

## MANAGER SPOTLIGHT

### Claims held the recipe for success for restaurateur in his quest to make a difference



**John Foster**  
Vice President, Claims  
Farmers Alliance  
Companies

John Foster was fresh out of college working his way up the food chain as a restaurant manager

when he exchanged his apron and reservations book for an entry level position in the claim department with a health care insurance company. It did not take him long to realize that property and casualty claims held the key to his future.

“I didn’t care for that work environment (at restaurants) and began to look at insurance claims,” said Foster. “Claims—specifically property and casualty—has provided me with the challenge I required as well as the opportunity to accomplish something that makes a difference.”

sible for all in-house training at Mercury for more than a decade and is currently working on a program to develop online courses for busy claim professionals.

In her spare time, Ramos keeps score at her daughter’s softball games and relaxes by watching professional baseball. She explains that professional players, like adjusters, can improve by learning from their mistakes and being prepared for inevitable change.

“Keep on smiling and don’t let stress get you down,” she concluded. “Everything usually works out.”

In the 22 years since he graduated from Emporia State University in Kansas with his business degree, Foster has served as an office adjuster, field adjuster, claims supervisor, and claims manager. He currently serves as vice president of claims at Farmers Alliance in McPherson, KS.

“My current position has provided opportunities that I never would have experienced elsewhere,” said Foster. “I have never felt more challenged while, at the same time, being allowed to learn so much about myself.”

Jack Rader, the executive vice president and chief operating officer at Farmers Alliance, praised Foster’s use of automation to manage his time and provide improved customer service.

“John’s innovative,” proclaimed Rader. “He utilizes techniques from the classroom and puts them to use in the office almost immediately. He does whatever it takes to give better service to our agents and policyholders.”

In his time away from the office, Foster

serves as the public address announcer for the Black Bear football team at Sterling High School as well, as the Sterling College Warriors. He also operates the scoreboard for the men’s basketball team at the college.

He credits classes from International Insurance Institute for coaching him on his strengths and knowing when to surround yourself with others to fill in areas where you lack confidence or experience. Foster added that classes for adjusters taught him about his business and provided him with insight into his clients and the people he worked with. His goal for 2007 will be the completion of his CPCU designation.

“I learned from experience that you must work smart, and you should do whatever is necessary to make your boss look good, too,” said Foster with a smile. “If he looks good, you look good, too.”

He sums up his decades of wisdom with a classic quote from actor John Wayne: “Life is tough, but it’s tougher when you’re stupid.”

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owners because, “I’ve always been the one who enjoys crawling around on roofs or under cars to assess the actual damage before settling the claim.” On the flipside, she prefers not handling too many commercial claims because those often involve an abundance of paperwork and too much time in the office.

When not problem-solving for a policyholder, Walters and her family enjoy the outdoor adventures near their home in Wisconsin. That means snow mobiling during the winter and spending time camping at the lake during the summer.

“Personally, I have never actually suffered the losses that many of my clients have endured, but I pride myself at being an excellent listener and keeping a positive attitude in every situation,” she said. Walters credits her mother for teaching her that the glass is always half full.

She credits the Awesome Adjuster class she completed with the International Insurance Institute for giving her the tools to provide excellent customer service to her clients. After all, “They deserve the best service after years of paying premiums to safeguard their cars, their homes, and their businesses.”