



THE GRAFEL BROTHERS received this year's Kansas Bankers Association soil conservation award for their farming practices. Pictured top row, (above) are Dan and his wife Melinda and

Amanda Greg. Row 1: (from left) Dan and Melinda's kids, Isabel and Kade, and Greg and Amanda's kids, Kel and Reece.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Brothers receive soil conservation award

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Two brothers who farm together and operate an elevator in Traer were selected for the Kansas Bankers Association soil conservation award.

Dan and Greg Grafel, who live outside of Traer, were selected for the award this year. The men said this is their second award, having received one in 1993 for their farming practices.

The men said they first learned about being selected for the award when they received a letter from the conservation district recently.

Greg Grafel said Grafel Farms does pretty much all no-till farming or about 90 percent. He said they also strip till on the irrigated fields and have put water ways in where needed.

"Over the years," said Dan Grafel, "we have re-built terraces, normally hiring someone to do the job. We have also worked with the soil conservation office on other projects.

"Some of the projects have included the conservation reserve program and windbreaks."

In 2003, the men started strip tilling on their irrigated fields, which is similar to no-till.

"It used to be that on irrigated ground it was tilled, so much of the residue was lost, said Dan, "but now that residue stays on the field which helps retain the moisture."

"Last year was a dry year in the Traer area," said Greg, "but with the new practice we were still able to raise good crops."

Dan said they also started using a stripper head on the combine that just takes the top off the wheat, leaving the straw for the wildlife

and also retains the moisture.

He said that 2006 was the first year they used the stripper head for wheat harvest.

A lot of the Grafels' land is in Finley Township, they said. All of it is north of Oberlin, but they also have some land in Nebraska.

The Grafels grow wheat, corn, alfalfa, and soybeans and also raise cattle.

"We also own and operate D&S Grain and Cattle Co. Inc., which is a small county elevator," said Dan.

Dan and Greg said their mom, Connie, dad, Rich and Ms. Grafel's father, Harold Demmer purchased the elevator in 1969 and are able to lease the farm ground around the elevator.

Besides farming, Greg is also involved in wildlife projects, including releasing pheasants in the area.

Dan said he went to Kansas State University where he received a degree in Agricultural Journalism. He said he didn't plan on coming back home, but he knew it was a good place to raise kids, with a good education system and he felt they would be better grounded growing up here.

He and his wife Melinda have two kids, Kade, 11 and Isabel, 8.

Greg also went to Kansas State University where he received a degree in Animal Science. Before returning home he worked with ServiTech for two years.

He and his wife Amanda have two kids, Kel, 9 and Reece, 5.