

# Mercer County Farm Bureau

Newsletter of the Mercer County Farm Bureau

December 2021

A quarterly publication

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

### **MCFB Board Meeting**

County Board meets 7:30 p.m., the first Monday of the month, at the Pig Barn, Munnell Run Farm – January 2022 meeting moved to January 10!!!

### **Dec. 31**

Deadline for PFB Membership dues to receive additional money in insurance policy.

### **Dec. 31**

Deadline for Ag Literacy Week Registration

### **March 15**

Deadline for twine orders to be placed with Larry Moose



*Mercer County Farm Bureau Float*

Parade goers were able to learn about the equipment by tuning into station 91.5 on their car radios. Patrons were also treated to free milk and cheese sticks and were given the opportunity to donate canned goods or money. The Ag Council planned on giving collected items to the needy. Mercer County Farm Bureau was represented as they entered a float using the theme "In the Meadow We Can Build a Snowman." The weather added to the wonderful family event as it was a starry night with a little nip in the air. Participants are already planning for 2022!

## **WINTER WONDERLAND**

Undoubtedly, you have heard the familiar sounds of the season on the radio but on Saturday, December 4, you could also see the sights of the season as the Mercer County Ag Development Council hosted the "Tractors and Tinsel Drive-Thru Parade" at the Stoneboro Fairgrounds. Holiday revelers were treated to a plethora of amazing light displays as they traversed the fairgrounds. Traffic was steady from dusk until after 9 p.m. Tractors, sprayers, combines, grain trucks, excavators, buses, fire trucks and other heavy equipment were decked out in their holiday finest.

## **DUES DUE**

The mad rush is quickly approaching, not to get your shopping, decorating and cards sent out, but to take advantage of paying bills prior to the end of the year. It is time to get your Pennsylvania Farm Bureau membership paid in order to take advantage of additional money added to your Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy. An extra \$100 is added to your policy each year that you pay your dues by December 31. You are also eligible for special member benefits with your paid membership through My Deals! More importantly, your membership strengthens the voice for the promotion of agriculture so that legislation is farm friendly to help keep agriculture growing for the future. Join the over 34,000 who have joined. Your membership absolutely makes a difference.

## **WELCOME PRESIDENT PAXTON**

Steve Paxton of Irishtown Acres was recently elected as the president of the Mercer County Farm Bureau. Thank you for your willingness to serve in this position. Your leadership is appreciated!

## SPOTLIGHT ON TIM HEETER MERCER COUNTY FARM BUREAU BOARD MEMBER

*~Putting a name with a face and getting to know our members~*

It has been an interesting journey from farm boy in Callensburg, PA to Mercer County Farm Bureau board member. Tim Heeter is newly elected to the board of the MCFB and will be an asset to the association. Tim grew up on a farm in Clarion County, went to college, joined the Air Force and then returned to Penn State University where he graduated with a degree in design engineering. He put his degree to good use in the business world as he worked on circuitry as well as computer networks and security from which he has retired. Tim's work took him to Florida for 16 years and then he returned to the Pittsburgh area where he and his wife, Cheri, raised their two children. After retirement, Tim and Cheri moved to Mercer County where they live tucked away between Jackson Center and Franklin on their farm, Breezy Ridge Acres. Their hideaway includes goats, chickens, peacocks, guineas, and horses, but their primary focus is on bees. Tim is an experienced beekeeper and is president of the local organization. He currently has 50 hives and travels to farm markets and events to sell honey and bee related products. Originally Tim had planned on keeping busy with an apple orchard, but the bees, which were originally purchased to be used as pollinators, kind of took center stage while the apple trees fell by the wayside. The USDA has a multitude of rules which beekeepers must adhere to, although no one enforces the rules creating an uneven playing field, which is a constant source of frustration. Local honey has huge benefits for people with allergies. Look for more information on bees and honey in a subsequent newsletter! Tim is also an amateur radio operator. We are fortunate to have a man of Tim Heeter's life experiences on the board!



### **-IT'S THAT TWINE OF YEAR AGAIN- 2ND ANNUAL MCFB TWINE SALE**

Mercer County Farm Bureau is again offering for sale to members, high quality twine, stretch wrap, net wrap, ag bags, and silo covers at our cost. If you did not receive a price list, please call Larry Moose at 724-944-2666 and he will send you a price list. Payment must accompany order and received by March 15. Membership dues must be paid to participate.

