

# renew



by Kayla Schlechter

## American Patriot

When asked to be a member of the South Dakota Honor Guard, Josh Bittner, Plant Operator at POET Biorefining – Chancellor, hesitated. A proud member of the National Guard, his hesitation wasn't stemmed by a lack of devotion to his country, but instead a discomfort with the spotlight.

Usually a behind-the-scenes kind of guy, Bittner stepped out of his comfort zone to help out when his Staff Sergeant brother-in-law needed him to fill in at a local funeral. After a crash course on the formalities of the Honor Guard, he proudly represented his country in front of a room full of people. And now, after extensive training, is very proud to serve as a permanent member of the South Dakota Honor Guard Team.

On January 20, 2011, Bittner along with Sgt. Jeremiah Zuraff and Sgt. Ray Morgan presented a plaque to Bittner's manager David Riphagen, Operations Manager, and also his supervisor Eric Petersen, Operations Supervisor, at POET Biorefining – Chancellor. The plaques were to express Bittner's appreciation for their support, for going above and beyond what is asked for his normal duties in the SD National Guard.

"They've always been very supportive of the extra training and volunteer duties needed for me to be a part of the Honor Guard Team," Bittner says.

The training and duties of the South Dakota National Guard are extensive and his additional duties with the Honor Guard do occasionally take him away from his job at POET Biorefining – Chancellor. And instead of looking at this as time away from his job, Bittner's supervisors are proud to have



their team member be a part of something so important and so reverent.

"I am proud to have a member of our team not only excel in his duties at POET, but also to be a part something as meaningful as the National Guard and the South Dakota Honor Guard," says Riphagen.

The team attitude is a force field at POET Biorefining – Chancellor, a definite feeling of gratitude and appreciation for the contributions of one another.

"I appreciate his [Bittner's] gratitude towards us, but he's the one who is out there providing funeral honors for Americans who have served our country, which is an extremely important duty," says Petersen. "Giving him our full support for this is the least that we can do."

### [PLAQUE INSCRIPTION]

**Presented to an American Patriot  
for Support of National Guard  
Soldiers Who are Defending Freedom  
at Home and Around the World**

**The American Flag in this case is  
a replica of those worn by  
National Guard Soldiers**

**The Flag Insignia is Reversed to Suggest  
the Flag is Flying in the Breeze as  
the Soldiers Move Forward**



## Community of the Year

A community known for its Irish roots and home to POET's Project LIBERTY, Emmetsburg, Iowa was chosen 2010 Community of the Year by Biofuels Digest.

"We take great pride that Biofuels Digest singled out Emmetsburg as their 'Community of the Year,' because POET is shifting the economy from our small town rural Iowa roots through the use of corn and cellulosic ethanol," says Emmetsburg Mayor John Schad. "We as a community cherish our relationship with POET, and look forward to many years of mutually profitable efforts."

And that's not the only accolade they received, POET Biorefining – Emmetsburg was awarded the Patriot Award by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve – the award is given on nomination of an employer by a grateful guardsman or reservist team member.

The plant was nominated for the award by employee SSG A.J. Poepppe of Emmetsburg who is currently on active duty with Battery A 1st Battalion 194th Field Artillery 2nd Brigade 34th I.D. of the Iowa National Guard.

"The management team at POET Biorefining – Emmetsburg has always been supportive of my service," Poepppe says in his nomination letter. "My maintenance position has me scheduled to work every other weekend, and my manager worked around my drill schedule if the two conflicted each other."

While away on tour, POET Biorefining – Emmetsburg took care of snow removal for Poepppe's family and also sent care packages with some comforts from home.

## Out of Gas

Still nearly 5 miles from Macon, Mo., Bud and Becky McKirgan pulled into the POET Biorefinery as their "miles remaining" gauge flipped to zero. Sensing the irony of pulling into an ethanol plant just short of begging for gasoline, the McKirgans were uncertain about how their problem would be approached. They soon realized they had made the right decision.

"It was a good choice," says Bud.

"I learned a little about the ethanol production and a lot about the kindness of strangers."

Phillip Robidoux, Commodities Assistant, soon showed up with a 5 gallon gas can and filled the McKirgans' vehicle with enough gasoline to carry them to the next gas station and more. They took their unfortunate situation as an opportunity to learn about the ethanol industry and their new friends at POET; and chose to help out the community in return.

"Thanks so much for the kindness we experienced at your facility," said the McKirgans in a letter to POET Biorefining – Macon. "We're making a small donation to the Macon County Sheltered Workshop to reflect our gratitude."

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## BEST PLACE TO WORK

POET Biorefining near Preston, Minn. was honored as one of the eight “Best Places to Work” in southeastern Minnesota. A few qualities the Workforce Development, Inc looked at while judging were whether the group was part of a close-knit team and how the companies develop and retain their team members. The team in Preston scored exceptionally high in all categories involved in the award criteria.

In a letter to POET Biorefining – Preston, Jeff Broin, CEO of POET, wrote,

*“As someone who worked in a plant for many years, I know how important it is that we have great people and a great work environment. This is why the POET culture is so important to me and I hope to all of you. Based on my experience, there is nothing that teamwork, a positive attitude and over-communication can’t accomplish. I am very proud of our POET Preston team and this outstanding accomplishment. Even though POET Biorefining – Preston was recognized with this award, I believe similar positive work environments exist at all of the POET locations.*



*Congratulations again POET Biorefining – Preston!”*