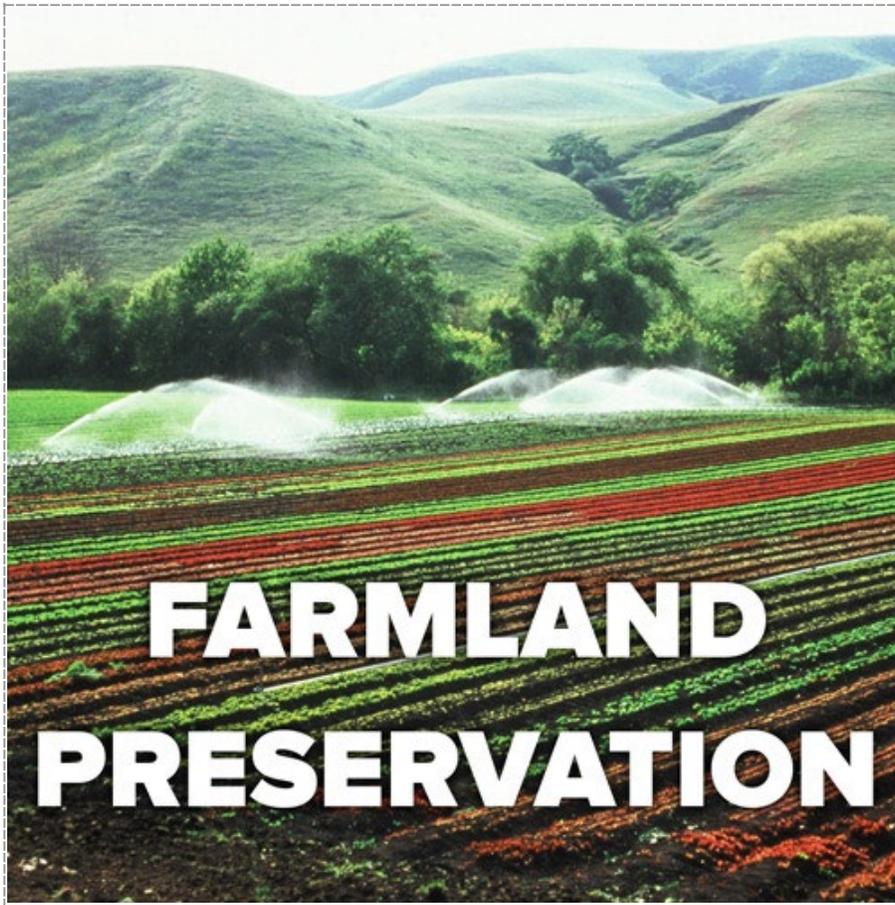


## A Lesson in Hands-on Learning



Earth Day observances remind us of our need to be good stewards of the Earth and our environment. Congratulations to the Lebanon County Conservation District and area school students who participated in the conservation district's local Envirothon. Stephanie Harmon and the entire team did a great job, and the students were treated to an outstanding learning experience! Thank you for sharing your knowledge with the future stewards of our planet.

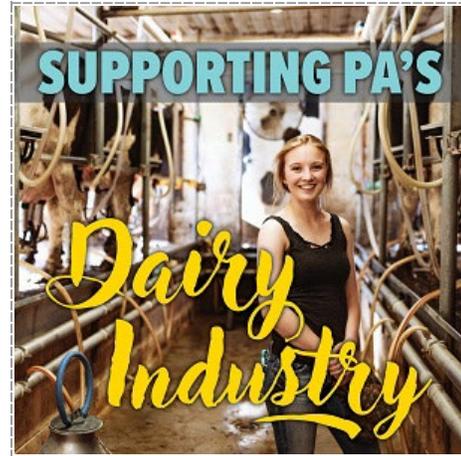
**PA Invests Nearly \$10 million to Preserve 40 Farms –  
Two in Lebanon County**



Pennsylvania recently invested nearly \$10 million to preserve 40 farms in 19 counties, including two in Lebanon County. They include the Nelson and Eva Martin Farm in South Londonderry Township and the Matthew D. and Louise H. Nolt Farm in Myerstown. Properties protected under the Farmland Preservation program are preserved for farming and cannot be used or sold for non-farming purposes. For details, [click here](#).

**House OKs Bills to Help PA Dairy Farmers**

The House recently approved several bills to support dairy farmers and the dairy industry in the Commonwealth. [House Bill 223](#) would create Keystone Opportunity Dairy Zones (KODZ) with the goal of encouraging new or additional processing capacity for Pennsylvania milk. With people drinking less milk but eating more yogurt, cheese, butter and ice cream, Pennsylvania dairy farmers would benefit by having additional processors in the Commonwealth who would turn their milk into value-added products that can be shipped around the country or the world. Under the bill, qualifying processing facilities would be required to create new jobs and use primarily Pennsylvania milk in exchange for tax incentives similar to those offered under the existing Keystone Opportunity Zones program. The House also approved [House Bill 224](#), which aims to ensure the state's over-order premiums on milk are being properly paid to support Pennsylvania dairy farmers. Additional bills approved by the House would amend the Milk Marketing Law to increase the amount of payment in lieu of suspension of a milk dealer's license from \$150 per day to \$1,000 per day, and to increase milk tester and weigher sampler certification periods from one year to two years. The bills are pending action by the Senate.



