



Chris Glynos relaxes on his farm in Bethlehem while some of his Boer goats frolic in the background.

Jim Shannon
Republican-American

Creating a place to meet over meat

BETHLEHEM

If Chris Glynos builds a farmers' meat market, he is sure they will come. "They" are the consumers who crave a direct link with livestock farmers, the same link that has made buying sweet corn and tomatoes by the side of the road a rite of summer. For the same reasons, Glynos wants to unite a limited supply of locally grown, organic meat with a growing demand from health-conscious consumers.

He is navigating in untested territory, guided by common sense and culinary and agriculture expertise. As the owner of the popular Painted Pony restaurant in Bethlehem, he is familiar with the maze of regulations that must be met to sell food. As a part-time farmer, he also knows how much work is required to tend Boer goats, a breed that is to the goat world what the Angus breed is to cattle.

Until now, the United States Department of Agriculture has been apathetic at best. Essentially, it told Glynos



County
Chronicles

**Brigitte
Ruthman**

to go ahead and build it, then they'll decide what's wrong with it. In an about face, the USDA has now offered encouragement in the form of a \$4,137 grant to help chart a course.

The goal is to create a place where customers can see, select and buy live animals and arrange for custom cuts. The grant is part of a \$2.2 million program managed by the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, which serves to support agriculture that is environmentally sound, profitable and beneficial to communities throughout the Northeast.

Other grants were awarded to farmers to explore diverse topics. Funding was

provided to control mites in honeybees, develop portable sheep dairies to restore pastures, perfect nitrogen retention in compost, and develop a link between local food sources with schools. Projects were chosen for their relevance, innovative design and potential impact on the sustainability of farms across the region.

Already, Glynos has formed an informal coalition of farmers interested in delivering quality meat to consumers. In an ever-so subtle reversal of the trend away from small family farms, their efforts are invigorating a small but growing segment of the farming community.

"It's to answer a growing concern that you are what you eat," said Glynos, who has operated the Bethlehem Boer Goat Ranch for the past six years.

There are two sides to the equation, Glynos said. Increasingly, consumers are eager to speak with farmers and examine the meat they raise while it's still on the hoof. They are aware of the added value of organic and range-fed and are willing to pay the extra price to avoid chemicals

and hormones. The inquisition beats inspecting a label.

On the other side are farmers who have developed informal relationships with customers who buy pigs, chickens, goats, lambs, ducks, and cattle directly from growers. They crave taste as well as the assurance that the meat has not been tainted by E. coli, listeria, chemical additives, genetic mutations or variations on mad cow disease.

There are obvious stumbling blocks. Not everyone knows a butcher who can turn a live animal into cutlets and roasts.

"Once it becomes inconvenient, the consumer says forget it," Glynos said.

The only established wholesale markets don't differentiate between farm or stockyard raised when they cut a check.

Glynos imagines the new marketplace in the shell of a former dairy barn on his 25-acre property a mile from the town's center. Subdivisions encroach on the horizon, but the fields which grew up into

Please turn to 4A², RUTHMAN