

VIRGINIA EXTENSION

THE VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE MAGAZINE

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COMMENTARY



Mitch Geasler

M. R. Geasler
Vice-Provost
Extension Division

Visits to Israel Generate New Thought

My term as chairman of the agriculture and natural resources subcommittee of the Virginia-Israel Commission is rapidly drawing to a close. The Commission concluded its official activities in late April with the Governor's Leadership Tour to Israel.

A creation of Governor Gerald Baliles, the Commission provided a number of our agricultural leaders with the opportunity to visit that Mediterranean country and study agricultural production, irrigation, marketing systems, and a process that combines fertilization and irrigation, which is called "fertigation".

Two Virginia groups visited Israel to examine agricultural practices. The first, which included four producers, four extension/research staff members, and four state agency employees, intensively studied irrigation and fertigation systems for a week. The workshop was conducted by research and extension personnel of the Israel Ministry of Agriculture.

The second group of thirteen agricultural leaders from the Commonwealth spent a week studying agricultural production technologies and the marketing system as well as exploring the diversification of the Israeli agricultural economy and the rationale that leads producers to make decisions about which commodities to produce.

Most of the returning Virginians were convinced that we probably should not attempt to adopt the specific technologies that we observed. There may have been some procedures with which we will experiment to test their applications in our system, but most were developed specifically for the production constraints found in Israel.

More important than our exposure to specific technologies, however, was our exposure to the mindset of the Israeli agricultural producers and those who work within that infrastructure. Our visit to Israel convinced us that there were

lessons to be learned in this arena.

There are a couple of basic truths that are evident throughout the Israeli agricultural system which may be worth considering as we look to the future of Virginia agriculture. First, the efforts of all segments of that country's agricultural system are oriented toward one goal—profit. It is the driving force in decision making.

Such factors as climate, water resources, and available technologies are considered, but the decision-making process is basically oriented around the potential profit.

This orientation was most evident in discussions we had with producers, with extension and research personnel, and with others involved in the agriculture infrastructure. They frequently tell of incidents where commodities that have been produced very profitably in Israel suddenly are being produced for the same markets at less cost by someone else.

The Israelis' almost immediate reaction is to stop producing the commodity in question and to begin looking for an alternative with which they can gain a market advantage. This ability to make such decisions quickly is one that we need to consider.

The second concept of which we were constantly aware is the market orientation of Israeli production. Commodities in Israel are produced for specific markets. There is a very strong structure of market analysis and projection in production decision making.

Even the smallest producers understand the market situation and, in most cases, produce for specific markets. The identified markets may be local, within the country, or international in scope.

In conjunction with this market orientation, the Israelis have a statewide market structure for the export of commodities. It is a non-profit cooperative, run

(Continued on inside back cover)

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Editor

William C. Burleson

Contributing Editor

James N. Cranor

Typesetting & Pasteup

Charlotte Hungate

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Visit to Airfield 4-H Center Clears Cobwebs from the Mind

By Cheryl J. Cease

Traveling to the Wakefield Airfield Conference Center is like climbing into a rustic painting and strolling up a dusty path to the farmhouse door.

At a time of day when Interstate 64 and the Virginia Beach Expressway are alive with motorists racing each other to work, a freight train is the fastest-moving object in this sleepy countryside.

Small villages with strange names like Zuni and Ivor dot the landscape. It's the heart of peanut country, far removed from the urban world's concrete shrines to business.

The Airfield Center—all 218 acres of it—lies in the midst of this bucolic glory.

"I think you'll be surprised when you see what we have out here," predicts Robert Lowry, the center's new director, in a phone conversation.

Indeed. The Airfield Conference Center, a facility opened near Wakefield in Sussex County in 1981 to provide an educational center for the Southeast Region of 4-H, is a rural wonderland. Black swans and peacocks, whose startling tail feathers are spread wide, greet visitors as they pull up to the administration building. Narrow wooden bridges stretch across portions of a lake laden with water lilies. The air vibrates with a vitality far different than the energy generated by urban bustle.

But, despite its rather primitive setting and the permanent four-legged and feathered residents, Airfield Center's manicured lawns and trim wooden architecture lend a certain sophistication to the facility.

A pair of tastefully furnished lodges and a conference center are located near the more rugged quarters and outdoor amphitheater used by 4-H campers. An elegant dining room sits beside the large cafeteria used by the 1,500 youngsters who romp on Airfield grounds each summer.

Lowry is banking on those contemporary facilities and some carefully placed ads to attract corporate customers.

He stresses that although the center was developed primarily to serve summer 4-H programs, private and corporate donations "expanded it to such a base we had to change the focus. It isn't practical to use it three months a year."

Realistically, the center, which also is known as the Southeast 4-H Educational Center, needs the revenue that conferences generate to help make it self-sufficient. Throughout the past six years, the facility



Helen Jones Photo

A peacock strolls across the road leading into the center's living area.

has relied heavily on the generosity of both businesses and individuals to keep it running. The coffers of the faithful may not be running dry, but Airfield officials realize it's time for a declaration of financial independence.

Lowry has set for himself a goal of 1½ to 2 years "to get a good solid operation." His target, pure and simple, is corporate.

One of the first objectives is enhanced name recognition. Until recently, Airfield Center relied almost completely on word-of-mouth to spread news of its operation as more than a 4-H center.

Locally, at least, it has been used for a variety of purposes. The facility has "served a great need of local organizations, church groups, and civic clubs," explains J. Allen Minetree Jr. of Franklin, first vice president of the board of directors. It was available "anytime they wanted anything special."

But, the center continues to be one of southeastern Virginia's best-kept secrets, particularly among members of the corporate community.

Lowry is trying to change all that. A new, more sophisticated logo has been developed, and the center has begun advertising in business publications.

Corporate business is trickling in. In July, a group of 15 superintendents from Philip Morris Inc. in Chester spent three days at Airfield Center.

"It was just what we were looking for," says Tom White, manager of quality and technical services at

Philip Morris and organizer of the conference. "We needed a place off the beaten path that was quiet for what we were trying to do."

For its team-building exercises, the group needed to distance itself from "the normal urban distractions, work routine, and nightlife," White explains. Like most visitors, White had learned of the center's existence through a friend.

