



Learn Agri-Food Network

December/January
2007/2008

Supporting agri-preneurs in sharing information with peers to build businesses of ag or rural based experiences, products and services.

Network News

The December Learn Agri-Food Network meeting was a regional affair. Carol Mayer traveled from Beaverlodge to Rycroft for the afternoon and said, "It was well worth the trip to share ideas with one another."

Carol says she needs to separate her businesses at both her website and her market table. She has two different customer groups. One is winter buyers – they're looking for the dog sweaters as practical and fun gifts for the owners or the dogs themselves. Her other customer group is mostly moms and grandparents ready to buy her 'books' on CD. The great art work and joyful stories are an attraction, although the animal character T-shirts are the eye candy which brings the younger crowd to her table.

From the meeting Carol received a push to investigate professional recording studios in the Peace and their prices. Other ideas she received included contacts to libraries and college courses related to audio productions.

Market Differences

Reviewing and judging the value of seasonal markets was the major theme of this meeting. How to make good decisions on where to spend time and money including travel and table rent is a big issue. Here is a summary of ideas when planning for next year:

1. Review where you went this year. Record how much of what kinds of things sold at each market and the prices.
2. Review why each market works or not. Heather Porrill says two-day markets are great for her as people buy one bag of caramels the first day. They eat some that evening and return on day two to purchase many more as gifts.
3. Consider your booth needs. Ask about noise, traffic flow, visibility and accessibility. Plan your layout to encourage conversation with customers and show off your wares.
4. Plan how to promote your business before customers arrive at your table. Kathy Meyer

**It's free and everyone is welcome
Learn Agri-Food Network meeting:**

There will be **NO** Network meeting in January due to workshops. The next Learn Agri-Food Network meeting will be on Tuesday, February 12. Look for location details in the Jan/Feb Newsletter.

says, "I'm local, I have a studio (or farm or plant or...) and this is my passion." The group created (in our heads) a series of photos for Barb Barrs: her at her pottery wheel, the map to her farm store/studio and Barb smiling with her product.

5. Make sure customers can find you for purchases later. Kathy has her name & phone number on each Coverall for Kids labels. Both Barb and Soames Smith have a map to their farm on their business cards.
6. Start planning now for next year. Production is one issue; inventive packaging and marketing ideas are others.



*William &
Heather Porrill*

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Celebrating Success

"Belonging to the Learn Agri-Food Network and attending meetings have more benefits than simply sharing ideas," says Kathy Meyer. She was interviewed for the Call of the Land radio show at least two years ago and received two calls from southern Alberta this November as a result.

Kathy Meyer
and
Susan Meyer
at the Learn
Agri-Food
Meeting.



Others recalled visitors to their market tables saying, "I saw you in the paper." Those pictures in the Proudly Peace Full page of the Peace Country Sun are effective in helping to introduce you to the public.

Soames Smith, Uddersmith Dairy thought there was enough variety of products in the room that a store dedicated to those products would be an easy sell. Conversation around the idea was joyful, supportive and you never know... a spark might ignite something. Both Barb and Soames have joined the project to solve distribution challenges in the Peace.

"My open house was a great success. There were spurts of crowds and times for breathing between them over the 10 hours. Friends stayed after and played on my pottery wheel." says Barb Barrs.

Celebrating Mistakes

Serendipity - Pure luck in discovering things for which you were not looking.

Sharing stories related to making a mistake that 'worked' was great fun. The power of friends became evident as we cry about our mistakes and the friend (or customer if we are gutsy enough to try selling something) finds the bright light for us. The conversation started with a 'differently fired' batch of Barb's pottery that Kathy judged to be truly beautiful. Heather discussed messed up recipes that turned into candied popcorn or their now famous Ballerina Pucks. Ballerina Pucks seems so much more saleable than caramels gone bad!

Homework from the November meeting: What is the difference between caramel and butterscotch? Caramels are soft and chewy. (Heather's contain cream and butter along with the sugar.) Butterscotch are hard candies with sugar and butter as the main ingredients.



