



AG SCIENCES 2008

A Monthly Newsletter for the College of Agricultural Sciences

November 2008

News in Brief

Griel Honored for Advising Again

For the second time in 10 years, Lester Griel Jr., has been honored for excellence in academic advising. Penn State's Schreyer Honors College recently presented Griel with its Excellence in Honors Advising Award.

Griel, professor of veterinary science and program coordinator and honors adviser for the Animal Bioscience major, also received the College of Agricultural Sciences Alumni Society's Excellence in Academic Advising Award in 1999.

Ag Fraternity Named Best Chapter

Delta Theta Sigma, a professional agricultural fraternity, recently received the Chapter of Excellence award for 2007 from the Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life in the Division of Student Affairs.

Receiving the Chapter of Excellence Designation, Delta Theta Sigma will be rewarded with several perks from the university. The agricultural fraternity was one of just two fraternities at Penn State to receive the high honor.

Reddys Create Scholarship

C. Channa Reddy, distinguished professor emeritus and former head of the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences, and his wife Usharani Reddy have given \$50,000 to the college to endow a scholarship to assist undergraduates who have financial need. The award, named for the donors in honor of their generosity, gives first preference to students majoring in Toxicology in the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences.

This is the second Trustee Scholarship that the Reddys have established in the college.

4-H National Science Experiment Promotes "One Million New Scientists"



◀ Centre County 4-H youth participated in the National Science Experiment in a lab at Penn State, examining the properties of water-absorbing hydrogel polymers, which are found in disposable diapers, but can also be used in environmental applications.

Across Pennsylvania, youngsters and children of all ages learned the connection between disposable diapers and water conservation, as Pennsylvania 4-H participated in the first-ever 4-H National Science Experiment, the designated science activity of 4-H National Youth Science Day, Oct. 8.

The experiment, which uses science principles to teach youth across the country the importance of water conservation, was made available to the six million 4-H youth, parents, teachers, students and youth organizations nationwide. Participants examined the properties of water-absorbing hydrogel polymers, which are found in disposable diapers but also can be used in environmental applications such as agriculture, erosion control, soil management, and environmental clean-ups. They then posted their findings online and engaged in dialogue with participants nationwide.

The National Science Experiment was designed to educate youth about the environment while making science fun. It

helps them understand how superabsorbent polymers can be used in horticulture, gardening, landscaping, and specialty crop farming, and how they can address water conservation and groundwater contamination issues in their own community.

The 4-H National Youth Science Day is part of a new public service campaign called "One Million New Scientists, One Million New Ideas," which supports the organization's long-term goal of attracting one million new members to 4-H science, engineering, and technology programs by the year 2013. Daney Jackson, director of Penn State Cooperative Extension, which administers 4-H in Pennsylvania, says 4-H's new and existing science curricula will arm youth with the technical skills needed to help America maintain its competitive edge in the global marketplace.

"The 4-H program offers several environmental, water quality and conservation curricula, so this particular experiment just expands on the knowledge that 4-H kids already have in this area," he says. ■

Familiar Faces

QUESTION: How do you feel about all of the negative campaigning that has taken place in the run-up to the presidential election?



Anna Starovoytov, graduate student in Ecology

"I think that the negative campaigning is a bad tactic. When candidates try to bring up dirt on each other it takes time away from talking about their platforms on important issues."



Marvin Hall, professor of forage management

"I don't like the negative campaigning. I think that the campaign should focus on the important issues and not petty aspects of the opposing candidate."



Sara Ashcraft, research technician, Entomology

"I feel like with politics, that's just how it is going to be. But I also feel that this is the most negative election that I've participated in so far."



Sage Clark, graduate student, Dairy and Animal Science

"I think campaigning could be done in a better way. Candidates need to focus on the important issues first and foremost."



Jon Cofer, Agricultural Learning Center coordinator

"I think it's detracting from the issues that people care about. And it's unfortunate that candidates have to resort to that. It divides the country rather than uniting it."



Svend Pedersen, events and programs coordinator, Food Science

"Negative campaigning does a disservice to both the candidates and electorate. Each of our presidential candidates have much to offer and I would rather hear their ideas and proposals and choose based on that, rather than negative campaigns of dubious value."

