CCA Pat Lynch was the first mentor to John Heard, winner of 2014’s ICCA of the Year Award. Lynch worked with Heard’s dad (Dick) and helped get Heard started on the extension track in Ontario.

“John brought a lot of enthusiasm, energy, and humor to the job,” Pat says. “I remember his shovel. His shovel would break on the handle in a manner that he could put it back together. We had a bunch of farmers who overworked their land and ended up with compaction. When John made a call where he knew compaction was a problem, he would take his ‘trick’ shovel to emphasize that to the grower.”

Heard studied at the University of Guelph in Ontario and began working with extension after earning his bachelor’s degree. He credits Lynch (Ontario CCA of the Year; see March–April 2014 issue, page 14) with encouraging him to use strong demonstration techniques in the field.

Early in his career, Heard worked with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (www.ontariosoilcrop.org), helping farmers to implement farm tests and demonstrations. Many of the demonstrations were related to zero-till. “I was working with farmers in an area where zero-till was unconventional,” Heard recalls. That work that prompted him to study for his master’s at Purdue University in conservation tillage. He was in one of the first groups to take the CCA exam in Canada in 1996, after which he moved to Manitoba where he works as a soil fertility specialist with Manitoba Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development in Carman.