Penn State Extension

Armstrong, Indiana, and Westmoreland

Extension News

District 6 ✦ Spring 2013

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Good Agricultural Practices and Food Safety Go Hand In Hand

For the past several years, as farm food safety has become more topical and various food safety proposals were being developed, Penn State Extension has been conducting meetings for growers to inform them about the techniques they would need to use based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP's), or ways that produce growers can prevent on-site contamination of fruits and vegetables.

GAP's are about recognizing that all possible measures must be taken to prevent foodborne disease as fresh produce moves through production and distribution systems. Every grower should take time to learn about potential food safety hazards that can occur on the farm or orchard and take preventative steps to reduce the chance for contamination from harmful microbes. GAPs are also about protecting your farm business from the economic consequences of food contamination.

On January 4, 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a draft Produce Safety Rule as required under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) of 2011. This proposed regulation would establish mandatory practices that farmers must take to prevent microbial contamination of fresh produce. The law directs the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to: Establish minimum standards for safe production and harvesting of fruits and vegetables based on known safety risks. The draft ruling is available for viewing at http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FSMA/ucm304045.htm. The public will have the opportunity to submit comment on the draft rule until May 16, 2013. Before this date, FDA will be holding public meetings to explain the proposal and to provide additional opportunity for input.

Key areas requiring attention in the FDA proposed final regulation include: worker health and hygiene, biological soil amendments, wild animals, domesticated animals, agricultural water, equipment, tools, and buildings.

For detailed information on GAP's and farm food safety visit www.foodsafety.psu.edu/gaps

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Pictured l to r are: Serina Gaston, Bureau of Health Promotion and Risk Reduction; Judy Ochs, Director, Division of Tobacco and Control; C. Scott Bucher, Healthy Communities Coordinator; Anne Lail and Thomas Aguilar, Director, Bureau of Health Promotion and Risk Reduction .

Anne Lail received the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors Public Policy Award from representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The award was presented in recognition of Penn State Extension's outstanding work in collaborating with the Department of Health to promote tobacco free zones for outdoor recreation areas where children and their families can safely play without exposure to tobacco smoke, products and litter through expansion of the Young Lungs at Play initiative.

An OUTREACH program of the College of Agricultural Sciences

Northeast Region Grant Award Has Roots in Westmoreland County

Ed Johnstonbaugh has reason to celebrate. A grant proposal he submitted to the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program (SARE) was selected as a finalist for a limited pool of funds, ranking third of 11 submissions to the program. David Holm, Program Manager for SARE's Northeast Region, broke the good news in a phone call.

Ed applied for the grant, called the Farm Energy IQ program, based on work he's undertaken in the programming of Renewable Energy Academy (REA), which teaches consumers to become more involved in the decision-making process when it comes to energy buying. Through REA classes Ed teaches, participants learn where their energy dollars are spent so that they can make more informed decisions about changing their buying habits to reduce the amount of energy purchased or to change the type and timing of energy purchases. The net result being educated consumers that make better buying choices and are able to stretch their energy dollars farther. Ed teamed up with Dan Ciolkosz, Coordinator of Renewable Energy Extension Programs at University Park, to form a multi-state team to develop the proposal.

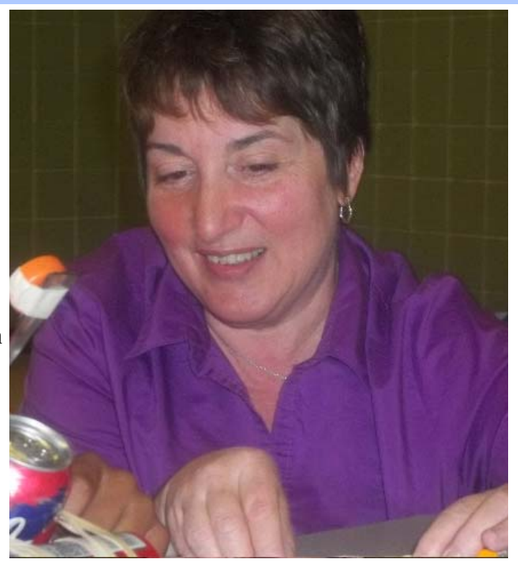
In addition to four fellow members from Penn State Extension, there are team members from Rutgers University in New Jersey, the University of Vermont, and an outside consultant who specializes in agricultural energy engineering. The team worked over a month to develop the winning proposal, believing their efforts would apply to customers over the mid-Atlantic region.