Horticulture Educators Receive Diversity Award for Innovative Programs

A team of six horticulture extension educators in the Southeast Region has been selected to receive the college's 2007-2008 Diversity Achievement Award.

Team members include Mary Concklin, Montgomery County; Nancy Bosold, Berks County; Cheryl Bjornson, Chester County; Warren Goll, Delaware County; Scott Guiser, Bucks County; and Emelie Swackhamer, Lehigh and Northampton counties. The group was honored for innovative programs that reach diverse audiences, including Spanish-speaking green-industry professionals, prison inmates and welfare-to-work clientele.

The educators received the award at the Extension Annual Conference on Oct. 29 at Seven Springs. Their names also will be engraved on a Diversity Award plaque that is permanently mounted in the lobby of the Agricultural Administration Building.

"This group has demonstrated a deep and continued interest in reaching all potential audiences with their horticultural education," says Nancy Stevens, county extension director in Montgomery County, who nominated the team for the award. "They have developed a

team-teaching approach, with the goals of increasing pluralism in the labor force and enhancing upward mobility of clients with limited educational and training opportunities."

Stevens notes that the group has developed and taught six different programs throughout the region, including a vocational education course at the maximum-security State Correctional Institution at Graterford. "This in-depth course teaches inmates—including Hispanics, African Americans and Caucasians—many different aspects of horticulture," says Stevens. "The educators have had to consider educational levels of the participants, cultural differences and language barriers. In addition, strict prison rules have also made hands-on activities challenging."

The team also has offered horticulture programs for African American and Hispanic welfare-to-work clients at the Awbury Arboretum, as well as various classes taught in Spanish for Spanish-speaking employees of green-industry firms. These programs have made a difference in the community, according to Stevens. ■

Ag Council Visitors See Cutting-Edge Science on Fall Research Tour

More than 120 people descended on the University Park campus Sept. 25 to attend the college's ninth annual research tour. Sponsored by the Penn State Ag Council, a stakeholder advisory group to the college, the tour is intended to increase awareness and support for college research and programs.

Tour participants—including legislators, other government officials and agribusiness representatives—visited facilities and laboratories, where faculty members highlighted some of the leading-edge research being performed in the college:

- Eileen Wheeler, professor of agricultural engineering, discussed advances in measuring and addressing agricultural odors and impacts.

- Jeff Catchmark, assistant professor of biological engineering, talked about the potential of using nanotechnology to change the way the forest products industry does business.

- Kelli Hoover, associate professor of entomology, and Scott Geib, postdoctoral researcher, described studies of how the gut microbes of insects, such as the wood-feeding Asian longhorned beetle, break down cellulose. This understanding could help us to mimic nature's methods of converting cellulose to sugars, leading to more efficient and cost-effective methods for producing biofuels, such as cellulosic ethanol.

- Tim Kelsey, professor of agricultural economics, highlighted programs address-

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From Dean Steele

First, I am pleased to report that enrollment in our college is up again this year. Preliminary data indicate an overall increase of 8 percent over last year for all campuses combined and at University Park as well. Detailed information on specific majors has been sent to all college units. Under Associate Dean Marcos Fernandez' leadership, our recruiting activities have been a large, coordinated effort by many in the college.

Second, I want to thank you for what I know you will do in the next few days: that is, complete and return your pledge card in support of our United Way campaign. It is important that you stay involved if you've contributed before, and get involved if you haven't contributed before. Our college's participation rate last year was about 24 percent. I know we can do better. There are many in our communities who need our help, and the organizations supported by the United Way rely heavily on your generous commitment of money to the United Way in your region.

Finally, a word about our current budget challenges. Pennsylvania continues to experience a less-than-projected revenue stream resulting in a substantial shortfall of funds, and Governor Rendell has asked all state agencies, including Penn State, to set aside 4.25 percent of our budgets for possible return to the state treasury. Consequently, I have directed all college units to slow expenditures significantly so that we can return to Old Main 4.25 percent of our state-funded research and extension lines and 0.75 percent of our instructional budget. A real concern is whether economic conditions will continue to worsen before they get better. We simply don't know, so it is prudent to substantially rein in our spending in case additional rescissions become necessary later in the fiscal year.

