



Where robotics meet rural roots:

USDA loan funds fuel Kinetic Technologies' growth in rural Iowa

When Mark and Betsy Barglof founded Kinetic Technologies LLC in November 2021, the idea was rooted in both practicality and purpose: to build a company that could bring high-quality technical jobs to rural Iowa while allowing them to remain connected to the community and farm life they care deeply about.

The company grew out of Mark's experience as an infantry officer in the U.S. military, an engineer in the private sector and farmer. For years, he balanced engineering jobs away from home with helping operate the family's corn and soybean farm near Algona, Iowa. That often meant long commutes and time away from family and the farm during the week.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mark was able to work from home for an extended period, which sparked a new idea: why couldn't high-tech engineering and manufacturing jobs exist in rural communities like Algona?

At the same time, Betsy, who had spent many years raising their family and managing farm operations, was ready for a



Growing the business

Above | Corn Belt Power partners with Kinetic Technologies in Algona through a \$952,000 USDA Rural Economic Development Loan to support the company's continued growth. Pictured from left are Stacy Cirks, development finance director, Corn Belt Power Cooperative; Betsy and Mark Barglof, Kinetic Technologies; Steve Benne, vice president of development finance, Iowa Area Development Group; and Laurie Bertram, Farmers Trust and Savings Bank, Buffalo Center, IA.

new challenge and excited about building something of their own.

The idea became more real when Mark met Kyle Post, a talented local engineer whose future became uncertain after his employer was acquired.

"Like many small towns, rural Iowa often loses highly skilled people because local opportunities simply don't exist," Betsy said. "Instead of accepting that reality, our team decided to try building those opportunities themselves."

That's how Kinetic Technologies began.

Growing Through Robotics

The company started small with a laser cutter and a press brake, manufacturing parts for local businesses while also helping customers with engineering prototypes, custom equipment and welding fixtures.

"We specialize in custom robotics integrations for manufacturers, specifically welding applications," Betsy says. "We

design and manufacture fixtures, tooling and positioners for these robotic cells. We also do custom parts manufacturing for other companies."

As the business grew, additional equipment was added to expand capabilities. Along the way, the team realized that competing as a traditional job shop would always be difficult because of labor costs, software expenses, and the realities of small-scale manufacturing. That led to a new focus: automation and robotics.

The company's goal is simple: build practical, high-quality automation solutions while creating skilled technical jobs and supporting economic growth in rural Iowa.

"We started with three people in December of 2021 and have grown to a team of 15 full-time employees," Betsy said. "We have also greatly increased our capabilities over time. Our company is not recognizable capability-wise from one year to the next, *Continued on page 3...*"



Loan closing

Above | Stacy Cirks, left, development finance director, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, assists Betsy and Mark Barglof with closing documents May 12 for Kinetic Technologies' USDA Rural Economic Development Loan.

Robotics

Continued from page 1... because we're always learning and growing in our technical competencies.”

Skilled workforce hasn't proven to be a problem in rural Iowa.

“So far, we haven't had any trouble recruiting,” Betsy says. “There are great people right here in Northern Iowa. We hire for culture, and send our new employees through a robot training curriculum.”

Due in part because of a growing workforce, Kinetic and the industry at large continues to expand.

“The robotics and robotic welding market is experiencing strong growth, driven by labor shortages, reshoring of manufacturing, and unprecedented industrial construction activity — particularly in data centers, energy infrastructure, and advanced manufacturing,” Betsy said.

Kinetic now works across several sectors including some of the fastest growing corners of the economy. This includes companies that manufacture components for data centers, the aerospace industry and high value manufacturing.

Expanding Jobs, Space and Opportunity

For the Barglofs, however, where they are building the company matters as much as what they are building. Betsy grew up in the Algona area on her family's farm, which they continue to operate today.

“I grew up in the Algona area on my family's farm, which we continue to operate today,” Betsy said. “Creating a positive impact in the community through high-quality jobs and economic growth is an important goal for the company. In addition,



Kinetic Technologies

Above | Mark Barglof, Kinetic Technologies, demonstrates a robot to Stacy Cirks, development finance director, inside the company's new Algona manufacturing facility May 12. The facility was constructed in part from a USDA Rural Economic Development Loan.

we have worked with Algona High School to help launch a robotics club that will begin next school year. It has been rewarding to expose young people in the community to robotics and advanced manufacturing technology and introduce them to career paths they may not otherwise have the opportunity to explore.”

That future will be helped by support from Corn Belt Power and the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan program, which Betsy said has been an important boost for the young company. Corn Belt Power partnered with Kinetic on a \$952,000 loan.

“We are extremely thankful to have received the USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan,” the Barglofs said. “This is a huge help to our young company. The process was pretty seamless, and working with the Iowa Area Development

Group, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, and Farmer's Trust and Savings Bank has been great. The hardest part was waiting to see if we would be awarded the loan.”

With the loan, the new 12,000 square foot expansion plans include 8,500 square feet of new manufacturing space and 3,500 square feet of new office space and conference room. In addition, Kinetic will purchase new equipment including air compressors, cameras, workbenches, racking, and a 3D printer. The company began work on the expansion in the fall 2025. Kinetic Technologies currently employs 15 full-time positions and expects to hire an additional 8 full time positions over the next three years. ■

Learn more about Kinetic Technologies:
www.kinetictechllc.com

Corn Belt Power restores system after storm damage

The week of May 17 brought several days of severe weather across Corn Belt Power Cooperative's service territory, leaving behind transmission damage in multiple areas. High winds, tornadic activity and lightning were the primary causes, resulting in dozens of broken poles across the system.

