NEWFOUNDLAND, PA — You don't have to journey far to find family-produced, organically certified, sustainably harvested maple syrup. At Journey’s End Farm, the Curtis family has produced maple syrup since 1934, and recently hosted a Maple Sugaring Field Day in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Women’s Agricultural Network (PA-WAgN) to teach others about how it's done.

In spite of classic spring thaw conditions, participants tackled mud, brambles, snow flurries and gusting winds while collecting firewood, harvesting sap, learning how to manage a sugar bush, equip a sap house and boil, evaporate and grade syrup. The tapping season typically runs from mid-February to late April and is a time of intense physical labor and long hours of syrup production.

Today, Kristin Curtis runs the farm with sons Jason, Ira and Andy, and the assistance of other family members and friends. Their work is guided by the philosophy that “We should not take more from the earth than we need, and what we do take should be used to its fullest extent.”

Journey’s End farm transforms into a children’s camp during the summer season, where campers gain a better understanding of “who they want to be, how their actions impact the world and what they are truly capable of.”

For additional information about the farm or camp, visit www.journeysendfarm.org or call 570-689-3911.

Sandy Long
The River Reporter
www.riverreporter.com

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Conflict and change – two ever-present components of daily life – were the topics of discussion at the recent PA-WAgN Steering Committee meeting and Leadership Training. Led by Penn State Extension educators Joann Kowalski (Susquehanna County) and Jon Laughner (Beaver County), steering committee members practiced using tools to manage conflict and change in our lives, on our farms, in our businesses or jobs, in PA-WAgN, and in our communities.

Joann led steering committee members through a discussion that included the likely sources of conflict, such as lack of communication, differing values and expectations, ineffective leadership or ill-defined roles, and external changes affecting the group. Through stories that steering committee members told about their own experiences, she helped us think through both the positive and negative outcomes from conflict. She stressed that successfully navigating conflict can make a group stronger and lead to better decisions. Conflict can be an opportunity for growth. Each person completed a self-assessment that helped us think through our strengths and weaknesses in handling conflict. (I discovered I need to work on listening to options with an open mind and looking for the smaller steps that will lead to a full resolution.) Then we discussed conflict resolution techniques and guidelines, such as creating an environment that is positive, defining the conflict together and identifying the sources of the conflict, communicating in a way that is assertive and positive, acknowledging the needs of all participants, and outlining a plan of action.

Jon started the session on change by having all the steering committee members take sideways steps for each of a number of changes in our lives, from small (changing hair color) to monumental (changing jobs, adding a family member). Some people found themselves on the opposite side of the room! The point was that all of us experience change, some because of our own actions and choices, and some because of external forces. Change is constant – how we deal with it determines the success of our businesses and community organizations. To illustrate this point, Jon shared a video documenting the changes that have occurred in our lifetimes, and the likely changes that the next generation will see (available at: http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com). Then he led the group in a brainstorming exercise to identify the changes that affect or could affect PA-WAgN, and how we might deal with those changes.

This leadership training was a continuation of training held in March 2006. The materials are drawn from the Penn State Cooperative Extension program Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow. For more information about this program, contact your county extension office or go to http://www.leadership.psu.edu.

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On April 25 a small group of PA-WAgN members met at Friends Farm in Blair County to learn to think like a building designer.

Farmers Chris Wise and John Favinger shared their extensive experience and knowledge in constructing barns, chicken houses, storage sheds, and their most recent addition—a commercial kitchen and dining area to host value-added seasonal dinners.

We used my future chicken house as the example project. My needs are relatively basic but Chris and John helped me consider some very important features that I may have overlooked. After determining that I want to maintain a very small flock of laying hens (approximately 10 to feed a family of five with enough to share), the following elements were incorporated into my design:

- space for raising chicks (although this is not an immediate need, I plan to do this in the future)
- space for people and storage, separate from the chickens
- electric fencing for predator control
- nest boxes off the ground to discourage brooding
- ample ventilation, plenty of windows that open and close
- elevated chickenhouse to reduce predator access
- provide a small door to outside area only large enough for chickens, with an easy mechanism to raise and lower the door from the outside

Considerations in determining chicken house location include natural wind barriers such as trees and shrubs, proximity to family home (avoid being downwind to minimize unpleasant odors entering home), and ample sun and light exposure.

A follow-up, hands-on construction workshop on my homestead has been planned in the Fall. Participants will review the plans and learn basic construction techniques that can be used in any building project. Look for details soon.

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Chris Wise discusses the importance of proper ventilation in a chickenhouse and demonstrates the installation method frequently used at Friends Farm.

Photograph by Ann Stone

QUOTE OF THE DAY
“The most important part of construction is the thinking and decision making you do before you start.”

Gene Logsdon
Practical Skills, 1985
Choosing how to best market sheep and meat goats is complex, but the profit potential can be high, particularly here in Pennsylvania. We are fortunate to be located near the ethnic markets of New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore where lamb and chevon are popular and increasing in demand. We are also within a few hours drive of the New Holland Auction, the largest sheep and meat goat auction on the east coast.

Farmers have a wide range of marketing options: to sell at auction or to market directly from the farm to consumers or livestock buyers who are seeking lambs and goats.

PA-WAgN members recently visited Maple Hollow Farms in Bedford County to see how the Barkley family markets its lamb and meat goats. We toured their pastures, barns, and handling facilities, and talked with Melanie Barkley, who is also a Bedford County Extension Educator and a PA-WAgN representative, about how to market sheep and meat goats. Her responses to the questions PA-WAgN members posed may help you in selecting your markets.

