

Lancaster District Awards 'Standout' Conservation Efforts

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NEW HOLLAND (Lancaster Co.) — Conservation farms should stand out.

In the case of Jack and Donna Coleman's Cherry-Crest Dairy Farm in Paradise, their Amazing Maize Maze welcomed more than 50,000 people during the past year's hot, dry summer.

Even more amazing, from an airplane, the farm stood out. Observers from the air could easily identify the distinctive American flag created with 14,000 red, white, and blue petunias.

"At the top of the flag, it's easy to see this is a conservation farm," said Gerald Heistand, director of agricultural operations for the Lancaster Conservation District.

The theme for the maze itself was the "Land of Liberty," in the shape of Pennsylvania, comprising four stars and a huge Liberty Bell in the center.

The Colemans were a standout last week when they were honored with the Outstanding Cooperator of the Year Award by the Lancaster County Conservation District.

More than 200 attended the district banquet last week at Yoder's Restaurant in New Holland.

The Colemans "are true farmers with a heart for milking cows and raising crops," said Heistand, who, with a slide show presentation, spoke about the work of the farm.

Jack Coleman began crop farming in New Jersey and started dairy farming when he moved to Lancaster County in 1987. His expertise in growing crops is evidenced by standout corn yields in the Pennsylvania Five-Acre Corn club. According to Heistand, in 1996 Coleman was the first in the state to have the highest three-year corn yield average at more than 213 bushels per acre.

Cherry-Crest Dairy Farm consists of 70 milking cows on DHIA, which raises 250,000 boilers per year, and 175 acres (113 owned) of land on which to grow the crops.

Coleman grows 70 acres of corn, 50 acres of soybeans, 40 acres of hay, 20 acres of barley and other crops, 10 acres in pasture, and five acres for the farmstead.

Growing good crops requires a standout management plan. A rye cover crop is planted with appropriate amounts of dairy or poultry manure applied to the land, Heistand noted. "Jack is a real manager of nutrients, and does not allow any field to be left bare over the winter," according to Heistand.

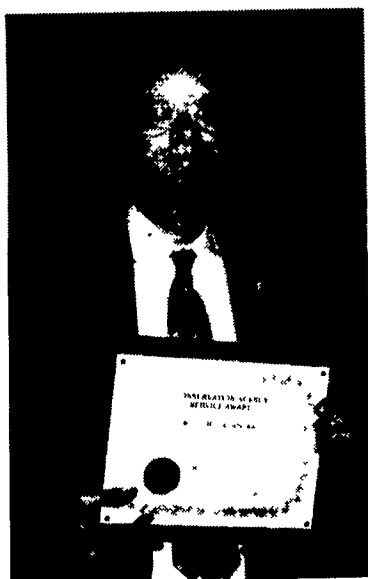
Chiseling the rye down allows it to slowly release the nutrients as it decomposes, so the newly growing corn plant can use the nutrients.

When the fields are wet, "Jack is often the last one in the field," Heistand said. Jack "works closely with his agronomist and does not add commercial fertilizer other than micronutrients."

The farmhouse and barn were built in 1774 by Phillip Feree, a Conestoga Wagon maker. The farm has been improved since. Contours were put on the farm in 1958. In 1987, Coleman signed as a cooperator with the district to install a manure handling system with the aid of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

The watershed on the north side of the railroad has about 70 acres requiring surface water control. A waterway and basin with 1,000 feet of pipe were added to provide that control.

In 1997, 3,200 feet of terraces and 1,810 feet of pipe were installed with the aid of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. Coleman did much of the pipework himself after purchasing his own backhoe.



Hosea Latshaw, NRCS, was presented with the Conservation Agency Service Award.



Educational winners at the conservation banquet. From left, Bob Good, Youth Conservation School Award; Dewey Null, Paradise Sportsmen's Association, Watershed Award; and Jim and Lee Amigh, Educator of the Year Award.

Coleman "has a philosophy that you are never finished with your farm's conservation program," Heistand noted. "Flowers now grow on the steep slopes that used to grow corn!"

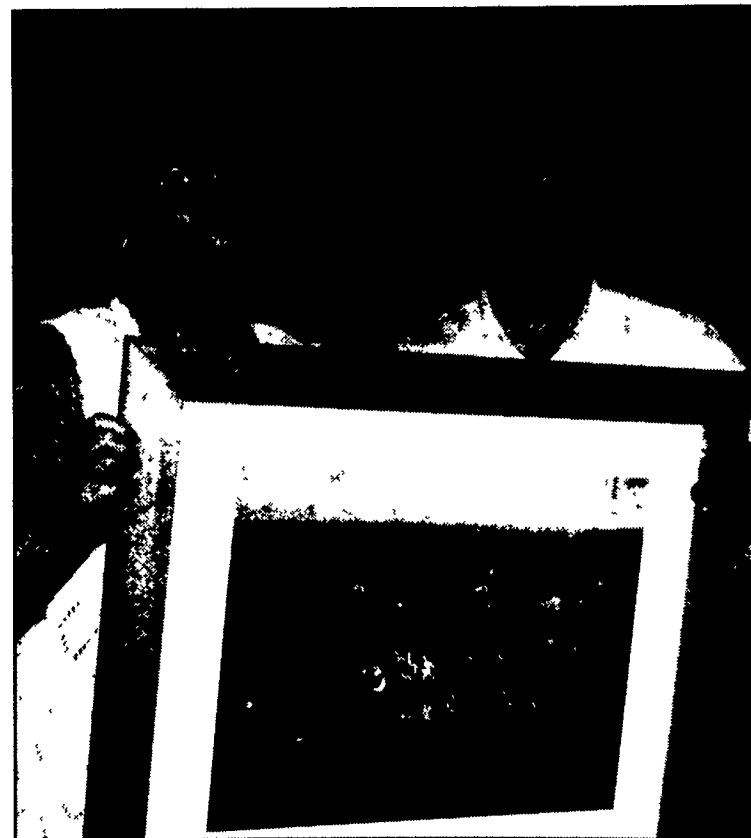
The Colemans provide tours of the farm. And the people on the tour "learn about where milk comes from," said Heistand. "It's a true operating dairy farm."

