



# THE IOWA / NEBRASKA CHAPTER OF THE ESOP ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2020 NEWSLETTER



## In This Newsletter:

Letter From the President  
Pages 1 and 2

Sponsorships  
Page 2

Advocacy  
Page 3

Communications  
Page 4

Membership  
Pages 5, 6 and 7

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the chapter officers, I want to extend our continued support and best wishes to you, your loved ones, and your companies as COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on our world.

While we couldn't gather in person for the annual Midwest conference, we made the most of it virtually! A total of 406 attendees gathered as a community on Sept. 17 and 18 to learn, share, and support each other. Iowa/Nebraska joined our traditional Midwest chapter partners: Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota/Dakotas, and added a new partner, the Heart of America chapter. Although it wasn't the forum we'd prefer, it was heart-warming to see and hear local content again and celebrate our 2020 Chapter award winners. And, I was so proud to see the talent and passion of the Iowa/Nebraska members on full display, as our members presented in nearly one-third of the sessions.

As you've heard, Employee-Owned 2020 is also going virtual Nov. 11 to 13. The event, ESOP 2020: Resilience and Renewal, is a technical education conference with exceptional keynote speakers designed for ESOP leaders.

Details can be found on the Association website, [www.esopassociation.org](http://www.esopassociation.org), or via emails from the National office or our chapter administrator, Jodi Lamb.

We hope to see you all again soon when the economic and health conditions allow. In the meantime, enjoy this newsletter and stay safe and healthy.



Becky Streff, Employee Owner at ESP International, Inc.  
President, Iowa-Nebraska Chapter of the ESOP Association



## SPONSORSHIPS

### Sponsorships for ESOP 2020 are Now Available: Over 800 Expected to Attend

Many ESOP companies prefer to buy goods and services from their fellow employee owned businesses, and now you have a new way to spread the word about your business among ESOP Association members.

TEA is offering a unique sponsorship opportunity for corporate members at our new virtual conference - [ESOP 2020: Resilience and Renewal](#), taking place Nov. 11 to 13.

For only \$500, you can become a [Corporate Supporter](#) and be recognized during session breaks, on TEA's social media channels, in marketing emails, and more!

As the only employee ownership event scheduled to take place after the national elections, ESOP 2020: Resilience and Renewal offers a unique value to attendees - and unique opportunities to [market your brand](#) to an engaged audience of ESOP leaders and decision makers, including ESOP company executives, trustees, board members, plan administrators, employee owners, and professional service providers.



Excitement for this new event is palpable and growing - almost 490 people have already registered! Total attendance is expected to exceed 800. Visit us online today to learn more or to reserve your [Corporate Supporter sponsorship](#).

# ADVOCACY

## Advocacy Page on TEA Website

Have you had a chance to look at the Advocacy page of the TEA website? If not, please take a few minutes to go in and review it. If you have seen it, you are encouraged to review it again as the information is constantly evolving and being updated.



You may access the [Advocacy page](#) on the TEA website where you will find helpful and interesting information on topics, such as the Top Advocacy Issues, Guide for Successful Advocacy, Engage Your Elected Officials, Our ESOP Champions in Congress, and much more.

## Elected Official and Candidate Visits

Our elected officials and candidates running for office are always interested in visiting our member ESOP companies. If you're interested in hosting an official or candidate, please contact the individual's local office. This includes officials and candidates from your local positions all the way up to the national offices. Make sure you showcase the fact you are an ESOP company, thank them for their past support, provide a quick overview of what they can do for your company and the ESOP industry, and ask for their support.

If you have never hosted an individual and want some pointers on how to do it, don't hesitate to reach out to individuals at Folience, Precision, VGM or a host of other chapter companies and they'll gladly share their experiences. (Please take pictures of the event and send them to [Melany Stonewall](#), our chapter VP of Communications, or [Jodi Lamb](#), our Chapter Executive.)

## November Elections

We have the opportunity to vote for our elected officials on Tuesday, Nov. 3. It doesn't matter which party or candidate you support, just make sure you vote. If you're not registered to vote, please do that as soon as you can. You can make a difference!



## Let Us Know How You're Celebrating Employee Ownership Month!

Employee Ownership Month is here! This is an exciting time for ESOP companies and provides an opportunity to celebrate being employee-owned by hosting fun events and activities. If your company will be conducting something special for your employees in October, we would love to hear about it and see pictures!

Simply send an email to [Kellie Stastny](#) and/or [Melany Stonewall](#) with details and your company will be featured on Twitter and highlighted in the fourth quarter newsletter. Please make sure to share your company's Twitter handle as well so we can tag you.

If you are still looking for ideas for the month, don't forget that there are a variety of fantastic resources available on [The HUB](#), including fact sheets, EOM quizzes, advocacy materials, social media shareables, and more!

