

FARMLIVING

CELEBRATE WITH SEAFOOD

Try something new this Christmas Eve by adopting the Italian tradition, feast of the seven fishes. Team columnist Sarah Galvin offers soup and shellfish recipes and advice on suitable wine to accompany each dish. | **Page 20**



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RICHARD BROSEAU
ALBERTA DAIRY FARMER



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AMANDA O’CONNELL
ONTARIO DAIRY FARMER

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMERS | CONFERENCE BENEFITS

Farmers gather info, soak up ideas

Overcoming obstacles | Event showcases innovative ideas and celebrates contributions of young farmers to industry

BY MARK CARDWELL
FREELANCE WRITER

QUEBEC CITY — There were the usual galas, guided tours and keynote presentations by big name politicians, producers and performers.

But for the seven farming couples from across Canada who competed in last week’s Outstanding Young Farmers event in Quebec City, it was the small things that mattered most.

“We had so many rich and positive exchanges of stories and ideas with producers from across the country,” said Richard Brosseau, a franco-phone Albertan dairy farmer from St. Paul.

He and his wife, Nicole, were the nominees from Alberta.

This year’s winners were potato farmers Andrew and Heidi Lawless from Kinkora, P.E.I., and grain farmers Myron and Jill Krahn from Carman, Man.

Brosseau said he plans to put into practice an idea he heard from a fellow farmer during the annual five-



JACK THOMSON
OYF NATIONAL PRESIDENT

day professional development event.

“He told me he mixes the dust of recycled drywall with straw for dry bedding,” said Brosseau, whose barn is loose housing with a straw-bedded pack.

“Apparently it’s really absorbent (and) I intend to try it.”

Another nominated couple, dairy farmers Jason and Amanda O’Connell from Carleton Place, Ont., also discovered a new idea during a visit to Ferme Jacob, an award-winning dairy farm and Holstein breeding operation near Quebec City.

“We really liked the design of their calving barn,” Amanda O’Connell

said. “We’re planning to build one this winter and expand our herd. But when we saw the simple layout of theirs, we realized we were making ours too complicated.”

The Ontario couple was impressed by the basic layout, a straw pack in the back, gates centred between pens and the use of super hutches that kept four calves.

“We use individual ones, (but) we’re going to add some super hutches because they are more practical (and) the calves we saw looked great,” said O’Connell.

She said she and her husband felt invigorated and inspired after meeting young farming couples from other regions and in other areas of production during the event.

“I’d never met a potato farmer or an organic vegetable grower before,” said O’Connell.

“It was really neat to learn that we have a lot of things in common, like dealing with employees and balancing farm and family. It makes you realize you’re not alone.”

She said she and her husband

intend to keep in contact with their new farming friends through Facebook and Twitter and attend future OYF events like next’s year meeting in Alberta.

OYF national president Jack Thomson said friendships are just one of the many benefits that participants take away from the program, which recognizes excellence in Canadian agriculture among 18- to 39-year-old farmers.

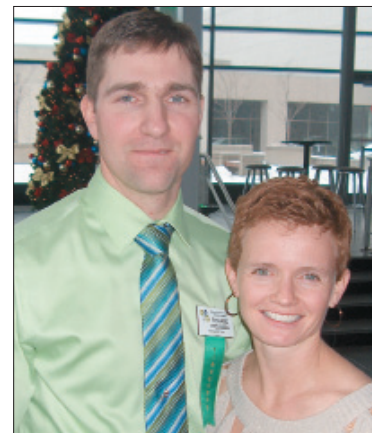
“There’s nothing like it in Canada,” said Thomson, a dairy farmer from Antigonish, N.S., and a winner, together with his wife, Rhonda MacDougall, in 2004.

“It’s a chance to meet positive rural leaders from across the country who have overcome obstacles.”

He said those meetings lead to frank and fertile exchanges between farmers, which can have practical benefits for everyone involved.

OYF nominees and alumni made up the majority of the more than 100 people who attended this year’s event.

“There are so many tangibles and



Alberta Outstanding Young Farmers Richard and Nichole Brosseau travelled to Quebec City for the national competition. |

MARK CARDWELL PHOTO

intangibles,” he said.

“Farmers are independent businesspeople who live and work in isolation in their region. This event opens them up to ideas from beyond their farmgate.”

‘TIS THE SEASON — CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND STORIES WILL BE FEATURED IN THE FARM LIVING SECTION NEXT WEEK