Although White did not attend the conference, participants reported that the center's food was outstanding and the service first-rate. White also was impressed by the flexibility of the staff, who would postpone dinner until 9:30 p.m. if the group had to work that late.

The casual atmosphere, which dictated a standard uniform of shorts and a T-shirt, and the availability of basketball and tennis courts were another plus, according to White.

And the cost of using the center, he says, was "dirt cheap. It was half of what you pay for a hotel room in the city." (Rooms run \$39 for a single and \$65 for a double. Lowry says he has no plans to raise rates.)

For all these reasons, White wouldn't hesitate to recommend Airfield Center to other businesses, but he does admit the center has an image problem.

"When you tell people they're going to a 4-H camp, they're not quite sure how to take it," he laughs. "One guy asked if he needed to bring sheets." Another was concerned whether towels would be provided.

Lowry is aware that work is needed on the corporate perception of Airfield Center. "We have nothing to be ashamed of," he says after a quick inspection of the immaculate guest rooms.

Still, the 42 employees at the center are open to suggestions. Eager to know where change is needed most, Lowry had members of the Philip Morris group fill out evaluation forms at the end of their stay. Overall, the service was rated as excellent, but participants noted that better lighting was needed in the conference room, telephones were desirable in sleeping quarters, and lunches were a bit too heavy for their liking.

Action is being taken on the recommendations. Because some guests are delighted by the absence of phones in their rooms, jacks are being installed, and each visitor will be given the option of having a phone if he chooses.

Another problem Airfield Center faces is the number of overnight guests it can accommodate. The



Bill Burleson Photo

Lodges blend naturally into the surroundings.



Bill Burleson Photo

Although the center provides an ideal meeting place for private groups, it still is a fun place for the thousands of 4-H'ers in the Southeast Extension District.



Center director Robert Lowry plans to make every business aware of the advantages of meeting at the 4-H facility.

facility's two lodges have a total of 22 rooms and can handle 44 guests. The executive conference center can comfortably hold 60. The limited space is a double drawback: Airfield can adequately serve only small groups, and it is hard-pressed to generate the thousands of dollars it needs to operate each month.

Plans are under way to add two lodges, which would raise the room total to 50 and guest capacity to 100. New conference, educational, and recreational facilities are also on the drawing boards.

The center's board of directors has approved the project, Lowry says, and contributions are being solicited to pay for the construction. He hopes to have the structures completed within two years.

In the meantime, Lowry wants to make sure the center can deliver on any promise it makes. "We're making certain we can handle the business that comes our way."

Although unfamiliar with the Airfield property, Helen Preti, president of Conference Planning Associates in Virginia Beach, speculates that the center's isolation is both its best asset and biggest drawback.

Preti, who researches and recommends conference sites throughout Virginia and Maryland for companies in Hampton Roads, notes that "people flying in from out of town would have a way to go." For that reason, Airfield Center is best suited to groups from organizations within driving distance.

Lowry points out that a municipal airport capable of handling jet traffic is located just seven miles from the center, and that Airfield personnel are willing to arrange transportation for corporate guests.

Preti also speculates that the Wakefield property is most appropriate for gatherings of employees from a single company "because a seminar or meeting involving various organizations needs something (external) to draw them together."

She does feel, however, that the center is perfect for small groups "who really want to focus in on their topic. That's the kind of destination I'd choose for them."

Reggie Tyler, a Newport News management consultant, agrees. In the last several years, Tyler has brought about 10 companies to Airfield, including two just last month.

Tyler says the center's proximity to Hampton Roads (it's an hour from either Norfolk or Newport News), reasonable rates, and rustic setting make it a desirable destination for business groups. "The change in scenery is extremely conducive to a change in mind set. . . If you're going for team building or creative (reasons), it's very effective."

Old Dominion University in Norfolk has used the site for its annual Student Services Division staff retreat ever since the center opened.

"It is delightful," says Debbie Heida, assistant to the vice president for student services. "It's such a nice setting, and it's far enough away that you can put (the office) behind you."

She admits that when "you hear 4-H center you say 'uh,oh.' But it's totally civilized."

Like Philip Morris, ODU has found the cost of the center attractive and its service excellent. "They can accommodate large enough groups and take care of

everything. And the food is good enough, you roll away," Heida laughs.

Heida has been planning meetings for 10 years. "I'd rate them higher than any place we've ever had a retreat," she says of the Airfield Center.

Lowry hopes that sentiment will spread. "If anyone is willing to travel to Williamsburg (from the Peninsula or Southside), we qualify as a destination for those people."

Lowry is aware that Airfield doesn't have the same ambience as Colonial Williamsburg, for instance. But, he notes, the center is striving "to marry its rural charm with metropolitan finesse" to come up with a combination that corporate audiences find attractive. ☒

4-H Center Is Delight to Young and Old

It's a haven for wildlife, the source of delight for 1,500 youngsters each summer, and a relatively new host of corporate conferences.

The Southeast 4-H Educational Center in rural Sussex County opened six years ago on the banks of the 105-acre Airfield Lake to serve the 14 cities and counties in the Southeast region. As in other states, 4-H is operated by the Cooperative Extension Service; in Virginia, a program of the commonwealth's land-grant universities.

The facility, known as Airfield Conference Center by the business community, sits on 218 lush acres donated to 4-H by Union Camp Corp. of Franklin.

The gift of property wasn't an unusual gesture by the paper manufacturer. "Union Camp has a history of giving land like this if there's a demand for it," says J. Allen Minetree Jr., who retired this summer as the company's chief conservation forester. "Because there was a desire for it, and the land could be put to better use by 4-H, Union Camp gave it."

Minetree was the chairman of the center's original buildings and grounds committee and continues to sit on its board of directors.

Other companies as well as individuals have helped developed and sustain the center. Elmon T. Gray of Gray Lumber Co. in Waverly, a state senator from the 16th District, was in charge of raising money from corporate and private sources.

Gifts came from Farm Fresh Supermarkets, Virginia National Bank (now Sovran), Franklin Equipment, Birdsong Peanuts, and many others. Gray donated the pine lumber used in framing the buildings at the center.



Helen Jones Photo

Executive sleeping rooms are comparable to those at most good hotels.

In addition, 16 foundations or trusts made contributions to the 4-H cause. Lodges, conference centers, stables, riding rings, and even the swimming pool have been named for those whose donations helped make the center a reality. "It's been a real satisfaction to see the private sector [give money to assist 4-H,]" notes Gray.