If a farmer wants to sell lambs or goats through the New Holland auction, what are the best times of the year to do that?
For sheep and goats, the Easter markets, both Western and Eastern, are good, but there is much competition and the market can get flooded. Prices typically run from $1.50 to more than $2 a pound for smaller lambs (40 to 60 pounds) while heavier lambs will bring less per pound. Goats are sold by the head. You should plan to have your animals at the sale one to two weeks before a holiday. The Christmas market has fewer new crop lambs and can therefore be more profitable—last year fall-born 40-60 pound lambs brought as much as $3.30 a pound.

There are many other religious holidays that bring buyers for lamb and goat (see chart below). Producers should tailor the ages and weights of their lambs or goats to the individual holidays. To check the latest market reports for New Holland and other Pennsylvania auctions, go to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture web site at [http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/agriculture](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/agriculture).

(Source: University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension, http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-3094.pdf)
What should farmers keep in mind before deciding to sell through New Holland?
Well, a drawback to selling at auction is that you don’t know what price you’ll receive before you send your animals—Fuel costs are another important consideration. It’s very costly to transport animals now, and you need quite a few animals to justify your transporation costs. You may want to collaborate with other farmers to get a truck or trailer load.

Are there livestock buyers who will buy from farmers and re-sell at New Holland?
Yes, many of the sheep and goats sold at other smaller auctions across the state end up at New Holland because of the high demand and high prices at that auction. Some buyers may come and buy directly from your farm, especially if you have a larger group of animals to sell or can collaborate with your neighbors to put together a larger group. Your local Cooperative Extension office may help you make contact with local livestock buyers.

For farmers wanting to sell meat goats directly from their farm to the ethnic market, what is the best way to make those connections?
You can contact local places of worship or leave ads at ethnic grocery stores or health food stores. You can also just put the word out among your friends and relatives that you have animals available.

How does the transaction usually work?
The typical transaction is to have customers come to the farm to pick up the live animal or the customer may have you haul the animal to a local meat processing facility. They would then make arrangements with the processor for cutting. The customer would be responsible for the costs associated with cutting, wrapping and freezing. Some producers may also allow their customers to purchase the animals and slaughter the animals on the farm.

Another market for meat goats and meat lambs is sales to 4-H or FFA members. How does that work?
Again, your local Cooperative Extension office may help you contact 4-H leaders or FFA advisors to let their members know you have animals available. You must have the right type animal for that market—meat, muscle, eye appeal, and structural correctness. In addition, your animals must be the correct age so that the animal is finished in time for club members’ local fair.

If you have other questions about raising or marketing meat goats and sheep, please check out the Meat Goat and Sheep Online Courses available from Penn State Cooperative Extension: http://bedford.extension.psu.edu/second.asp?county=Bedford&table=Ag
Free online lesson materials are available anytime, or you can register to take the course with instructor feedback during the winter. You may also contact Melanie Barkley with your questions: 814-623-4800 or email meh7@psu.edu.

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Small Ruminant Marketing Resources
http://www.sheepandgoat.com/articles/sellingatauctions.html
A good article on selling at auction written by Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist at Western Maryland Research & Education Center, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension.

http://www.newfarm.org/features/2006/0606/ethnicgoatmrk/miller.shtml
Excellent overview of selling to ethnic markets written by PA-WAgN member Sandra Miller.

http://www.newfarm.org/features/0704/meatgoat/resource.shtml
Resources for raising and marketing meat goats.
KUTZTOWN, Pa. — Members of the Pennsylvania Women’s Agricultural Network (PA-WAgN) got a special treat during their second ever tour of the Rodale Institute farm on Wednesday.

Ardath Rodale, who founded the original farm on which the institute does most of its current research, gave a moving speech on connecting with nature and the food system and how she believes it helped her defy the odds of cancer, twice.

It was part of WAgN’s second tour of the institute. Over 100 people, mostly women, attended the day-long event, which included a wagon tour of various plots the institute does experiments on.

At various stops, visitors observed work being done on cover cropping, the use of compost and research on plants from around the world.

“The Global Garden,” as it is known, contains plants from six of the world’s seven continents. The garden is a tool to learn about farming methods from around the world.

A visit to the institute’s compost station included a demonstration of a compost turner, which was built in 1995 out of an old truck chassis for $25,000.

Linda Moist, senior extension associate with Penn State who works with WAgN, said the program has grown rapidly since it was started three years ago, with more than 1,000 members today.

“The members are very different women with very different ideas,” Moist said. “But the one thing they have in common is their willingness to learn from each other.”

A highlight of the day was Ardath Rodale’s speech about how the institute has changed her life through the years.

When the founder of the Rodale Institute, J.I. Rodale — Ardath’s father-in-law — died in 1971, she and her late husband Robert decided they needed to expand the farm from its base in Allentown to continue the experiments J.I. started in the 1930s.

After an exhaustive search for more land, Ardath eventually came upon a little-used farm just outside of Kutztown. Years of neglect had turned the farm into an eyesore. But Ardath saw great potential. “It was exciting; we saw a lot of places,” she said. “But when I saw this place, I knew we had to relocate here.”

Having done research on the farm’s history, she found out it dated back to the days of William Penn and the well-known Siegfried family of Berks County.