Star Bright products are melt-in-your-mouth addictive. For special treats Heather enhances her line with different flavour combinations: vanilla, chocolate and coffee.

Heather brought a seasonal special called the Double Decker. Imagine two layers with different flavours swirling in your mouth as they melt.



Energy, Environment, Economy & YOU—"Taking the Binders Off"
Community Futures Grande Prairie & Region Presents:
Next Steps Symposium 2008

Schedule:

January 16, 2008 - Registration

January 17, 2008

9:00-11:00 am Keynote: Brad Stelfox

11:00 am-12:30 pm Breakout Sessions:

Alternatives to Electricity, The Future of Farming, Coal Bed Methane, Nuclear Energy, the Future of Forestry, The Future of Oil & Gas.

1:30-3:30 pm Keynote: Richard Worzel

3:30-5:00 pm Moderated Plenary Session

Call today to register 780-830-7411.



In Touch

An update from the Camrose Country Roads Network.

Business to Business was the name of the game at the November Country Roads meeting along with a report from Pete and Jan Wasylyshyn from their recent self-directed study tour to British Columbia. An Agri-Preneur Scholarship funded by Alberta Agriculture and Food and the Renewal Chapter of the Agricultural Policy Framework helped make their trip possible.

Pete and Jan shared pictures, brochures, business cards and memories from their tour of orchards and wineries in the beautiful Creston and Okanagan Valleys. They assessed each site for signage, parking, customer service and marketing ideas. Even their three year old grandson, Cole, shared ideas he thought were "cool" from a kid's point of view!

If you have an idea for a self-directed study tour which you can do before the end of March, apply for a scholarship today. The application deadline is February 1, 2008.

Esther Walker from Glen View Greenhouses of Camrose went to the Sherwood Park farmers' market this season. Fragrant roses were a good seller as were organic eggs and lamb. More retail customers are coming to her on-farm greenhouse after seeing her at the market.

Gwen Simpson from Inspired Market Gardens had great success with her edible flowers at the City Centre market in Edmonton.

New members at this meeting were Marvin Nakonechny from Wetaskiwin who is processing a pre-cooked hulless barley product and Jean Schultz who is thinking of farm direct marketing their bison and adding a B & B to their farm north of Camrose.



Peace Region Distribution Study

Eleven businesses are involved in the Peace region distribution study to identify and test viable solutions to moving product to buyers.

The **Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association** as the project host received Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food (ACAAF) program funding to hire logistics consultant Brian Dumsday. Participants in the study are not required to be members of the Association and not all Association members are involving themselves in this study. Everyone will gain from the collaborative transportation solution and shared ideas.

As people left the first meeting, they were already finding ways to approach buyers for others and were starting to share possibilities for co-marketing. Watch the newsletter for more information or call someone on the back cover.



Soames Smith, Dan Prudholme, Margurite Thiessen and Brian Dumsday



*Jan and Pete Wasylyshyn
and Marian Williams*



Learn Agri-Food Network
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The Learn Agri-Food Network Team helps agri-preneurs build profitable businesses to grow their industry. We look at business issues and apply them to the larger industry by supplying knowledge and information, reducing business development barriers and identifying resources.

We help reduce the tuition in the school of hard knocks.

Learn Agri-Food Events to Attend

NO January meeting, as there are these events to attend.

Promotions Made Easy January 29	This half-day workshop will show you how to make the most of your newsletters, brochures and other promotional materials.
Learn Agri-Food Meeting Tuesday, February 12	The next Learn Agri-Food Network meeting will be on Tuesday, February 12. Look for location details in the January/February Newsletter.
Great People = Growing Profit\$ February 26	Denis Cauvier will lead this half-day session on strategies for finding and retaining good employees. You'll leave with a toolkit of templates you can use in your business to solve your workforce challenges.
Innovative Marketing on a Limited Budget March 18	Join Lori Colborne for this full day workshop on marketing strategies that work for small rural businesses. You'll leave wired, inspired and energized!



RENEWAL.

Canada

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)
A FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL INITIATIVE

Alberta

We're on the web:

www.peacecountrycanada.com

Look for Culture of Innovation and then Learn Agri-Food

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