

# Penn Manor is ready for National FFA Week

By SALLY BAIR  
Staff Writer

## MILLERSVILLE

Members of the Penn Manor Chapter of the Future Farmers of America are taking advantage of FFA Week to tell students and the general public more about vocational agriculture.

According to Gus Birchler, FFA advisor and vo-ag teacher at Penn Manor, the students have prepared a series of posters for use in the school cafeteria and a window display in the library "to educate other students." They also have two radio programs planned.

Birchler said they hope "to make students aware of the week and of the agriculture program. We want them to associate vo-ag students with agriculture, and they have selected such themes for the posters as 'Youth with a Purpose' and 'Agriculture—A New Generation.'"

On Wednesday of FFA Week, every one of the 165 FFA members will wear their FFA jacket (or a suit) to bring recognition to the group.

In the library display, FFA students included the symbols used by each officer as well as some of the more outstanding trophies won by the chapter. There is also an FFA jacket and an explanation of its symbols. Norman Zink, Conestoga R2, and Brian Martin, Conestoga R1, explained that the kernels surrounding the insignia show that corn is found in every state. The owl portrays wisdom and the plough the tillage of the soil. The eagle represents the United States and the rising sun symbolizes a new era in agriculture.

The radio programs are



Norman Zink, Conestoga R2; on the left, and Brian Martin, Conestoga R2, prepare to place some of the statues in the library display window to finish their FFA Week display.

interviews with students done with WDAC and WSBA. These shows, taped by telephone, are designed to inform the public about the FFA program and its various projects.

Penn Manor, which has four teachers in the vo-ag department, is one of the oldest chapters in the county, and will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary next year. The national organization celebrated 50 years in 1978.

Birchler said he feels that FFA has a positive image at Penn Manor, greatly enhanced by their very active participation in "building a better community." This community service work includes stocking and maintaining fish in the fishing streams of the district as well as providing helping hands to

farm families which may encounter problems such as fire or other disaster. "We are willing to do whatever we can to help families," Birchler stated.

The group also helps poultry farmers to move chickens, and this money helps defray costs of some other programs the students participate in. They are involved in the FFA citrus sale and hold a large banquet each spring to honor the young people. "Many youngsters have a chance to be recognized there as well as their families and the people who have helped throughout the year," Birchler noted.

Birchler, who is in his tenth year as vo-ag teacher there, has seen some interesting changes. When he

first began his vo-ag career there, there were 95 per cent farm youth enrolled in FFA and 5 per cent non-farm. Now, he said, there are 45 per cent farm youth and 55 per cent non-farm youth.

He attributes this large turn-around to the fact that at one time vocational agriculture could teach only production agriculture. Now that they teach agri-business, the interest has changed. Birchler noted that agri-business is a growing entity in the Lancaster area, and he said there is increased interest in jobs in that area because "good jobs can be had without a four year college degree."

And jobs are not hard to find for graduates with agri-business backgrounds. "Many people come here looking for employees. We

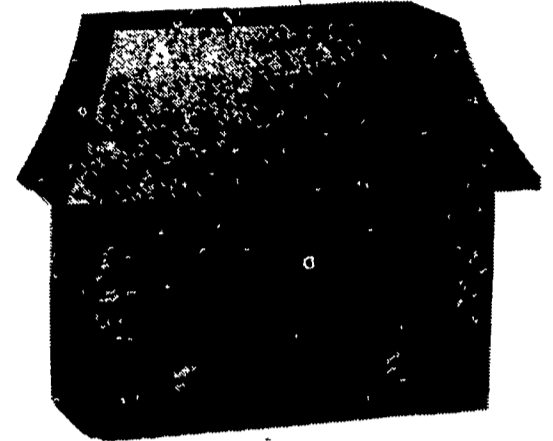
are able to place all our seniors who want jobs. About 88 percent go on to jobs in ag business," he said, adding, "We have highly motivated students in this area."

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