

Dan Cochran is involved in four, 4-H clubs and is reaching for more of what 4-H offers

BY MARTHA J. GEHRINGER TRAPPE — Most kids would be content to be active in one 4-H club, but not Dan Cochran. Currently he is involved in four clubs and continues to reach for more 4-H activities.

One could easily describe Dan as an ideal 4-Her because of his enthusiasm and excitement about everything the 4-H program offers.

Dan, 15, the son of Gary and Alice Cochran, started his 4-H story in 1981 when a variety of influences came together.

Dan was familiar with pigs since his family had always raised a few pigs for meat. Yet, one year when he attended the Farm Show he

found the pigs and pig show fascinating, and spent a great deal of time in that area.

He learned about the fun things a 4-H club offers from his mother, a former 4-Her, who also told him about the education she gained from her beef project.

Dan thought about the farm show, his mother's stories and the pigs out in the barn. Then he made the decision to give 4-H a try because he "thought it would be neat to start raising pigs."

He didn't wait for someone to come to him, once he decided, Dan contacted the Montgomery County Extension and found out when the next livestock club meeting was.

At this point it was mid-year and too late to begin a project. Dan decided to attend the meetings to make sure he wanted to pursue this project without the commitment of purchasing pigs.

This year was important, Dan explained since he learned a lot about grooming and showing and what the club was all about. He also realized that he wanted to start a pig project.

In April 1982 he purchased two purebred Duroc pigs from a Duroc breeder in nearby Telford. Dan based his criteria for selecting this breed on what the judges were picking in the showing. At that time the Duroc breed was winning many market hog classes.

The second year he raised purebred Spots and showed them to the reserve champion position. Dan contends, however, that he likes the Duroc breed best, either purebred or crossed with Hampshires.

Finding the showing to be infectious, Dan entered his pigs in the Farm Show this past year. Although he didn't place very high, he greatly enjoyed it, and plans are already in place for a return engagement next year.

The Livestock club that Dan belongs to encourages its members to market or promote their project to prospective buyers. This can be accomplished by writing to individual buyers and letting them know when and where the 4-H project will be sold.

Dan's success in promoting his project is witnessed regularly in the prices he receives. His projects consistently bring more per pound since he has more buyers bidding.

Successes are partially responsible for keeping his interest in 4-H. Even more important are the friendships he has gained. These friends, many of whom he knows will be lifelong, kept encouraging him to try something new and spurred him on to new



Dan poses with the Hampshire lamb he will be showing at the Montgomery County 4-H Fair this summer.

levels of achievement.

Enrollment in the sheep project was the result of his 4-H friends motivation. After some considerations he entered the sheep club last year. The purebred Hampshire project he chose took champion honors in the lightweight class.

These achievements have not gone unnoticed. Last year he won the Farm Credit awards for sheep and swine.

In addition to preparing a project, he is also the current president of the livestock club and the treasurer of the sheep club.

His interest in livestock doesn't stop with the show ring. The past two years he has been learning about type and confirmation by participating on the county livestock judging team that attended the State Achievement Days.

Dan is looking forward to a good

judging team and developing his judging skills even further this year with the team's new coach, Steve Ledoux.

For his third club, Dan reached beyond livestock and found the exchange club. Dan discovered this club through his friends. "We have a great time there, all my friends are in it," he explained.

Last year the club made a trip to North Carolina and Virginia Beach. While down south, Dan had the unique opportunity to work on a pig and tobacco farm. He was actually able to help harvest the tobacco, an experience he describes as "really great."

Dan is equally excited about this year when the 4-Hers they visited make the trip up here. He is anxious to show them everything we have to offer.

The Toastmasters International Club is the fourth club Dan has

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Dan holds a runt that he is raising. A neighbor farmer gave the pig to Dan so it would have a chance to survive.

Toastmaster's Youth Program teaches 4-H'ers leadership, speaking skills

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

LANCASTER — Leadership is an elusive quality often referred to as the "stuff" of which successful 4-H'ers is made. It is difficult to define and more difficult still to explain how 4-H'ers build on this important characteristic to become leaders.

There is one small, dedicated group of 4-H'ers determined to enhance their leadership abilities, and each Saturday morning for eight weeks they leave the coziness

of their beds to be a part of the Youth Leadership program being led by the Conestoga Toastmasters. Seventeen 4-H'ers are enrolled in the program, and program coordinator Jack Fish acknowledges that he is pleased with their attitude, calling it "very unusual."

According to Fish, the program "deals with leadership in general." He explained that the Toastmasters' philosophy is achieved through effective speaking, both impromptu and

prepared.

He notes, however, that giving speeches is only one part of the course. "They also learn to run a meeting, and just as important, they learn how to be a participant in a meeting." He said this may be the only opportunity for some people to actually be taught the basics of participating in a meeting.

Fish said these 4-H'ers will learn not just to give speeches, but also how to react in all speaking situations. Fish said, "In Toast-

masters we have housewives, executives, engineers and all walks of life represented. What they have in common is that they have not accomplished anything until they have communicated."

Fish himself has been a member of Toastmasters since 1958, when, he said, "I recognized the need to speak more effectively." A plant engineering manager at Sperry New Holland, Fish said that he enjoys his continuing association with Toastmasters because it keeps you "constantly in shape."

The current group of 4-H'ers in Youth Leadership ranges in age from 11 to 17, a factor which concerned Fish at first, but he admits that the group has been quite cohesive. "The fact that they are all 4-H'ers is very important, because they have something in common. We're all very impressed with these kids." One of the other adults working with the group noted his satisfaction in watching individual members of the group grow through the eight-week course.

Fish adds, "Most of us enjoy working with children — it is very interesting." He notes that 4-H is a natural organization for them to work with because of its leadership opportunities, but added that they are willing to work with any kind of group with an interest in leadership.

Throughout the program Fish notes that 4-H'ers receive "many, many speaking opportunities." Beyond that, they elect a president, vice-president and secretary at each meeting to give

them a chance for that sort of decision making.

Each participant has been given a handbook, which has a complete Roberts Rules of Order, plus many suggested fundamentals for preparing and giving speeches, to be used in any situation. Fish noted that "Youth Leadership" is a copyrighted program of Toastmasters International. Another important element of the program is teaching the 4-H'ers to be effective listeners, something else which Fish believes no one is teaching. "Listening is every bit as important as speaking," he says.

About the Saturday meetings, Fish says, "We try to create an atmosphere of helpfulness. We are not critics; we are evaluators. When we evaluate the emphasis is on helpfulness. We give them immediate feedback through evaluation."

Fish says, "Speaking is not a science — it is an art. We cannot change the person, but we can add to their strengths."

Zoann Parker, 4-H Agent in Lancaster County comments, "This is one of the best leadership programs I have seen. It helps them learn to run meetings and make decisions, and also teaches them the ability to think on their feet, which is one of the most valuable skills."

This course is the first offered by Conestoga Toastmasters, but last year Lancaster Toastmasters offered a similar course, and Zoann has had the opportunity to see results from that program. She

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These are some of the participants in the Youth Leadership Program sponsored by Conestoga Toastmasters. From left are: Melissa Harris, Mark Robertson, Kim Kettering, Michelle Harris, Amy Harris, and Jack Fish, program coordinator.