

## 2017 PYFA WINTER CONFERENCE

Shippensburg was the site of the 2017 Winter Conference of the PA Young Farmers Association February 7-9<sup>th</sup>, hosted by the Shippensburg Young Farmers Chapter.



The “Media Blitz” kicked off the conference when Spokesperson for Agriculture contestant Ayla Blatt of Kutztown visited with shoppers at the local Weis Market and chose one to receive free groceries. PYFA paid for the food items in the shopper’s cart to point out how much of the grocery bill is non-food items. Ayla also presented a speech later that day at the Conference telling “What Agriculture Means to Me.” She won a trip to the National Young Farmers Educational Association Institute in Savannah, GA in December.

The Conference continued with four educational workshops. “What’s in It for Me? Farmers and Local Government” was presented by Judy Chambers, Penn State Extension Educator. Agriculture faces many challenges from government regulations and neighbors’ complaints. Most municipalities want to support agriculture but may not understand how their zoning and regulations may affect it. Farmers need to step up and serve in local government to express the agricultural viewpoint at the township or borough level.



The second workshop was on sprayer calibration presented by Tracey Harpster, Penn State Extension Educator. Attendees received two pesticide credits. An explanation of the PA Preferred Program was given by Ashlee Dugan of PDA, explaining the benefits to farmers participating and how to apply.

Cassie Yost, Franklin County Extension Dairy Educator, spoke on the new Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) under the Food Safety and Modernization Act. Each farmer raising livestock must have a working relationship with a veterinarian, who must prescribe any feed and water additives used. The vet must submit forms to the feed mill in order for the farmer to obtain the additives. Ms. Yost explained which categories of drugs required the VFD. She also explained new changes in the FARM program, Farmers Assuring Responsible Management. This is a Quality Assurance program for dairy offering training through online learning modules and webinars.



State Rep. Mark Keller, vice-chair of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, presented a citation recognizing PYFA for its 57<sup>th</sup> annual Winter Conference. Secretary Russell Redding, PA Department of Agriculture, also greeted members and guests at the Tuesday evening banquet. Channel 27 weatherman Eric Finkenbinder compared farming to meteorology and spoke of the importance of weather forecasting to agriculture. He stated that whether climate change is manmade or a natural cycle, farming must make adjustments to address its effects.

An important part of the winter conference is tours of the local area. Bob Keefer opened his Hard Earned Acres in Shippensburg to the members and told about milking his 640 cows three times a day in the double-16 parlor. His anaerobic digester supplies all the electricity for his operation and home. He has had a closed herd for many years, raising all his own heifers.

The second tour was to Railside Farm, the Martin family, working 600 acres in the heart of the Cumberland Valley. They milk 270 cows with 5 Lely robotic milkers. They ship to Mount Joy Co-op and separate and compost their manure.

Thursday's tours visited Martin's Famous Pastry Shoppe, home of Martin's famous potato rolls. Martin's operates the headquarters in Chambersburg, where they make 350 rolls per minute, and another plant in Valdosta, GA. Their hamburger rolls are rated number one and hot dog rolls number two in the nation. A family company since 1958, the business began in the garage of

Lois and Lloyd Martin and has grown to 750 employees.

BWISE and Bri-Mar Trailer Manufacturing welcomed PYFA members for a tour of their plant in Chambersburg. Brian Wise has been involved in metal fabrication since his start in vo-tech school in 1981. The plant builds 130 trailers per week, in all sizes. Each trailer is computer-tracked through the entire process in the 300,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility. The company currently employs about 100 and is constantly designing new trailers and looking for ways to improve existing models.

Conference attendees brought a “mountain” of cereal boxes which were presented to Rev. J.R. Wells for the King’s Kettle food pantry in Shippensburg. Next year’s conference will be February 6-8, 2018 at Seven Springs Resort, hosted by Somerset County Young Farmers.

