

# Ag in the Classroom

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the program, the students had the opportunity to sample some chocolate milk.

Giving similar demonstrations were Bob Bachman, Bob Kendig, Ray Reitz, Jeff Brukholder and Gerald Garber.

The information provided in each of the sessions brought forth a flurry of questions from the students. They wanted to know how much a calf weighs when it's born, how long it takes for a pumpkin to grow and how you can tell if an animal is a boy or a girl.

The farmers patiently answered these questions and many, many more throughout the course of the three-day program.

The timing of the project coincided with a social studies unit on farming. "It fits into the third grade curriculum just perfect," said Helen Kocken, a third-grade teacher at Ann Letort Elementary.

William Wood, a principal for two of the elementary schools in the district, said that teachers and administrators alike have shown an enthusiastic response to the program and hope that it will return next year. Wood said he believes agricultural programs

like the Ag in the Classroom project are especially important in areas like Lancaster County where farming is prevalent.

Jane Eshleman, county coordinator for the project, and a group of planners worked out the Penn Manor project by following guidelines issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Ag in the Classroom is a national program with individual states and counties responsible for developing their own programs according to the guidelines, she explained. In Pennsylvania, the Farmers Association is heading the project.

The basic philosophy of the program, she explained, is to utilize existing organizations such as farm women groups, the Chamber of Commerce and the Farmers Association to educate youngsters about agriculture.

The people who are participating in the program are all doing so on a voluntary basis. Eshleman said she is very pleased with the response of the farmers who were willing to take time out during the busy harvest season to visit the schools.

Farmers are willing to devote their time to the program, dairy farmer John Barley said, because they believe it is something that will make a difference in how people perceive agriculture and farmers.

"People think milk comes from a shelf in the supermarket," he said, noting that it is this kind of misconception that farmers hope to eradicate through Ag in the Classroom.

Their message has already influenced the career aspirations of one young student, who upon seeing the impressive size of an International tractor remarked: "I wanted to be a truck driver, but now I'm going to be a farmer!"



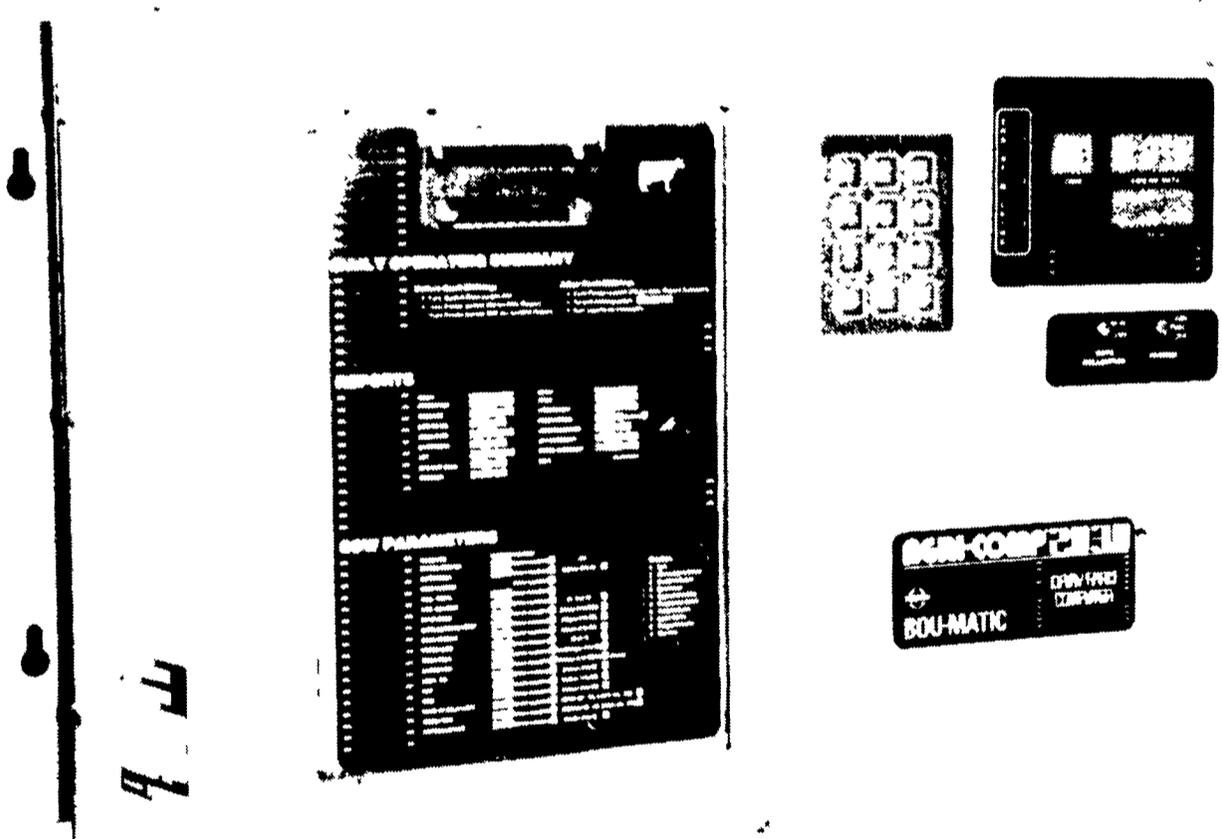
FFA'er Tracee Aument shows the halter she uses when training her steer project. Tracee and several other FFA students from the high school talked to third-graders at Eshleman Elementary about FFA.



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