Airfield Center is the successor of 4-H Camp Farrar, which from 1946 to early 1974 was located on land rented from Seashore State Park at 85th Street in Virginia Beach. The center, situated in the heart of Virginia's peanut country, is about an hour's drive from Norfolk, Newport News, or Richmond.

Although there is a municipal airport in nearby Wakefield, planes have nothing to do with how Airfield got its name in the late 1800s. Minetree says the constant movement of air over the water in the lake is believed to have inspired the Airfield name. Locals say the air flow is the cause of an added perk: "They claim they don't have any mosquitoes," Minetree says.

What Airfield does have is acres of open land, trails, hundreds of birds and other wildlife, and a resident llama named Fred.

"It's nature at its best," Gray says. ☒

Our thanks to the Tidewater Virginian magazine, Cheryl Cease, and Helen Jones for giving their permission to Virginia Extension to use these articles.



Bill Barlesson Photo

4-H'ers do not have any trouble finding shade at the Airfield camp.

INNOVATIONS

RESEARCH TO BENEFIT VIRGINIANS

The value of 4-H increases dramatically in a rapidly growing community. This is the belief of Loudoun County's Barbara Tulip. Last year she was Virginia's Salute to Excellence representative, providing 4-H leaders from across the nation with information about a volunteer program in her county. "4-H gives families the feeling of belonging to a community," she says.

Tulip's efforts were aimed at implementing a program that families needed and volunteers would find challenging. She recruited and trained volunteers to lead after-school groups through 4-H clubs or special interest areas. Older 4-H'ers served as ambassadors who spread the word in schools.

With the support of school officials, Tulip and the county 4-H agents visited eight back-to-school nights to recruit volunteers, arranged exhibits at community functions, and visited parents in their homes. A special recruiting campaign was conducted during National 4-H Week.

The new volunteers joined some veterans in two workshops that helped them acquire the skills and confidence to start new clubs and teach various activities. Separate sessions were given to volunteers who teach youngsters to understand the basics of self responsibility.

The results exceeded expectations—seventy-six new volunteer leaders, 403 new 4-H members, seven new clubs, and fourteen new interest groups. "Everyone in the Extension office contributed toward making the project a success," Tulip says.

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More than 500 recycling locations are now available to Virginians who need to dispose of their used motor oil. Recycling is the only environmentally safe way to dispose of used oil.

The recycling program began in 1982 in response to the increasing popularity of do-it-at-home oil changing. More than fifty percent of all Virginia motorists change their own oil and generate an estimated four million gallons of used oil each year.

"By recycling used oil, we avoid the possibility of environmental damage and we get to reuse the energy content," says Allan Lassiter, manager of the Virginia used oil recycling program for the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy.

Motorists can prevent their used oil from causing environmental problems by taking it to service stations that display the blue-and-white "RETURN USED OIL HERE SIGN" sign. The location of the nearest station can be found by calling the Virginia Energy Hotline, toll free, at 1-800-552-3831 between 9 and 11 a.m. and 1 to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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A new soybean variety has recently been released by Virginia Tech's soybean breeding program. The new variety has been named Hutcheson in honor of the late Thomas B. Hutcheson Jr., former head of the department of agronomy.

Agronomist Glenn R. Buss, who developed the variety along with retired agronomist Houston M. Camper and plant pathologist Curtis W. Roane, says Hutcheson has exhibited outstanding performance during several years of widespread field testing in both double-crop and fall plantings.

"The performance of Hutcheson has been outstanding in regional tests where it has been compared with the best experimental lines from other states. It was evaluated in 82 tests in 16 states over a three-year period and was the top yielding entry each year," Buss says. It also had twelve percent greater yields than the other varieties. It was tested against Essex, York, Bay, Toano, Pioneer 5482, and DP105.

Buss says the new variety is resistant to soybean mosaic virus and peanut mottle virus and has shown some resistance to stem canker, a disease that has been severe in the Southeast. Its reaction to other diseases is similar to that of most other popular varieties.

Approximately ten acres of Hutcheson foundation seed were harvested last year and will be available to seedsmen for planting this year. The development of the new variety was partially supported by check-off funds that were administered by the Virginia Soybean Board.

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U NO 4-H XISTS N SHEN N DOA



D.D. Galjean Photo

Standing by their cars with the personalized plates are, front row, from left, Charlotte Rinker, 4H 4EVR; Teresa Funkhouser, LUV 4-H; Jamie Koontz, 4-HHHH; and Carol Baird, 4-AITCH; back row, from left, Skeeter Lambert, 4H-DAD; Pat Lambert, 4H MOM; Judy Rinker, 4H FMLY; and Rick Rinker, 4H GUNS.

Nowhere in the Old Dominion does 4-H get more publicity than it does in Shenandoah County. Ten county residents keep the youth organization's name before the public through their personalized license plates.

Although each message is different (the state does not allow any two plates to be alike), all definitely convey the message that 4-H is THE organization for the drivers of the cars on which they are attached.

The messages are 4H 4EVR, LUV 4-H, 4-HHHH, 4-H MOM, 4-H DAD, 4H FMLY, 4H GUNS; WINK 4H, IMN4-H, and 4 AITCH. Carol Baird, Shenandoah County 4-H agent whose car bears the the latter message, has had her plates for four years. In fact, the former 4-H'er and Paula Orndorff, a senior finance major at Virginia Tech who coached the 4-H county's meat judging team before going to Tech, are the only two who are not volunteer leaders in the Toms Brook 4-H Club. The club has twenty members and fifteen volunteer leaders, a leader-member ratio of which all are proud.

Harry, "Skeeter", and Pat Lambert of Toms Brook

got their plates at the suggestion of their daughter and son-in-law. Donna Koontz had IMN4-H while son-in-law Jamie owned 4-HHHH. They suggested that the couple get 4-H MOM and 4-H DAD. The Lamberts liked the idea, applied for the plates, and, to their surprise, got them.

Probably none of the plates are more appropriate than Charlotte Rinker's 4H 4EVR. The Toms Brook resident has been a 4-H leader for nearly forty years. Teresa Funkhouser, who heads the county 4-H All Stars chapter and who lives in Toms Brook, wanted ILUV4-H but had to take LUV 4-H as the other was taken.

