

*At Littlestown High School*

# How to get a new vo-ag program started

BY SALLY BAIR  
Staff Correspondent

LITTLESTOWN — In a time of budget concerns and program cutbacks, Littlestown High School in Adams County has just begun its first ever vocational agriculture program. The program, voted into existence by the School Board last February, is starting with 45 students, who are eagerly awaiting approval of their Future Farmers of American chapter.

Prior to this year, the only opportunity for a Littlestown student to take vocational agriculture was to attend Gettysburg or New Oxford schools, not easy because of the problems of changing schools and working out transportation.

Having three farmers serving on the board of education is helpful in establishing a vo-ag department, but broad-based community support is what really was the deciding factor, though the original vote was close.

Ron Harrison, one of the three farmers, said, "I served on an advisory committee with the superintendent before going on the board, and this is one of the con-

cepts discussed. We found a lot of interest from other people who had served on the committee. If we were just doing it for farmers I couldn't vote for it, but there are many people involved in agriculture and more and more people who are interested and who need to become involved and educated."

Mark James, a native of New Hampshire, who was hired as the teacher to coordinate and implement the new program adds, "The community has been very receptive, and parental support has been super. There is a strong need for agriculture ingrained in the community. A lot of the students are involved in summer jobs on farms. It's an important part of the community."

While very few of the 45 students in grades 9-12 are actually from farms, James says that Littlestown is a fairly rural community, and adds, "Most students have an appreciation for that way of life and for agriculture."

James says he has received a lot of support and encouragement from other vo-ag departments in the county. Littlestown will be the

seventh school offering the program, and for James it is natural that they should be offering it. "Littlestown has the best rounded agriculture and the highest concentration of agriculture in the county."

Littlestown once had a slogan on signs greeting travelers as they entered the community, which read, "Littlestown - where agriculture and industry meet." Harrison said these signs have come down, but the local Lions Club has had buttons made with the slogan, and he says, "I proudly wear mine." It was this slogan, in fact, which impressed him when he was considering moving to the area 13 years ago from Blair County.

As to why some programs are folding, while they are starting up a new one, Harrison responds, "It's not that agriculture is dying, but programs are changing."

He cited cooperation from the superintendent and the principal as important reasons for the opportunity to start the program, and he adds, "Guidance counselors



Vocational agriculture is in its first months at Littlestown High School in Adams County, and Mark James is the teacher who will be building the program. Initially, the course has attracted 45 students in grades 9-12.

(Turn to Page D19)

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