

The Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing

Presents

A series of two-day workshops and seminars in making cheese and other dairy products on the farm, taught by Peter Dixon and special guests. Through making cheese and other dairy products and receiving classroom instruction at Westminster Dairy at Livewater Farm, a licensed Vermont farmstead cheese business in Westminster West, Vermont, participants will learn the fundamentals of milk processing and how to set up and improve their own farmstead cheese businesses. During the two days, we will make butter, yogurt, starter cultures, other fresh cultured dairy products and at least four varieties of cheese. A simple raw milk tomme-style cheese will be made in all the workshops. Lunches and course materials, including many tried and true recipes, will be provided. A separate pair of clean water-resistant boots or shoes are required. Cost is \$250; a \$50 deposit is required and the remainder is payable on arrival. Classes are from 9 am to 4 pm each day.

Contact Peter Dixon at Tel. 802-387-4041 or Email <pdixon@sover.net> for further details and to register and receive directions.

Send deposit to Peter Dixon, PO Box 993, Putney, VT 05346.

2004 Workshop/Seminar Schedule

January 24-25 Alpine cheeses: Swiss, Asiago, Tomme and Toma, Butter and Sour Cream from cow and goat milk.

February 7-8 Italian cheeses: Making Romano, Toma, Provolone, Fresh Mozzarella, and Ricotta from goat and cow milk.

March 6-7 Soft-ripened cheeses: Brie, Camembert, Aged Goat cheeses, French Tomme, Butter and Creme Fraiche from cow and goat milk.

April 17-18 Four Blue cheeses from goat and cow milk, including Bleu de Gex (tomme-style).

May 1-2 British cheeses: Caerphilly, Colwick, Cheddar (cloth-bound), and Cheshire from cow milk.

May 22-23 Soft-ripened cheeses: Brie, Camembert, Aged Goat cheeses, French Tomme, Butter and Creme Fraiche from cow and goat milk.

October 16-17 Cheeses of the Low Countries: Gouda, Edam, Havarti, and Trappist from cow, sheep and goat milk.

November 13-14 The Science of Cheesemaking and Cheese-ripening with Dr. Paul Kindstedt of UVM: Washed-rind Tomme and Brie cheese-making and classroom instruction.

November 20 The Business and Regulation of Farmstead Milk Processing with Greg Lockwood, VT State Dairy Plant Inspector.

December 4-5 Italian cheeses: Making Romano, Toma, Provolone, Fresh Mozzarella, and Ricotta from goat and cow milk.

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December 4-5 Italian cheeses: Making Romano, Toma, Provolone, Fresh Mozzarella, and Ricotta from goat and cow milk with guest cheesemaker Brian Civitello, who will make traditional Caciocavallo.

2005 Schedule

January 15-16 Cheesemaking and Starter Culture Technology with Margaret Morris: Gouda, Aged goat cheeses, and Tomme cheese-making and classroom instruction.

February 12-13 Four Blue cheeses from goat and cow milk, including Bleu de Gex (tomme-style).

March 12-13 British cheeses: Caerphilly, Colwick, Cheddar (cloth-bound), and Cheshire from cow milk.

April 23-24 Soft-ripened cheeses: Brie, Camembert, Aged Goat cheeses, French Tomme, Butter and Creme Fraiche from cow and goat milk.

May 7-8 Cheeses of the Mediterranean: Feta, Kashkaval, Fresh Mozzarella, Corsican-style tomme, Ricotta and Yogurt from goat, sheep and cow milk.

May 21-22 Alpine cheeses: Swiss, Asiago, Tomme and Toma, Butter and Sour Cream from cow and goat milk.

CreamLine

a new voice for little dairies

Issue No. 22
Winter 2005



Training Center Turns Two

by Peter Dixon

Imagine a place where, once a month, people come to learn about making cheese from raw milk, where experienced cheesemakers share the knowledge of their craft and business with novices, farmers talk shop, and cheesemakers try each other's cheeses for lunch. Welcome to the Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing, which turned two years old in January, 2005.

