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Workshops Offered for Direct Farm Marketers

On-farm retail markets, farmers markets and roadside stands are popping up across Tennessee. Farmers who market products direct to consumers through these and other direct marketing channels, however, face many challenges in getting their product from the farm into the hands of the consumer.

A series of educational workshops will be offered over the next few years to help farmers who direct market products to consumers gain knowledge and skills to increase their potential for success. These workshops, called Direct Farm Marketing for Success Workshops, are offered as part of the Tennessee Farm Fresh program efforts to increase sales of fresh and local farm products.

The first installment of workshops will be held in December. Sessions will

The fourth Tennessee Agritourism: Cultivating Farm Revenue conference has been set for January 26 and 27, 2009 at the Chattanooga Marriott and Convention Center.

The conference will once again feature educational sessions, a trade show, networking opportunities and the annual meeting of the Tennessee Agritourism Association.

include topics such as methods to increase sales by developing effective product displays, how to develop repeat customers by providing excellent customer service and what techniques experienced direct marketers have used to grow their businesses.

Workshops will be held in four locations :

December 10 in Spring Hill,
December 12 in Jackson,
December 16 in White Pine/Morristown and
December 17 in Crossville.

The cost of the workshop is \$15 per person if registered prior to December 3 or \$20 per person for late registration. Workshops will be held from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm. Lunch will be provided.

Additional information and the registration form is available on-line at the Center for Profitable Agriculture's Web

site at <http://cpa.utk.edu> or by calling (931) 486-2777.

Tennessee Farm Fresh is a joint effort of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to promote the sale of Tennessee farm products directly from the farm to the consumer. The workshops are being coordinated by the Center for Profitable Agriculture. Learn more about the program or where to find fresh and local products at www.tnfarmfresh.com.



Agritourism Conference Scheduled for January

New this year!

Watch for more information on pre-conference tours of Chattanooga area agritourism enterprises to be held January 25. Also watch for information on how to enter contests to find the best Web site, brochure and t-shirt design.

The registration fee for the conference is \$100 if registered by January 15. Late registration is \$150.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Chattanooga Marriott for conference attendees at a special rate of \$89 per night plus tax, while they last or until January 4. Parking at the conference center will be free for hotel guests.

Find additional information on the conference as it develops on-line at <http://cpa.utk.edu>.

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Spotlight on Agritourism: Keller's Corny Country



Tonya and Bryan Keller
Dickson County
www.kellerscornycountry.com

Bryan and Tonya Keller are in their first official year of operating an agritourism enterprise featuring school tours on Fridays and public access on Saturdays in October through November 1. Activities at the farm include a corn maze, pumpkin patch, hayride, barrel train ride, retail shop, tractor-tire playground, Monster Tube Slide and sand box with diggers. They also have a party pavilion for special events with a bonfire and barbeque buffet for up to 300 people.

Called "Keller's Corny Country," the Keller's have developed the operation with a "corny" theme. They invite visitors to "Come Get Corny in the Country."

"We have a "Corny Store" and "Corncessions" and a hand washing station "For Your Convenience," says Tonya. "Our barrel train is the "Niblett Express," and we have a "Corn Crib" where visitors can roll around in the corn. We feel that the pumpkin gets way too much of the credit so we are trying to make sure that the corn doesn't feel left out."

The Keller's road to agritourism is an interesting one. Bryan and Tonya have operated a cattle farm for eleven years, and for the past five years, the Keller's have hosted a "Fall Harvest Festival" on the farm. At first, the festival was for members of their Sunday school class, but the event and grew from there to an average of around 300 people each year. Little did they know this would help

prepare them to enter a whole new industry.

The Keller's credit their friends, Charlie and Candi Pewitt, who attended an agritourism event in another county who and called them to say, "We think y'all can do this!" Within a matter of weeks, the Keller's saw an article in the Farm Bureau News about the Agritourism Conference in Paris Landing and called right away to make reservations.

Tonya says, "We got so excited after attending that conference we went home and made a list of priorities of everything that we wanted to have our first year open. Then we immediately sold ALL of our cows and went to work. We built the pavilion, ordered a building for the retail shop and put an ad in the local shopper asking folks for free playground equipment. You would not believe ALL of the stuff that we have in our playground that was FREE! We got free out-buildings that we are using to store supplies in, free picnic tables, old church pews for benches. We got our tractor tires free from our local farmers' Co-Op."

