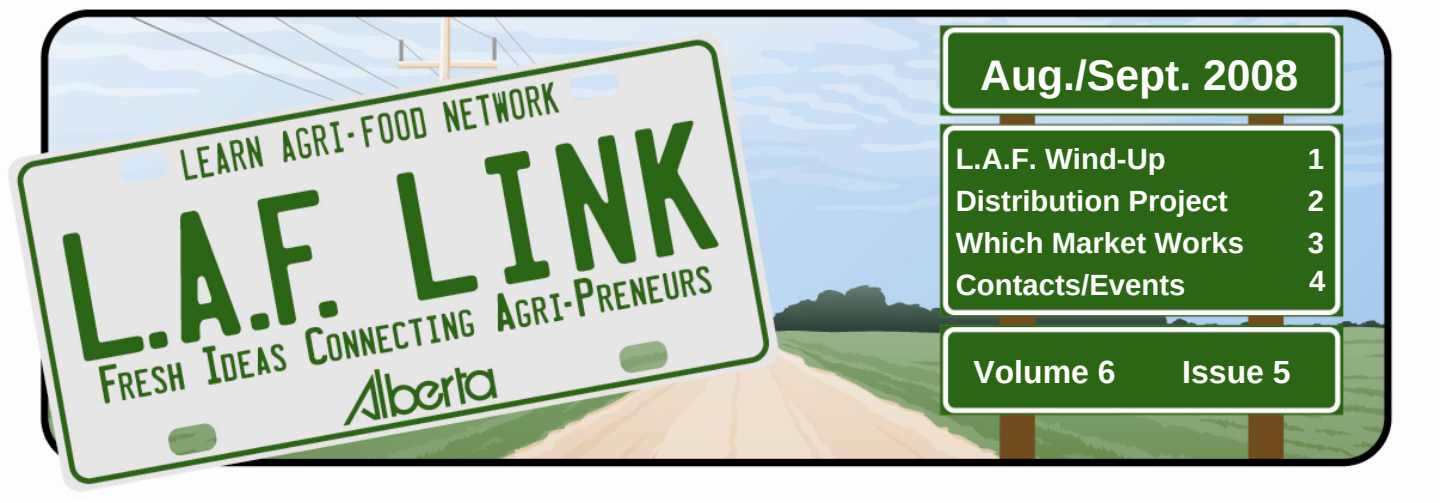

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L.A.F. Wind-Up Meeting

Learn Agri-Food Meeting September 16 at Burnt River Clay (Barb Barrs). See page 4 for more information.

A Look Back to Create an Exciting Future

Eight network members gathered at the Chinook Valley Golf Course in June to enjoy good food, friends and businesses stories from the past winter.

Serious discussion about challenges, opportunities and successes were punctuated with bouts of laughter and family stories over the course of the three hours.

At every meeting the challenges spark ideas for consideration or rejection.

Input Costs Up...Prices Where?

Kathy Meyer (Coveralls for Kids) and Tara Sallis (Birch Hills Bath Company) agreed that rising input costs coupled with the difficulty of processors and farmers to raise prices is causing a serious squeeze. No one disagreed. Finding ways to use less, and to decrease costs must be coupled with higher sticker prices.

Gail Briggs, Briggswood Country Preserves is considering turning off the heat in the warehouse to reduce operating costs this winter. Inventory will need to be both displayed and stored in the retail area of the processing plant.

In addition, Gail increased her jam prices by $.50 to offset rising gasoline costs. “Prices may have to go up again if costs keep escalating,” she said.