The training center began operating at Westminster Dairy at Livewater Farm in Westminster West, Vermont and after several months found a permanent home at the Woodcock Farm and Cheese Company in Weston, Vermont. It has proven to be a useful resource for those who want to know more about the art and science of making dairy products on the farm. In the past fourteen months, sixty people – mostly farmers and farmstead cheesemakers but also chefs, educators, and marketers – have received instruction in the processes of turning milk into a wide variety of cheeses, butter, sour cream, crème fraîche, buttermilk and yogurt. The novices have gotten a genuine feeling for the reality of operating a farmstead milk processing business and the experienced cheesemakers have learned to make many new varieties of cheese. Some of the highlights from the twelve weekend workshops have been:

- Exploring traditional cheesemaking techniques and developing recipes to make cheeses from different regions of the world
- Using sheep, goat, and cow milks and observing the differences in composition and properties for cheesemaking
- The science of soft-ripened cheesemaking (bloomy rinds and smeared rinds) with Dr. Paul Kindstedt of the University of Vermont
- How to effectively use starter and ripening cultures (EZAL and Lacto Labo) with Margaret Morris of Glengarry Cheesemaking and Dairy Supplies
- Cheese tasting and evaluation sessions
- Shared group learning about farming, cheesemaking, milk processing, business and life

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A typical weekend workshop has accommodated a group of five to ten people, who have spent most of their time learning to make four kinds of cheese and other dairy products. What started as a lunch break evolved into a cheese tasting and evaluation session because many participants brought in their creations for others to try. We also had the pleasure to sample local cheeses from Westminster Dairy, Woodcock Farm and Taylor Farm and to critique cheeses made in previous workshops. One weekend tasting included five tommes from cow, goat, sheep and mixed milks made by four different cheesemakers. Afternoons gave us time for lectures and roundtable discussions about techniques, conditions and facilities for aging cheese; composition and use of starter cultures; equipment; marketing; and other related topics.

The collective progress we have made in nurturing the activity of making dairy products, especially cheeses, on farms and in artisan businesses has been exhilarating. It seems as if there will always be a place for this "reality-based" training center and plans are to continue operations for at least another year. This year we will most certainly be making more cheeses, such as Gorgonzola, Stilton, Bleu de Gex, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, Crottin and other aged goat cheeses, Chevre, Feta, Gouda, Havarti, Citeaux, Cheddar, Cheshire, Colwick, Caerphilly, Tomme, Toma, Romano, Provolone, Mozzarella, Ricotta, Asiago, Appenzeller, and Swiss. Some new ideas for the training center are:

- Classes about cheese aging techniques and conditions (affinage), and designing cellars and caves
- Beginner classes with instruction in starting milk processing businesses
- Workshops taught by foreign cheesemakers about their traditional cheesemaking practices
- Apprenticeship programs
- Presentations about the science and craft of making different cheeses

The Training Center's current schedule is:

April 16-17 Soft-ripened Cheeses:

Brie, Camembert, aged goat cheeses, French Tomme, butter and creme fraiche from cow and goat milk

May 7-8 Cheeses of the Mediteranean:

Feta, Kashkaval, Fresh Mozzarella, Corsican-style tomme, ricotta and yogurt from goat, sheep and cow milk.

June 11-12 Alpine cheeses:

Swiss, Asiago, Tomme and Toma, butter and sour cream from cow and goat milk. ❖



The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)

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Vermont Cheese Council

Spring/Summer 2004 • Vol. 4, Issue 1

Summertime in Vermont...
and the livin' is easy...?

Photo courtesy of Cabot Creamery; Glenn Moody, photographer



Summertime's easy livin' means 18 hour workdays for Vermont's cheesemakers. Between delivering their animals of offspring, milking the herd or flock usually twice a day and turning their farm fresh milk into a wide variety of cheeses, it's a busy, hectic, productive time of year in Vermont. And as cheese-lovers know, there's no time like it. For a list of Vermont cheesemakers you can visit, see the cheese trail map inserted in this newsletter.

