

Leadership Highland Agriculture Day
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On Wednesday, October 30, the 2019-2020 class of Leadership Highland met to learn about agriculture in the region. Leadership Highland class members toured the Highland County Extension Office, Brown Farms, Premier Grain, Bright Farms, and the World Equestrian Center.

The first stop on the Leadership Highland agriculture day was at the Highland County Extension Office. Brooke Beam and Kathy Bruynis provided an overview of the variety of Extension programming offered in the county, which includes 4-H, agriculture and natural resources, community development, family and consumer sciences, and SNAP Education. Dr. Beam provided an overview of the fertilizer and pesticide recertification courses offered for farmers annually, as well as the daily operations in the Extension Office.

The second tour of the day was to Brown Farms, where the group met with Nathan Brown. Mr. Brown, a first-generation farmer, learned by working with another local farmer to become established in the industry. Mr. Brown discussed the challenges facing the agriculture industry, cover crops, and mental health in the farming community. Brown Farms raises grain crops and beef cattle near New Vienna.

The third visit of the Leadership Highland agriculture day was to Premier Grain in Leesburg, where the group met with John Surber. Mr. Surber is the owner of Premier Grain, which operates several grain mills in the region. On this particular day, Premier Grain in Leesburg was filling shipping containers with grain for overseas markets. Mr. Surber discussed the logistics of transporting Highland County grain to Asia and the different uses of grain locally.

Due to the inclement weather, the afternoon of the Leadership Highland agriculture day was spent at indoor facilities. The first stop of the afternoon was to Bright Farms in Wilmington, Ohio. Bright Farms is a hydroponic greenhouse that raises multiple varieties of leafy greens. The greens are mature in 12 to 14 days after planting depending on the variety. Once harvested, the lettuce is delivered fresh to regional grocery stores and restaurants, which include WalMart, Jungle Jim's, Damon's in Wilmington, and the Escape Bar and Grill in Wilmington.

The final stop of the day was to the World Equestrian Center outside of Wilmington. The World Equestrian Center hosts 28 USEF rated hunter/jumper horse shows annually. The winter season of shows will begin in November. The tour of the facility included the show rings, stables, shops, and the Paddock Restaurant.

The next meeting of Leadership Highland is scheduled for the end of November, highlighting health and public safety. For more information about Leadership Highland or other Extension programming, contact the Highland County Extension Office at 937-393-1918.