Youth to Youth International Agriculture Ukraine: Phase II
Thomas Bruening

Introduction
International agricultural development is an abstract concept to most high school youth. Many students in Pennsylvania lack any connections to international community. However, society needs graduates at all levels to think critically about global issues.

Purpose
The purpose of this project was to develop a new model that can be used to effectively connect secondary students to international peers and the challenges they face. The objectives were to 1) educate the trainers (current and future agricultural and extension educators) to be knowledgeable of global agricultural issues, 2) develop linkages between Pennsylvania students and young people in Ukraine interested in developing agriculture, and 3) improve Pennsylvania students’ appreciation of challenges associated with international development.

Information to be Shared
Selected secondary agricultural teachers and Pennsylvania extension educators were recruited to participate in this program and course. Criteria for selection of the educators included: those having little or no prior international experience, link of implementation project to current extension work, and willingness to take the course for credit. Two secondary agricultural teachers and four extension educators participated in the program. Prior to departure to Ukraine, the group participated in two class sessions that were developed to prepare them to travel to Ukraine and to analyze the needs of agricultural youth in Ukraine. The National Agricultural University in Kiev agreed to host the group at NAUU, facilitate connections with local schools and extension offices, and to be our contact university in Ukraine.

The group traveled to Ukraine in July 2004. The program in Ukraine lasted two weeks. While in Ukraine, the group traveled to four schools and to three extension offices to better understand and analyze the youth needs in Ukraine. The international office at NAUU did an excellent job of locating appropriate schools that youth educators in Pennsylvania could develop linkages. In particular, the group identified two locations that would be excellent sites for sister schools for youth groups in Pennsylvania. The feedback from the Pennsylvania participants was very positive and, clearly, all of those involved expressed that the initial objectives of the project were met.

Conclusions
Agricultural teachers and extension educators identified several partners for youth participation. Educators also identified and can now relate information about specific youth in Ukraine to a Pennsylvania audience. The group was successful in capturing hundreds of electronic photos and digital video to incorporate into electronic presentations for Pennsylvania youth. Four out of six of these educators came back to Pennsylvania with a commitment to find the resources needed to make the project successful in their schools and community.

Implications
Internationalization is a critical issue in higher education. There is a real need to connect with younger students to create more knowledge and interest. As this program evolves there will be opportunities for hundreds of high school students to participate. Developing direct communication linkages among high school-aged youth from both countries is a first step toward greater understanding and awareness.