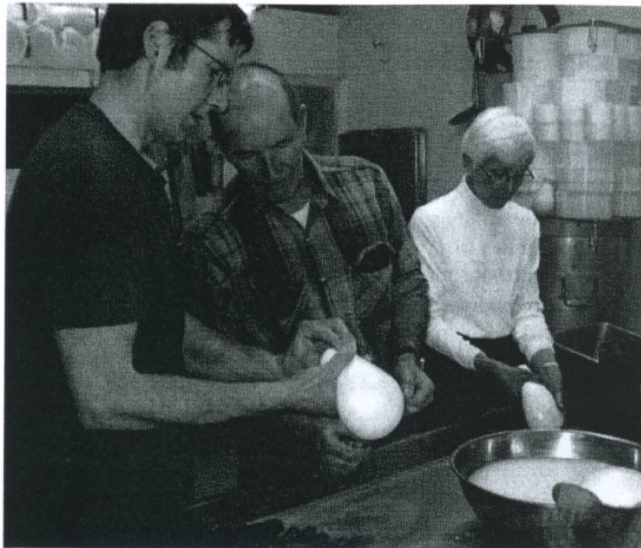


Cheesemaking Workshops

"I got a very good feel for what commercial artisan cheesemaking was all about. It helped me make a more informed decision about my artisan cheesemaking project."

— Shannon Nichols,
dairy farmer and conservation
program specialist, Graze-NY

Late in 2003, Westminster Dairy received a Northeast SARE Grass Roots Grant to fund their cheesemaking training center so that they could expand their resources and offerings. Dr. Paul Kindstedt; Margaret Morris, consultant and owner of Glengarry Cheesemaking and Dairy Supplies in Alexandria, Ontario; and Greg Lockwood, Vermont Department of Agriculture and Markets' dairy plant inspector are collaborators with dairy farmer Bill Acquaviva and cheesemaker Peter Dixon, owners of Westminster Dairy, on this project. Since January 2004, Westminster Dairy has played host to a series of workshops and seminars on a variety of subjects about processing milk on the farm including: cheesemaking and aging, sanitation, making butter and cultured dairy products, ice cream manufacture, regulations and compliance, practical dairy chemistry and microbiology, starter culture technology, business planning, and organic grass-based farming and its relationship to seasonal changes in milk quality and utilization for dairy products.



Peter Dixon (left) getting "hands-on" with novice cheesemakers.

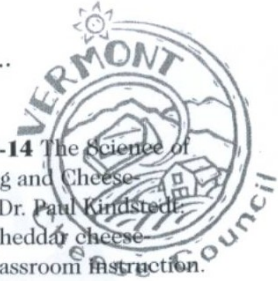
Dixon's vision is to provide a resource that will provide farmers with the knowledge and tools to be successful at the business of processing their milk into dairy products on their farms. He hopes to expand the programs in the future to bring in instructors from other countries where farmstead milk processing is a part of the social culture. In this way,

the Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing at Westminster Dairy can help to regenerate dairy farm processors as vital parts of their communities.

In all, Dixon and colleagues offered six, two-day workshops since January attending by approximately 30 people from states including VT, NY, CT, WA, ME, and British Columbia. Remaining

"Overall it was a very informative two days. You can be a total novice, or an experienced cheesemaker, and still get something out of the workshop. The other good part is that it takes place in an actual working cheeseroom and not some college classroom. Peter has a lot of knowledge, and like a true lover of the art, he doesn't hold back on the "secrets". He wants people to learn and know how all of this works. It was a good experience. One I would welcome again in the future."

— Jamie Miller, Shelburne Farms cheesemaker



training dates this spring are:

- **May 15-16** Soft-ripened cheeses: Brie, Camembert, Aged Goat cheeses, French Tomme, Butter and Creme Fraiche.

The series will start again in the fall with a few dates already set.

- **September 18-19** Cheese of the Low Countries: Gouda, Edam,

Havarti, and Trappist from cow and sheep milk.

- **October 3** The Business and Regulation of Farmstead Milk Processing with Greg Lockwood, VT State Dairy Plant Inspector.

- **October 16-17** Alpine cheeses: Swiss, Asiago, Tomme and Toma, Butter and Sour cream from cow and goat milk.

