

Society 35 is newest addition to Lancaster Co. Farm Women

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NEW PROVIDENCE — Members of Lancaster County's newest Farm Women Society, #35, have celebrated their first anniversary as a group. Members agree that the first year, while not without difficulties, was one of growing and learning together.

The impetus for forming the group came mainly from Joan Dean, a "die-hard farm girl," who wanted to get to know other women in her age group interested in farming. New to the Strasburg area since her marriage to Gary, she knew of Farm Women through Gary's mother, and felt it would be a good way to make new friends. She recalls, "I had always heard a lot of good things about Farm Women."

Joan searched out societies and had her name on a waiting list to join one for five years. She and eight others were on a list but couldn't join because the society had reached its self-imposed limit, made necessary because the groups meet in homes which cannot accommodate large groups.

Society #34 was formed in the Quarryville area by some of those on the waiting list, and Joan thought there was a need closer to home. She found others who

wanted to join a group with young women who would share similar interests.

Getting commitments was not easy at first because of people's busy schedules, but Joan persevered. She says with a laugh, "I knew everyone in the group but no one knew each other." As the common denominator, it was natural that Joan became president when the group was formally organized. She said the phone calls began almost a year before the group actually formed.

Pat Ranck, Lancaster, now secretary of the group, recalls, "The original reason we thought about starting a society though there were already a lot of societies, is that we felt there weren't a lot in our own age group. Many of us are offspring of older members. My mother is a member so I heard a lot about it, and I think that was the biggest influence." Pat says one of the hardest things was telling women about it who were not at all familiar with the group.

Lory Hess, Strasburg R1, was also instrumental in starting the group and gives her reasons for wanting the group to organize. "I was new to the Strasburg area, and I wanted to get to know women my own age and to meet other people in farming." Lory and her



These are the members of Lancaster County's newest Farm women Society, #35, shown following a recent meeting. Back row from left are Marilyn Walters, Lory Hess, Joann Herr and Dot Frey. Middle row from left are Judy Landis, Kandy Rohrer, Karen Martin, Linda Rudy, and Debbie Wimer. Front row from left are Deb Welk, Phyllis Brubaker, Joan Dean and Rachel Thomas.

husband, Rick, are in dairying.

About half of the members are actively involved in farming, and most are involved in agri-business in some way. "We all live in the same neck of the woods," one member explained.

Deb Welk, who lives on a dairy farm, near Quarryville, says she knew about Farm Women from her mother-in-law and pointed out, "It's a nice opportunity to meet new girls. I only knew one other person in the group."

Having begun with what Joan refers to as "unlucky 13," the group now numbers 16. Though they will eventually limit their membership, they are still encouraging visitors to their meetings in hope of getting more young women interested. Pat Ranck says, "One of our goals is to encourage new members."

It has been a year of rewarding experiences for the group and as they met recently they agreed that they enjoy the programs, but perhaps just as much, they enjoy the fellowship. Joan points out, "We've had a whole year of fellowship. It's amazing."

Rachel Thomas, New Providence, said, "I knew some of the girls before, and I thought it would be fun to get out and do different things. Being out with other women helps, and I probably wouldn't do some of these things on my own."



Joan Dean, left, president of Society 35, looks over the agenda with vice-president Lory Hess. The two Strasburg area women were instrumental in organizing Lancaster County's newest Farm Women society.

Another member, Kandy Rohrer, Ronks, says quite candidly, "I had just had a baby when they called me, and I needed to get out." Her feelings are echoed by Debbie Wimer, Quarryville R4, who said, "I joined to get out of the house, and to meet women in my own age group. Here everybody has the same interests. I saw that they had nice programs and it made me want to join."

Indeed, sharing interests is one of the delights of the group. Many have been married only a few years, and most are just starting their families, so they share the joys and concerns of that stage of life.

Linda Rudy, a visitor who plans to join, said, "It's nice to get away from the children." Another visitor, Judy Landis, adds "I think I'm going to join. I enjoy the

fellowship and getting together with other women."

Phyllis Brubaker, Quarryville R2, another one of the original members says, "I knew Joan and she called and asked if I wanted to join. "It's nice to just get out for the evening."

Joan Hershey, county Farm Women president, says the membership is a priority both of the state level and on the county. She explained, "It is a priority to encourage younger members to become involved." She feels it is important not just to start new societies but also to get younger members in existing societies. She said, "For any new or existing society it must be a time of support and we must keep helping one another."

The newest society joins
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Joann Herr, left, and Dot Frey are brushing with great concentration as they work on stencil projects. Both members of Farm Women Society, 35, they were trying the new technique at one of their regular monthly meetings.



Kandy Rohrer, left, Deb Welk, center, and Marilyn Walters make plans for the next meeting of Farm Women Society 35. With most members living near the Strasburg area, Society 35 is the newest of the county's Farm Women Societies, whose total membership is nearly 1,000.

Homestead Notes