

Ukrainian Joins Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

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Bedford Co. Correspondent
BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — Fred Claycomb thinks he has only touched the tip of the iceberg in his work with the farmers of the Ukraine.

His latest achievement has been to have Izor Alekseyenko become the first Ukrainian citizen to become a member of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

Fred's work began when he was selected in 1994 by VOCA (Volunteers Overseas Cooperative Assistance), a group he came in contact with at Ag Progress Days, to travel to the Ukraine to help farmers learn of the latest in farming techniques.

During the Communist regime, the Ukrainians had practically no knowledge of the fast changing world of farming.

"Communism did not allow for advancements such as machinery, and quality seeds and parts for tractors are difficult to find," Fred explains. VOCA though American farmers, like me, could help bridge these problems."

In 1995, Fred returned to Ukraine, this time through the Odessa Mutual Assistance Association, an organization similar to the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

One of the first people Fred met in Ukraine was Anna Alekseyenko, a third-year student at the University of Kiev, who acted as his interpreter.

Anna immediately introduced him to her family. Fred and her father, Izor, became fast friends.

In 1995, Anna came to America to visit the Claycomb family and while there, was fascinated with the Farm Bureau Cooperative. "She took videos of one of our local stores," Fred says. "Farm Bureau had the manager explain everything so she could take it back on tape."

It immediately became the dream of Izor, who lives for farming, to eventually have a cooperative like the Farm Bureau in the Ukraine.

"I called the state office and asked Jan Carson how I could get a membership for Izor," Fred continues and found out it was relatively easy.

"I had to get the 'okay' of the county board and the executive directors who are Norman Sollenberger, Paul Stup, Betty O'Neil and Pauline Yoder. That was easy!"

From this point on, so long as Izor keeps his dues paid, he will remain a member. Correspondence from Farm Bureau will be sent by Fred through VOCA.

"I am not aware of anyone from any other country in the world being a member of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau," says Marlin Miller, Member Relations director at Harrisburg. "But, we welcome Izor and hope we will be of a lot of help to him and his fellow farmers in the Ukraine."

Prior to the revolution, farms in Ukraine were about 1,000 acres each. But, all of those farms were destroyed when the communists took over.

"The people there live for farming," Fred explains. "It is the richest, most fertile land in the world. They have no droughts, no severe weather of any kind. With a love of farming in their hearts, they struggle hoping only that someday life will be better."

Almost non-existent are

machinery and equipment, feed and farm supplies, seed, fertilizer and chemicals, hardware, electrical supplies and a good system to distribute new or better farm technology. Hence, the idea of a cooperative was the beginning of a new dream for Izor Alekseyenko and others like him.

"Already they are running into problems with help that has been given," Fred says. "There are presently a large group of Mennonites in Ukraine who are distributing seeds to the farmers for their upcoming growing season. Ukraine's government now wants to put a tax on humanitarian aid. Greed always gets into the

picture!"

Anna's visit to America also left with her many dreams, among them, studying agriculture at Penn State University. "Every time she calls, she mentions it," Fred smiles. "Both my wife and I hope it is something she can eventually do."

Meanwhile Fred continues his work with VOCA and recently returned from a trip to Brazil.

He is grateful to all of these volunteer organizations for giving him so many rich experiences and he is particularly happy that Pennsylvania Farm Bureau was quick to welcome a new member from such a faraway land.



Izor Alekseyenko and his wife, Helena.



Izor (wearing an Old Bedford Village sweatshirt) and Fred in Ukraine.

Today's Spending Affects Future Savings

LEWISBURG (Northumberland Co.) — The Women's Financial Information Program (WFIP) is a series of seven hands-on lecture/workshop sessions aimed to assist women in taking charge of their financial future. Co-sponsored by the American Association of Retired Person (AARP) and the Penn State Cooperative Extension WFIP is being provided as a non-profit volunteer service to the community. Topics to be covered in these sessions include "Getting Organized: Where Are You Now? Where Do You Want To Be?," "Banking and Credit: Tools For Your Cash Flow System," "Investing For Retirement," and "Care Giving: Becoming A Care Giver To A Spouse Or Aging Parent."

The program begins Tuesday, March 18, and continues for seven Tuesday evenings through April 29, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. All sessions will be held at St. John's United Church of Christ, 1050 Buffalo Rd., Rt. 192 West from Rt. 15, Lewisburg. Free parking is available and the building is wheelchair accessible. The registration fee is \$20, which includes a workbook, handouts for each session and light refreshments.

Women and men of all ages are welcome to attend. To register contact Penn State Cooperative Extension of Northumberland County at (717) 644-4455 or 1-800-479-2626 (ask for Penn State).

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