THE 2011 R.J. VOLLMER SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FARMER WINNER NAMED

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois Department of Agriculture, Sustainable Agriculture Program is pleased to announce the 2011 “R.J. Vollmer Sustainable Agriculture Farmer of the Year”. This year’s recipient is Jack Erisman from Pana, Illinois in Christian County.

Jack began experimenting with conservation tillage back in the 1960s. In the 1970s he had completely ceased the use of anhydrous ammonia and insecticides in his fields, and by the mid 1990s, became a certified organic operation.

Erisman runs a diverse operation using a seven-year rotation including corn, cover crops, soybeans, small grains and grass/legumes. He also has a 200+ head cow/calf herd that he keeps mostly on pasture. The animals are there to complement the system.

“If we can successfully keep the animals on grass, it enables us to use longer rotations,” Jack said.

Jack and a group of other organic producers founded the Illinois Organic Crop Improvement Association Chapter. He was instrumental in the formation of the earliest
sustainable agriculture organization in the state—the Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Society and also played a leadership role in the creation of CFAR, the Council on Food and Agriculture Research.

Jack Erisman is considered a driving force in the Illinois sustainable farming movement and will be awarded the 2011 R.J. Vollmer Sustainable Agriculture Farmer Award at the Agriculture Day Luncheon tomorrow at noon on the Director’s Lawn at the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

For more information on all that is happening during the 2011 Illinois State Fair, visit www.illinoisstatefair.info.

A NEW TWIST ON A STATE FAIR TRADITION

The Giant slide has been a part of the Illinois State Fair since 1968 and that tradition will continue this year, but with a few changes. While the Giant Slide has technically come under new ownership this year, this family is no stranger to running the popular attraction. Shad Shymansky and his wife Angie, along with their four children Sydney, Shyanne, Skylar and Seager are thrilled to have the Giant Slide back in the family after previously owning the slide from 1976-1993. To celebrate, the Shymansky’s have reduced the price to $2.00 per rider and $5.00 for 3 riders, and they say the response has been great.

“We have had people coming up to thank us everyday for lowering the prices,” said Angie Shymansky. “But the best part about owning the Giant Slide is just seeing the smiles on all the kids faces when they get down to the bottom of the slide.”

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The Shymansky family has also teamed up with a new vendor at the Giant Slide this year. Mel-o-Cream Donuts will be selling their traditional donuts, along with some brand new treats at the attraction this year.
UPCOMING EVENTS: TUESDAY, AUG. 16
Agriculture Day

Illinois agriculture, which is featured throughout the fair, is highlighted on this day. Grand champion junior livestock including the barrow, steer, wether, poultry trio and rabbit trio are auctioned at the Governor’s Sale of Champions, and the best of Illinois processed foods are auctioned at the Commodity Auction.

Livestock Center
5:00pm – Commodity Auction
5:30pm – Governor’s Sale of Champions

The Shed
9:00am - Cutest Little Farmer – Contestants may enter the day of the contest, but preregistration is suggested. Contestants may bring one object that will accent his/her costume. Ribbons will be awarded to the winners, along with a general participation ribbon for all contestants.
1:30pm - Pedal and Tractor Pull – This competition is open to all boys and girls weighing between 30 and 80 pounds. There will be no advanced entries. The winner of each contest is determined by who can pedal for tractor down the track the farthest while pulling a weight transfer sled. The competition is divided into three weight divisions and 1st-3rd places will be given a cash prize for each division.

Grandstand: Luke Bryan with Craig Campbell – 8pm
Luke Bryan will singing his chart topping songs “Rain is a Good Thing” and “Someone Else Calling You Baby” along with other hits tomorrow night. Craig Campbell, a Georgia native, will open for Bryan.

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