Keep in mind that we still have 95.75 percent of our budget, and our taxpayers still place high value on the teaching, research and extension programs we deliver throughout the commonwealth. What we are going through is happening to a greater or lesser extent in every other state. In time, we will get over this hurdle and take our programs to even greater heights. We appreciate your understanding, and we will keep you apprised of any changes as they arise. ■



Name: Paul Rebarchak

Hometown: Born in Wilkes Barre; grew up in Hazleton

Job title: Facilities/greenhouse manager for the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences

Office: 3E Agricultural Sciences and Industries Building

Working at Penn State: 31 years, all within the college

Spouse: Gretchen Rebarchak (Bloom) "My best friend."

Children: One child, Caleb, completing his senior year at Penn State majoring in Music Education. "He's a great saxophone player who still likes to spend time with his dad on a trout stream with fly-rod in hand, when he finds time."

Pets: Two English setters, Misty and Jeb. "I have always been an English setter man."

Last books read: "Triumph Forsaken" by Mark Moyer and "A Good Life Wasted" by Dave Ames

CD currently in your car's player: "It's a short ride to the university, so I usually listen to National Public Radio. But I believe there is a Grateful Dead CD currently in the truck."

Favorite musician: Jorma Kaukonen

All-time favorite movie: A Christmas Story

Favorite actor: Jack Nicholson

Favorite food: "Seafood is a favorite, but honestly I like just about anything—a good chef can do wonders."

Favorite restaurants or

hang-outs: American Ale House, Duffy's Tavern, and The Elk Creek Cafe

Hobbies: "Enjoy a good book and listening to music when time allows, as well as fly-fishing and fly-tying."

Little-known claim to fame: Named Man of the Year by the Pennsylvania Agronomic Education Society in 2008

Thing you are proudest of: Our son Caleb

How you relax: "Standing in a stream waving a stick has a way of clearing the head for me. I am fortunate that Gretchen also enjoys fly-fishing so we fish as often as we can together. Come fall, I enjoy bow hunting and following our setters through Pennsylvania's woodlands."

Ag Council Visitors . . . (continued from page 2)

ing the impacts and opportunities of Marcellus shale natural-gas exploration and drilling in Pennsylvania. The Marcellus shale "play" could provide a windfall of revenue and jobs to landowners and municipalities, but information is needed to assist individuals and communities in making sound decisions surrounding land use, environmental protection, and financial and legal issues.

• Elizabeth Boyer, associate professor of forest hydrology, informed the group

about research related to Pennsylvania water resources and its implications for agriculture.

• Robert Berghage, associate professor of horticulture, discussed research around the functions and benefits of green roofs. Penn State's Center for Green Roof Research seeks to show how roofs planted with vegetation can reduce stormwater runoff, provide habitat for threatened pollinators and other wildlife, and save energy by helping to heat and cool buildings. ■

Up and Coming...

November 8. Nittany Lion Fall Classic, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Dale Olver at (814) 863-3914.

November 15. Dairy and Animal Science Alumni Tailgate, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Jana Peters at (814) 863-4198.

November 22. College of Agricultural Sciences Alumni Society Ag Live '08 Tailgate, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Kathy McCartney at (814) 865-2717.

November 27. Thanksgiving Day.

December 4-7. Festival of Trees, Ag Arena, UP. 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday. Contact Jennifer Corman at (814) 237-7717.

FACULTY/STAFF ALERT

Posting Flyers and Announcements

In keeping with Penn State's policy to keep our campus appearance neat, all announcements are to be placed only on general-purpose bulletin boards. Office of Physical Plant employees will remove any announcements posted on trees, building-entrance doors, interior walls, windows, buildings, transit center bus stops or other university structures. Program-related information can be posted on faculty and staff office doors if done in a neat and orderly fashion.

