The fourth annual Maple Weekend was held March 9-10, and the number of participating camps throughout the state almost doubled from 2018. This year 14 sugarmakers participated in the event.

- Beachler’s Sugar Bush, Claypool
- Fisher’s Sugar Camp, Rockville
- Harris Sugar Bush, Greencastle
- Hinkle-Garton Farmstead, Bloomington
- J&A Farms, Nappanee
- Joe’s Sugar Shack, Peru
- Maple Cliff Farm, Waveland
- Maplewood Farms, Brownsville
- Sweet Tree Farms, Wabash
- Rutherford Sugar Camp, New Castle
- Stenger’s Sugar Shack, Brookville
- stix2°brix, Anderson
- Twin Lakes Camp, Hillsboro
- Zimmerman Sugar Bush, Argos

Becky Harris reported the following about the weekend:

Maple Weekend was very busy for us. It was nonstop traffic, and at the same time we were having a very heavy sap run. Sales were extremely good, and we had people from all areas of the state as well as several from out of state that had traveled a good distance to get here. We gave many tours and boiled during that time also. We had people the second day that came because people that were here the first day recommended they come out.

Twin Lakes Camp participated for the first time this year. Ashley Nierman is the Outdoor Education Coordinator at the camp and was in charge of the open house. Ashley reported the event was a smashing success:

We had 126 people come through. The cool thing is that they all came from 10:00-12:30! It rained and stormed from 12:30 p.m. through the end, so no one came during that time. I had a ton of volunteers lined up to help, which was awesome...23 volunteers plus our camp staff. The timing couldn’t have been better to enlist volunteers since our summer staff was home from college on spring break.

We had different stations that visitors could work through. We had one station with a fire going with a pot over it and a hollowed-out log there too. Visitors were able to learn about the history of maple tapping. We had another station where visitors were able to learn about different taps and collection methods throughout the years, along with information about maple trees. Another station allowed participants to drill a hole in a log and tap in a spile. In the sugar shack was a station where they could learn about the evaporator and boiling process as well as the bottling. Our director also had a station called “A Sweet Devotional.”

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Message from the President by Dave Hamilton

My 54th season as a sugarmaker has come and gone, and it was a very good one. My wife’s grandfather began making maple syrup in 1911, and this season ranks as the 6th best of all time. Not only was the quantity good, but the quality was great as well. I hope you also had a great sugaring season.

During Maple Weekend we may have had the visitor with the most unusual occupation. A young man from Las Vegas told me he was the human cannonball in the circus in the city of lost wages!

Last month Art and Becky Harris, Melvin Hawks, and I met with Gary Emsweller of the Pioneer Village to discuss the new sugarhouse. We agreed on a structure that will be 16 feet by 24 feet and will basically occupy the same space as the current one. The building will be on 6x6 runners to avoid Marion County building codes for a permanent structure. There will be a primary serving window to the north as it is now, with a smaller serving window facing east near the north end. The shack will probably have a hinged door for the east side serving area and a roll-up overhead type door for the north serving window. Entrance to the sugarhouse will be about where it is now, but there will be a three-foot pass door, not a sliding door. A porch will extend the entire length of the north end. There will be a sizable overhang on the east side. Art wants to put a mural on the south side of the building with a sugaring scene of some kind. The roof will be tin so that it can be insulated. The serving areas will probably be Formica counter tops with the refrigerator right behind to make it easier to get to the maple cream. The inside of the south end will be partially enclosed for volunteer use and possibly with a counter-top and sink. We still need to design the interior of the building.

The Pioneer Village will be responsible for demolition of the existing building and the preparation of the site for the new one. IMSA will be primarily responsible for the construction of the new facility. That means there will be plenty of opportunities for IMSA members to help out. I am sure that there will be several work days scheduled to display your carpentry skills. We will notify members of these work days by email, postal mail, or phone. If you are unable to assist in the actual construction but want to help out monetarily, you can send a check to Brent Tubbs earmarked for the State Fair Sugar Shack. We will have expenses for lumber, electrical supplies, shelving, and other miscellaneous items.

Canning Day is May 18, and there is an article elsewhere in this issue on that event. One of the topics during our Board of Directors meeting that day will be the possibility of expanding the number of directors from nine to 12. Originally there were six directors, and that number was expanded to nine in 2002. This subject was broached at our last annual meeting with a favorable response. If a motion to increase the number of directors passes on May 18, it will be published in The Tapline and voted on at the December 2019 membership meeting. In anticipation of this happening, IMSA will be providing an opportunity for any member to indicate his or her desire to serve on the board, with a possible election to be held at the December meeting. Ron Burnett is the Chairman of the Nominating Committee and will have more information on this topic in this issue of The Tapline.

It would be good to see you at Canning Day and to also see some of you express an interest in serving as a director.

