

Mifflinburg Young Farmers Celebrate 50 Years

MIFFLINBURG (Union Co.)— Change often brings improvement, and the Mifflinburg Young Farmers Association has found a good way to promote change during its 50 years of operation, according to Wayne J. Sprick, executive director of the National Young Farmers Educational Association.

Speaking to 160 Mifflinburg Young Farmers and their guests at the association's golden anniversary banquet at Mifflinburg Area High School, Sprick said the local chapter has created a friendly, informal atmosphere for the exchange of information. He told members that their "three E's"— "eat, entertain and educate"— are a good way to foster positive change and learning.

The group holds monthly dinner meetings with educational programs as well as evening classes. Topics range from milk production to soil conservation to nitrogen management. On-farm instruction is included.

To effect change, Sprick told

members to decide what should be done and where and when to do it. Develop a plan for change, make a commitment to the plan and work to see it become reality, he said.

The national official recommended assigning tasks to busy people to assume that they'll get done, using time-management skills to achieve change, and being prepared to deal with change once it occurs. He cautioned against excuses to avoid change, such as "we never did it that way before" or "we're not ready for that."

Sprick encouraged members to learn from past experiences as they move toward the future.

Dr. Glenn Stevens, the Mifflinburg vocational agriculture teacher who developed the part-time adult education program for farmers 50 years ago, traced the organization's history. The group began meeting January 2, 1939, for a series of classes on getting started in farming. The concept of evening adult vocational classes had been introduced the previous summer by Dr. R.W. Gregory, a

specialist in the U.S. Office of Education.

Stevens noted that the model of adults learning along with school students is worthy of study by the nation's governors and President Bush as they seek to improve education. Both adults and students can gain from such a cooperative approach, Stevens said.

The Mifflinburg Young Farmers Association is the oldest continuously operating Young Farmers chapter in the state and possibly the nation, according to its current advisor Glenn Spangler.

During its 50-year history, its members have seen increasing specialization in farming, the growth of specialized services for farmers, the sophistication of farm financial record keeping, and dramatic advances in plant and animal genetics and other technologies, Spangler said.

Over the years, Mifflinburg members have helped to establish the Pennsylvania Young Farmers Association in 1949, the First Pen-

sylvania Artificial Breeding Cooperative (now Sire Power), the Union-Snyder County Crop Improvement Association and the Vicksburg Community Hall, he added.

Fifteen members have held offices in the state association, eight have been named outstanding young farmers in the state, five have received state community service awards, and one farm family has received a state farm financial management award.

G. Earl Dietrich, a Mifflinburg

RD 2 dairy farmer and one of those state award winners and officers, was honored as a charter member of the association active during its 50 years. Dietrich chaired the committee that planned the anniversary celebration.

Also recognized was the Mifflinburg Future Homemakers of America chapter, which has prepared and served the association's monthly dinners for the past 18 years.

Protect Open Fields From Erosion

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — "Protect your open fields from erosion this winter with a low cost productive conservation practice - cover cropping", says John Fior, soil conservationist of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

A cover crop helps to control soil erosion during the freeze and thaw cycles through winter and early spring. This saves dollars on fertilizer and lime.

Rye is a popular cover crop, since it can be followed with seedings of bromegrass, annual ryegrass, winter wheat or winter rye.

Cover crops are grown primarily for seasonal protection and soil improvement. Benefits such as increasing the soil organic matter content, if the cover crop is plowed under as green manure.

Cover crops can provide limited winter and early spring grazing provided an adequate cover is maintained on the fields, adds Fior.


For more information on cover cropping contact the U.S. Soil Conservation Service at the Berks County Agricultural Center in Bern Township.

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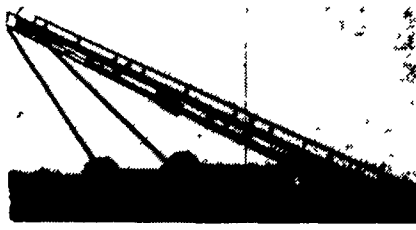


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