

Entrepreneurs Learn To 'Till The Soil Of Opportunity'

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Lancaster Farming Staff

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — A diverse group of people, from seasoned farmers to those with no background in agriculture, have begun gathering for the second annual "Tilling the Soil of Opportunity" course in small business management.

The class that kicked off in Gettysburg this week included several fruit growers, an ag chemical distributor, an organic produce farmer, and an air traffic controller who plans to become a dairyman.

The 12-week course is being offered by Penn State Cooperative Extension in Adams, Berks, and Lancaster counties, with the goal of teaching small business managers how to develop a plan for a success.

Extension leaders Lynn Kime, Adams County, and Winifred McGee, Lebanon County, are teaching the Gettysburg class. The first session featured two guests who were students in last year's course and have since been applying what they've learned to the world of farming and marketing.

Tonya White of Knouse Fruitlands, Arendtsville, said the reason she took the class was because she needed to learn more about running a business.

"Business is not my background," she said. "I didn't know how to look at a financial statement, (although) I was smart enough to know that our assets were supposed to be greater than our liabilities."

Creditors need to know that business owners have a sound plan before they lend money to an operation, according to White.

"Banks want to know that you're a good risk," she said. "If you fall through, they really don't want to be bothered selling a farm."

Beverly Benner of Donaldson Fruit Farm, Gettysburg, said one of the key points she learned is that successful managers do not

shy away from looking at the weaknesses in their business in order to improve them.

"While it's not fun to look at what you're not doing well," she said, "that's what you need to look at."

When she and her siblings were younger, Benner said the business was going well and the family was "living to farm." But



Tonya White of Knouse Fruitlands, Adams County, tells new students some of the things she learned in last year's Tilling the Soil of Opportunity class.

as time went on and family members went different ways, this turned into a situation in which they were "farming to live," she said.

One reason for developing a good business strategy is to make it possible to have a lifestyle in which the family can live to farm instead of the other way around, according to Benner.

Developing a budget for the fruit market operation over the past two years was a good step one that requires a lot of attention, Benner said. She recommended checking it once a month, if possible, and four times a year at minimum.

"We've learned that if you look at (the budget) at least quar-

terly, you can find out where you're going off track," she said.

In addition to working on the problem areas in the business, Benner said family farmer/marketers must be open to new ideas and willing to implement them.

"We have the tendency in our business to bury our heads," she said. "You can't do that."

Kime and McGee outlined some of the characteristic of entrepreneurs in contrast to people who are merely business owners.

"A business owner is someone who calls me up and says 'I want to be a business owner' — what kind of business should I start?" McGee said.

Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, usually start businesses that involve something they love to do. They tend to be motivated by a passion for the work, seek self-reliance, and want to create something new. For entrepreneurs, the lines between work and play become blurry, McGee said. Their business is more than just a means of making money.

A drawback to running a business is that entrepreneurs tend to work long hours, risking failure and family strain. They often need to risk substantial amounts of their own money, too, with banks typically looking for 30 to

40 percent of the finances to come from the owner, McGee said.

McGee used the example of Milton Hershey, the late chocolate magnate, to illustrate how the most successful entrepreneurs tend to persist when faced with setbacks. Hershey experienced bankruptcy several times before launching his chocolate operation.

"Milton Hershey had several other businesses before the (chocolate factory) got off the ground," she said. "And look where it is today."

Lynn Kime outlined some of the myths that have traditionally been associated with entrepreneurship. These include:

- *Entrepreneurs are born, not made.* Not so, Kime said. Entrepreneurial skills can be learned by almost anyone.

- *Entrepreneurs are their own bosses.* They actually work for many people, including investors, bankers, customers, employees, and family members.

- *Entrepreneurs set their own hours.* In fact, they work long and hard for their success.

- *Entrepreneurs love high-risk ventures.* Actually, successful ones do everything they can to minimize risk.

- *Entrepreneurs are all young*

"techies" working in the Silicon Valley in California. No, entrepreneurship is not governed by age, sex, geography, or any particular type of industry.

"Small businesses are supplying over 50 percent of the jobs in the U.S. today," McGee told the group. "Small business owners run the capital system."



Chris Waesche, left, organic farmer from West Virginia, and Sabrena DeKowski, veterinary technician, Gettysburg, share their backgrounds and future plans during the Tilling the Soil of Opportunity course in Gettysburg.

Kung To Discuss Dairy Feed Additives

WEST CHESTER (Chester Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension in the southeast region is offering educational programs to discuss the benefits of various feed additives in dairy cattle rations.

The first segment of the program will review the fundamentals of overall ruminant nutrition and the second segment will focus on specific types of feed additives, how they are used in the digestive system, and their relative effectiveness.

Dr. Limin Kung, ruminant nutrition and microbiology professor from the University of Delaware, will be the featured

speaker.

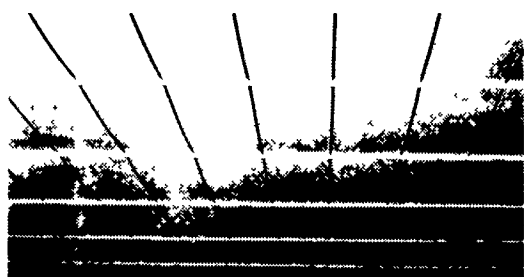
The specifics of these meetings are as follows:

- Jan. 14, Chester County, Russellville Grange Hall, Oxford, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Register by Jan. 13 by calling (610) 696-3500. Program is free.

- Jan. 15, Berks County, Berks County Ag Center, Reading, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Register by Jan. 13 by calling (610) 378-1327. Cost for this program is \$5.

- Jan. 16, Bucks/Montgomery County, Bucks County extension office, Doylestown, 10:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Register by Jan. 14 by calling (215) 345-3283. Program is free.

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