

Susquehanna County

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Dairy farmers and agri business people, Department of Agriculture representatives, and others comprise their core group. However, they are always open to including new people who can contribute new ideas. They also have tremendous support from the school personnel including the custodial staff, cafeteria workers, teachers, and administrators.

The event has grown ever since it started nine years ago.

"The first one we had about 450 people," said Place. "We were impressed with that and it's been growing ever since. Most years we have between 500 and 600 participants but the last couple of years we've had over 700."

Place admits that the actual number of dairy farmers is hard to estimate but he is sure that the bulk of the attendants are either dairy farmers or tied to dairy farming in some way.

"We feel that there's education that takes place and think it does a lot with building the dairy community in the area. Hopefully people leave with a positive feeling. That's hard to measure, but I think that's something I'm really happy about . . . to get people together with a common cause."

Jake Stoltzfus of Star Silos agrees that Susquehanna County Dairy Day in a positive experience.

"I think this is one of the best dairy days in the state," he said. "They try to have something for everyone."

This year's program included workshops on alternative agriculture ideas including heifer raising as a business and stone quarry management, as well as agronomy issues such as adjusting your corn planter, biotechnology, and preventing pesticide drift.

Other participants could listen to a presentation called "Headbanging 101," which related stress management ideas, provided valuable tips on food safety, allowed them to take advantage of free blood pressure screenings, or bare their arms for a tetanus shot. Representatives from Farm Credit and the Cooperative Extension Service were also available to answer questions about estate planning.

Participants were invited to listen to the encouraging words of Maria Fanning, director of career services and cooperative education at Keystone College, before bidding on one of 27 pies that were entered in the annual pie contest.

When not attending one of the informational seminars, participants had the opportunity to visit 72 exhibitors and grab a carton of free milk to quench their thirst.

In a well attended program on alternative agriculture, David Bradstreet enthusiastically told the group that alternative agriculture can enhance on-farm income.

"You've got to throw out all the rules of what you're used to and try new things," said Bradstreet. "There are lots of opportunities out there."

Examples of enterprises that could work on your farm include small fruit production, bees/honey, rabbits, greenhouse, kennels, and ornamental plants — the list goes as far as the imagination can take you.

Bradstreet knows of one farm family that cuts and dries weeds and sells them to crafters. Another is involved in raising game birds for various hunting organizations.

"The most important thing," said Bradstreet, "is that the whole family buys into the project."

Also important is that the new enterprise fits into the time the family has.

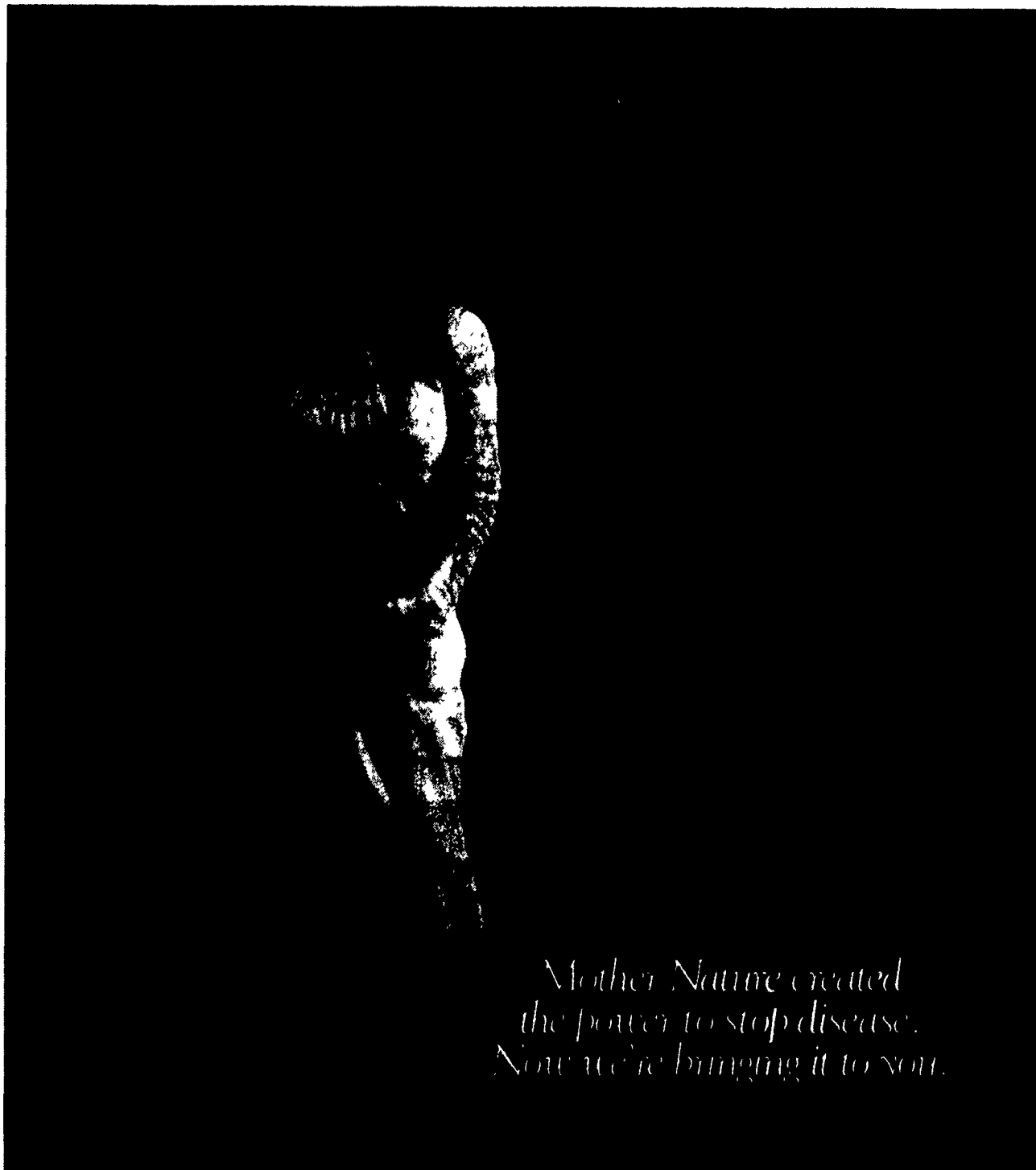
Alternative agriculture doesn't necessarily mean buying into a whole new enterprise. It could be as simple as adjusting the way you do things.

"You could consider a different production system that is unique, such as organic production, or you might consider direct marketing."



More than 800 people and exhibitors attended the 1998 Susquehanna County Dairy Day. Featured at the event were workshops on alternative agriculture, stress management,

agronomy tips, and estate planning. Visitors could also spend time at each of the 70 exhibitors and bid on a prize winning pie from the pie contest.



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