Rick Rinker got 4H GUNS because he is a 4-H shooting sports coach. His wife, Judy, decided that since 4-H is a way of life in the family, 4H FMLY was the only choice.

With the exception of Baird's 4 AITCH, all of the messages are easy to read. The Extension agent likes to tell about a Woodstock businessman who came into the office after she had the plate for two years to ask whose car had the itch. ☞

PEOPLE

James Ramey:

Teacher of 'Upmanship'

To paraphrase an old "down home" expression, James Ramey has worked with more 4-H'ers than Carter has liver pills. Ramey has been working with Virginia 4-H'ers for four decades, helping them prepare for various large animal activities.

"I started working with 4-H'ers in 1948," he recalls grinning. "I started helping those working with dairy cattle while I was a teenager in Loudoun County. I graduated to beef cattle, then hogs, and finally horses. I have been working with the horse program for more than thirty years. You might say that I enjoy helping young people."

Born on a Loudoun County farm, Ramey has worked for eighteen years as a handyman on the horse farm of Mrs. A.C. Randolph in Upperville. It is a job he obviously loves. "I just like working with animals," he says, "and I think they like me. I have been doing it all my life and see no reason to quit now."

As a 4-H volunteer leader, he works with 4-H'ers in the Post and Rail Club in Fauquier County, the Greenway 4-H Club in Boyce, the 4-H Light Horse and Pony Club and the Post Rail and Light Horse Pony Club in Clarke County.

Ramey each year looks forward to going to the Virginia State Fair in Richmond and working with the horses at the the 4-H Horse Show. "I have only missed three state fairs since 1948," he says while leaning back in his chair. "I missed going in 1953, '54, and '55. But I had a good excuse as I was in the Army. It was sort of hard to get away to go to a fair."



Bill Burleson Photo

James Ramey likes to help young people.

Present during the interview was Ramey's twenty-five-year-old son, James Jr. The son, who likes to be called Jimmy, has the same love of horses that infects his father. But, unlike his father, he was a member of 4-H while a youngster and has some pleasant memories of winning competitions in local and state events.

Jimmy also works with horses on Robert Smith's Heronwood Farm in Upperville. And he enjoys working with 4-H'ers, teaching them the ins and outs of horsemanship.

When the elder Ramey wanted to teach his young son how to ride, he went out and bought a pony named Pinky that, being over twenty years of age, was no youngster. Today, Pinky still is going strong at the age of forty and has almost become a legend in northern Virginia 4-H horse lore.

Ramey doesn't know how many 4-H'ers have ridden and worked with Pinky over the years, but notes there have been "quite a few." His

love of the aging pony led him to establish trophies in Pinky's name at the Clarke and Fauquier county fairs as well as at the district horse show.

Ramey's life isn't all horses and 4-H, however. He still has two of his three daughters—Jane, nineteen, and Michelle, fifteen—at home. A third daughter, Betty, is married and lives in Reston. "My daughters are all interested in sports, especially basketball, track, and volleyball," he says.

He has noticed little change in 4-H'ers over the years. "They still like to ride horses and dislike having to take care of their mounts after they are through. In that respect, I don't think they will ever change," he says. "In time, they recognize that learning to ride and taking care of horses can't always be fun. But, there is enough fun to keep them coming back for more."



Bill Burleson Photo

Jimmy Ramey wants to help others, which will repay those who helped him.

Kathleen Stadler:

A Community Agent

Home economics is changing to meet today's demands, and the changes become evident when one talks with Frederick County Extension agent Kathleen M. Stadler. Stadler is one of the "new wave" of home economists who are busy expanding home economics into new areas.

Stadler last year was named the Outstanding Extension Home Economist for Virginia by the Virginia Association of Extension Home Economists and received the New Professional's Award from the national association. The latter recognizes the accomplishments of persons who have less than four years of experience but who are making significant impacts on the quality of life in the communities in which they work. And there is no doubt that the North Dakota native is having an impact.

She won her two awards for her work in starting the Free Medical Clinic in Winchester. The program began when she was vice chairman and chairman of the Community Services Council, chaired its speakers' bureau, helped develop a slide presentation, headed major fund-raisers, trained volunteers, and served on five committees. Today, she works as treasurer and puts in other time in the clinic that helps those without medical resources.

The 1980 graduate of North Dakota State University got involved in starting the community supported clinic after a study showed that the area had a large number of "working poor"—those who cannot afford insurance or do not qualify for government assistance.

"I was really surprised at the number of people in the area who do not have health insurance even though they are employed. Their pay is at such a level that they cannot afford it and meet their other family obligations," she says.

The clinic, which is open each Thursday, opened in 1986; an



Kathleen Stadler is making her presence felt in Frederick County.

executive director and sixteen doctors volunteer their services. As patient numbers climbed, so did the number of area doctors donating their time. Last year, the Public Welfare Foundation donated \$20,000 to help with general operating expenses.

"The center is serving more people than we dreamed of when we were starting the program. I enjoy being involved with it and helping out with the bookkeeping. I would like to devote more time, but there are so many things to do.

"You have to network with other agencies if you are going to survive. You have to create strategy, recruit and train volunteers, and plan what you are going to do because there are so many demands on your time that it is impossible for one person do it all," she says.

Stadler, who spent three years working in the Caribbean as a Peace Corps volunteer after graduating from college, is also proud of the work being done by the fifteen Extension Homemakers clubs in the county. A campaign designed to get everyone to buckle their safety belts has netted five

awards and significantly raised the awareness of the safety aspects of seat belts among youngsters in kindergarten and the elementary grades. The homemakers have made Buckle Bear a familiar figure to area youngsters.

Stadler, as are many home economists in Extension, is training volunteers to work one-on-one with families that are having financial problems. "There are many mid-income families who cannot make ends meet," she says. "Since they have nowhere to go to learn how to manage their incomes, we show them how."

Stadler, who is also on the board of the Northern Virginia Educational 4-H Center, helped organize the Compassionate Friends group for those who have lost a child. She also is on the boards of Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Lutheran Family Services of Virginia. She also finds time to work on a master's degree in human nutrition and foods.

Stadler has found that free time is hard come by in her job. "The adults in most homes work, so you can't see them until after working hours. This is forcing us to change the way we do things. Fortunately, we have agencies here that are interested in working together. This allows us to divide the work to a more manageable level.

