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Roofs may get green makeover

By BRAD RHEN
 Staff Writer
 Lebanon Daily News
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It's Oklahoma that's supposed to have corn as "high as an elephant's eye," but it could be the case someday soon in the Lebanon Valley, though not in the traditional manner.

The Lebanon County Conservation District has organized a green-roof symposium for July 14 at Lebanon Valley College.

"A green roof, or rooftop garden, is a vegetative layer grown on a rooftop," said Stephanie Harmon, a watershed specialist with the Lebanon County Conservation District. "Green roofs transform urban roofs into green space or gardens that improve water and air quality and save energy."

One of the greatest benefits a green roof can provide is stormwater management, Harmon said. Depending on rain intensity and soil depths, a green roof can absorb up to 60 percent of rainfall runoff.

After intercepting rainfall runoff, green roofs allow the water to return to the atmosphere via evaporation and transpiration.

Green roofs also absorb heat and act as insulators for buildings, thus reducing energy costs.

Additionally, they reduce air temperature, filter dust particles and airborne toxins, protect the roof from UV rays, wind, and temperature fluctuation, can extend the roofs lifespan, improve quality of life via aesthetics and enjoyment of the natural green space.

Green roofs are a new trend in America, Harmon said, and she is not aware of any green roofs in Lebanon County.

"There are none that we are officially aware

of, but that doesn't mean that Joe Shmo doesn't have one," she said.

The symposium will provide an opportunity for participants to learn from local and national experts about the general design and implementation of green roofs. It's hoped that the meeting will provide input toward the implementation of a local green-roofs policy.

The LCCD, in partnership with the Lebanon County Planning Department, received an \$11,600 grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Education Grants Program, which allowed the district to hire "Green Roofs for Healthy Cities," a nonprofit industry association to foster the development of a green-roof infrastructure in Lebanon County.

The symposium's keynote address will be delivered by Jeffrey Bruce, owner of Jeffrey L. Bruce & Co., a national landscape-architecture firm.

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The symposium will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. in LVC's Mund College Center. Cost for the symposium is \$199, and a limited number of scholarships are available for nonprofit organizations, such as municipal officials, local watershed- and conservation-group members and teachers.

For more information and to register, visit <http://www.greenroofs.org>.

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