

News

# 'Non-stop fun'

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## 1st-ever farm crawl draws together 28 farms

With 28 farms participating in Saturday's 1st-ever "farm crawl," it was a countywide affair.

And from Capon Bridge to Purgitsville, Paw Paw to Kirby, the crawl ended up being a sprint to success.

"This was a new thing, and I had no idea who would want to participate," said Tina Ladd, director of the Hampshire County Convention and Visitors Bureau – and organizer of the crawl. "I was hoping it would be a success, and I wasn't expecting 28 (farms), so it was really great right off the bat."

The farms who participated were creative in how they interacted with the public, Ladd said, something that she was really intrigued and pleased by.

"I was sad I couldn't go to them all," she admitted, adding that next year's event will be a multi-day undertaking.

The inaugural crawl brought folks from near and far to visit the farms who make up the background of Hampshire County, including Krithika Harish, who drove from D.C. to experience West Virginia's pastoral charm.

"This has been non-stop fun," Harish said, beaming. "We have been everywhere."

Being "everywhere" Saturday was a real feat – and next year, Ladd said, folks will have a little more wiggle room in their schedule because the crawl will span for more than 1 day so no one misses out.

Harish also identified the top quality of the farm crawl that Ladd was aiming for, adding that the friendly and welcoming nature of the farmers and visitors alike made the day memorable.

"It's a great way to meet folks and learn about new areas," she said.

Ladd also organized a post-crawl concert, with acts like Bud's Collective and Few Miles South rounding out the day at the Augusta fairgrounds. She said that while turnout at the concert wasn't great, the music was phenomenal, especially Few Miles South.

"I was really blown away by them live," she said, and revealed that the band would likely perform at next year's event as well.

With the CVB, Ladd said her goal is to highlight what Hampshire County has to offer, rather than make it something it's not. Since agriculture is a huge part of the Hampshire County Lifestyle, Ladd explained that folks may want to visit to experience the land and the area just the way it is.

"For me personally, just driving around and talking to them (at the farms) really reminded me of how special this place is," Ladd remarked. "And the history of the farms, it was really a great experience to see all of it."

Even after last week's heavy rains and high winds, the farmers made it over that hurdle to bring what they have to the table for visitors. Some farms were more affected than others, Ladd said, but there's a lesson here.

"It just shows how fragile the farming industry is," she pointed out. "It just shows that it's that much more important to support your local farmers."