

# North Carolina 4-H'ers spend event-filled week in Lancaster County

BY SALLY BAIR  
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LANCASTER — "As a tourist you don't get to live on farms." This is how Greg White, and 18-year-old 4-H'er from North Carolina summarizes his feelings about the benefits of the exchange trip between his county and Lancaster County. "The program also gives you a chance to meet new people and travel to new places."

Greg is one of 11 4-H'ers from Randolph County who spent a week in Lancaster County as part of a two-way exchange program begun last year when a contingent of Lancaster County 4-H'ers traveled to North Carolina.

The local 4-H'ers have planned a week jam-packed with activities, which began with visits to Victor F. Weaver and Sperry New Holland minutes after the groups arrival last Friday morning. Visits were also planned this week to Longwood Gardens, Baltimore, Hershey and an organized tour of

the Amish countryside.

And when nothing was organized, the 4-H'ers quickly got together and went to the movies and planned other activities.

Chris Chapman, a Lancaster 4-H'er who also traveled to Massachusetts on an exchange trip, says, "you are pretty tired by the end of the week." But she adds, "The exchange trips give you a chance get out of Lancaster County and it really opens some 4-H'ers eyes. We are kind of secluded here. You also get to meet new people and see what the 4-H program offers. I really value the friendships and I still keep in touch."

Fifteen-year-old Amy Pearce from North Carolina agrees. "It's nice to meet different people," she says. She admits to have some nervousness before leaving home, but says, "I was a little bit scared but my family is real nice. I was looking forward to doing all this, but I am more excited since we're here."

She laughs when asked about a



These 4-H'ers enjoyed a tour of the Sperry New Holland manufacturing plant in New Holland. To the North Carolina visitors, the plant is well known. From left are: John Ward, Chris Chapman, Guide Tina Strepko, Karen Reid, Shelley Peterson and Regina Brazier.

language difficulty, and says, "They talk different from us. I have to keep asking, "What did you say?" But she says her family also has to ask her to repeat things.

Greg says the whole exchange is a good experience, and points out, "I have a great family. In just a few hours we were picking on each other just like brothers and sisters." Greg and Amy are guests of Phil and Gini Nissley, so there's plenty of opportunity for sibling teasing.

Gini Nissley feels she benefits as much as her guests. "It's good to learn other people's lifestyle and the different ways they do things, and what kind of things they like to do. The value of it for them is seeing what Lancaster County is like."

Regina Brazier from North Carolina expressed the feelings of many when she said; "I was really interested in getting to other states and seeing how they do things. We have no Amish or Mennonite where we live." A "really big chocolate fan," the one thing Regina wished to see even before she left home is Hershey and its famous chocolate factory.

Lancaster County Council Co-president Joe Rohrer, 19, went to North Carolina last year and to Massachusetts several years ago.



Gini Nissley, left, and Amy Pearce from North Carolina show off one of the T-shirts brought by the visitors for their local hosts. The distinctive green 4-H shirts made the group easy to distinguish wherever they went.

He says, "It gives 4-H'ers a good perspective of different states, and how they talk and how they live." He pointed out that accents were different in both states he visited, and when they played miniature golf, the North Carolina visitors called it "putt-putt."

Most of the guests are from suburban Asheville, but Greg lives on a small farm, and worked on a dairy farm nearby, so he is enjoying visiting with the Nissleys, who operate a dairy farm near Manheim. He reflected, "I enjoy working on a farm, but they get up a little earlier here than we do." The Nissleys get up at 5 a.m., and in North Carolina he didn't get up to milk until 7 a.m.

Richard Peterson, 4-H agent for Randolph County, pointed out some of the many similarities between the two counties. Both have a strong agricultural economy, and both have varied industries. Near his home textiles and furniture are important industries, and recently Goodyear tire and rubber has located there. There is also a Black and Decker small appliance plant.

Tobacco is the major cash crop in Randolph County, but the system under which it is grown

differs widely from Lancaster County. There is an allotment system, Peterson explains, with farmers actually owning allotments, based on poundage. Peterson commented, "Just anyone can't grow it." Allotments have become a legacy, passed on from generation to generation, although a few farmers do lease out their allotments if they are not growing tobacco themselves.

Tobacco grown there is brite leaf tobacco. Although it looks the same in the fields, the bottom leaves are taken off the plants as they mature, then are hung in a barn and heated until they are the desired color. After that they are dried to the proper pliable state, then bundled and taken to market to be auctioned. Tobacco brings about \$10 per pound, according to Peterson, making it "quite a valuable thing."

Another large industry is the broiler-fryer industry, with almost all of the birds grown under contract. Although there was some concern about driving into the avian influenza area, Peterson said the state University advised them that there was no problem.

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Susan Reid helps her Lancaster County host Michelle Dean load her belongings shortly after her arrival in Lancaster County with 11 other North Carolina 4-H'ers. This week's visit completes a two-way exchange begun last year when the group from Lancaster traveled to Randolph County, North Carolina.



These North Carolina 4-H'ers enjoyed a taste of Victor F. Weaver's manufactured chicken products after touring the plant and learning about the local operation.