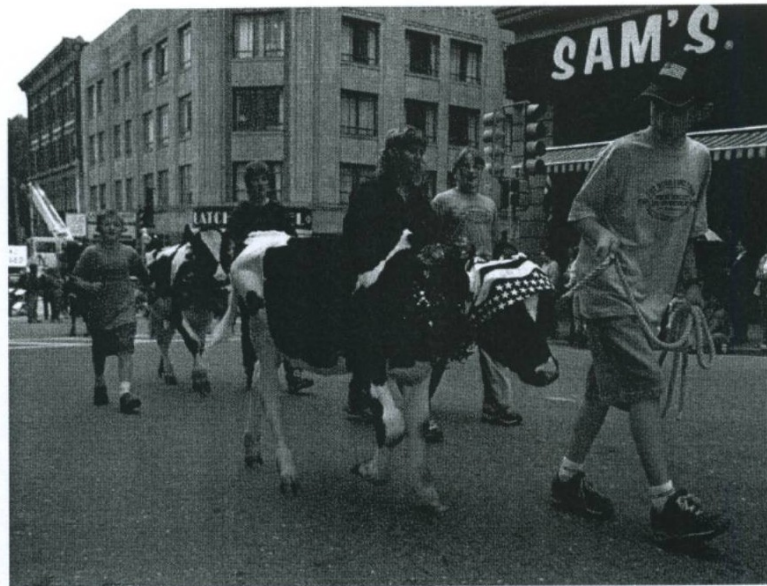
- **November 13-14** The Science of Cheese-making and Cheese ripening with Dr. Paul Kindstedt. Tomme and Cheddar cheese making and classroom instruction.

Tel. 802-387-5110 or email pdixon@sover.net for details.

Strolling of the Heifers: Take 3

A community party and fundraiser to benefit agricultural programs in schools, the third annual Strolling of the Heifers parade and festival, sponsored by Turkey Hill Dairy, will kick off Vermont Dairy Month, June 4 – 6 in Brattleboro. The weekend begins with the Farm Summit, an issue-oriented event open to the public that will explore ways to support local farmers. This year's topic "The Facts & Myths of Dairy Pricing: Who's Getting Milked – The Farmers or the Cows." An art exhibit of over 30 area artists celebrating Vermont agriculture opens Friday night at the Windham Art Gallery with a benefit show and silent auction entitled "The Farm Show."

On Saturday, a parade featuring dozens of bovine beauties led by students, farmers and 4-H Club members will begin at 10 am complete with lively entertainment and colorful floats, including clowns, a dairy fairy, horses, oxen, alpacas and more. The heifers will include black and white Holsteins; brown Jerseys and russet milking short horns. The parade will be followed by The Dairy Fest & Marketplace



Flower bedecked, groomed and shining, over 75 heifers identified by name will strut their stuff up Main Street led by Putney School students, 4-H Club members and farmers from across Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts at the 3rd annual Strolling of the Heifers

(9 am- 3 pm) sponsored by Vermont Country Store at the Brattleboro Common and featuring regional farm products and Best Chefs of Vermont cooking demonstrations. Later that evening is the informal Heifer Ball at 7 pm at the Putney Inn, with Sunday, June 6 given over to Farm

Tours and the "hearty" Heifer Brunch at Adams Farm in Wilmington.

For more information visit www.strollingoftheheifers.org or call 1-877-VTSBEST. Ask for a list of farms that offer stays and other packages.

The Training Center Turns Two

The Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing, turned two years old in January. It began operating at Westminster Dairy at Livewater Farm in Westminster West, Vermont in early 2003 and, after several months found a permanent home at the Woodcock Farm in Weston, Vermont. The Center has proven to be a useful resource for those who want to know more about the art and science of making dairy products on the farm. In the past 14 months, 60 people; mostly farmers and farmstead cheesemakers but also chefs, educators, and marketers, have received instruction in the processes of turning milk into a wide variety of cheeses, butter, sour cream, Crème Fraiche, buttermilk and yogurt. The novices have gotten a genuine feeling for the reality of operating a farmstead milk processing business and the experienced cheesemakers have learned to make many new varieties of cheese. Some of the highlights from the weekend workshops have been:

