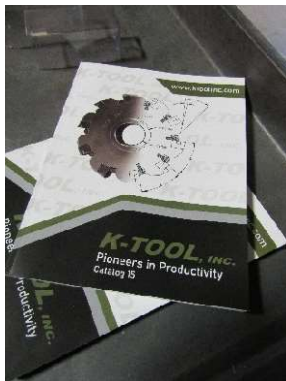


PA YOUNG FARMERS WINTER CONFERENCE- 2023

The PYFA Winter Conference took place at the Gettysburg Hotel February 7-9, 2023. Three days of educational tours and workshops were enjoyed by about 50 attendees.

Tuesday morning four contestants for the Spokesperson for Agriculture award traveled to the local Weis Market to talk to shoppers about agriculture and where their food comes from. One lucky shopper was selected and PYFA purchased all the food items in their cart, demonstrating how much of their grocery bill was comprised of non-food items.



Tuesday's tours began at K-Tool, founded in 1979 by Dale Keller in his garage. The company manufactures indexable carbide cutting tools for use in the metalworking industry. K-Tool is in the top ten private tool manufacturers in the world. They have 24 employees and sell through 360 distributors across the U.S.

They make special order tools and respond faster than their larger competitors.



The next stop was Miller Chemical, manufacturer of fertilizers and adjuvants for growers globally for more than 80 years. All of their products are made at this location and are shipped to more than 90 countries with custom mixes and labels. There are 18 employees in the plant and 4 in their warehouse.

On return to the Hotel, the four Spokesperson contestants delivered their speeches on the topic "What Agriculture Means to Me." All presented excellent talks, but the winner of the trip to the National Young Farmers Education Association institute in Texas was

Penelope Brosius. Second place- Makayla Keller, third- Theresa Feese, and fourth- Makayle Hess.



Congratulations and thank you to all! (Pictured here with PA Honey Queen Paige Ryan.)

Tuesday's banquet featured entertainment by Jacob the Amishman, who involved the audience in his comedy show. Many beautiful items were auctioned to benefit the PYFA programs.

Wednesday morning PA Secretary of Agriculture visited the group prior to the delegate business meeting, where new officers were elected for the year:



President Michelle Dietrich, President Elect Anthony Dietrich, Past President Becky Nas, Secretary Tammy Rentzel, Treasurer Ed Zug, Membership Chair Debbie Zug, and Public Relations Chair Denise Leydig. Regional Vice Presidents were reelected: Eastern- Dale Hawkins, Western- Keith Weimer, South Central- Jason Rentzel, North Central- Matt Dersham. Betsy Huber will continue as Executive Secretary.



The spouses spent the day at a local shop making personalized charcuterie boards, wooden decorated "grazing" boards filled with cheeses, meats, fruits, etc. which they enjoyed for lunch.

Workshops featured Allison Maloney from Agri-Safe who spoke about their resources for rural mental health. Agri-Safe works under a USDA grant through the Farm & Ranch Stress Assistance Network, to provide help for farmers who may be struggling with stress and suicidal thoughts.

Zack Bolitho, National Park Service representative from Gettysburg National Military Park, spoke about the changing management of agricultural lands within the park which totals 6032 acres, plus the Eisenhower National Historic site of 690 acres, 90% of which is farmed. The Park Service tries to balance the historical significance of the 1860s with environmental concerns of today.

The third workshop was presented by Deb and her daughter Courtney Smith, owners of Fields of Adventure farm, a popular agri-tourism spot near Gettysburg. They spoke of the good, the bad, and the ugly of agri-tourism, their challenges and opportunities in their effort to educate and entertain the public.

Hickory Bridge Farm restaurant was the host for the evening banquet where attendees enjoyed a feast of delicious food in a rustic barn setting. The Richard Hoppes Award was presented to Greg and Judy Croner, long-time members of the Berlin-Brothersvalley Young Farmers chapter for their many contributions to PYFA.



Thursday the group traveled to the recently opened World War II American Experience museum just outside of Gettysburg. Attendees spent the morning on a guided tour of the many displays, followed by a box lunch. Everyone then said their goodbyes and look forward to next year, February 9-10, 2024 in Mifflinburg.