

OCTOBER 2013

LOUDOUN

# Producer

For Loudoun Agribusiness

## Farming, Education Go Hand-in-Hand for New Extension Agent

In case readers have any question about the rural authenticity of Jim Hilleary, the new Virginia Cooperative Extension agent for Loudoun County, he sealed the deal with us when he asked for a few extra minutes before our interview so he could clean up from deworming his male goats. We would know, he forewarned us, if he didn't.

He cleaned up nicely, and was joined by Extension Northern Virginia District Director Cynthia Marston to discuss his background and new role with VCE.

For Jim, agriculture started long before his new role in Loudoun. It was a driving force in his life, even growing up in urbanized Arlington.

"We were probably the only family on the block receiving Progressive Farmer magazine at the house," he said with a smile. That early exposure blossomed into a rural reality when his family moved to Fauquier County in 1978, where he now owns property and a small meat goat operation.

In the years between then and now, his life has focused on both agriculture and education. Along the way has been a career in the military, graduation from Virginia Tech and teaching at the Virginia Tech College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. He has served as a farm mentor in the Virginia Farm Mentor Network, and been involved with the Fauquier Education Farm, an agricultural education organization. He plans to use his experience with both suburban and rural environments while working in Loudoun.

"Loudoun has a strong agricultural base that's in transition. There's an opportunity to blend innovation and tradition,

and there are opportunities for agriculture in both eastern and western Loudoun. One challenge is to be able to draw out agriculture from the eastern – it could be through vertical farming, aquaponics, hydroponics -- any production of food or fiber that can take place on a small footprint. In the west, we want to continue to facilitate traditional agriculture and economic opportunities for producers."

Overall, he sees his primary role as an educator. "Our role is to help producers make educated decisions. And getting

with beginning farmers is also very important," Hilleary explained. VCE District Director Marston agrees.

"Our program definitely needs to strengthen and grow," she said. "This is a chance to look at things with a fresh perspective, see what our niche is and head that direction. One of our biggest challenges is the education of our urban community on the importance of agriculture, and a focus on youth is a good way to get that accomplished. The capital investment required for land is a hindrance for new farmers, but

there are good models on the table to explore." Also critical, says Hilleary: working well with partners.

"The key to success for the continuation of agriculture in Loudoun County is going to come through collaboration with the Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Department of Economic Development, and other ag-related organizations such as Farm Bureau and Farm Credit. In bringing these people together and working collectively for the promotion of agriculture, therein we will find our success," he concluded. Hilleary may be contacted at [Jim.Hilleary@vt.edu](mailto:Jim.Hilleary@vt.edu).



*Jim Hilleary and Extension Northern Virginia District Director Cynthia Marston*



## Last Call for Holiday Producers

**D**o you sell Christmas trees, fresh holiday greens and floral products? Now is your last chance to be included in the Christmas in the Loudoun Valleys farm and retail outlet guide. The brochure provides all the details, from where to buy seasonal items and attend special holiday events to recycling your Christmas tree. For information on being included in the guide – or to be added to the list to receive a copy -- email [Coco.Lyons@loudoun.gov](mailto:Coco.Lyons@loudoun.gov) at the Department of Economic Development before November 1.

## Loudoun Board Approves Matching Funds for AFID Grants

**G**reat news for rural producers: On October 2, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the allocation of \$100,000 for rural economic development incentives. The funding will be used as matching grants to the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund approved last year, and will be applicable to the production of value-added goods where 30 percent or more of the agricultural products used in production comes from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"For the Board to invest \$100,000 is huge," said Economic Development Acting Director Buddy Rizer. "This is a significant investment into the rural economy to increase agricultural production."

Factors used by the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry in determining AFID grant awards include: anticipated levels of job creation, capital investment, projected impact on producers and competing businesses, amount of Virginia-grown products used and projected return on investment.

As part of the approval by the Board, it was also recommended that the Board of Supervisors consider funds for additional rural economic development incentives as part of the regular year-end fund balance decision making process. For more information, contact Kellie Boles at the Department of Economic Development at 703-777-0426.

**"F**or the Board to invest \$100,000 is huge. This is a significant investment into the rural economy to increase agricultural production."

*Buddy Rizer, Economic Development Acting Director*

### Subscribe Today!

Loudoun Producer will be published three times per year: the first issue will be printed, and two issues will be sent to you by email. Please make sure we have your email address. Send a note that says "Loudoun Producer" to: [LoudounBiz@Loudoun.Gov](mailto:LoudounBiz@Loudoun.Gov).



# Ag Externship Bringing Rural Industry Skills Direct to the Classroom



Teachers in Industry Co-Director Janet Schiavone (fourth from left) was joined by Loudoun teachers Saemin Oh, Cheryl Golden, Jean Scarborough, Cindy Tan and Alexandra Watson.

