

Berks Co. farmers complete leadership training classes

By JUDY MITCHELL
Berks Correspondent

LEESPORT - Members of the Berks County Farmers Association completed the second of two, full-day leadership training sessions held over a one-week period at the Berks County Agricultural Center. The four-phase training program, presented by Mr. Eugene G. McDowell, Regional Organizational Director for the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association, with the assistance of Sandra Strohmier, Agricultural Employers Specialist, was offered to some 24 County Association directors, committee chairmen and their wives. Leadership instruction was provided through slides, group discussions, case history studies, and a film, "The Strangest Secret," written and recorded by Earl Nightingale, renowned expert in the field of people-motivation.

Unit I of the program presented an independent look at the Farm Bureau, the parent organization of all State and County Farmers Associations. It also provided background information on the Pennsylvania Association which began 25 years ago. The basic concepts of the Bureau and how the Farmers

Association differs from other farm organizations were emphasized. The Farmers Association, it was pointed out, is first of all a family organization. It is a voluntary, dues supported, non-governmental organization which provides economic services for its members. The Bureau is a decentralized structure by state and county associations operated solely by their volunteer members, involved, not in protest, but in fostering programs which

will benefit the farmer. The Association includes all crop growers and is working with all levels of government in many areas of farming. The challenges of the future for the Farmers Association as presented are, to involve youth in Association efforts, to keep adequately financed, to keep members politically active, to establish better public relations, to base market values on supply and demand, and to take its rightful place in world trade. The second unit of the

program was "The Farm Bureau Basic Unit - The County." This phase covered the organization hierarchy from the national to the county level. At the national level the AFBF boasts 2 1/2 million families and the total in the State of Pennsylvania this year is expected to reach the twenty-thousand mark with 935 in Berks County alone. Statistics indicate that 4 out of every 5 farmers who belong to any farm organization belong to the Farmers Association, and the County organization is determined to be the basic unit of the Association

because that is where the people live and work and that is where their major problems arise.

The training session was concluded with the third and fourth phases of the overall program. The third units, entitled "Boards and Committees dealt with the responsibilities, limits, functions and procedures for Association leaders. Nightingale's film, although not specifically designed for agriculture, presented a study in motivation and self improvement which made up the fourth unit of study, "The Effective Leader."

According to the Regional Organizational Director of the Pennsylvania Farmers Association, "getting people to do the job voluntarily is really the definition of leadership." Programs similar to the one just held in Berks County have been taking place throughout the State this winter to improve leadership ability within the Farmers Association so that the Association might better serve its members. McDowell stated that the purpose of the Farmers Association is to help farmers analyze and solve their problems.

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