

Growing hemp

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harvest. This kept them busy, but they made it all work and continued on to the next hurdle — how to get it all dry. The buds of the plant are where the CBD is found, and on those buds are tiny trichomes, which are particularly valued for being high quality with unique healing properties. These trichomes are very sensitive, and can be lost if the plant is dried wrong. The family did a lot of harvesting by hand, cutting down the plants and putting them on a trailer, before hauling them to bins where they could have air blown through all winter. Other plants were strung up with bailing twine along the exterior walls of two sheds.

When it's dry, the Collinses use a machine they built to "buck" it — separating the desirable buds from the stems and leaves. Only Nathan and Sean feed the hemp into the bucking machine, which looks similar to a wood chipper, for safety reasons. Later, the buds are scooped into a pellet machine. The pellets are laid to cool for a while, then run over a screen to get rid of any fine pieces, and finally they are bagged. The whole process took them right up to spring planting of this year.

From the beginning, the Collins knew they wanted to be able to do the whole process in-house. "We're the only ones I can find that sell product that has never left the farm it was grown on,"

Nathan said. Others will send their buds in to have the CBD oil taken out, and then the company doing that processing takes some of that oil as payment. "The most important part that separates ours from everyone else's is in the processing and extraction, they take out the terpenes. They extract them and sell them for a lot of money. With ours, because it's done right here, all the oil, all the terpenes, the full spectrum of value is still here."

The product that the Collinses create is designed for horses and dogs, which have a very similar endocannabinoid system to humans. "The reason we went with the animal route is their emotions can't drive their reaction to a product like humans," Nathan explained. "If you take a product and you don't think it's going to work, you subliminally affect it and it won't work as well, but a horse or a dog doesn't have the preconceptions."

The CBD in the Collins products is used to help in the healing process. "It's kind of like a miracle drug," Nathan said. It produces endocannabinoids within the body which react with receptors in the nervous system. The body of research on CBD continues to grow, but different strains can have a variety of effects. The horse-side of the Collins products has three varieties: Leg Up helps with joint pain and inflammation, Bronc

Buster helps with anxiety, and Winner's Circle is for general health and can aid anxiety, inflammation, pain and soreness. "We suggest people have them all — you can use Winner Circle when at home, but if you're going to perform or to trailer the horse give them the Bronc Buster, then after the performance give them Leg Up to help them recover."

Each pack of pellets that the farm sells also has a certification card with it. This is to help protect the Collinses' customers, because the tests that law enforcement would run if they should find the pellets would be a simple positive or negative for THC. There are very minimal, trace amounts of the compound in the product, but the certification explains that the levels are within the legal guidelines. "This card will protect you, but you have to have it with," Nathan said.

The Collins family has taken a risk in their endeavor into growing hemp for CBD — the seeds cost a dollar each — but through it all they have done a lot of research and made sure that what they were doing would help, not hurt. "As we're growing it and tending to it, it's with the idea that this is going into someone's body," Nathan said. "That's what we do with everything we grow. We ask, would I use this product? Is it safe around my kids?" The second question is particularly



The whole Collins family is involved in raising the hemp on their farm. Here, three of Sean's boys smile up as their cousin's drone flies above. Nathan and

Sean Collins did a lot of research to make sure that their product would be safe around their kids. -- Photo from the Botanical Animal website

important, because this is truly a family operation. "The kids are working with us on the whole thing."

"We put a fair amount on the line to get this going, so we wanted to make sure everything was done right so we weren't setting ourselves

up to fail, and we wanted to know we were creating something that would give us an opportunity to help others while hitting a market that was emerging," Nathan recapped. They got a first-hand example of what their CBD pellets can do right off the

bat. "Sean has a 15-year-old dog who wouldn't leave the garage, she just laid in there. Once we got these made, Sean started giving her one a day and now she's back walking around, making her rounds around the farm."



Amid the leftover remnants of a traditional corn crop, a young hemp plant emerged from the soil on the Collins Family Farm of rural Murdock. --photo submitted by Nathan Collins

Zach Nelson enters Raymond Rockets' Hall of Fame

by Billie Jo Rassat

Growing up learning the national pastime by playing catch with his father and watching his grandpa and uncles keep the Norway Lake - Sunburg Lakers town team alive for so many years, Zach Nelson developed a deep love for the game of baseball. That love, dedication and respect for baseball, especially town team ball, has earned him the honor of being the sole inductee into the Raymond Rockets' Hall of Fame for 2020.

In a ceremony to be held at 1 p.m. on Sunday, July 26, just before the Raymond Rockets begin their game against Marshall at 1:30 p.m., Nelson will join the 30 others who have been honored by being named to the Rocket's Hall of Fame since its inception in 2013.

Nelson's journey in town ball began in 1989 when he started to play with the New London Twins. He started with the Twins while still in high school at New London-Spicer. After graduating from NLS in 1992, Nelson played at Ridgewater Community College for the next two years. In 1994, he traveled to the Twin Cities and attended Hamline University

to play for the Pipers. There, while playing baseball for them for the next two years, he earned a degree in kinesiology and teaching. Also during this time in his life going through school, he played on the town teams of Benson and Norway Lake - Sunburg, until he joined the Raymond Rockets in 2000.

For the past 20 years, Nelson has been a major contributor for his team in Raymond. As a pitcher for the Rockets in the 299 games played he pitched a total of 895 innings. With an ERA of 2.35, he accounted for 56 wins and 57 saves. Batters at the plate were less confident while facing Nelson as he tallied 760 strikeouts.

When not on the mound, Nelson also added to the Rockets' team as a strong third baseman throughout the years with his strong throwing arm and fielding skills.

On offense, Nelson held his own with a batting average of .292. Of his 437 hits, Nelson racked up 250 runs and 230 RBIs, with eight homers, 58 doubles and with his eagle eye in the batter's box he had 213 walks. He was also able to account for 101 stolen bases.

Nelson is still adding to



Zach Nelson, middle, is living any baseball-loving father's dream by playing the game he loves with his children. Zach has been blessed to play with two boys, Esau Nelson, 13, (left) and Eli Nelson, 16, on the Raymond Rockets Town Ball Team. Zach is the sole 2020 inductee into the Raymond Rockets' Hall of Fame.

these totals this year as he continues to be an active member of the Rockets. At 47-years-old, Nelson has become the go-to pitcher for the final innings when looking for a save.

However, the best part of still being a part of the Raymond team is that now his two

sons have joined him. Eli Nelson, 16, has been a part of the Rockets for a few years now, this year getting a significant amount of playing time even at such a young age. Esau Nelson, 13, was added to the Rockets' roster this year and has been on the field a couple

times as a pinch runner.

Both boys began playing baseball while they were still young as Nelson has been coaching them for years. For the past eight years, Nelson started and continues to organize and coach the youth traveling baseball organization MaxBat ESX, out of Willmar, which both Eli and Esau play with.

Along with his boys, Nelson and his wife of 20 years, Rachel, have a daughter named Dialina, 9. As a family they reside in Willmar.

Nelson's time with the Rockets has been some of the best years of his life. He counts the 13 times his team has participated in the Minnesota

Baseball Association's State Tournaments some of the most fun. One of the greatest for him was when the Rockets won the championship game in 2016. The following year, while it may not have been Nelson accomplishing it, being there to see Kyle Knott hit not just one, but two, home runs while playing a game at Target Field in Minneapolis is a memory he will never forget.

There truly are multiple reasons why Nelson is this year's inductee, but to him, he just loves the game and will continue to play for as long as his body will allow. "I just like to be around baseball," Nelson added.

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