

Berks Farmers' Assn. starts membership drive

By LAUREL SCHAEFFER
Staff Correspondent

LEESPORT - Berks County Farmers' Association kicked-off their annual membership drive December 11, as more than 20 committeemen met at the Berks County Agricultural Center, here, to organize "One of the most important things the Association does each year," described Gerald Stephens, manager of program development and training with the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association.

Stephens addressed the group, encouraging the members to continue to do an outstanding job. "You are the model for other Counties," he told the farmers, "but you have to stay on

your toes, even top brass can lose it's shine." Stephens was referring to the recent accomplishments made by the County association, including the honor of being named this years All Star County of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association. Berks has won this award, the highest recognition a County can receive, six times.

Stephens, who is also the field service manager for regions I, II, and IV, emphasized the importance of agriculture and the need for a strong organization such as the Farmers' Association. Especially in these times when farmers are under constant pressure from state regulations. He pointed out bills passed by the legislature which have been

helpful to the farmers, because of the clout exerted by this organization. These accomplishments include a bill exempting the farmer from sales tax on many agricultural products.

"If we are going to solve some of the problems of agriculture, then you, the members of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association will be the ones to do it," Stephens concluded.

Heading the membership drive for the County, are Lloyd Dreibelbis, Shoemakersville, and Harry Shaak, Hamburg, who is co-chairmen. So far they have enrolled more than half of the members needed to reach the County goal of 1047. Reaching the membership goal is one of several prerequisites needed to be eligible for the All Star County Award each year.

Jack Kooker, County president, mentioned that the annual dues were increased this year to \$40. He explained that \$29 now go to the state association and \$11 are for the County association. The County dues are used for such things as: newsletters, PACMA orders, postage and phone calls, County board materials, County directories, legislative and training meetings, public displays, insurance, conventions, and The Voice, a weekly newsletter published by the state association.

Kooker and the co-chairman of the membership drive added that the farmers of Berks County are assured of the benefits of a strong organization by their membership dues, and their dues are an investment in one of the most effective farm family organizations.



Lloyd Dreibelbis, Harry Shaak, Jack Kooker, and Irene Grim, membership processor (standing left to right) help to kick off the Berks County Farmers' Association membership drive.

"The Berks County Farmers' Association is the voice of agriculture here in Berks County, and if we are

to remain free to formulate the action to achieve development of a most profitable and permanent system of

agriculture, then we need to be members of this association," Kooker said.

GAO to investigate FDA on nitrite additive controversy

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The General Accounting Office (GAO) plans to investigate the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) and USDA's handling of the controversial nitrite issue. Seven congressmen have called for a probe to find out why the agencies didn't evaluate research submitted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The agencies allegedly had the report for four months. Iowa State University scientists and the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) have both been highly critical of the MIT report in evaluations. No results are expected from investigations until January.

It is also noted that the Agriculture Department and Food and Drug Administration have asked the scientific community and government researchers to evaluate the MIT study to

determine if further research is needed. According to reports, the dosage in rats tested was equal to human consumption of 23 tons of bacon and drippings daily for 70 years.



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