Society of American Foresters Meeting by Ron Burnett

IMSA was asked to participate in the Indiana Society of American Foresters winter meeting at McCormick’s Creek State Park on February 21-22.

The meeting focused on timber and non-timber products. As a representative of IMSA, Ron Burnett presented a program about Indiana’s maple syrup industry and management of a sugarbush.

The presentation included information about IMSA’s newsletter The Tapline, the association’s website and Facebook page, and the survey results of Hoosier syrup production that Jeff Settle provided at the recent annual meeting. Ron also provided information about a sugarbush managed with a professional forester since 1948 and the impact of reverse osmosis in syrup production.

At the end of the meeting, the foresters traveled to Hinkle-Garton Farmstead in Bloomington. IMSA member Mike Bell provided an overview of his operation at the farmstead. Mike gave the foresters an opportunity to view sap collection and syrup production in person. Several of the foresters had personal experience as hobby producers.
2019 Maple Weekend

(continued from p. 1)

We served a pancake meal with sausage, juice, and coffee in the dining hall. A wagon ride was available to take guests from the parking lot to the sugar shack area.

Something that was fun was one of our workers came up with a bunch of questions about maple syrup and had on a “fun apron” with pockets. The children could pick a pocket, and the staff member would pull a question from the chosen pocket. If the child got the answer right, they were given a piece of maple candy. The kids loved that! They also really enjoyed drilling the tap holes.

This is the second year for Stenger’s Sugar Shack to participate in Maple Weekend. Alan Stenger reported visitors came non-stop from the time the doors opened on Saturday morning until the rainstorm hit around 3 p.m. Alan estimated around 200 people attended, which was a 30% increase from the prior year. Several guests came from as far away as Cincinnati. Family friend Jerry Hunt ran the evaporator so Alan could mingle with the visitors. Sales were very strong. Besides maple syrup, Alan also sold jerky with his business partner Joey Singer. Several friends set up shop selling honey, baked goods, and wood crafts.

This is the first year stix2⁰brix participated in Maple Weekend. A turnout of about 90 people was encouraging. Quite a few visitors came from the Indianapolis area. Several guests were from Ohio with the honor for the longest distance going to a young lady from Ontario, Canada. Complimentary food was available. Nadine Riffey provided fresh-baked Yankee breadsticks for dipping in maple syrup and cocktail sausage links with a maple mustard glaze. Retail items included maple cream, maple fudge, maple sugared nuts, maple cotton candy, and bourbon barrel-aged maple syrup. As reported by other sugarmakers, retail sales were pleasingly strong, while the selling period was really short. By 2 p.m., the torrential rain had arrived, and the visitors scattered.

Besides local people, Dave Hamilton had visitors from Wisconsin, Tennessee, Nevada, and Washington, DC at Rutherford Sugar Camp. Turnout was about 45 people each day. Internet advertising is important. Most attendees read about the various open houses online on IMSA’s website and Facebook page. A few had picked up the promotional cards at the Indiana State Fair. Some were repeat visitors who know the event occurs on the second weekend in March.

Visitors enjoy breakfast at Twin Lakes Camp’s open house.

Ellie Brooks hands out product samples at stix2⁰brix.

Demonstration of tapping a maple tree at Twin Lakes Camp.

Visitors enjoy breakfast at Twin Lakes Camp’s open house.

Alan Stenger

Jerry Hunt shows young visitors the evaporator at Stenger’s Sugar Shack.

Demonstration of tapping a maple tree at Twin Lakes Camp.
Phil Hanner can trace the ownership of his 400-acre farm near Norman back to the late 1800’s. His great-grandmother Eliza Jane Hanner received money from the federal government following her husband’s death. Abner Hanner was a Civil War veteran. Abner and Eliza Jane’s sons then used the money to buy adjacent farms in scenic Jackson County. The farm was passed down to Ralph Appleton Hanner, Phil’s grandfather, and then to Phil’s father Eldon Hanner. Through the generations, the farm has been used for livestock and timbering. However, the maple trees were never cut down because Phil’s grandfather had the foresight to know that someday one of his descendants may want to produce maple syrup. It wasn’t until Phil was living on the farm that the Hanner family began sugaring. Today the Hanner farm is surrounded by the Hoosier National Forest.

Phil’s sugaring career began with a persistent wife and a single maple tree by the house. Phil’s wife Mary, a school teacher, had been urging Phil to make syrup. A tree by the house the children used for a swing had a broken limb, and Phil noticed the sap running from the wounded tree during the spring thaw in 1979. Seeing the sap running, the children wanted to tap the tree. However, it was too late in the season, so the family began tapping the following year. They cooked the sap that first year in a stainless-steel pan on a cookstove in the house basement.

Using a cookstove was not efficient, so later Phil had a pan made to fit a firebox he had taken from a local Civilian Conservation Corps camp. He used this pan for making syrup until he burnt it good and proper. Out of fatigue and frustration, he was ready to give up sugaring.

