

Penn State's Ag Progress Days Celebrates Invention, Innovation In Agricultural Sciences

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — If invention is 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration, it will be no sweat to be inspired by the agricultural inventions showcased at Penn State's Ag Progress Days, Aug. 15-17.

The College of Agricultural Sciences Exhibits Building, on West 11th Street at the Ag Progress Days site at Rockspring, will feature several inventions that changed the face of agricultural business, as well as innovations that helped create new business opportunities and educational technologies.

"Visitors will really get an idea of how much work goes into bringing an invention to market," said George Hamilton, senior lecturer in agronomy and inventor of PennMulch, an environmentally friendly mulching product for lawns and gardens.

"For me, the real work started after I had the idea and figured out that it would work. I think this display really shows all the facets of how new ideas come to market."

One of the building's main exhibits will detail how DuPont Inc. and Hummer Athletic Fields collaborated with Andrew McNitt, assistant professor of turfgrass science, to work with them on the development of Grass Tiles, a turfgrass system for sports stadiums. McNitt mixed and tested a variety of resilient materials used with sand and turfgrass to create an improved playing field.

"Using the Grass Tiles system, a crew can lay down an entire football field over an asphalt surface, and a team could play on it the next day," McNitt said. On display will be a machine used to install the large, square turf tiles and a special machine used to simulate the wear and tear inflicted on a turf surface during a typical football game.

Hamilton's invention,

PennMulch, also marketed for consumers under the name Emerge, created a new product category for lawn and garden centers — pelleted paper mulch. The product uses recycled newspaper fiber and fertilizer mixed with a polymer that expands on contact with water to form a protective mulch over lawns or landscape and vegetable gardens.

Another inventor, Joseph MacNeil, professor emeritus of food science, will display and demonstrate his prototype for a machine that separates the eggshell from the protein membrane coating the interior of the shell. MacNeil's process, which is now licensed and used by Cutler Eggs, a Philadelphia egg-processing company, has been adapted to create value-added products from what were once landfill-bound eggshells.

Once the shell is separated from the membrane, processors can market the calcium in the eggshells and use collagen from the shell's protein membrane for medical products.

Another Penn State innovation, Penn State's Community Impact Model, or CIM-PSU, uses a database of economic information from Pennsylvania's 67 counties to analyze how changes in a community's economy will affect the long-term health of the area. Designed by Tim Kelsey, associate professor of agricultural economics, and Martin Shields, assistant professor of agricultural economics, CIM-PSU can be used by a community to better plan its economic development strategies and react to economic downturns.

Innovation in outreach to new audiences will be on display in an exhibit about a Penn State Cooperative Extension program in Potter County called Community Information Network. The display details how rural communities can utilize infor-

mation technologies to compete in the global economy by creating a community technology center and using community resources to market the community's resources nationally and internationally.

Another outreach exhibit will detail how Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach and Continuing and Distance Education created the Mifflin County Outreach and Cooperative Extension Center, which provides educational and vocational opportunities for the largely rural Juniata Valley, an area that has no college or university within 30 miles of its population. Visitors can see how the new center has provided opportunities for undergraduate and graduate degree programs as well as vocational training and extension education programs.

The College of Agricultural Sciences' Publications Distribution Center will provide a display of college publications. Visitors can pick up a variety of



free publications and an order form for the college's for-sale publications.

For more information, call (800) PSU-1010 toll-free from

July 10 to August 17 or visit the Ag Progress Days site on the World Wide Web at <http://apd-cas.psu.edu>.

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Lexi Lingle, 5, holds the wheel of a brand-new tractor while cousin Bob Hartman, Jr., 4, looks out on a bustling crowd at last year's Ag Progress Days. Lexi is the daughter of Brian and A.J. Lingle, Centre Hall, and Bob is the son of Bob Hartman Sr. and Jackle, Port Matilda. They visited Ag Progress mid-week last year to check out the new equipment and have fun.

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