Putting a positive spin on the rising cost’s story so customers will hear it is a challenge. “My soap lavender comes from Bolivia. It’s exotic but expensive,” says Tara Sallis.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting—Barb Barrs, Gail Briggs, Tara Sallis, Kathy Meyer, Cindy Cuthbert

Challenges and Successes

Barb Barrs training for the marathon

As part of her assertiveness training and to celebrate a milestone birthday Barb Barrs will run a marathon in San Francisco this October to raise money for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada. Her fundraising goal is $6000. “Raising this amount of money will be hard for me, because I’m not assertive. It will be a challenge to ask for support but I will succeed. When I reach my fundraising goal I will cut off my hair and donate it to be made into wigs for cancer patients. I’m also donating 10% of my summer pottery sales to the charity.” You can help support Barb by pledging on line at www.teamtraining.ca/donate/BarbBarrs.

Congratulations, Heather! Buttery Bites, those melt-in-your-mouth caramel treats produced by Heather Porrill of Star Bright Farm in Bay Tree, will be listed in the August Images of Canada catalog. Look for 400 g of delicious caramels in the shiny tin with the *Made In the Peace* logo on it. Or, order on line at www.starbrightfarm.com.

Heather Porrill with her Buttery Bites in the Images of Canada packaging

The Distribution Project

The Distribution Project is looking for more members

The group has grown to eighteen members involved in two projects:

The Consolidated Shipping Project - moving product to markets in Calgary and Edmonton, and

The Consolidated Purchasing Project - sourcing and sharing freight costs to bring supplies into the region.

Consultant Brian Dumsday has been collecting and sharing freight prices.

The group uses conference calling to keep up to date with one another and reduce travel.

Call Susan Meyer for more information.

A reminder to project members: Bring or send samples of the supplies you buy to the Grande Prairie office so the project coordinator can see them. Samples of packaging have arrived from Briggswood Country Preserves and Peace Country Milling.

Which Market Works For Me?

Trade Shows

"The 3 day Kiwanis Trade Show in Dawson Creek in April was the first trade show I've attended where I didn't come away feeling exhausted," says Heather Porrill. "It's a great show. Sales were hot. We talked up Learn Agri-Food, Toastmasters, Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association and Branding the Peace Country Association throughout the three days."

"Why do customers turn jelly upside down? Are they looking for the tequila worm in the bottom?" asks Gail Briggs. Jelly makers first rule of etiquette: Do NOT flip the jelly jar. Every time jelly is inverted the jell breaks down. Flip the jams, pickles or syrups but DO NOT flip the jelly jars!

Gail Briggs showing a bubble in the jelly.

"My best investment this year was two high chairs with arm rests and foot supports," says Gail Briggs. I take them to all the shows and I'm not nearly as tired at the end of the long days. They're absolutely great."

"I don't like trade shows," says Barb Barrs of Burnt River Clay. "Customers don't put the casserole lids back on so they fit correctly. They're wonky and loose. My breakage increases. Don't they care that its hand made?"

The Hines Creek trade show is always good for Kathy Meyer. "I don't sell anything until the last 4 hours and then I sell out. It's a 1 day show with a $40 entry fee. It's a good return on my investment."

Farmers' Market

"I started at the Dawson Creek Farmers' Market in early May and will go right through to Thanksgiving," says Gail Briggs of Briggswood Country Preserves in Rycroft. "By mid June there weren't as many tourists as in previous years but the market gets strong local support."

"I see a difference in taste preferences at every market," says Gail. "Interestingly, tourists go for the jams while local purchases are split 50/50 between pickles and preserves. Pickled carrots are the hot seller at the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market while Dawson customers buy a variety of pickles."

On Site Retail

Signage is a big issue for one person businesses. "When you're by yourself and multitasking it's hard to pick a day to be open every week," says Heather Porrill. "Is Friday the right day? Tea with the family is a Saturday or perhaps a Sunday afternoon event."

"I still don't have a sign on the road yet," says Barb Barrs. "A sign is permanent. If I say I'm open I'm tied to the studio. I'm not ready for that. How do others start out?"

"Long days don't suit me anymore and I still can't be in two places at once," says Gail Briggs. "A closed sign on the shop doesn't mean I'm not working. I could be at a trade show, shopping for supplies or at a meeting. Walk-in traffic doesn't make me a living but people do like the access. You work alone and can't hire someone to sit there. What's the answer?"

