



# OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

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MICHAEL W. FRERICHS

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## **Past Cream of the Crop Photo Contest Winners Share Memories, Advice for Young Photographers**

State Treasurer Michael Frerichs Encourages Students  
to Submit Photos by June 22



**SPRINGFIELD** – Past winners of the *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* are looking back fondly on how creativity, hard work and an eye for beauty helped them succeed as young photographers sharing their vision of Illinois agriculture. They’re also looking to the future, offering insight to students who might be—or should be—thinking about entering the 2022 contest, hosted by Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs.

Frerichs is calling on Illinois students, ages 8 to 18, to submit photos for the 2022 *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* by the deadline of **June 22, 2022**. Each student may submit up to two photos electronically at [www.CreamoftheCropContest.com](http://www.CreamoftheCropContest.com). Top photographs will be chosen in three age-based categories: ages 8-10, 11-14 and 15-18.

The contest, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, provides Illinois students with an opportunity to showcase their most innovative or scenic pictures that depict their vision of agriculture in our state. During the history of the contest, more than 500 students have participated, submitting nearly 1,000 photos.

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One of those past winners, Anna Johnson of Durand, Illinois, still remembers what she was thinking when she submitted her photo for the 2021 competition: “It would be such a great opportunity to share a little piece of my life with everyone else who would see this if I win.”

Johnson now is building her own photography business while studying agricultural business at college and holding down a marketing job. Winning the Cream of the Crop contest turned out to be “an amazing opportunity and experience,” she said.

Emily Boecker of Morton, Illinois, recalled her photographic technique of “trying to get low to the ground to try to capture the best angle and framing that included the path, crop and silos on the family farm.”

Boecker, who is now pursuing a degree in art, described how thrilled she felt when she was chosen as a 2017 contest winner. “It was the first time I had entered the contest. It was a very meaningful photo as it is the farm where four generations of my family have lived,” she said.

Maria Schilder of Bolingbrook, Illinois, a 2015 contest winner, remembered taking her photos at a farm that had a friendly goat named Jack. Her cream of the crop photo, however, featured a different animal. “I was proud to submit my portrait of a chicken and even more proud when I was recognized for it,” she said.

While Schilder was excited to learn that her winning photo would be included in the Cream of the Crop calendar, as all winning photos are, she got a bigger kick out of seeing her work displayed at the Illinois State Fair. “I love opportunities to be part of something bigger than me and my circle of friends,” she said.

Other past winners offered additional advice for students who are considering entering this year’s contest.

- “Do it!” said Noah Sandage of Marion, Illinois, a 2020 Cream of the Crop contest winner who plans to study engineering and history when he goes to college in the fall. “You never know what might come of the photo you submit! It is a great opportunity for both you and the community.”
- “My advice would be to continue to practice and take pictures of everything you see,” said Tanner Mickey of Taylorville, Illinois, a 2020 contest winner now studying agriculture in college. “You will begin to gain an eye for good photos and how to take the perfect shot.”
- “Have fun taking pictures and submit something you are proud of!” said Renee Gehrke of Byron, Illinois, a 2017 contest winner and current college student.
- “Go out and capture the beauty in the world,” said Jennifer E. Johnson of Hoffman, Illinois, a 2018 contest winner who is pursuing a career in radiology. “You never know where it could lead.”

The *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* is part of the Ag Invest program in the treasurer’s office. Winning photos will be featured in Ag Invest marketing material, as well as at the 2022 Illinois State Fair.

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Ag Invest, one of the nation's largest agricultural linked deposit programs, helps hundreds of Illinois farmers and agriculture professionals. Through Ag Invest, the treasurer's office partners with eligible financial institutions to offer farmers and ag businesses annual and long-term low-interest loans that can be used for operating costs, equipment purchases, construction-related expenses, and livestock purchases.

To read the rules, terms, and legal conditions associated with this contest, visit our website at [www.CreamoftheCropContest.com](http://www.CreamoftheCropContest.com) or contact Teri Whitfield at 217.900.0075.

### **About the Illinois Treasurer**

As Illinois State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs is the state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer and actively manages approximately \$52 billion. The portfolio includes \$26 billion in state funds, \$17 billion in retirement and college savings plans and \$9 billion on behalf of local and state governments. Frerichs' office protects consumers by safeguarding more than \$3.5 billion in unclaimed property, encouraging savings plans for college or trade school, increasing financial education among all ages, assisting people with disabilities to save without losing government benefits, and removing barriers to a secure retirement. The Treasurer's Office predates Illinois incorporation in 1818. Voters in 1848 chose to make it an elected office.

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