

# Area FFA 'shines' in national spotlight

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN  
LEOLA — FFA programs in Lancaster, Lebanon and Berks counties were in the national spotlight on Wednesday.

And, the area programs, their student participants and families and vo-ag teachers glistened and shone as brightly as the gold trim on a blue FFA jacket.

The programs, particularly the Supervised Occupational Experience projects — in which teachers and students work closely together to apply classroom instruction to real life projects on farms or in agribusiness, received ample praise from visiting vo-ag leaders and teachers, the National FFA and state officials, including Secretary of Education Robert G. Scanlon.

Scanlon, as featured speaker at a windup dinner to the day-long activities focused on the SOE program, told the 200 visiting vo-ag personnel from 45 states and Canada:

"Today, you have seen firsthand the quality of education which has become a way of life in vocational agriculture.

"Vo-ag has learned years ago what other phases of education are just now learning — that technology is vital for the future.

"The teaching of students about farming is more innovative and specialized than ever before.

"In vo-ag this educational program doesn't end at 3 p.m. or only continue nine months of the year.

"Supervised occupational experience programs provide a unique round-the-clock relationship between the teacher and student.

"And, that's what farming is all

about — extra time, extra work, extra commitment and extra trust."

And perhaps, Gus Birchler, vo-ag instructor at Penn Manor High School, Millersville, and one of 26 area teachers who took the visitors on field trips to visit students, summed it up best concerning the value of the personal SOE program:

"You gotta learn your students before you can teach them."

The visiting vo-ag supervisory personnel and teachers began their day with greetings and orientation sessions at Victor F. Weaver, Inc. and Sperry New Holland, which helped sponsor the field trip program.

But the heart of the visit — just as it is the backbone of the overall vo-ag educational curriculum — were the individualized tours to area students to observe how the local teachers work with FFA'ers on their farms or at their places of agribusiness employment to prepare for the future.

The visitors, who are participating in a week-long workshop on SOE in Washington, came to this area because of the excellent FFA instructional programs conducted by area vo-ag departments.

And the visitors, who will now carry their local observations back across the country and into Canada, saw FFA student projects ranging from market hogs to dairy herds and from growing Sugar Baby watermelons to on-farm experience aiding a handicapped farmer.

After their visits and talks with the local teachers, students and their families, the visitors nodded approval in unison when Secretary



Sampling a Sugar Baby watermelon grown by Grassland FFA member Wade Martin, Caribou, Me., and Larry Devine, assistant superintendent of Eastern Lancaster County Schools, are Tom Hale, left, vo-ag teacher from

Scanlon concluded his remarks by saying:

"The future of farming depends on the vision of our agricultural youth and the creativity of their teachers.

"We need and support the 12-month contract for vo-ag teachers for that vital link between the classroom and the real world of farming.

Area vo-ag teachers participating in the program included:

Solanco High School — J.D. Miller, MeeCee Baker and Ron Althoff.

Twin Valley High School — Ron Frederick.

Cedar Crest High School — Harold Berkheiser and Dick Moore.

Eastern Lebanon County — Gerald Strickler.

Conrad Weiser High School — Steven Miller.

Elizabethtown Area High School — William Erickson and Albert Martin.

Mount Joy Vo-Tech — James Kerr.

Warwick High School — Sonia Shaner.

Garden Spot High School, Eastern Lancaster County — Robert Herr, Abbe Barbato, Robert Lauffer, Phil Oglie, Clifford Day and Don Robinson.

Ephrata Area High School — Lewis Ayers and Charles Ackley.

Brownstown Vo-Tech — Bonita Levy.

Pequea Valley High School — Clair Witwer.  
Manheim Central High School — Charles Bechdel and James

Cowden.  
Penn Manor High School — Steve Smith and Gus Birchler.



One of SOE projects viewed by vo-ag visitors was two-acre lope and melon patch of Wade and Kevin Martin, R2 East Earl.



Discussing area FFA visits, from the left, are Charles Lebo, state supervisor; Chris Townsend, ag education, Illinois; Lloyd Ruoss, superintendent, Eastern Lancaster County Schools; Abbe Barbato, vo-ag teacher in Eastern Lancaster County; and Clarence Pearson, vo-ag instructor in state of Washington.

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Participating dignitaries in area FFA program are Robert G. Scanlon, left, Pa. Secretary of Education; and Byron Rawls, National FFA Advisor, Washington, D.C.



Another of the SOE programs visited by national FFA group on Wednesday was the dairy project of Dennis Weaver, right, of Weaver Homestead Farm, R1 New Holland. Dennis graduated last year as president of Grassland FFA.