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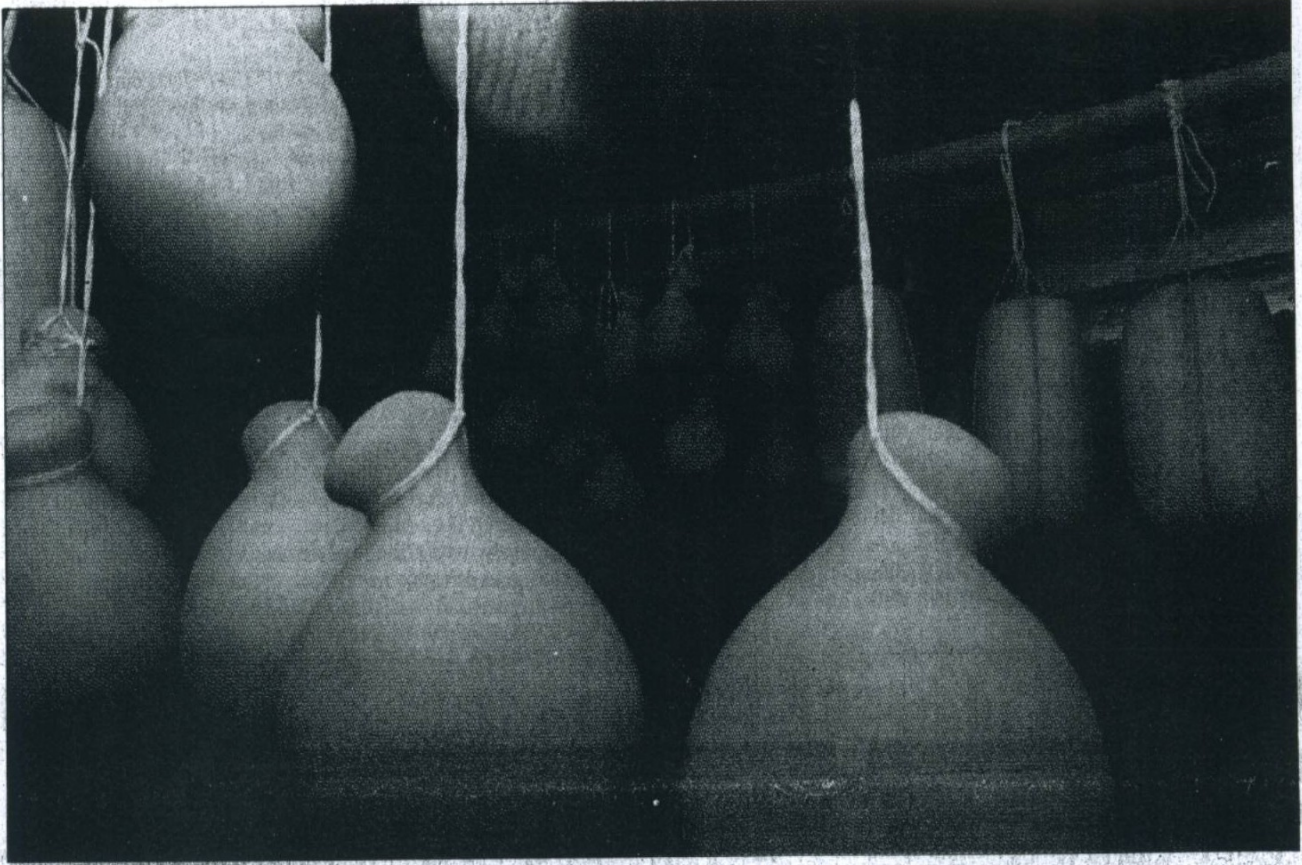
A typical weekend workshop has accommodated a group of five to 10 people, who have spent most of their time learning to make four kinds of cheese and other dairy products. What started as a workshop lunch break has evolved into a cheese tasting and evaluation session because many participants have brought in their creations for others to try. Sampling local cheeses from Westminster Dairy, Woodcock Farm and Taylor Farm and critiquing cheeses made in previous workshops were part of the experience for attendees. One weekend tasting included five tommes from cow, goat, sheep and mixed milks made by four different cheesemakers. Afternoons are dedicated to lectures and roundtable discussions about techniques, conditions and facilities for aging cheese; composition and use of starter cultures; equipment; marketing; and other related topics.

The collective progress the Center has made in nurturing the activity of making dairy products, especially cheeses, on farms and in artisan businesses has been exhilarating, according to its director, Peter Dixon. Dixon who plans to continue operations at the Center for at least another year says, "It seems as if there will always be a place for this "reality-based" training center." In the coming year, workshops will likely include the making of cheeses such as Gorgonzola, Stilton, Bleu de Gex, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, Crottin and other aged goat cheeses, Chevre, Feta, Gouda, Havarti, Citeaux, Cheddar, Chesire, Colwick, Caerphilly, Tomme, Toma, Romano, Provolone, Mozzarella, Ricotta, Asiago, Appenzeller, and Swiss. Some new ideas posed for the training center include:

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For more information about future offerings, contact Peter Dixon, pdixon@sover.net.

