

Agriculture Education Program Advisory Committee

Through hard work, strong support and dedication, the agriculture community is receiving a greater voice with the Frederick County Board of Education (BOE) Ag education program. As many of you know, the ag community received quite a wake-up call in the spring of 2008, when the BOE cut the funding to build an ag mechanics and woodworking building at the Oakdale High School. This raised significant concern within the farm and agri-business community not only about the immediate future of the Linganore ag mechanics program, but also status and the priority the BOE placed on the Agriculture Education programs in Frederick County.

In response to these concerns and through strong support and good Farm Bureau leadership, the Agriculture Education Program Advisory Committee was created to investigate the Linganore issues as well other agriculture education program issues throughout the county. The committee is made up of members of Frederick County Farm Bureau, Pomona Grange, Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation, and Frederick County Delegation to Annapolis, Office of Economic Development, and selected parents of high school students currently active in agriculture education programs. Colby Ferguson is the chairman of the advisory committee.

The purpose of the committee is to:

- Assess the economic impact/demand for the ag programs
- Review existing program curriculum
- Identify issues or barriers to program success
- Enhance and expand the programs
- Act as an advocate for the programs

The committee completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis in October 2008. (For a copy of the SWOT analysis, call Colby at 301-600-3037 or email cferguson@fredco-md.net.) The final report and recommendations for program improvement were presented to the BOE Curriculum and Instruction Committee in December. Some of the recommendations have already been accepted by the BOE and implemented into the current program. Others will be the topic of follow-up discussions.

The committee is very pleased with the reception they received from the BOE to their initial proposals. They foresee a very positive relationship between the ag community, the BOE, and Frederick County Public Schools in the future and hope to work cooperatively and constructively with them to continue to improve the ag education program in Frederick County.