



## Mitchell County Fox River Sock Company Wins Iowa Farm Bureau 'Renew Rural Iowa Entrepreneur Award'

### Worldwide Sock Manufacturer Praised For Innovation and Community Contribution

The Mitchell County Fox River Sock Company, long lauded as a strong innovator, major employer and generous community citizen, can add a new honor to its name; the Osage-based company has been named the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) Renew Rural Iowa Entrepreneur Award winner for April.

The worldwide Fox River Sock Company, founded in 1900, provides employment for 180 people within a 40-mile radius of Osage, while fostering economic growth in Mitchell County. In addition to major contributions to the local economy, Fox River Sock Company is revered for its community involvement. Their annual Socktoberfest celebration takes Osage by storm the first weekend in October. The benefit sock sale brings 7,000 visitors to the otherwise quiet rural town of 3,500. Last year 100,000 pairs of socks were sold during the annual event to benefit local service organizations and civic groups. "They're some of the earliest to volunteer; their employees are active in the community, small service clubs and organizations, in their churches and the schools," said Brenda Dryer of the Mitchell County Economic Development Group.

"We've been here for 47 years, and we've made a lot of socks since then," said company President and Chief Sock Inventor, John Lessard. In addition to traditional socks for the feet, Fox River Sock Company has made the popular Original Rockford Red Heel Monkey Sock for more than 20 years.

The Farm Crisis of the 1980's hit rural Iowa hard. Mitchell County Farm Bureau President Leland Meitner remembers the role Fox River Sock Company played while helping the county fight through. "People had tough times back in the '80s; Fox River employed these people to keep them here in Mitchell County," said Meitner.

"Today's Iowa farmers constantly work to improve their communities, quality of life, and sustainability of the land; Fox River Sock Company has demonstrated those same virtues during nearly 50 years of fostering economic growth in rural Iowa, and that's why Farm Bureau is proud to present them this award," said Sandy Ehrig, IFBF Economic Development Administrator.

Renew Rural Iowa (RRI) is an IFBF initiative supporting new and existing businesses through education, mentoring, and financial resources. The next Renew Rural Iowa Business Success Seminar takes place April 4 at International Document Training in West Des Moines. For more information, go to [www.renewruraliowa.com](http://www.renewruraliowa.com).