Once again we're going “all in” at CONEXPO-CON/AGG® 2020 in Las Vegas

Every three years, more than 120,000 attendees converge on the Las Vegas Convention Center for CONEXPO-CON/AGG, the largest construction trade show in North America. It is a great place to find out about the latest equipment advances and newest technology applications in every aspect of construction, including asphalt, aggregates, concrete, earthmoving, lifting, mining, utilities, and more.

Even by Vegas standards, CONEXPO-CON/AGG is quite the spectacle. And like its predecessors, the 2020 show, which will be held March 10–14, will not disappoint. This massive event features over 2.6 million square feet — or about 50 football fields — of indoor and outdoor exhibits. It’s truly a must-see. Encompassing 70,000 square feet, John Deere’s equipment spaces include areas for Construction & Forestry, John Deere Power Systems, and the Wirtgen Group. Seventy-four John Deere and Wirtgen Group products will be on display, and over 300 of our product experts will be available to speak with attendees.

Our 38,000-square-foot Construction & Forestry booth will provide a great place to show our customers how our products, technology, and support empower them to achieve their goals on their terms. We’ll be showcasing nearly 40 of our construction models — including seven world-premiere machines — grouped by quarry and aggregate, roadbuilding, site development, and underground. Our booth will also feature captivating videos, educational sessions, simulators, our John Deere Store, and a fully restored Model 24 Skid Steer to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Deere skid steers.

There will also be a new Solutions Deck where you can engage John Deere and dealer representatives about our product, support, and technology solutions. They can answer your questions about John Deere Connected Support™, Certified Rebuild Centers and Powertrain ReLife Plus, grade-management systems, JDLink™ fleet management, and more.

Please visit us at booth #N12525 in the North Hall. Besides all of your Deere friends who will be eager to speak to you, we’ve even come up with a few fun surprises so you can be a part of the action.

Visit JohnDeere.ca/Vegas2020 for the latest information as March approaches. I hope to see you there!

David F. Thorne
Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing
Worldwide Construction & Forestry
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An Iowa-based limestone mining operation proves what it means to go the extra mile — and in an uncommon direction.

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The owner of an Indiana wood products company has seen the timber business from nearly every angle, including from the seat of a new John Deere 524L Loader.
For Brent Bazemore, owner and president of Griffin Contracting, Inc. in Pooler, Georgia, the path to success started in an unlikely place: his parents’ house.

— continued
“I founded Griffin Contracting in April 2001,” says Bazemore. “I’d been out of college for about a year. I’d worked at one construction company and then another one. But I wanted to go out on my own, so I lived at home with my parents. I started in the bedroom, then moved to the garage, and finally got an office after three or four years.”

Today, Griffin’s 80 employees are working on 18–20 jobs — from site preparation and paving, to roadway construction and demolition — all across South Carolina, southeast Georgia, and north Florida.

But while the company has grown quickly, Bazemore is the first to admit Griffin hasn’t always been at the forefront of innovation. “Technology lagged around here for a long time,” says Bazemore. “I went to CONEXPO-CON/AGG® for the first time in 2017 and realized what we’d been missing — remote-controlled devices, satellite technology, time-entering software, and aerial intelligence. Right then, we decided to implement more technology throughout the business. We started with new accounting software and eventually upgraded our machines to make ourselves more productive and profitable.”

**GAINING AN EDGE**

According to Richie West, project superintendent at Griffin, John Deere technology has made a difference on every single one of his jobsites. “Before CONEXPO, you’d see a lot more people walking around out here with survey equipment and grade stakes. But now we’ve got a huge advantage. We’re grading and cutting ditches and ponds — and there are no mistakes. We can work more effectively because we’re not measuring sites by hand.”

— continued on page 8

**TAking CONTROL**

“Grade-control technology has expedited our growth significantly,” says Jerald Grantham, project superintendent for Griffin Contracting, Inc. “It takes out the whole step of bringing in a surveyor just to lay out the job. You tell the operators what section you want them to work, and they’re good to go. Once we turn on the machines, we have everything we need right there. We can run all the equipment off one unit base station, so everyone is on the same page and working together.”
THE mmGPS SMARTGRADE™ HAS CUT OUR GRADING TIME IN HALF."

— Jerald Grantham, project superintendent, Griffin Contracting, Inc.

“EVERYTHING IS LINKED UP WITH OUR GPS. YOU COME IN, CONNECT YOUR EQUIPMENT TO THE GRID, AND GET MOVING.”