"And," she says grinning, "I do try and keep one night for myself each week. I think everyone needs that."

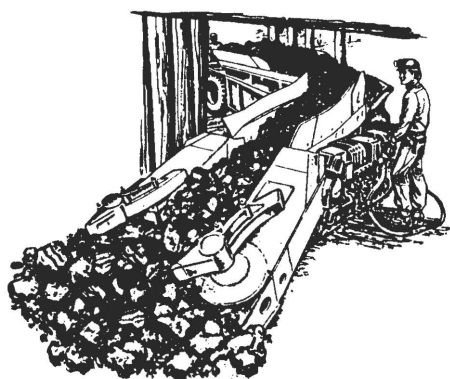


One of Stadler's many stuffed animals watches as she works on the books of the Free Medical Clinic.

IMPACT

DOLLARS AND SENSE FROM EXTENSION

The quality of life in Virginia's seven coal-producing counties generally lags behind the rest of the state. And, says a Virginia Tech agricultural economist, the gap "is growing wider." Thomas G. Johnson, working with Brady J. Deaton, associate director of international development at Tech, and research assistant David Kraybill completed a three-year study of the quality of life in this region.



The study, sponsored by the university's Powell River Project, focuses on environmental, social, and economic issues in the coal-producing counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, and Wise. Johnson says the region's traditional overreliance on the coal industry and its narrow economic base has produced three major problems.

They are lower average income, less evenly distributed income, and less certain sources of income. "The combination of these factors, especially the uncertainty of income, has an overwhelming effect on quality of life and how coalfield residents view the future," says Johnson.

Without confidence in a secure income, Southwest Virginians are

hesitant to invest in either human capital or material assets. This hesitancy, coupled with the historic neglect of the region by the public sector, is apparent in many of the region's problems.

One positive impact of traditional hardships that the area's residents have had to suffer is that they "are much better [able] to cope with tough times than those residing anywhere else in the state. They've endured more than their fair share of hard times," Johnson says.

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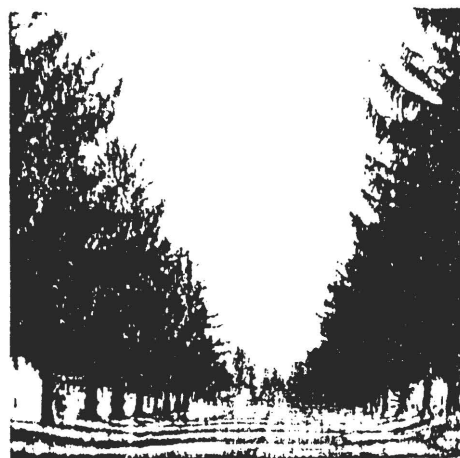
Chemical growth regulators are often used to control the height of grasses grown beside roadways.

For nearly twenty years, Virginia's Department of Highways and Transportation has been using maleic hydrazide at the rate of four pounds an acre. Now, Extension recommendations based on Virginia Tech research call for one-half pound of Embark per acre.

The use of chemical regulators in late March or early April eliminates the need to mow for six to eight weeks, after which there is growth of about only twelve inches for the rest of the summer. It would take six to eight mowings during the peak growing season to maintain the same appearance achieved by the chemicals, although such a mowing schedule is unlikely, says Extension weed scientist Wayne Bingham.

In addition to the savings of twenty-seven dollars per acre every time mowing is not done, he points out that the risks of mowing beside highways and on steep slopes are also an important consideration in the decision to use chemicals.

Still, a half pound of Embark or



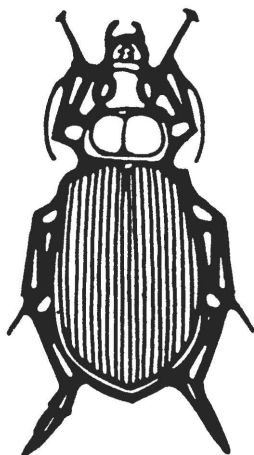
four pounds of MH cost about thirty dollars per acre and Virginia has 200,000 acres of turf on highway rights of way, at least 50,000 of which are sprayed.

So, the Department of Highways and Transportation is continuing to fund research. Last spring, Bingham, a researcher in the department of plant pathology, physiology, and weed science, and research technician Elizabeth Rucker had demonstration sites in Nottoway and Culpeper counties and the city of Salem.

Using a combination of Embark, which is absorbed through the foliage, and Telar or Escort, which are absorbed through the roots, they reduced the costs to \$10.75 per acre. "And we're testing newer compounds that leave the turf greener," Bingham says. He hopes to have new recommendations by next spring.

□

Japanese beetles may not be as threatening to grapes as many Virginia vineyardists thought. Virginia grape growers for years have built their spray programs to control this voracious pest. Virginia Tech entomologist Douglas



Pfeiffer and graduate student T.J. Boucher found in research at the Shenandoah Valley Experiment Station that, at normal beetle densities, there was no significant reduction in fruit quality or quantity.

“In most years, Japanese beetles may not need control measures at all,” says Pfeiffer. “In years when there are heavy infestations, control may be needed after the fruit begins to ripen.”

Since being introduced in the United States in the early 1900s, the Japanese beetle has feasted on more than 250 varieties of plants, including ornamentals, trees, and fruits. Roses, peaches, and grapes are three favorites. Beetles have been known to devour a peach, leaving only the pit hanging on the tree. They can be a serious threat to peach orchards; but, because they feed only on the leaves and not the grapes, vineyards can withstand some infestation.

Because they don't eat grapes, the effects of Japanese beetles on the crop are indirect. If too much of the leaf is lost, the plant's photosynthetic ability, by which it produces energy and food, is damaged. Researchers estimate that an individual plant can sustain a loss of eight percent of the total leaf area without suffering serious damage to the fruit.

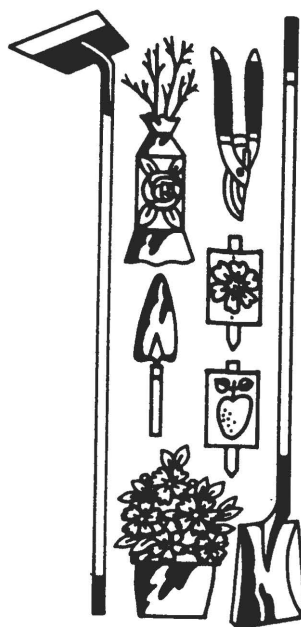
Pfeiffer says the research findings indicate that no control measures may be needed in most years. But, when there are heavy beetle infestations, control measures may be needed after the fruit begins to ripen. An Extension

research bulletin is being prepared to provide growers with complete information about the study and control measures.