One year at the Indiana State Fair, Phil became acquainted with Lee Bisner, who owned Reynolds Sugar Camp in Wisconsin. At that time, Lee sold maple syrup at the fair. Lee tried to sell Phil an evaporator for $2,000, which was quite a bit of money in those days. Sometime after their meeting at the fair, Phil received a call from his new friend. Lee had a shipment of maple equipment and supplies coming from New England to Wisconsin. He told Phil to meet the truck driver in West Lafayette to pick up his new evaporator. Surprised by his “acquisition,” Phil met the driver and brought home the new evaporator he hadn’t ordered. Now Phil needed a sugarhouse, so he scurried to build a 10x10-foot building for his new toy.

One year there was so much sap that the evaporator was being fired around the clock. Phil was still working as a supervisor at Cummins in Columbus. The evaporator was putting off so much steam that he couldn’t see across the sugarhouse. Water was even dripping off the ceiling. This was before he knew about steam hoods. To his amazement, one snowy day in walked Lee. Phil asked Lee how he had found him. “Not hard,” said Lee. “I just looked for the steam rising on the horizon!” Eventually Phil paid Lee in full for the evaporator and also purchased a steam hood.

It was at a meeting in Rockville shortly after the Indiana Maple Syrup Association (IMSA) was formed that Phil met Garth Atherton. Garth was the owner of Small Brothers, a maple equipment manufacturer in Enosburg Falls, Vermont. He purchased a Waterloo Small wood-fired evaporator from Garth, which was the second and last evaporator he owned. Six years ago Phil converted the evaporator from wood to oil. Due to failing health, Phil has not made syrup for the last several years and just recently sold his evaporator and other maple equipment to another sugarmaker.

At the peak of production, the sugarbush had 800 to 900 taps. There was the potential for 2,000 to 3,000 taps. Phil built his sugarhouse down low to take advantage of gravity tubing. At one time, the sugarbush had ten miles of tubing due to the layout of the trees. His “ingenious” strategy...
Hanner Sugar Camp

resulted in the sugarhouse floor being underwater every time the nearby creek flooded!

Phil made syrup for over 40 years and learned a lot along the way. The syrup was sold at the farm and at one shop in Nashville, Indiana. He chuckles (now) about his dad. Eldon Hanner thought he also knew how to make syrup. Sugaring is often a community event, and Eldon’s friends and other family members would come watch syrup being made. Phil would let his dad watch the evaporator when he needed to feed the livestock. One evening Eldon was so busy talking to his nephew that the fire went out. Also, the float in the bulk tank had frozen, so no sap was flowing from the tank. When he realized the fire was out, Eldon rushed to fire up the evaporator again, not noticing there was no sap in the flue pan. Needless to say, both the flue pan and the finishing pan got burnt. Lesson learned. The only other person Phil allowed to run the evaporator after that calamity was his son Douglas. Also, he bought a second finishing pan as a spare.

Phil has been an active member of IMSA. He is a charter member and served as president from 2002 to 2003. He was the first officer to attend a North America Maple Syrup Council (NAMSC) meeting. At that time Florence Williams was the IMSA president and asked Phil to attend the meeting in Portland. After he returned home, he contacted Florence and told her when he arrived in Portland, Oregon, he couldn’t locate the hotel that was holding the meeting. He then “realized” he was supposed to be in Portland, Maine. Whether Florence fell for Phil’s antics is not known.

Garth Atherton was at the NAMSC meeting in Portland and asked Phil to join him on stage as a contributing member of a panel. Phil didn’t know what to do, so he just read the Indiana production report to the audience. After the session, the Vermont representative told Phil he was sure Phil had been lying about being a Hoosier because his southern accent was so prominent.

In a subsequent year, Phil attended the NAMSC meeting being held in Quebec. Garth had invited Phil to travel with him across the border from Vermont to Quebec. At the last minute, Garth stayed home with no explanation, so Phil ended up travelling to the meeting with a CDL sales representative, which Garth had arranged. Unbeknownst to Phil at the time, Garth was in the midst of negotiations to sell Small Brothers to CDL.

It was at Garth Atherton’s sugarhouse that Phil first saw an early edition of a reverse osmosis (RO) machine operating. At that time, Garth had 40,000 taps. He was tapping both soft maples and hard maples. Garth was using an 8x16-foot evaporator with two fire doors and four finishing pans. Although impressed with the new technology, Phil never installed an RO machine in his own sugarhouse.

Phil has one son and two daughters – Douglas, Shona, and Tamla. Douglas recently moved to Wyoming. Shona lives nearby and looks in on her dad. Today his grandsons Zebulon and Zane help with the livestock and hay. There are 25 head of cattle and a few “worthless” horses. With a mischievous grin, Phil said the horses can belong to the first person who comes along and takes them home....

