

# Customer Care Makes Heritage Ag 'Best In Class'

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**STUTT GART, ARK.**

**“W**e are customer driven, customer focused. That’s our only concern. We take care of our customers, everything else will take care of itself.”

Those are the words of Mike Linton, general manager of Heritage Agriculture of Arkansas. With a philosophy like this, it’s little wonder that Heritage Agriculture of Arkansas was named the 2011 “Best-in-Class Farm Equipment Dealership” by Farm Equipment magazine. In fact, the panel of renowned farm equipment experts who did the judging for the contest actually focused on Heritage Agriculture’s attention to customer care, employee development and community involvement as well as its financial and operational results. Heritage Agriculture was chosen in the \$50 million and under category. There also was a \$50 million and above category.

Linton explained his company’s philosophy at Heritage Agriculture’s First Annual Big Red Event, a gathering of customers, equipment representatives and specialists, and Heritage Agri-

partnered with Tractor House to design a website and keep it fresh.

“We try to keep it updated, we don’t think there’s about anything else you could add to it. If there is I’d like to know it because we want to do it,” Linton added. “On our website you can get an overview of our company.”

The beginnings of Heritage Agriculture of Arkansas were in 1966 when Claud Cash purchased Trumann Implement Co. with his Uncle, Jimmy Moon. In 1987, Claud and business partner, Bob Pittman, acquired Carlisle Implement Co. in Carlisle, Ark. and later Arkansas County Farm Equipment in Stuttgart and DeWitt. After his passing in 2004, Claud’s wife, Joan, assumed the role as head of the company. She remains involved in every aspect of the business. She has served two terms in the Arkansas House of Representatives. Today, Joan’s son, Greg Cash, and son-in-law, Mike Linton, oversee the day-to-day operations of the dealership. Cash is vice-president and Linton has the title of secretary/treasurer general manager.

“We are a family-owned business. We’re involved in these dealerships every day. My

**Linton commented about the Big Red Event “They hear from us every day but we wanted to put them in touch with the people that help us make our decisions. So they’re hearing it firsthand from the people that we do business with everyday.”** Photos by John LaRose, Jr.



culture representatives at the Grand Prairie Center in Stuttgart, Ark.

“When we go to shows this is what we experience and we wanted to bring that same type of experience to our customer base,” he explained. “They hear from us every day but we wanted to put them in touch with the people that help us make our decisions. So they’re hearing it firsthand from the people that we do business with everyday. We’re excited about it, it’s our first annual of course, something we can build on; but we’ve had a tremendous turnout and it’s just been a wonderful experience so far. Customers are raving about it so they’re just real excited about it too.”

Heritage Agriculture of Arkansas has five dealerships, one of each located in Hoxie, Pocahontas, Carlisle, Stuttgart and DeWitt. The event at Grand Prairie, which is part of Phillips County Community College, brought a huge sampling of the company’s equipment into a large open indoor area where visitors could see the company’s offerings in cool comfort, while outside the mercury soared to over 100.

“We have a classroom setting across the hallway and we’ve invited the people we do business with every day, our Case IH representatives and specialists, to present information on the equipment,” Linton continued. “We have Magnum tractors and Steiger tractor specialist here, Dale Massey. We have Terry Medley on combines, Luke Gazway discussing planting and seeding, we have Andy Strickland on guidance. Our Case business manager Doug Cole is also here, as well as the Case IH dealer development coordinator Mike Spillers.

Visitors were treated to a chicken and catfish meal in a cool comfortable setting, allowing many to get out of the hot weather for a day. While some had chores to complete early in the morning, many called to say they would be there for the lunch.

“I said ‘hey, just do what you have to do, we’re here and we’re here for you. If you can come and take advantage of it, fine; if not, there’ll be another day,’” he related.

For those who couldn’t be present they can learn a lot by going to the company’s website, <[www.heritageag.net](http://www.heritageag.net)>. Heritage Agriculture has

brother in law, Greg Cash, runs the Hoxie and Pocahontas operation, I oversee Carlisle, Stuttgart and DeWitt and we’re on the phone together daily.

“We’re farm equipment dealers. We’re in our dealerships everyday. It’s a wonderful experience working with your family, and we’ve got a close family.”

The company has about 90 employees who also are treated as an important part of the company.

“We keep our customers number one, we keep our employees number two and I think as long as we keep things like that good things are going to happen,” he said. “When you have such a grass roots foundation in the sense of family and home, it’s hard to fail, especially when there is love involved in it.”

They pride themselves in that they are not absentee owners.

“We’re not sitting in Florida, Alabama or Mississippi or someplace else trying to make decisions about what’s going on in Arkansas,” Linton continued. “We’re not big farmers, we don’t farm 20,000, 30,000 acres.”

“This is what we do, this is who we are. It’s not an 8 to 5 job, it’s 24/7 and that’s the way we live it. We constantly get phone calls – Saturday night, Sunday morning. Yes, we want to go to church and we want to do things too, just like everybody else does; but nothing is more important than our customers, our customers come first. We have people on call 24/7 and that’s the reason why.”

His take-home message is very clear:

“We’re Heritage Ag, we’re family owned, five store complex. We’re not too proud to ask you for your business. We don’t expect you to give us anything; but give us a chance and we’ll earn your business.”

Farm Equipment magazine profiles the winners of its Dealerships of the Year in its July/August 2011 edition. The complete article can be seen at <[www.farm-equipment.com](http://www.farm-equipment.com)>. Δ

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