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Michigan Farmers Spring “Free Groceries for a Year!” on Three Michigianians

Sweepstakes Winners Awarded \$5,000 Grocery Gift Cards During “National Agriculture Week”

Even during tough economic times, Michigan’s farmers are thanking the consumers of the state for their support of agriculture by helping to pay their grocery bills. In fact, three Michigan consumers are the lucky winners of “Free Groceries for a Year!,” courtesy of Michigan’s farmers, following a 90-day sweepstakes.

The three winners, who were drawn at random from more than 200,000 Michigan consumer registrations, are: Ron Barnes, Detroit, Twila Kock, Grand Rapids, and Greg Napolitan, Kalamazoo.

In coordination with “National Agriculture Week” (March 14-20), groups of Michigan farmers are presenting each of the winners with their gift cards for \$5,000* in free groceries, which can be redeemed at their preferred grocery retailer.

For three months, beginning in November 2009, residents from across the state were invited to visit www.FarmersFeedUS.org to register for a chance to win. While doing so, they also had the opportunity to meet 10 Michigan farmers, and take a video tour of their farms. Each video explained how they produce safe, nutritious and affordable food for Michigan consumers.

“Throughout the sweepstakes, it was great to see the support that consumers showed for the Michigan farmers who raise their food,” said Jennifer Lewis, a Jonesville dairy farmer featured on the Web site. “And as Michigan farmers, we’re proud to showcase our farms, sharing how we raise the food that consumers eat, while also introducing them to our families.”

Sweepstakes winner Ron Barnes was also in high spirits. “The economy has taken a toll on a lot of people in our state, myself included. So it’s great to win and be part of such a positive program,” said Barnes. “And after meeting some of Michigan’s farmers online, I felt like I knew them personally. I’ve had farmers in my family – aunts and uncles – so I know how hard they work every day. And now, I’m even more appreciative of all farmers, and everything they do to get food to our table.”

And as the official retail partner of the sweepstakes, Grand Rapids-based Spartan Stores has helped connect their customers with the farmers of the state by promoting the chance to win in shopping circulars and online.

“We were excited at the opportunity to help introduce our customers to the hard-working Michigan men and women who produce their food,” said Jeanne Norcross, vice president corporate affairs Spartan Stores. “And after visiting the site, we hope they have a better understanding of how that glass of milk, pork chop, carton of eggs, or bag of apples is produced.”

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And while the sweepstakes registration period is now over, the Michigan Farmers Feed US web site, featuring information about agriculture in the state, will remain live.

The Michigan Farmers Feed US program is supported by local farmers represented by the Michigan Ag Council, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Beef Industry Commission, Michigan Pork Producers Association, Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee, Michigan Apple Committee, Dairy Farmers of America, Michigan Milk Producers Association, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, Michigan Allied Poultry Industries, GreenStone Farm Credit Services, West Michigan Ag Alliance, Hamilton Farm Bureau, and 30 county Farm Bureaus from across the state. Further, Spartan Stores is the official retail partner, helping connect their customers with farmers from across the state.

*Based on Food Marketing Institute, a \$5,000 value.

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Michigan Farmers Feed US
Farmers Featured on
www.FarmersFeedUS.org

Below are the names and contact information for each of the ten Michigan farmers featured at FarmersFeedUS.org. If you are interested in speaking with them about their farm, and how they became involved in the program, feel free to call them directly. Or, if you'd prefer, please call Mark Crouser at 816-556-3134, who can assist in coordinating with each of them.

Eastern Michigan

- Jennifer Lewis, dairy farmer, Jonesville, Hillsdale County (517-869-2877)
- Jason Ruhlig, vegetable farmer, Carleton, Monroe County (734-777-2839)
- Bret Schapman, cattle farmer, Romeo, Macomb County (586-531-0770)

Central Michigan

- Dave Cheney, hog farmer, Mason, Ingham County (517-676-7930)
- Harry Herbruck, egg farmer, Saranac, Ionia County (616-676-1754)
 - Annie Link, dairy farmer, Alto, Kent County (616-293-0432)
- Clark Gerstacker, corn farmer, Midland, Midland County (989-615-3133)

Western Michigan

- Jennifer Bixby, apple farmer, Berrien Springs, Berrien County (269-471-9290)
 - Ed Cagney, soybean farmer, Scotts, Kalamazoo County (269-217-4559)
- Scott Oswalt, sheep farmer, Vicksburg, Kalamazoo County (269-649-9025)

EDITORS NOTE: Photos of the presentations are available upon request from gfrahm@michigansoybean.org.