The grant will be used to train 100 program facilitators, who can subsequently teach the agricultural communities they serve, minimizing the uncertainty of energy purchases for on-farm production uses. Once these new practices are adopted, farmers will be better able to plan on the costs and uses of energy in their day-to-day operation, making energy buying a strength instead of a risky business.

If funding is ultimately awarded, the Farm Energy IQ grant program could begin delivering result to the farm industry in the multi-state region by spring 2014.

Hope Not The Only Life Lesson This Youth Mentor Passes On

Ask Patty Klingensmith what she finds most rewarding in working with the youth at the Juvenile Detention Center, and her response is, " I touch their lives and give them hope." Patty has been providing upbeat programming to youths using 4-H curriculum for over 10 years. In 2012, 124 teens were provided with life skills in robotics, cooking, and community-service projects.



Penn State Extension has had a long-term partnership with the Westmoreland County Juvenile Detention Center, helping youths there to also improve their skills in fostering teamwork, ethics, and sharing. Patty has heard the teens acknowledge that the lessons she teaches can be shared at home and continued the rest of their lives. "I still use some of the recipes I learned in 4-H," said one young man, years after having a cooking lesson given by Patty.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 2013

April 4, 11, 18, and 25—*Equine Environmental Stewardship & Manure Management Short Course*, 7—9 PM, Armsdale Admin Bldg., 124 Armsdale Road, Room B11, Kittanning
Saturday, April 6—Westmoreland 4-H Horse Tack Swap, Westmoreland Fairgrounds
Monday, April 8—Armstrong Horse Leaders Meeting, 6:30 PM, Armsdale Bldg., Room B-11
April 12-14— *Western PA 4-H Teen Leader Retreat*, McKeever Environmental Center
Saturday, April 13—Rabbit School, Greensburg Central Catholic High School, Greensburg, PA
Saturday, April 13—Christmas Tree Grower Field Meeting, 1—4 PM, Fleming's Christmas Tree Farms, Indiana County
Wednesday, April 17—*Land Use Decision-Making Monthly Webinar Series*, Noon & 7 PM
Saturday, April 20— *SW Regional 4-H Camp Counselor Selection Day, Westmoreland County*
Saturday, April 20— *State 4-H Wildlife and Forestry Field Day, Penn State University*
Sunday, April 21—*Earth Day*, St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA
Monday, April 22—*"Spring Cover Crop Field Day"*, 10 AM—12 PM, Leroy Bergbigler's Farm, 263 Game Reserve Road, Butler, PA
Tuesday, April 23—4-H Officer Training, Westmoreland County
Thursday, April 25—4-H Horsemanship Skills Clinic, Westmoreland County
Saturday, April 27—*Master Gardener Spring Workshop*, 9 AM—1 PM, Donohoe Center, Greensburg, PA

May 2013

Wednesday, May 1—4-H Travel All Club Blood Drive, Extension Office, Westmoreland County
Thursday, May 2—Westmoreland 4-H Board Meeting
Tuesday, May 7—Westmoreland 4-H Horse Leaders Meeting
May 9 - 19 — *Tractor Supply Company 4-H Paper Clover Campaign*
Saturday, May 11—*Master Gardener Plant Sale*, 8 AM—1 PM, Donohoe Center, Greensburg, PA
Wednesday, May 15—*Land Use Decision-Making Monthly Webinar Series*, Noon & 7 PM
Wednesday, May 15—Fruit Growers Twilight Meeting, 6:30—9:00 PM, Dawson's Orchards, Lawrence Co.
Saturday, May 18— Armstrong Master Gardener Plant Sale, 9 AM—1 PM, Armsdale Bldg. Grounds
Tuesday, May 21—Livestock Leaders Meeting, 7:30 PM, Armsdale Bldg., Room B-11
Friday, May 31— *World No Tobacco Day*

June 2013

Monday, June 3—Armstrong Horse Leaders Meeting, 6:30 PM, Armsdale Bldg., Room B-11
Tuesday, June 4—Westmoreland 4-H Horse Leaders Meeting
Wednesday, June 5—Westmoreland 4-H County Communication Contest, Extension Office, Greensburg
June 16-19—*SW PA 4-H Camp*, Laurelville Retreat Center
June 17-20—Multi-County 4-H Horse Camp, Westmoreland Fairgrounds
Tuesday, June 18—*Pond Workshops*, Keystone State Park, 1-3:30 PM and 6-8:30 PM
Friday, June 21 — *Smoke Free Air Affair,* Idlewild Park, Ligonier, PA
June 24-26—4-H Horse Counselor Camp, Westmoreland Fairgrounds
Thursday, June 27—*SW PA Regional Fashion Revue and Communication Contests*, Greensburg
June 28-29—*SW 4-H Dairy Clinic*, Washington County Fairgrounds