Nine generations of Siegfrieds lived and farmed the more than 300 acres that would eventually become the Rodale home. Years of economic hardship eventually forced the Siegfried family to sell the picturesque property.

(Continued on page 7)
Ardath remembers the day she bought the farm with excitement, but also sadness. The family left virtually everything behind, taking with them only a carful of belongings and more than 100 years worth of memories. “It was sad to see them go because they were a great family,” she said.

Almost immediately, Ardath and Robert got to work, transforming the farm into a place they could do experiments and continue J.I. Rodale’s legacy of demonstrating to the world the benefits of organic farming.

“But it took a while, because the soil was so neglected,” she said. “You couldn’t even hear a bird because it was so stripped.”

In 1989, Ardath was diagnosed with cancer, her first of two bouts with the potentially deadly disease. Then in 1990, tragedy struck again. Robert was killed in a car accident in Russia. Then Ardath’s cancer returned in 1993. “At that time, I was overwhelmed with a lot of things,” she said.

But tragedy didn’t keep her down. She did a lot of research on the use of chemicals in the food system and along the way, she discovered her own personal connection between natural foods and her soul.

“Food is not only for the body, but for the soul,” she said.

The institute’s mission of connecting mind, body and soul through the development of natural food processes is something she says will continue and something she encouraged all members of WAgN to embrace.

“All life is sacred,” she said. “Nature can be the orchestra leader to help us heal. The world needs us and our mission and all of your other missions out there.”

Tim LaSalle, the institute’s first ever CEO who was hired last year, reiterated his mission to get the institute to focus more on developing good farming methods that have a positively effect on climate change.

He said transforming the world’s 3.5 billion acres of tillable land into no-till could take care of 40 percent of the world’s carbon levels.

“We really don’t have any choice but to reverse the pollution we are leaving for future generations to come,” LaSalle said. “It’s an exciting time to be at the institute and we have so many things to give.”

Chris Torres
Staff Writer
Lancaster Farming

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Additional details regarding this event are available at The Rodale Institute’s website: http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/home
Farmer-entrepreneurs John and Sukey Jamison hosted PA-WAgN in May for an outstanding tour of their sheep farm and processing plant. The Jamisons are well-known for the gourmet lamb produced on their 210-acre Westmoreland County farm. Jamison lamb is served in the finest restaurants in the United States and also sold directly to consumers through the farm’s mail-order business.

John and Sukey’s secrets to success seem to be their innovative spirits, their recognition that they produce and market a superior, artisanal product, and, according to John, a lucky break.

In the early ’80s, they had a small sheep flock and were searching for ways to expand because John had lost his job selling coal. Western Pennsylvania wasn’t a place where you could sell much lamb, they had found, so they looked farther afield. In a stroke of good fortune, John sold three young lambs to French Chef Jean-Louis Palladin at his restaurant in the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. When John and Sukey delivered the lambs, they were amazed at the chef’s reaction. “Palladin nearly cried when he saw the carcasses,” John said. “He knew immediately that these were very young milk-fed lambs raised on pasture in the same way they were raised in Europe. He told us that he had never seen lamb like this in America.”

Palladin purchased more lamb and helped build the Jamison’s reputation among other chefs and restaurants. Soon Jamison Farm was selling nearly 5,000 lambs per year. Their lamb, slaughtered before 5 months of age, is famous for its tenderness and delicate flavor.

When John and Sukey began their business, they used local USDA-inspected slaughterhouses for processing the animals. However, they soon realized that to produce the very best lamb, they needed to have their own plant. “Sukey sent Julia Child a leg of lamb, and we were horrified when she remarked on its chewiness.” John said. “We couldn’t have that, so we set about finding out why the lamb was tougher than it should be. We found that the muscle fibers in a small lamb carcass, when it’s chilled as quickly as a larger animal like a steer, will shorten and toughen the meat.” So they purchased a local meat plant of their own where they were able to work with the USDA to develop a slower cooling process. Having their own plant allows them to slaughter on their own schedule as well.

PA-WAgN was able to tour the plant, as well as see the sheep, the grazing paddocks, and the packing facility on the farm. We were also treated to a magnificent lunch prepared by Sukey in her beautiful country kitchen. While we watched a spring rainstorm through the farmhouse windows, we sat by the fire sharing ideas and eating lamb stew, salad, and fresh baked bread. And we all thought, how lucky can we get?

To read about Jamison Farm, visit their web site at [www.jamisonfarm.com](http://www.jamisonfarm.com). You can order lamb and home-cooked products like Sukey’s lamb stew at the web site. If you would like more information on marketing pastured lamb, take a look at [http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc/commodity/livestock/lamb/lamb+direct+marketing.htm](http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc/commodity/livestock/lamb/lamb+direct+marketing.htm).

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JAMISON FARM LAMB STEW

• 9 sprigs fresh parsley
• 4 sprigs fresh sage or 1/2 teaspoon dried
• 5 small sprigs fresh rosemary or 1/2 teaspoon dried
• 9 small sprigs fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried
• 9 large fresh basil leaves or 1 teaspoon dried
• 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
• 2 1/2 pounds stewing lamb (shoulder), cut into 1-inch pieces
• 1 medium-size onion, chopped
• 2 cloves garlic, minced (about 2 teaspoons)
• 2 tablespoons chopped shallots (about 2 shallots)
• 1/2 cup white wine
• 3 cups V8 vegetable juice
• 1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste
• 3 cups lamb, veal or chicken stock, or water
• 1 tablespoon sea salt
• 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
• 2 ribs celery, coarsely chopped (about 1 cup)
• 1 white turnip, peeled and coarsely chopped (about 1 cup)
• 1 cup chopped leeks (about 1 leek), both white and green parts
• 2 cups (about 8 ounces) white or cremini mushrooms
• Freshly squeezed juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons)
• 3 carrots, peeled and diced (about 1 1/2 cups)

Put the parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme and basil in the center of a piece of cheesecloth and tie into a sack, using a string. Set aside.

