

Six Conservationists Recognized At Lebanon District Banquet

MT. GRETTA (Lebanon Co.) — The Lebanon County Conservation District recognized six individuals for their outstanding efforts of conservation in Lebanon County at their annual planning meeting and awards banquet. Special recognition was awarded to two farmers, an educator, an attorney, an employee of Hershey Foods Corporation, and a long-time conservation district employee.

Earl and Pat Ziegler were recognized for their efforts in soil and water conservation on their 113-acre farm in Bethel Township when they were awarded The Clean Water Farm Award. Earl and Pat became cooperators with the Lebanon County Conservation District in 1961 and have continued the family tradition of conservation farming.

The Zieglers practice contour strip cropping with rotations, cover crops and residue management. They maintain a Chesapeake Bay Agreement and have instituted a plan incorporating: a manure storage facility, a concrete barnyard, nutrient management plan, surface water control measures, and stream bank fencing with two livestock crossings are planned. The farm was preserved in 1994 through the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Board.

Robert "Bob" Arnold of Lebanon was named Conservationist of the Year for his years of conservation volunteer efforts. Long before the recent interest in protecting watersheds, Bob was assisting with fish habitat improvement structures during the early 1970s.

In the 1980s, Arnold worked with Palmyra area groups to help with the Quittapahilla Creek Improvement Project installing further fish habitat improvements. For 21 years, Arnold has helped Hershey Foods maintain environmental compliance.

Mrs. Lynn Aponick, a biology, environmental ecology, anatomy and environmental science teacher with ELCO High School, was awarded the District's Educator of the Year award. A resident of Myerstown, Lynn has taught for 20 years at ELCO High School. Her efforts have had a major impact on the science department at ELCO.

Recruited by the conservation district in 1989 to gain participation from ELCO schools in the Envirothon (a hands on environmental competition covering forestry, soils, aquatics, wildlife and current issues), Aponick took on the challenge. Starting with two envirothon teams and 10 students, the ELCO Envirothon has grown to six high school teams and two middle school teams, totaling over 50 students.

In 1999, a middle school Envirothon Team was started. This team serves as a training ground for students and a feeder system for the high school teams. Aponick's students do water testing in local streams for the Leaf Pack Network and assist with activities involving the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area and the Nature Conservancy. This past spring her students assisted on a Tulpchocken Creek stream restoration project lead by Mark Chegwiddden of the Lebanon County Conservation District.

Aponick's students coordinate outdoor and nature activities for the ELCO Elementary fifth grade camping days.

George C. Bowman Jr. of Lebanon was chosen to receive the Landowner of the Year award. Bowman is a conservation-minded individual who has a history of sound soil and water stewardship on his 170 acre tract including a tree farm and agricultural land.

Bowman became a conservation district cooperator in 1975 and has operated a state register-

ed tree farm since 1964. He has been named District Tree Farmer of the Year by the Commonwealth in 1980 and 1985, receiving the Maurice K. Goddard award in 1984.

Forty-five percent of his land is farmed with special attention paid to nutrient management while the remaining 55 percent of the land is a woodlot managed for timber, wildlife and recreation. The state has used Bowman's tree farm to conduct scientific tree species' tests and his forestry practices have been used as examples by service foresters for others. Bowman has opened his land for hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, jogging, and horseback riding, and the Boy Scouts of America have conducted a forestry project on the land while Cub Scouts and Webelos have taken tree, plant, and wildlife identification walks. Charles V. Henry III, an attorney, was honored for his outstanding support of community recreation and conservation. He has donated many hours of professional legal services to organizations such as the Lebanon Valley Rails to Trails, Swatara Creek Watershed Association (formerly Citizens Coordinating for Clean Water), Lebanon Valley Conservancy, Inc., Quittapahilla Watershed Association, Tulpehocken Study Group and the Save The Rexmont Dam. He was and continues to be available to conservation groups having legal questions.

Charles Wertz is the district manager of the conservation district and was recognized for his work at the district for 17 years. He has been instrumental in developing and conducting the Farm Preservation Program and the Lebanon Valley Conservancy here in Lebanon County. He is dedicated to both of these new programs and has recruited board members for both groups.