Nominating Committee Request by Ron Burnett

As explained by Dave Hamilton in the “Message from the President” article, the Board of Directors is considering an increase in the number of directors. The Nominating Committee requests at this time anyone interested in being considered for a director position to forward his or her name and past syrup-making experience to the committee.

Responsibilities of an IMSA director include attending three meetings annually - Canning Day at Greencastle in May, Setup Day at the state fairgrounds the first Thursday in August, and the annual meeting in December. Director duties also include participation in Canning Day, volunteering at the Sugar Shack during the state fair, participating on the Annual Meeting Committee when the meeting is in your district, and making suggestions and decisions at the board meetings.

Those interested should forward their names to Ron Burnett at ronburnett88@gmail.com or 9741 W Baseline Rd, Paragon, IN 46166.
Canning Day

Saturday, May 18
Harris Sugar Bush
999 E County Road 325N
Greencastle, IN 46135

IMSA sells approximately 600 gallons of maple syrup at the Indiana State Fair. These sales are the association’s major source of revenue. The syrup is purchased in bulk and then bottled in various sizes. With that much syrup to bottle in one day, plenty of help is needed. Be a part of the crew as we fill the containers, attach labels, rack the jugs for cooling, pack cases for delivery to the fairgrounds, and clean up. Volunteers are also needed to transport and store the syrup jugs until setup day at the state fair. There’s a job for everyone. Come for the entire day if you can, but even a few hours are helpful as many hands make for light and enjoyable work.

Participating in Canning Day is a great time to visit with fellow IMSA members, catch up on the latest industry news, hear how the 2019 season went around the state, and pick up new ideas for bottling operations in your own sugarhouse.

Setup begins first thing in the morning at 9 am, and bottling continues until finished, usually around 4 pm. A potluck lunch will be held at noon. Meat dishes and drinks are provided. Bring a salad, side dish, or dessert to share, along with your own plate, cup, and table service.

To help with planning for this event and the meal, please notify Ron Burnett by May 13 if you will be participating. Ron can be reached at (765) 537-2375 or ronburnett88@gmail.com.

For information about overnight accommodations in the Greencastle area, contact the Art and Becky Harris at (765) 653-5108 or aharris@joink.com. Also, visit the Putnam County Visitors Bureau at http://GoPutnam.com/stay.

Maple Weekend in Pictures

Joe Miller of Joe’s Sugar Shack near Peru.

Never too young to enjoy the sweetness of maple syrup.

Dave Hamilton explains the syrup grading system.

All aboard! Shuttle service was provided at the Twin Lakes Camp open house.

Gerald Riffey chats with visitors at stix2°brix.
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Sweet Beginnings Maple

Sweet Beginnings Maple is a family-owned business that provides a full line of CDL maple equipment and supplies right here in the Hoosier state. Our services also include custom tubing installation. Tubing with vacuum system significantly increases sap production.

Thinking about expanding your production? Sweet Beginnings Maple can assist in properly sizing a reverse osmosis machine to run your operation more efficiently.

We are committed to providing superior service to our customers, whether you have 10 taps or 10,000 taps. Contact Silas Beachler for your equipment or tubing installation needs. Feel free to call at any time. No question is too big or too small.

Sweet Beginnings Maple
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Claypool, IN 46510-9019
(260) 578-1625

TUBING SEMINAR: Jesse Randall would like to conduct a tubing seminar in Indiana this fall. The seminar is funded by the Acer Grant, of which IMSA is a recipient. If anyone is interested in this event, contact Dave Hamilton at (765) 524-1565.

FOR SALE: Three galvanized stock tanks used for sap storage. One 500 gallon tank for $75 and two 300-gallon tanks for $50 each. All three for $150. Delivery available for a fee. Contact Dave Hamilton at (765) 524-1565. Located in New Castle, IN.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: Any news, suggestions for future articles, or subscription changes should be sent to Eric Lee at eric.lee@privategarden.org or 32 Winding Way, Anderson, IN 46011-2255. Eric can also be reached at (765) 643-3468.

Gideon Wright sleeps peacefully for his first photo shoot in a galvanized sap bucket once used by Claude Wright, his great-great-grandfather, to collect sap on the family farm near Cowan.

Joey Singer makes and sells jerky at Stenger’s Sugar Shack near Brookville.

Winger's Sugarbush & Supplies

The Tapline is the quarterly newsletter for members of the Indiana Maple Syrup Association (IMSA), Eric Lee, editor (eric.lee@privategarden.org). The latest IMSA information, archives of issues, and much more is available at IMSA’s website, indianamaplesyrup.org. Also, please “like” our two Facebook pages: facebook.com/IndianaMapleSyrupAssociation and facebook.com/IndianaMapleWeekend.