

**Naturally Meramec
Crawford County Meeting
April 10, 2015
Belmont Vineyards**

Attendees: Chuck Held, Reba Walle, Stephanie Willman, Alan Collins, Katie Nott, Greg Kerlin, Chris Johansen, Penelope Beache, Carol Springer, Leo Sanders, Jeff Voss and Trish Voss.

Welcome: Connie Willman, MRPC, welcomed attendees, introduced Lyle Thomas and thanked hosts Jeff and Trish Voss, owners of Belmont Vineyards.

Belmont Vineyards: Belmont Vineyards is nestled on a farm between Cuba and Leasburg on Route 66 just off I-44. They offer ten wines, ranging from dry to sweet. The tasting room is furnished with European antiques. Trish explained that she and husband Jeff began the winery in Sullivan in 2003. They currently produce about 1,700 cases of wine per year. Some of the juice for their wines comes from the St. James Winery. In 2010, they opened the Bistro. They have a certified chef on staff and use local food products as much as possible, featuring seasonal farm-to-table. The Brix on 66 Bistro also features two brick ovens, and offers a variety of delicious pizzas.

Introductions: attendees were asked to introduce themselves and tell a little about their businesses or entities involved with agriculture/tourism:

Chuck Held: Chuck and Jane Held own and operate the Nutty Pig Farm, on which they raise heritage hogs that are free to wander woods and graze in pastures. They thrive on acorns, hickory and walnuts and are supplemented with natural grains and no antibiotics or hormones. The Helds are interested in the marketing aspects of naturally Meramec.

Reba Walle: Reba is visiting the area from New Orleans and is interested in relocating to Missouri. She has been touring many places in Missouri to decide where she wants to live.

Stephanie Willman: Stephanie lives in St. Louis, and is interested in finding producers of organic products.

Alan Collins: Alan owns the Ozark Berry Farm. This farm features organic berries and offers you-pick blueberries and blackberries, as well as elderberries.

Katie Nott: Katie owns the Peaceful Bend Winery in Steelville. The winery started in 1972 and the current owners have been there since 1998. They feature blended wines from Missouri grown grapes. The winery currently has no vineyard of its own. The winery features live music events and partners with vacation cabin rentals for their customers.

Greg Kerlin and Chris Johanson: Greg and Chris represent the Travelers Table restaurant located near Dillard Mill Historic Site. Although they use as much of their own garden's produce as possible, they are interested in using other local products. Everything is cooked from scratch. They are interested in posting coming events and featuring other businesses at their restaurant.

Penelope Beache: Penelope is directing the newly formed Slow Food-St. James Chapter. This organization is part of Slow Food USA, a global network of over 100,000 members in more than 150 countries that promote good, clean and fair food for all. This group champions local, culturally significant heritage foods, customs and recipes and brings these experiences into farms, markets, restaurants and homes.

Carol Springer: Carol is owner of the Meramec Farm, a bed-and-breakfast that offers horse-back riding and cabins on the Meramec River. The cabins offer views of high bluffs and green pastures.

Naturally Meramec Background: Connie Willman reviewed the Naturally Meramec project. Staff have been working to finance the project for about four years, following a discussion of the MRPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Advisory Committee presentation by Peter Hofherr. The need for a consortium of agriculture/tourism businesses that crossed "silos" was identified. The project was

funded this year by the USDA Rural Development Farmer's Market Promotion Program and the Delta Regional Authority. The purpose of the project is to provide a forum for agriculture and tourism businesses to meet together to discuss ways they can use and market each other's products/services.

Needs: Staff asked attendees to share the top three needs of their businesses or agriculture/tourism related entities with which Naturally Meramec may be able to help. Responses follow:

- Need to educate each other on each business
- Need to create a map showing the locations of local restaurants wineries etc. along with their hours
- Need to link websites for agriculture/tourism businesses
- Need to create a billboard which would identify website for local businesses
- Need to make everyone aware of the international workers internship—Work Away International if they are in need of workers.

Agriculture/Tourism Database: Staff distributed a copy of the Crawford County database of agriculture and tourism businesses. Attendees were asked to check their information for accuracy and to check the list for any other corrections or missing agriculture/tourism businesses. They should contact Connie with any changes or additions.

Adjourn: Following an invitation to continue conversations over lunch at the Belmont Winery, the meeting adjourned.