

Evans Orchard: An Agritourism Adventure



Jenny & Kevan Evans the father and daughter team at the orchard.

When Kevan & Jenny Evans began selling vegetables and fruit from the family farm in the late 1990's, they never imagined they would become leaders in Kentucky's Agritourism industry.

"I had no desire to work in tobacco on the farm growing up," said Jenny. "That is why I convinced Dad to let me try raising a few vegetables and sell them at the local farmers' market when I was in High School."

After the success at the farmers' markets that first summer, Kevan expanded their vegetable and fruit production. By the end of the 1990's Kevan had gotten completely out of tobacco and beef cattle, and had established a small orchard on the family farm.

In 2001, Kevan

partnered with Bill Jackson, of Jackson's Orchard in Bowling Green, and the two orchards received Ag Development Funds to provide cider-processing services to farmers across the state.

The grant funds allowed Kevan to renovate an old tobacco barn for the cider processing and cooler facilities. Also, a portion of the barn was set aside as a storefront to sell Evans Orchard produce and cider, along with other Kentucky products.

Evans Orchard began to grow to meet the needs of the customers who saw the farm as more than just a place to buy local produce, but a unique farm experience.

"We did a school tour or two and it surprised us to realize kids living in Lexington and even Georgetown

had never been on a farm," explained Kevan. "That's when we realized there was potential in the educational programs we could offer.

Getting school children out on the farm opened up a whole new market for Evans Orchard, and suddenly families were making weekend trips out to the farm. Jenny and Kevan worked together and slowly built a play area, a corn maze, added hay rides, a bee observatory, and they began holding events and festivals at the farm.

"We started noticing that people were asking for more than just the fresh vegetables

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Save the Date

KCARD Summer Board Meeting

July 29, 2010

Working together to serve

Spring 2010

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KCARD

The KCARD staff works diligently to facilitate agricultural and rural business development in Kentucky. We have helped to develop new start-up agribusiness and have assisted established agribusiness to improve and expand their existing businesses.

Our work is supported by Kentucky Agricultural Development funds and USDA Rural Development funds. Without the financial support of the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board and USDA, KCARD services would not be available to agricultural entrepreneurs across Kentucky.

Our work is further strengthened by the close working relationship that we have with the staff of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, the Governor's Office of Agriculture Policy, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, Kentucky Farm Bureau and many other agencies/organizations serving Kentucky agriculture.

KCARD is also a member of CooperationWorks!, a national organization of 19 other cooperative development centers across the U.S. that provide similar services to their rural communities. KCARD networks with these Centers to share information and

to learn about new programs or services that are successful in their states.

By working together, member Centers are able to quickly translate best practices and effective strategies from one region to another, maximizing our resources to bring the greatest benefits to the rural areas of Kentucky that we serve.

KCARD is very appreciative of all the support that others contribute to its efforts to improve our rural economies throughout the Commonwealth.

Ag Finance Announces DEAL for farmers

The Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation (KAFC), chaired by Agriculture Commissioner Richie Farmer, today announces the availability of a new participation loan program: Diversification through Entrepreneurship in Agribusiness Loans (DEAL).

DEAL will provide low-interest financing to beginning agri-entrepreneurs who are attempting to diversify their farming operations through non-traditional agricultural production or services.

"This program combines features of KAFC's infrastructure and beginning farmer loan programs

to provide a financing option for agri-entrepreneurs," said Roger Thomas, chief executive officer for KAFC. "This program addresses capital needs of ventures that may not fit in traditional agriculture production programs."

DEAL will provide up to \$100,000, not to exceed 50 percent of the project costs. Eligible applicants must receive the majority of their household income from farming with less than \$100,000 annually coming from off-farm sources.

The program may provide financing for equipment purchases, facilities, permanent working

capital, real estate, investment into an existing agribusiness or other investments at the discretion of the KAFC board. The program does require the applicant to have a mentor and provide five-year business plan.

For more information on this or other programs offered by the KAFC, contact Bill McCloskey, director of financial services, at (502) 564-4627 or visit the KAFC Webpage at kafc.ky.gov.



Evans Orchard *cont...*

and fried apple pies we had in our market,” explained Jenny. “They wanted meals. So when Agritourism grants were offered through the Ag Development Fund and we decided it was the right time to add a kitchen.”

Jenny and Kevan agree that adding the certified kitchen was the best decision they have made at the market. Not only are they able to provide lunches and dinners to customers visiting the farm, but it has also giving them the facilities they need to expand their value-added line of farm products.

A Growing Market

The growth at the market made Jenny and Kevan realize that it was time to make a few changes in the operation to make business more efficient.

“KCARD came in and did a thorough business analysis for us last year and it was a great experience,” said Jenny. “They had some suggestions on how to improve our business and they gave us a detailed report of the analysis for us to use as we continue to grow.”

As a result of the KCARD analysis, customers this summer at Evans Orchard will find a new floor layout in the market and a larger selection of great meals and value-added items to enjoy while visiting.

“When businesses layout their facility, they do not take into consideration that their customers need an efficient travel path to be able



Evans Orchard & Cider Mill

to find and purchase the items they need and desire,” said Rich Laing KCARD. “Customers want to see what is available and do not want to fight for space to find what they want, this critical factor was the driver in redesigning the Evan’s Orchard retail store front.”

“I’ve heard people say this before, but it really does make a difference to get that unbiased third party opinion in analyzing your business,” said Kevan. “I think that with the changes we have made, as a result of the KCARD analysis, we will see a difference in the bottom line at the market this year.”

A Family Farm

It has been the opportunity to work and build Evans Orchard together that has meant the most to both Kevan and Jenny. While they have their own roles in the day to day operations of the farm and market, they have learned to work together to make the big decisions.

