

## NYFEA INSTITUTE 2021

The annual NYFEA Institute began December 8 in Fort Wayne, Indiana at the Hilton and Grand Wayne Convention Center with the delegate session and an opening reception. President Tim Faulkner, SC, welcomed the 150 attendees in person for the first time since 2019, since the 2020 Institute was held virtually.

Thursday featured tours of businesses in the South Bend area. Attendees were amazed at Homestead Dairy where 36 robots milk 5200 cows each day. Each day three to four tankers of milk, 44,000 gallons, go to Wal-marts in Indiana and Ohio. The farm has two digesters and uses dried manure solids for bedding. It is the largest robotic dairy under one roof in the world.



Next we visited a round barn at the Fulton County Museum. Round barns were common in Indiana and about 100 still remain. They provided more capacity for the same amount of siding. The Museum was filled with historical farm, household, medical, and commercial items from the area's past.

A delicious chicken barbecue lunch was served at the county fairgrounds where speaker Lori told about her experiences in a catastrophic combine accident in which she lost an arm and a leg. Her

positive attitude and determination was truly inspirational.

Next stop was the Indiana Whiskey Company which uses all Indiana products from corn to equipment to produce bourbon and flavored whiskeys. Attendees enjoyed the tour and the tasting. A photo op followed at the Notre Dame golden dome and cathedral.





The South Bend Chocolate Company provided much opportunity for tasting several of their products while we watched the making of chocolate covered caramels, pecan turtles, and several other candies.

On the way back to our hotel we drove through the Fort Wayne Festival of Lights, a two-mile drive of many lighted Christmas creations that really put us in the Christmas spirit.

On Friday we started out at Ivy Tech, the Indiana community college system's Fort Wayne campus. Students gave us a tour of the Ag Department greenhouse, aquaponics and hydroponics programs. The 3000 square foot greenhouse was built in 2007 and demonstrates several different growing techniques, some new and some ancient methods. The college offers Associate of Science and Applied Science tracks, depending on whether the student wants to continue for a bachelors degree at Purdue or enter the work force career ready. They also offer many certificate courses as well as college credits for high school students. Statewide there are 200,000 students enrolled in Ivy Tech.



Next stop was Peridot and Davaus, rapid prototype specialists who use various methods of 3-D printing to create parts or prototype models for industry including seed plates for planting mixed cover crops.

Lunch was served at the Joseph Decuis farm, a producer of Wagyu beef where we enjoyed some delicious beef stew and cranberry crisp. The owners Pete & Alice Eshelman, former insurance executive and actress, told their fascinating story of meeting in New York City, deciding to leave the big city and relocate to rural Indiana, and how they discovered Wagyu beef and opened a farm to fork restaurant.

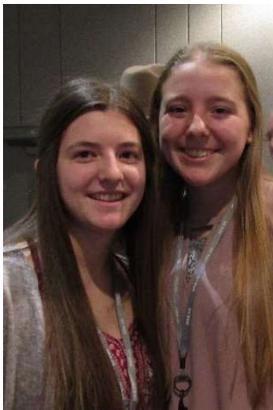
In the meantime, through their interest and investment the small town of Roanoke IN was revitalized into a thriving hub of small boutique shops and businesses which we then visited for some shopping.



Sweetwater Sound is an amazing store of anything related to music, from instruments to microphones and amplifiers to recording studios and performance theater to music lessons for area youth. It began with one man with a VW bus traveling recording studio, and now the store and warehouse cover a million square feet, from which 100,000 packages are shipped weekly to customers around the world. This store in Fort Wayne is their only retail store, but over 2200 employees work to fulfill mail orders.

Dinner was served at the Eel River Bison Ranch, where we tasted bison with local vegetables and heard an interesting speaker from Purdue Extension on an urban farming project in Fort Wayne.

Saturday featured the Ag Decision Makers College, with Don Weiss of Bunge soy processing company, Alicia Rogers of Purdue Extension, and Stan Deal, former NYFEA president and principal in a fertilizer business. They told their backgrounds and discussed current challenges and opportunities in agriculture.



At the evening banquet the Ag Communications Award winners were announced: 1<sup>st</sup>- Hannah Hoover, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sierra Kapustas, both from Pennsylvania and freshmen at Delaware Valley University. The speaker for the evening was Joe Secrist, who overcame blindness, sexual abuse, and an unhappy childhood to become a successful businessman, skydiver, martial arts expert, teacher and coach, and Iron Man competitor. An amazing story! His life motto is, "Anything Is Possible!"

NYFEA President for 2022 is Donny Carter, GA; President Elect Clovia Ketchum, TX; Secretary Jane Pluimer, IN. Next year's Institute will be November 30-December 3 in New Orleans, LA.