



AG SCIENCES 2008

A Monthly Newsletter for the College of Agricultural Sciences

August 2008

News in Brief

Hyde Promoted in Extension

Jeffrey Hyde, associate professor of agricultural economics, has been appointed state program leader for entrepreneur and value-added agricultural systems with Penn State Cooperative Extension, on a half-time basis.

As state program leader, Hyde will provide leadership for entrepreneur and valued-added agricultural systems extension programming in Pennsylvania. He will work to unify existing extension efforts into a focused state program by collaborating with administrators in the college, academic department heads, regional extension directors, faculty and county extension educators, as well as academic and outreach programs in other colleges within the university.

College in Group to Help Nepal

The college, as part of a consortium that includes Virginia Tech and Ohio State University, is collaborating with researchers from Nepal Agricultural Research Council and Winrock International to develop a new grafting technology to combat diseases and pests in tomatoes and eggplant.

Tomatoes and eggplant are some of the most popular vegetables in the world. But various pests impair the production of these crops. These pests decrease yields and have been known to destroy entire crops.

Murphy Helps Form Safety Council

Dennis Murphy, Distinguished Professor of Agricultural Safety and Health, is a founding board member of a new organization, the Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America, recently formed to work toward making farming safer.

The new council, driven by farmer/rancher and agribusiness leaders, is the first of its kind in the country to pursue a national strategy to reduce disease, injuries and fatalities in American agriculture.

APD College Building: It's all about Bioenergy

"Ag Energy: Harnessing the Potential" is the theme of exhibits to be showcased in the College of Agricultural Sciences Exhibits Building at Ag Progress Days, Aug. 19-21.

With gas prices reaching all-time highs, visitors can discover how the college's teaching, research and extension programs are helping turn Pennsylvania toward renewable sources of energy. Faculty and staff also will be on hand to answer questions and provide information about the college's undergraduate programs.

Exhibits will show how Penn State researchers and educators are developing and applying technologies to produce and process alternative fuel sources—not only from corn and soybeans, but also from wood and other nonfood crops—in a manner that is environmentally and economically sustainable under Pennsylvania conditions.

The exhibits will show that the college is well positioned to provide valuable and much-needed research to move Pennsylvania toward energy independence.

During Ag Progress Days, specialists in the college will offer energy-related presentations in the theatre of the College Exhibits Building. Times and topics are as follows:

Tuesday, Aug. 19

11 a.m. – "Natural Gas Leasing Impact"

1:30 p.m. – "Potential of Wind and Solar Energy"

2:30 p.m. – "Using Straight Vegetable Oil"

Wednesday, Aug. 20

11 a.m. – "Natural Gas Leasing Impact"

1:30 p.m. – "Energy Efficiency on the Farm"

2:30 p.m. – "Natural Gas Leasing Impact"

Thursday, August 21

11 p.m. – "Combined Heat and Power Project"



▲ *Getting Ready:* Bill Smiley (left) and Jessie Darlington work on the entryway of the new Ag Choice Building at the Ag Progress Days site in preparation for its first use at Ag Progress Days 2008.

Familiar Faces

QUESTION: What is your or your department's involvement in Ag Progress Days?



Davis Hill, Agricultural and Biological Engineering Program director

"At Ag Progress Days, our department does safety and agriculture-rescue demonstrations,

sponsors an ag-safety quiz bowl and sets up a safety and health tent. This year we're also doing an ATV-safety presentation."



Paul Heinemann, professor of agricultural and biological engineering

"While I'm only planning on attending the agricultural and biological engineering

alumni dinner this year, I enjoy the opportunity to talk with attendees at Ag Progress Days about our department, our goals and the projects we're currently involved with."



Cathy Bowen, associate professor of agricultural and extension education

"I'm going to Ag Progress Days with an exhibit located in the Family Room called

'Right on the Money,' which is designed to help educate children ages 5 to 7 and their parents about saving, spending, sharing and borrowing."



