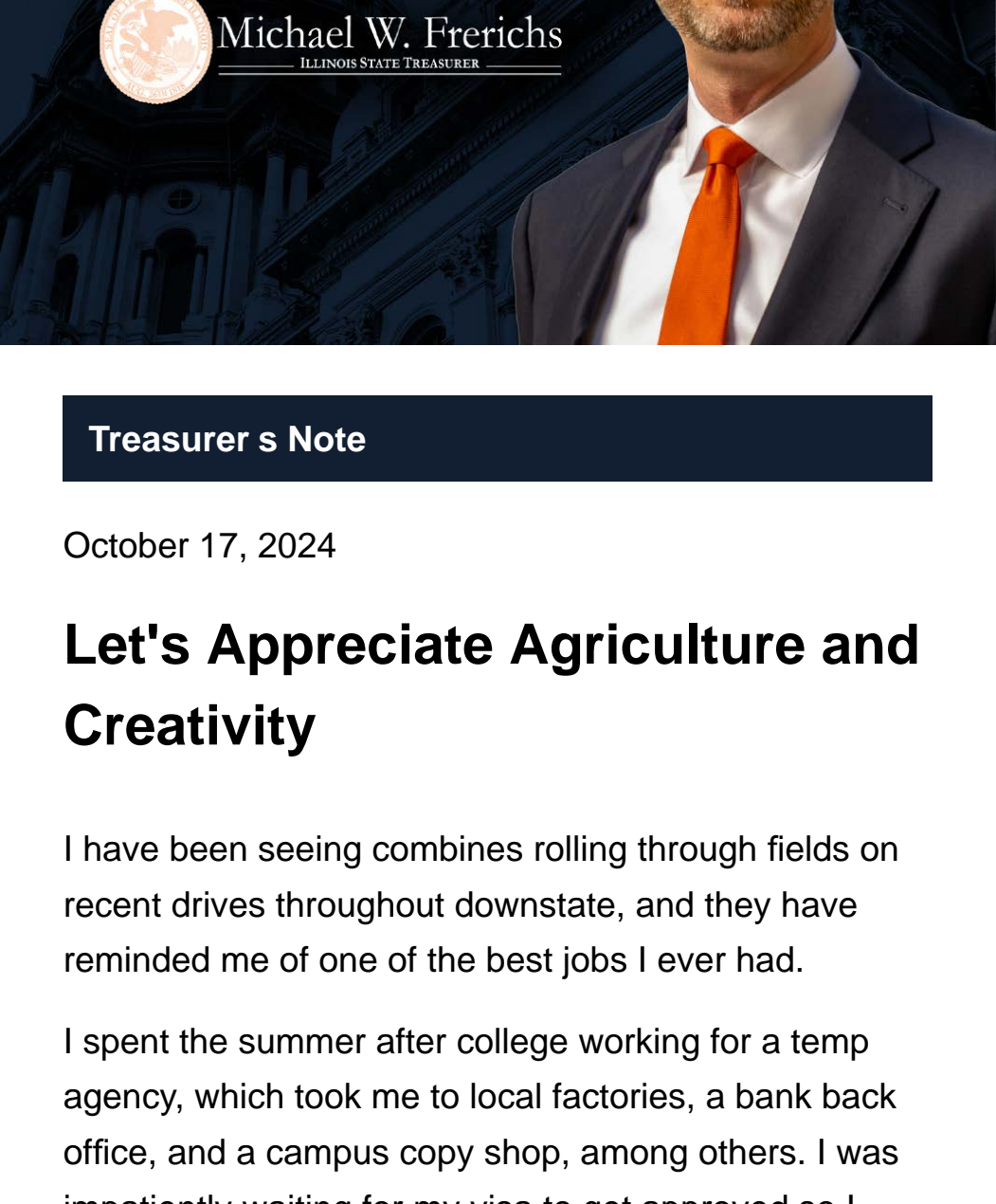


Our Cream of the Crop photo contest offers top winners Bright Start scholarships of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250.

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Treasurer's Note

October 17, 2024

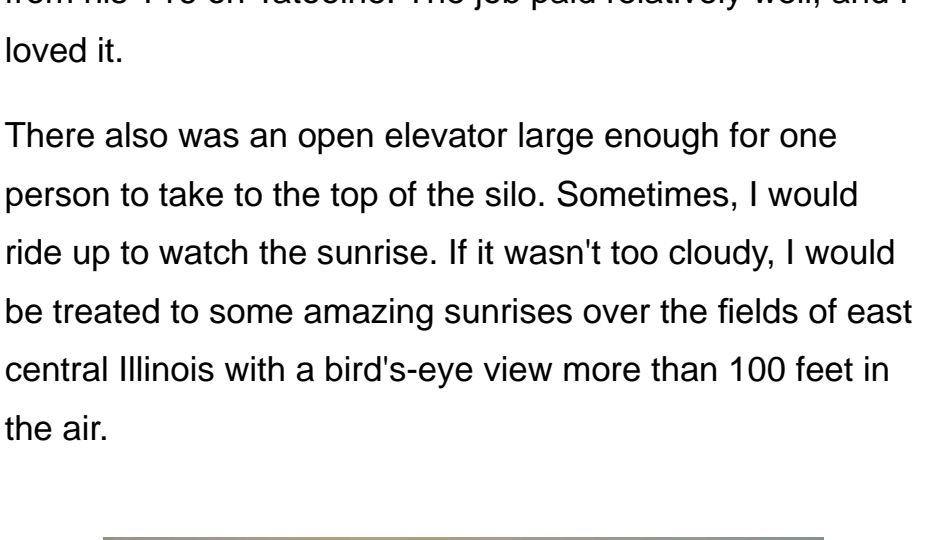
Let's Appreciate Agriculture and Creativity