The Colemans are active in their community and support agriculture. They have completed Ag in the Classroom presentations and they educate the many tourists that come to their farm. Nonprofit organizations are allowed to have a food stand at the maze at no costs.

The farm, with pick-your-own mums, popcorn, or pumpkins, allows the Colemans to educate the consumer and provide "a positive image for Lancaster County agriculture," Heistand noted.

"Even the hay (fields are) placed on contour," Heistand said.

Donna Coleman noted this year's theme for the maze will be



Lucy and Roman Stoltzfoos were honored with a Soil Stewardship Award last week at the Lancaster County Conservation District banquet.

"Lost In Space" with a solar system theme.

Other awards were presented at the banquet.

Soil Stewardship Award

The Soil Stewardship Award for 2000 was presented to Spring Wood Farm, operated by the Roman Stoltzfoos in Christiana, eastern Lancaster County.

The farm, a standout intensive grazing operation in the county, is a grass-based seasonal organic dairy that grows 9,000 organic turkeys, also seasonally, according to Kevin Seibert, nutrient management specialist with the district. All the owned acres — 150 — and rented acreage — 100 — are in intensively managed grass. One-hundred cows are milked on a mostly seasonal basis.

The family includes Roman, wife Lucy, and nine children: Dwight, 20; Hilda, 18; Delmar, 14; Charlene, 12; Clifford; Joshua, 8; Caleb, 6; Althea, 4; and Raphael, 1.

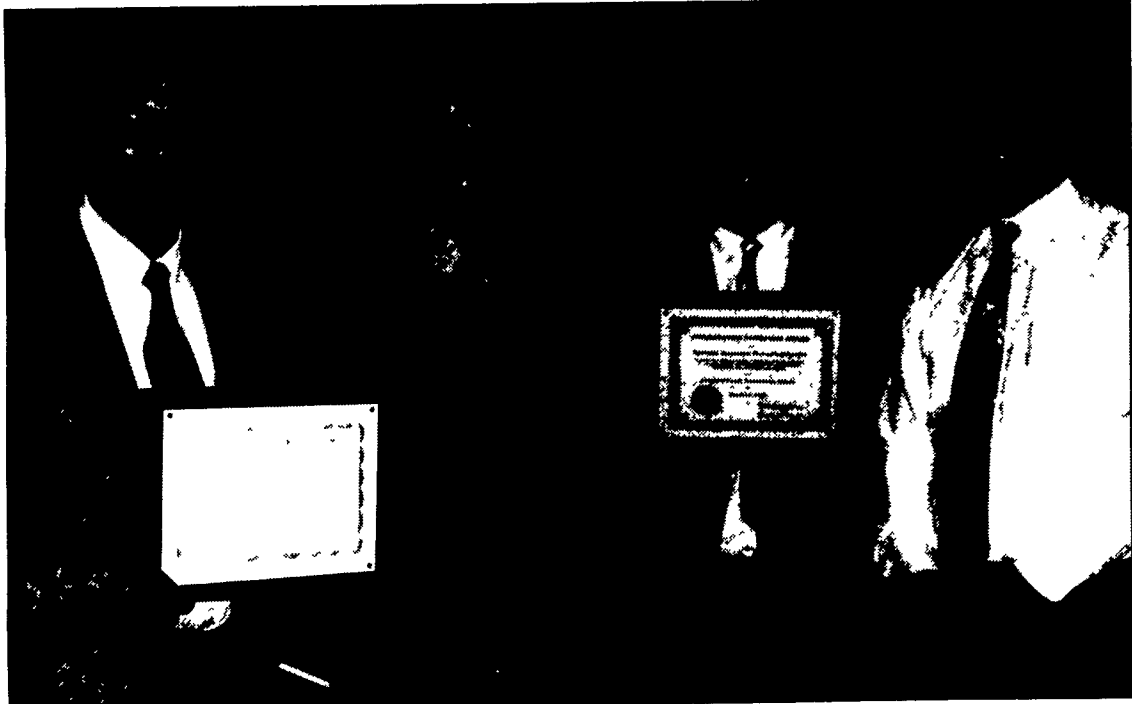
Conservation and water quality practices include stream bank fencing, stabilized with crossings, conversion of all ground into grass, and composting collected manure into high quality compost for retail and wholesale sales.

The 250-acre farm has been in the family for three generations. The farm was purchased in 1944 by Roman's grandfather and then passed to his father. Roman's father recognized the importance of conservation practices, including terraces.

Roman continues conservation work with best management practices such as barnyard runoff controls, stream bank fencing, composting, and converting tilled land into sod, Seibert noted.

All acres farmed are in intensively managed grass. The terraces installed long ago are covered with sod.

The dairy herd numbers 100



Industry awards were presented at the conservation district banquet. From left, Mike Mountz, Cloister Car Wash and Lube, Building Industry Conservation Award; and Chris Sigmund, Bill Rogers, and Mike Brubaker, Brubaker Agronomic Consulting Service, Conservation Promotion Award winners.