Christy Bartley, program leader 4-H youth development

"The 4-H program will be in the Youth Building with an exhibit focusing on science, engineering

and technology. We'll introduce general science concepts to children with a fun, hands-on display and prizes to get them interested in 4-H and the science programs it offers."



William Lamont, professor of vegetable crops

"I'm mainly involved in the energy exhibit, which will feature biodiesel, ethanol and other energy projects here at Penn

State. I'm going to be presenting plasto-fuel at the exhibit, and we will have the machine that processes the plastic into fuel on display."

Congleton Appointed Director of Multicultural Programs

Randi Congleton has been named director of multicultural programs in the college. She will develop and coordinate programs and policies affecting the recruitment and retention of underrepresented and minority students in the college. She also will work with student groups and the college's numerous educational and academic-support services and programs.

Congleton will investigate current and potential funding sources, prepare grant proposals and develop funding partnerships with collaborating agencies.



▲ Randi Congleton

Before graduating from the college in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural and Extension Education (Leadership Development and Communications option), Congleton was a member of the Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources Association (MANRA). She earned a master's degree in Community Service from Michigan State University and comes to the college from a position as assistant director at Penn State's Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life, where she provided educational programs and opportunities for students and advisers.

"I'm excited by the opportunity to not only continue working with students

but to give back to the college in unique ways that will assist in retention and success," Congleton says. "Returning to the college where I was an undergraduate will allow me to collaborate with people who were mentors and that I've worked with."

Much of her work with underrepresented groups, she says, will be creating and maintaining spaces where they feel welcome.

"Ag sciences has always been a place where students come together to bond and build social networks that they will retain long after graduation," she says.

Another perspective that Congleton brings to her new position is a broad sense of multiculturalism that she says meshes with the vision presented in the college's strategic plan and the university's Framework for Diversity. "The position has evolved and I want to make sure it offers the broadest sense of multiculturalism as providing all who are underrepresented and looking to find place in college: rural lifestyles, sexual orientation and single-parent students," she explains.

J. Marcos Fernandez, associate dean for undergraduate education, says that Congleton's experience will help ensure student success while contributing to the recruitment of new and promising students.

"Randi has a great deal of college-level advising and student-life experience, as well as a familiarity with Penn State and our college," he says. "Having worked alongside her on university-level student-life initiatives and events in the past, we anticipate that Randi will bring an abundance of enthusiasm, energy and success to this critically important position."

Ann Dodd, assistant dean for strategic initiatives, says Congleton will be a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion among faculty, staff and educators as well as with undergraduate and graduate students. "She will work with the college's diversity coordinating council to advance collegewide change in support of our diversity goals and will be instrumental in leading and assisting units in the recruitment, retention and success of underrepresented graduate students," she says. ■

From Dean Steele

Most readers of this newsletter by now have seen my announcement that I will be stepping down as dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences on or about July 1, 2009 and move to the food science department as a professor. By then it will have been 12 years that I've had the privilege of serving as your dean, much longer than I would have anticipated when I came to Penn State in the summer of 1997.

But looking ahead, we have much to accomplish this next year, and I look forward to leading the college as we prepare for a smooth leadership transition. President Spanier and Provost Erickson will be initiating a search for a new dean very soon, and I have agreed to continue to serve as your dean until a new dean is on board.

The arrival of August brings our annual Ag Progress Days, an opportunity to showcase our programs spanning the entire food and fiber spectrum to approximately 50,000 of our stakeholders. This year's show promises to be another highlight for our college. This being a presidential election year, you never know who might be dropping in to visit. Please join us at Ag Progress Days, running from Tuesday, Aug. 19 through Thursday, Aug. 21.

This year, the beginning of August also brings us a finalized state budget and a still uncertain federal budget. Overall, our college received level funding for our research and extension programs with a modest increase in our instructional budget compared to last year's state budget. While this increase isn't sufficient to cover ongoing operating costs, we continue to work hard at extracting efficiencies from an already lean budget in attempts to minimize the impacts of this budget shortfall.

