

NYFEA MEETS IN LANCASTER

The Pennsylvania Young Farmers Association hosted a successful National Young Farmers Education Association Institute December 11-14 at the Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square. Over 220 people attended and participated in two days of tours and two days of meetings on agriculture and leadership.

One of Thursday's tours featured Chester County's mushroom industry. Sixty percent of U.S. mushrooms are grown in Chester County PA by 80 growers. ToJo Mushrooms welcomed the group and traced the growing process from compost to cutting. All recycled materials are used for the compost, and the spent compost is again recycled by farmers on their fields. With modern methods it is possible to grow 5.2 crops in a year.



The Manfredi Companies were the next stop on the tour. Started in 1913, the third generation is now operating the business which is the largest cold storage facility in the world. The warehouses handle 1 million pineapples per week in addition to many types of fresh produce from avocados to kiwi to berries and tomatoes. 250 trucks per day are sent out to stores across the country. Fifteen percent of the produce is re-packaged; the rest is separated and sent out in LTL (less than a truckload) to customers.



Other Thursday tours went shopping at various antique shops or toured Dutchland Inc, manufacturer of engineered concrete environmental structures. The Railroad Museum of PA and the Choo Choo Barn were also sites of interest on the tours.

CNH, New Holland headquarters for hay and forage equipment manufacturing, was a popular tour stop for the farmers from across the U.S. They had the opportunity to see the expertise of engineering, research and development, marketing and manufacturing operations come together to produce the world's number one hay tools.

Oregon Dairy Organics takes excess manure from local farms and turns it into useful, high quality compost for gardeners, landscapers and organic farmers.

Thursday's buses enjoyed dinner at one of three PA Dutch smorgasbords in the area, and a group attended the Christmas show at American Music Theater before returning to the hotel.

Friday groups toured Liberation (Tiny) Homes where they saw tiny homes on wheels created from start to finish. Lancaster Laboratories, owned by Eurofin, employs 2000 people providing scientific and analytical services in the environmental sciences to area agribusinesses and industries.

Other groups explored Lititz on a walking tour of the many shops, Sturgis Pretzel Bakery, and Wilbur Chocolate Museum and store. They enjoyed a chalk talk by Elva Hurst who created a beautiful painting with chalk while telling a story.

Kreider Dairy Farms tour featured a high-tech dairy farm with a 54 cow carousel milking parlor where 1800-1900 cows are milked three times a day. Purchased by Noah and Mary Kreider in 1935, Kreiders now own 3000 acres in three counties. In addition to the dairy they raise 7 million laying hens and run 50-60 tractor trailers to deliver fresh eggs to markets.



Tours also stopped at Binkley & Hurst machinery dealer and learned about the challenges and opportunities of serving farmers for their equipment and service needs. The company began in 1939 and now has five locations in PA, DE, MD, and VA.

Some tours spent time at Outback Toys and the Green Dragon Farmers Market. All tours met for lunch at the farm of Samuel and Rachel King for a traditional Amish meal, and for dinner at the Country Barn near Centerville.

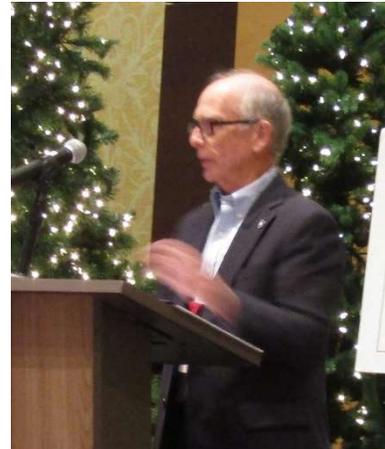


Saturday morning featured the Ag Decision Makers College, a panel discussion by three leaders in PA agriculture. PA Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said agriculture makes up 18% of Pennsylvania's economy, and PA is working to serve farmers through economic development assistance and the 2019 PA Farm Bill.



Don Hoover, owner/manager of Binkley & Hurst machinery dealers, spoke of the importance of faith and family. He participates in the Lancaster County Ag Council which works on ag issues to benefit farmers in the area.

Keith Masser, CEO of Sterman Masser Inc., told how he grew his business from a small potato farm to a huge operation that now includes growing, processing, packaging, and trucking potatoes and products across the country.



Pennsylvania youth received honors in the contests on Saturday. Ethan Sanner of Kutztown won the Ag Expressions essay contest. Caylin Stevens of Delaware Valley University won the Ag Communications Award.



Noah Berning, an FFA State Officer from Indiana, was named Ag Spokesperson of the year.

