

**Naturally Meramec  
Osage County Meeting  
May 29, 2015—4:30 p.m.  
Westphalia Inn—Norton Room, Westphalia, MO**

**Attendees:** Hollis Sturdy, Mark Smith, Joan Strong, Don Claycomb, Terry Neuner, Miki Odendahl, Dave Dudenhoeffer, Mary Rose Hilkemeyer, Jeff Kormann, Arlen Schwinke and Debbie Huff.

**Welcome:** Connie Willman, MRPC, welcomed participants, introduced Maria Bancroft and thanked host Terry Neuner.

**Westphalia Inn:** Terry shared information about Westphalia Inn. The hotel has been in business since 1930 in the current location. It has long been regarded as an ideal place for entertainment, being close to the Maries River. Terry and Mary Neuner purchased the property in November 2008. It is well known for its food and family style atmosphere. Terry and Mary use the top floor to showcase the family's award winning wine, produced on their 400-acre farm located in the Maries River Valley near Westphalia.

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

**Hollis Sturdy** owns and operates High Meadow Farm on which he produces cattle. Mr. Sturdy also owns property in St. James—an old gas station. He suggested that property such as this might lend itself to featuring some of the Naturally Meramec products/services as a group.

**Mark Smith and Joan Strong** represented Lucas Farms. This farm, located in Meta, features all natural beef that it sells to local consumers. The farm has been in the beef cattle business for almost 50 years. The first major buildings on the farm were built in the 1970s by a German brewery family in Westfield. The farm became a dairy operation in the 50s. Beef cattle were introduced sometime later, and the farm is now well known for its outstanding Angus herd. Mark and Joan are interested in the marketing aspects of Naturally Meramec.

**Don Claycomb** represented State Technical College of Missouri. The college, founded in 1961, is Missouri's only two-year public technical college with a statewide mission. Don is interested in the educational aspects of Naturally Meramec.

**Terry Neuner** is interested in finding new markets. He has concerns that most local entities are doing business outside the region and it may be difficult to get them to market and use each other's products and services inside the region.

**Miki Odendahl** owns and operates the Fat Farmgirl Soap Company and Moonhunt Productions. The soap company features laundry soaps and personal soap products. She is interested in finding sources for organic product ingredients, such as tallow.

**Dave Dudenhoeffer**, Osage County Presiding Commissioner, also owns and operates a turkey farm in the county. The farm currently has around 1000 turkeys.

**Mary Rose Hilkemeyer** owns and operates the Outdoor Place in Freeburg, MO. The Hilkemeyers are interested in education and assistance with regulations for organic production.

**Jeff Kormann**, MRPC, is from Chamois. He is interested in bringing tourism-related businesses and activities into the county.

**Arlen Schwinke** and his wife, Kay, own and operate the Epple Haus Bed and Breakfast in Morrison, MO. Arlen is also chairman of the Osage County Agritourism Council.

**Debbie Huff** owns and operates the Old School On The Hill B & B in Chamois, MO. The building was built in 1876. It features quaint suites, great views of the city of Chamois and a 100-year-old pendulum clock.

Debbie has also created the Osage County website and works with several other tourism groups in the county.

**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 the group to share the top three needs of their agriculture or tourism based business, with which Naturally Meramec may be able to help. Responses follow:

1. Understanding of laws (i.e. taxation, etc.)
2. Identification of target consumers, resulting in more sales.
3. Culture/mindset for agriculture and education of public.
4. Information on finding long-term workers (apprentices).
5. Marketing strategy
6. Map of entities, including directions, etc.

**Agriculture/Tourism Database:** Staff distributed a list of agriculture and tourism businesses in Osage County and asked participants to review the information for accuracy and to check the list for any other corrections or missing agriculture/tourism businesses. They were asked to contact Connie with any changes or additions.

**Adjournment:** Following an invitation to continue conversations while wine-tasting, the meeting adjourned.