Brainstorming, an activity this group does well, produced some ideas:

- open the same day each week to meet the local demands to purchase products
- be open Wednesday through Saturday
- open by appointment only, or
- have someone else do the retail and wholesale markets

What ideas do you have to resolve the hours of operation and signage questions? If you have a strategy that works tell sherry.smith@gov.ab.ca so we can share it with the network members. Phone 310-0000 and then 780-538-6208

Eckert AgriMarketing offers a North American single source agritourism website, www.ruralbounty.com The site is available for members, to promote the rich bounty of our farms, ranches, wineries and farmers' markets.

Think good thoughts about the exciting adventure Sue & Larry King are going to have. They are off to Italy for Terra Madre, the slow food convention. We can't wait to hear the stories.

For toll free calling of all government staff dial 310-0000 first.

Learn Agri-Food Network Team includes Gail Briggs and Jerry Kitt, as well as:

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Send submissions to Sherry.

For Peace Region agricultural entrepreneurs.

The Learn Agri-Food Network Team helps agri-preneurs build profitable businesses to grow their industries. Members 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.

We're on the web:

www.peacecountrycanada.com

Look for Culture of Innovation and then Learn Agri-Food

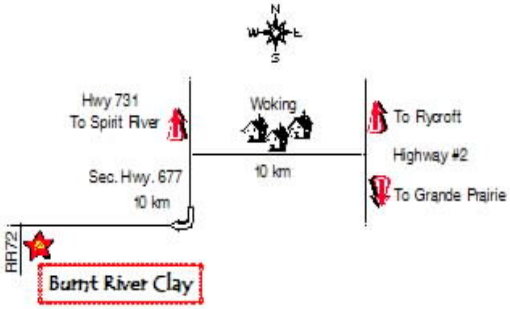
Learn Agri-Food Events

Fridge Keeper Events Page

Learn Agri-Food Meeting September 16, 2008	Burnt River Clay—1:30-3:30 p.m. Please call Barb Barrs: 780-774-2184

Directions:

From Grande Prairie: Follow highway #2 north to Woking turn off, sec. hwy 677 (approx. 50 km). Turn west and go 10 km to T-intersection. Turn left (south) on sec. hwy 677 and follow for another 10 km. Barb is on the south side of the road. Two houses with beige siding. Driveway is just before corner of RR72.



From Spirit River: Follow highway 731 south (runs on the west side of Spirit River) for approx. 30 km (it becomes sec. hwy 677 at the intersection to go to Woking) Barb is on the south side of the road. Two houses with beige siding. Driveway is just before corner of RR72.

Learn Agri-Food Meeting Tuesday, December 9	Grande Prairie: Provincial Building—1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Rycroft: Alexander's Restaurant—1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Learn Agri-Food Meeting Tuesday, February 10, 2009	Grande Prairie: Provincial Building—1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Rycroft: Alexander's Restaurant—1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Learn Agri-Food Meeting Tuesday, April 14, 2009	Host site-TBA—1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. If you want to host this meeting please contact Sherry Smith.

See the enclosed upcoming events sheet for lots of educational and promotional events.

Coming Soon to Your Telephone

After September 8, 2008 people must use 7-digits for local calls. All 3-digit numbers such as the emergency service 911 will remain the same.

A new area code—587—will be assigned to new numbers throughout the province. The geographical areas for the current codes will not change.

Keep your business cards accessible. Ensure the area code is on all your business cards, letterhead, in your e-mail signature and other promotional materials. Spend time to save time-program speed dials (including faxes) with the area code.

Hand-washing Signs

The Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions has developed signage that you can place on your farm to inform and educate your consumers regarding hand-washing techniques especially around animal display areas.

Go to www.canadian-fairs.ca, find 'CPP Free Signage Program' heading and click on '>>more'.

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