

Lebanon Extension Recognizes Volunteers' Dedication

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff
SCHAEFFERSTOWN (Lebanon Co.) — Lebanon County Cooperative Extension Service held its 79th annual banquet/meeting last week at the Schaefferstown Fire Hall.

In addition to the reading of the minutes, and the disbursing of the extension office's annual report, extension staff recognized outstanding achievements by volunteers and held an election for four positions on its 21-member board of directors.

Re-elected were Frances Krall, of Myerstown, a retired nurse active in the Society of Farm Women and a volunteer on the county Extension Family Living Advisory Committee; Glen Krall, a Cornwall dairy and crops farmer with children enrolled in 4-H, he also serves on the Extension Agronomy Advisory Committee; and Lynn Pleet, Lebanon, a homemaker, former professional craftsman, a master gardener volunteer, and a participant and volunteer in the family living programs.

Newly elected was Laura Jean Watson, of Newmanstown, a homemaker and home-school parent with four children in 4-H, who has served as a 4-H leader and who has been a past member of the board of directors.

In other business, county Extension Director Alletta Schadler discussed the success of the Lebanon Extension program, its programs, dedicated staff, and its corps of dedicated volunteers.

She also noted the support of county commissioners, who were in attendance, and the continuing role of extension to serve the community by providing researched-based information on a wide variety of aspects of day-to-day life, helping to provide community volunteer-lead developmental and goal-oriented activities for youth, as well as helping entrepreneurial people with small businesses.

Also present was Dr. Gary San Julian, the director for the Penn-State Cooperative Extension Southeast Region.

Julian told the audience that the support from the state was encouraging and helped restore some of the programming that was allowed to atrophy or disassemble in the preceding decade.

He also talked about the changes that are to be coming to the role of extension in aggressively serving a broader-based constituency.

Technically, the Penn-State Cooperative Extension program is to be available for all to use its services — city, urban and rural residents of the state.

Historically, rural residents, especially those involved with farming either for profit or for fun, have been the largest user of extension services. It also made sense since the dean of the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences had been in charge of the program and its development until recently.

It has been announced by Penn State that the extension program hierarchy within the university is to shift from being a College of Ag Sciences-only domain. A university wide vice president is to be responsible for coordinating resources among the various colleges within the university system to provide users with a greater information knowledge resource base, and better community outreach services.

Obtensibly, changes in degree programming at select university satellite campuses, as well as changes in technology are expected to help strengthen the ability of the people of the state to be more independent, knowledgeable and safer in creating their own lives and better able to take advantage of opportunities.

He discussed training for the anticipated transitions and how it is necessary for people to be able to adapt.

San Julian thanked Schadler for her leadership and support for the program in the county and the region.

The guest speaker for the evening was Dr. Herbert Cole, a Penn State professor of agricultural science, who urged group to be

wary of decisions being made locally and statewide that aren't being made with the proper input from the people who will be affected by those decisions.

Using a slide projector, Cole showed how zoning for large-lot residential areas in agricultural sectors has largely destroyed more farmland because it requires so much land-use per capita.

It also requires the use of motorized transportation and the use of highways.

In the time he had, he tried to demonstrate how decisions "made from the seat of a car" are self-defeating and perhaps economically dangerous for the long-term.

He said that if just the agricultural production from Lebanon and Lancaster counties were to be considered, it would represent 42 percent of the state's total agricultural production.

"Agriculture in the southeast region of the state is tremendous," he said. "If Lebanon and Lancaster were a state, it would No. 30 among all (50) states."

He said the future of that amount of economic industry is threatened by those who depend upon it — those who seek to reside in the area.

The restrictive use of large amounts of land for limited residential housing was seen years ago as a preventative against irresponsible development. However, Cole showed how it has not impeded development, but rather has increased the consumption of agricultural land for development.

Basically he called for residents to look at what local policy is doing to the land and the resources.

Cole also said the future of farming in the area will probably continue to change from the traditional family farm that was typical of the landscape to one in which farms no longer resemble farms and more resemble factories in close proximity to residential neighborhoods.

He said the small-production independent agricultural producer will be one who seeks and develops local market niches.

"The key to sustainable agricul-

ture is profitability," he said, noting that those were the sentiments of state Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brosius.

He also said that different production attitudes should be adopted, so that a producer doesn't consider himself, for example, to be a grower of Durham wheat, but a pasta manufacturer.

Currently there are four processors operating in the state that account for the processing of 80 percent of all the state's beef, poultry and pork. "The challenge for the farmer, is how to get his fair share."

He said the economies of scale, "and all that goes with it," challenge today's farmer, especially in southeastern Pennsylvania. He said that contract production is controlling an increasing share of the market of all agricultural products.

"My father never questioned that no one would buy his chickens," Cole said, adding that when his father raised birds there was always a market willing to buy it. Now, those days are gone.

"The ties from production to consumer are getting tighter and tighter."

He said that common misperceptions about the agricultural community have the Plain Sects faring well, but the truth is far from that.

He said it has become more common among the Plain Sects that three generations are effectively attempting to purchase a farm today. He said that when a father purchases a farm, he works it until his oldest son is able to take over farm production, leaving the father to work off the farm in carpentry.

When the grandson becomes old enough to take over the farm, his father and grandfather are working off the farm and all are still paying for the farm.

Further, there has been a greater increase in non-farm activism coming from the urban residential areas of southeastern Pennsylvania.

"We've got a preception problem," he said. "(Farmers) in (the

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*Annexstad et al. 1990. J. Dairy Sci. 73:170.