

Northwest Michigan Young Farmer Leadership Program

Initial Brainstorming Meeting

March 13, 2009

The Cherry Stop, Traverse City, Michigan

Identified Need: Social, economic, political, and environmental changes have had an impact on agriculture and rural communities in northwest Michigan, and it is important that agricultural interests are effectively represented and articulated in the years to come. The *Northwest Michigan Young Farmer Leadership Program* is designed to identify and train young farmers to assume leadership positions, such that agriculture remains an economically viable, socially responsible, and environmentally sound industry in the region.

Program Intent: The Program is intended to help participants in the following ways: 1) develop and hone leadership, decision-making, facilitation, communication, team-work, and problem-solving skills, 2) decipher challenges and opportunities in regards to agricultural commodities, marketing strategies, profitability, and local, state, national, and international economies, 3) develop a better understanding of public policy, estate planning, and inter-generational farm transfer, and 4) navigate the changing social, economic, and political environment as it relates to agriculture and rural communities.

Overall Program Goal: The end result of the multi-year Program will be a tight-knit, regional network of agricultural leaders that will help make informed, long-term decisions that will positively shape Northwest Michigan's rural communities and agricultural industries now and in the future.

Program Benefits:

- Enhance leadership and collaborative leadership skills
- Gain business skills
- Improve public speaking and communication
- Network with industry contacts and legislators
- Learn public policy
- Improve management skills
- Increase economic skills
- Thinking into the future: Vision for change
- Social awareness

Estimated Costs: \$2400, which includes all transportation, food, lodging, and speaker costs, registration for EXPO and portion of IFTA conference

- Potential scholarships
- Grants: USDA CSREES Leadership Building Grant/MSU funding
- Sponsorships
- Leelanau Conservancy FarmAbility Program cost-share

Proposed Timeline of Events:

November 2009: Kick-off Meeting, Kettunen Center, Tustin, MI
Friday noon until Saturday 3pm

Proposed topics:

- Ice-breaker
- Meyers-Briggs Leadership Self Evaluation
- Need for leadership skills in communities
- Changing trends in agriculture
- National Agricultural Policy
- Michigan Wine Tasting Event

December 2009: Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable EXPO
Tuesday am until Wednesday pm

Proposed topics:

- Attend apple, cherry, farm marketing, and winegrape sessions
- Tuesday post-lunch session: "Sitting on a Board"
- Tuesday evening mixer with boards: MI Cherry Committee, MI Wine and Grape Council, MI Hort. Society, MI Apple Committee
- Wednesday lunch session: "Leadership in a New Century"

January 2010: Economics Session, NWMHRS
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- Economics
- Banking, loans, credit
- Grants
- FSA programs, GreenStone Credit

February 2010: Speaking to a Crowd, NWMHRS
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- Public Speaking
- Media relations
- Crisis Management

March 2010: Intl. Fruit Tree Association (IFTA) Tour, Grand Rapids, MI
February 28-March 3
Post-Tour, Traverse City: March 4, 5

IFTA Mission: IFTA was established in 1958 to promote an understanding of the nature and use of dwarf fruit trees through research, education and dissemination of information. Its mission is to be the leading international organization advancing intensive orchard systems.

Caveat: Despite this conference's focus on fruit trees, this conference provided a tremendous amount of general horticultural information as well as marketing and business strategies. Also, the post-tour of the conference will be held in Traverse City where we can also incorporate other farming practices into this post-tour.

April 2010: Owning a Business, NWMHRS
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- Business decision-making
- Writing a business plan
- Marketing
- Management skills
- Feasibility studies

September 2010: Alternative Marketing Strategies, Black Star Farms, Suttons Bay, MI
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- Tour of Black Star Facilities
- Value-added products
- Agricultural tourism
- Alternative marketing

November 2010: Government trip to Lansing
Weekday overnight

Proposed topics:

- Meet with local legislators
- Meet with MDA director and staff
- Understanding agriculture policy
- Understanding relationships between agriculture, agricultural associations, and legislation
- Meet with Farm Bureau
- Meet with DEQ

December 2010: Effective Communication, NWMHRS
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- Effective negotiation
- Facilitation
- Conflict resolution and mediation
- Problem-solving skills
- Multiculturalism/social awareness

January 2011: Labor Issues, NWMHRS
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- Labor—where and how to get it?
- Rules and regulations regarding labor
- Housing
- Labor resources

February 2011: Agriculture and the Environment, NWMHRS
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- EQIP and other environmental cost-share programs
- MEAP
- Groundwater stewardship
- Dept. of Environmental Quality

March 2011: Public Policy, NWMHRS
6-9pm

Proposed topics:

- Working with local governments
- Zoning
- Federal government issues
- Helping shape future ag-related policies
- Advocating, lobbying

April 2011: Last Hurrah Trip to Fruit Growing Region in World