July 2013

Tuesday, July 2—Westmoreland 4-H Horse Leaders Meeting
July 8-12—Craft Camp, Lenape Tech, Ford City, PA
July 8-12—Science Camp, Lenape Tech, Ford City, PA
July 9-11—Westmoreland 4-H Science Day Camp, Extension Office, Greensburg, PA
Saturday, July 13—*Master Gardener Demo Garden Open House*, 11 AM—5 PM, Donohoe Ctr.,Greensburg
Tuesday, July 16—Livestock Leaders Meeting, 7:30 PM, Armsdale Bldg., Room B-11
July 16, 17—International Fruit Tree Association Meeting, Adams County
Wednesday, July 17—*Drinking Water Clinics*, 1-3 PM and 6-8 PM, Donohoe Center, Greensburg, PA
Sunday, July 28—Horse & Pony Round-up, Dayton Fairgrounds
Tuesday, July 30—Armstrong Co. Hosting the Horse Production Show, Crooked Creek Horse Park

Friends That Work Together, Quit Together

"I want to quit and I want you to quit with me!" was the call to action made by Shirley Coleman of the Monessen Head Start program. "We are all going to climb this mountain together," she said, noting that her employer enthusiastically supports her goal.

Shirley and others attended a "How to Quit Tobacco" workshop presented by Anne Lail, Penn State Extension Educator in Westmoreland County. The workshop, hosted by Westmoreland Community Action, was a "Lunch and Learn" organized by Mila Schall, Head Start Health Coordinator, during the annual employee conference.

"Head Start welcomes any community support available to help meet the personal goals of the families we serve as well as our staff," said Mila. "Penn State Extension has been one of our community partners for quite some time. We sit on each other's advisory boards, offering help and advice. Penn State is great at providing us with information and face-to-face quit groups that we use to show our families and staff the true benefits of smoking cessation. This can also be an emotional topic, but Penn State's expertise is so beneficial to our program goals and needs."

After the presentation, Shirley realized that quitting was possible and there was free help. She was ready to quit smoking and her excitement was contagious. So she organized a small group of co-workers to start a quit group. "It's nice to have the support of a cessation coach and to meet weekly with friends that are having similar experiences." said Shirley. Melissa Albright and Renee Weston joined her for the weekly sessions. Melissa was reluctant to face such a big life-changing decision alone. "However," she said, "if you have friends to do it with, it helps." "Not only is my son very proud of me, but I was really proud that I haven't bought a pack in over a week!" Renee's advice for anyone thinking about quitting tobacco is, "Do the program. It helps. I thought about how to quit and began to change habits before I actually quit smoking. Now I save the money I used to spend on cigarettes."

Mon Valley Head Start Center workers. Pictured l to r Melissa Albright, Shirley Coleman and Renee Weston

Employers that recognize the importance and benefits of offering wellness programs to their staff partner with Penn State Extension to provide free help to quit tobacco programs. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids reports that smoking-caused productivity losses in Pennsylvania are approximately $4.73 billion annually.

The workplace cessation program consists of seven weekly coaching sessions and is offered free to employers in Westmoreland County. It's funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Health through Tobacco Free Southwest PA. For information or help to quit tobacco in Westmoreland County, call 1-888-NO HABIT (664-2248).

Commodity Game Teaches Farmers How To Sell Without Losing Their Shirts

John Berry, Penn State Agricultural Marketing Educator from Indiana County, trained farmers at a December 2012 workshop using "Winning the Game." Developed by the University of Minnesota Center for Farm Financial Management, "Winning the Game" is a fast-paced marketing technique that simulates a complete year of grain marketing. By playing the game, farmers gain a greater understanding of the seasonality of post-harvest grain prices, and practice marketing without the risk of losing their money. At the end of the workshop, the attendees were able to develop a marketing plan for their farms and decide whether to sell or store their grain based on actual market information. Elderton State Bank funded the workshop.

Our Moms' Approach To Serving Food Safely A Relic Of The Past

Melanie Peterson thought she knew the ins and outs of serving food safely thanks to previous jobs at several fast food restaurants in Westmoreland County. But the Derry Township 4-H leader said a February seminar called "Volunteer Food Safety: Cooking For Crowds" at Penn State Extension opened her eyes. "From the time I worked in restaurants, some of which had strict food-handling procedures, till now, food safety has changed," said Melanie. "Not only me, but my mom and her mom couldn't do things like we did once upon a time, particularly when it comes to defrost times, storage techniques, and the acceptable periods during which food can sit out."

