

York Chamber Honors Ag Family Businesses

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YORK (York Co.) — The Paul McPherson and Dick Naylor families have been named farm business honorees of the year by the York Chamber of Commerce.

These two marketing-savvy farm families were saluted before a crowd of more than 300 attending the Chamber's annual Ag-Business Awards Dinner, Jan. 25 at the York Expo Center.

Named farm family of the year, Paul and Gail McPherson operate a 1,400-acre grain and fruit operation new New Park. A portion of their orchard production is marketed through Maple Lawn's customer-pick and farm retailing center, with seasonal emphasis on peaches, blueberries, and apples. Their Maple Lawn Excavating service is a sideline business started several years ago by Paul to assist other landowners in conservation construction.

Paul is a 10-year director of AgChoice and chairs the Fawn Township Planning Commission. He has also served as director of the Penn State Ag Science Alumni Society and as president of the National Peach Council, Fawn Grove Fire Company and the York County Fruit Growers Association.

Gail is an active charter-member of the American and Pennsylvania Agri-Women, serves on the Apple Marketing Board and formerly taught in the Southeastern School District. The McPhersons are involved in the North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association and fill various leadership positions at the Centre Presbyterian Church.

The couple has three children, daughters Gretchen and Sarah, and son, Hugh, who has joined the family business after graduating from Penn State. Hugh added an additional twist to Maple Lawn's creative marketing events and activities with the farm's popular corn maze. That enterprise has evolved into a "MazeQuest" franchise with seven additional mazes in various locations.

With their upbeat approaches to marketing, the McPherson farm has become a destination for thousands of regional consumers looking for quality fruit, hands-on harvest experiences and hours of cornfield entertainment.

Selection of the Farm Family award is based on excellence in farming and production quality, dedication to and years of involvement in agriculture, community involvement, setting a positive lifestyle example and participation in ag-related activities and groups.

Similar criteria — excellence in operation, a quality produce, out-

standing customer service, community service, and years of popular business relationships — are the selection hallmarks of the annual Outstanding Agri-Business Award, presented this year to Dick and Audrey Naylor's production and marketing business, Naylor's Wine Cellars.

"You can make a living from a hobby," quipped Dick Naylor, accepting the family's honor from the Chamber on behalf of their family-farm winery.

A tool and die maker by trade, and general manager of York's Cor-Box by later career, Naylor began growing grapes as a hobby, purchasing the farm near Stewartstown in 1974. The vineyard has grown from its original 1-1/2 acres to 33 acres, with more than 25,000 vines of 15 mainstay varieties of grapes and more than two dozen experimental cultivars.

Sales for 1998 topped \$880,000, with 95 percent of their production marketed through their own retail outlets. About half of the Naylor Wine Cellars total sales figure is from distributing specialty packaging products, including shipping cartons and gift boxes, to some 700 other wineries and shops around the country.

Winter months keep the several full-time and part-time production employees busy pruning and caring for the vines, as well as bottling product. During the summer months, musical entertainment and special events bring crowds to enjoy the rural setting of the Naylor vineyard pavilion. Naylor's wines have won numerous industry awards for excellence.

A true family business, Naylor is headed by Dick as president, Audrey is vice-president, their daughter Janey Potter handles systems coordination, while son-in-law Ted Potter is a winemaker. Naylor's mother, 98-year-old Helen Wheat, often lends a hand helping to label and bottle.

Recognition was extended to hosts of the Chamber's annual Farm Visitation Day. Farms which opened their doors to the public for the annual ag education event last November were Brown's Orchards and Farm Markets, operated by Stan and Nona Brown; Highbourne Deer Farm, the enterprise of John and Nancy Behrmann; Perrydell Dairy, Greg, Laurie, Tom and Donna Perry; and the South Branch Farm of Robert and Anne Kinsley.

Also honored were participants in the Agricultural Exchange, which teams farm and industry representatives to spend a day visiting at their workites. Teamed with Sandy Johnston and her horse farm were Adhesives Research employees Cathie Huber and Sue Kisielnicki. Dairy

farmers Harry Bickle, Alta Vista Farm West, and Felicia Dell, York County Planning Commission, were teamed for a visit, as well as 93rd District State Representative Ron Miller who teamed with grain producer Brian Utz, Green Valley Farm.

Dale Crist, business associate of Rutter's Dairy and the Chamber ag business committee's photographer, was honored for his years of service. The FFA Chapter of Eastern York High School was saluted by the Chamber for its outstanding display awards received at the recent Farm Show. Also recognized were county dairy princess Heather Crowl, Pennsylvania Poultry Ambassador Rijelle Kraft, Alan and Denise Taylor who were among the top finalists in a recent state Farm Bureau young farmers competition, and Russel and Betty Cornbower, also honored by the Farm Show for Russel's lengthy years of participation.

Featured speaker was Penn State Ag College's dean, Dr. Robert Steele. Steele praised York County for its measures being taken to preserve farmland, noting that "Pennsylvania is still a keystone state, located within a day's drive of two-thirds of the U.S. population."



Farm Family of the Year honoree by the York Chamber of Commerce was the McPherson family of Maple Lawn Farms. From left are daughter Sarah, Paul, Gail and son Hugh McPherson.



Accepting their York Chamber of Commerce Agri-Business of the Year award are, from left, Tony Dobrosky, Chamber representative; Audrey Naylor, Helen Wheat, and Dick Naylor.

"That gives this area a geographical advantage," noted Dr. Steele, praising the ag-business honorees for recognizing and utilizing the surrounding population in their marketing efforts.

Steele acknowledged that Pennsylvania is the leading state in the nation in farmland preser-

vation efforts, with some 200,000 acres on 1,500 farms in preserve status. But with 45,000-plus farms and more than 7.5 million acres of farmland across the Keystone state, Steele emphasized that there is much more to be done. He especially noted water quantity, along with water

quality, to be an issue of concern for the future and that capturing and recharging water supplies becomes more difficult as acres are paved over.

"Keep agriculture a profitable enterprise," he urged. "That's the best way to preserve agriculture."

Genealogy Conference Is March 30-31

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Featuring as keynote speaker Roland Paul — associate director since 1978 of the Institute for Palatinate History and Folk Culture, Kaiserslautern, Germany — the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society and the Lancaster County Historical Society will cosponsor the 22nd annual Fam-

ily History Conference on Friday and Saturday, March 30-31, 2001, at Lancaster Mennonite High School, Lancaster.

In his keynote address, Paul will discuss "The Old World and the New World of the Pennsylvania Germans," outlining the political, religious, and social situation in the 17th- and

18th-century German Palatinate. He will also present workshops on "Genealogical Sources for the Palatinate in State, City, Church, and Private Archives" and "Immigration into the Palatinate from Switzerland and Other Countries after the Thirty Years Wars."

Other leaders will conduct

about 20 other workshops featuring beginner to advanced research; facilities in multiple geographic areas; and usage of varied types of records, including estate, courthouse, federal immigration and naturalization records; gravestones and social identity; genealogy computer programs and web pages as sharing tools; and dating one's house.

Program and further registration details are available from Lola M. Lehman, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499 (include self-addressed, stamped envelope). Phone: (717) 393-9745; fax: (717) 393-8751. Registration deadline is March 17.