Nevertheless, we anticipate that we will need to downsize our faculty, staff and extension educator personnel base unless we can find resources elsewhere to offset this shortfall of funds from the commonwealth. Although we are only a few short months from the end of our federal fiscal year, it is unlikely that we will have a reading on our federal budget until past the election and after the inauguration of the new president in January. We will keep you posted as developments occur on the federal front.

I hope you've been finding some time here and there to relax and enjoy summertime activities in Pennsylvania with friends and family. Summer continues to fly by and our new academic year is fast approaching. ■



Name: Nicole Webster

Hometown: State College, Pa.

Grew up where: Miami, Fla.

Job title: Associate professor in the Department of Agricultural & Extension Education. "I conduct research in the area of service learning and civic engagement."

Office location: 109 Ferguson, University Park

Working at Penn State: Six years

Pet: "My cat's name is Midnight, and he is 15 years old."

Last book read: "The Measure of a Man: A Spiritual Autobiography"

CDs currently in your car's player: Fourplay and Steelpan Exodus

Favorite food: Pelau and roti

Favorite restaurant or hang-out:

Cheesecake Factory

Hobbies: Gardening and playing tennis

Things you are proudest of: "The impact my research can bring to distressed communities and youth in the inner cities and developing countries, and the relationship I have with my family and friends."

How you relax: "Reading a good mystery book on the deck or near the beach."

Favorite part of job: "Seeing the impact of work on the faces of the youth who are involved in the programs or projects that I design."

Favorite quote: "Every job is a self portrait of the person who did it. Always autograph your work with excellence."

Study Shows Consumers Accept Grass-fed Beef

High feed-grain prices and the growing interest in "natural" foods have spurred both consumers and farmers to consider grass-fed beef, and a recent study done by researchers in the college may reinforce this trend.

According to John Comerford, associate professor of dairy and animal science, the study showed that most consumers find the taste and tenderness of grass-fed beef acceptable in blind taste tests. He recommends that producers look for ways to interest more potential customers in grass-fed beef.

Emily Steinberg, who recently completed her master's degree in the

Department of Dairy and Animal Science, conducted consumer evaluations of cooked grass-fed beef steaks and analyzed production issues for farmers. Her work suggests that some of the preconceived notions held by farmers about the physical type of the cattle and the length of the grazing season needed for high-quality grass-fed beef may not be true.

"The results of the study showed that most consumer evaluations of the cooked meat were not influenced by frame sizes of the cattle, weight at harvest, range of grazing period from 120-180 days, and final fat composition of the carcass," Comerford explains. ■

Up and Coming...

August 5-7. State 4-H Achievement Days, University Park. Contact Phil Hoy, (814) 863-7872.

August 6-7. Penn State Turfgrass Field Days, Joseph Valentine Research Center, UP. Contact Heather Treaster, (814) 863-0129.

August 19-21. Ag Progress Days, Rock Springs. Contact Bob Oberheim, (814) 865-2081.

August 22-24. New and returning student arrival days.

August 25. Classes begin.

September 1. Labor Day holiday—no classes.

NEW FACES

Elizabeth Booher, staff assistant V in Westmoreland County

Linda Cray, administrative assistant II in Westmoreland County

Stacie Domer, assistant extension educator in Centre County

Karen Fisher-Vanden, associate professor in agricultural economics and rural sociology

Alexander Graziani, senior extension associate in Westmoreland County

Lorraine Jacobs, assistant extension educator in McKean County

Tammy Lihan, staff assistant III in Westmoreland County

Megan Marshall, research associate in agricultural and biological engineering

Beverly Poole, staff assistant V in Westmoreland County

Irmgard Seidl-Adams, research associate in entomology

Bonnie Skovira, staff assistant V in Westmoreland County

Rebecca Villegas, assistant extension educator in Montgomery County

PARTINGS

Clancy Cash, associate extension educator in Luzerne County

Grace Coffman, staff assistant VI in undergraduate education

Amanda Edmundson, research support technician III in veterinary and biomedical sciences

Jessica Howard, conference coordinator in conferences and short courses

Cathy Shreckengast, staff assistant VI in veterinary and biomedical sciences

RETIREMENTS

Craig Kreider, farm machinery facility and mechanic in horticulture

Steven Miller, barn worker and milker in dairy and animal science

Wanda Nyman, administrative assistant III in agricultural and biological engineering

Larry Pruss, director of finance and operations in administrative services

PROMOTIONS

Marsha Hull, graphic artist in agricultural and biological engineering

Amy Maney, administrative assistant III in agricultural and biological engineering

DEATHS

James Bochy, senior extension agent in Somerset County from 1951 until his retirement in 1988, died April 23 at the age of 83.

