

Appreciating our Agricultural Heritage

“I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my club, my community, my country, and my world” is the 4-H Pledge. A number of individuals have done just that throughout history and have contributed to the agricultural world. Those individuals have put in time, effort, and energy to help make large advances in agriculture and should be thanked, not within a given month, but year round.

February is National African American History Month and probably the most well-known African-American who had an impact on agriculture is George Washington Carver. However, Carver was not the only African-American to make an impact in the world of food chemistry. Lloyd Augustus Hall is credited with over 100 US and foreign patents in food chemistry. Hall received a patent for curing meats that is still used today that involved the combination of sodium chloride, sodium nitrate, and nitrite. He also discovered that some spices carry bacteria and molds that can speed up the spoiling process.

March holds the honor of having two month long celebrations devoted towards history. These are: National Women’s History Month and National Irish-American Heritage Month. Temple Grandin is one notable female figure that is still in the headlines today for her impact on agriculture. Dr. Grandin is known for her livestock handling facilities that are found throughout the world.

One example of an Irish-American farmer who had a profound impact on agriculture is Cyrus McCormick. At the age of 15, Cyrus invented a lightweight cradle for carting harvested grain. He went on from there to try to complete his father’s goal of developing a horse-drawn reaping machine. Cyrus completed this goal before the 1831 harvest was over and is credited with the world’s first mechanical reaper.

May is National Asian/Pacific Heritage month. Many of the individuals who were involved with the harvesting of grapes, canning of goods, and fishing along the west coast are of Asian-Pacific heritage. Those individuals, like many who immigrated to the United States, felt hardships and persevered. They are credited with the creation of unions to help those working in the fields attain better working conditions.

National Hispanic Heritage Month is in September. Dolores Huerta was born in 1930 in a small New Mexico mining town. Her family lost their farm during the Depression. Years later while teaching she became interested in advocating for farmers because she could not stand seeing kids come to class hungry and needing shoes. Ultimately, that is what led her down the path to become one of the co-founders of the United Farmers Workers Union with Cesar Chavez.

Understanding how individuals of different cultural descent have impacted agriculture could not be complete without including those involved with National American Indian Heritage month in November. The most symbolic impact that American Indians have had on agriculture is through the

“Three Sisters.” For centuries, Native American tribes have planted corn, beans, and squash (the three sisters) together.

Visit our homepage at www.extension.purdue.edu/putnam or you can contact the local Purdue Extension Office by calling 765.653.8411 for more information regarding this week’s column topic or to RSVP for upcoming events. It is always best to call first to assure items are ready when you arrive and to RSVP for programs. While many publications are free, some do have a fee. Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity institution. All times listed are Eastern Time.

Upcoming Events:

February 10 – IEHA Council meeting, Fairgrounds

February 11 – Understanding the Business Side of Ag, Fairgrounds, 6:30 PM, \$5 per family,
 Register at 765-653-8411

February 17 – Exploring 4-H First Meeting, Fairgrounds, 6 pm

February 25 – Understanding the Business Side of Ag, Fairgrounds, 6:30 PM, \$5 per family,
 Register at 765-653-8411

February 27 – Beef and Dairy Steer/X-bred Heifer Weigh-in/Tagging, Fairgrounds, 8-noon.

March 3 & 4 – Keeping the Business in Your Family, Purdue University, \$150, Call 765-494-0889
 to register

March 4 – Apple Tree Pruning Workshop, Chandler’s Farm & Country Market, 1-3 PM

March 10 – Understanding the Business Side of Ag, Fairgrounds, 6:30 PM, \$5 per family,
 Register at 765-653-8411

March 24 – Understanding the Business Side of Ag, Fairgrounds, 6:30 PM, \$5 per family,
 Register at 765-653-8411