

Lancaster educator shares leadership qualities with 4-H'ers

BY SALLY BAIR

Staff Correspondent

GORDONVILLE — Joanne Smoker has been a 4-H leader for only four years, but has already made a lasting contribution to Lancaster County's 4-H organization. This month she will complete a three-year term on the 4-H Leaders' Advisory Council, and she served as president of the council last year.

For Joanne, being a 4-H leader is an extension of her involvement with youth. As a high school business teacher, working with children comes naturally. However, it is her attitude which really demonstrates why she is a leader.

"I love young people," she says enthusiastically. "I see the youth of today as having more potential than in my own youth. They are exposed to so much, and have had their views broadened before they are out of high school. They have a better concept of the world, and have a lot of things going for them—things my generation didn't have until they were into their twenties."

As with many leaders, Joanne became a sewing leader when her

own children, Dina, 12, and Dori, 11, joined the Pequea Valley 4-H Club. She and her husband, Lynn, live on Harvest Drive, Gordonville. A former 4-H'er with a club near Mastersonville in northern Lancaster County where she grew up, Joanne knew the value of the skills taught in 4-H.

However, with her involvement on a county level, she is much more aware of the greater picture of 4-H. "I can see the benefits of 4-H'ers learning the skills outside the home. Four-H is a very good organization as far as leadership. It offers a lot of social contacts on a county level, and 4-H'ers can really broaden their horizons," Joanne commented.

She added, "The Leaders Council showed me all that's valuable for 4-H'ers to be in. There are a lot of neat state activities, and leaders have to be aware that 4-H extends outside the club. Leaders should encourage their members to participate."

Of course, there is another element to the successful 4-H'er, Joanne points out. "Parents are so important. Children need encouragement from their parents. Parents need to say, 'We support



Joanne Smoker enjoys harvesting fruit from her backyard orchard. With many fruit trees and a large garden, she spends a lot of time preserving food.

you."

Joanne added, "Most outstanding 4-H'ers have either a very dedicated leader or very dedicated parents. If there isn't that support, then it is a truly outstanding 4-H'er."

She noted, "Most children must be encouraged by adults. Leaders could be the person who keeps the child involved."

Recruiting leaders is always needed in 4-H, and Joanne says, "I keep after parents of present 4-H'ers. Everybody can do something. I think we also need to seek out community people, and I think there have to be senior citizens who would benefit greatly and who would have a lot to offer as leaders. It would be so neat if that could be incorporated in 4-H."

Being a leader is a challenge, Joanne is the first to admit. She teaches third year sewing and works with girls who have not touched the sewing machine since the year before with their previous 4-H project. "They forget how to sew, and can't sew a straight line." The first year she taught it she had 15 children sign up. With so many she sought out helpers for each project meeting, and adds, "hardly a day went by when somebody wasn't here working on a project."

Because of what she terms her "teacher instinct," Joanne is a stickler for making her children do demonstrations as part of their projects. Each child must do two—one for practice, and one for scoring. The demonstration counts for 10 out of the 100 points the children can attain for round-up.

Although not everyone likes the idea, Joanne says, "They can start to be comfortable being in front of their peers. It helps them learn to



These canned goods represent many hours of work and will be enjoyed by the entire Smoker family during the winter months. Joanne works as a substitute teacher so she has her summers free to garden and to be a 4-H leader.



Joanne puts her organizational talents to work keeping the 4-H spirit alive in Lancaster County as a 4-H leader and a member of the 4-H Leaders Advisory Council.

talk on their feet. If they start at a young age, they will be more comfortable later."

She said she is not particular about subject matter, and lets them choose anything that is related, which could mean nail care, clothing for special uses, pattern measurement or how to do counted crosstitch.

Joanne says her concerns for the club she works with are the same as those shared by many clubs—keeping older children involved. "One solution is to put them in as teen leaders. They get satisfaction from helping younger children and teens are very capable."

Keeping up the competition is another way of maintaining interest, Joanne feels. Children like to be challenged and try to do better. "Once they see they can compete and win or improve, they like it. They also enjoy seeing how they do on a county level when they participate in the 4-H Fair," she points out. She would like to encourage more leaders to push the members to take their projects to the Fair.

Joanne stresses that the biggest change in 4-H is the variety of projects now available. "4-H has a connotation now that is more than animals, sewing and cooking. If the leaders are available, 4-H'ers can take anything."

She noted, "Four-H is definitely no longer just for rural kids. It is neat that we are getting more minorities involved, and that there are programs for city children." She adds that her own Pequea Valley Club is branching into project areas other than cooking and sewing.

The Leaders Advisory Council, according to Joanne, is primarily responsible for the 4-H Fair, and does some other planning as well. They work closely with 4-H agent Zoann Parker and Hazel Nestleroth, who recently left a second 4-H position. Joanne says, "I can't give enough credit to Zoann and Hazel. They do the brunt of everything. We make decisions as a Council, but they carry them out."

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Pruning shrubbery at her Gordonyville home, Joanne likes the challenge of doing the outside work required with an acre of land.

Homestead Notes