### **AG LITERACY WEEK**



*Pennsylvania Ag Literacy Week focuses on connecting volunteers from the agricultural community to local classrooms to share the story of agriculture.*

Volunteers throughout the state will read a book with an accurate and engaging theme about agriculture with a focus on kindergarten through second grade classrooms. It is an opportunity for Pennsylvania agriculturalists (farmers, industry representatives, FFA teachers and students, and others supportive of agriculture) to be the face of agriculture in kindergarten-2nd grade classrooms across the commonwealth.

Readers who participate in Pennsylvania Ag Literacy Week will have the opportunity to talk about farming and agriculture through the book they read as well as share their own story about farming, agriculture programs they are involved with or their connections to agriculture. After the book is read volunteers can engage further with students, if they choose, with an activity developed by the foundation that re-enforces the concepts they learned from the book. The book is then donated to the classroom teacher along with educational activities and resources to use throughout the school year. This year's book selection is *My Family Soybean Farm*. Your registration fee of \$10 goes to purchase the book. You can register and find more information at

<https://pfbfriends.com/ag-literacy-week/>

or go to the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau website, click on resources, click on Friends of Ag Foundation and it will take you to the site where you will click on Ag Literacy Week. Info provided from PFB

## LAKEVIEW STUDENTS LITERALLY GO ON A FIELD TRIP

Students from Lakeview Middle School brought in their permission slips to go on a field trip in November. However, this field trip was truly a “field trip”. Robotics students in grades 6 and 7 were anxious to learn about the process of moving grain from field to mill. These students are part of the First Lego League in which they program robots to perform specific missions as well as complete research on a problem relating to a given topic. This year students had to develop a way to deliver a product more efficiently. While many schools were looking at package delivery, the Nautical Navigators from Lakeview decided to embrace their rural roots and learn about grain delivery. Serving as teachers for the day, Farm Bureau members Terry Shearer along with Todd Shearer showed the students their harvesting operation. The seven boys and two girls were able to see the combine and grain wagon up close and watch the harvesting process until the load reached the grain truck. The students were in awe over the massive amount of grain that resulted and the amount of fuel that is necessary each day. The equipment also brought oohs and aahs from the students. The students had thought of having drones take the grain to the mill, but quickly discovered that the weight of the grain could not be supported by a drone at this time.

The field trip didn't end there. The next planned stop was at the Sandy Lake Mills, operated by Brian and Adam Raymond, also Farm Bureau members. The students were taught the unloading process by Nicholas Bindas. The final stop before returning to school was at Land Pro in Stoneboro, to learn about equipment that is already in existence.

Even though these students live in an agricultural community, they were impressed, inspired, and surprised by the technology that is evident in harvesting. It was truly an eye opening experience for the middle schoolers. Thank you to all of the Mercer County Farm Bureau members who willingly took their valuable time to showcase agriculture to a new generation!

### MCFB DIRECTORS

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*Terry Shearer addresses the Lakeview Nautical Navigators as Todd Shearer looks on*

## FARM TO TABLE BUY LOCAL

Farm to Table Buy Local is a non-profit created to promote healthy food grown in Western Pennsylvania. Since 2018, they have been promoting locally grown food via guides, online data bases, and events. If you are a producer of agricultural items and would like to have your information available for consumers, all you need to do to be included in the free Western Pennsylvania data base is to submit your listing on their website:

Farmtotablepa.com

You may include pictures, recipes, or articles in addition to your contact information. Between 20,000 and 30,000 magazine style books are distributed throughout the Western PA region.

## Christmas Tree Capital of the World??

Indiana, Pennsylvania has been known as the Christmas Tree Capital of the World, but that title may be in dispute. In the early 1960's there were about 200 tree farms in this county. Now there are only five or six that remain. Pennsylvania continues to be a top producer of Christmas trees, but a shortage of trees due to the recession the late 2000's, a shortage of seeds, fungal disease, and deer damage have limited the supply.

Pennsylvania ranks third in the nation in Christmas tree farms with more than 1,400 growers. The farms account for more than 31,000 acres and produce about one million trees cut each year. It takes an average of 7 years before a tree is ready for market. For every tree that is cut, one to three seedlings take its place.



