



Iowa Women in Agriculture

Ag Women@Work - 11th Annual Conference Summary

Written By Madeline Schultz, August 21, 2017

Inspiration Abounded at the Ag Women@Work Conference

An outstanding line-up of speakers and 160 enthusiastic attendees made the 11th Annual Iowa Women in Agriculture Conference, Ag Women@Work, a wonderful success. The conference generated a whole lot of fun and learning at the Iowa FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny, Iowa on August 1, 2017.

Darci Vetter, former chief agricultural negotiator for the U.S. Trade Representative and diplomat in residence at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, traveled from Washington DC to kick off the morning with her discussion of women in agriculture as global citizens along with her assessment of agricultural trade. Elaine Kub, author and market commentator, brought her energy and common sense to the topic of grain marketing. Angie Treptow, Regional VP with Farm Credit Services of America shared business management insights for family farms. “Track farm sales in your area and watch what happens at the courthouse,” advised Treptow. These talented speakers gave women solid information they can put to good use on their own farms and agribusinesses.

As she was graduating with an Ag Business degree from Iowa State University in May of 2016, Natalina Sents pitched an idea to Beck’s Hybrids. She would spend one year traveling the country as an Ambassador for the ‘Why I Farm’ movement. Beck’s gave her the green light and off she went, visiting farmers in all 50 states and sharing their stories. She entertained the audience with heartfelt stories of the farmers she met as well as her personal adventures.

After lunch, women could join two of the three workshops presented. Melissa O’Rourke, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm and Agribusiness Specialist and Attorney, shared the top ten estate and transition planning mistakes. Her workshop got everyone involved and thinking about the next step on their own plans. Dr. Tina Chasek, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Psychologist, talked about harvesting health and happiness. Rural women face unique issues that can lead to depression such as having three jobs: on-farm, off-farm and “Mother.” “There can be a lack of recognition for women’s work as well as the burden of everyone else in the family sharing problems with them.” Explained Chasek. She shared some self-assessment tools to help people identify if they are stressed, depressed or over-blessed. Meghan Filbert, Practical

Farmers of Iowa, and Mike Phelan, Beaver Creek Produce discussed adding value to the farm business by grazing cover crops and growing and marketing hydroponic produce.

Amanda Freund shared her inspiring story of agriculture advocacy and the thrills and spills of being part of a four-generation family farm in Connecticut. The family produces 'Cow-Pots' for gardeners, milks 300 dairy cows, and operates a vegetable and agritourism market. Amanda is an outspoken ag-vocate in her state and likes to wear t-shirts with slogans like "I Farm in Connecticut" and "I Love Milk." Amanda assured the audience, "I DO want to miss a milking over the next four decades!" That's one way she is different than the previous generation. Working with her big family is challenging but honest conversations help. "Find a dynamic woman leader to be a mentor in your life," advised Amanda.

About 60 women enjoyed the Wine and Cheese Networking Reception held the evening before. Ruth Rabinowitz highlighted the event with her presentation on stepping into her role as farm manager of her family farms. Her story demonstrated her love of Iowa farmland and her dedication to conserving the land for the next generation. "I'm so thankful we discovered a 14-acre parcel of native prairie on our Warren county farm before changing that landscape," she shared.

The 11th Annual Iowa Women in Agriculture conference was organized by IWIA board members Kami Axtell, Cathy Ayers, Jeanne Bernick, Amber Kohlaas, Ann Leonard (Treasurer), Katie Olthoff, Deb Marcellus Schuler, Madeline Schultz (Secretary), and Cheryl Tevis (President).