Heat the olive oil in a large heavy stockpot over high heat for 2 minutes. Scatter the lamb cubes in the hot oil and sauté them for about 2 minutes, stirring constantly. You need to do this in 2 batches.

Add the onion, garlic and shallots and cook for about 5 minutes. Add the wine, V8 juice, tomato paste and broth, stirring to blend in the paste. Season with the salt and pepper, and drop in the prepared herb sack. Bring everything to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 30-45 minutes.

Add the celery, turnip and leeks, and simmer for 25 more minutes or until almost cooked.

Wash the mushrooms in the lemon juice, cut them if half if large and add them to the stew along with the carrots. Simmer for another 15 minutes, remove the herb sack.

Makes 8 servings.
In May, Bill Callahan at Cow-a-Hen Farm in Mifflinburg hosted PA- WaN for a pasture walk and discussion about direct marketing pastured meats. Bill raises hogs and beef, as well as chickens, ducks, and turkeys, on his 100-acre farm. “With the exception of my woodland, which I manage pretty aggressively, all my acreage is in pasture,” Bill said. “I purchase all my hay and grain and use my fields to pasture all my animals, including the hogs.”

At Cow-a-Hen Farm, the hogs live a comfortable life—we watched them graze the paddocks, soak in mud puddles, and nap in the shade. “Hogs on pasture are very healthy animals and we have none of the odor problems associated with confined hogs,” Bill said. “They are also easy keepers—they gain well, and get much of their nutrition from pasture.” To deter the hogs from rooting and destroying the pastures, Bill puts rings in their noses when they are small. The rings don’t prevent them from foraging the pastures, but they do prevent the hogs from digging holes. The cost of the infrastructure required for such an operation is very low. Bill uses simple A-frame huts for shade in the summer and warmth in the winter. Other than waterers and feeders, the only other required equipment is a strand of electrified high-tensile fencing.

Bill’s beef and poultry operations are run in a similar way. He raises Jersey calves on milk bar buckets until they are old enough to transition to grass. Then they eat only grass and hay until they go to slaughter at 18 months. The cattle share a pasture with his chickens and ducks. The poultry have access to portable shelters that are moved to fresh grass on a regular basis. “I do not rush production,” Bill said. “I raise only pullets, which mature slower, have better flavor, and a smoother skin. They also feather better for winter production.”

What makes an operation like Cow-a-Hen successful? Health-minded consumers who are anxious to buy pastured meats, Bill says. He sells all of his meats directly to consumers through farmers markets and health food stores. Demand for such products is high. “I’m growing as fast as I comfortably can,” Bill said. “In fact, I turn away more business than I accept.”

Bill Callahan and other farmers who attended the event noted the need for USDA-inspected butchering facilities, as USDA inspection is required for selling meat by the cut. “I am fortunate to have three facilities within driving distance from my farm,” Bill said. “Yet I sometimes have difficulty getting animals to slaughter when I need it due to the high volume at the slaughterhouses. Small farmers can be successful at selling to consumers and eliminating the middleman, but only if they have access to USDA inspection.”

If you are interested in pastured meat production, you might find the articles archived at Cooperative Extension Agricultural Marketing site helpful: http://agmarketing.extension.psu.edu/begfrmrs.html#link

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Farm & Garden Tools for Women

Despite the growing number of women farmers and the distinct differences between women’s and men’s bodies, virtually all equipment is designed for men. Using tools and equipment produced for male farmers puts women at higher risk for injuries and reduces efficiency.

After 11+ years as market growers, PA-WAgN members Ann Adams and Liz Brensinger of Green Heron Farms in Lehigh County know first-hand how hard it is to find the right tools. To address the shortage of high-quality equipment appropriate for women, they’ve formed Green Heron Tools, LLC, and are currently seeking assistance in finding and designing the tools women farmers want or need.

If you are a women in agriculture or a home gardener, take a few minutes to ensure that your future equipment needs are met by completing and online, 12 question survey http://www.farmtoolsforwomen.com/Survey.html.

For additional information about Green Heron Tools and the dynamic duo with the vision to create tools for women, visit http://www.farmtoolsforwomen.com/.

Event for Women Land Owners

October 5 Event at Grey Towers National Historic Site

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy and US Forest Service are holding a one day event on October 5, 2008 for women landowners who want to learn more about the forests they own and where their place is in the community of forest landowners. Nearly ¾ of Pennsylvania forestland is privately owned and a growing number of those landowners are women so it is important for women to understand their connections to the land and how to manage land for the future. This introductory program will include presentations on all aspects of forest ownership including: the values of land that might not be apparent, ways to conserve the land for the next generation, resources available to you within the landowner community, flora and fauna you can find in the woods and more. Come join the group to discuss why the woods are valuable to you physically, emotionally, and economically and take a walk in the woods with renowned botanist Dr. Ann Rhoads from the Morris Arboretum. The event will be held at Grey Towers National Historic Site in Milford, PA. There is no charge and lunch is provided. Space is limited so please call the Delaware Highlands Conservancy at 570-226-3164 today to reserve your place.

