

President's Message

As I sit down to write this first President's Message, (currently on vacation in Colorado during the "downtime" of the year), I realize just how long it's been since I've spent any time writing. During my college years all I did was write (many times right before the paper's deadline), so I guess it's time to dust off a skill I haven't used in a while.

While some know me, for those who do not, I'll give a small introduction. I am a third-generation grower at Schwalm Farms, located in Schuylkill County, PA. We are a diversified farm growing around 40-acres of tree fruit and 370-acres of agronomic crops with most of our fruit being fresh market wholesale. While I did not grow up full time on the farm, a large number of family vacations and summers were spent helping out there. Throughout my high school and college years, I continued working outdoors and in agriculture, working for a garden center and wholesale nursery learning pest management and irrigation maintenance and design. I attended the University of South Florida where I received a Bachelor's degree in History with a minor in English literature. While not the most useful degree entering the field of agriculture, I knew even in college that I was interested in coming back to the family farm. After graduating, I moved up to the farm and in short order began to focus on my career in agriculture, joining the Young Grower's Alliance and attending many SHAP supported events. These events and interactions with members of these organizations provided me with a strong foundation and confidence entering this industry.

As always, the 2021 growing season presented new challenges for our industry. Changing weather patterns, large amounts of rain in some places and less than ideal rain in others, concerns over periodical cicada, COVID still hanging around, all posed challenges to producing a high-quality crop. In order to deal with these ever-evolving challenges, one of our greatest assets in improving our production systems are the research projects funded by our organization. Through the support of the PA Apple Program, the funds raised by our grower staffed booths at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, and contributions from our growers and industry partners, we are able to fund many of the research projects deemed critical to our needs. I'd like to thank those who volunteered their time and people in order to staff our booths, making the Farm Show a success in raising money to support SHAP. I'll also again ask you to take a look at the letter concerning the upcoming PA Apple Program Referendum. As we finalize the Research projects for this upcoming year, PAP support alone will contribute roughly \$80,000 towards that funding. The last couple years have been trying for many, but we as an organization have persevered through them and maintained our mandate of supporting the PA Fruit Industry. As always, I would recommend that you reach out to the committee, board members, and our research partners with areas of concern you feel we as an industry need to address.

To conclude this first message, I would ask everyone to take a look at the Pennsylvania Apple Program letter that appears on page 6 of this issue. It is time for the Referendum vote on the program to take place. The letter provides a good description of the services provided by the Apple Program and the good it does for our industry. I would also like to thank my predecessor, Ben Keim, for all the work and effort he put into leading our organization through the difficulties of the last couple years. In the coming years, I hope to work with many of you and continue the great work that this organization provides to the Pennsylvania Fruit industry.

Andrew Schwalm

SHAP President