

PCO's Farmer Appreciation Day

Outstanding organic farmers, researchers and food producers honored



Russell Redding, Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture, leads the Awards Ceremony at PCO's Farmer Appreciation Day.
Photo: Kurt Grotz, Waterhouse Studios.



Beautiful weather, exceptional farmers and motivating speakers dovetailed on Friday, July 29th, for PCO's Farmer Appreciation Day at the fifth annual Organic Farmfest in Centre Hall, PA. Delivering the Keynote address was Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator of the USDA National Organic Program, who spoke about the integrity of the organic label. (See article, page 12) Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding was on hand to discuss the importance of Pennsylvania's farmers to healthy families, strong economies and vibrant communities. Redding also presented eight awards to truly deserving recipients, recognizing their extraordinary achievements in organic agriculture. Peggy Miars, Executive Director of Organic Materials Review Institute spoke about the role organic farmers and consumers play in shaping our global food system. (See article, page 11) Edward Jaenicke, Penn State Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics described his research on "organic hotspots" and their effect on local economies. (See article, page 9)

2016 Award Winners

PCO Extends a Hearty Congratulations to our Fabulous Lineup of Award Winners

Outstanding New Organic Farmer

For attentiveness throughout the certification process, innovative management, and dedication toward creating and maintaining a successful organic plan.

Mark Nuneviller

Nuneviller Farms, Emmaus, PA



Mark Nuneviller

Mark Nuneviller owns and operates Nuneviller Farms, a certified organic produce farm located at The Seed Farm in Emmaus, PA. Nuneviller Farms produces a wide array of vegetable and fruit crops for wholesale and retail markets. According to Mark, "...a farm is, at its heart, a series of systems — biological, mechanical, economic, and social systems working in harmony to create food products."

Nuneviller Family Farms is a well thought-out combination of these systems that work to meet three goals: 1) Produce healthy and delicious food, 2) Provide a living for the farmer and his family, and 3) Respect people and the environment.

Mark utilizes high tunnels to grow many crops including tomatoes, peppers and strawberries towards the aforementioned Nuneviller Family Farm goals.

Mark is particularly excited about high tunnels because of the fact that they allow him to extend the season so he can provide local crops over a longer period of time, increase crop yields by 50–100% and thus produce ample amounts of food on less land, prevent erosion and preserve topsoil, and finally decrease foliar disease and therefore the need for material treatment. And of course, the increased quality and related customer satisfaction is yet another benefit of high tunnel production.

Mark shows promises as a new organic farmer, as exemplified through his innovative management and dedication to a successful organic plan. We welcome Mark to the PCO Community and commend him on his efforts.

Outstanding New Organic Processor

For attentiveness throughout the certification process, innovative management, and dedication toward creating and maintaining a successful organic plan.

Pompeii Organics

Jessica Grill, Mifflinburg, PA

Pompeii Street Soap Company was started, as many hobbies are, in a base-

ment or garage. One soap batch led to another and after years and years of obsessive improving, the company now supports 8 employees and handcrafts over 200 products. In 2012, the owner, Jessica Grill, earned her aromatherapy certification from a school approved by the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy (NAHA). Her intent was to improve Pompeii's current product formulations but instead her training served as the catalyst to start an entire new brand, Pompeii Organics.

The Pompeii Organics brand serves clinical and certified aromatherapists who depend on oils that are distilled from organically cultivated plants, have a chemical analysis for every batch, and are fresh. Pompeii Organics stands apart from other essential oil companies because they obtain a GC/MS analysis of every single batch of oil before making it available to customers. Taking this extra step of having the oils analyzed also assures that pesticides, plastics (phthalates), or synthetics have not made their way into the oil. You can see the chemical analysis of every single batch of oil on the company website (www.pompeiiorganics.com). There are only a handful of essential oil companies

that are certified organic *and* offer batch specific analysis on their website.

With 4 of the 8 employees being Certified Aromatherapists, the essential oil knowledge readily available to customers is also rare. The combined expertise of the aromatherapists ensures each product meets exacting quality and purity standards. The Pompeii Organics brand was founded with the highest standards in the aromatherapy industry and continues to meet and exceed these standards every day.

Sustainability Award

For furthering the sustainability of farms, families, communities, and the environment.

Glen Rex

Rex Farm • Slatington, PA

Glen Rex farms 250 certified organic acres of crop, hay and pastureland in Slatington, PA. Glen has been a real pioneer of organic farming, helping to organize the Pennsylvania chapter of OCIA when organic certification in the region was just getting off the ground back in the 1990s. He jumped on board as soon as PCO certification became available and remains very community minded.

Glen's recent inspector commented that, "He is an amazing farmer who had the best managed organic row crops I have ever seen. He has very hilly ground with more than a little shale but he has those fields in great shape with rotation and cultivation. He showed me fields where he cut and baled hay and I got dizzy just thinking about it — talk about steep!"

