

Ag in the Classroom program brings the farm to school

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LANCASTER — Sixty pairs of arms reach simultaneously toward one tiny, squealing piglet, while patient, smiling teachers struggle to recover order in their classrooms.

When at last the teachers are successful, each youngster takes a turn at holding the piglet in his arms for just a few seconds and to feel its compact, bristly body squirm against him.

The piglet and other farm animals, products and implements all came to school this week as part of an "Ag in the Classroom" project developed through the combined efforts of the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Farmers Association.

Potato farmer Jane Eshleman, coordinator of the program in

Lancaster County and a former Penn Manor school board member, headed the pilot program in the Penn Manor School District this week.

A total of thirteen farmers and several groups of FFA'ers traveled to the six elementary schools in the Penn Manor District in an effort to give approximately 270 third-grade students a better understanding of agriculture and the role it plays in the economy and in society.

The farmers gave presentations on a variety of agricultural topics including fruits and vegetables, FFA, beef, chickens, hogs and dairy. A number of the farmers brought along feed, animals, farm implements, and slides to share with the students, giving additional weight to their verbal message.

Hog producer Nancy Charles came to the classroom equipped



All eyes were on this tiny piglet that visited the third-graders at Ann Letort Elementary School as part of the Ag in Classroom program this week. Each student had a chance to hold the squealing creature.



Beef producers Marsha and Henry Barley brought a tractor to school as part of their Ag in the Classroom presentation. Here, Karen Gochnauer and Steven Hoffman marvel at the size of the wheel.

with a "Porky" pig puppet, who explained the workings of the hog industry from a pig's point of view. Her presentation also included slides of her farm and a visit from a real piglet.

Using a slide presentation consisting of scenes from their farm, beef producers Marsha and Henry Barley showed the youngsters the equipment they use to run their farm and the chores that they must do each day. The tractor they brought with them was the highlight of the children's day.

The groups of high school FFA'ers who visited the classrooms explained their different projects and told the younger students about the vo-ag program available in the high school.

Jane and Guy Eshleman, potato farmers, explained to the students that some vegetables grow on top of the soil, some on stalks and some below the ground. The students also learned that potato farmers must battle potato bugs and later enjoyed a treat of potato chips.

Dairy farmers Nelson Habecker and John Barley explained dairy farming to the students and showed them a cow and calf and the amount of food and water each cow consumes every day. Later in

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Henry Barley, a local beef farmer, shows a model of the combine he uses on his farm.

City teachers attend Ag in the Classroom workshop

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LANCASTER — About 15 Lancaster School District teachers voluntarily attended an Ag in the Classroom workshop last week to talk about ways of incorporating information about farming into their classrooms.

The workshop, headed by Carolyn Holleran from the Pennsylvania Council on Economic Education, was primarily designed to help teachers prepare their students for a field trip to Lancaster Harvest Days. The teachers were also encouraged to incorporate farming information into their classes throughout the school year.

The program featured a talk by Lancaster County extension agent Jay Irwin, who focused on agriculture's impact on the county's economy. "No other area has the production we do," he said, citing production statistics for the past year.

Dairy farmer John Barley presented a lecture on dairying that he plans to give to third-grade students during an Ag in the Classroom project in the Penn Manor School District. His presentation included facts about dairy cows and dairy products.

Karen Freeman, a member of Lancaster County's Land Preservation Board, told the teachers about the movement to protect farmland and discussed the zoning changes and planning necessary to protect prime farmland from development.



Carolyn Holleran

Later in the program the teachers received teaching materials to use in their classrooms.

Shirley Duschel, a third-grade teacher attending the workshop, said she learned a lot about farming during the program and was excited about using the teaching materials in her classes.

The workshop is just one part of the Ag in the Classroom program, which is a national movement to help young people better understand the source of their food supply and the role of agriculture in the total economy and society.



Dairy farmers John Barley and Nelson Habecker show students at Hambright Elementary School how a calf gets its breakfast.