

The Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association (KLICA) has planned September 19 and 20 as work days to complete land improvement conservation work on the Servicemember Agricultural Vocation Education (SAVE) Farm. The afternoon of the 20th will be set aside to allow elected officials and interested conservation contractors from across Kansas to view completed work and recognize efforts of those contributing. Any conservation contractor, landscaper or someone in similar work is invited to view the SAVE Farm and learn more about KLICA and what we're about.

We always hear much talk of assisting the veterans of this great nation. Finding ways to help them heal mentally and physically, assist them with transitioning to civilian life, finding them employment to support themselves and their families, and become valuable contributing members of our communities.

Unfortunately, much of this talk does not actually result in action and results. The Servicemember Agricultural Vocation Education (SAVE) Farm, a not-for-profit charitable educational corporation (501c3), is way past talking about working with these heroes of our nation, they are getting down and dirty. You can't get much more in the dirt than they are.

Want to get in the dirt, go to the farm! Whether you are planting row crops, raising livestock, or growing specialty crops such as bees and honey as they now do, farming is connecting with the soil and natural resources in a positive way to grow and sustain life. Farming is hard work, early hours, late nights, and working in all elements and weather. Everything our veterans are used to already. Building a bridge to farming for veterans and transitioning service members, SAVE has had 450 participate in their various farm training programs.

The Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association (KLICA) fits right in to assisting the SAVE Farm. KLICA had the honor of meeting Gary LaGrange and Tim Hieman and listening to their stories at our Winter Convention. After hearing about their plans to purchase a farm for their program the KLICA Board realized this was a great opportunity to assist with these efforts and offered their time and expertise to complete needed conservation and land improvements. Through KLICA's network of Associate Members and partners obtaining the necessary machinery and equipment to complete this work appeared to be readily available.

The KLICA Board decided to hold their summer meeting at the farm providing an opportunity for the board and SAVE Farm staff to view and discuss land improvement needs. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were in on the initial discussions and present to provide technical service, conservation planning, and other support. The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) and Kansas Department of Agriculture Division of Conservation were present providing support for the effort. We had the opportunity to meet a few servicemembers who are enrolled in the program, and we heard about them putting up their first bale of hay and getting their picture taken in front of it. We heard about hay being put up right behind the swather, a learning opportunity experienced!

Immediate land improvement needs were prioritized with these being clearing and leveling livestock facilities, repairing the emergency spillway of a pond to prevent total loss of the pond, and installing some water crossings. Associate members have been contacted to provide the machinery necessary to complete this work. This work is what will be completed September 19 and 20 on the SAVE Farm located near Riley, Kansas.

Long term plans include the SAVE Farm working with NRCS to develop a conservation plan. KLICA has indicated their commitment to assisting with completion of the land improvement elements of this plan at least through 2020 and possibly beyond. "KLICA's work with us is absolutely one of the best things that has

happened to us. Great people helping our veterans; we are deeply thankful for what KLICA is doing.” Col (R) Gary LaGrange, President and Founder of SAVE.

Veterans and agriculture; Healing and growing; Learning and living; Two quotes one by the Father of our Country and one by a Japanese farmer/philosopher cause me to reflect on the goals of the SAVE Farm; “Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful, and most noble employment of man.” George Washington “The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings.” Masanobu Fukuoka

For additional information about the field day or this effort you may contact Jon Ungerer, KLICA Executive Director at 785-221-8697 or email at jungerer@kansaslica.com or Tim Hieman at savefarmcoordinator@gmail.com

For more information about the SAVE Farm visit their website: <https://www.thesavefarm.org/>

For information about KLICA visit their website: <https://kansaslica.com/>

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