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Spring / Summer 2005



Reformer file photo

Provolone cheese ages in the cellar at Livewater Farm in Westminister West. The farm's part owner, Peter Dixon, recently received a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expand his on-farm training center.

Great balls of cheese

Grant allows farmer to diversify

By HOWARD WEISS-TISMAN

Reformer Staff

WESTMINSTER WEST — An area farmer has been awarded a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant to expand his on-farm training center.

Peter Dixon, part owner of Westminister Dairy at Livewater Farm, won the \$10,000 grant. Dixon has more than 20 years experience in making European-style cheese. He runs workshops on the farm for other farmers, teaching them ways to produce quality cheese that could help them bring in more money for their milk.

"We started these workshops before we heard about the money, but the grant will really help to keep the ball rolling," Dixon said. "Our idea is to not only have a place to make cheese, but to have a training center as a place to teach other farmers."

Over the years, Dixon has traveled around the country sharing his cheesemaking skills. Farmers from around the

Northeast, as well as from Washington state and Colorado, are coming to Vermont for future workshops, he said.

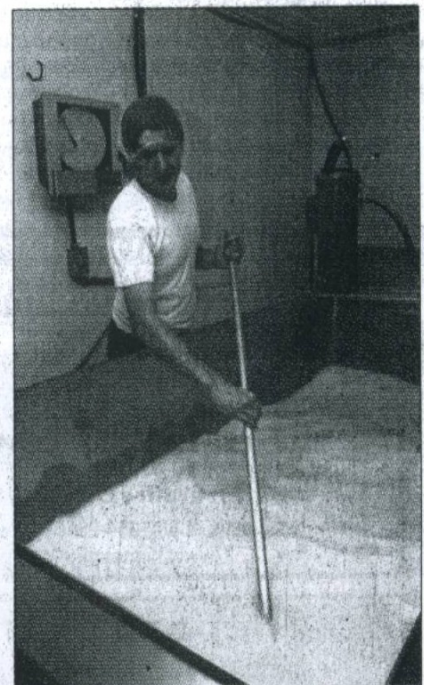
The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the grants through its Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program. The nation is divided into four regions. The Northeast region covers 13 states.

The average grant in the Northeast was about \$5,800. Dixon's \$10,000 was one of the largest amounts awarded this year.

Helen Husher, spokeswoman for the grant program, called the selection process "very competitive." She said 125 applications were submitted, and 38 grants were awarded, bringing more than \$219,000 to Northeast farmers.

"We look for projects that are innovative and that explore topics in agriculture sustainability. And we also look for projects

See CHEESE, Page 6



Reformer file photo

Peter Dixon stirs curds and whey while "cooking" the cheese, part of the process used to make provolone cheese.

Brattleboro Reformer April 9, 2004

Development Review Board and Brattleboro Selectboard member Pat DeAngelo.

Agave said Thursday's meeting would likely be the first of many as the commission gears up to work on the next town plan, which is reviewed every five years and rewritten every 10 years.

The event featured presentations on residential sprawl and strip developments, slide shows on developments in other Vermont communities and suggestions on how to "fix" sprawling and strip developments.

Long-term planning and commitment to smart growth from the community are the only ways to stop sprawl and strip developments, explained Beth Humstone, a member of the Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative.

Strip development leads to confusing traffic patterns, more vehicle accidents and additional stress on municipal services such as water and sewer, explained Humstone.

She suggested instead that corridors need to be planned with development clustered around intersections, allowing the space between to be open and pleasing to the eye.

Future development should be built closer to the road, she explained, with parking lots in the back. This approach both allows stores to have a "showroom" facing the street and creates a "sense of place" along the corridor.

The town attempted to pass a similar ordinance last year — shortening the setback for Putney Road to encourage new

limited, explained Humstone, and she urged people to brainstorm on potential solutions to the sprawl problem.

"We are trying to provoke discussion in the community, not provide answers," she said.

Agave, who has to step down from the planning commission this year due to term limits, hopes the planning discussion continues between interested parties as the new town plan develops.

He told audience members to discuss the issues on a local community Web site, www.ibrattleboro.com. The site has a section devoted to the Brattleboro Town Plan.

The next presentation on planning will likely be on local business ownership, Agave said.

Rep. Michael Obuchowski, D-Rockingham, recently added a \$50,000 provision to fund a scoping study of Putney Road onto the state's transportation bill, said Goodemote, and business leaders along the strip are hopeful the funds remain allocated through the approval process.