Landowner Joann Puskarek at home in her woods

Claire Wildermuth
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I come from a stoic people. My people don’t talk too loud, don’t fight publicly, don’t express their feelings and any evidence of excitement is watched carefully for signs of demonic possession. Which is why, on the last day of my trip to India in March, I realized why the constant excited chatter, heated debates and exclamations about just about everything (in Hindi, mind you), made me so danged uncomfortable. The realization that my discomfort came from walking between cultural worlds made me laugh out loud. I thought I was immune to culture shock—being a world traveler and all. Instead of I was repressing it. Typical of my people. So, I am learning new ways of being.

In India, I learned about more than just ways of being. I learned about ways of loving too. I was married there, and wrapped in silk, love and joy for two weeks by strangers who are now my family. I was even temporarily adopted by a couple so that they could immediately “donate” me (as it’s called) to my husband’s family in the wedding ceremony. I was continuously and constantly humbled by love and family—living in the moment on the outside of the skin—which is why I felt turned inside out and upside down by the end. But during it all, at the center of all the loving and fighting and laughing was, you guessed it, food. In India I also learned a lot about eating.

Most westerners who travel to exotic parts of the world are warned about what’s in the food. And I’m not talking about the spices. Not that the reverse is true about the nerve toxins and e. coli in our food, but I digress. Anyway, I was swept away on a tide of feasting in my honor the moment I stepped foot in India, and I couldn’t very well turn up my western nose at my own wedding. So, I ate (with great gusto, actually). And I prayed. I guess the prayers worked, because I never got sick. (Except for that time when my insides revolted after eating western food at a restaurant frequented by westerners on my honeymoon…but I digress again). I ate everything I wasn’t supposed to eat, and while I’d like to think it was the love that went into the cooking (not true for the truckstop restaurants and streetfood), I think it had more to do with the food itself.

It is said that the whole world loves Indian food, and for good reason, but I think we have more to love than just the taste. The whole world has a lot to learn from India (I know I’m biased) and many make spiritual journeys there for that reason, but we also have a lot to learn about eating locally from India too. I’ll give you a few examples. Before going there, I was prattling on to my fiancé, now husband, about how happy I was that local restaurants, etc, etc, were doing well in my part of the world. He looked at me like I was crazy and asked why I cared. Didn’t he understand how important the local economy was to the functioning of community? Didn’t he understand how great it was to know and have relationships with owners and entrepreneurs? Didn’t he want the quality and service that came with small-scale, local businesses? This was almost a deal breaker. But I overlooked this major flaw for the moment (because I knew there had to be a reason for this thick-headedness)—and after a few days in India I realized why he thought I was being so ridiculous and probably very precious.

Because EVERYTHING in India is LOCAL. I saw one chain restaurant, a few petrol station chains and some big companies in the cities. But the food—IT ALL comes from local markets and all the food in every farmers market (forget about grocery stores!) is the same. Cuz that is what is in season. Check. Local and seasonal works even when you have almost a billion people to feed. I even

(Continued on page 13)
met one of those women who farms to feed some of those millions of people. Her name is Comla, which means ‘lotus’ in Hindi. The goddess Laxmi, sits on a lotus flower and offers blessings of wealth and prosperity. Comla grows spinach, eggplant, wheat and variety of other crops I couldn’t recognize, for her family, her village and a local market. She asked us to stay for dinner (to eat a sweet dish called kheechdi made out of the wheat she had been harvesting that day) and when we declined because we had to get on with our honeymoon she said, stop by on your way home. We asked how we might find her again, and with a gold encircled arm, she pulled a cell phone out of her blouse. Far from living a life of deprivation, she and lots of other sturdy, happy and healthy farmers feed the people of India the way they always have AND they selectively enjoy the conveniences of modernity too.

And then there was the case of the mango lassi. Lassi is a fermented and slightly sweetened milk product that I LOVE. It’s made in big vats by street vendors and served in ceramic cones which are then thrown away. (This bit of economy, I don’t quite understand, but dirt is cheap and ceramic just goes back to the earth eventually…so it’s renewable and recyclable I guess…) Germophobes try not to think about all the little critters wiggling around in all that ceramic and the (un)sanitary conditions of street kitchens (horrors!). Anyway, even though my body kicks out in rather alarming ways anything with milk or sugar, this food loved me and I loved it back with a passion. My new husband, approving of my new passion told me there were many other flavors. Like mango. Yummy. When I asked (demanded, actually) for some mango lassi, he smiled kindly at me and said, “my dear, mangoes are not in season in March.” Right. Local and seasonal works—even, and maybe even especially, when you have a billion people to feed.

So now, after learning all these lessons about loving, being and eating, I have to learn a lesson about letting go. As dogwood and redbud bloom in the woods, the last few days of my work with WAgN draw near. A new life unfurls for me like the fresh green leaves on the maple trees, as unmarked and fresh as a baby’s fist. I am unspeakably, unbearably proud of WAgN and what is has become and I have meditated on this letting go for many years. Even though I come from a people who don’t talk about their feelings, I am also unbelievably sad to say goodbye. But the time has come, and with me or without me, you all will carry on the good work that you and the Comlas of the world over do for your families, your communities and your world. And the next time someone tells you that local and seasonal won’t work because we have too many people to feed, tell ‘em to go to India. And eat local. If they dare!

