



COUNTY OF BERKS, PENNSYLVANIA

Office of Agricultural Coordinator

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READING --- More than 6,000 Reading Phillies fans learned about Berks County's "real" farm team on June 5th when members of the agricultural community came out to the baseball stadium and hit a home run with pre-game activities. Baseball fans got the facts on farming and its key role in the local economy and had fun learning. Farmers Night at the R-Phils is sponsored by the Berks Agricultural Resource Network (BARN), a non-profit organization that represents the entire food industry in the county. Helping to co-sponsor the event for the third year were the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association and the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council. Joining in sponsoring this agricultural outreach for the first time in 2012 was Giorgio Foods Inc.

"We were happy to have Giorgio join us for Farmers Night at the Reading Phillies this year," said Berks County Agricultural Coordinator Sheila Miller. "We all recognize their leadership in the mushroom industry, marketing fresh, frozen, canned and jarred items. Now in its third generation, the Giorgi family is recognized for producing a high quality product that lives up to its brand standard." Miller noted that Isabella Giorgi was part of the "first-pitch" line up to start the game. "Bella" is the daughter of Peter and Kathy Giorgi. Peter is chairman of Giorgio Foods, Giorgi Mushroom Co., and Giorgio Fresh Co.

Also participating in the "first pitch" pre-game activities were Berks County Dairy Princess Kayci Johns, daughter of Mark and Debbie Johns; Li'l Miss Dairy Princess Brooke Bicksler, the five-year-old daughter of Jonathan and Tiffany Bicksler; Bradyn Erb, the grandson of Berks County pork producers Oscar and Sandy Manbeck. Representing 4-H was Ashley Mohn, the daughter of Steve and Karen Mohn; and representing the FFA was Lexi Coppello, a 2012 graduate of Twin Valley High School.

Singing the National Anthem was a quartet of Berks County farmers from the beautiful Oley Valley. Brothers Ken and Lloyd Zook were joined by father and son Bill and Brad Gotwal to pay tribute to the nation's flag for the third straight year. The Zook family farms several hundred acres, raising dairy, hogs and steers, along with grain. The Gotwalls own Brookledge Trucking, the premier horse trucking company in the country that transports horses all over the country. They own the DeTurk farm in Oley, one of the oldest continuously operating farms in Pennsylvania where they raise steers and sell hay in addition to producing corn, wheat, soybeans, and barley.

Sporting the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association's milk jug costume on the baseball field with the other Reading Phillies mascots was Noah Weber, son of Mark and Kim Weber, Mohnton. His older brother Aaron donned the Patty Melt mascot costume in a prior year and inspired Noah to help promote the agricultural industry to all the fans and have fun while doing it.

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Twin Valley FFA graduates Ben Tait, Kate Stalnaker, and Brian Anderson assisted in tossing farm-related stress relievers into the crowd of cheering fans. Susquehanna Bank provided the much-appreciated squeezable sling shot prizes.

B.A.R.N. vice president, Carl Brown, spoke to home listeners when he was interviewed during the opening inning of the game. Brown is part of F.M. Browns' Sons Inc., Birdsboro, a fifth and sixth generation family business that sells livestock feeds and turf/agronomic seeds through the Eastern quarter of Pennsylvania and the entire state of New Jersey.

Members of the Berks 4-H Beef Club tested the Reading Phillies fans knowledge of agriculture by giving out an ag quiz and bookmarkers that taught them about the connection between baseball and farming. Dairy ambassadors distributed 2,000 special Farmers Night aprons to fans as they entered the stadium.

“We always want the giveaways to reflect the food industry,” commented Miller. “That way every time a fan uses a serving spoon, oven mitt, hand towel, or this year’s apron, they will be reminded about the importance of Berks County’s farmers and our food industry. It’s good to share an evening at a baseball game and help promote agriculture.”



Berks Agricultural Coordinator Sheila Miller, center, with First pitch line up at Farmers Night at Reading Phillies included: from left: PA Pork Producers' Bradyn Erb, Li'l Miss Dairy Princess Brooke Bickser, Dairy Princess Kayci Johns; Ashley Mohn, representing 4-H; Lexi Coppello, representing FFA, and Bella Giorgi, whose family owns Giorgio Foods Inc.



Noah Weber was proud to wear the Milky mascot costume and be on the playing field with R-Phils Screwball mascot.



Lexi Coppello joins fellow Twin Valley FFA graduating seniors Kate Stalnaker, Ben Tait and Brian Anderson for the Farmers Night pre-game activities, reaching more than 6,000 fans with information about agriculture.



A farmer quartet sang the National Anthem for the third straight year: from left Lloyd Zook, Brad Gotwal, Bill Gotwal, and Ken Zook, all from the Oley Valley.



Berks County's dairy royalty model this year's giveaway aprons which were given to 2,000 fans.