Loudoun County science, math and English teachers began the new school year with a fresh focus on their curriculum, thanks to the George Washington University Teachers in Industry program. This past July, a group of five middle and high school teachers participated in an ag-focused externship in the annual teacher enrichment program. Participating rural businesses were Fabboli Cellars near Leesburg, Endless Summer Harvest in Purcellville and Great Country Farms in Bluemont.

“Through GWTIP we are trying to make core content area teachers aware of the work environment that they’re preparing their students to enter, and to help them see what they can incorporate into their classrooms,” explained Paula Harper, executive director for program development and management at the George Washington Science and Technology Campus. “The entire cohort spends time with GW VTSC faculty and staff, and then small groups experience two, four-day externships with industry partners. The Loudoun Farm group was organized by Kellie Boles of the Department of Economic Development.”

During the externships, Doug Fabboli, owner and winemaker at Fabboli Cellars, demonstrated the process of titration used in his winery operations. At Great Country Farms, “Farmer of Fun” Kate Zurschmeide spoke to the group about agricultural tourism and the business management of her family’s 200-acre working farm. And at Endless Summer Harvest, owner Mary Ellen Taylor focused on the citizen/scientist aspect of her hydroponic salad greens operation, which included a group project with a local Boy Scout to develop an improved teaching kit for schools.

“The teachers that came to ESH jumped right into our daily tasks with exuberance,” said Taylor. “Within our farm mission, we want to inspire the next generation of farmer scientists and there is no better way than to teach a teacher to plant that seed.”

“I was so excited to be able to mentor a group from Teachers in Industry this summer,” said three-year participant Jean Scarborough, a science teacher at River Bend Middle School. “At the three farms where we studied, we focused on the importance of having our students think critically, collaboratively and adapt to a changing economy. We discussed how firsthand farming knowledge would benefit the types of experiences teachers feel comfortable working into their curriculum, and we combined our teaching experience with the farms’ agricultural expertise to discuss ways of increasing hands-on agriculture experiences in the classroom. The best way to learn is through these hands-on experiences.”

Rural businesses looking to participate in the Teachers in Industry program next year may contact Kellie Boles at [Kellie.Boles@loudoun.gov](mailto:Kellie.Boles@loudoun.gov) or Paula Harper at [pharper@gwu.edu](mailto:pharper@gwu.edu).

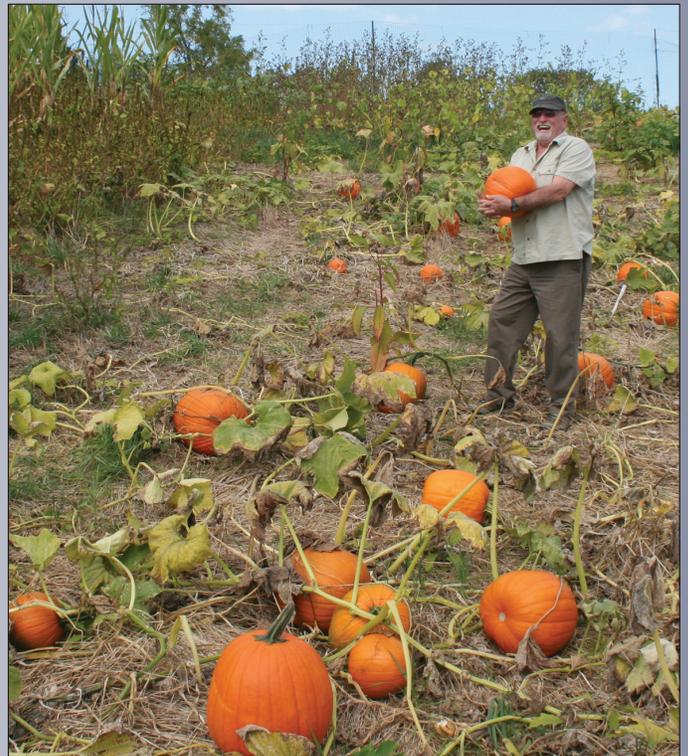
“The teachers that came to ESH jumped right into our daily tasks with exuberance. Within our farm mission, we want to inspire the next generation of farmer scientists and there is no better way than to teach a teacher to plant that seed.”

Mary Ellen Taylor, Owner,  
Endless Summer Harvest

## Where's Warren:

Loudoun berry producer Warren Howell is known to many in the Loudoun agricultural community, and with each edition of Loudoun Producer we test your knowledge by sending him to an undisclosed ag-related business. **Tell us where he is by sending an email to LoudounBiz@loudoun.gov by November 15 and be entered to win a selection of Loudoun farm products.**

**Here's a hint:** this month, Warren visited a farm whose owners have been Loudoun pioneers in the large-scale use of raised-bed plasticulture, making their strawberry crops cleaner, weed-free and very easy to pick. Their popular pumpkin fields are grown using conservation no-till practices, making for clean, well-rounded pumpkins.



*Where is Warren? Tell us and be entered to win a prize.*