

Chester County Farmers Attend Keep Farming First Summit

WEST CHESTER (Chester Co.) — Chester County farmers were front and center for the two-day summit "Keep Farming First" last week at West Chester University.

The Chester County 2020 Trust, Chester County Economic Development Council, and Penn State Cooperative-Chester County sponsored the summit, which drew more than 260 members of the farming community plus walk-ins.

The 73 presenters represented almost every category of farmer, support service and expert, ranging from sustainable farming, bio-genetics, organic and value-added crops, estate planning, to dairy, multi-generational farms, GMOs and economic alliances.

summit. They have worked to help preserve more than 16,000 acres of agricultural land in the county.

Other speakers included Pennsylvania's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Christian Herr and, speaking for Governor Ed Rendell, dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Science, Dr. Allen Kelly.

Co-chairs Nancy Mohr (Chester County 2020) and Gary Smith (CCEDC) rounded out the program. The third co-chair, Cheryl Fairbairn from the cooperative extension was both a presenter and the closing speaker on the second day.

Farmers were deeply involved in the planning process for the summit, billed as "planned for

and by the farmer."

The full group presentations included Multi-faceted Estate Planning, Agriculture As a Business and The Successful, Multi-generational Family Farm. The interest

in the Sustainable Agriculture breakout session, featuring Fred Kirschenmann and the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's (PASA) Brian Snyder was so large that it was transferred from a classroom to the ballroom.

By the end of the conference, the experts themselves had gained greater familiarity with the challenges faced by farmers in this area of rising land values and increased development pressures.

Additionally, 37 farm families were honored at the summit as registered Century Farmers. Each represents a history of at least one hundred years of farming by succeeding generations of the same family. For some of the families, the two-hundred-year mark is fast approaching.

Anyone who would like to be notified of future events should send name, address and telephone number to Keep Farming First, P.O. Box 425, West Chester, PA 19380.

E-mail requests may be sent to info@CC2020.org

Telephone inquiries are being handled by Chester County 2020 Trust, (610) 696-3180.

Summit Offers Several Breakout Sessions

MICHELLE KUNJAPPU
Lancaster Farming Staff

WEST CHESTER (Chester Co.) — A "Keep Farming First" summit conducted recently drew more than 260 members and friends of the agriculture community to West Chester University.

Planners, land trust representatives, farmers, people interested in their food source and what is happening to the land around them, and organizers of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms gathered to help find ways for farming to become more profitable to and keep land in the county.

A comprehensive overview of the event is in the article on page A33. Following is a summary of a few of the breakout sessions.

A few of Thursday and Friday's breakout sessions included alternatives and options to development, agricultural law, niche opportunities, farm loans, marketing, grazing for profit, farm business transfer, and starting farmers' markets.

Conrad Fisher, Rocky Acres Farm, Green Land, Montgomery County, and Arden Landis, Kirkwood, teamed up to teach about grazing for profit in their session.

Fisher described his "Rocky Acres Salad Bar," which includes foxtail, dandelion, and crab grass which takes over when the cool-season grasses die down, he said. He raises Herefords on his operation.

He also broadcasts rye grain which saves slower-growing grasses and allows them to grow structure and leaf, as the cattle graze the faster-growing rye. The rye grasses are also doing well in forested areas of the farm, he said.

He frost seeds March 1 and re-seeds on labor Day.

Arden Landis has been grazing his dairy herd since 1993. "We're thankful that the journey went from high production back to the grass," he said. "There are just so many benefits to the family and the animals."

Landis spends less than \$10 per cow on vet bills. "The cows need to be able to do it on their own, because one cow can take

more energy out of you than the other 89," he said.

This year the dairy is completely seasonal, with the last milking on Dec. 30 and the next around March 1.

"We have found that when you line the herd up with the season, and get those cows coming in with the spring grass, that is



Thursday and Friday included several choices of breakout sessions.

the cheapest milk. Over winter, the cheapest feed is dry cow hay.

"The more home-grown forages I have, either with grazed grass or baleage, the greater profitability," he said.

Toni Stuetz, Penn State cooperative extension agent who

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Conrad Fisher, Rocky Acres Farm, described his "Rocky Acres Salad Bar" in his discussion about grazing.

Flying in from Iowa State University, the director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Fred Kirschenmann, set a can-do attitude that followed all the way through the closing reception.

His keynote speech, "How to Keep Agriculture in the Game," put responsibility for the future in the farmers' hands. He urged them to recognize opportunities and realize that different approaches to farming had more in common than they might think.

Three key goals for healthy farms and farm families were: developing new production systems that are less costly to both the farmer and the environment, developing new markets that enable farmers to produce more value and retain a larger share of that value on the farm, and developing new public policies that support communities rather than commodities.

Also involved in the opening session were the Chester County Commissioners chairman Colin Hanna, Karen Martynick, and Andrew Dinniman, who served as honorary co-chairs for the

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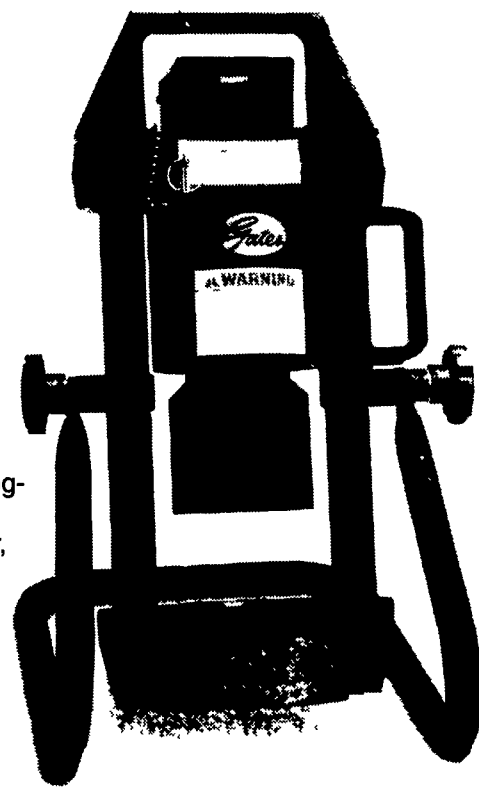
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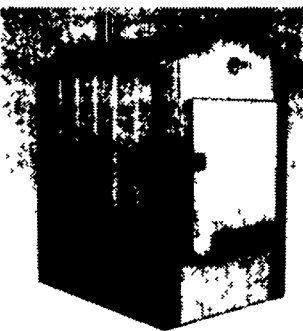
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