

Lectures

Written by Jeff Poppen
Tuesday, April 10, 2012

I frequently give lectures as part of my business. It can be to youngsters at Head Start, to an elderly garden club, or to anything in between. I've slowly gotten over stage fright and give speeches fairly easily. Although our county executive said my talk to the commissioners fourteen months ago was respectful, he refuses to let me address them again. "We are not talking about chicken anymore," he said. People talk to me about chickens all the time.

On March 2nd I gave two lectures in Bowling Green, at the Organic Association of Kentucky's annual conference. It's a good bunch of people trying to get more organics going in our neighboring state.

The next day I attended the Nashville Lawn and Garden Show. Many old and new friends meet me there every year for my lecture. It turns into a fun question and answer session. The Davidson County Master Gardeners were represented, and have asked me to speak at their May 19th get together, at the Ellington Agriculture Center.

March 10th found me back in Nashville at Lipscomb University, giving a 3 ½ hour class on gardening. Afterwards, I gave a talk on beekeeping to a different group of people.

The Tennessee Organic Growers Association also hired me to lecture at their annual conference on March 24th. They are a hard working group active in the organic movement in Tennessee, and also had speakers from Pennsylvania and Washington State.

Two local groups, Kirbytown Farm Community and Friends of Long Hungry, still meet regularly to share research on the impact of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) coming into Macon County. We believe our findings would be of interest to our local representatives and policy makers.

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Whenever a major industry moves into a rural county, people talk about it. Many of our friends and family have been negatively impacted by the chicken houses next door in Clay County, from what we can tell, the citizens of Macon County are uneasy with the prospect of CAFO communities, and can see the truth in this statement. But it is never too late to admit a mistake and change direction.

Yesterday, Nashville Public Television came here and filmed three more T.V. shows. I would like to continue operating my business at my home, but feel threatened by the huge Tyson (who owns Cobb) chicken houses being erected 450 feet from my kitchen doorstep.

With 300 acres, there is plenty of room to move them back to 1500 feet away from my 1871 log cabin, the public organic garden and the storage cave. Cobb's own restrictions are "1500 feet from a public area or business." The Macon County Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution stating CAFO's must be 1500 feet from a residence. Why are they so close to me?

Hundreds of people visit here every year, and spend money locally. The concern throughout Middle Tennessee, wherever I go, is deeply gratifying. Most importantly, the wide support I have in my local community touches my heart. I didn't know so many cared so much. As I keep on the lecture circuit and meet all kinds of people, I always can't wait to get home to my comfortable little neighborhood.