



Telling the true story of the land we love and work

North Carolina, March, 2009 - It took a logger from Montana to remind us of something we should all know in Sampson County and that's just how important our farmers are, both here and across our great nation.

Whether they are growing tobacco, sweet potatoes, pepper, corn, hogs or even trees, those who work the land understand it far better than anyone else. And, as Bruce Vincent so passionately put it during the Friends of Agriculture rally earlier this week, no one can better tell the story — and speak the real truth — about agriculture than those closest to nature.

Vincent is also correct in reminding us that we must stand up and be counted, making urbanites realize that it is rural America that feeds the world, grows its trees, mines its coal and protects its environment.

Here in Sampson County, it all starts and ends with agriculture. While there are other very successful businesses and industries here, without our farmers, their crops, their hogs, their turkeys, their cotton and a vast array of other crops and products, where would we be?

Working the land has, in some circles, become a trite statement relegated to the way old-timers talk about the good ole' days. But that simply shouldn't be the case.

Here in Sampson, working the land is a family tradition, a catalyst for the work ethic that so many within our ranks exhibit day in and day out, the pride we feel in being a part of rural America, where a slower, more family-oriented pace seems to exist.

It's not completely idyllic — we, of course, have our problems — but the lives we live, the work we create, the products we produce and the place where we do it all is envied by so many.

As Vincent said, many urbanites take vacations and head to rural America, where they spend a few days in a place they long for, then return to their lives believing they need to sustain that life for everyone. Problem is they don't know how, but farmers and those who live within rural America certainly do.

We simply don't do a good job of communicating that fact or the story we've lived all our lives, the same story our parents and their parents and their parents' parents' lived.

It is time we do a better job of communicating the simple truths of rural America, just as Vincent pleaded with us to do.

Sure we're busy, but are we really so behind in all we must do that we can't take a few minutes to let the truth out — our truth and our neighbor's truth ... and our county's truth?

We do need that fire in the belly Vincent called on us to find, and we need it now. Before it's too late.

We don't want extremists, searching for a cause, to make those things that make us a viable county their next target, simply because no one is telling agriculture's story, the real story, the one we know and should be shouting at the top of our lungs at every turn.

It's up to us.