Wertz conducts farm site inspections for preservation consideration; works with DEP, landowners and attorneys explaining the Farm Preservation Program; acquires deeds, and fights for increased funding from our County Commissioners and our State Legislators in support of farm preservation. Since 1991, over 5,000 acres of farmland have been preserved in Lebanon County.

The Lebanon County Conservation District was also recognized for its work in groundwater education and conservation. Groundwater Guardian is a program of the Groundwater Foundation of Lincoln, Nebraska that supports, recognizes and connects communities that are protecting their groundwater re-

sources. It is not a regulatory program, rather it relies on voluntary steps developed at the community level to address local groundwater protection priorities.

Linda Shultz, secretary, was recognized for her 10 years of service to the Lebanon County Conservation District. Shultz has presided over front office operations during an unprecedented period of growth in district programs and responsibility. Charles Wertz, conservation district manager, said, "We would simply be crippled without Linda's dedication." She provides administrative and logistical support to all staff in their programs to make sure office operations proceed smoothly and goals are met.

Record Farm Price Drop Signals Needed Policy Reform

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Using last month's record commodity price drop as an example, National Farmers Union (NFU) reiterated the need for an adequate safety net for farmers and ranchers to offset severe price fluctuations.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service reported Nov. 1 the largest one-month decline in farm-gate prices since the department began recording the statistic 91 years ago. The 9.5 percent plunge from the September index reflects downturns in prices for milk, soybeans, hogs, corn, broilers, cattle and lettuce, along with seasonal changes in the market-

ing of commodities.

"There is tremendous uncertainty among producers and

their lenders because of the volatility of agricultural markets," said NFU President Leland Swenson. "This proves the need for an adequate safety net for farmers and ranchers, which current farm policy lacks.

"These unprotected dips and dives in the market hurt our farmers and ranchers and the rural communities that depend on them," Swenson said. "We need a safety net provision that helps farmers when prices are low and that is based on what producers are doing today. This safety net is a vital part of the Farm Bill that must be completed this year."

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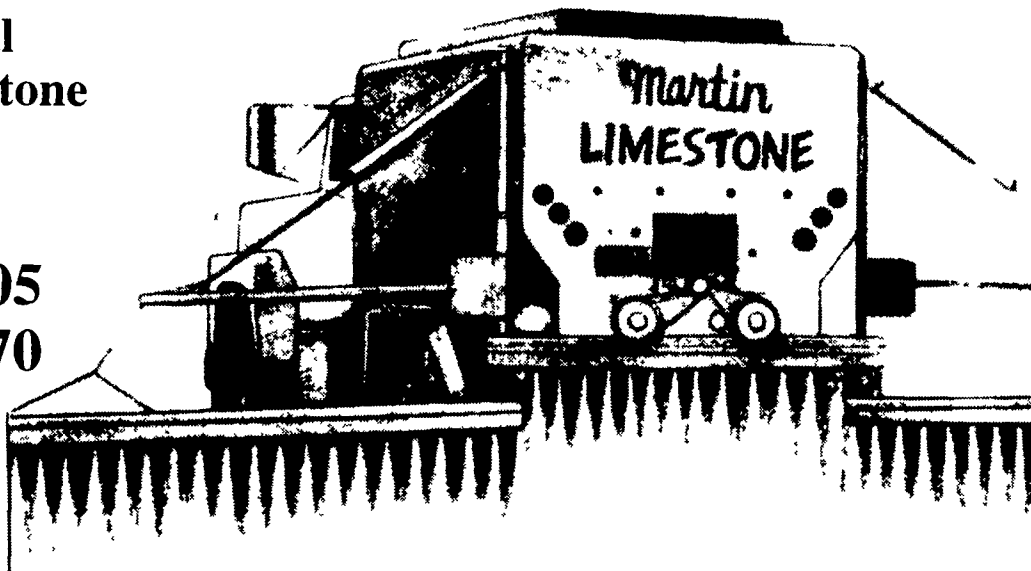
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