— Richie West, project superintendent, Griffin Contracting, Inc.
West also appreciates how quickly the Griffin team can get to work each day. “On this site right now, we have a John Deere 672GP SmartGrade™ Motor Grader, a 700K LGP SmartGrade Crawler Dozer, and a 210G LC Excavator. Everything is linked up with our GPS. You come in, connect your equipment to the grid, and get moving. We’re able to save money by working fast — and by putting the right machines in the right place at the right time.”

**MAKING THE GRADE**

The G-Series SmartGrade is the industry’s first mastless motor grader lineup, but Griffin’s 672GP is special for another reason — it’s the very first John Deere motor grader off the assembly line with integrated Topcon millimeter-GPS (mmGPS) technology.

“The mmGPS SmartGrade has cut our grading time in half,” says Project Superintendent Jerald Grantham. “We can set up early, grade all day long, and get two or three days’ worth of work done. And when guys come up behind us to check our tolerances, we’re within two-hundredths of a foot.”

Grantham sees firsthand that this new technology can impact every person on the jobsite, no matter their skill level. “The mmGPS helps an average operator complete to a finished product, and with an experienced operator on the grader, it’s amazing what it’ll do. Having a millimeter advantage makes you that much faster, that much closer, and that much better. I’ve been doing this work my entire life, and this machine is head and shoulders above any other piece of equipment I’ve ever been on. The mmGPS really lives up to the hype.”

Griffin Contracting, Inc. is serviced by Flint Equipment Company, Garden City, Georgia.

**Check out the video at:** JohnDeere.ca/TheDirt
THE ROAD TO RECOVERY
On October 11, 2018, Hurricane Michael, a Category 5 storm, made landfall on the Florida Panhandle.

High winds, heavy rain, and extreme surges caused massive destruction along the coast, resulting in billions of dollars in damages — trees uprooted, houses splintered, and shops reduced to bare cement slabs. In Florida alone, dozens of people lost their lives. Thousands more lost their homes and livelihoods.

Over a year later, there’s still plenty of recovery work to be done, especially in Panama City, Mexico Beach, and the surrounding areas. Sammy Fitkin, project manager for Hauling Away, a Theodore, Alabama-based company that specializes in debris removal, grinding services, trucking, and site management, sees this kind of devastation far too regularly.

“We came here straight from a hurricane-recovery project in North Carolina,” says Fitkin. “At first, all we could see were the trees. We could see how the wind blew them one way and then another way. Acres of trees were either twisted or snapped completely to the ground.”

According to Fitkin, the trees were a telltale sign of the destruction to come. “I looked around at all the damage and figured I might as well try to find somewhere to live because I was going to be here for a while. It’s going to take a long time to clean this place up.”

“I’ve met people from all walks of life, from all over the country. Half of my guys are from Wisconsin and Missouri. They came in here just to help people.”

– Sammy Fitkin, project manager, Hauling Away
THE LONG HAUL
Each day, Fitkin sends his team through neighborhoods and business parks in a fleet of specially designed trucks to collect debris — furniture, refrigerators, sheds, cars, and trees — bound for dumpsites and grinding locations throughout the Panhandle.

“When you’re on a pickup and the homeowner is there, it’s tough. You keep telling yourself you’re not going to let it bother you, but you see a 70-year-old person out there and you’re picking up three-quarters of their life and putting it in the back of a truck — or you see a lady and her kids hunting in the wreckage for a tent — it’s heartbreaking.”

At the dumpsites and grinding locations, Fitkin and his team deploy a fleet of John Deere machines, including excavators, wheel loaders, and dozers, to manage the debris and prepare it for the landfill. “At this location, we grind all the trees we’ve collected on pickups. The goal is to reduce the wood by a three-to-one ratio, and we transport those woodchips with our John Deere 624K and 724K Wheel Loaders.”

WORKING TOGETHER
No matter how many trees his company grinds or how much debris it hauls, Fitkin credits the people around him for making the biggest difference. “I’ve met people from all walks of life, from all over the country,” he says. “Half of my guys are from Wisconsin and Missouri. They came in here just to help people.”

A strong dealer relationship also plays a significant role in Hauling Away’s recovery efforts. “Beard Equipment is a real partner,” says Fitkin about the Panama City-based dealer. “They live here. They know the devastation. They lost part of their shop — the roof was gone and they were running off generators. But they did, and continue to do, everything in their power to support us. We pick up the phone and get the support we need 10 times out of 10. The next morning, they have our parts. They come in on weekends. It makes you feel good when you look up and see everyone working together.”

Hauling Away is serviced by Beard Equipment Co., Panama City, Florida.

