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**Giant bee-ing proactive with produce pollinators**

Following the theft of its honeybees earlier in the year, The Giant Co. added two new beehives, housing 30,000 honeybees, near the company's seven-acre pollinator-friendly solar field at its corporate headquarters. The company will continue to add to the colony over the next several months and will ultimately house 450,000 honeybees in nine beehives by next year.

The new beehives and honeybees were unveiled in celebration of National Pollinator Week. The event was attended by The Giant Co. President Nicholas Bertram and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, as well as representatives of Planet Bee Foundation and the Capital Area Beekeepers Association.

"The theft of our bees and beehives in January brought to light the issue many beekeepers around the country are facing – not only have bee populations been declining for decades, now they are also being stolen," said Bertram. "Bees and other pollinators are crucial to growing fruits and vegetables; without them, our produce departments and mealtimes around the table would look much different, with many of our favorite items missing from plates. Recognizing the impact bee colony loss has on our local food supply chain, we knew we would bring honeybees back to our corporate headquarters, but not everyone is as fortunate as us. That's why we also wanted to support other local beekeepers impacted by this issue, too."

In partnership with Planet Bee Foundation, The Giant Co. also awarded grants to five central Pennsylvania beekeepers, totaling \$10,000. The beekeepers will use the funds to replace bee colonies, rebuild beehives and continue research.

"This grant will allow me to enhance bee breeding efforts, which ultimately enable better survival rates and provide strong queens to other local beekeepers in the midstate," said John Patterson, local beekeeper. "The grant money will also help fund some of the equipment needed to maintain the existing beehives and splits as the colony continues to grow. Lastly, the funding will help with late season feeding of sugar syrups to build up the storage for the honeybees to feed on over the winter."

"Over the last two years, we have become more intimately aware of where our food comes from and how it gets to us — and the connecting points and people who make it all happen. But another equally important piece of the puzzle is pollinators," said Redding. "One out of every three bites of food we eat is thanks to pollinators, including bees, and their role in promoting biodiversity and plant health within our greater food system. The Department of Agriculture is honored to kick off National Pollinator Week with our partners at The Giant Co. Initiatives like these are advancing community and sustainability for generations to come."

National Pollinator Week is celebrated the third week in June every year to address the decline in pollinator populations. The nationally recognized celebration has expanded into an international initiative, acknowledging the critical ecosystem support provided by honeybees, birds, butterflies, bats, beetles, moths, wasps and flies.

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