Melanie joined nine 4-H leaders and 26 other attendees from churches, social halls, and community groups at the Westmoreland Extension Office to hear Nutrition Educator Dori Campbell explain the latest safe-food practices. She did so because her volunteer 4-H work requires her to supervise food booths at local fund-raisers, where adults and youths need to be particularly aware of hygiene and safety.

"Dori really held my attention at her workshop, and I absolutely think some of my 4-H home economics kids could benefit from the practices she made us aware of," said Melanie.

Best Grain Practices The Theme At Annual Western PA Crops Day

The 2013 Western PA Crops Day event highlighted important agronomic information that will help participants manage and improve their cropping systems. Information was provided for a diversity of cropping systems, including corn, soybeans, grass hay, and alfalfa. This event featured Penn State University Specialists William Curran, Greg Roth, and John Tooker. Their topics included weed-control strategies in forages, management tactics for improving soybean yields, and corn-trait selection to improve insect control. An overview of the 2012 grain crops and insect pests was also presented.

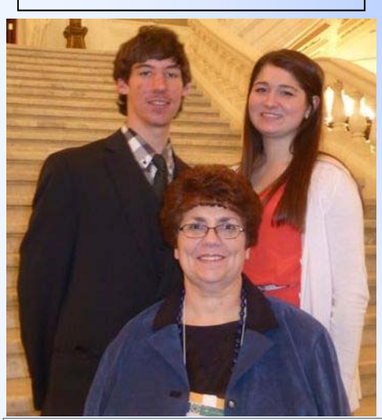
Partial funding for this event was provided by several agribusinesses and organizations, and representatives were present at the event. Participants at Crops Day were able to interact with the representatives throughout the day.

From The Farm Show To The Capitol, 4-H Youth Make Their Mark

Armstrong County Square Dance Team

Elizabeth Bruner and Abigail Bruner of Indiana County won ribbons at the Farm Show's "*Fashions With a Flair*"

Senator Kim Ward visits with 4-H members at the PA Farm Show.



4-H Capital Days district participants: Alexis Elgin, Marshall Richardson Josh Shugars, Emily Verner & Pam Paletta, Extension Educator, Washington Co.

Justin Alter of Indiana County won for Reserve Champion Light Heavyweight Crossbred.

Southwest PA 4-H Leaders' Symposium

The Southwest PA 4-H Leaders' Symposium attracted 109 people from eight counties, including 12 from Armstrong, 37 from Indiana, and 11 from Westmoreland. Leaders attend to learn new ideas for club programming and to network with others. Seventeen different workshops were offered on such topics as risk management, animal science, foods and nutrition, working with parents, clothing, crafts, environmental science, and robotics. Leaders were also recognized for years of service, and Marjie Bezilla, Indiana County, was named an Outstanding Leader. The event is planned by a committee of leaders and extension staff, with Kitty Eget of Indiana County serving as chair. Grants from Monsanto, 4-H/Unitedhealth-care, and the PA 4-H Leadership Endowment supported the program.

4-H leader Mary Douglas, Indiana County, samples a drink of coconut water, an example of a "trendy" new food to share with club members.

Going To The Show Gives 4-H Youngsters A Chance To Shine

The 97th Annual Pennsylvania Farm Show was an opportunity for 4-H members statewide to test and share their livestock growing skills and family living expertise at a hugely popular event. Hundreds of youngsters gather for this show, including 100 members from our Western Pennsylvania district. Competitions included square dancing, livestock, rabbits, and poultry. Many teens also competed and earned blue ribbons in the family living section, which featured photography, posters, and honey. For example, Abby Zyhowski had a Best of Show in family living with her dried foods entry.

Meanwhile, livestock champions included Annamarie Brubaker, Champion Other Wool Purebred; Tyler Keith, Reserve Champion Other Wool Purebred; Tee Pecora, Grand Champion Market Hog; and Justin Alter, Reserve Champion Light Heavyweight Crossbred. Six members also competed in the 4-H Potato Grading and Identification Contest. In addition, Indiana members entered 70 family living entries with twelve first place awards. Although receiving a blue ribbon is a coveted highlight for teens, most 4-H members love coming to the Farm Show simply to soak up the culture of agriculture.

Tee Pecora and his Grand Champion Market Hog at the PA Farm Show.