

Maryland Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Women in Ag Conference "Growing Together"

The Maryland Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee held its annual Women in Ag conference "Growing Together as Advocates for Agriculture" on March 13 and 14 with over 50 women in attendance. This two-day conference featured advocating and leadership presentations, educational hands-on activities, idea sharing, a lesson and tasting on tea, tours and so much more.

The goal of the conference was to educate, inspire and empower women to be Advocates for Agriculture. This event was open to anyone interested in improving leadership, professional and personal skills. We were very appreciative of our sponsors – Southern States, Maryland Soy Bean Association, Common Ground, Mid Atlantic Farm Credit, Miller Farms, and Tea with Carrie Douthit.

A silent auction was held and the money raised will benefit the Miss Maryland Agriculture Program. We started our conference in Annapolis at the State House for a private tour. Then, we headed to the Maryland Farm Bureau Office where Jesse Reeder with Nationwide Insurance addressed the group and Jeanne Mueller, Director of Elementary Education with Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), shared several hands-on Ag in the Classroom activities.

The group then enjoyed an evening of fellowship and seafood at Mike's in Riva, Maryland. On Saturday we started our day enjoying Miller Farms scrumptious homemade donuts while Shelley Miller told her Ag Story and family values - Faith, Family and Farming.

Lauren Arbogast with American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture gave two lessons; *Super School: Classroom Visits Made Easy* and *Power Up! Making the Energy-Ag Connection*. An Estate Planning workshop was held by Leslie Hart of the Washington County Dept. of Economic Development and Cody Lyon of American Farm Bureau Federation spoke on *Advocacy: How Capitol Hill is Changing the Way it Listens to Constituents*.

We ended the day with Shelby Watson Hampton showing a slideshow of her family farm in transition and spoke on *How to Be a More Effective Woman* and traveled around the corner to Homestead gardens where the owner of Homestead Gardens, Brian Riddle, gave a private tour of his nursery and store, displaying many areas that highlighted Maryland.

The 2016 Women in Ag Conference will be a one-day event on February 23.