Glen custom delivers his grain and hay to many farmers in Lancaster County and raises a sizable beef herd...in his spare time. In addition, Glen raises organic replacement heifers for Lancaster County farmers. To top it all off, Glen volunteered to participate in the Penn State Cover Crops Cocktails Research Project and will be working with researchers and PCO staff to trial various cover crops, collect valuable data, and host a field day to share insights with other farmers. Many thanks to Glen for his various efforts toward sustainability!

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(From left) Dawn Hartman, Carol Hollister, Tyler Yearick, Cassidy Fegley, Jessica Grill, and Kelley Conrad. Employees not shown: Sharon Wright and Wilfredo Mendez

Organic Research and Education

For furthering the cause of organic farming through research and education.

Edward Jaenicke

Penn State University • State College, PA



Edward Jaenicke

Edward Jaenicke, Professor of Agricultural Economics, has been at Penn State since 2001. Starting with his dissertation research, which analyzed organic cropping systems data from the Rodale Institute, Jaenicke has often investigated economic issues associated with organic agriculture and food. He has authored or co-authored more than 25 peer-reviewed research papers on economic and policy issues related to food and agriculture, as well as two reports for the USDA's Economic Research Service and two reports for the Organic Trade Association.

At Penn State, Jaenicke teaches micro-economic principles to students in the College of Agricultural Sciences, and statistics to grad students in an applied economics program. In 2017, he will teach an introductory course on the U.S. food system that traces the farm-to-fork pathways for a number of specific crops and foods. The presentation at PCO's Farmer Appreciation Day is based on three related research papers co-authored with Julia Marasteanu while she was a Ph.D. student at Penn State under Jaenicke's supervision. These papers were recently summarized in an OTA White Paper titled, "U.S. Organic Hotspots and their Benefit to Local Economies." Clearly, Jaenicke's work is an invaluable resource to the organic farming movement and we at PCO are grateful for his contributions!

Inspector Appreciation

For excellent management, thorough records, positive attitude towards the inspection process and exceptional effort in creating and maintaining a successful organic plan.

Amy and David L. Martin

Martin Family Farm, Port Royal, PA

With the support of his wife Amy, David farms a 246 acre certified organic dairy in Central Pennsylvania's Juniata County at the base of the Tuscarora Mountains. The Martins raise corn, soybeans, alfalfa and rye as livestock feed. They raise enough feed for their 60-cow dairy and sell the extra. The Martins became certified with PCO in the spring of 2012 and have maintained excellent records and a very clean operation ever since, according to inspector reports.

In 2015 the Martins introduced a new cover-cropping program including turnips and rye, which they then introduced into their grazing plan. They are committed to grazing, and only feed supplemental baleage during the grazing season. They built a nice dairy facility that has a free stall system with sawdust bedded stalls, skylights for natural light and grooved flooring for traction. The Martins have extremely healthy cows that require very little veterinary assistance indicating that they consistently reduce cow stressors and effectively manage their herd. We commend the Martins for being conscientious and well organized farmers with impeccable records and a great attitude.

Staff Appreciation

For special dedication to the organic certification process and use of innovative practices.

Fran and George Knarich

Knarich Family Farm • Mt. Vision, NY

George began farming in 2010, after working for John Deere 20 plus years and having a near fatal snowmobile accident. As George healed from the snowmobile accident he volunteered on a local conventional dairy farm. While working there George would hear the farmer often complaining that he could never make any money and George began to humbly consider why that might be the case. When

ruminating on the conventional farmer's struggles George "always felt inside as if we were supposed to be caretakers of Gods animals, and in return, they would be caretakers of us. That meant to me to keep it as He originally planned."

To George, "keeping things as originally planned" translates into stewarding the earth and the animals through organic management practices. George and his wife, Fran, began farming with a nurse cow given to them by the farm George volunteered for and a small group of heifer calves purchased from a local auction. George and Fran considered their job at first to "feed the cows as much as God provided them within the summer, and store up everything we could for them in the winter." George and Fran started their farm on a 7½ acre lot and some borrowed land, and today own and operate a 94-acre certified organic farm with some help from their daughter Jessica, son-in-law Akil, and three grandchildren Anella, Abby, and Noah. Currently the herd consists of 10 milking Jerseys and Jersey crosses, 3 springer heifers, 6 heifer calves, and a Jersey Bull. A gold star to the Knarichs for their dedication and commitment to organic agriculture!

Staff Appreciation

For special dedication to the organic certification process and use of innovative practices.

