

## Workforce Development Projects

- Since January 2015, more than 25 high-demand occupations have been identified in the agriculture and food industry with the development of companion posters and career development material that have been used at the 100<sup>th</sup> Farm Show in January 2016 and at a series of Agriculture Education Showcases around the Commonwealth in February 2016. The Department also created a Desk Guide to Careers in the Agriculture and Food Industry that has been widely distributed for the use of vocational counselors in school, workforce development veterans, and rehabilitation programs.
- PDA is working with the PA Department of Education to organize the Agriculture Education Advisory Committee which will provide advice and counsel to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Education about agriculture education programming around the Commonwealth.
- Since August, the Department has met with employers from the agriculture industry to talk about skill and training needs as well as human capital needs. PDA announced the formation of another Working Group to explore an apprenticeship for agriculture equipment service technicians, and two other apprenticeships for dairy herdsman and organic farmer. Registered Apprenticeships offers new workers a chance to earn while they learn. Employers hire apprentices who engage in a structured program of on-the-job training and classroom learning, eventually reaching the full earning potential of a journey person as they acquire skills.

Binkley & Hurst, Hooper's, Messick's, and Deer Country are the equipment dealers and New Holland Agriculture and John Deere are the original equipment manufacturers who are at the core of the new apprenticeship for Agriculture Equipment Service Technicians. Various high school agriculture programs are developing pre-apprenticeship programs that allow training in high school to be used toward the education requirement in the apprenticeships.

- Collaborating with its partners in the industry, PDA is identifying training that is already in place that would lead to a micro-credential as well as identifying where there are skill gaps that may require new micro-credentials. Good examples of micro-credentials already exist. Training for pesticide certification, ServeSafe, and the PDA Certified Poultry Technician course are examples of skill-based training that could become a micro-credential.
- PDA continues to work with urban farmers in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh on a number of technical and workforce issues such as sharing information of soil contamination and remediation, concerns about ownership of the land on which urban farming is done, the use of hydroponics and aquaponics to supplement in-ground growing opportunities, season extension strategies, and getting young people who are interested connected with jobs in the agriculture and food industry.

In Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Horticulture Society, Urban Nutrition Initiative, The Common Market, EPRA, The Food Trust, Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners, Bartram's Garden, Weaver's Way, St. Joseph's University, University of Pennsylvania, Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Greener Partners, and the Philadelphia School District have been among the partners that the Department has engaged. In Pittsburgh, the list includes Office of the Allegheny County Executive, Grow Pittsburgh, Chatham University, Pittsburgh Food Policy Council, Penn State

Extension, GTECH, Hilltop Alliance, Community Kitchen Pittsburg, Goodwill Pittsburgh, Peration Better Block, Penn's Corners Farmers Alliance, Pittsburgh Public Market, and Pittsburgh Aquaponics.

- Veterans have been a special focus of the Department since 2015.
  - Outreach early in the administration to Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture program housed in the WV Department of Agriculture. This contact which included a visit by James McCormick, the Director of the program, provided a best-practice example of how state government can involve veterans in the industry.
  - Additional outreach to the national Farmer Veteran Coalition for an example of how the industry and veterans can be connected through a non-profit. Michael O’Gorman, the Director of the Coalition, was the featured speaker at Veteran and Active Military Day at the 100<sup>th</sup> Farm Show.
  - Many veteran services organizations attend a focus group sponsored by the Department on September 30. Those attending included: Abbie Spackman, Penn State University/AgrAbility; Kendra Martin, AgrAbility/UCP; Randy Loss, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; Rick Hamp and Jerry Beck, PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs; Mimi Baker, Westmoreland County; Mark Critz, PA Rural Development Council; Dennis Pollard, Steve Wolfe, and Mike Fleck, PA Department of Labor and Industry; Adam Hill, PA Horticulture Society; Christina Hawk, PA Department of Education; Justin Barclay, Rodale Institute; Thomas Kennedy, Delaware Valley University; Jack Wagner, PA Hires Veterans, Serena Speer and Steven Loux, PA Department of Labor and Industry; David Madsen, Lela Reichart, and Hannah Smith-Brubaker, PA Department of Agriculture; Steve Suroviec, PA Department of Human Services; Vincent DeMedici, US Department of Labor; and Scott Sheely, PA Department of Agriculture.
  - This group was the core around which PDA organized the Veteran and Active Military Day at the 100<sup>th</sup> Farm Show. More than a dozen veteran services organizations including the VA Medical Center, the Harrisburg Vet Center, the PA Department of Education, Dauphin County Veterans Services, Agrability, the National Guard, and the PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs staffed a booth at the Show on the Day and literally met hundreds of Farm Show attendees.