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Picture Butte resident given agriculture award

by Melissa Villeneuve

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The annual Farming Smarter Conference recently honoured a man dedicated to giving significant contributions to the agriculture industry across southern Alberta over his lifetime with the Orville Yanke Award.

Ron Svanes, who has spent his life working within the industry, received the honour earlier this month due to his undying love for the industry.

“Ron has brought vision from all over the world to his farm,” said Wayne Linwall, who presented the award to Svanes during a presentation that highlighted his work within the industry.

“I’ve had the great privilege of knowing Ron for 50 years and he has made many significant contributions to agriculture, specifically in agriculture research and extensions in all of southern Alberta.”

The Orville Yanke Award is named after one of southern Alberta’s earliest and most ardent soil conservation leaders. Orville Yanke, who was a farmer from Medicine Hat, played a pivotal role founding the Southern Albertan Conservation Association and the Southern Applied Research Association. Both organizations merged in 2012 to form the Farming Smarter organization.

Since 2009, Farming Smarter presented this award to celebrate a farmer or researcher whose contributions have significantly impacted soil conservation research and extension in southern Alberta. Svanes was the ninth recipient.

Svanes, who graduated from the University of Alberta in 1971 with a major in economics, had a plan upon graduation to continue working on his family-run grain farm just north of Picture Butte. The farm was founded in 1905 by his uncle.

Today, Svanes, his wife Edith, his daughter Mandy and her husband Jason Zienstra manage the farm. Svanes has hosted several tours over the decades from for people from China, Australia, France, Quebec and the United States as well as offering an area for applied research to take place on his farm for many industry research professionals.

However, his contributions don’t stop there.

Svanes also taught farm management courses under Gear Up Financially with Alberta Ag, as well as toured the Melbourne area of southern Australia with his wife and several other members of AEPP to promote and explain the program to farmers and government officials there.

Svanes is also the president of the Prairie Tractor and Engine Museum Society in Picture Butte that operates a pioneer style village names Coyote Flats.