WEATHERING THE STORM

- Michael was the first Category 5 hurricane to strike the contiguous United States since Hurricane Andrew in 1992.
- Mexico Beach, Florida, experienced 155-mph winds that flattened more than three-quarters of the city’s homes.
- The massive storm was directly responsible for at least 16 deaths and approximately $25 billion in damage in the U.S.
- Destruction rated from devastating to catastrophic occurred in Bay County, Florida, where every building was reported damaged, with many destroyed, at Tyndall Air Force Base.

Sources: noaa.gov, npr.org, and nhc.noaa.gov.

Check out the video at: JohnDeere.ca/TheDirt
Nothing good comes without some work, and this crew isn’t afraid to roll up its sleeves.

READ ON
IT’S EARLY MORNING, AND DESPITE THE SUN MAKING ITS PRESENCE KNOWN, the humidity hanging in the summer air shows no sign of dissolving with the fog. As trucks roar to life and hit the quarry roads, a fine dust complements the haze, creating an otherworldly scene amongst the rock and rubble. While the sight may be foreign to the average Joe, this is everyday to many a miner — and only scratches the surface at Linwood Mining & Minerals Corp. in Davenport, Iowa.

While the company covers a tidy 0.25-square-mile space above ground, its underground operations unfold into a sprawling checkerboard of rooms and pillars entailing a surprising 2.5-square-mile area. Cool, pitch black, and eerily still, it stands in stark contrast to the action outside.

Without the proper safety briefings and understanding of signage, even the most experienced miners are likely to lose their way in the cavernous moonscape of a maze. If the lack of light, tight quarters, and limited airflow aren’t enough, the daily blasts make safety Linwood’s top concern in this man-made cave.

THE MAN FOR THE JOB
Mark Klimek, safety manager for Linwood, got his start mining coal in Kentucky, where the underground ceilings are low and the stakes are high. “It’s dark, you’re incredibly far underground, there’s dust everywhere, it’s cramped, and the lingering risk of an explosion doesn’t do much to ease a person’s mind,” Klimek explains the gravity of the situation. Then, with a shade of levity, “Plus, I’m pushing six-feet tall myself — all these nicks in my hard hat aren’t from dropping it out of the truck.”

His experience, aptitude, drive, and genuine care for employees make Klimek the ideal person for his role at Linwood. Like most safety guys, he’s down to business — but Klimek insists he’s not there to bust any chops, rather make sure no one loses them. “Going from underground coal to this limestone mine was a natural transition. Other than being a lot more open here, the engineering and safety sides of things are very similar. If someone gets hurt, that could affect them and those around them for the rest of their lives. Making sure everyone leaves with the same number of fingers and toes as they had coming in is first and foremost.”

THE CLEAR CHOICE
Although the technology is vastly different than in the canary days, maintaining proper air quality is a top concern for all underground mines — especially those with heavy equipment operating in them. Good thing Linwood is putting a 944K Hybrid Loader to work. “Since we’ve had the 944K, ventilation hasn’t been much of a concern at all — especially compared to older machines. We’ve been very happy with the emissions.”

Mark Klimek, safety manager for Linwood Mining & Minerals Corp., reviews engineering plans with employees.
Linwood’s Legacy

Tracing its roots back to 1944, Linwood Mining & Mineral Corp. is a proven leader in the limestone industry and currently ranks as one of the largest in the country. Originally an open-cut quarry, Linwood has since taken operations underground, where it’s able to access high-purity limestone and exceptionally pure calcium carbonate without the expense or destruction of disturbing the surface area.

The Products Linwood Offers Help Make:

- Dirty Air Clean
- Drinking Water Safe
- Steel Pure
- Freeways Strong
- Roofs Watertight
- Eggshells Hard
- Animals Grow
- Glass Clear
- Soils Productive
- Sugar White
- Plastic Soils Firm
- Cement with a Lower CO₂ Footprint

Delivery More

As a company that produces and stands by its high-quality products, Linwood appreciates vendors who do the same. “Our old loader was a different brand, and if anything broke, it was bad news. It was like pulling teeth just to get hold of someone to come diagnose the issue and then it took months to finally get the part. No one can afford that kind of downtime!”

“Our old loader was a different brand, and if anything broke, it was bad news. It was like pulling teeth just to get hold of someone to come diagnose the issue, and then it took months to finally get the part. No one can afford that kind of downtime!”

“Safety-wise, I can tell you our operators feel safe in the cab. That’s important, because if they don’t feel safe, they’re operating distracted, which makes accidents more likely. On top of that, they’re comfortable — which makes them that much more productive.”

From the Trenches

Operator Justin Voss readily backs up Klimek’s claims. “Oh, the 944K makes my job a lot easier. I mean, it digs nice and loads trucks quickly.”

