



## More to be done for horticultural producers

by Geri Kamenz, President Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario's producers of horticultural crops find themselves facing an increasing need for program support by both provincial and federal governments. They find their efforts to produce safe, high quality fruits and vegetables for society are not enough to meet production costs.

When I met recently with leaders of Ontario's fruit and vegetable growers organizations, we reviewed the situation they face. It was acknowledged that government ad hoc programs have helped, but Band Aid solutions aren't enough – especially when we see what other countries are doing for their producers.

We talked about the Canadian tree fruit industry and how it continues to face flat or declining producer returns – primarily due to subsidized imports from competing countries, but made worse by Canada's declining exchange rates and rising costs. If the sector is to survive, a national replant strategy is crucial. This is aimed at getting newer, more marketable varieties into production.

The tree fruit growers said such a national replant strategy would reduce the sector's need for other government funding support. They pointed to such a program undertaken by the government of British Columbia eleven years ago, and similar programs just coming into operation in Nova Scotia and Quebec.

With the introduction of the Agricultural Policy Framework in 2003, governments promised the sector production insurance. Failing that, Self-Directed Risk Management or something similar would be made available to the industry, growers were told.

Unfortunately, none of this has been offered to the

sector, and enrolment in production insurance has steadily declined. Growers who have production years that don't coincide with calendar years will face the predicament of having neither production insurance nor Self-Directed Risk Management protection for their 2007 crop.

In 2000, growers discovered Plum Pox Virus infecting their tender fruit plants. Both federal and provincial governments partnered with producers to eradicate the virus, but unfortunately that funding ran out before the virus was eliminated. Now the virus is being discovered in neighbouring Michigan and New York States, ensuring the battle will have to continue in Ontario orchards.

Ontario's growers are in need of additional funding to carry on the battle to eradicate plum pox virus, and any program, if it is to be successful, needs to be in place long enough to get the job done, especially now that the virus is in neighbouring jurisdictions. Like some other programs, this requires minimal government investment, but with producer input can be quite effective.

OFA agrees with Ontario horticultural producers that expansion of the Foodland Ontario promotion program would benefit the industry. A trial project in Northern Ontario, implemented through the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion, is another example of how producers and governments can work together for economic benefits to growers, and health benefits for consumer.

OFA also supports the growers when they call for resolution to the municipal taxation issue on value-added on-farm operations. We had considerable influence on behalf of the maple syrup producers and equestrian operations on this issue.

# Essex County 4-H Awards Night

BY ANDY COMBER

Members of the Essex County 4-H Association gathered at the Essex Legion Feb. 6 to celebrate another successful year with an awards night.

"Our membership is growing," said local 4-H president Penny Anger,

culture, food and nutrition issues, and current events.

Following Anger's overview of the 2006 season, each of the clubs gave reports and various awards were presented.

Among the numerous 4-H awards presented were Club of the Year to the Christmas Crafts club; the

Members Kimberley Vanderveen, Kroeker and Jennifer Quiring were recognized for completing the Michigan Rotary Youth Leadership Workshop.

In addition, \$500 scholarships were presented to Melissa Morris by the 4-H Association, and to Alisha Nelson by the Roseland Rotary.

Volunteers were also recognized for their contribution. A 15 Year Volunteer Leader Award was presented to Susan Brown and a

Numerous first year certificates, member plaques, and other project awards were also presented at the event, which was sponsored by Cargill Ltd.

The Ontario 4-H council represents over 7,000 members and 1,500 volunteers from every county, region and district in the province, encouraging youth to develop self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility, as well as learn useful skills in communications, leader-



Recognized. Jennifer Quiring, left, and Kimberley Kroeker were presented with Rotary Youth Leadership Awards at the 4-H Awards night Feb. 6.



Celebrated. Essex County 4-H named their Christmas Crafts Club as Club of the Year at their 2006 Awards Night. Pictured l-r, Darren Mayville, leader Andrea Keller, Jennifer Scherer, Lacey Wolters, Amber Fontaine, Susy Wolters, Tori Rocheleau, and leader Mary Mayville.

speaking of the recent growth of the organization which currently boasts 18 interest clubs and 112 members for youth age 10-21.

"This year we held achievement days at three local fairs, Leamington, Comber and Harrow," said Anger, speaking of the tremendous involvement by the local 4-H clubs.

Emcee for the event, 4-H director and secretary Mary Mayville noted that a majority of the youth involved did not come from area farms, although many of the clubs deal with agricultural interests, such as livestock and field crops.

"We have a young group," said Mayville, noting that the club has attracted younger children to join, ensuring a promising future for the association.

"The 4-H program is about opportunities, personal development, making friends, and having fun," she said.

At the event, 4-H members were encouraged to sign up for the "Go-4-the-Gold" competition, a quiz game based on members understanding of current 4-H project material and general knowledge of 4-H, agri-

Robert Nelson Memorial Award for Junior Member of the Year and the Brian Park Memorial Award for Best Reporter to Darren Mayville; Top Secretary Award to Susy Wolters; 60 Project Award to Shannon Willemsma; 42 Project Award to Melissa Morris; 30 Project Award to Sarah Morris; 18 Project Award to Maggie Anger, Darren Mayville, and Kaitlyn Nostadt; and 12 Project Awards to Craig Chevalier, Tyler Gemus, Nina Hotz, Elisha Nelson, and Jessica Tracey.



Honoured at the Essex County 4-H Awards Night were, left to right, Melissa Morris - 42-project award; Sarah Morris - 30-project award; Susan Brown - 15-year volunteer award; and Shannon Willemsma - 60-project award.

Five Year Volunteer Award went to Mark Balkwill, Patrick Hughes, Bernard Nelson, Allen Rogers and Debbie Tracey. First Year Volunteer Awards were presented to John Barnett, Marie Hall, Kelli Kirkpatrick, Mary Kroeker, Dave Page, Tina Quiring, Stu Stevenson, and Cindy

ship, problem solving and goal setting.

4-H is defined in their pledge: "I pledge...My Head to clearer thinking, my Heart to greater loyalty, my Hands to larger service, and my Health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world."

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