Eat well, love well, be well.

Namaste.

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For more musings on eating local, visit
Amy Trauger’s website at:
http://www.localeater.net
VISIT ME AT MY NEW HOME!

A CASE OF WEB-ENVY!

Are you afflicted with a case of web-envy? You know, feeling that you really need a presence on the web but no clue how to make it happen and a bit envious of all those people who have a worldwide advertising venue that connects consumers to their farm/business at little or no cost. How many times have your customers asked if they can have a virtual visit of your farm or peruse your products via the web and your response was no? I’ve had this affliction for many years. Not for business purposes but for personal reasons. Many times, friends have requested recipes or details about projects I had described. But, I needed a push in the right direction, a helping hand and a not-too-technically challenging way to create and maintain a website. If this sounds like your affliction, please read on! I hope that my experiences will help you.

Many of our PA-WAgN partners and members have excellent Web sites with useful information, interactivity and even on-line stores. I visit a lot of them and they’re great! I, however, was looking to publish information easily and my needs weren’t that sophisticated – I’m not selling anything. Well, with a little help from our department technical support guru, about twenty dollars and about 12 hours of time, I had my new home on the Web that I’m pretty proud of. While it will probably always be a work-in-progress, it is an easy way to get information out to my friends and family and my coworkers can now get my recipes any time they want.

I’ve compiled a few tips to help you set up a quick, easy and professional Web site for personal or business use. It’s not very sophisticated and doesn’t have on-line store capabilities but it is easy, quick and fun!

For me, the two biggest hurdles were not technical at all! I needed a name for my Web site. Our techie taught me that this is called a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) which will be a domain name that you choose and then research its availability (that initially sounds complicated but, you’ll see that it’s actually quite easy). The second challenging part was figuring out what content to put in my new Web space and how to lay it out.

You may not be able to get your first choice of domain names. My first choice was annstone.com but another Ann Stone got to it first. While there are many places to register and purchase your domain name, our techie recommended his favorite company which is http://godaddy.com. With this company, you can search for your favorite domain name and easily purchase it after you’ve found one that you like. While they can also sell you Web space, email accounts and much more, I decided to use free on-line services for my Web site elsewhere. For now, I have purchased only my domain name for two years for just over twenty dollars. For my Web pages, I’m using the free Web hosting provided by Google as part of my Google account.

No matter where you create your site, even if you change the location of your web pages at a later date, your domain name will not change.

Google Web pages can be activated as part of a Google account. Google is a best known for being a search engine but they also offer many very useful services at no cost. They offer email accounts, appointment calendars, customized home pages, chat, Web sites, Web site analysis, free photo editing software, on-line photo sharing, BLOGS, and much more. To start your account, go to http://www.google.com and click on either Sign In or My Account in the upper right. Fill out the requested forms and you’re almost there. When your account is activated, go back to My Account and select Page Creator. There is a lot of on-line help and, trust me, I used it. However, most all of it was point-and-click easy. Google makes it fun to choose a theme and a layout. With this free service, however, you substitute more advanced functionality and unlimited choices for ease of use. You have plenty to choose from, though.

My basic Web page with two other pages and some recipes took me just a few hours. After I published it, I was really pleased with myself—I had a home on the Web! But one step remained. I had to “link” or forward my URL at Godaddy to my free Web site at Google. Again getting a tip from our techie, I found out that it’s as simple as logging into my Godaddy account, clicking on my domain name and clicking the Forward button. After entering in my full Google URL and hitting save, my URL was forwarding to my Web space. I feel like such a techie now!

What’s good to know is that with domain forwarding, you can keep your one domain name and URL and re-forward it to wherever you want – whenever you want. If

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you decide that Google pages is not for you or if you want to do things that Google pages and services does not offer, you can always get Web hosting services elsewhere and re-point your URL to that new location. Remember that your domain name is separate from your Web site and the domain name just points to the Web site. It's a bit confusing at first but if I can now understand it, you surely can!

So please visit my new personal home on the Web at http://annstonehome.com. Notice that when you go to annstonehome.com, the URL will change (forward) to my Google pages. My site has some favorite recipes, some photographs of my garden and a layout of my sunflower garden that I hope grows. I also have pictures of my boys' bedroom that was hand painted and even some empty pages for more stuff when I get time. I'm just now learning to use the free photo editing software called Picasa and Google Web albums for photo sharing.

Google also has many other free services such as BLOG (Web Log) and I am looking into all of them. I have to admit that it's really exciting to be part of the 21st century. I plan to use my newfound skills to help my father set up a Web site with a BLOG and, if successful, maybe my experience will be a future article in this newsletter. Look for a PA-WAgN blog in the very near future. Until then, keep up to date with my progress at http://annstonehome.com. I look forward to hearing about what you think of my new site and if you set up your own!

As my work progresses and I learn about new tools, I plan to share the information. I'm currently exploring online photo albums and photo sharing, and maybe even video on the Web. I'll report on successes in subsequent newsletters. In the interim, please feel free to share your tips and suggestions and I'll incorporate them into future articles.

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Visit Me at My New Home – A Case of Web Envy

Step By Step To Get Your Business On The Web

- Visit [http://godaddy.com](http://godaddy.com)
  - Enter desired URL (web name) in Search area and click search.
  - If Domain name is unavailable, continue searching until you reach a screen that indicates that your choice is available.
  - Review the options, click your preferences and click proceed to checkout when you are satisfied with your selections.
  - You will be presented with a few more options which you may select or choose “no thanks continue to checkout”
  - Enter your personal information to create a new account and continue to proceed to checkout.
  - You will be given many options along the way. Just click your choices and continue to checkout. It's all very self-explanatory.