THE HUB  
POWERED BY THE ESOP ASSOCIATION



### The HUB: The Center of Online ESOP Interaction

As a reminder, last spring, The ESOP Association rolled out The HUB, which is a new series of networks that will become the center of online activity for ESOP companies and employee owners. The HUB offers tools for chatting, sharing resources, asking questions, and gathering insights and ideas – all in a safe online environment offered exclusively to ESOP Association members. The HUB also is where recordings of popular webinars are stored. You can even find a variety of resources to use during employee ownership month, including quizzes, fact sheets, social media shareables, and more!

Fully integrated into TEA's website, when you sign into the website you are automatically signed into The HUB and all the networks within it. Commenting on TEA resources and sharing them in your discussions is quick and easy because you are still connected to the website.

Some of the networks that have been launched include:

- [COVID-19 Network](#)
- [Chapter Networks](#)
- [Work Groups](#)

If you haven't already, members are encouraged to check out The HUB today by following these steps:

1. Log in to [The ESOP Association website](#) to access The HUB.
2. Click "My HUB Settings" in the navigation menu.
3. Enter a professional bio and photo for yourself.
4. Connect any social channels you want your fellow members to see, such as LinkedIn.

# MEMBERSHIP

## Welcome New Members!

We'd like to welcome Shawver Well to our Chapter! Established in 1937, Shawver Well Company Inc. has been providing outstanding well drilling services in Northeast Iowa. Over the years, Shawver Well has expanded to provide geothermal installation, as well as pump and septic services in select counties. Shawver Well is based in Fredericksburg, Iowa and employs approximately 23 employees. Their ESOP was formed in 2012 and they are 100% employee-owned.



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: THE VGM GROUP

In an effort to showcase other ESOP companies that are members of the IA/NE Chapter, this quarter we are highlighting VGM Group. VGM Group (VGM), located in Waterloo, Iowa, formed an ESOP in 2005 and has since built a culture around employee ownership and unique ESOP events throughout the year. Moving to a 100% employee-owned company in 2008, the group's share value has seen almost 100% growth and now employs more than 1,150 Iowans.

### How do your employees live an employee-owned culture every day?

At VGM, we live by the “Power of One.” The Power of One is an idea that each of us can make a difference with a single intentional action to grow ourselves, company, and customers. VGM recently introduced the Power of One Principles, which are a collection of eight distinct values that go to the core of our culture, of who we are as a company. They're the characteristics and behaviors that each member of the VGM family can and should aspire toward:

- Make a Difference
- Welcome Change
- Provide Meaningful, Memorable Service
- Create Your Future
- Own Your Ownership
- Cheer Each Other On
- Protect Our Company
- Find the Fun in Your Day





### What is one of the coolest things your company has done as it relates to being employee-owned?

In 2019, VGM asked employee owners to vote on a local “Be the Change” partner as a way to give back to our home base and community, through time and money. VGM employee owners selected House of Hope to support their mission in providing homeless mothers and women who age out of foster care with individualized support and transitional housing to achieve secure families, independence, and permanent homes. Collectively, VGM employees were able to donate over \$42,000!

VGM’s philanthropy is directly related to being employee owned because our employees give a lot of their own time and money to these local charities through the different fundraisers our Events Team puts together directly connecting to our “Make a Difference” principle.

### What advice do you have for employees of newly established ESOP companies as they begin their ESOP journeys?

Ask lots of questions! No question is a dumb question. Resources are available through ESOP communication committees, your local ESOP chapters, and other ESOP companies in the area are willing to help and share information. Let’s be real – math can be hard, so it’s best to seek out advice and start thinking about your retirement now.

### What kind of impact has working for an ESOP company had on you? What does it mean to you and your future?

I have a new sense of pride and ownership in my work that I’ve never felt before at previous companies. I know my co-workers are depending on me to do well and show up, and that makes me work 10 times harder. I know I share this feeling with a lot of my employee owners, so it has made work so much more enjoyable knowing that everyone is there to do their job with 110% effort every day.

# VGM

## How has being a member of the IA/NE ESOP Chapter benefitted you?

I have learned so much from being in the IA/NE ESOP Chapter. It has allowed VGM and our ESOP Communications Committee to attend multiple conferences where both basic and high-level information has been shared. By being a part of the chapter and attending events/conferences, you meet other ESOP companies from the Midwest that you can steal ideas from about employee ownership month activities, education opportunities, and other fun events for your employee owners.

## Anything else you would like to add about being employee owned?

I hope all employee owners, no matter which company you work for, truly values how great being an ESOP is. It provides us all with a leg up on companies that are not employee-owned because we have additional funds for retirement. It's hard to think about retirement when you're in your 20s and 30s, and maybe even 40s... but if you work hard now...you can play and vacation harder later!

Visit VGM's [website](#) to learn more.