□

A Master Gardener/4-H youth gardening project in Virginia Beach is getting national attention. The program, begun last year, has been awarded a National Gardening Grant from the National Gardening Association. The program was selected from 500 that applied. The grant consists of \$600 worth of gardening material and equipment.

The program, which this year will reach nearly 4,000 fourth graders in Virginia Beach, is called “Ready-Set-Grow” and attempts to



teach the youngsters about how plants grow. Diane Morris is program coordinator and heads the training of twenty-six other Master Gardeners who will form teams that teach in classrooms. Each team consists of a lecturer and one or two seed technicians. Also being trained were the fourth grade teachers.

Each student receives potting soil, peat pots, and radish, marigold, watermelon, and sunflower seeds. The grant also provides materials that cannot be used in the school program but are being utilized in other 4-H community beautification projects. Two contests are scheduled in June—the

tournament of radishes and “Marigold Mania”—to recognize those who have been the most successful gardeners.

□



Soil testing may not only provide farmers and home owners with individual recommendations for proper fertilizer and lime treatments for crops and lawns; summaries of soil test results may provide information for broader-based programs.

Since soil testing became recognized in the 1940s as a reliable agricultural tool, millions of soil samples have been analyzed by soil testing labs in the United States. About three million samples are analyzed across the nation each year. Virginia Tech's testing lab handles thousands of samples annually.

From these samples, the labs can generate annual summaries of soil pH and nutrient levels on a county, regional, and state basis for the major crops in those areas. Forty land-grant university and government labs issue periodic summaries to determine soil fertility status and general fertilizer and lime needs.

Stephen J. Donohue, Virginia Tech Extension agronomist for soil and plant analysis, says, “These summaries, if used with discretion, can provide meaningful information regarding general trends in soil acidity and nutrient levels. They also show the need for adjustment in fertilizer and lime programs, not only for individuals but for crop producers who must make economic decisions.”

For several years, Donohue has been organizing these reports and sending them across the state through Extension agents and fertilizer and lime vendors. Dissemination of this information, he says, “can result in beneficial shifts in fertilization and liming for more economic crop production.”

□

Mom and Tots Program Benefits Everyone

“And a little child shall lead them.” This biblical statement has served Cooperative Extension well during its nearly seventy-five years of existence. The premise led to the establishment of the 4-H youth organization, which evolved from the work of early Extension agents who worked with young boys and girls in corn, tomato, and canning clubs. These youngsters, in turn, showed their parents how the newly learned practices could help them.

The saying still is serving Extension, as evidenced by the Mom and Tots Program that is conducted each spring or summer in Page and Lee counties and the cities of Chesapeake, Petersburg, and Richmond.

“The concept of the program is simple,” says Jolene M. Griffith, Page County Extension agent. “During a week in a day-camp setting, you provide the mothers with nutritional and other educational information while also helping the little ones find out that there are foods that taste good and are also good for you.”

Actually, the mothers and their offspring learn about a variety of things during the week. The programs dispense information about foods and nutrition, conservation, and growing plants. The information is provided in such a way that the three-hours for each session goes by very quickly for all who are involved in the program.

Griffith says the program each year reaches as many as forty-five or fifty families with information that may not get to them in any other way. Last year, she enlisted the help of two volunteers to work in each program.

Nancy Hernley and Janet Scott of Luray taught the twenty-five family groups in Luray while Brenda Dodson and Shirley Weakley of Stanley did the second program for the fifteen families at Grove Hill. Weakley worked for a number of years in Extension’s expanded food and nutrition program as a technician.

Griffith noted that during the most recent program, the Page County participants had snacks of granola, puddings, bunny salads, and pumpkin cookies. The little ones heard stories that illustrated ways to conserve natural resources and learned the value of such everyday items as paper bags. They also found out that although they might think a toy was out of date, there might be someone else who would like to have it.

The youngsters also met McGruff, the crime fighting dog, and heard various ways that they can prevent crime. The little ones also learned how plants grow by planting sunflower seeds in small containers, taking them home, and watching them develop.

The final day of the program is reserved for an educational tour of a local dairy, farm, or other agricultural related operation. It provides both young



It's hard work learning about nutrition. and old with an experience that is both fun and educational, Griffith says.

The camp participants, who range in age from two to five, adapt to the routine easily and quickly know what is supposed to be next on the schedule, remembering what happened the previous day.

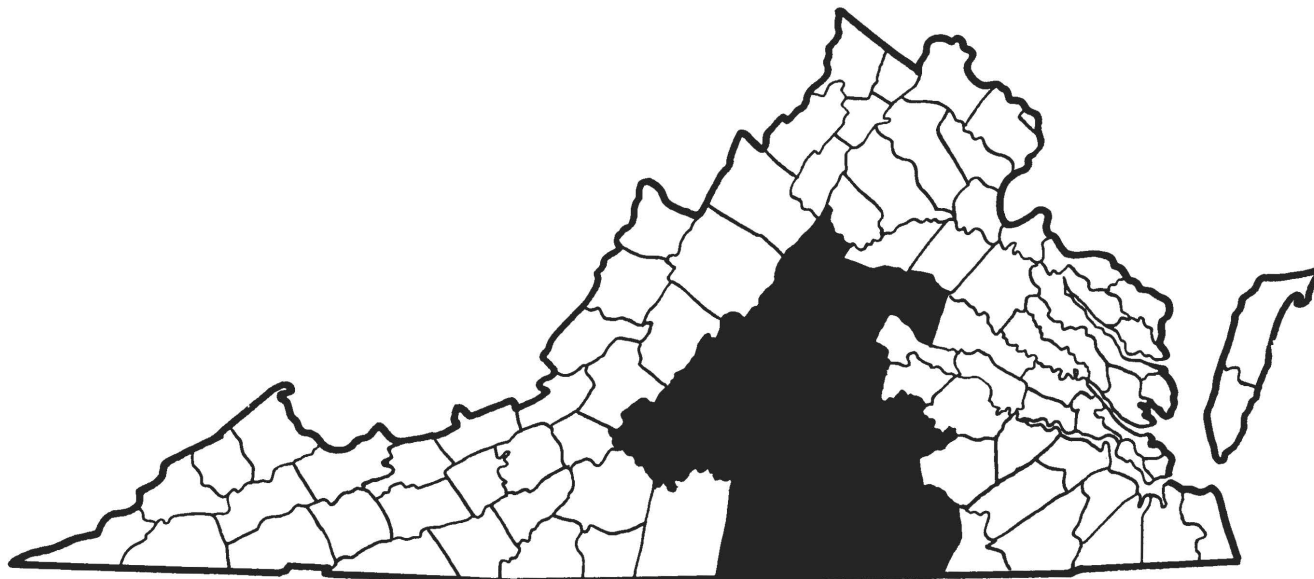
“Both parents and children seem to enjoy our programs,” Griffith says. “And the mothers learn a little more about some nutritional foods that they may not have thought about. Since the expanded food and nutrition education program stopped in the county, we have found the Mom and Tots Program to be an excellent way to reach young mothers.” ☞



