



NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2008
VOLUME IX

IL Specialty Crops & Agritourism Conference January 9-12, 2008 by Ross Ament

The 2008 IL Specialty Crops & Agritourism Conference, which was held in Springfield, is now history, as the second year of this partnership produced a record number of attendees along with a successful sharing of latest trends, technologies, best practices and interesting stories! The ATPI sponsored speaker, Charlie Touchette, Executive Director, North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, gave a thought provoking opening presentation and follow up workshop, in which he highlighted the current and future trends in regards to consumer characteristics and the face of agriculture. He challenged the group with numerous great ideas for partnering direct marketing and agritourism.

ATPI presented nine agritourism workshops throughout the conference. These nine, combined with the two marketing workshops, offered participants a very rich educational experience. A special thanks to John Pike for all of his hard work coordinating these sessions! In addition, the ATPI booth was a center of activity, where both new and renewed members could enter to win gift baskets. The ATPI Board of Directors also met during the conference and worked within their newly formed committees to plan future activities and direction.

Thank you to everyone that worked so hard to make ATPI's second partnered conference a valuable learning and fellowship experience for all. If you were not able to attend this year's conference, watch for next year's announcement and be sure to sign up! If you have suggestions for next year's conference, please send them to me, Ross Ament, rament1@aol.com.

Absolutely Ament By Ross Ament ATPI President

The ATPI Board of Directors met in regular session in November 2007 to engage in strategic planning for the organization for the near future. The planning work accomplished in a 2004 session was reviewed. The Board examined external issues of agritourism in Illinois, ATPI member value, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. The outcomes of the November session were the defining of four goals. The four goals which were later approved at the January meeting of the ATPI board are:



Ross Ament

Develop and implement a membership plan including the analysis of ATPI's membership structure, as well as a plan for sponsorships.

Develop and implement a plan for educational offerings as well as a means to better disseminate beneficial information to ATPI's members (internal communications).

Continue and enhance the marketing of agritourism in Illinois, including the development of the ATPI brand (external communications).

Analyze ATPI's organizational structure and implement improvements for enhanced effectiveness, internal board communications, and definition of roles.

Potential strategies for action were surfaced for each goal. Committee chairs and members were surfaced to enhance outcomes and accountability. Committees and chairs are listed on the following page.

An important strength of ATPI is the dedication and commitment of the leadership to offering value to the members through education, marketing, advocacy and beneficial information. I am proud to be working with these motivated volunteers to benefit you.

Thanks,
Ross Ament





AGFUN.COM Wins Award!

The Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois are proud to announce their new website, www.agfun.com, received an award for the Best Website (budgets under \$250,000), during the 2008 Illinois Governors Conference on Tourism. Organizations from all segments of the travel and tourism industry entered websites into this competition. Agfun.com was launched in November to promote Agritourism businesses throughout Illinois. Special thanks to Wendy Tritt and Trittenhaus Design for their continued enthusiasm and commitment towards this project.



ATPI MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

River Front Berry Farm
Bob & Coleen Blain
2799 N. 1700 East Road|, Martinton, IL 60951

River Front Berry Farm originated in 1994 when Bob and Coleen Blain retired from the education field in suburban Chicago, and returned to the farm in downstate Illinois where Bob grew up. The farm is located in northeast Iroquois County and borders the Iroquois River, hence the name River Front Berry Farm. Coleen and Bob are the third generation of the family to operate the farm, which was originally purchased in 1906 by Bob's grandfather, Gilbert Demierre.

River Front Berry Farm is open from May 1 through October 31. Hours are 8:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M. daily.

Fruits grown on the farm include: strawberries, red raspberries, blueberries, gooseberries, apples, cherries, and now black raspberries, which were established in the spring of 2007.



Vegetable crops grown include: asparagus, garlic, sweet corn and over 20 other garden vegetables.

Freshness and high quality produce are paramount to Coleen and Bob, therefore produce is picked fresh daily throughout the growing season. Items that benefit from cooling such as strawberries and raspberries are in coolers within 20 minutes of being picked and are sold directly from the coolers when possible. The goal is to pick and sell a given product in the same day, so as to

ensure the freshness and quality that customers deserve. The Blains also sell their produce at several area farmers markets. For more information call 815/428-7382 or visit them on the web at

www.riverfrontberryfarm.com

ATPI 2008 Program Committees

Membership Committee

Co-Chairs: Erin Orwig & Bruce Curry
 Committee Members: Betty Sirls, Mary Landon
 LaMonica Henrekin, Mac Condill

Sponsorship Sub-Committee: Bruce Wicks

Education/Information Committee

Co-Chairs: John Pike & Stephanie Rhodes
 Committee Members: Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant,
 Lowell Lenschow, Brenda Matherly, Carolyn Brown
 Hodge, Diane Handley

Marketing, Public Relations and Brand Development Committee

Chair: Brooke Doggett
 Committee Members: Bonnie Heimbach, LuAnn Haydon, Angela Massey, Mike Rahe, Kristin Vacek,
 Chris Miner, Heather Wilkins

Organizational Development Committee

Chair: Ross Ament
 Committee Members: Lowell Lenschow, Bonnie Heimbach, Mary Landon, Heather Wilkins,
 John Pike

Note: Heather Wilkins provides administrative support to ATPI.



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