Justine and Brian Denison

Denison Farm • Schaghticoke, NY

Justine and Brian Denison, along with their daughter Maggie, raise 25 certified organic acres of mixed vegetables on their 164-acre farm of rich bottomland,



Justine and Brian Denison

wooded ridges, pasture/hayfields, marsh, and streams. The Denisons market their produce through their 430-member CSA, two farmers markets and various wholesale accounts. Justine and Brian, 1st generation farmers, started farming in 1981 with a team of horses and an acre of cabbage — and it grew!

After 17 years of farming 110 acres of conventional produce, the Denison family's health had diminished, so they made a vow to turn things around and began their path toward organic farming. Their mission is "to grow the best, cleanest, most nutritious food possible and to get it in the hands of a large amount of people." That is, "the heart of what we do," explains Justine. In addition, Justine is especially motivated to educate eaters on where their food comes from and the role/value of the farmer. Toward those ends, the Denison Farm takes part in numerous outreach programs including Farm to Preschool, a nationwide program that strives to influence the eating habits of young children and their families by providing access to healthy fresh vegetables and experiential opportunities including gardening and farm visits. The Denison Farm also participates with the Center of Disabilities Services, the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program, EBT Food Stamps, and the Women, Infant and Children Food and Nutrition Service. They encourage farm visits from the mom's clubs, boy scouts, kids camps and anyone interested in learning more about farming. The Denisons are an exemplary farming family who exudes enthusiasm and dedication to organic food and farming. When explaining their farmland preservation with the Agriculture Stewardship Association, Justine exclaimed, "We are an organic and a forever farm!"



Craig Lauer

Product Officer of The Lancaster Food Company, has a life-long love of food, along with a passion for agricultural issues, workplace fairness, and the local and organic food movement, that drives his work with The Lancaster Food Company. Working with co-founder and CEO Charlie Crystle and COO Polly Lauer to guide the company's vision and mission, Craig leads the company's efforts to develop new products, meet and exceed all food safety compliance standards, maintain organic certification, and continually improve production quality and efficiency. He also uses his background in branding and identity to help guide the company's creative look and feel.

Craig explains, "We founded and run this company with three primary goals: make extraordinary food, source from organic farmers as close to home as possible, and hire people out of poverty into good-paying supportive jobs." Before co-founding the company, Craig was a brand strategist, advertising copywriter, and college instructor in New York City. He now lives in Lancaster City with his wife Polly Lauer and their daughter Edie. Hats off to Craig and Lancaster Food Company!

Outstanding Organic Processor

For exceptional commitment to high quality organic production, promoting organic products and supporting the integrity of organic goods in the market.

Craig Lauer

The Lancaster Food Company • Lancaster, PA

Craig Lauer, Co-founder and Chief



Peter Miller

As a child, Peter whiled the summers away at his grandparents' house tending the garden, making compost and perusing Rodale's *Organic Farming & Gardening* magazine and from there his passion for agriculture grew. His multitude of agricultural endeavors include managing the Albany, Oregon, farmers market, interning at the Rodale Institute Research Farm, working with Oregon Tilth (OTCO) during its infancy and serving as a full-time organic inspector for processing plants, livestock and crop operations across the United States. In addition, Peter studied horticulture and food science at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University and started Gathering Together Farms, an organic vegetable farm that is still going strong in the town of Philomath, Oregon. In 2004, Peter was hired by CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley to work from Maine to Virginia to help recruit dairy producers to join the cooperative, and he has been working toward that initiative ever since.

Peter lives in central Pennsylvania working as an East Division Manager for CROPP/Organic Valley. He travels throughout the east working with staff and organic dairy producers. He has served on PCO's Board of Directors and Committees, has participated in and assisted with countless PCO meetings and events, and initiated PCO's transitional membership program in partnership with Organic Valley. A hearty thank you to Peter for his immeasurable contributions to PCO's farmer members and the greater organic community.

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Outstanding Volunteer Award

For contributing to PCO as a whole and supporting of our mission to ensure the integrity of organic products in the marketplace.

Peter Miller

CROPP Coop/Organic Valley • Milheim, PA

Going the Extra Acre

For sharing knowledge and expertise with fellow farmers and the organic community. Great systems are built on collaboration.

Eugene Lapp

Lapp Brothers, LLC • Kinzers, PA

Eugene Lapp is a 3rd generation farmer with more than 25 years of farming experience. His transition to organic farming began as a business opportunity and quickly became a philosophy and lifestyle. Eugene and his brother Curtis, operate Lapp Brothers, LLC with the help of their father, Aaron; Eugene's sons, Carter and Trevor; and their families. They farm 190 acres of certified organic cropland and approximately 80 transitional acres.

