



This is an artist's sketch of the proposed Sunny Crest Home that will be built near Morgantown. Hoover has donated two farms to be used for the non-profit facility that will offer both day and extended care for the physically and mentally handicapped. Services will include helping each client obtain his or her highest potential.

Farmer Donates Two Farms For Sunny Crest Home

BY LOU ANN GOOD
MORGANTOWN (Berks Co.)
—“When you have a handicapped child, the severity of it hits you in different ways and at different stages,” Leroy Hoover, Morgantown, said. “My low point was when my second son was two-years-old.”

That was when his wife needed to go to the hospital to have their third child. Because their son was severally handicapped and suffered convulsions several times a day, the Hoovers did not have anyone who could watch him.

Trying to manage the farm chores and care for their son caused Leroy to cry in frustration,

County farms that he has donated to the project.

The time between Hoover's pledge and the unveiling of the plan were filled with many disappointments, frustrations and—amazing accomplishments.

The Hoover's handicapped son required considerable expense for weekly treatments. Despite the best care, he died at six years of age.

But the Hoover's journey with the crippling disease was far from over. They had a daughter who was also afflicted with cerebral palsy.”

Hoover said, “My wife and I would ask, “Why did it happen to

others when he couldn't even pay his own farm's interest seemed absurd.

Because they had had to move off the farm where they were rent-

Hoovers faced other difficulties such as the time he broke his leg and his wife needed to do the milking for six weeks. Then Hoover's dad was killed in a farm accident.

customers and with our help Hoover said. Their efforts paid off. Business increased and the Hoovers continued to expand their operation. They now have 200 hundred

With expansion and overseeing the daily operation of both Farmer Brown Country Markets, it would have been easy for Hoover to forget about his pledge to build a home for the handicapped. But Hoover said, “In 1984 I realized God had answered my prayers for wisdom and finances and I needed to do what I had promised.”

Hoover said, “My wife and I would ask, “Why did it happen to us? Why did we have two handicapped children? We didn't feel we deserved it. We didn't feel capable of coping with it.”

“God, if I ever make enough money to build a day care center for handicapped children, I will.”

That was in 1958. The financial possibility of fulfilling his pledge to God seemed preposterous. He was a struggling tenant farmer. But recently, Hoover unveiled plans for his proposed Sunny Crest Homes to cost \$2.5 million at completion to be built on two Lancaster

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Hoover's wife, Anna Mary, persisted, “God gave us these children for a purpose.”

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ing, the Hoovers had purchased a Morgantown farm. But \$70,000 proved to be a substantial loan for the fledging farmer. “We couldn't even pay the interest that first year,” Hoover recalled.”

The Hoovers discovered that their firstborn, who was then five years old, was 50 percent blind. That required trips to Wills Eye Hospital and Baltimore Children's Hospital.

In hopes of overcoming the children's handicaps, the Hoovers took their two children through a prescribed patterning program that was to develop the brain and which required 100 volunteers every two weeks.

The expenses and work load was heavy. “There seemed to be no light,” Hoover recalled.

In addition to the struggles with their handicapped children, the

“My dad was never able to help me financially,” Hoover said, “but he was a big source of encouragement and he helped with farm chores. When he was killed, I didn't see how I'd ever make it.”

In 1965, the Hoovers opened up a country milk store hoping to sell milk, cheese and ice cream from their farm and cut out the middleman's profits.

people employed in their two Farmer Brown Country Markets located in Morgantown and in Kutztown.

Because the Morgantown operation is on a farm that sets both in Berks and in Lancaster Counties and is near Chester County, Hoover felt there wasn't a newspaper that suitably covered the area. Hoover began the Tri-County Shopping

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But the first years, showed no profits and in desperation Hoover tried to sell the store, hoping someone would buy it and fix it up as a residence. There were no bidders.

Because he couldn't sell the store, he continued the milk jugging operation. He hired a local woman, Roberta Ayrs. “She was very shy, but a hard worker,” Hoover said, and I give her a lot of credit for turning our profits around. Whenever customers asked for other items, Roberta found places to buy them and added them to our inventory.”

It was Roberta who taught Hoover his most important lesson. “Once a customer returned some milk because it didn't taste right. I told her to tell the customer that the bad taste came from turning the cows out to pasture. The truth was that we had over processed the milk.”

She reprimanded me, “If you can't say the truth, don't say anything at all.”

“That taught me the importance of always being truthful with our

News.

“Within 10 years, we went from poverty to being able to buy two farms in one day,” Hoover said of his financial status.

The operation still processes its own milk but Hoover no longer does the daily farming chores. He likes to start young couples in farming by offering them cheap rent.

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Hoover began his search for a suitable location for the home. It needed to have traffic access, utilities, public sewer and quietness. It led him to a nearby 86-acre farm where after lengthy and considerable negotiations, he purchased the property and an adjacent farm.

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Mike Shreiner, a teacher from Warwick Middle School, tutors Janelle Hurst, 14. Sunny Crest Home will offer training facilities for clients like Janelle, daughter of Leonard and Laura Hurst. Leonard, co-owner of Binkley and Hurst, a farm equipment business in Rothsville, is a board member of the non-profit organization. He said that since he also has two handicapped children, he is aware of the needs the facility would serve.

Homestead
Notes