

### By Jan Rahn

#### *Managing Editor*

Hi-Line Coop's accounts payable manager Brenda Metcalf gave a presentation at a recent Chamber meeting for being selected as August's business spotlight of the month.

Metcalf proudly explained the company's history, its longevity, its successes and its expansion during the regular monthly meeting of Perkins County Chamber last Thursday, Aug. 16, at Hastings Memorial Library.

Chamber members learned about the coop's various sites in Elsie, Wallace, Roscoe, Brule, Grant and Sutherland.



The original company established as Elsie Oil Company opened in 1948 with services and products of oil, fuels and tires.

A merger with Wallace in 1969 created Hi-Line Cooperative Inc.

Three decades ago the annual sales for Hi-Line were \$1.7 million—today the annual sales are \$75 million.

Expansion and success gives the company a legacy along the Highline Canal and beyond.

In the early 1980 Hi-Line purchased Elsie Equity—a hardware and feed store on the south end of main street.

Sutherland and Hershey locations were added in 1995, and the terminal facility in Grant was purchased in 2004.

By 2007 two more locations joined—Brule and Roscoe.

The company's ownership is still under the local producers, just as it was in the beginning, being served by board members from throughout the trade territory of Grnat, Elsie, Wallace and Sutherland.

"The focus hasn't changed much," said Metcalf. "Input products are still being provided—as technology would advance, the majority of the business is now in crop protection (chemicals, fertilizers and custom application), instead of fuels and tires. Those products are still available along with a convenience store in three of our locations."

Targeted customers are the local producers from an average of a five-county area, she said.

Hi-Line currently employs a total of 76 full-time and part-time workers.

The future is bright for a business begun so many years ago as a small town business that has expanded by leaps and bounds in, around, and outside of Perkins County.

"Within the last year we invested \$2.4 million dollars in assets at our locations," said Metcalf.

"We are always looking for growth—as long as it is within good business practices."

Overseeing all locations is President and General Manager Roy Evans.