Eugene certainly goes the extra acre by graciously sharing his knowledge, experiences and farm with interested farmers. Eugene's wife, Marie, submitted the following nomination that sums it all up, "When I saw this request for nominations, I could think of one man who serves selflessly. For "Going the extra acre," I nominate my husband, Eugene Lapp, from Lapp Brothers, LLC. Eugene spends countless hours on the phone, giving

advice and sharing his experiences in our transition to organic production. He invites interested parties to visit and follow him through the operation. He has the "we can do it" attitude when it comes to helping fellow farmers. He has co-hosted many farm profitability events. He is a student, ever learning and a teacher, always expounding! Thank you for considering this amazing man!"

Marie's words rang true during the planning and carrying out of a recent *PCO Transition to Organic Grain Study Circle and Farm Tour* hosted by Eugene and Curtis's Farm, Lapp Brothers, LLC. We consider ourselves very lucky at PCO to certify amazing farmers, such as Eugene, who manage exceptional operations yet consistently strive to improve and while doing so open their ears and farms to the needs of others.

Outstanding New Organic Farmer

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Miranda and Jon Powers

Grazeland Jerseys • Holland Patent, NY

Miranda and Jon are 1st generation farmers managing approximately 312



Jon Powers

acres of certified organic land in upstate NY. They started with 16 conventional bred heifers in 2005 and added a milking herd in 2006. 11 years later, Grazeland Jerseys is a certified organic and 100% grassfed operation with exemplary farming practices.

Their organic inspector commented that, "I have never seen a farm couple who was more called to do what they do, who have overcome greater obstacles to do it, and who farm with such exceptional commitment to their cows and the land."

Miranda and Jon are excited about the work they are doing to improve their land from reclaiming and regenerating old pasture to spreading manure on bioactive soils and intensively rotating their cattle. In terms of herd health, by setting the stage for natural herd behavior and supporting the immune systems of their cows, they are producing amazingly clean milk with cell counts they didn't know were possible.

The positive results seen in the pasture, animals and milk have been astounding but Miranda and Jon aren't stopping here. They are looking ahead to future improvements such as utilizing soil testing, complimentary amendments and grazing techniques to recover weak pasture areas, bettering their milk house biofilter by incorporating native flowering plants, and enhancing their hedgerows to provide a better environment for pollinators and other species. Miranda and Jon are really wonderful people who exemplify the determination required not only to make it, but to excel as organic dairy farmers.



The Lapp Family

PCO Hall of Fame

For continuous, extraordinary dedication of time and energy to furthering the mission of Pennsylvania Certified Organic.

The Brownback Family

Spiral Path Farm • Loysville, PA

Mike and Terra Brownback along with their family own and operate Spiral Path Farm — a certified organic vegetable farm in Perry County, PA, since 1978. Mike and Terra are both first generation farmers. Today, two grown sons, Will and Lucas, both farm with the family on 255 certified organic acres; about 80 acres in produce, 4 acres under high tunnel vegetable production and 13,000 square feet of transplant production for on-farm use. Spiral Path Farm raises a wide variety of certified organic vegetables, herbs and annual fruits. The farm employs about 40 workers in peak of season. Organic produce is marketed via wholesale, CSA members, and farmer's markets.

The Brownback family is "...committed to farming practices, which protect and nurture the soil, while providing healthy, farm-fresh produce. We believe that our stewardship of the land promotes a living soil, which grows healthy plants from which we harvest flavorful and nutritious food."

Mike and Terra were founding members of PCO and our first meeting was held around their kitchen table. Mike is a past President of the PCO board and the entire Brownback Family have con-



The Brownback Family

tributed their time and expertise to making our organization strong and our members successful. Thanks to Mike and Terra, Spiral Path will remain as agricultural land in perpetuity, as they preserved the farm in 2007 by donating a conservation easement that is administered by The Central Pennsylvania Conservancy. Clearly, the Brownback family members are leaders in organic farming and PCO is grateful to have them as part of our community.

The Ranck Family

Charvin Organic Farm • Mifflin, PA

Elvin and Charlotte Ranck, along with their son and daughter-in-law Michael

and Krystal, and their son Andrew partner to operate a 180-cow organic dairy and crop farm on 1,300 acres in Juniata County. Elvin's 5 other sons, Eric, Kelvin, Shawn, Donovan and Stephen, also work on the farm.

After years of conventional farming Elvin had the opportunity to observe a biologically managed farm and the soil tilth thereof and so began his inspiration to pay careful attention to the life of the soil.

Elvin and family have been farming organically since 1987, are grateful for the healthier crops, healthier animals and healthier environment such practices afford, and are eager to share their knowledge with others. "While we don't have all the answers to all life's problems in organic farming, we've learned and mastered a few things along the way and would like to pass that along to other people."

From soil consulting, hosting field days, and conducting seed trials to collaborating on research projects, the Ranck families play an important part in furthering organic agriculture research and educating the organic community. In addition to their work at home, Elvin and Eric both travel to Africa throughout the year to do ministry work and agriculture education. Many thanks to the Ranck family for their great work.



The Ranck Family