

Ag Symposium Educates Township Officials

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Lancaster Farming Staff

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — This week's Regional Township Agricultural Symposium drew 95 township officials from 54 different townships in a nine-county region, according to public relations spokesperson for Landis Valley Museum and event coordinator K.C. Wenger.

Other government and ag agencies also attended the event.

The overall goal of the program was to "educate township officials, planning commission members, solicitors, and anyone involved in the creation of township policy and law on community issues, concerns, and opportunities for integrating agriculture and the community," said Wenger.

The event is sponsored by The Advanced Agricultural Institute at Landis Valley Museum. The organization was created in 2001 by the Landis Valley Museum, PennAg Industries Association, and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to provide a non-biased arena to educate the public about agriculture.

Also partnering with the Advanced Agricultural Institute to sponsor the symposium is the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, the South Central Assembly for Effective Governance, and the Ombudsman Program, supported by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and conservation districts.

During the event, Elam Herr, assistant executive director of the Pennsylvania Department of Township Supervisors, gave the lecture, "Changes to the Municipal Planning Code: Managing Growth While Protecting the Viability of Agriculture."

In another session, Don Robinson, administrator, Lancaster County Conservation District, addressed how township officials could partner with county conservation districts.

Tom Beuduy, deputy director of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC), discussed the SRBC's role in regulating water removal.

After a picnic lunch Christine Kellett, director of the Agricultural Law Research and Education Center, Dickinson School of Law and Penn State University, lectured about the coexistence of agriculture and communities.

From survey results, feedback from participants showed "a resounding yes" that the event was timely, relevant, and beneficial, said Wenger.

"The question and answer sessions were very lively. They (township officials) were so appreciative to have people with that expertise give them candid advice on their concerns," she said. Officials questioned the speakers on issues they may have "felt confused about, or wanted some guidance on," Wenger said. "A huge portion of the

questions were surrounding water issues."

Sponsors of the symposium included the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, the Lancaster County Conservation District, and the South Central Assembly, a regional planning organization.

With the addition of spouses and children, approximately 230 people attended the event.

Events conducted for spouses and children of the township officials included not only touring through the museum but also old-time games, snapshots of the children dressed in period costumes, and wagon rides.

The museum is the perfect setting for the symposium, because it "documents the history of agriculture," said Wenger. In addition, the symposium covers "what we think is going on out there, and we have yet to understand what is to come," she said.

According to Steve Miller, executive director, Landis Valley

Museum, "One of the things that has changed significantly in the museum profession is that we're really charged to provide programming and content that relates to contemporary issues.

"Lebanon Valley has a significant collection of agriculture items, but we also want to make that collection relevant not only to historical issues but also to contemporary issues," he said.

The museum is the result of a public and private partnership funded by taxpayers of Pennsylvania and Landis Valley Associates, a community support group.

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Weekly Dairy Market Outlook

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higher. And there is still hope the U.S. economy could recover and fuel demand for cheese. But both are long shots right now.

To learn more about using the futures markets to lock in favorable milk prices, consider attending USDA's Dairy Options Pilot Program (DOPP). There are 25 counties in New York and Pennsylvania each that are eligible to participate in this valuable program (to find out if your county is eligible for the DOPP, see

<http://www.rma.usda.gov/training/programs/dopp/round4counties.html>).

This year both Cornell and Penn State are teaming up with USDA to host the fourth round of the DOPP program via satellite Aug. 6. There will also be a morning program on the Farm Bill. For more information on locations and program content, call your local county extension office or go to the Webiste, <http://farmbill2002.aers.psu.edu/SatelliteDownlink.htm>.



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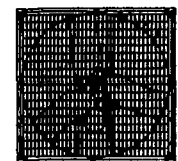
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