A little one explains the ingredients in the pear rabbit to a classmate before starting to eat the nutritious treat.

East Central Agents Know What Their Priorities Are

By Terry Canup



The East Central Extension District includes nineteen counties and the cities of Charlottesville and Lynchburg.

The perceived role of the Extension agent in the year 2000 may be often dominated by visions of them using satellite dishes, computers, and other high-technology gear to deliver educational programs; but an equally revolutionary change is taking place in the minds of Extension agents who are devising a new, non-traditional method of determining which problems will receive their attentions.

The home economics agents of Extension's East Central District have challenged their traditional roles as general information and education brokers. Their attention and time has been too-often fragmented by efforts to solve too many insignificant problems. Instead, they have decided to determine and attack the most serious problems of the region.

What has resulted is anything but a casual approach to educational programs. Home economics programming decisions are now being made with the forethought that is given high-stakes corporate initiatives. East Central District agents are now committing their professional time to two priority problems of the district. Their skills in dealing with these problems are being tested, and their shortcomings are being addressed through special in-service education. Program delivery plans are being guided by market research and analysis.

Many of the East Central District agents were more than ready for this business-like approach. The district is extraordinary in many ways. It includes isolated rural communities, and education and income are well below average for the state. The agents were working hard, but their hard work was not impacting on the district's problems enough to reduce them significantly. Extension's traditional approach was not working well.

"We tend to work from crisis to crisis or event to event and we do good programs, but we get so exhausted and frustrated that we get burned out," says Betty J. Minton, a Greene County agent, about the traditional method of solving district problems.

"Extension professionals have attempted to deliver whatever programming the community desired," says Judy B. Burtner, former district Extension home economics leader who helped initiate the approach. She now is Northeast District program leader in Richmond. "Staff members were very busy and sometimes overwhelmed as they tried to deliver many programs to an expanding clientele. They found it difficult to measure the impact of their programs."

Says Minton, "We weren't reaching our potential or dealing with some of the problems in our counties,



Keith Painter, district home economics program leader, presides at a meeting of the task force. In the background are Phyllistine Mosley, right, of Campbell County and Brenda Mosby of Bedford County.

and I think it was leading to unrest. We knew we could do more, but we weren't sure how to do it."

In 1984, a task force was formed in the district, beginning an 18-month process aimed at helping agents find another way to approach programming. Already, the state leadership had endorsed the concept of priority programming. The task force interviewed staff members to determine how the agents could best pursue priority programming. The centerpiece of the task force recommendations was that agents should concentrate 75 percent of their efforts on one to three problems in the region.

Agent approval of such an approach was far from unanimous, but more and more took to priority programming as they became part of the process of selecting those major targets for concentration. Three retreats were held during 1985. A statistical profile of families in the East Central District was prepared. Agents identified four major problems: nutrition-related disease, poverty, substandard housing, and teenage pregnancy.

Extension faculty were asked to review trends, research, and possible educational approaches to each of the problems. As a result, programming focus was narrowed to nutrition and health and to family financial management.

The advice of lay leaders was sought to confirm or deny the need for Extension attention to these priorities. Their confirmation led to the development of final objectives that concentrated efforts on young families. Extension faculty developed extensive tests to ascertain the level of expertise that agents



Judy Burtner helped initiate the new approach.



Prince Edward County agent Patsy Pelland uses her hands to make a point during meeting to look at possible programs for the district.

possessed in the priority areas. The nutrition exam lasted three hours. The results of the exams are determining the focus of in-service education for agents.

The new programming will be aimed at reaching new audiences not familiar with Extension. To help figure the best way to deliver programs, R. Keith Painter, East Central program leader, heads a team of agents and faculty who are applying a marketing approach to achieving program objectives. After a review of existing research and conducting their own research, the team will develop a guide to effective program delivery by the end of this year.

The process has been long, but Painter sees it as worthwhile. "It was time-consuming, but there are certain steps you have to go through or agents will not be able to visualize the changes that must be made."

If this new approach is as effective as hoped, it too will prove to be a significant step toward the twenty-first century. ■



Task force agents working on specific home economics problems in the district are, from left, Elizabeth A. Payne of Albemarle County; Rachel S. Brydie of Nottoway County, and Kay Burke of Amelia County.

IN BRIEF

NEWS OF INTEREST FROM ACROSS VIRGINIA

An exhibit developed specifically for the Black Heritage Festival in *Virginia Beach* has become a permanent record that shows the contributions of blacks to the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service.

The exhibit was developed by 4-H agent *Herbert W. Pettway* with the assistance of various retired black Extension agents across the state. The exhibit features pictures of *John B. Pierce*, Virginia's first black Extension agent, and *Tom Campbell* of Tuskegee Institute, who was the first black demonstration agent.

Entitled, "The Roots Go Deep", the exhibit has been used at a number of meetings and is available for loan from Virginia Beach Extension.

"After we got the exhibit together," Pettway says, "we found it to be too useful to just dismantle it. It vividly illustrates the contributions that blacks have made to agriculture and Extension."