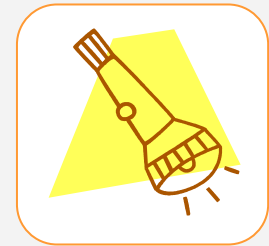
The Dickson Farmers' Co-Op has been extremely supportive of their endeavor, providing corn seed and other products to ensure a great corn and pumpkin crop. The Keller's were also able to take advantage of

the cost-share opportunity through the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program to help them get their operation off the ground.

"What I love about the Tennessee Agritourism Association and the Center for Profitable Agriculture is how all of these groups are networking together to assist the farmer in creating new and innovative ways to produce revenue with the resources that we have available to us. We have been so impressed with the nice people that we have met, and their willingness to help one another. That is something we hope to continue passing down to the new people that we have recently met who are just now thinking about getting into agritourism and who we can help get started," says Tonya.

To market their enterprise, the Keller's participated in a local parade with their barrel train and a tractor-pulled wagon, which won the prize for "Best Float Overall." They also gave rides on the barrel train to children during the four day event surrounding the parade. In addition, the Keller's have run advertisements in the local newspaper and put up banners around town. They also developed a Web site and distributed press releases.

(Continue with "Keller's" on page 3).



"Our first year open to the public is a little scary, but we are excited and feel this is the direction we are supposed to go right now. After this year, we'll see where the future takes us."

Tonya and Bryan Keller



Resource Review: Value-Added Success Stories

As part of the celebration of the Center for Profitable Agriculture's 10 year anniversary, the Center has developed 17 "value-added success stories."

These stories comprise a special series of value-added agricultural enterprise successes in Tennessee. The entrepreneurs featured have worked with specialists at the Center for Profitable Agriculture in different ways

to achieve various levels of start-up, sustainable and long-term enterprise success.

Of the 17 enterprises featured in the stories, 13 have agritourism elements. Those enterprises include:

- Berry Ridge Farms
- Bonnie Blue Farm
- Donnell Century Farm
- Forgie's Fruit Farm
- Granddaddy's Farm

- Grinder's Switch Winery
- Hatcher's Family Dairy
- Honeysuckle Hill Farm
- Jones Orchard
- Oakes Farm
- Ritter Farm
- Sweetwater Valley Farm
- Valley Home Farm

Find links to all of the value-added success stories on-line at

http://cpa.utk.edu/success_stories/index.htm

First TN Horticultural Expo Slated for January

Make plans now to attend the inaugural joint meeting between the Tennessee Fruit and Vegetable Association, the Tennessee Viticulture and Oenological Society, the American Wine Society, the Tennessee Farm Wine Association, the Tennessee Flower Growers Association and the Tennessee Farmers' Market Association. The meeting will be held at the Nashville Airport Marriott on January 29-31, 2009. The finishing touches are being put on the program.

Registration prior to January 5 starts at \$35 – some sessions and events at the conference require additional fees. Registration after January 5 starts at \$50.

Additional information and registration materials are available on the Tennessee Farm Wine Growers Association Web site at www.tennesseewines.com

Keller's

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"With high fuel costs and a slow economy, we wanted to provide something within our own community that people can enjoy together as a family. We support Dickson's Chamber of Commerce theme, "Buy local, Play local, Be local" and we hope local folks will support us," the Keller's say.

"This is only the beginning for us. Our first year open to the public is a little scary, but we are excited and feel this is the direction we are supposed to go right now. After this year, we'll see where the future takes us."

Upcoming Events

Direct Farm Marketing for Success Workshops

December 10, 12, 16, 17
<http://cpa.utk.edu>

Agritourism Cultivating Farm Revenue Conference

January 26-27, 2009
Chattanooga Marriott and Convention Center
<http://cpa.utk.edu>

Tennessee Agritourism Association Meeting

January 27 at Agritourism Conference

Farmers Market Forum and Tennessee Horticultural Expo

January 29-31, 2009
Nashville Airport Marriott

2009 NAFDMA Conference

February 1-7, 2009
Savannah, Georgia
www.nafdma.com

