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Press Release

October 21, 2019

Chester County Commissioners present 2019 Farmers of the Year, Distinguished Service Awards

Awards go to the Gable Family of Conebella Farm in Elverson and Duncan Allison of Kennett Square

WEST CHESTER, PA—The Chester County Commissioners, along with the county’s Agricultural Development Council (Ag Council), presented two agricultural awards at Conebella Farm in Elverson, Pa.

Farmers of the Year Award

The 2019 Farmers of the Year Award was presented to the Gable family, 5th generation dairy farmers who own and operate [Conebella Farm](#). They are well known for their 100% registered Ayrshire herd and value-added dairy products, including their artisan, raw-milk cheeses and cheese spreads.

Despite the many pressures on the dairy industry, the Gables have remained successful over the years through identifying additional opportunities for selling directly to customers at their on-farm store, farmers’ markets, festivals, at over 40 retail accounts across the region, and even online.

“The reason our farm is still here is the diversity of our business,” says Don Gable.

“Dairy farming is a challenging but critical part of our local food system,” said Chester County Commissioners’ Chair Michelle Kichline. “We are honored to recognize the Gables for their ability to rise above difficult market conditions and thrive as part of our county’s top industry: agriculture.”

County Commissioner Kathi Cozzone said, “We rank second in the state for value of agricultural products sold, and that’s in large part due to the day-to-day devotion to quality that families like the Gables provide.”

“It’s fitting that as we all enjoy the harvest season this fall, we are reminded of the importance of supporting local farmers and investing in our local economy,” said County Commissioner Terence Farrell.

In 2007, Don and Pam Gable knew they needed to expand beyond their traditional business model (selling milk to a dairy cooperative) to keep the farm viable for their sons one day. They started by selling raw milk to customers from their farm. They continued to expand their product line to include a range of preservative-free, fresh and aged cheeses. This was soon followed by yogurt, yogurt smoothies, and cultured butter.

Not to be outdone by their parents, the Gables' now-grown sons have developed their own custom hay business from the farm and have even branched out into selling specialty low sugar hay for diabetic horses—that is, when they aren't busy helping their parents with the dairy business and their other side jobs.

Josie Gable, Don's mother, also plays a vital role on the farm by helping to raise the calves and mowing.

Always thinking about the next generation, Don has continued his father's environmental stewardship role on and off the farm. In addition to implementing environmentally friendly farming practices like low and no-tilling on their fields, Don currently serves as the vice chair of the Chester County Conservation District's board, of which he has been an active member since 2013.

Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award

The Commissioners and the Ag Council presented the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award to Duncan Allison, a tireless champion of agriculture and key figure in the development and advancement of the Chester County Ag Council.

During his 15 year service to the Ag Council, Allison served as the board's chair for 5 years and was instrumental in shaping the organization's work program and mission.

In addition to serving on the Ag Council's board, Allison was the past president of The Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture (PSPA), former media relations director for the Chester-Delaware County Farm Bureau, past board president of the Brandywine Valley Association (BVA), and a board member for Penn State Extension. He also worked with the Chester County Food Bank through their farm gleaning program.

Prior to his many years of volunteer service in Chester County, Allison worked in global product development, planning, and marketing for DuPont and traveled throughout the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa in those roles.

"I cannot even begin to thank Duncan for all he has done for our organization and for so many others across Chester County. Even though he did not farm himself, his appreciation and love for this industry is nothing short of legendary. In recognition for his incomparable service, our award will henceforth be known as The Duncan Allison Award for Distinguished Service to Agriculture," says Ag Council Director Hillary Krummrich.

For more information about the Chester County Ag Council and our awards program, visit www.chesco.org/agdev

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