Among the items that may be addressed by the Putney Road master plan committee include confusing intersections, the lack of landscaping, pedestrian and bicycle pathways and the potential to include apartments or homes to add a sense of community, said Goodemote.

"Most people agree there is a problem," he said. "I'm hopeful we can come up with a Brattleboro solution. We are a very intelligent and creative community, so we have that advantage."

Daniel Barlow can be reached at dbarlow@reformer.com

Cheese

Continued from Page 1

that benefit other farmers," said Husher.

The organization also awards grants to universities and private companies doing research in agriculture, she said, but these grants are special because they go right to the farmers.

"The farmers are the ones who understand the new ways of doing things. They are on the farms every day, and they often come up with intelligent and innovative ideas," she said. "This fund helps them see their ideas through and creates a pool of knowledge for all farmers."

She said money is awarded to large and small farms, from the conventional to the organic.

"We look at the whole spectrum of farming practices," she said.

Dixon grew up in southern Vermont. His family used to run the Guilford Cheese Company. In 2000, he moved to the Westminster West farm where he and Bill Acquaviva produce organic cheeses such as fresh mozzarella, ricotta, camembert and brie. The farm made 20,000 pounds of cheese last year, and expects to produce 25,000 pounds in the coming season.

With small-dairy farmers around the country struggling with low milk prices, Dixon said that by producing quality cheese, they can make more money per pound of milk, and they stand a better chance of surviving.

"It is a crucial issue for smaller farmers and family-size farms," said Dixon. "Milk prices change,

but producing cheese is a way to stabilize the price."

Dixon said he got help with the grant from Vern Grubinger of the University of Vermont Extension Service. Grubinger reviews the applications and signs off on them before they are submitted.

"These grants are one of the best things the USDA has ever done," Grubinger said.

He said that more than \$100,000 has gone to Vermont farmers since the programs start in 1988. The money goes directly to the farmers, and helps them to test ideas and share their work with other farmers.

"It is one of the most forward-thinking programs out there," Grubinger said. "It has really helped out a lot of people."

Dixon said he hopes the grant money will allow the training center to grow. He said he wants to expand into butter and yogurt workshops.

Farmers can go to colleges and universities to learn the skills, Dixon said, but his center offers hands-on opportunities.

"They can experience exactly what it takes for equipment and buildings to process milk on the farm. I want this to be an international center for cheese making, and bring in consultants from all over the world," Dixon said. "I hope this is a jumping-off point to bigger and better things."

Howard Weiss-Tisman can be reached at hwtisman@reformer.com

Published in The Brattleboro Reformer
Fall, 2003

Dairy training center to host cheese-making workshop series

WESTMINSTER — The Training Center for Farmstead Milk Processing at Westminster Dairy at Livewater Farm will present a series of two-day workshops in making cheese and other dairy products on the farm taught by Peter Dixon and special guests.

Through making cheese and other dairy products, and receiving classroom instruction at Westminster Dairy, a licensed Vermont farmstead milk processor, participants will learn the fundamentals of milk processing and how to set up and improve their own farmstead cheese businesses.

During the two days, participants will make butter, yogurt, starter cultures, other fresh cultured dairy products and at least four varieties of cheese. A simple raw milk tomme-style cheese will be made in all the workshops.

Lunches and course materials, including many tried-and-true recipes, will be provided. The cost will be \$250, payable on arrival. Contact Peter Dixon at Westminster Dairy, 1289 Westminster West Road, Westminster West, VT 05346 or call him at (802) 387-5110 or pdixon@sover.net for further details and to sign up.

The schedule will be as follows:

- Jan. 24-25, Alpine cheeses: Asiago, Tomme (artisanal), Swiss, butter and sour cream.
- Feb. 7-8, Italian cheeses from goat and cow milk: Romano, Toma, Provolone, fresh Mozzarella and Ricotta.
- March 6-7, Soft-ripened cheeses: Brie, Camembert, aged goat cheeses, French Tomme, butter and creme fraiche.
- April 17-18, Four blue cheeses from sheep, cow and goat milk, including Bleu de Gex (tomme-style).
- May 1-2, British cheeses: Caerphilly, Colwick, Cheddar (cloth-bound), and Cheshire.