### Christmas Tree Tidbits

- The official Christmas tree tradition at Rockefeller Center began in 1933. Since 2004 the tree has been topped with a 550-pound Swarovski Crystal star. And since 2007, the tree has been lit with 30,000 energy-efficient LED's which are powered by solar panels.
- Every year since 1947, the people of Oslo, Norway have given a Christmas tree to the city of Westminster, England. The gift is an expression of good will and gratitude for Britain's help to Norway during World War II.
- In 1856 Franklin Pierce, the 14th President of the United States, was the first President to place a Christmas tree in the White House.
- Teddy Roosevelt banned the Christmas tree from the White House for environmental reasons.
- From 1948 to 1951, President Truman spent Christmas at his home in Independence, Missouri, and lit the National Community Christmas Tree by remote control. Truman agreed to stay at the White House for Christmas 1952, and personally lit the tree.
- The first Christmas tree retail lot in the United States was started by Mark Carr in New York, in 1851
- From 1887-1933 a fishing schooner called the "Christmas Ship" would tie up at the Clark Street Bridge in Chicago and sell spruce trees from Michigan to Chicagoans.
- In 2012, 35% of real Christmas trees sold were from chain stores or garden centers/nursery, 24% from cut and harvest farms, 15% from retail tree lots, and 15% from non-profit groups.
- In 2012, 85% of the Christmas trees purchased were pre-cut, and 14% were cut-your-own.
- An estimated 175,000 real Christmas trees are sold via e-commerce or catalogue and shipped mail order.
- In the United States, there are more than 15,000 Christmas tree farms.
- Approximately 100,000 people are employed full or part-time in the Christmas tree industry.
- 24.5 million farm-grown Christmas trees were purchased in the United States in 2012, with a real market value of \$1.01 billion.
- Oregon, North Carolina, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Washington, New York, and Virginia are the top Christmas tree producing states.
- An acre of Christmas trees provides the daily oxygen requirements of 18 people.

Sources: National Christmas Tree Association, USDA Census of Agriculture, PolitiFact.com, Christmas Tree Farm Network, Christmas Trees Magazine, Forestry.about.com, Facts about Treecycling, U.S. Commerce Dept., NFPA Fire Analysis and Research. Special thanks to Rick Dungey of the NCTA for his assistance.

Updated by: University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners Janice Byron, Carol Stitzer, and MaryAnne Spinner

### **USDA Extends Disaster Set-Aside for Direct Loans Until 2022**

The USDA has extended the availability of COVID-19 Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) for installments due through Jan. 31, 2022. In addition, FSA will permit a second DSA for COVID-19 and a second DSA for natural disasters for those who had an initial COVID-19 DSA. Requests for a COVID-19 DSA or a second DSA must be received no later than May 1, 2022. Last year, FSA broadened the use of the DSA. Normally used in the wake of natural disasters, the DSA can now allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19 and determined to be eligible to have their next payment set aside. FSA provides up to a 95% guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest. Producers can explore available options on all FSA loan options at [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov) or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#). Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

### **State Senate Passes Bills to Ease Transportation Restrictions on Farmers**

The state Senate has passed two bills supported by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau that would broaden farmers' use of farm-registered vehicles and driver's licenses. Senate Bill 725 clarifies the types of licenses that farmers are required to have when operating trucks or truck combinations with a gross vehicle weight more than 26,000 pounds, and SB 736 will allow farmers to use farm-registered vehicles for the home delivery of products they produce on their farms. Senators passed both bills unanimously, 49-0. SB 725, introduced by Sen. Camera Bartolotta, clarifies Act 170, which the General Assembly unanimously passed in 2014. That legislation says that farmers do not need a commercial driver's license (CDL) to operate a farm vehicle, or combination, with a GVW of 26,000 pounds or greater. Recent action by State Police has left confusion as to whether farmers need a Class A license instead of the more-common Class C license. SB 725 clarifies that farmers are permitted to operate vehicles with a GVW over 26,000 pounds with a Class C driver's license. SB 736, introduced by Sen. Wayne Langerholc, streamlines the home delivery of milk and other agricultural products with a farm-registered vehicle. Currently, the state's vehicle code stipulates farmers can use farm-registered vehicles only for the transportation of products to and from a place of business. Farmers would need to obtain a commercial vehicle registration for home deliveries, and the vehicle code prevents commercial vehicles from being registered as farm vehicles. SB 736 will ensure that farmers are able to use farm-registered vehicles to deliver products to both businesses and private homes. SB 725 has also passed out of the House transportation committee unanimously. Both bills await further House consideration.

### **PMMB Maintains Over-Order Premium**

The Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board has issued a pricing order maintaining the Class I over-order premium price for milk at \$1 per hundredweight. The order, which started on Oct. 1, also continues the formula for determining the fuel adjuster add-on. PMMB's pricing order will remain in effect through March 31, 2022.

