

Who's Behind Lancaster 4-H Success

BY LOU ANN GOOD

Zoann Parker is an energetic dynamo as she oversees the 4-H Fair which began Tuesday at the Solanco Fairgrounds. 4-H activities fill her life and this three-day roundup is the highlight of her year.

With pride, Zoann points out that when she first took on the responsibility as county 4-H coordinator 3½ years ago, the roundup lasted only one day. Yet she is quick to add that Lancaster County's 4-H success of ranking 2nd in the state is not entirely her doings. She said the parents are extremely supportive. "They give time being 4-H leaders, they transport their kids to each event and donate handcrafted projects to the benefit auction."

Zoann attributes the parent's cooperation to the culture. "They are so family-oriented compared to those in other communities. They know the importance of 4-H." "It's a great place to live," she said, but

she feels that people who grow up here do not realize what a goldmine they live in. "The work ethic is beautiful," she remarked.

Although Zoann grew up in New York, she certainly doesn't lack Lancaster County's work ethic. She often works 80 hours a week as she trains and recruits over 600 adult leaders and makes it a point to visit every club at least once throughout the year. Zoann jokes, "You can't have a family and have this job."

Yet Zoann has managed to find time for marriage. Two years ago she married Terry Schuck who works at Lancaster Labs. Although Terry was not raised a 4-H'er, Zoann has established 4-H commitments as a normal part of their life. Either by force or by choice Terry now leads a 4-H air rifle club.

For career purposes, Zoann has chosen to maintain her maiden name. "Imagine," she said, "peo-

ple having to learn a new last name for me. It was difficult enough for them to learn Zoann. I didn't want them wasting time hunting my number up in the phone book and saying, "Now let's see -- what's her name?"

Marriage for Zoann meant moving out of her apartment to a small farm. The farm was a dream come true for this country girl who was raised on a 1000 acre New York farm. Then, showing steers at fairs and farmshows was a major part of her lifestyle. And when she moved into the area, she missed having her own animals.

"Now," she said with obvious pride, "we have steers, ducks, and chickens." Zoann finds it relaxing to spend time with the animals. "I love people and I love my job, but sometimes I need to get back to the basics." And spending time with her animals does that for her.

One project that Zoann feels has eased 4-H leaders' responsibilities has been a how-to book she formulated to explain all the pertinent information that leaders need to know in order to fulfill 4-H responsibilities. "Before this book, we were losing 60% of our leaders after the first year. That makes it difficult to recruit--afterwhile you run out of people. Now with the book, leaders know exactly what is expected of them and how to accomplish it."

The time required to put the book together has paid off. "This is a time when other counties are losing enrollment. We are gaining. We have a terrific program."

Zoann isn't content to have merely a terrific program. She wants to have the best in the state. "There is no reason we can't," she explained. "We have the leaders, the kids, the values and the craftsmanship. Three of our girls ranked first, second, and fourth in the Fashion Revue State competition."

Every year Lancaster has consistently been at the top statewide, but it has been Zoann's disappointment that no county 4-H'er has won national recognition. She's determined to change that record.

"I want a kid in every category to make it to the nationals."

She is digging to discover the cause for their not yet making it to the top. She knows their projects



Parents like Karen Lehman, Manheim, enable 4-H to carry on a successful program. Karen Lehman, a 4-H sewing club transports 3 of her children to area clubs & applied this farming scene for the benefit auction. Her husband, Dennis made the frame.

deserve it. She thinks the weak area might be in filling out the required blue forms. "We usually use a one page form called baby blue which asks all the necessary questions," but the winners evidently impress the judges by filling out 14 pages on the standard blue forms plus 5 typewritten pages telling about their 4-H career."

Zoann wants the community to realize all that 4-H offers. She believes, "The scholarships and career opportunities are fantastic."

Zoann graduated from Cornell University in 1973. She planned to be an ag teacher and before taking her present position, she worked for the government as a dairy inspector.

Zoann said she couldn't be as successful without the help of the other agents in the office who assist her in 4-H duties. Still, it's Zoann who has her fingers into everything, her mind is constantly thinking up new and better ideas.

A priority at this point is setting up 4-H clubs in suburban com-

munities. "It's tough. Nobody has time to lead them anymore. The parents are more willing to drive their kids to the country for a club than lead them."

Zoann brims with future plans but as she elaborated on them someone yelled, "Hey, Zoann, PM magazine is here. Come quickly."

"See what I mean?" Zoann said, throwing her arms outward, "In Lancaster County the whole community cares!" She continued, "Today two TV stations, two radio newscasters and four newspapers showed up to interview us. This doesn't happen in any other county -- there you need to pull teeth to get a little publicity. But Lancaster County -- they know the importance of 4-H; it's right up there with church and family responsibilities."

So, you see, the force behind the county's successful 4-H program is not the coordinator alone, but Lancaster countians who join their time and talents to make each year the best 4-H program ever.



Zoann Parker takes a rare break from her duties as Lancaster County 4-H Coordinator.

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