tuttle from Friend, Nebraska, who is in the ag industry; and Albert Cox, a grain farmer from Wisner.

"All four came on board and



Governor Dave Heineman (seated left) listens as Pat Kroese (right), vice president of marketing, explains the software Grainbridge, LLC has developed for farmers.

helped us give tools to agricultural businesses to take to farmers," Kroese said.

Farmers Mutual Hail, an insurance company out of Des Moines, Iowa, is also a major partner. Grainbridge works with

insurance companies in 15 major ag states.

In Waterloo, Grainbridge has five full-time employees and eight IT personnel on contract. In the long term, Kroese said their goal is to bring in 30-32 people locally.

"We're excited about the work ethic in Nebraska," he said.

Village Board of Trustees Chair Stan Benke welcomed them.

"We're very honored you chose Waterloo to locate your business," Benke said.



Governor Dave Heineman cuts the ribbon on a new business located on 3rd Street in Waterloo. With him (front row, l-r) are Mark Frank and Pat Kroese (Grainbridge), Jim Tomanek (Western Douglas County Chamber of Commerce) and Stan Benke (Waterloo Board of Trustees chair); and (back) partners with Grainbridge.