

# County officer sees FFA as top youth program

By JOANNE SPAHR  
**BLUE BALL** — "I think FFA is one of the best youth organizations going right now," believes 18-year-old Daniel Witwer, East Earl R3, president of the Red Rose Chapter of the Future Farmers of America in Lancaster County. This county association president, who has been active in the Grassland Chapter at Garden Spot High School for four years, has great respect for the organization, which he believes has helped to shape his character.

"I'd have to say that my greatest benefit from FFA revolves around leadership," he reflects, pointing out that he is more natural and at ease in front of groups thanks to his FFA experiences.

That same philosophy stems into his personal life,

as well, he acknowledges, saying that he now has adopted the belief that people will have to accept me for what I am." For a person who has the tendency to be self-conscious, as Dan admits he is, this philosophy is a real step forward in personal growth.

"FFA does a lot to open you up," Dan continues, referring to public speaking contests as well as judging competitions and other activities. "Not only that, but you make friends as you travel, which is another big benefit."

After four years of active participation in FFA activities, Dan knows what he's talking about.

In 1977 he developed his elocution skills to the point that he placed third in the state public speaking contest, which did much to give him poise in front of an

audience. Some other merits to his name include being a member of the first place meat judging team in Lancaster County, in which he placed fifth individually. He was also a delegate to PAFC which was held at Shippensburg State College last Summer. As a freshman, he was president of the 9th grand FFA chapter at Garden Spot. He has also been a foundation award winner in crops, sales, and service as well as a silver medal winner in the state small engines contest. In the regional electrification competition held in Springfield, Mass., Witwer placed fourth.

Just last month he was also named a Keystone Farmer for 1977, the highest state honor a Future Farmer of America can earn. For Dan, this degree meant more than any other recognition he had ever won previously.

"The Keystone Degree encompasses everything you've ever done," explains Dan, "All things lead to it, really, so it's quite an honor."

However, there is one other state honor which Dan hopes to achieve. At present this high school senior is grooming himself for a shot at state office — the summit of his present ambitions.

"I plan to run for state office this June," explains Dan. "I've always admired the skills of the state officers and I would like to develop my abilities to that level."

Fortunately, Dan enjoys public speaking and the challenge of getting up in front of an audience — two

points which will be assets as he seeks his position. A third factor in his favor is that he believes in the organization which he hopes to represent.

"FFA has a very well organized program" stressed Witwer, "the people that planned it developed it so well at the county, state, and national levels that there's little I could think of to change."

But, his concept of FFA hasn't always been the same, he admits.

"I initially thought of it as an organization for farm boys — for them to get out and enjoy themselves," he states. "But, the more I got involved, the more I realized that the most important thing about it is leadership and getting people involved. If you want a good organization, you have to accept responsibility." This year he accepted the position of secretary in his home chapter.

A rural, although not farm, boy, Witwer's involvement with agriculture began as a child when he visited his grandfather's farm. Then, to add to the enticement, his friends in fourth and fifth grade had steers — an asset which Dan envied. After a move to his present home on Frogtown Road near Blue Ball, his neighbor consented to Dan's raising a steer in his barn, and Witwer's agriculture career was launched.

Today he rents 23 acres of land on which he grows 17 acres of corn which he picks for grain, and six acres of hay. He also has a farrow to finish operation with three



Dan's hog operation is farrow to finish with three sows.

planning to buy extra feeder pigs to supplement his operation.

Dan notes with a laugh that his interest in hogs began quite accidentally when he won an SCS pig chase in 1975, although he'd been convinced prior to the chase that hogs were a good investment.

After graduation Dan has plans to go on for Bible college and ag school training following which he hopes to work abroad in agriculture.

"I feel missions and agriculture go together," states Witwer. Although his plans are still gelling at this point, he has always entertained the hopes of working in Latin America in his chosen field of endeavor.

In addition to his FFA activities, Witwer was named to Who's Who Among American High School Students for 1976-77 and is president of the youth group at Terre Hill Bible Fellowship.

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