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Listen To Customer, Farm Market Panelists Say

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Lancaster Farming Staff
HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — A

sellout crowd jammed the Hershey Convention Center Trinidad Room on Tuesday to hear how retail marketers succeeded in the vegetable and fruit farm market industry.

More than 400 people attended the afternoon session, "Making Big Bucks — Successes and Failures in Retail Markets" at this year's Pennsylvania Vegetable Conference and Trade Show.

Farm market representatives from Pennsylvania and other states listened to the panel describe certain "secrets of the trade" in running a successful direct marketing business.

What the panelists agreed on was simple — you have to have quality merchandise and the right atmosphere that keeps customers coming back.

Quality to start

"It's easier to sell in the market when you have quality to start with," said Bob Trax, Trax Farms, Finleyville. Trax Farms operates a vegetable and fruit production operation on 375 acres and leases another 250 acres. Trax said that the store regularly stocks corn, tomatoes, and peaches all through the season, because people come in "day after day" for those items. He said it is important not only to pick quality produce, but to choose quality employees.

 Several marketing ideas tried by Trax Farms includes an 8-ounce bottle of cider made into a six-pack version. During the apple season, about 200 bags of seven to eight

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Zoann Parker, Lancaster 4-H agent, shows the design of the special Winross truck now available. An order form appears on page B12. Parker will be soon leaving for Poland to help start a 4-H program in that country. Photo by Andy Andrews.

Agent To Bring 4-H To Poland

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— Until recently, for the children of Poland, it was all work and no play, which made for some painfully dull days.

But thanks to the efforts of leading agriculture experts who recently toured the large eastern European country, some rays of hope for the children and for the countrywide ag industry are shining in.

Several Pennsylvania representatives will soon make a journey to the country to further the efforts of youth in agriculture. One of those to introduce the 4-H way of life to Polish children will be Zoann Parker, Lancaster County 4-H agent.

The children of Poland "work, they go to school, they sleep," said Parker. "Again, they work, they go to school, they sleep. They need a social outlet. And so 4-H can offer that to them."

Mission to Poland

On February 14, a one-month

mission to Poland begins for a team of U.S. extension professionals, including Dr. Donald Evans, Penn State University, chair of the team; Dr. Daniel Pfannstiel, Texas A & M University; and Parker.

The team will arrive in Warsaw, Poland, where they will meet and discuss current high school ag curriculums with the Polish minister of agriculture and food economy. Then, for nearly a month, the team will visit sites in south, west, and east Poland — working with the schools, local extension offices, and school administrations, said Parker.

"I'm going to be out in the schools and the community, and we are going to start a couple of very basic local 4-H clubs, teach them some of the games that we play that teach leadership skills, how to run a 4-H project, and do some hands-on programming," she said.

 Parker, working with an interpreter, will be bringing in 4-H project books, such as gardening, rab-

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Oakenbound Farms No. 8 In Nation For Bulls Tested

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff
RICHLAND (Berks

Co.) — More than 20 bulls from the Oakenbound herd are in USDA animal model summaries, making the Berks County dairy farm eighth in the United States for the most number of bulls being tested.

According to the data, the Oakenbound farm has 27 proven bulls averaging a +124 pound for protein, +1,025 pounds milk and predicted transmitting abilities (PTAs) of +29 protein and +34 fat.

Impressive, by any standards.

And it is not lost on the Troutman brothers, Nelson and Richard

Jr., who said they are pleased with the results of their breeding program.

But selling breeding stock is a side business. The main business at Oakenbound Farm is running a profitable dairy operation that can pay its bills and maintain two households.

They do that by milking an average 90 registered and grade Holsteins.

"When Butch (Richard Jr.) and I took over, we made some major changes in management to go along with changes in the industry.

"My goal is to really be profitable and take care of our cattle so

we have longevity," Nelson said.

The family operation is basically comprised of a 127-freestall building and a 63-stanchion milking barn. There are also calf, heifer and bull facilities, a TMR setup (They have been using TMR for at list 15 years and are on their third mixer.), and bunk feeding.

The farm sits in a tiny, smooth-edged valley north of Rt. 422, near the Lebanon County border. It's not very visible from the road except for the roofs of the buildings and the silos jutting high. The soil is deep and good for production of the corn, alfalfa and soybeans they raise on the farm's

acreage and the additional rental property.

The brothers are in their third year of jointly purchasing the farm from their father Richard Sr., who lives in a house at the mouth of the farm lane where a hand-painted Holstein sign proclaims the entrance to Oakenbound Farm.

There's also a shed and a sign at the lane entrance which advertises the Troutmans' willingness to take neighbors' newspapers to use as bedding.

 Richard Sr. contributes to the operation, doing jobs such as watering and feeding silage to

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Lancaster County Farmers' Association Elects First Woman President

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff
ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — Lancaster County Farmers' Association chose its first woman president recently.

"I didn't want the job. I don't have time. And I said 'no' two times," Jane Balmer said.

But in typical Balmer style, Jane said, "Somebody's got to do it. I didn't want to lose the Association so I took the job."

Jane is familiar with doing jobs that need to be done. In 1978, her 39-year-old husband died of a heart attack. "I had two loves: my husband and the farm. I lost my husband, but I wasn't about to lose the farm," she said.

Through hard work and determination, Jane has been able to

maintain two farms with a total of 188 acres. She eventually sold out the dairy cows and concentrates on raising 100,000 chickens, 80 hogs, and about 55 steers.

Her two children were teenagers at the time, but now her daughter, Belle, is married and has a daughter, and her 24-year-old son, Bryan, works full time on the farm.

Balmer also has a full-time and several part-time employees, but it's she who does "everything but the mechanical work" to keep the Elizabethtown farm profitable.

 Her husband had been a member of the Lancaster County Farmers' Association. When he died, Balmer saw the benefits of remaining part of the Association, which has

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Lancaster County Farmers' Association president Jane Balmer believes in doing what needs to be done even if it isn't easy. Widowed in 1978, Balmer has been determined to continue farming. It has not been easy, and Balmer does not foresee easy changes in the farm economy either, but she is convinced that the Pennsylvania Farmer's Association is the best organization to legislate changes.