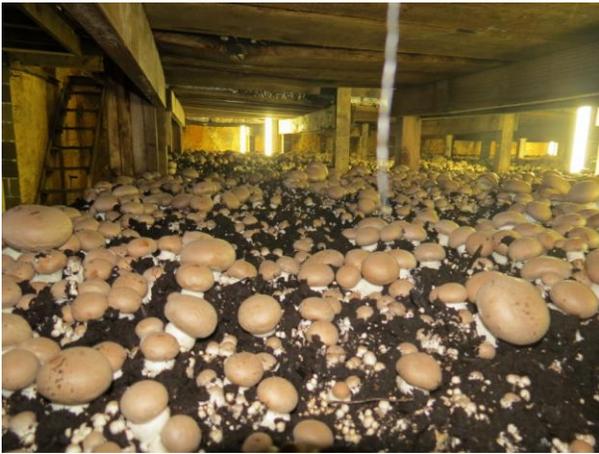


The 55th Annual PYFA Winter Conference was held February 3-5, 2015, at the DoubleTree Resort, south of Lancaster PA. It was hosted by the Solanco Young Farmers, hosting chairman A. Dale Herr.

The conference began Tuesday with lunch at a Quarryville church followed by two tours. One bus traveled to



West Grove to visit Hy-Tech Mushroom Compost where we learned the modern method of making the compost that mushrooms grow in. Long-time recyclers, mushroom growers use hay, cocoa hulls, horse and poultry manure, corn fodder and cobs, etc. for phase one. When the compost sits for several days, it is mixed with the mushroom spawn and packed into small plastic wrapped 50 lb. bales and stacked in a warehouse for two weeks until the spawn starts to grow. Then the bales are opened and placed into the mushroom houses, where the first crop is picked in 19 days. This method allows growers to have ten crops a year rather than just five. We then traveled a couple miles to see the mushrooms growing on another farm also owned by

the Needham family.

The second Tuesday tour was to Kreider's Long Valley Farm where 1225 cows are milked three times a day. They digest the manure to generate electricity to heat all the farm buildings and hot water. The remainder is sold on the grid. Solids are separated out and used for bedding. On another Kreider farm, an automatic feeding system feeds 9.5 liters/day of milk to many calves according to their neck tag. Pens of 22-24 calves are filled within a week and are weaned after 70 days.



Tuesday morning two contestants in the Spokesperson for Agriculture contest visited with shoppers at the local Weis Market. One lucky shopper had her food items purchased by PYFA. Later that day the two girls delivered 5-minute speeches on the topic "What Agriculture Means to Me." Taylor Gilmore of Northern High School was the winner and Amanda Baurer of Solanco High School was runner-up.

At the Tuesday evening banquet Rep. Bryan Cutler presented a citation to PYFA and he was awarded the Honorary Young Farmer award. Newly named PA Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding was present and spoke of his goals for the department. A quartet, "Old Dogs, New Tricks," entertained, followed by an ice cream social served by Lancaster County Dairy Ambassador Kelly Foose.

Wednesday morning was the delegate's business meeting where Dan Wilkinson was elected president and Denise Leydig President-Elect. The spouses enjoyed two workshops, Cyber Safety by Dave Kerr of AT&T and a presentation on birds. Then they traveled to Liz's Amish Kitchen for a delicious lunch, followed by shopping at Cackleberry Antique Mall.



Educational workshops Wednesday afternoon were:

1. Farmland Preservation by Matt Knepper of Lancaster County Preserve Board. He said Lancaster County leads the state with 102,090 acres and 900 farms preserved. There are 200 farms on the county's waiting list. Pennsylvania has 502,757 acres and 4732 farms preserved in 57 counties. He discussed their ranking system and the sources of funding. The audience was very interested and offered lots of questions.



2. Grain Marketing by John Berry, Ag Marketing Educator for Penn State Extension. His workshop was very interesting with some predictions of markets for grain and meat. He said the food business is an inelastic demand curve—the demand does not increase or decrease correspondingly with a fall or rise in price. He listed many risks in farming, from right-to-farm issues to liability to global politics.

3. Conservation and the Chesapeake Bay by Kevin Seibert, Lancaster County Conservation District. He spoke about the history of conservation districts and the responsibilities they have, from the Dirt & Gravel Roads program to land development to farmers' erosion and sedimentation plans and nutrient management plans. He showed many examples of work they have directed on farms to stop erosion from fields and barnyards.



Wednesday night's banquet featured awards for the contests that PYFA sponsors. Matthew Groff of Solanco Young Farmers was the winner of the Outstanding Young Farmer under 30 Award at the 55th annual winter conference of the PA Young Farmers Association last week in Lancaster. Groff and his wife Esther are dairy farmers in partnership with his brother Kevin on Groffdale Farm in southern Lancaster County. They milk 101 cows and farm 220 acres of corn, rye, and alfalfa.

Outstanding Young Farmer over 30 Award was won by Dale Maulfair of the Northern Lebanon chapter. He owns the 142 acre Maulfair Farm in

Jonestown and received the Grand Champion Ayrshire award at the 2015 PA Farm Show. He has been a 4-H leader for over 25 years.



John and Andrea Harrell of Northern Lebanon and Cedar Crest Young Farmers received the Outstanding Community Service Award. They live on a 119 acre farm in South Anville Township, Lebanon County. John keeps busy with his welding/repair business along with raising wheat, barley, corn and soybeans and operating a 1200 finisher swine facility. He serves on the Lebanon Expo Board and the Land Preservation Board for Lebanon County. Andrea is a Secretary at the Anville- Cleona High School during the school

year and enjoys doing wedding flowers as a part time job. She also volunteers on the Academic Booster and Field Hockey Booster clubs. She is a member of the Lebanon County Dairy Promotion Committee and volunteers her time with the Little Dutchmen FFA Chapter. The Harrells are actively involved in the Lebanon Area Evangelical Free Church.

Outstanding Young Farmer Chapter honors were won this year by the Mifflinburg Chapter for their work in hosting a Grain Bin Safety Day. Members obtained a Monsanto grant and other sponsorships, brought a speaker from Indiana, and presented the day-long workshop for four local fire companies. They also purchased a rescue tube for the use of local fire company rescue teams.

The Outstanding Agri-Business Award was given to Randy Ranck of southern Lancaster County, Pioneer Seed dealer and auctioneer. Runner-up was Robert Singo III of Rob's Rations LLC, nominated by the Rockwood Young Farmers Chapter.



Sam and Anna Mary Glick of Solanco received the Richard Hoppes Memorial Award, awarded to a member who has given outstanding service to PYFA through the years. They are both Life Members of PYFA and are very active in their church. Sam was PYFA regional vice president from 2005-12 and both were key members of the host committee for this year's conference.

Thursday tours went to Herr Foods in Nottingham and the David K. Stoltzfus farm in Peach Bottom. Herrs produces 10,000 pounds of potato chips per hour, 24 hours a day, 5 or 6 days a week. They also make lots of other snacks like pretzels, popcorn, corn and tortilla chips. They have 1400 employees. The broken or rejected snacks are fed to a herd of 500 angus cattle on their nearby farm.



David K. Stoltzfus milks 50-60 cows with a herd of 26,000 lb. He farms 80 acres with 8 horses. The cows and the barn are immaculate. He grows 4 acres of tobacco and had greenhouse tomatoes last year. The family graciously welcomed us with whoopie pies and chocolate milk.



Thank you to Solanco Young Farmers for an interesting, educational, and very enjoyable conference. Next year's conference is in Reading, PA, hosted by Kutztown Young Farmers February 2-4, 2016.