

5/5/10

Contact: Sara Long, longsj@msu.edu 517-432-1555, ext. 170

Celebrate “June Is Dairy Month” this Father’s Day weekend with Breakfast on the Farm June 19 in Pewamo -- NEW TICKET LOCATIONS ANNOUNCED

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 19, if you’re interested in enjoying a free pancake breakfast and experiencing family fun along with a chance to learn about local farm families who produce the food you eat.

Breakfast on the Farm, now in its second year, is a family-oriented program that welcomes neighbors and area residents to enjoy a complimentary pancake breakfast along with a self-guided tour of a family-owned farm that includes visits to various educational stations and opportunities to ask questions of local farmers. The June 19 breakfast and farm tour takes place rain or shine from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (breakfast served from 9 a.m. to noon) at the Steenblik Dairy Farm near Pewamo.

This year’s Father’s Day weekend event will be hosted by Albert and Els Steenblik, Steenblik Dairy, Pewamo. The Steenblik’s milk 2,500 cows three times per day in their state-of-the-art milking parlor, which will be one of the stops on the event’s self-guided tour. There will be a variety of tour highlights, and the young and young at heart will be eager to stand alongside and climb aboard modern-day farm equipment as well as to pet and feed baby calves, take a tractor and wagon ride, and touch and smell the feeds that cows eat.

Also planned for this year’s event is a goat-milking demonstration and a commodity area displaying the variety of farm crops grown in Michigan that makes the state the second most agriculturally diverse state in the United States.

Faith Cullens, Clinton County Michigan State University (MSU) Extension dairy educator and lead organizer of the event, says that the event was created to help non-farm families learn how a modern-day dairy farm operates.

“Dairy farming has changed immensely since the 1970s and 1980s, and many people are not familiar with the new technology,” she says.

Cullens admits that there is a lot of conflicting and confusing information in the media today about farming and food production.

“Dairy farmers are our best examples of what it means to be a steward of the land and their animals,” she says. “Providing the best nutrition, health care and living conditions for the animals, which are the backbone of a dairy farmer’s business, is still priority No. 1.”

With all the new technology, one thing hasn’t changed: most Michigan farms are family-

owned and small businesses.

“We are very fortunate to be living here in the United States, where we have an abundant, affordable and safe food supply,” Cullens says. “Farmers are people just like you and me. What better way to learn the real story behind modern-day farming than by coming face to face with the people who are actually producing our food? That’s what Breakfast on the Farm is all about.”

Agriculture, with dairy production contributing the highest percentage, adds more than \$71 billion annually to the Michigan economy. Clinton County ranks No. 2 in the state in the number of dairy cows.

There is no cost to attend the event or take the tour, but tickets are required for the free breakfast. Free tickets can be obtained from the Clinton, Gratiot and Ionia County MSU Extension offices; the Clinton County Michigan Farm Bureau; Dewey’s Trading Post; Frosty Boys (Portland); Greenstone Farm Credit Services (St. Johns and Ionia offices); the Ionia Community Library; L & L Food Stores; the St. Johns Public Library; Schmitz Service and Party Store; Scoopy Doo’s Ice Cream; Tom’s Western Store; Village Market in Muir; Vito’s Pizza in Ionia, Uncle John’s Cider Mill or Woods Deli in Pewamo.

Breakfast on the Farm is organized by the Clinton County MSU Extension office and the Clinton County Michigan Farm Bureau.

Statewide sponsoring partners for the 2010 Breakfast on the Farm are Dairy Farmers of America, Dairyland Seed, Greenstone Farm Credit Services, the Michigan Milk Producers Association, Pioneer and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan.

In addition to the Clinton County Breakfast on the Farm, two other breakfast-farm tour combinations are planned for this summer. The 2010 MSU Dairy Farmer of the Year award winners, Earl and Diane Horning, along with their son, Jeff, and his wife, Lynda, and family, will host a Breakfast on the Farm June 26 at their dairy farm near Manchester (Washtenaw County). On July 24, Joe and Beth Bryant will host a breakfast and farm tour on their livestock operation located near Shepherd (Isabella County). Both events, scheduled to take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., are organized by their respective county MSU Extension and Farm Bureau offices.

To get more information about Breakfast on the Farm or to reserve tickets, contact Faith Cullens at 989-224-5240 or cullensf@msu.edu.

For more information about Breakfast on the Farm or to download directions to the Steenblik farm, visit www.breakfastonthefarm.com.

#sl#