

Leadership Ohio Class of 2009, October 2009

Marion – Agriculture and Farm Industry

The class stayed in Bucyrus, but much of the time was spent in nearby Marion, all part of Central Ohio's farm country. Friday morning the group met John Buck, a family farmer and alumni of Leadership Ohio. The class also met Dave Blackford and Doug Hafer, both farmers, who were the drivers for the day. John led the group first to his family farm for a tour of the farm and Fremont Ag and Auto Repair. His grandfather and father farmed the land with the main crops for this year being soy beans. The group met Dave Shuey, Business Development Manager with the United Federal Credit Union.

Next the group headed to Devries Dairy Farm which is what is known as a Dutch Dairy farm due to the process developed by the Dutch owners which includes milking cows via a carousel system. The thousands of cows are milked three times a day. All the cows are tagged and carefully monitored.

The next stop was Ohio Fresh Eggs layer production farm. With over 2.3 million chickens, this large facility produces many of the eggs we all buy in grocery stores across the state. Ohio is the number two egg producer in the nation.

Lunch was next at the Ag Credit Office which sponsored the lunch. The group heard from Richard Schweinfurth and Chuck Yoder from Ag Credit as well as Van Orians from Farm Service Agency, Joel Leslie from Soil and Water Conversation District, Thomas Milligan, agent with Nationwide Insurance and Tom Bostick from Central Ohio Farmers Co-op.

After lunch the group visited Wyandot Snack Foods. Wyandot was founded in 1936 as a raw popcorn supplier to ball parks and movie houses. It is now one of the leading US snack-food contract manufacturers, with an annual production capacity of 100 million pounds. Much of their products are private label for worldwide companies such as McDonalds, Wendy's, Fridays, Gerber and more.

The last stop for the day was Poet Ethanol Plant tour. The Marion plant is one of 26 plants in seven states producing over one billion gallons of ethanol annually. This plant began operations October 24, 2008. The state-of-the art ethanol production facility will consume 22 million bushels of locally-grown corn to produce 68 million gallons of ethanol annually.

The day was not over as the group headed back to the inn to clean up, eat a pheasant dinner sponsored by Pheasants Forever and hear from Bill McCaulley of Pheasants Forever. The group moved from the dining room to the meeting room and heard a presentation from Pat Hord of Hord Livestock which is a privately owned large pork facility and beef cattle operation.

Saturday morning started with presentation by Cy Prettyman from the Marion County Farm Bureau and discussion on Issue 2 which is a constitutional amendment that will create the Ohio Livestock Care and Standards Board. The next presenter was Brad Moffet from the Ohio Department of Education who spoke on the future of Agricultural Communications.

Submitted by Michelle Van Wormer