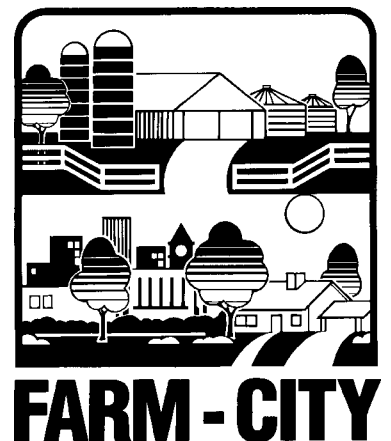


**Tips, tools
and ideas
for
organizing
a
successful,
local
farm-city
program**



When, Where and What

National Farm-City Week is the 7-day period ending on Thanksgiving. Many Farm-City planners deliberately try to sponsor some type of event during this time frame. Others set their events during fall harvest time, when weather tends to be a little more predictable than late November. Keep in mind, though, that this can be an extremely busy time for the “Farm” side of Farm-City.

Other groups have found midsummer to be ideal. Many agricultural producers are not quite as busy as during spring planting or fall harvest time. Many gardens have begun offering up their rewards and farmers markets around the country are in full swing. Plus, there typically are not school conflicts.

You will have to keep an eye out for possible conflicts such as local or even state fair activities that could drain away some of your participants, particularly from the farm side. And watch for schedules of firemen’s and church picnics. In most communities, such activities tend to happen at the same basic time, year after year, so you should be able to plan around them for your Farm-City program

The **Where** side of hosting a Farm-City events tends to depend entirely on what type of program you want to do. If it is just a poster or essay contest at local schools, no special site is required. If it’s a luncheon or dinner bringing together rural and urban residents, then you may need to find out about a banquet hall or church or school community room.

If you are considering a larger event with more community involvement, you may want to touch base with City Hall and get their inputs. Can you block off a couple streets on a Sunday afternoon? What about using a city or county park?

Want to take it to the country for a real, hands-on farm experience? This can become more involved for a couple of reasons. First, you will have to find a farmer who will work with you and doesn’t mind the idea of a couple hundred people dropping by for an afternoon or all-day event.

You also will need to think about where you will park the cars of everyone showing up. And porta-potties. And food tents. Traffic control. Maps and signs. Dust.

And no matter what type of event you are planning, if it’s going to be outdoors, you have to think about weather and have some kind of plan in place in case it rains all day.

What involves the program itself. If your program is going to be a lunch or dinner program, ask the local county agent to make a presentation on agriculture in your area with some statistics on the role farm producers play locally in terms of benefit to the local economy. Or are their agricultural companies in your area which could provide program materials?

If you’re going a little larger, like a half-day program in a local park, how about starting out the morning with a local farmers market. Then ask a senior citizens group to provide some singing entertainment. Any barber-shoppers in your area? A high school jazz band? Square dancers?

As far as speakers are involved, get officials from both the city and county governments involved for a “few remarks.” Here again, the county agent could be on the program.

An outdoor program also opens opportunities for larger exhibits and displays. Police and fire departments are always looking for ways to reach out to their communities to talk safety and many have ready-made displays. The local farm machinery dealer would probably be happy to

bring in a couple tractors or a combine or two as well.

For the younger folks, you can probably find someone who can offer pony rides. There are also farmers in the area who may be able to arrange some type of petting zoo, or can bring in some exotic animals such as llamas or giant draft horses.

As far as food is concerned, you could be overwhelmed by people and organizations who will want to provide everything from barbecues to sweet corn to desserts.

In any case, you will need to determine up front what will be donated and what will be purchased. You may also need to check with local officials about allowing things to be sold other than food. You will want to proceed cautiously when it comes to opening up a display area to general vendors. Remember, this is supposed to be a Farm-City event, not a community rummage sale.

In General

- Establishing a certain date for your event each year helps establish your creditability. We have set the 2nd Saturday in July for Tioga County. This was done after carefully checking calendars of other community summer activities so as to avoid conflicts and overlapping activities.
- Our location varies throughout the county but the date stays the same unless there would be a major conflict with the host family.
- We draw a family-oriented crowd. In over 20 years of Farm-City events, I've never noticed kids running wild or unsupervised. We do not draw the carnival crowd such as those sometimes seen at county fairs.
- Be sure to have bales of hay or straw placed under shade trees throughout farm as places for people to rest.
- Designated parking for persons with disabilities is greatly appreciated. A local course loans us two golf carts to use to help persons get from the parking area to our display areas.
- We use FFA students and advisors for parking attendants. Be sure to remember them with food, beverages and breaks since it will be harder for them to get back for something to eat.
- Portable toilets should be accessible. Locating these in level areas against buildings works very well in most cases. We have since added hand-washing stands here as well.
- For wagon tours we suggest a tour guide on each wagon for a number of reasons:
 - to tell the visitors about the host family farm
 - to give brief history of the area
 - to answer questions relating to agriculture,
 - to be our Farm-City personal contact with visitors since they are a captive audience.
- A scripts for tour guides is prepared and given out in advance. This is not a manual to be read on the tours but a reference to be used by the guide.

