

Pa. 4-H'ers Travel To National Center For Weekend Of Sharing

BY SALLY BAIR

Lancaster County Correspondent
WASHINGTON, D.C. — For 125 Pennsylvania 4-H'ers and leaders, "Washington Farms" at the National 4-H Center in Washington, D.C., provided insight into the opportunities in the 4-H program and some concrete advice in putting leadership into action. It was a perfect prelude to Pennsylvania 4-H Week which begins Monday, March 16.

Roxanne Price, 4-H agent in York County, explained that one reason the southeastern region organizes the event is to "get leaders and teens away from their local club situation and see the resources that are available. It is a renewal, a sharing."

This year 12 counties from throughout the state sent young people to participate in the Friday to Sunday event, which has been held every two years for the past eight years. Roxanne says, "For many it is the first time they have come to the Center. It is a new experience and it makes them aware of the opportunities the National 4-H Center has to offer. We try to have a happy medium of socialization between the counties and leadership development."

Indeed, the weekend seemed to offer a composite of everything a 4-H event should be — fun, educational, fellowship, recreation.

The most popular session of the weekend proved to be a workshop presented by Dorothy Emerson, a 94-year-old former Maryland state 4-H leader, who inspired the young people to have confidence to stand before a group. Exhorting them to speak unafraid, Emerson said, "Think of what you are saying, not of how you look or who you are. What you say right now is right for you."

Using signs with maxims such as

"Talk Less and Say More," "Speak Up," "Mistakes are Learning Experiences," and "Next Time I'll Do Better," Emerson got the shyest of the 4-H'ers to live through the experience of speaking into a microphone to a group of peers.

In a remarkable cross generational understanding, Emerson challenged, cajoled, encouraged and aided the children. She taught the group such simple but effective public speaking techniques as repeating a question that is asked before answering it. She explained, "It enhances you and makes you talk longer with the answer."

Emerson has been conducting workshops at 4-H citizenship events for dozens of years. When she encouraged the 4-H'ers to ask questions of her, she was asked how many children she has. Her reply, "I have thousands of children," in reference to the thousands of 4-H'ers who have passed through the National 4-H Center and whose lives she has influenced. When asked to be frank about what they thought when they first saw her, the teens expressed amazement that someone so old should be on the program. They also quickly pointed out how much they had learned from her.

Darby Miller, York County, summed up the feelings of many when she said, "Dot made you think about what you're talking about, not what everyone else is thinking." Amy Bowman, Dauphin County, agreed that Emerson's workshop was effective, saying, "She taught us that our opinion is as important as everyone else's is."

Another popular speaker was Captain Jack Fellows, a Vietnam veteran who spent seven years in a North Vietnamese Prisoner of War



These 4-H'ers from Adams County relax on the steps of the National 4-H Center in Washington, D.C. during a break in workshop sessions. From left are: Kathy Grim, Karen King, Kristi Mummert and Mitch Reaver. They were part of a group of 125 Pennsylvania teens and leaders who participated in "Washington Weekend," learning about 4-H opportunities and practicing their leadership skills.

camp. His patriotic speech enlightened this generation of teenagers about the horrors of war and prison camp while reminding them of the precious freedom they enjoy as Americans. When they were given an American flag at the conclusion of the weekend, it struck a responsive and receptive chord.

One workshop, led by former 4-H'er Jody Day, gave the 4-H'ers an informal lesson on the process of passing a bill in the Congress. Hill, legislative assistant to Senator Richard Lugar, Indiana, explained how the system works, and had each group choose a bill they would like to pass. Increasing the minimum speed limit, lowering the drinking age, increased health benefits for senior citizens and increased price supports for the dairy industry were some that were considered. Hill also explained to the groups how to have their voice heard in expressing

opinions to their elected officials.

Leaders in their respective counties, the teens and adults attended workshops which ranged from filling out "blue forms," to using videos, to learning about various judging techniques, to working with other leaders to keep the 4-H program healthy.

Speaking to teens and leaders, Mary Grim from Adams County encouraged them to be willing to serve on committees and to express their opinions when programs or projects are not up to expectations. She told the groups of leaders and teens, "You can make a difference."

Wendy Debnam, York County, said the weekend experience taught her, "Don't be afraid of anything." Her mother, a 4-H leader, said she thought the conference was useful, because of the opportunity for 4-H'ers to share learning experiences. "It is nice to be in the nation's capital because it

gives them a sense of patriotism and of importance."

For Donna Romita, a two year horse club leader from Adams County, the experience showed her "what a nice place the National 4-H Center is, and that it is not just for 4-H, but for their families and other activities."

