

For Immediate Release

“New Vistas for Hoosier Syrup Makers”
2011 Annual Meeting of the Indiana Maple Syrup Association
December 3, 2011 8am to 3:30 pm
Whitley County Fairgrounds, Columbia City, IN

Indiana Maple Syrup Producers to Meet December 3

“New Vistas for Hoosier Syrup Makers” is the theme for the 2011 annual meeting of the Indiana Maple Syrup Association set for Saturday, December 3 in the Community Building at the Whitley County Fairgrounds in Columbia City. Registration opens at 8am; the meeting begins at 9.

The day-long program features sessions for experienced producers and beginning hobbyists along with displays by equipment dealers and suppliers in the spacious exhibition area.

Joe and Barbara Polak of Merrill, Wisconsin are the keynote speakers. The Polak's produce syrup and operate their family business, Maple Hollow, which sells maple products and sugaring equipment. Joe Polak currently serves as Secretary Treasurer of the North American Maple Syrup Council as well as past president of the Wisconsin Maple Producer's Association. An avid spokesperson for the maple industry, he appeared on Wisconsin Public Radio's call-in program to answer questions about making maple syrup.

“Maple producers are in the midst of some significant changes and challenges,” Polak noted. “Climate change is shifting our sugaring season, we must be ever vigilant for appearance of the Asian long horn beetle, and the next generation of syrup makers must find access into the industry.”

“Still,” Polak continued, “there is a bright future for producers of all sizes with the strong interest in wholesome, natural, locally produced foods.”

While Joe is a third generation maple producer, his wife Barbara, is an educator and native Californian who now helps to manage and operate of Maple Hollow. Barbara will share her humorous and entertaining story about what it has been like for someone from the West Coast to marry a maple syrup maker.

Following the keynote presentations, those attending the conference may choose from morning and afternoon breakout discussion sessions led by experienced members of the Indiana Association. Those sessions include the following.

Maple Confections as Value Added Products led by Kim and Bill Owen, Noble County producers who will demonstrate making candy and cream and lead the discussion about producing and marketing these products.

Managing Tubing Systems features Art Harris, Greencastle, who is a producer and expert on the installation and operation of tubing systems used to collect sap.

Sap to Syrup will be hosted by Brent Tubbs, an IMSA board member from Steuben County who will lead the discussion as beginners and veterans share their experiences and expertise about making maple syrup.

Food Safety and Regulations will be covered by Larry Yoder, Allen County, a producer and past member of the Indiana Department of Health Task Force that developed the state guidelines for production and marketing of maple syrup. He will lead the discussion about regulations and compliance in Indiana.

The closing session will feature a panel of hobbyists, dealers and veteran producers who will respond to questions generated in the earlier discussions.

“This meeting is a great opportunity for beginners to ask questions and learn how to get started,” commented Garry Sink, president of the association and a producer from Allen County.

With all of this, would a person want to take up maple syrup making?

“Absolutely!!” is the response heard from Indiana syrup makers.

Lunch will be served as part of the day's events.

The Whitley County 4-H Fairgrounds is located on the west side of Columbia City at 680 Squawbuck Road, approximately 1/3 mile South of the intersection of US Highway 30 and Lincolnway.

Registration (\$20.00) includes a year's membership in the Indiana Maple Syrup Association and lunch. Advance registrations can be sent to: to IMSA c/o David Hamilton, Treasurer, 6025 N. 100 East, New Castle, IN 47362 or by accessing the Indiana Association's web site at www.indianamaplesyrup.org.

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