



**NEWS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch honors Hoosier visionaries during Celebration of Agriculture**

**INDIANAPOLIS (Aug. 17, 2017)** – [Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch](#) presented the 2017 [AgriVision Award](#) to Beth Bechdol, Director of Agribusiness Strategies at [Ice Miller](#) and President and CEO of [AgriNovus Indiana](#), and Dr. Jay Akridge, Interim Provost at [Purdue University](#), during the Celebration of Agriculture at the Indiana State Fair. In its eleventh year, the award is given to Hoosier visionaries who have demonstrated exemplary leadership to maximize the potential of Indiana agriculture.

“The extraordinary vision and leadership Beth Bechdol and Jay Akridge provide to Indiana agriculture epitomizes the spirit of the AgriVision Award,” Lt. Governor Crouch said. “Their passion and expertise has led to countless innovations, and they represent the very best of Indiana agriculture. It’s an honor to present them with this prestigious award.”

“I have had the privilege of working alongside Beth and Jay for many years and seen firsthand the tremendous contributions they have made to agriculture, Hoosier families and the state,” said Ted McKinney, [Indiana State Department of Agriculture](#) (ISDA) Director. “They are true visionaries, and their deep commitment to those who grow our food, fuel and fiber is why they are more than deserving of this honor.”

Beth Bechdol is the Director of Agribusiness Strategies at Ice Miller and President and CEO of AgriNovus Indiana. Growing up on a farm in Auburn, Ind., Bechdol has spent her entire life striving to make Indiana a global leader in agriculture.

Her public service includes work with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and on the Senate Agriculture Committee under Indiana Senator Richard Lugar. She was also the first deputy director at ISDA and was integral in establishing the agency. She was directly involved in ISDA’s international trade efforts and coordinated several trade missions for then-Governor Mitch Daniels and Lt. Governor Becky Skillman.

Dr. Akridge is currently Purdue’s Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Diversity. Akridge began his career 20 years ago at Purdue University as a faculty member in the Department of Agricultural Economics and has since served as dean of the College Agriculture. During his time at Purdue, he has positioned the university to be one of the world’s leading agricultural colleges through innovative program development, initiatives and research.

His expertise and leadership is valued by industry leaders here in Indiana and nationwide. Akridge served on the ISDA Advisory Board from 2009 to 2015 and was part of the team that created AgriNovus Indiana. He is also a leader in the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), a research, policy and advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the work of public

universities in North America.

### **Purdue Extension Women in Agriculture Award**

The 2017 [Purdue Extension Women in Agriculture](#) awards were also presented at the Celebration of Agriculture. This year, the Leadership Award, which recognizes women in policymaking and agribusiness, was presented to Jane Hardisty. The Achievement award, which recognizes women who are directly involved in a home farming operation, was presented to Carrie Vollmer-Sanders.

For a press release from Purdue Extension on the Women in Agriculture Award, please click [here](#) or visit [www.extension.purdue.edu](http://www.extension.purdue.edu).

### **John Arnold Rural Preservation Award**

Awarded for the first time as part of the Celebration of Agriculture, [Indiana Landmarks](#) and [Indiana Farm Bureau](#) presented the [John Arnold Rural Preservation Award](#) to Tim and Beth Sheets. The annual award recognizes the preservation and continued use of historic farming-related buildings. The Sheets' Heritage Farm in western Howard County is home to a large gambrel roof barn with a decorative shingle roof.

For a press release from Indiana Landmarks on the John Arnold Rural Preservation Award, please click [here](#) or visit [www.indianalandmarks.org](http://www.indianalandmarks.org).

### **2017 ISDA Photo Contest**

Winners of the [2017 ISDA Photo Contest](#) were also announced during the Celebration of Agriculture, whose photos will be featured in the Offices of the Lt. Governor's Family of Business in Indianapolis. The contest, now in its tenth year, was created to showcase the hard work and contributions made by Hoosier farmers. Below are the winners for 2017. Their photos can be found by clicking [here](#).

#### *Overall*

- "Best Friends" by Joelle Orem of Forest, IN
- "Morning Glory" by Andrea Kappler of Evansville, IN

#### *Agritourism*

- "Autumn Harvest" by Andrea Kappler of Evansville, IN
- "Fallen Fruit" by Taylor Watkins of Cloverdale, IN

#### *Conservation*

- "Ladybug" by Kevin Allison of Indianapolis, IN
- "Morning Sunlight in the Hoosier National Forest" by Brad Laidig of Lakeville, IN

#### *Faces of Agriculture*

- "Cowboy Graham" by Abigail Pflum of Milton, IN
- "The New Generation" by Fatima Scott of Palmyra, IN

#### *On the Farm*

- "A Daybreak Saturday Morning" by Jeff Riggins of Albany, IN
- "Moo" by Kara Tracey of Mooresville, IN

For more information about the AgriVision Award or the 2017 ISDA Photo Contest, please visit [www.isda.in.gov](http://www.isda.in.gov).

#

*Note to the press: The photos below were taken during the Celebration of Agriculture.*



*ISDA Director Ted McKinney speaking at the Celebration of Agriculture.*

---



*Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch and ISDA Director Ted McKinney presenting Beth Bechdol with the AgriVision Award.*

---



*Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch and ISDA Director Ted McKinney presenting Dr. Jay Akridge with the AgriVision Award.*

---

#### **ABOUT ISDA**

The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture \(ISDA\)](#) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. The Director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Administratively, ISDA reports to [Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch](#), who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.

---



**Media Contact:**

Ben Gavelek  
Phone: 317.690.3303  
Email: [bgavelek@isda.in.gov](mailto:bgavelek@isda.in.gov)



Indiana State Department of Agriculture • [www.isda.in.gov](http://www.isda.in.gov) • (317) 232-8770