

## Vanier Family Donates \$1 Million

The Jack and Donna Vanier family continued their legacy of giving by donating \$1 million to the future of wheat research.

"As we enter the golden age of wheat research, this gift to the Kansas Wheat Commission Research Foundation (KWCRF) will ensure a bright future for our state's most iconic crop," said Ron Suppes, a Kansas wheat farmer who serves as the chair of the KWCRF Steering Committee.

"Wheat is something that touches lives across the world every day, from the Kansas farmer to the suburban mom to children in developing countries," said the Vanier family. "For our family, wheat is ingrained in our heritage and is a proud cornerstone of our business, so we are honored to give back to the industry that has blessed us with so much."

In recognition of the Vanier family's forward-thinking gift, the Kansas Wheat Alliance has named a new wheat variety KS Western Star, a tribute to the Salina flour mill that started it all for the Vaniers.

John J. Vanier had a bold passion for the milling industry, and through saving and hard work, was able to afford a then-struggling Western Star Mill Company in 1925. As his business began to expand, so did his family, which includes Jack and Donna Vanier, as well as their children Marty, Mary and John, the generous individuals who now have given a gift that will shape the Kansas wheat industry for years to come. The KS Western Star variety, which was developed at Kansas State University, will be available to farmers in fall 2020.



This generous donation is a pillar of the KWCRF's Fields Forward campaign for a sustainable wheat future. The campaign aims to fund research projects that improve yield and quality, develop and maintain technologies and facilities necessary for future wheat research and cultivate new talent in the wheat breeding and genetics industry.

"This gift is an incredible gesture to Kansas wheat farmers and researchers," said Aaron Harries, vice president of research and operations at Kansas Wheat. "It will allow us to properly maintain and improve the Kansas Wheat Innovation Center, a facility that marks the largest investment by farmers in wheat research to date. This facility has hosted tens of thousands of visitors from around the globe over the last seven years, and it contains the future of wheat genetics in its laboratories and greenhouses. This donation gives our stakeholders peace-of-mind, knowing that the hub they have created for international wheat research will be maintained for years to

come."

The KWCRF was established in 2011 as the official fundraising organization for the Kansas Wheat Commission. The Foundation works to raise private dollars to combine with public funds for the advancement of wheat research including the accelerated release of wheat varieties. Much of this research is conducted at Kansas State University.

Over the past half century, Kansas wheat farmers have contributed millions of their own hard-earned dollars toward wheat research through the wheat checkoff. However, the cost of research continues to increase while government funding decreases. The Kansas Wheat Commission Research Foundation was created to increase research funding above and beyond the resources of the wheat checkoff. And while the checkoff is paid only by farmers, the Foundation allows private individuals and all segments of the wheat industry to support wheat research through tax-deductible gifts.

With supporters like the Vanier family, the Kansas wheat industry will continue to honor the heritage that unites us all. For more information about the KWCRF, visit [fieldsforward.org](http://fieldsforward.org).