The major game-changer for Voss? “The biggest thing is the power difference. The 944K has constant power all the time — other machines seemed to lack that. Plus, the joystick steering controls make it easy to operate. That’s huge when you’re working 12-hour days in the dark. I couldn’t think of another machine to have down here — it does what we want it to and I couldn’t ask for anything else.”

All the Power I Need

“The biggest thing is the power difference. The 944K has constant power all the time — other machines seemed to lack that.”

– Justin Voss, operator, Linwood Mining & Minerals Corp.

Check out the video at: JohnDeere.ca/TheDirt
AN OFFICE WITH A VIEW

HOW A 524L LOADER WITH TOOL-CARRIER CONFIGURATION OFFERS A WHOLE NEW LOOK FOR LOG YARDS

Jim Rogers has seen the timber business from nearly every angle. Cutting, hauling, mulching, and now in his latest endeavor, running a sawmill. “In today’s market, you have to be flexible — that’s the only way to make it,” says Rogers. The other ingredients for success? Family and work ethic. It’s how Rogers Wood Products, based just south of Terre Haute, Indiana, has expanded to include nearly every aspect of the wood business.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

The Rogers family is a tight-knit clan, with Jim heading the operation and his wife, two sons and daughter, and son- and daughter-in-law chipping in with the myriad of tasks that accompany running a business. “Without family, you have nothing,” explains Rogers, which is a sentiment that extends to the company’s crews. “We do have foremen and bosses out there, but we don’t worry about production. We want them to treat each other like family. If you treat each other that way and do your job, production always follows.”

Much like the rain-soaked grounds surrounding the region, Rogers’ philosophy holds water. Since purchasing the sawmill, they’ve increased its production from five loads of lumber per week to 15, and have drastically cut down on employee turnover. “Before, the mill wouldn’t have a consistent supply of logs, so they might only work 15 hours a week. We have more of an end-to-end operation now — in addition to select cuts, we clear land for a local mine, so it’s easier for us to keep the mill fed.”

CARRYING ITS WEIGHT

Also helping keep the mill fed is Rogers’ latest addition to the team — a John Deere 524L Loader, complete with tool carrier configuration that allows increased visibility to the boom and forks. “A sawmill can’t function without a loader. If your loader’s down, you can’t get logs off the trucks, you can’t get them on the deck for cutting, and you can’t get the lumber loaded. We’ve run other brands and even other models of John Deere loaders, and this 524L is the ticket.”

Perhaps more than most applications, the need for visibility from the cab is crucial in a log yard, especially toward the front tires and forks. “This is the first loader I’ve run where you can actually see what you’re doing when picking up a load of logs. The way they set up the boom on this tool carrier model makes life a lot easier — it takes the guesswork out so you’re not jabbing into the logs anymore.” Fewer damaged logs means crews have more usable material, helping minimize waste and improve efficiency.
FUELING FAMILY FUN

When they’re not cutting, hauling, and sawing logs, the Rogers family keeps busy with higher-octane pursuits. Since the age of 14, oldest son Chris has competitively raced nitrous-injected mud trucks. “Racing has been a fun family activity for all of us,” says Jim Rogers, head of the family and of Rogers Wood Products, south of Terre Haute, Indiana. “We’ve raced everywhere from Ohio down to the edge of Texas, from New York to Kansas — there was a time when you’d mention the Rogers boys and their mud cars, and it didn’t matter, if they were in the mud business, they knew who we were.”

ON THE BALL

Should the need arise, Rogers anticipates that the new West Side Tractor Sales dealership in Terre Haute will be just as dependable as his new loader. “Our sales guy is really good. He comes and watches how we work in the log yard here and out at cuts, and he sees where we’re having trouble, where we could do things differently. It’s great to have someone that proactive about helping our business. I think the support will be even better now with the new store being that much closer.

“As for the loader, it’s like I said, I can’t pick on the machine, and I usually have something to say about everything. John Deere hit a good one.”

Rogers Wood Products is serviced by West Side Tractor Sales, Terre Haute, Indiana.

The 524L is no slouch when it comes to lifting capacity, either. “We handle a lot of 40-foot trees, and I was worried the machine would be too small, but so far there isn’t a task it can’t do. Last week, in two-and-a-half days, we had 31 loads come in, and the only time it slowed down was when my operator needed a break. On top of that, it’s fast and can cut tight turning radiiuses — that goes a long way in a full yard.

“If you told me to name three things wrong with that machine and you’d give me a brand-new one for free, I’d still have to make my payments. I’m pretty picky and I like free things, but that loader is a great piece of equipment.”

Check out the video at: JohnDeere.ca/TheDirt

Jim Rogers, president, Rogers Wood Products
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