ON THE MOVE

New Faces

Andrew Beck, assistant extension educator in Schuylkill County

Kevin Martin, associate extension educator at Lake Erie Regional Center for Grape Research and Extension

Dana McQuaide, extension assistant in agricultural economics and rural sociology

Dorothy Snoberger, staff assistant V in administrative services

Kenneth Snyder Jr., barn worker/milker in dairy and animal science

Promotions

Justin Dillon, senior extension associate in crop and soil sciences

Tarrah Geszvain, program coordinator II in environmental resource management

Roger Martell, manager of financial and administrative services in administrative services

Paul Rebarchak, manager of agricultural research farms in crop and soil sciences

Partings

Marjory Apollon-Shields, nutrition education advisor in Philadelphia County

Michele Brosius, nutrition education advisor in Northumberland County

Retirements

K. C. Kim, professor emeritus of entomology

Teresa Shirk, facilities services and safety coordinator in plant pathology

MORE ABOUT US...

Deaths

Rita Anderson, University Creamery salesroom clerk from 1967 until her retirement in 1987, died Sept. 22 at the age of 69.

William Henson, assistant professor of agricultural economics from 1984 until his retirement in 1999, died Sept. 7 at the age of 74.

Roy Snyder, senior extension agent in Perry County from 1948 until his retirement in 1980, died Sept. 15 at the age of 84.

Noteworthy

Robert Graves, professor of agricultural and biological engineering, has been honored as a Fellow of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineering "for his leadership and numerous accomplishments as an extension and outreach educator." To be considered, an individual must demonstrate unusual professional distinction with outstanding qualifications and experience in the field of agricultural engineering and have at least 20 years of membership in the society.

Thomas Richard, associate professor of agricultural and biological engineering and director of the Penn State Institutes of Energy and the Environment, has been

asked to serve on the advisory board of the Brazil-USA Higher Education Biofuels Network by the Fulbright Commission in Brazil. The board will provide input to help establish the network, to assess the qualifications of those who apply to participate in it, and to advise the commission as appropriate to most effectively establish this network, the first of its kind established by the Fulbright Commission.

Alan Snider, professor emeritus of agricultural and extension education, was elected president of the Association of Tobacco Control Professionals of Pennsylvania at its spring conference at the Penn Stater Conference Center, April 22-23. Amanda Iwinski, extension educator in Westmoreland County, was elected secretary of the association.

James Ladlee, county extension director in Clinton County, received the 2008 Buckstopper Award from Penn State Cooperative Extension's Economic and Community Development program for his work on improving extension's strategic planning program, "Choosing Our Direction." The award is the program area's highest award and is given annually to the person who provides significant leadership in developing a program that addresses an issue of concern.

Jorge A. Elizondo-Salazar, doctoral candidate in dairy and animal science, was awarded the second-place prize at the 23rd annual Graduate Exhibition in the area of Health & Life Sciences for his paper on "Immunoglobulin G Absorption in Neonatal Dairy Calves Fed Heat-Treated Colostrum." The prize included a certificate and cash award.

James Clark, senior extension educator in McKean County, received the 2008 Individual Program Leadership Gold Award from the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals. His program involved educating more than 200 private water-well owners in that county and testing their water supplies at the Penn State Water Lab.

Lawrence Specht, professor emeritus of dairy science, was honored as a National Dairy

Shrine Living Pioneer at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wis. The shrine recognizes more than 11,000 dairy cattle breeders, scientists, industrialists and students who have contributed to the shrine's purpose of "stimulating, inspiring, educating and recording" members of the nation's dairy industry, as well as "assembling pictures, histories, book and other records and mementoes of those who have made notable contributions to the development of outstanding breeding herds and the advancement of the industry."

Thomas Butzler, horticulture extension educator in Clinton County, received a Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents for his work in disseminating horticulture information to the landscape, nursery and vegetable industry.

Gary San Julian, professor of wildlife resources, has accepted a shared faculty position with CSREES Natural Resources and Environment unit with national program responsibilities for the CSREES Fish and Wildlife program. He will help develop a new wildlife and fish strategy for CSREES. Through collaboration with partners and stakeholders, he will identify mission-relevant wildlife and fish problems and corresponding opportunities for action. Potential issues include fragmentation, invasive species, wildlife damage management, the interface of endangered species regulations with natural resources management, and natural resources public relations.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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