I have been seeing combines rolling through fields on recent drives throughout downstate, and they have reminded me of one of the best jobs I ever had.

I spent the summer after college working for a temp agency, which took me to local factories, a bank back office, and a campus copy shop, among others. I was impatiently waiting for my visa to get approved so I could take a job teaching English in Taiwan.

By early fall, the visa still hadn't been issued, so I found a steady job with Dad's old employer. I was in charge of drying corn at the United Feeds grain elevator in [Royal, Illinois](#). I was an overnight crew of one, working from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

For those of you who didn't grow up around a farm, a grain elevator stockpiles or stores grain. They are usually the tallest structures in small towns. The tower has a bucket elevator or pneumatic conveyor that scoops up grain and deposits it in a silo or other storage facility.



I didn't take this photo of the grain elevator in Royal, but found it on Wikipedia. It was taken by [Daniel Schwen](#).

The fields around where I grew up are very fertile. Farmers produce more corn than can be quickly used, which means it has to be stored until a buyer is ready for it. The dryers remove some of the moisture from the corn so it can be stored without rotting, but not so much moisture that the corn ends up weighing less than is ideal. That would cut into how much money farmers could earn from their crops.

At harvest time, there is so much grain coming in that the dryers usually run 24/7. Someone needs to monitor the dryers to make adjustments and in case something goes wrong. That's where I came in. Every hour, I collected a sample of corn from the dryer, measured its moisture content, logged the results, and adjusted the dryer temperature if needed. The entire process might take 10 minutes. The rest of the hour I was free to do whatever I wanted.

That allowed me to read, write, think, and shoot a BB gun at rats that might be eyeballing the corn. I felt a little like Luke Skywalker in "Star Wars" [bull's-eyeing womp rats](#) from his T16 on Tatooine. The job paid relatively well, and I loved it.

There also was an open elevator large enough for one person to take to the top of the silo. Sometimes, I would ride up to watch the sunrise. If it wasn't too cloudy, I would be treated to some amazing sunrises over the fields of east central Illinois with a bird's-eye view more than 100 feet in the air.

