

Enjoying a unique behind-the-scenes look

My wife Andrea and I enjoyed a busy weekend getaway as we traveled to Milwaukee on September 25 and spent the day with our younger son Dave and fiancée Andrea to celebrate her birthday. As part of our time together, we enjoyed an event called “Doors Open Milwaukee” in which over 90 buildings and sites in greater Milwaukee were opened to the public for tours. We took in three great tours beginning with the Brass Lighting Gallery, a fascinating business creating and restoring light fixtures of all vintages in two amazing historic buildings dating back to 1880. Our next stop was at the Church of the Gesu, the spectacular 1894-vintage Gothic style church on the Marquette University campus where Dave and Andrea will be married later this month (the architectural beauty and the incredible sound of the restored pipe organ left me awestruck). Our final visit was the Best Place at the historic Pabst Brewery, where the old Pabst corporate board room and other pieces of the brewing giant’s history are being renovated and preserved (Dave and Andrea have secured an awesome apartment in an adjacent complex that was previously a Pabst warehouse, one of 24 Pabst buildings in Milwaukee). I wish we could have spent the whole weekend touring other places on the extensive list!

On Monday Andrea and I traveled to Chicago for another terrific tour, this time on one of the Chicago Food Planet tours in historic Chinatown. We’ve previously enjoyed the other two CFP tours - the Near North tour in the Old Town/Gold Coast/Lincoln Park neighborhoods, and the Bucktown/Wicker Park tour. These tours include tasting stops at various unique establishments as part of a guided walking tour highlighting the history and character of the neighborhoods. Many people are familiar with the popular mainstream attractions in the Windy City, but these tours give you a close-up look inside the ethnicity and social fabric of the city’s close-knit neighborhoods. I strongly recommend all three of these tours, and we’re trying to make arrangements to incorporate the Near North tour as an option for our May bus trip to Chicago. Visit www.chicagofoodplanet.com to learn more about these great tours!

Flu shots offered

Winter’s not far off, and that signals the start of another flu season. In advance of that challenge, we’re again offering flu shots to our members and the public on Wednesday October 26 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Farm Bureau. The Stephenson County Health Department will be administering the shots at a discounted price of \$20 each for SCFB members and \$25 for non-members, with Medicare Part B accepted.

Mark your calendar

The Stephenson County Beef Association has coordinated a terrific winter banquet for the past three years with a great meal and program, and another one is planned for Thursday February 9 at 6:30 p.m. at the Farm Bureau in Freeport. Heilman Catering will again provide their fabulous prime rib dinner, and this year’s program will feature veteran Wisconsin farm broadcaster Pam Jahnke, whose farm reports are heard on numerous radio and TV stations throughout the Midwest. Pam was the 2009 president of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters, and her observations and insights on the world of agriculture will be enlightening. Watch for ticket information soon!

County fair soup & sandwich supper

The Stephenson County Fair Association is planning another Soup & Sandwich Supper on Saturday November 19 from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the Farm Bureau, with proceeds benefitting capital improvements to several buildings on the fairgrounds. Chili, potato soup, barbecue sandwiches, hot dogs, chips, dessert and beverages will be offered, and carry-outs will be available. Last year’s popular event generated funds which were used for restroom improvements, and I encourage you to come out for a great night of food and fellowship for a good cause.

Farm Bureau Night at Rockford Icehogs

The county Farm Bureaus in northwest Illinois are sponsoring a Farm Bureau Night at the Rockford Icehogs hockey game against the Chicago Wolves on Saturday night February 11, 2012. We have a large block of tickets reserved at \$12 each, and it’s Youth Hockey Night and Fleece Blanket Giveaway so the place should be rocking - call our office at (815) 232-3186 if you’d like to join the group for this fun night at the rink!

See you on the Barn Tour!

Don’t forget that next Sunday October 9 is the annual CAP Foundation Barn Tour from 1-5 p.m., featuring five classic barns in the German Valley area – call (815) 235-2165 for more info, with tickets available at the FB office.

Bruce Johnson is the manager of the Stephenson County Farm Bureau