- Visit [http://www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
  - Select “sign in” in the upper right corner
  - Follow the step-by-step process to create a new account
  - You will receive a verification email and to which you must respond before continuing.

- Visit [http://pages.google.com](http://pages.google.com)
  - Log in using your new account information.
  - Select your desired layout and look and begin adding content.
  - Remember to publish when you're finished with your initial web site and all future changes

- Return to [http://godaddy.com](http://godaddy.com) (log in if you aren't already)
  - Select your URL, click “forward”
  - Enter your google pages URL, select “permanently moved” and click ok.
  - CONGRATULATIONS! NOW YOU HAVE A PRESENCE ON THE WEB

PA-WAgN Announces a New Information Sharing Tool!

Visit PA-WAgN’s blog at [http://pawagn.blogspot.com/](http://pawagn.blogspot.com/) for frequent updates on PA-WAgN activities. Details about creating your own blog will be highlighted in PA-WAgN’s Fall/Winter 2008 Newsletter.
INCORPORATING VALUE-ADDED GOAT DAIRY INTO A DIVERSIFIED FARM BUSINESS

August 26, 2008
10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Sponsored by PASA & PA-WAgN
If you are considering starting a value-added dairy venture, Lucinda and Steve of Paradise Gardens & Farm in Jefferson County can walk you through the questions at hand, from training to buildings and layout, equipment to marketing, and more.

Registration: $15/PASA members
25/non members, includes lunch

Online Registration Available:

HANDS-ON HIGH TUNNEL CONSTRUCTION WORKSHOP

September 10, 2008
10:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Josie Porter Farm, Stroudsburg, PA

Join PA-WAgN member Heidi Secord for a hands-on Workday to build a high tunnel at Josie Porter Farm. The day includes a farm tour and a discussion of Heidi’s Community Supported Agriculture program (CSA) on leased municipal land.

Details &
Online Registration available:
http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/Register0810.html
or e-mail or call
Linda Moist, lsm9@psu.edu
814-865-7031

$15 includes lunch

TASTE OF HARVEST WINERY TOUR
J. MAKI WINERY AT FRENCH CREEK VINEYARDS

September 11, 2008
11:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

This small, family-owned vineyard is known internationally for its superior wines. Enjoy a tour of the vineyard with French Creek Ridge winemaker Janet Maki. The tour will include information and discussion on:
• Growing wine grapes in Southeastern Pennsylvania
• Varieties of root stocks
• Planting, pruning, and other production methods
• Sustainable, low-chemical input production

Participants will enjoy tasting each wine grape and its corresponding wine.

Registration Fee: $15, includes the wine tasting.

Online Registration available at:
http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/Register0813.html

Visit J. Maki Winery on the Web:
http://www.jmakiwinery.com

ADDING ARTISAN CHEESEMAKING TO YOUR DAIRY OPERATION

September 25, 2008
10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Join Sue Miller at Birch Run Hills Farm in Chester Springs to learn more about adding cheesemaking to your dairy operation. Discussions will include legal requirements, profitability, and marketing issues involved for a typical operation.

Details &
Online Registration available:
http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/Register0811.html
or contact Linda Moist,
lsm9@psu.edu, 814-865-7031

$15 includes lunch at an on-farm market
**Book Review**

*Fields of Plenty by Michael Ableman*

*Fields of Plenty* chronicles the pilgrimage of author Michael Ableman to 25 entrepreneurial farms from British Columbia to New Mexico. These farmers include a grain farmer who sells freshly milled amaranth, heirloom wheat, and lentils; a vegetable grower who supplies Chez Panisse in Berkeley; orchardists producing organic fruit and wines; a Rio Grande farm family specializing in traditional Southwestern fare; farmers making sheep cheese and ice cream; and pastured meat producers.

When the book was published in 2005, it received enthusiastic praise from chefs, foodies, and supporters of local and artisan cuisine. But the book deserves a closer look from farmers for its perceptive study of the practices and philosophies of innovative farm families.

Ableman's accomplishments as a farmer, author, and executive director of the Center for Urban Agriculture are well known. In his youth, he traveled extensively to Asia, Africa, South America, and Europe to explore organic agriculture and write about. On this trip, though, he focuses on larger policy issues like how to maintain sustainable farms and how to organize affordable, healthy local food systems. Most of all, his goal for the journey is to share his knowledge, skills, and philosophies with other farmers.

Currently middle-aged after two decades of farming, Ableman wants to know “how my own skills stack up to other farmers’ and to learn from them what I can, to know whether other farmers’ lives are as complicated as my own, whether they think about quitting, what their best moments are.” In answering these questions, Ableman shows us that farmers’ goals are more alike than different, despite their diverse locations and operations.

As he travels, Ableman learns that farmers do indeed live complicated lives, and they often despair. Most of the farmers he visits struggle financially. In the words of one, “I’m always on the phone either trying to get people to buy food or pay for what they already bought.” These farmers also carry a workload so heavy that they fear they don’t have enough time for their own children. Ableman recognizes the feeling of being overwhelmed by work in some off the new farmers he meets. It is, he says, “the sense that you have just arrived at a major accident with multiple victims and you can’t decide whom to treat first.”