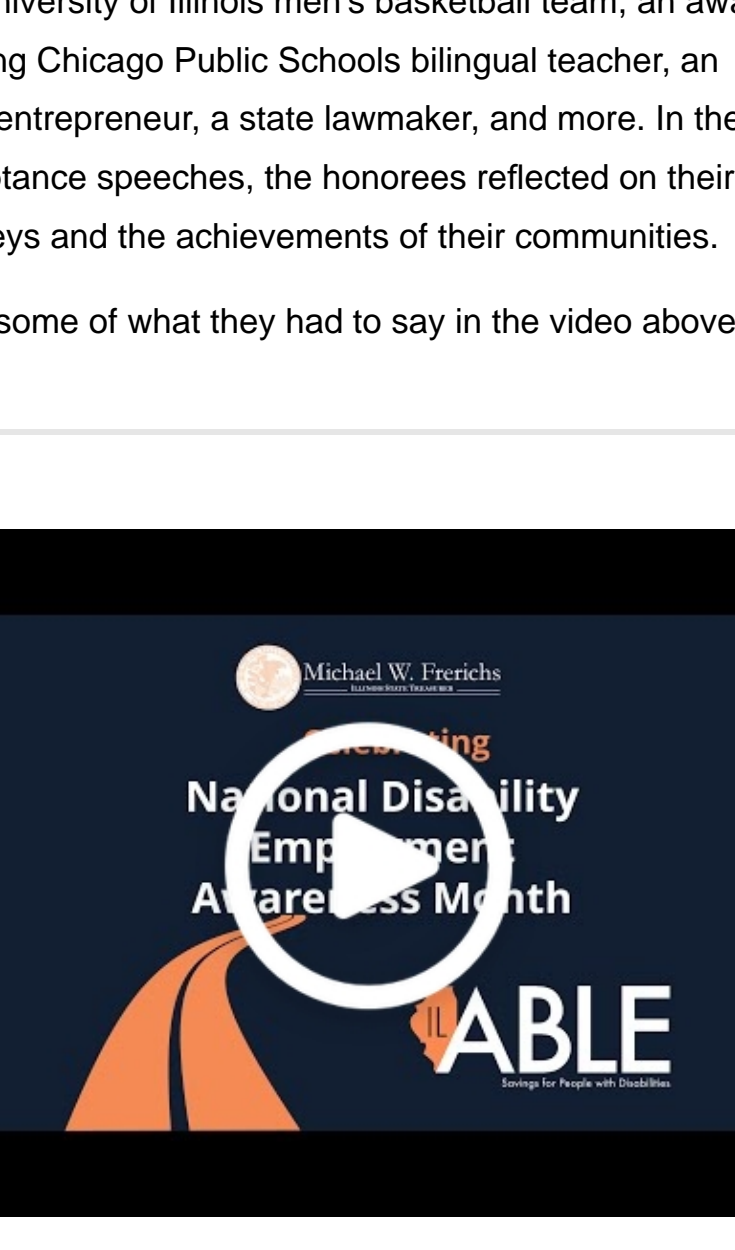


As an alternative to grain elevators, some farmers store grain in their own bins. Here are a couple of photos of grain bins, submitted by students who entered the Cream of the Crop contest.

My cheap camera couldn't capture the sunrise's beauty, so I don't have a picture to show you. But I encourage teens and children with better equipment or a better eye to go out onto the farms and into the fields for our annual [Cream of the Crop](#) photo contest.

The contest doesn't open until March, but contestants can take photos year-round. There are three age groups — 8-10, 11-14 and 15-18. Top three entries in each group get [Bright Start college savings](#) scholarships of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250.

Our goal is to introduce more of our young people to modern agriculture. We get [tremendous pictures](#) that we use in our marketing materials for our [Ag Invest](#) program, especially [our calendar](#). Even if some contestants don't win a scholarship, the hope is that they'll come away with a new perspective on the largest industry in our state and possibly inspire a potential career. We have had winners who grew up on farms, in small towns, and in cities. Anyone can compete.



As you might expect, we receive a lot of photos of corn in the Cream of the Crop contest. Here are a couple that I really like. Thank you to the talented young photographers!

I am certain that there are not a lot of people between the ages of 8 and 18 reading this newsletter, so if you know someone in that age range who likes photography, really enjoys farming, or you think would benefit from a little more time outside, please encourage them to take their cameras, their creativity, and a little imagination out into the country to capture some beauty.

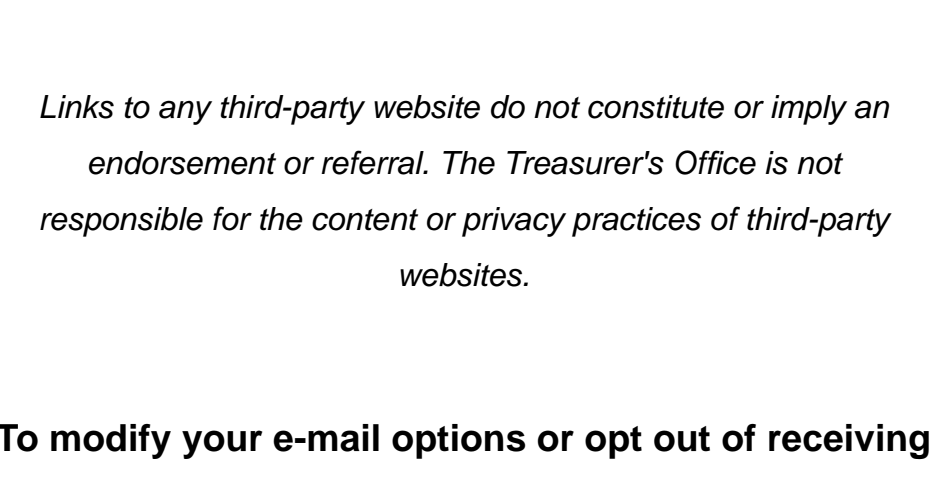
I look forward to seeing their work and hearing their stories.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Frerichs

Illinois State Treasurer

P.S. I didn't want to get into the weeds of how grain elevator sites were chosen, but if you are curious about how previous advances in technology helped settlement and development in our state, I can tackle that material in a future note. Let's try out a poll.



Insights from Hispanic Heritage Month Honorees

We mark the end of Hispanic Heritage Month with a video from the Illinois State Treasurer's Office celebration ceremony. Treasurer Michael Frerichs honored [eight Hispanic leaders](#), including the associate head coach of the University of Illinois men's basketball team, an award-winning Chicago Public Schools bilingual teacher, an artist/entrepreneur, a state lawmaker, and more. In their acceptance speeches, the honorees reflected on their journeys and the achievements of their communities.

Hear some of what they had to say in the video above!

October is a Time to Honor Workers with Disabilities

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and we are celebrating workers with disabilities and their contributions!

As part of this celebration, Treasurer Michael Frerichs and the [Illinois ABLE](#) team visited Urban Autism Solutions' [Growing Solutions Farm](#). This 1.2-acre urban produce farm in Chicago helps transitioning high school students with autism build vocational skills and work experience. Find out more in the video above.

Workers with disabilities, learn how you can contribute more this month — and every month — from earnings to your IL ABLE Account at [illinoisable.com/able-to-work](#).

Visit [illinoisable.com](#) to learn how an IL ABLE account can be an important financial tool for you, or someone you know who has a disability. You can read the Plan Disclosure Booklet for full plan details and important disclosures about investments, fees, and risks on our [website](#).

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