

Pennsylvania Young Farmers Association met for the 65th Annual Winter Conference February 4-6 in Kutztown, PA.

Wednesday evening the state board met for their quarterly meeting and to review the conference schedule.

Thursday morning delegates from each chapter held their annual meeting to receive officers' reports and elect officers for the coming year.



President Keith Weimer, President Elect- vacant, Secretary Tammy Rentzel, Treasurer Ed Zug, Membership Chair Anita Weimer, Eastern VP Linda Krall, South Central VP Jason Rentzel, Western VP Anita Weimer, Northern VP Lydia Everhart, Executive Secretary Betsy Huber.

Spouses spent the day exploring shopping opportunities in the area, with lunch at a local winery.

Following lunch, the first workshop speaker was Russell Burkholder, a local produce farmer. His operation on 20 acres is entirely "pick your own," featuring a variety of vegetables favored by different ethnic groups who travel from Philadelphia and Baltimore. Russell also has peach and apple trees and 200 chickens. He does no advertising; customers find him by word of mouth.

The second workshop, "How to Handle Nuisance Wildlife and Insect Pests around the Home and Farm," was presented by Dan Lynch. He told many stories of his experiences trapping and/or eliminating household and wildlife pests, from mice and bats to beavers and skunks.





Jon Stutzman then spoke about “Is the Highest Yield the Most Profitable Yield?” He shared much data on different levels of inputs, from the bare minimum (good seed, weed control) to a variety of additional inputs (biologicals, root stimulators, soil health additives.) His data charts showed the additional costs of various inputs and the resulting yields to determine if they are worth the costs.

During the morning, seven contestants traveled to Weis Market to talk to consumers about the food vs other items in their shopping carts. PYFA purchased the food items for one lucky shopper, about \$160 worth. After the workshops, these girls each gave their speeches on “What Agriculture Means to Me” and answered questions from the judges.



The evening banquet took place at Beltzner Hall on the Kutztown Fairgrounds. Special guests were PA Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, Kutztown FFA Advisor Ayla Blatt, FFA State Treasurer Alexis Butler, State Representative (124th) Jamie Barton. Local PA Dutch spokesman Jon Bond presented a program on PA Dutch sayings and customs.

The Spokesperson for Agriculture winners were announced: 1st Maggie MacAteer, 2nd Megan Schaeffer, 3rd Remington Weaver. All will receive expense paid trips to the 2026 NYFEA Institute in Raleigh, NC in December.



Musical entertainment was provided by the Honky Tonk Medics, and the evening closed with an ice cream social sponsored by BAD Farms with their farm-made ice cream.

Friday featured four tours of area businesses and farms. Seedway processes seed for soybeans, wheat and oats, mainly grown by farmers within an hour radius of the plant. The process involves cleaning, treating, and packaging the seed for delivery in PA and neighboring states.



Next the group traveled to the Mack Truck Museum in Allentown and learned the history of Mack trucks since 1900. The museum displayed many examples of models through the years. Since 2000 the company has been owned by Volvo.



Following a box lunch, the bus traveled to the Ron Kurtz farm, a grain buyer/seller hauling one million bushels of grain per year. In May 1998 a tornado leveled all buildings on the farm except two silos and grain bins. At this time Ron purchased the farm from his uncle and built all the current buildings. He farms 500 acres and raises 50-60 steers each year.

The final tour was Corner View Farm owned by Kyle Biehl and family. He is a Galaxy dealer of robotic milkers, feeders, bedding equipment, etc. across the U.S. In addition to the equipment business they farm 650 acres and milk 145 cows with three robots. The Galaxy robotic milkers are imported from Europe and require 60 hours of preparation to meet U.S. requirements of FDA. They take about a month to install on-farm by Kyle's employees.



Friday evening's banquet featured contest awards and recognition of past officers. Kim Fies, executive director of the Berks County Department of Agriculture, brought greetings.



Outstanding Young Farmer- Jeff and Megan Ruth, Kutztown YF (with President Keith Weimer)



Outstanding Agribusiness- Kurt Haas, TIMAC Agro,
Kutztown YF



Richard Hoppes Award- Robert & Melinda Tercha,
Kutztown YF, with Grace Hoppes and granddaughters

The evening ended with the auction of many items and gift baskets donated by YF members and sponsors, auctioneer Randal Shirk.

Next year's PYFA Winter Conference will be at the Ramada Inn, State College, hosted by the PYFA board and State College Young Farmers.