### **DEP Announces New Energy Efficiency Rebate Program for Farmers**

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has a new rebate program for farmers to help with the cost of energy efficiency projects. The Agriculture Energy Efficiency Rebate Program is offering rebates to defray the costs of installing LED lighting or variable frequency drives on the farm, which can save energy while saving money on utility bills. Applications will be accepted from Sept. 20, 2021 through March 31, 2022 on a first-come, first-served basis as long as funding is available. The available rebates will pay for 50% of the equipment costs, up to \$2,000. Total funding to any one applicant will not exceed \$5,000. For complete program guidelines and application instructions, visit the [DEP agriculture and farming energy webpage](#).

### **USDA Announces \$700 Million in Grant Funding for Farm and Food Workers Affected By COVID-19**

USDA announced that \$700 million in competitive grant funding will be available through the new Farm and Food Workers Relief (FFWR) grant program to help farm workers and meatpacking workers with pandemic-related health and safety costs. For more information about upcoming webinars, grant eligibility, and program requirements, visit the FFWR webpage at [www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/ffwr](https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/ffwr)

### **USDA Announces \$700 Million In Relief to Small Producers and Processors, Farmers' Markets Impacted by COVID-19**

The USDA announced another \$700 million in new grant programs to help small producers who have not yet received federal assistance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new program – the Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant will provide assistance to small businesses in certain commodity areas, including small scale specialty crop producers and processors, shellfish, aquaculture and other select producers, meat and other processors, distributors, and farmers' markets. Updated information regarding the PRS programs will be available on the Agricultural Marketing Service website: [www.ams.usda.gov](https://www.ams.usda.gov).

## Farm Bureau Raises Concerns about Partisan Reconciliation Package

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall this week sent a letter to congressional leadership expressing deep concerns about the reconciliation package the House will begin considering this month. AFBF urged lawmakers to avoid tax increases on America's farmers and ranchers and ensure transparency and stakeholder involvement throughout the legislative process. Congress is considering another massive partisan bill through reconciliation, which would be paid for by steep tax hikes on farmers and ranchers.

## Mental Health Resources Available

Research has found that many farmers are experiencing new stress and mental health concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the farm economy and other pressures.

If you or someone you know is struggling or has concerns about their mental health, please **know that you are not alone and there is help available**.

There are unique factors that affect stress in the farming community as well as unique warning signs that someone is struggling. Those include:

- Change in routines or social activities
- Decline in the care of domestic animals
- Increase in illness or other chronic conditions
- Increase in farm accidents
- Decline in appearance of the farm
- Decreased interest in activities or events
- Signs of stress in children including struggles with school

## Help and Resources Available:

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or use the online chat at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat) 24/7 for free and confidential support and to be connected with a skilled, trained counselor in your area.
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741 for 24/7 support via text.
- **PA 211** is a United Way statewide partner which offers trained resource navigators who can tell farmers what services may be available in their area to help with a variety of health and human service needs, from utility or food assistance to mental health support. Visit [www.pa211.org](http://www.pa211.org), dial **211** from any landline or cell phone, or text your zip code to **898-211**.
- **Avera Health Farm and Rural Stress Hotline:** Call 800-691-4336 to be connect with a skilled, compassionate mental health professional.
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:** Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for treatment locators, SAMHSA's National Helpline, a Disaster Distress Helpline and other important information.

Find additional resources, learn tips for starting important conversations about mental health, and register for free rural resilience training by visiting [farmstateofmind.org](http://farmstateofmind.org).

## Contact information for our national and state legislators:

### U.S. Senator Bob Casey

17 South Park Row, Suite B-150  
Erie, PA 16501  
Phone: 814-874-5080

### U.S. Senator Pat Toomey

United States Federal Building  
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Phone: 814-453-3010

### Congressman Mike Kelly

33 Chestnut Avenue  
Sharon, PA 16146  
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[www.Kelly.house.gov](http://www.Kelly.house.gov)

### State Senator Michele Brooks

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### State Representative Mark Longietti

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# Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

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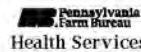


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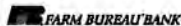


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## Publications

PFB adds value to membership and keeps members informed through a variety of print and digital publications. Members receive 5% off advertising rates in our print publications. Contact advertising coordinator for details.

A \$3 portion of annual dues covers a one-year subscription to a PFB publication. Members can receive either 8 issues of the County Focus newspaper or 4 issues of the quarterly Positively Pennsylvania magazine. Publication frequency and details are subject to change.

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## Additional Benefits

**AD&D Insurance:** Group Accidental Death & Dismemberment policy for each qualified member in family. Immediate value \$1000. Annual increase \$300 for consecutive renewals before January 1 each year to maximum \$3100 value. \*Subject to policy terms and conditions.

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