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What began in 1975 as an option in the College of Human Resources is now a full department. The department of hotel, restaurant, and institutional management has 300 undergraduates, twelve master's students, and sixteen doctoral candidates.

Department head *Michael Olson* says the new department's graduate program has been rated one of the best in the country. "Most of our students can expect two or three job offers, although a lot depends on how visionary each student is."

The new program has been



organized to include an international aspect at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Study agreements currently exist with schools in Switzerland, England, Scotland, Australia, and The Netherlands. In addition, faculty members are working on an arrangement with a school in South Korea.

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Virginia State University Extension representatives won three of the four awards given this year by the Association of Extension Administrators. The awards were announced at the association's annual meeting in Washing-

ton, D.C., and presented during special ceremonies at the Petersburg campus.

Winning the Achievement Award were *Ann M. Lastovica*, family management specialist, and *Mitchell Patterson Jr.*, agriculture specialist. *Barry W. Fox*, 4-H specialist, received the Distinguished Service Award. Lastovica received her award for her work training people to establish home-based businesses. Patterson was recognized for his contributions to the state's agricultural programs. Fox was honored for his 4-H marine education program.

The Association of Extension Administrators is composed of the executives of the 1890 land-grant institutions in sixteen states.

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The ground breaking for the new \$3.5 million addition to the Northern Virginia 4-H Education Center got off with a big bang as seven 4-H'ers pushed plungers during the March ceremony. Doing the plunging honors were *Alexander Smith, Rappahannock County; Tina Slaughter, Caroline County; David Keller, Shenandoah County; Katie Day, Prince William County; Sarah Hill, Warren County; Renee Parker, Orange County; and Doug Harrison, Loudoun County.*

Construction of the new 49,000-square-foot facility, designed by the Winchester architectural firm of Thomas Frisbee-Fulton, will complete the center's master facility plan. The new addition will include an expanded dining hall, a commercial kitchen, administrative offices, conference facilities, classrooms, library, health clinic, and 24 lodging units that will enable the center to substantially increase its capacity.

Last year, the center which is located at *Front Royal*, provided program opportunities to more than 70,000 persons. Although 2,500 campers were enrolled in programs, there were another 1,000 who were denied camping experiences because of the lack of space. The existing dining hall and kitchen were designed to serve only seventy-five persons at each sitting. The new facility will have seating for 400 persons. *Beverly and Silver Construction Co. of Fredericksburg* is the contractor.

□

Three Virginia Tech soil scientists in the department of agronomy have received a \$300,000 Virginia Department of Health grant to study alternative systems for on-site disposal of waste water.

Researchers *Raymond Reneau, Charles Hagedorn, and David C. Martens* will spend three years investigating ways to prevent ground water contamination if the conventional system doesn't function properly.

A common problem with traditional, gravity-fed septic systems is that the slightest imbalance in the distribution system can cause the water to concentrate in a small area rather than across the the entire absorption system.

The three will look at two possible alternatives, a pressurized system that adds a pump to force the waste water throughout the absorption field, and a spray irrigation system that distributes the water across large surface areas.

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Twenty-two Virginians from eighteen localities across Virginia are participating in the second class of the Virginia Rural Leadership Development Program (VRLDP). The program is a two-year exercise that requires participants to attend fourteen three-day sessions in Virginia, one five-day session in the Washington area, and a twelve-day multistate conference tour. It is supported by the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University.

The participants are *Carolyn S. Beale* of Rt. 5, *Martinsville; Guy E. Buckmaster* of Rt. 1, *Faber; Victoria E. Clark* of *Bowling Green; Rexford E. Cotten* of *Isle of Wight; David P. Haviland* of Rt. 1, *Abingdon; Ralph E. Janes* of Rt. 3, *Luray; Sherry V. Jonson* of Rt. 2, *Lebanon; Gary V. Layne* of Rt. 2, *Beaverdam; Gregory W. Miller* of Rt. 4, *Radford; Cynthia O'Neill* of *Williamsburg; Robert W. Peer* of Rt. 3, *Edinburg; Joan S. Powell* of *Colonial Beach; Ashby R. Pritchett* of *Martinsville; Winifred C. Roberston* of Rt. 1, *Woolwine; Elizabeth H. Roberts* of *Culpeper; Gregory B. Scarborough* of Rt. 1, *Painter; Foster L. Smith* of Rt. 2, *King William; Mary Catherine Tanner* of *Pearisburg; James E. Tarvid* of Rt. 2, *Independence; Paul M.*

Wilson of Rt. 3, *Amelia; and Sharon S. Wonn* of *Winchester.*

Programs have already been held in *Warren, Prince Edward, and Culpeper* counties. The group will also hold meetings in *Alleghany, Grayson, Accomack, and Albemarle* counties before the end of the year. In November, the VRLDP participants will take a tour of southern states that will end in Arkansas with a visit to a similar program in that state.

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A professor of international development at Virginia Tech is among those listed in the first edition of "International Leaders in Achievement." *Kenneth E. Dawson*, former director of Virginia 4-H, was recognized for his work in helping international visitors on the Virginia Tech campus, lecturing in several European countries, and serving as executive director of the International Technology Education Association.

It is not the first time Dawson has found himself listed in a book with other leaders. He previously has been listed in "Who's Who in the United States", "Community Leaders of Virginia", "Creative and Successful Personalities of the World", "Who's Who in the South and Southwest", and "Who's Who in Education". The achievement listing is published in Cambridge, England, by the International Biographical Centre.

□

COMMENTARY

continued

jointly by the government and the producers, that markets all commodities except citrus, dairy products, and cotton. The emphasis in this cooperative is on fruit, vegetables, and flowers.

The Israelis do a lot of contracting for the production of specific commodities, and delivery dates are part of the contracts. We were very impressed with the quality of the produce they were exporting. They market all of the products from the cooperative under a brand name that has a strong reputation for quality throughout Europe and in many markets in the United States.

Many of us who participated in the tour came home questioning the rationale of moving to a similar structure to market Virginia-grown products. This concept is still being questioned by many of us because we feel it requires more discussion and review.

The Virginia-Israel Commission has provided interesting and valuable experiences to those of us who were involved. It gave us the opportunity to exchange ideas with agriculturists in a nation that has technologies to contribute. It is imperative that we grasp the opportunity to effectively evaluate what we observed so that it will be used for the good of the Commonwealth.

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