

# THE FRED RATHJE AWARD WINNER 2012 - JOHN VAN ALTEN

John represents everything the Award stands for: entrepreneurship, personal service, and local, provincial and national industry leadership.

His company, Dutchman's Gold was started by John in 1981 and has evolved through his and his wife, Alison's, expertise to be one of Canada's premier



brands of honey and other hive products. The company has recently undergone a significant expansion and moved to new

facilities to further expand their market presence.

But business success has never been the sole driver for John. He is known throughout his community as someone to count on, whether it is the annual 4H visits, or a tour and picnic for the local bee club or simply mentoring his employees to become successful beekeepers in their own right. (At least five of his former employees are now commercial beekeepers in Ontario.) John

is also a committed husband and father, working in partnership with his wife, Alison, and enjoying close relationships with his grown children and new son, Yuri, adopted from Russia in 2011.

And although no one running a business such as this and managing a growing family could be blamed for concentrating on their own back yard, John has given of himself unstintingly at the Provincial and National level as well. From representing Ontario at the Canadian Honey Council to being an active, long-term member of the board (now President) of the Ontario Beekeepers Association, there is scarcely an issue of importance to beekeeping that hasn't benefitted from his steady hand and thoughtful voice. A few examples: In 2011, John accepted the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation for The Tech Transfer Program's leadership in honey bee disease detection and prevention that was recognized for their key role in the selection of honey bee stock for disease resistance characteristics.

John has been front-and-centre in addressing emerging critical issues affecting beekeepers in Ontario and nationally. In 2010, Ontario found itself host to the small hive beetle. Since then,

John and the OBA have taken leadership in working with OMAFRA to institute a comprehensive bio-security control program to halt the spread of this pest while at the same time supporting the interests of beekeepers in the affected area and across the Province.

In 2012 reports of extensive bee poisoning related to corn seeding required major attention from him and the OBA board. This very fraught and difficult issue had many players, little certainty, and no consensus. John has handled it with care, focusing equally on ensuring a science-based position, as well as respecting the concerns of the full range of stakeholders. He has worked tirelessly with beekeepers, farmers, researchers, government policy makers and regulators (PMRA) and industry by meeting, convening, researching and searching for constructive approaches.

For John, there are no simple answers, no quick fixes to these emerging and difficult problems. The world doesn't divide into 'good guys' and 'bad guys' for him. John is one of those unusual people who seek constructive solutions by listening, by looking at evidence, by bringing people together to find new ways forward. Throughout whatever process or issue he is involved with, however, John never forgets that it is beekeepers and bees whose interests he represents.

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The advertisement features a yellow background with a subtle honeycomb pattern. On the left, there is a list of clothing styles and a logo for NOD USA. In the center and right, two t-shirts are displayed: a red one with a bee logo and the text 'we love bees!' and a light green one with a bee logo and the text 'i love bees!'. The website address is at the bottom right.