The farmers take whatever nature throws at them, from flooded fields to hail storms, and sometimes they want to give up. Yet, their best moments are the times when they remember that they are a small part of something great and important. “To plant a seed and believe that it will germinate, outcompete weeds, bloom, set fruit, be harvested and sold at a fair price is a great leap of faith,” one farmer says. “Next to spiders, faith is the farmer’s best friend.”

Ableman admits that five or six times a year he thinks about quitting. “I’m not sure whether it’s the intense physical nature of the work, or not having enough help. Or just the demands of balancing biology with economics.” But just before he goes over the edge, he says, something pulls him back to the earth and his place in it, something like the scent of the new season on the wind or a flock of geese flying over. He concludes that farmers “who are outlaws by conventional terms are actually lured by a sense of being a part of something bigger than themselves.”

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**BOOK REVIEW**

*Fields of Plenty* by Michael Ableman

That sense of place and duty are aptly illustrated by John and Ida Thurman. They and their seven children raise watermelons, beans, squash, okra, and sweet potatoes in a poor rural community in Illinois. They sell their produce at inner-city farmers’ markets in Westside Chicago, a two-hour drive away. The Thurmans aren’t getting rich; in fact they struggle to provide the barest of necessities. But they are, as John says, “only poor in dollars.”

Poverty isn’t what keeps John awake at night. It’s the worry that his children won’t be able to resist the lure of the city. Despite his worries, he and his wife have incredible hope for the future. They are obsessed with giving their children farming as an antidote against the alienation of city life. So they run a youth-training program to teach kids in their community leadership and farming skills, they enlist their children’s help selling at farmers markets, and they encourage them to learn from the older farmers in their community. “It was our vision to have this for the children if they choose it,” Ida Thurman says. “The kids are learning to take care of the plants and the livestock, and they’re learning business skills when they go to market. As a family, we’re out there working together, carrying on conversations in the fields, we’re closer than we would be otherwise.” Her goals are echoed by many other farmers in the book. As one dairy farmer explains, “Of all the things I’d like to give my boys, I want them to be able to die as old men on this land.”

That pride in the land and their work keeps Ableman and all the farmers in the book farming. As John Thurman says, “If you’ve farmed for five or ten years, you can run the world. It ought to be a law that you have to farm before you do anything else.”

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Asparagus

It’s such a thrill to see those first tips of asparagus burst through the soil—a true sign that Spring has arrived and that the home garden has come to life.

In additional to being a delicious addition to both every-day and special occasion fare, asparagus is a super-food of exceptional nutritional value. It’s an excellent source of vitamin K; very good source of dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, Thiamin, Riboflavin, Niacin, Folate Phosphorus, Potassium, Copper, Manganese, and Selenium; and a good source of Iron, Magnesium, and Zinc.

Considering that asparagus is one of the few perennial vegetable crops, its popularity among home gardeners is no surprise. After making the initial laborious investment of establishing an asparagus bed, growers can enjoy a relatively care-free crop for many, many years.

Although easily started from seed, it is highly recommended that 1-year asparagus crowns be planted as the seed germination depth is much more shallow than the crown depth requirements. In mid-Spring, dig a trench at least 4’ wide and 15 inches deep. Back fill with 3 inches of organic matter (compost, well-rotted manure, peat moss) and form mounds approximately 18” apart. Place crowns on mounds, spreading roots outward in all directions. Fill trench with soil mixed with plenty of organic matter.

During the first and second growing season, allow asparagus to form mature ferny foliage and resist the overwhelming temptation to harvest those thin spears. Water frequently and top-dress annually with compost. Mulch heavily to reduce the occurrence of competing weeds.

Harvest sparingly in the spring and summer of the third growing season by cutting spears at or slightly below soil level. Harvest daily as marketable size spears are produced in 24 hours. Discontinue harvesting in early Summer to allow the plants to fern-out and regenerate for the following season.

Asparagus is an elegant addition to the dinner plate but is so versatile that it can easily be incorporated into a breakfast omelet or a light luncheon salad. Grilled asparagus requires minimal preparation with excellent results and can be wrapped with prosciutto for a lovely appetizer plate.

Celebrate the rebirth of your garden and be creative with your bountiful harvest of asparagus!

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Creamy Asparagus Soup
(adapted from http://www.epicurious.com)

1 large leek (white and pale green parts only), washed thoroughly in cold water, finely chopped  
1/2 cup finely chopped shallots  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper  
3/4 teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
2 1/2 lbs. asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces  
5 cups vegetable stock (preferably homemade)  
1/4 cup heavy cream  
Parmesan shavings (for garnish) (optional)  
Fresh Tarragon (for garnish) (optional)

Cook leek, shallot, pepper, and 1/2 teaspoon salt in butter in a 6-quart heavy pot over moderately low heat, stirring, until leek is softened, about 3 minutes. Add asparagus and stock; simmer covered until asparagus is just tender, 10 to 12 minutes. After 3 minutes, remove 6 asparagus tips, halve lengthwise and reserve for garnish.

Puree soup in batches in a blender until smooth. Return to pot, stir in cream and remaining salt and pepper to taste and heat over moderately low heat until hot.

Garnish with reserved asparagus tips, Parmesan shavings (optional), and tarragon (optional).

Asparagus Trivia

Asparagus and rhubarb are some of the only vegetables that can reproduce on their own for several growing seasons. Most other vegetables must be replanted every year.
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