

Penn State Farm Flourishes Under Jonda Crosby's Management

**BY MARY MAXWELL
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Penn State's Circleville Farm is an unusual place and consequently its manager must possess unusual skills.

The 176 acre farm is an undergraduate learning place where Penn State students experience typical farm activities. And this is where Farm Manager Jonda Crosby's special skills come in. She's the person who coordinates the on-going, essential life of the farm with the interests and needs of the many who use it.

Jonda has been involved in agriculture throughout her life. She grew up on a dairy farm in Wyoming County, N.Y. and shared in the care of a registered Holstein herd. Since her parents both worked off the farm, chores and haymaking became the responsibility of the seven Crosby children.

After high school she attended Alfred University for two years before going on to Murray State College in KY, for her B.S. and M.S. in Vocational Agriculture. Both colleges are relatively small agriculture schools and they gave Jonda hands-on learning experiences outside the classroom. She believes this was an essential part of her college education, but one that Penn State students have not had until recently.

After college Jonda worked as an embryo transplant technician, a Vo-Ag teacher and county agent. Last year the Circleville Farm Manager position became vacant and Jonda felt she had acquired enough knowledge and skills to apply for the job.

The hiring committee in the College of Agriculture apparently felt her qualifications fit the job, as well, and Jonda Crosby became Circleville Farm's new manager.

Jonda, as farm manager, works closely with five undergraduate student managers. "This is one of the strong points of our farm program," she says. "Undergraduate managers have an opportunity to either fine-tune skills they already have or they can move into an area of high interest and develop their understanding and skills there."

For undergraduate animal sci-

ence major, Kim Osborne, Livestock Manager, this not only means continuing her interest in sheep by caring for and expanding the sheep herd on the farm, but also acquiring from Jonda and others associated with the farm the rest of the knowledge and skills necessary for her job.

Walt Whitmer, International Agriculture student manager, works under Jonda developing the sustainable agriculture plots. His area has the largest number of volunteers, about 30-40, working at the farm. Again, the exchange of ideas is paramount to success. Walt develops his ideas with Jonda, with the farm administrative committees and with the volunteers, many of whom have had actual experience in Third-World countries and are returning to finish undergraduate degrees.

Ike Kershner, Horticulture student manager, Paul Buccigliaglia, Agronomic student manager, and Ted Brown, Ag Engineering student manager, also rely on Jonda's experience and knowledge; nevertheless, they have ample opportunity to try their own ideas. "This is pretty much a no-fail setting," says Jonda. "The undergraduate student managers talk over their ideas with me, our advisor Neil Gingrich, the Farm's director Carolyn Sachs, and our faculty advisors on the campus. The students have plenty of opportunity to try things out, but a lot of us are around to prevent disasters."

Sachs, who teaches rural sociology in addition to directing the farm, says, "It is in this area of coordinating ideas and people that Jonda is particularly skillful."

Jonda feels the "hands-on" opportunities available at the farm are extremely important for Penn State students. "A recent study of seniors in agriculture pointed out that 70% came from non-farming backgrounds," she reports. "And," she adds, "even with a farm background like mine, you may know a lot about dairy and haymaking but still have little experience in other areas of farm production."

Providing her managers and other students with the opportunity to learn by doing is a large part of Jonda's job. For many students who



Jonda Crosby explains shearing shears to Governor School scholars who had weekly sessions at the Penn State farm. From left to right are: Diane McNeill, Ambridge; Rebecca Wagner, Jersey Shore; Mark Swartz, Mechanicsburg-Cumberland Valley; Jonda and Brian Pavlakovic, Latrobe.



Going over the field crop notebooks of Agronomic student manager Paul Buccigliaglia from Naugatuck, Conn. is a regular part of the responsibilities of Circleville Farm Manager Jonda Crosby.

come to the farm as volunteers, she structures tasks, makes tools available, helps with procedures and, of course, answers questions. For the students using the farm for credit-earning courses, she must be available to develop procedures and teach skills while entertaining the ideas of all.

In addition, student groups often

came for short-term periods of instruction, usually related to classroom learning on the campus. For example the 65 high school students attending the recent Governor's School for Agriculture had weekly sessions on the farm. At other times community groups like YMCA day campers come to look at the animals or take a hay ride.

Workshops on Women in Agriculture, Beekeeping, or High Tensile Fencing offer opportunities for additional groups to use the farm's facilities.

Considering all these activities and the many people involved in the work, one wonders how the College of Agriculture ever got along without Circleville Farm.



Farm Manager: Jonda Crosby and undergraduate Livestock Manager, Kimberly Osborne from Hadley, Pa., build pens for the turkey flock expected soon at the Penn State Circleville Farm.

Homestead Notes