

AWARDS



Jim Zengerle / Lebanon Daily News

Posing with awards at the recent Lebanon County Conservation District dinner are (front row from left) George Gress, Lee Meyer, Matthew and Roxanne Molnar, (standing from left) Tom Buzby and Betty Conner.

The Lebanon County Conservation District honored several "conservation heroes" at its recent annual awards dinner in Myerstown's Lantern Lodge and Convention Center. LCCD manager Chuck Wertz served as master of ceremonies for the evening.

Weaber Inc., a Mt. Wilson-based sawmill, received the Business Steward of the Year award. Since its founding more than 60 years ago, the company has become one of the largest single-site, hardwood lumber sawmills in America. In addition to encouraging wise woodland-management practices, the company has invested significantly in state-of-the-art technology to maximize the efficient use of every part of the forest resources harvested on its behalf, according to a LCCD news release. Zero waste is the standard at Weaber, where processing residues are used as fuel to heat the company's kilns, wood shavings and sawdust are sold for farm-animal bedding, and bark is mulched for landscape and playground materials. **Tom Buzby** accepted the award on behalf of CEO **Galen Weaber** from presenter **Larry Bowman**, president and CEO of the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce.

George Gress of Heidelberg Township was recognized as LCCD's Conservationist of the Year for his lifelong commitment to preserving nature and wildlife both through his employment with The Nature Conservancy as a land steward/fire specialist who serves as project manager of the 108-acre Acopian Preserve and his numerous volunteer and leisure time commitments to conservation causes. In addition to being an avid outdoorsman, Gress expresses his love of nature in his pho-

tography, whittling of songbirds and carefully landscaped gardens, according to LCCD. Gress was also instrumental in the founding of the Lebanon Valley Conservancy, which he continues to serve as an advisory board member. LCCD Associate Director **Tisha Walmer** presented the award.

Earl and Lee Meyer received a Special Recognition Award for Conservation. Both work for the Lebanon County Planning Department, where Earl is the director, and Lee assists with technical details like GIS mapping, scanning, preparing PowerPoint presentations, etc. The Meyers' most recent achievement is leading the development of the county's new Comprehensive Plan to facilitate the preservation of open space. As part of the process, the Meyers conducted numerous public meetings and brought together conservationists, builders, citizens and government officials to forge a document. Lee Meyer accepted the award on her husband's behalf from county Commissioner and LCCD Vice Chairman **Jo Ellen Litz**.

Weaber Inc., Gress and the Meyers were also presented with State House certificates from Rep. Mauree Gingrich.

Nine municipalities were honored for contributing a total of \$356,800 toward farmland preservation since 1988, which in turn was able to leverage another \$342,602 in matching funds from other sources. **Tim Sheffey**, chairman of the Lebanon County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, presented certificates of appreciation to **South Annville, South Lebanon, North Lebanon, South Londonderry, Swatara, Bethel, Annville** and **Jackson** townships along with **Mt. Gretna** borough. Sheffey noted that without the continued support

of these local government bodies, it would not have been possible to preserve the 14,276 acres and 135 farms in the county to date.

Two poultry farms — **Matthew and Roxanne Molnar** farm near Grantville and **Glen and Violet Litzenberger** farm near Fredericksburg — received Pennsylvania Environmental Agricultural Conservation Certifications of Excellence in recognition for their good environmental stewardship, as well as good relations with neighbors and the community. The Molnars, who have a flock of 78,000 broilers, and the Litzenbergers, who have a 50,000-broiler flock, became the 81st and 82nd respectively, livestock or poultry farms in the state to achieve PEACCE status. Lebanon County has 16 PEACCE certified farms.

Lebanon County itself was also an award winner, as its Groundwater Education Team under the leadership of LCCD Watershed Specialist **Stephanie Harmon** garnered the Groundwater Guardian Community designation from The Groundwater Foundation of Lincoln, Neb., for the 13th consecutive year. The award recognizes communities that protect their groundwater resources voluntarily.

David Lasky, president of the Quittapahilla Watershed Association, gave special presentation in memory of **David Thomas**, a past recipient of the Conservationist of the Year award, for his dedication to several community organizations in their efforts to protect watersheds.

The evening's activities were capped off with entertainment by

Jay Hendren, a comedian known as the country's funniest farmer, provided the entertainment.