

Thanks to 4-H,

This 'Shepherd of the Year' isn't sheepish anymore

BY JACK HUBLEY

LANDISVILLE — Ellen Lewis just wanted a sheep for a pet. That was in 1980.

Five years later, "a sheep" has become a breeding flock of 25 Hampshire ewes with, at last count, 30 lambs.

On the family's five-acre farmette near Landisville there's a new 44-by-40 sheep barn.

Anchoring the fireplace hearth is a silver trophy proclaiming Ellen the Lancaster 4-H Woolies'

'Shepherd of the Year.'

There's also a large cardboard carton overflowing with newspaper clippings and a rainbow of show ribbons. When Ellen Lewis does something, she does it right. Which, in the terminology of livestock producers, seems to be a heritable trait.

Although Ellen's father, George Lewis, had no previous experience with sheep, he is a veteran of the 4-H program. While growing up in New York State, George parlayed

an interest in poultry into some successful 4-H projects. His career undoubtedly peaked in the late 1940's, when his rooster placed first in the Madison Square Garden poultry show. "He won a powerful big prize of \$3," George chuckles.

So when Ellen decided that she wanted to have a sheep, Dad decided that she ought to do it Lewis-fashion.

To start out in the right direction, Ellen and her father spent some time with well-known Lancaster County Hampshire breeders, Clyde and Dorothy Brubaker, who live nearby. "One Sunday we went over there and we talked all afternoon," Ellen recalls. "I remember him (Clyde) telling me that all you need to do is feed them right and give them some TLC."

Ellen joined the Woolies in 1980, the first year that the club separated from the county beef club. It was not until the following year that she entered show competition and found out that success in the showing depended on her fitting ability, in addition to feed and TLC.

She estimates that it takes about three hours of trimming to ready a sheep for the ring. That's in addition to the hour required to wash and dry, the sheep which, "is a good way to use all your old bath towels," she notes.

Since kicking off her show career in 1981, Ellen's combination of fitting, food and TLC has proven to be a winning formula. Her first show sheep, a Hampshire ewe purchased from the Brubakers, got off to a strong start by taking top honors in the 1981 Manheim Fair, then going on to be named champion breeding sheep at the



When you happen to be the smallest lamb in a competitive set of Hampshire triplets, you've got to take a meal wherever you can find it. Four-day-old Pee Wee isn't complaining.

county roundup. Annabelle finished the show season in characteristic style by taking reserve champion Hampshire ewe honors at the 1982 Farm Show.

In addition to maintaining an ambitious show schedule, Ellen's famous ewe starred on the local television station's program, "Rise and Shine," and joined the cast of a church Christmas musical. "That sheep acted just like an old ham," recalls Ellen's mother, Lorraine. "Ellen used to take her out without a lead and she'd be six inches from her hip pocket."

In fact, in those early years,

Ellen confesses that she was much more sheepish than her sheep. "When I first went into 4-H I was really shy," she says, pointing out that the 4-H program has been responsible for helping her to overcome her inability to talk to people, which, in turn, has resulted in many new friendships. Ellen also credits 4-H with helping her to develop the self-discipline necessary to properly care for livestock.

Although her breeding sheep projects have spanned five years, it wasn't until last year that Ellen took on a market lamb project. "I

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The ewe that started it all: Annabelle, Ellen Lewis's first show prospect, has dropped out of the limelight to produce more prize winning lambs for the Lewis flock.

City club swims into 4-H with goldfish project

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LANCASTER — As the late afternoon sunlight filters through the frosted windows of the Lancaster girl's club, a group of 4-H'ers listens as 4-H agent Zoann Parker describes the essential ingredients plants need to grow.

Later in the meeting, they will carefully tuck cuttings of Wandering Jew and piggyback plants into soil-filled Styrofoam cups. And, amid considerable excitement, they will wrap their newly-planted treasures carefully in newspaper to take home.

While this may sound like a routine 4-H meeting, it isn't. The youngsters are not the typical farm kids usually associated with 4-H; they are city children who had never seen seeds or transplanted a plant until they started attending 4-H meetings.

This city 4-H club is the brainchild of Lancaster Extension 4-H Agent Zoann Parker, who says, "I'd drive by and see these kids sitting around with nothing to do."

So, with characteristic energy and enthusiasm, Zoann announced that a new 4-H club would be meeting in the girl's club and invited the kids to join.

When no one showed for the first meeting, Zoann refused to be discouraged. She picked up the goldfish that were to be the club's first project and walked around the girl's club asking if anyone was interested in obtaining one of the shiny fish.

Before too long, she had attracted enough kids to start a meeting, and the city club was off to a shaky beginning.

The idea behind the goldfish project, which Zoann wrote her-

self, was to keep the kids coming back week after week. Through earlier experiences, Zoann had learned that attendance was often spotty at city club meetings. To encourage regular attendance, she would distribute only one week's worth of goldfish food at each meeting. To get the next week's supply, the 4-H'ers had to attend the meeting.

In her search for a project to start the club, Zoann relied on her experiences as a 4-H'er. "I've always loved animals and that's how I learned responsibility." Knowing the limited resources she had to work with and the environment the animal would be exposed to, Zoann turned to fish.

In order to obtain a goldfish, the 4-H'er had to attend three meetings. When this requirement was fulfilled, she was presented

with a quart jar bearing one goldfish and a week's supply of food.

Most of the fish died in a short time, Zoann reports. "When you put goldfish in a quart jar, they don't live very long." But early death was expected and she had warned the 4-H'ers that the fish wouldn't last long. "There was no pretense that they were going to live until they were 60," she said.

With the club established and the goldfish project behind them, the 4-H'ers moved on to other short-term projects like money management and plant cultivation.

Providing the kids with something tangible to take home every week has been important to maintaining membership, Zoann notes. For one project, the club looked at ways they could improve

their home environment, then made "garbage" cans out of plastic buckets covered with contact paper.

As part of the money management project, the 4-H'ers made banks and are working at saving \$3 to attend the 4-H Fair this summer. So far, her plan has worked and for the most part, the kids have been coming back.

Club member Tracy Dean said the reason she continues to attend meeting is "because it's fun." Her favorite 4-H activity so far, she reports, was a trip to a nearby greenhouse.

Fellow 4-H'er Shanda Lee, 8, agrees that the club is a lot of fun. Shanda says she learned about the club by watching a meeting and decided it was something she would enjoy.

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Members of a city 4-H club concentrate on getting their plants off to a good start.



Lancaster County 4-H Agent Zoann Parker shows a 4-H'er the tiny roots forming at the end of a cutting of Wandering Jew at a recent meeting of her city club.