Home Schooling: Combining Rural Living With Learning

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BY LOU ANN GOOD

EPHRATA — In recent years, many farm families have joined the growing list of parents who adamently believe in the value of schooling their own children.

Ken Sensenig, a high school science teacher and parttime farmer, and his wife Karen, a substitute elementary teacher, believe their Ephrata farm lends itself to an effective home schooling environment.

After their daughter Kristine, 7, completed kindergarten and part of first grade in an area school, they opted to teach her at home.

Not wanting to be left out, their two sons, Kurtis, 4, and Konrad, 3, insist "on having school too."

Karen maintains that "seeing the light turn on in a child's eye when he or she grasps a new concept is just as exciting as watching them take that first step." As a school teacher she enjoys seeing other children learn, she asks, "Why shouldn't I be part of the educational experience for the three

most important children in my life?"

The Sensenigs said that their interest in home schooling stemmed from living in southern Africa for three years. While there, Ken, who worked as a regional supervisor for agriculture teachers of 45 schools, was impressed by the students' eagerness to learn. He explained that in most third world countries like Africa, families sacrifice a significant part of their income to send their children to school. Students receive comprehensive examinations, and if they fail, schooling is no longer an option. Ken said, "I question how many American students would pass those same examinations?"

The Sensenigs desire that their children possess the same eagerness to learn. So far, the parents are delighted with their children's attitudes towards learning.

Ken said, "It's difficult to define when school starts and stops, because we try to incorporate all of life into a learning experience. Home schooling allows more time for using creative activities in learning."

They stress that fractions are

easily grasped by children who use hands on experiences like measuring cooking ingredients and feeding animals. For example, Kristine

bottlefed an orphan lamb whose formula needed to be mixed. She learned measurements and time (Turn to Page B28)



Ken and Karen Sensenig with their children Kristine and Kurtis examine Indian artifacts. At one time, the Sensenig's farmland was used by two different Indian settlements. While plowing the fields, Ken often finds, tomahawks, spear points, and arrow heads.

Four-year-old Kurtis is the artist in the Sensenig family. His sister Kristine likes to play teacher. Her mother says, "Kristine seems to have a natural gift of teaching small children." She teaches them many things that she has learned and even gives them plano lessons.

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