## Avian Influenza Confirmed in PA Poultry

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has confirmed the state's first positive case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in domestic poultry in Lancaster County. It was previously detected in wild birds in both northwestern and southeastern Pennsylvania and has been confirmed in more than two dozen other states. There is no risk to the public, and poultry and eggs continue to be safe to eat if cooked properly. However, HPAI is highly infectious and can be fatal to domestic birds, including chickens, ducks, geese, quail, pheasants, guinea fowl and turkeys. The department is working to protect the state's \$7.1 billion poultry industry by putting into place strict biosecurity protocols for Pennsylvania farms and for



poultry products shipped in and out of the state. In the last several state budgets, the General Assembly has set aside funding to respond to avian influenza. HPAI is mainly spread to healthy birds through direct contact with the bodily waste from infected birds. It can cause unexplained sudden death, swelling of head, purple discoloration of comb and wattles, sudden drop of feed and water consumption, and lethargy or depression. Poultry owners who suspect infection in their flocks should report concerns to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services at **717-772-2852, option 1**. Sick or dead wild birds should be reported to the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 610-926-3136 or [pgc-wildlifehealth@pa.gov](mailto:pgc-wildlifehealth@pa.gov). For more information about avian influenza, visit [agriculture.pa.gov](http://agriculture.pa.gov).

## Prioritizing Elder Care



As a member of the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee, I am concerned about Pennsylvania's aging population, whose numbers are among the highest in the country. In a column I prepared recently, I highlighted some of the problems facing our elder care institutions and steps our Commonwealth must take now to address them. [See it here.](#)

## PA ABLE Provides Savings Opportunities for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities

The Pennsylvania Treasury Department is marking the fifth anniversary of the PA ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) Savings Program. Established by the Legislature in 2016, PA ABLE is a savings program for Pennsylvanians with disabilities and their families. It provides a tax-free way to save without affecting eligibility for critical means-tested benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (up to \$100,000) or Medical Assistance. Nearly 6,300 Pennsylvanians have opened PA ABLE accounts and saved more than \$72 million for disability expenses. To be



eligible, a person's disability must have occurred prior to their 26th birthday. PA ABLE account owners can choose from six different investment options and an interest-bearing checking account. Contributions and earnings in PA ABLE accounts can be used to help save and pay for short- or long-term disability-related expenses. Qualifying expenses include education, housing, transportation, assistive technology, health care, financial management and more. Learn more at [paable.gov](http://paable.gov).

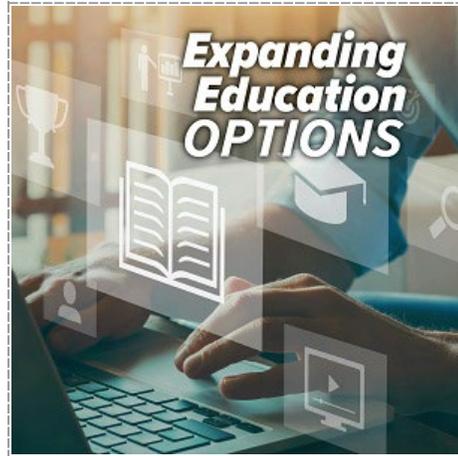
### Are You Protected?



Pennsylvanians are reminded to consider flood insurance protection ahead of the spring flood season. This is particularly important in areas of our district that are flood prone. [Learn more here.](#)

**Bill to Provide Improved Course Access for Schools, Students and Teachers Passes House**

The House recently approved legislation calling on the state Department of Education to establish a course catalog for online courses for K-12 students and professional development for teachers. Specifically, [House Bill 1330](#) would require the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to create a clearinghouse of online courses for students in grades K-12 to be accessible to public schools, nonpublic schools, home education programs and the general public. Schools may opt to participate in the programs as they see fit. The courses would be phased-in beginning with high school classes in the 2024-25 school year, followed by middle and elementary schools. A professional development course catalog for teachers would also be created. This legislation would enhance and improve Pennsylvania schools and serve as a model for the rest of the country. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.



## PHEAA Expands Student Grant Program

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) announced that now is the time to apply for college grants for the 2022-23 term. Application deadline for new and returning students is May 1.



PHEAA also announced that its new funding formula will increase the amount and number of student grants to be issued beginning with the fall semester. To apply for a state grant, students must first complete the 2022-23 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), which can be accessed online at [PHEAA.org/FAFSA](https://PHEAA.org/FAFSA) or [StudentAid.gov](https://StudentAid.gov).

## PennDOT Seeks Feedback on Winter Services

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is seeking the public's feedback on its winter services. The [17-question online survey](#) asks respondents about their timeline expectations for safe and passable roadways, how they rank snow-removal priorities and PennDOT's winter services. Respondents are also asked how they receive PennDOT roadway information, and whether or how they use the state's 511PA traveler information services. The survey [is available here](#) through April 29 and should take about five minutes to complete. All responses are anonymous.