“What truly justifies all the work for me is having four generations on the farm today working together,” said Kevan. “The challenges, the investments have all been worthwhile to know that I can get up every day and work with my family.”

Multi-County Ag Energy Initiative

The Multi-County Ag Energy Initiative is a program that encourages regional collaboration by providing a 1:1 match with ARRA funds and state Agricultural Development Funds for agriculturally related renewable energy projects.

The program makes available up to \$100,000 in ARRA funds not to exceed 25 percent of the total project budget.

Applicants will also be eligible for up to \$100,000 in state Agricultural Development Funds. Applicants are encouraged to seek funding and priority commitments from County Agricultural Development Councils within the counties that will directly benefit from the proposal.

The applicants are also expected to have substantial non-governmental funding committed to the project.

Application and guidelines are available on-line at agpolicy.ky.gov.

Cooperative Collaboration

KCARD's experience in doing Business Management Operation Audits has opened the door for the staff to share this unique service with other centers.

"KCARD is a member of an organization called CooperationWorks!," explained Larry Snell, KCARD Executive Director. "We work with 19 other centers across the US sharing information and networking to identify new ways to provide assistance to clients."

It was during one of the CooperationWorks! meetings that KCARD shared the experiences with BMOAs, and that gave Diane Gasaway, the Executive Director of the Northwest Cooperative Development Center an idea.

"We always look at ways to take our organization to the next level, and last year it was really evident that we had all these opportunities to work with other centers," said Gasaway. "We decided that working with KCARD would be a great collaborative experience and we could gain the knowledge of how to do BMOAs for our clients."

Initially, Snell provided Gas-

away with the basic materials and information to explain the BMOA process. From that point the two began planning how to best approach the staff training.

"A BMOA is an intensive process where you not only work with the client, but also with their staff, suppliers, and customers," explained Snell. "It is easy to share the materials and the basic process, but we knew it would really be best if we could do staff training in person."

In early 2010, Brent Lackey, KCARD Business Development Specialist, flew out to the NWCDC offices in Washington state and held training days for the staff where he went over the basics of a BMOA.

Soon after the classroom training, Snell invited the NWCDC staff members to join KCARD staff during the intensive BMOA process with one of their clients in Kentucky.

"Brent did a great job with the training in house, explaining the process of a BMOA," said Gasaway. "It was really beneficial to have the experience of participating in a BMOA, there is so much that we were able to learn from watching KCARD work with the client."

Gasaway went on to explain that after the Kentucky training in March, NWCDC signed a contract to perform a BMOA for one of their clients.

"The cooperative that we will work with on this first BMOA is pretty progressive and they are a very high function cooperative," explained Gasaway. "While it is a successful business in many ways, they are open to looking at how they can be more efficient."

Snell explained that the KCARD staff will mentor the NWCDC staff through this first BMOA. In fact, KCARD recently received the first round of information on the company and has been reviewing the information to help the staff prepare for the intensive week of interviews and analysis at the business.

"I just want to say KCARD has been really gracious about working with us and sharing their industry secrets so that we can be better for our clients," said Gasaway.

"We have really enjoyed working with NWCDC on this project," said Snell. "This is what CooperationWorks! is all about, collaborating to learn ways to help meet the needs of our clients."



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Board Member Spotlight

Derrick Waggoner

Growing up in rural Henderson County Derrick Waggoner didn't spend his days working on a farm, but he did grow up learning about cooperatives.

"I grew up watching my father work for Big Rivers Electric Cooperative," explained Waggoner. "I grew up in the cooperative world and witnessed the impact this cooperative had on our rural community."

Waggoner now works to make a difference in ag and rural communities in nine states as the Vice President and Regional Manager for CoBank. This is a position that also affords him the opportunity to serve on the KCARD board.

"I guess the one thing I've enjoyed the most in being a member of KCARD is how the different organizations come together for a common goal," said Waggoner. "We all bring our different points of view to the table and work together to help with rural development for the state of

Kentucky."

Waggoner admits he has been impressed not only by the commitment of the KCARD board, but also the level and diversity of assistance provided by the KCARD staff.



As a lender Waggoner believes that one of the most beneficial services KCARD provides is their assistance in developing business plans and feasibility studies.

"KCARD provides a level of expertise in developing business plans and doing feasibility studies that many small companies and especially start up businesses can not afford," said Waggoner. "Having a feasibility study and business plan prepared by a reputable organization like KCARD helps a company's position with obtaining funding."

Kentucky Micro Enterprise Loan Program

Thanks to a one-time state allocation of \$125,000 from the Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority qualified businesses in Trigg, Lyon, Livingston, Crittenden, Caldwell, Christian, Todd, Muhlenberg, Hopkins, Ohio, Butler, Logan, Simpson, Warren, Allen, Barren, Grayson, Hancock, Breckinridge, Meade, Nelson, Henry, Trimble, Carroll and Owen counties will have access to the Kentucky Micro Enterprise Loan Program.

The expanded loan program, which provides financing up to \$35,000 for entrepreneurs and small business operations, will be administered by Community Ventures Corporation from their regional office in Bowling Green.

For more information about the Kentucky Micro Enterprise Loan Program and the cabinet's other small business programs, visit www.ThinkKentucky.com.

Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development fosters business success and growth by developing and delivering technical assistance and by providing educational opportunities for agricultural and rural businesses seeking to enhance their economic opportunities.



KCARD Staff

Larry Snell, Executive Director
Brent Lackey, Business Development Specialist
Nathan Routt, Business Development Specialist
Rich Laing, Business Development Specialist
Thelma Davis, Staff Assistant

To learn more about KCARD visit our web site at www.kcard.info

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KY Center for Agriculture & Rural Development
411 Ring Road
Elizabethtown, KY 42701