Damage was reported in the following areas:

■ **Whittemore Junction to West Bend**

Municipal: 3 broken poles

■ **Dickens to Round Lake:** 26 broken poles

■ **Dolliver Tap:** 12 broken poles

“We hadn't seen a prolonged stretch of severe weather like we did in May in quite some time,” said Jeremy Stattelmann, transmission superintendent, Corn Belt Power Cooperative. “While we never like to see severe weather, I was proud of our linemen's ability to make repairs safely and

quickly.”

Despite the damage, outage times remained limited. Corn Belt Power's longest outage lasted just under two hours in the Dolliver area. Power was restored to members shortly after the damage occurred, while crews continued making permanent storm repairs throughout the week. Corn Belt Power crews completed all storm-related repairs by May 21.

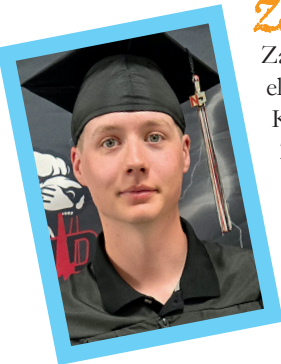
Stattelmann credited *Continued on page 4...*

Graduate Spotlight!



Dylan Connor

Dylan Connor is the son of Patrick, plant manager, and Kristy Connor. Dylan graduated from Northwest Iowa Community College in the Diesel Technology program. During his time at Northwest Iowa Community College, Dylan received the Vander Haag and Agrivision scholarships. Dylan is a diesel technologist at Ascheman Equipment in Sibley.



Zackary Mertz

Zackary Mertz is the son of Jim, electrical maintenance foreman, and Kerri, executive assistant, Mertz. Zackary graduated from Northwest Iowa Community College where he received a Powerline Certificate. He is currently employed at the Ottosen Elevator while he works to find employment at an electric utility.



Nick Saxton

Nick Saxton is the son of Mark, journeyman lineman, and Darca Saxton. Nick graduated from Emmetsburg High School where he participated in football, wrestling and golf. He is a volunteer at Bethany Lutheran Church, the Little E-Hawk Wrestling Club and flag football. He is the recipient of the Siouxland Official Scholarship and the IHSAA Bernie

Saggau Award. Nick plans to attend the University of Iowa and major in mechanical engineering.



Sean Connor

Sean Connor is the son of Patrick, plant manager, and Kristy Connor. Sean graduated from South Dakota State University with a degree in agriculture business and minors in banking and finance service, commodity risk management and animal sciences.

He graduated SDSU Summa Cum Laude. While in college Sean received the Larry and Diane Ness and Clark

Schoening Scholarships. Sean is employed as a loan officer at Sibley State Bank.



Jacob Girres

Jacob Girres is the son of Jon, meter technician, and Melissa Girres. Jacob graduated from Humboldt High School where he participated in football, basketball, soccer and track. He is a multi-time All-District Academic team member and an IHSAA Distinguished Academic Achievement Award recipient. Among the many scholarships he won are the: Power Cooperative Credit Union Scholarship, Dan E. Williams Scholarship, Justin Hinners

Memorial Scholarship and the Cody Fortune Memorial Scholarship. He plans to attend Des Moines Area Community College in the fall to be a lineman.



Karson Rubel

Karson Rubel is the son of Kari, accountant III, and Troy Rubel. Karson graduated from Humboldt High School where he participated in football, soccer and basketball. He was a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He received Humboldt's Three Sport Award and the Matt and Dick Jacobson, Justin Hinners and American Legion Adams Post #119 scholarships. Karson plans

to attend Iowa State University to obtain a degree in construction engineering.



Elsie Stattelmann

Elsie Stattelmann is the daughter of Jeremy, transmission superintendent, and Jen Stattelmann. Elsie graduated from Humboldt High School where she participated in National Honor Society, cross country, wrestling, track and field, FFA and the best buddies program. Elsie shared her talents in 4-H and the Salt and Light Group at St. Mary's Catholic Church. She plans to attend Iowa State University and major in Agricultural Studies.

With eyes closed and no talking, Corn Belt Power employees attempt to outline a perfect square during a Kathy Peterson-led IACT training at co-op headquarters May 19.

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May Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Dave Grothaus, energy advisor, Iowa Lakes Electric Co-op, won May's Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge and donated his \$100 prize to Pocahontas County Shooting Sports.

Storm damage and restoration



System restoration

Above | Following the May 17 storm, Corn Belt Power transmission crews set the final replacement pole along the Whittemore Junction to West Bend line on May 18.

Continued from page 3... the quick restoration efforts to Corn Belt Power's line crews, who worked through challenging conditions while prioritizing safety. Crews assessed damage, replaced broken poles and completed repairs in close coordination with the control center and impacted member cooperatives.

The May storms, as well as recent weather events, have reinforced the value of Corn Belt Power's ongoing investment in strengthening and rebuilding its transmission system. According to Stattelmann, the cooperative has experienced significantly fewer line trips and potential outages since launching its transmission rebuild program several years ago.

"There were many instances in the past when small thunderstorms would cause broken poles or multiple line trips," he said. "Since we began rebuilding and strengthening our system, we've seen far fewer line trips and outages."

While no system is entirely resistant to storm-related damage, the May events demonstrated the progress Corn Belt Power has made in improving reliability and resilience. Investments in system upgrades, combined with a rapid response and experienced crews, helped limit outages and restore service quickly during a challenging week of severe weather. ■

Corn Belt Power Cooperative Watts Watt

Watts Watt is published monthly for employees and associates of Corn Belt Power Cooperative, 1300 13th St. North, Humboldt, Iowa 50548-0508. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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