Helen Puskar, associate professor of home-management extension in Indiana County from 1961 until her retirement in 1975, died May 14 at the age of 93.

Dora Mae Andre, secretary in the College of Agriculture from 1955 until her retirement in 1974, died June 15, at the age of 99.

Sarah Donaldson, who had been a senior research associate in veterinary and biomedical sciences since January 2006, died June 16 at the age of 28.

Noteworthy

Ronald Matason, communications technology consultant in information technologies, hosted a two-day meeting for the Polycom User Group board of directors in Brussels, Belgium, for users of videoconferencing technologies in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, with about 50 attendees from corporate and government agencies.

Mark Madden, extension educator in Sullivan County, was recently awarded a Forage and Grassland Extension/Research Award by the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council.

Sharon McDonald, extension educator in Blair County, and **Mary Alice Gettings**, extension educator in Beaver County, have been chosen as incoming chairs for the American Dietetic Association Dietetic Practice Groups or specialty areas of dietetics practice. Gettings chairs the Nutrition in Complementary Care practice group and McDonald chairs the Nutrition Education group.

Constance Flanagan, professor of youth civic development and co-director of the intercollegiate minor in civic and community engagement, will spend a sabbatical year as resident fellow at Chicago's Spencer Foundation, which focuses on education. She also has been awarded a Fulbright lecturing/research award to work in Santiago, Chile. Flanagan recently presented the keynote address at the International Conference on Political Socialization, Centre for Citizenship and Democracy in Bruges, Belgium. She also delivered the keynote address for the annual meeting of the Marion County Children's Alliance in Ocala, Fla., on "Why Community Investment in the Next Generation Matters—For Youth and For Democracy." She also presented an invited talk at a conference on political socialization at Örebro University in Sweden on "Developmental Foundations of Social Trust: How Civic Dispositions Are Formed."

Jan Scholl, associate professor of agricultural and extension education, and **Patricia Powley**, retired extension educator in Dauphin County, have been named to the national planning committee for the 75th anniversary celebration of the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences in Alabama in 2009.

John Comerford, associate professor of dairy and animal science, recently presented an invited paper on "Biofuel Production and Intensive Livestock Production in the U.S." to the British Society of Animal Science in Scarborough, England. He also presented a lecture and toured the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Centers

at Hillsborough and Loughgall, Northern Ireland.

Frederick Gildow, professor of plant pathology, received the 2007-2008 Department of Plant Pathology Excellence in Teaching Award in recognition of his outstanding contributions as a faculty member. **Teresa Shirk**, facilities, services and safety coordinator in plant pathology, received the Laurence D. and Mary Ann Moore Faculty and Staff Award in Plant Pathology in recognition of her outstanding achievement as a staff member. Four Department of Plant Pathology graduate students recently received 2008 College of Agricultural Sciences Competitive Grants. The \$2,000 grants were awarded to **Aaron Brown**, **Li Guo**, **Rachel Melnick** and **Katelyn Willyerd**.

Chester Hughes, agriculture/livestock extension educator and interim extension director in Lancaster County, and **Kenneth Kephart**, professor of animal science, coauthored "Assessment of Producer Implementation of Pork Quality Assurance Good Production Practices" for publication in the February 2008 Journal of Extension. The article, a study to measure the implementation rate by 78 pork producers of best-management practices recommended by the Pork Quality Assurance program, was based on research undertaken in fulfillment of Hughes' master's degree requirements.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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