

**WINE FESTIVAL:** Enthusiasm for New Jersey wine grows unabated, evidenced by the throng of people attending the second annual Jersey Fresh Wine Festival last week-end at the Burlington County Fairgrounds. One newspaper account pegged the crowd at 4,000 and listed one testimonial after another for the quality of the wines being shared by 18 local wineries. Garden State Wine Growers Association spokesman Tom Cosentino was busy explaining why the consumers enjoyed the wine so much: "You like Jersey tomatoes and sweet corn? If we have great soil to make other great agricultural products, why shouldn't we have great grapes?" There are now 46 licensed wineries in the state, where there was once only a few. The recently-passed wine shipping law, heavily supported by Farm Bureau, has helped expand markets and contribute to more opportunities.

**PROPOSED GAS LINE IN GLOUCESTER COUNTY:** In what may become a test of protecting designated farmland from pipeline intrusion, Woolwich Township farmers attended an "exploratory" meeting Thursday night with representatives of the Columbia Gas Transmission Company, LLC. Farmers were perplexed by what they learned, which was presented to them hesitatingly and incompletely by a team of pipeline company representatives. At issue was the recent emergence of a second, "alternate" pipeline route 9.5 miles in length that will result in "inland cuts" transecting actively farmed vegetable ground. Some farm parcels affected are permanently preserved, and a large portion of the line directly impacts the Sending Zone of the township's long-awaited TDR plan. Also bothersome to the farmers in attendance was news that an application is expected to be filed in six weeks, yet this was the first public meeting concerning the "alternate" route. The original proposed line would have kept the line away from farmland, and would become "co-located" with an existing gas pipeline already in place along Center Square Road. Township of Woolwich officials released a letter that was read at the meeting that was fully supportive of the farm-related concerns of the pipeline route. Approval of this project rests with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, a representative of which attended the meeting.

**SOLAR PANELS-BUILDING FIRE:** An 11-alarm fire on Sept. 1 that destroyed a 266,000 sq. ft., five-story warehouse holding meats and other food in Delanco (Burl. Co.) was made treacherous for firefighters by the presence

of 7,000 solar panels on the roof. Delanco fire chief Ron Holt refused to allow any of the 300 firemen fighting the blaze to go onto the roof once it was realized that the panels' electric charge would not dissipate even after the building's power supply was cut off. Common practice is to have holes cut into the roof of a burning structure to better manage the fire. The solar panel obstruction and insufficient water supply at the industrial park location of the warehouse enabled the fire to burn for 30 hours before it was brought under control. Fire safety officials are now looking into the lessons learned from this fire about roof-mounted solar panels.

**YF&R:** Looks like the NJFB annual meeting will be the next opportunity for moving the new YF&R program ahead at NJFB. Plans are being developed for the board of directors to consider about the meeting in Princeton and subsequent activity during the winter. NJFB staff welcomes calls with interest in the program ... contact Debbie Pribell or Liz Thompson at the Farmhouse.

**MEMBERSHIP:** NJFB member farmers are encouraged to seek out Farm Bureau memberships from hunters who come on their property for hunting privileges. These sportsmen may join at the \$60 associate dues level, show support for agriculture and the need to continue wildlife management, and at the same time enjoy membership benefits. Contact Deb Pribell or any NJFB staffer for a supply of applications.

This is but one example of membership recruitment efforts that can help several more counties achieve membership goal in 2013. NJFB membership as of Sept. 9 stands at 10,920 or 97.6% of goal. Three more counties have achieved goal in the past two weeks: Hunterdon (857 members), Middlesex (370) and Somerset (383) making a total of five (joining Mercer and Monmouth). Counties close to goal are: Cumberland (need 4), Morris (1), Sussex (9) and Warren (2). Statewide, NJFB needs 260 memberships before Oct. 31.

**NJFB WEBSITE:** Effective immediately, this newsletter is no longer accessible via the njfb.org website without a paid membership accept for complimentary enrollees. If there are any questions, contact Sharon Besack at the NJFB office.

**IN MEMORIAM-FLOYD MENCHECK:** Hunterdon County agriculture mourns the passing of Floyd Mencheck, longtime farmer and East Amwell Twp. Committeeman. He died recently at the age of 80. Floyd was also a supervisor of the Hunterdon County Soil Conservation District for many years.