Other highlights for the teens and leaders were a visit to a dinner theatre, a first for most of them, and the opportunity to worship at the National Cathedral in Washington.

The Weekend experience was a unique opportunity for learning about 4-H in the nation's capital at the hub of 4-H activities on a national level. With Pennsylvania 4-H Week beginning Monday, it was an exceptional opportunity for teens and their leaders to garner the enthusiasm which will take them through a new and busy 4-H season.

'After School Kids' Program Takes On 4-H Nutrition Project

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LITITZ — When Bertha Ford walked into Kissel Hill Elementary School with a bag of potato chips peeking from the top of her grocery bag, the kids in the after school program there feared she had lost her mind.

One of the youngsters walked up to me and whispered, "Has Mrs. Ford lost her mind?" recalls Maryann Richards, director of the after school program at Kissel Hill Elementary.

To the 15 kids in the program, Bertha 'Bert' Ford is "Mrs. Nutrition." A nutrition aide with the Penn State Extension Service in Lancaster County, Bert visits the school once a month to teach the children nutrition basics.

As the youngster's comment illustrates, Bert's message is making an impression on the young minds. The potato chips in the shopping bag were one of several items she included in a test designed to measure the success of her nutrition campaign.

Students were told to select four nutritious items — one from each of the food groups — from an array that included cookies, candy, and an assortment of nutritious snacks. The response was overwhelming, Bert reports. All but two of the youngsters selected nutritious foods over junk food. And, the two boys who opted for the sweets confessed they selected the candy only because they thought they would get to eat their selections. "They wanted to make sure they got cookies and candy," Bert said with a good-natured grin.

Two years ago she was invited to participate in the after school program by Lester Rudisill, pastor of the Lutheran Church in Ephrata. Reverend Rudisill started the After School Kids or ASK program at Bergstrasse Elementary as an

alternative activity for young children who normally return to an empty house after school. Kids participating in the program range in age from five to about 10 or 11.

The program begins when school is dismissed and children stay until their parents have finished work and come to pick them up. Some stay only a short time, while others remain until 5:30 p.m.

Similar programs have taken root in three other area elementary schools — Lititz Elementary, John Beck Elementary and Kissel Hill Elementary. Next year, several more elementary schools in the Ephrata area will participate.

Without a second thought, Bert immediately accepted the Reverend's invitation to share her nutrition knowledge with the youngsters. It was only after she had met the kids that she thought of forming a 4-H club with the group. Using the 4-H foods project book, Bert set out to familiarize the students with the four food groups.

Her mission, she said, is to provide them with the knowledge they will need to make wise selections when they become responsible for meeting their own nutritional needs. To accomplish that goal, she tries to make learning fun and not too much like school, she said.

During her monthly sessions with each of the four 4-H clubs, she spends a few minutes on a lesson in the project book. It usually takes two meetings to get through a single lesson and an entire year to complete the project.

Following the formal learning time, Bert helps the kids prepare a simple, nutritious snack. Favorites they have tried include ice cream in a can, cheese popcorn, milkshakes, bugs on a log (peanut butter and raisins on cély) and



Bertha 'Bert' Ford, a nutrition aide with the Penn State Extension Service, displays an oversized pillow ASK students gave her at the end of last year's program.

strawberry shortcake.

When speaking to the students, Bert sometimes tries to trick them with an incorrect fact. For example, when discussing the nutrients in a milkshake, she pointed out the quantity of vitamin C included in the beverage. The students quickly corrected her, reminding her that the milkshake is a good source of calcium, but not of vitamin C.

"I know that I'm getting through with something," she says.

Through their children, parents of the After School Kids are becoming more conscious of good nutrition. One mother said her daughter will not permit her to put

the salt shaker on the table anymore.

Program director Maryann Richards noted that her four-year-old, who attends ASK with her, questioned the absence of two vegetables at dinner one evening. "I feel real positive about them understanding the four food groups," she noted.

Nutrition knowledge isn't the only byproduct of the 4-H sessions. The youngsters also learn the 4-H pledge and 4-H songs. In addition, they learn the value of cooperation, community involvement, manners, and cleanliness, Bert noted.

She encourages them to join a 4-H club in the summer when the ASK program is in recess. "We just want them all to be able to join in a 4-H group in the summer."

The ASK program is just a small part of Bert's job as a nutrition aide. Through the Expanded Foods and Nutrition Education Program, she works with youth and low-income families to help them improve their diets and to make better use of their resources.

And, although she enjoys all aspects of her job, the time she spends with the children is the most pleasurable. "They just lift your spirits," she says.