

Dairy Days Events Offer Perspective On Farm Design, Life

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Lancaster Farming Staff
MYERSTOWN (Lebanon Co.) — A family counselor provided some perspective on life and some tools for developing and maintaining an environment conducive to good mental health as part of Lebanon County Extension's Dairy Day event this week.

Meanwhile, at the Lancaster County Extension Dairy Day I, held Tuesday, a milking systems expert from the University of Wisconsin-Madison discussed in technical detail what makes a good milking system, how to run checks on the system, and what considerations might be made in design.

The Lancaster County Dairy Days II is set to be held March 4 at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center and a report is to be published in the next issue of *Lancaster Farming*.

While not the first dairy day events of the year, the Lancaster and Lebanon events usually attract a strong attendance and provide speakers offering useful information.

The events are held in the late winter/early spring because that time usually fits better in the schedule of the dairy farmer.

The events also provide a primer for the year in getting some new information injected into considering farm business strategies.

At the Lebanon event, Jerry Sherk, a family counselor, talked about building hopes in families.

He discussed how to deal with fears. First he said, is to recognize the fear for what it really is. Second is to value that fear.

He said that fears are natural and are part of being human, as God intended. Once the fear is recognized then the value of it can be

realized and some plan to deal with that fear can be developed. Sherk said that is next in dealing with fear — developing a vision for what to do to take care of that fear.

He said that once a vision is developed then an action plan can be developed next, but that action plan has to be in line with what is understood. The level of commitment to that action should be congruent with understanding, he said.

And then when dealing with that fear, he said it is very important to "trust the real you."

And faith is important in being able to learn how to accept those things about being human that are not necessarily seen as advantageous to achieving a "successful" life, and then, once learning how to accept those things, then to deal with them.

Sherk discussed some of the fears that involve farm families, and some of the results of attempting to handle them alone, without really recognizing or admitting the existence of those fears.

He also told stories about situations with which he has been involved in helping to resolve that involved fears, a lack of dealing with them, the anger and frustration and resentment that resulted, and how the situation was resolved after the fears were acknowledged, and the intent behind the apparent anger that caused the rift in the family relations was communicated and how it changed the attitudes and lead to forgiveness and healing.

He talked about a father who by any account was mentally and physically hard on a son, and how the son was pushed to achieve and pursue a goal that wasn't really what the son wanted to pursue.

After some physical punish-

ment resulted from the son getting a "B" grade instead of the usual "A," and after some intervention and discussion between counselor and father, counselor and son, and then father and son and counselor, it turned out that the reason the father was so hard on the son was because the father grew up during the Depression and had a tough life growing up and didn't want his son to have to suffer the way he did.

After learning the intent of his father's actions, the son's attitude changed. It worked out well, Sherk said, after the father realized that the son was doing well and was going to be alright without harsh parental oversight.

The father's fears, left unaddressed by him, manifest themselves in extreme compensating behavior that did nothing to resolve the fear.

That is not the way to live happily and healthfully, much less set up an easy and successful generational transfer of a farm.

Sherk said that it is an unavoidable part of the human experience to be hurt by loved ones. It is going to happen, he said, adding that it should be cherished in the knowledge that it is part of the human experience, as God made it.

But forgiveness must follow, and forgiveness, Sherk said, is something we do for ourselves, not for others.

Forgiveness involves personal and interpersonal healing and hope.

It also involves a choice to let go of the hurts that have been made.

Letting go and forgiving should be done with the primary goal of healing ourselves, he said. As an illustration of a good example of how to forgive and to be able to keep the tragedies of life from destroying life, he briefly

talked about how American comedian and entertainer Bill Cosby has dealt with the murder of his son.

Sherk said Cosby is a great example of not allowing pain and tragedy to control his life.

"Let's think of forgiveness as something we do primarily for ourselves," he said. "In the First Testament, Jesus said this clearly many, many times."

He also talked about anger and how it comes from a feeling of some fear or an act that violates and gives a sense of being wronged.

Sherk said anger is definitely different for men and women. In brief, he said that it is destructive to those close to us, it can be temporary if faced, and it will just cause more problems if kept inside.

The way not deal with anger is to allow to vent in unhealthy outlets, Sherk said. Those include attempting to get even and make them pay, pushing or avoiding the other person, to allow your own physical condition to be affected, and to judge oneself too harshly.

Hate, he said, is frozen love.

Forgiveness, as far as requesting it, requires action. He said it is accomplished when the two people involved can engage in a mutual relationship. It requires that trust be re-established and also some type of action, such as overtly

giving.

Sherk gave an example of a couple that had a problem when the husband violated a trust and the wife didn't feel that she could ever forgive him, even though he admitted his wrongdoing and vowed it would never be repeated.

His action was to swear that he would not change his shirt for a specified number of months and when people would inquire as to why the shirt wasn't changed, he would tell them about what he did to violate his wife's trust.

At first she didn't think it would make a difference. After a week she started feeling that he was making a fool out of himself, then after several weeks, she started to pity him, and eventually she made him stop and his demonstration was accepted as an overt action to substantiate the re-establishment of trust.

But one of the biggest obstacles to resolving the inevitable hurts that people inflict upon one another is the inability to say, "I'm sorry."

"Saying it out loud is good, helpful and hopeful," Sherk said, but added that some people do it in other ways, such as a woman may cook a favorite meal as a way of apologizing, or a man may do something special for his wife.

However, actually verbalizing, "I'm sorry," and meaning it does a lot.

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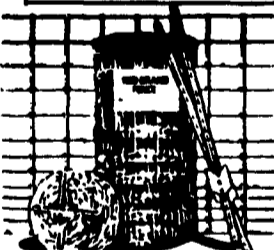
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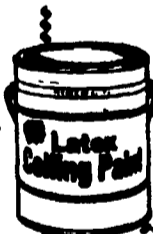
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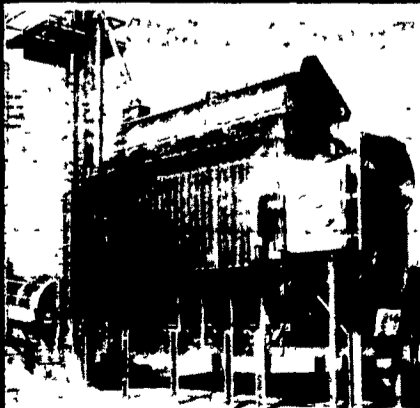
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