

August 29, 2015

Dear Holland Area Beekeepers Association,

We cannot begin to thank you enough for the opportunity for our club to attend the Heartland Apicultural Society Conference in July. As volunteers, we not only received invaluable work experience, we became integrated with a profoundly welcoming and informed group of people. The lectures and activities were immersive and greatly supplemented our educational paths.

The conference opened our eyes to the diversity of the beekeeping community in our country and in the world. We truly were able to see that beekeeping is about much more than honey production; it encompasses all scientific, environmental and social concepts that we learn in the classroom and enables us to apply them in a different situation. We learned about how to manage varroa, propolis and honeybee disease prevention, double queen colonies, honeybee genetics, bee nutrition and forage, selling honey at farmer's markets, and more. With the knowledge we took from certain sessions, namely Propolis and Disease Prevention by Renata Borba, Research in the Bee Yard by Mike Wilson, and Drivers of Colony Loss by Dennis VanEngelsdorp, we have been inspired to begin research in our own bee yards. We hope to look at the specific types of resins collected by the bees from the surrounding foliage. Renata Borba, who is a graduate student under Marla Spivak at the University of Minnesota, has even offered to collaborate with us.

Furthermore, it was very enriching to be surrounded by a diverse group of students, teachers, researchers, and beekeepers alike. As we have all discovered, successful beekeeping relies on the help of others. It is important to have a community of beekeepers from which one can gain perspectives, learn techniques, and share genetics. The HAS Conference enabled us to make lasting connections with beekeepers from near and far. For example, we had the opportunity to share conversations with Dennis VanEngelsdorp, Susan Cobey, Clarence Collison, Joe Traynor, Meghan Milbrath, Renata Borba, Kim Flottum, Larry Connor, and more. This experience was extremely rewarding for each one of us. Thank you so much for making this trip possible. We hope to collaborate with the Holland Area Beekeepers Association in the future. If you would like, we would love to share more about our experiences at an upcoming HABA meeting. Thank you again!

Sincerely,

GVSU Beekeepers

~Kali Smolen, Emily Noordyke, Megan Damico, Burritt Watrous, Cullin Flynn~