

Kutztown's Vo-Ag Benefits

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school board on Monday, showed 30 students in Agriculture 1-4; 20 in Ornamental Horticulture; 12 in Small Gas Engines/Welding; and five taking non-ag majors.

Karr also said that there seemed to be a stigma associated in taking vocational agriculture and that the curriculum needed to be updated to reflect today's industry.

A lack of qualified agriculture instructors is another difficulty that plagues the program, according to Karr.

In light of these difficulties, Karr offered three options: a change in the number of instructors; integration of the program into other classes such as science and business; and sending ag students to another school system.

Although no district was named during the meeting, published reports have mentioned the ag program at Hamburg Area High School as a possible choice. Hamburg is a 20-minute drive from Kutztown.

After Karr's presentation, the floor was opened for other speakers.

Among the 14 allowed, were state officials, educators, businessmen, graduates, parents, and students; all supporting the continuation of vo-ag at Kutztown High School.

One of the audience who didn't have an opportunity to speak was vo-ag teacher Reinert.

Reinert, who has taught at Kutztown since 1965, doesn't agree with Karr's assessment of the program.

"Ideally we would have two full time teachers for the Kutztown program," he said. "From the time I started, until a couple of years ago, we did have two positions. Then, when Christine Williams (the other teacher) resigned, they reduced her position to half time

status," Reinert explained.

Reinert conceded that the board has had a tough time locating qualified candidates, but points out that it's more a problem with process than with a tight job market.

"When I gave notice that I would be taking a sabbatical in March of last year, the position opening was advertised in the local papers," Reinert said. "But when I attended the National Vocational-Agricultural Teacher Association Region 6 conference in May, I found out that Penn State had not been contacted so they could post the opening for graduating seniors to see. I explained to the administration that Penn State needed to be notified and a secretary made the call," he said.

The result of the phone call is unknown. However, Reinert said some people were interviewed.

"They (Kutztown officials) did have at least one qualified candidate interview here. He also interviewed at Oley (school district in Berks County). A week or so after the interview, Oley offered him a job. He called Kutztown but they told him they hadn't made a decision so he took the Oley position," Reinert said.

"A number of other candidates were interviewed, but the board couldn't find anyone they felt was suitable, so they put Dr. Cal in the position," he said.

"A number of qualified candidates were due to graduate this January so the board agreed to advertise again. I saw the ad in the Morning Call (an Allentown newspaper) and the Kutztown Patriot, but when I talked to Dr. Scanlon (an ag education professor at Penn State) I found that they hadn't been notified."

Karr confirmed that Cal was hired for the first half of the school year with the understanding that another candidate search would be

done in January. According to Karr, the search was done, but no suitable candidates were found.

In contrast to statements made Monday by Karr, Reinert said that the ag department curriculum is constantly being updated.

"While doing research for the meeting, I came across a county superintendent's bulletin stating that a whole new curriculum was being developed in southeastern Pennsylvania, emphasizing that agriculture was no longer just production work. The bulletin was dated 1969."

According to Reinert, the ag program was the first one in the school to use the computer.

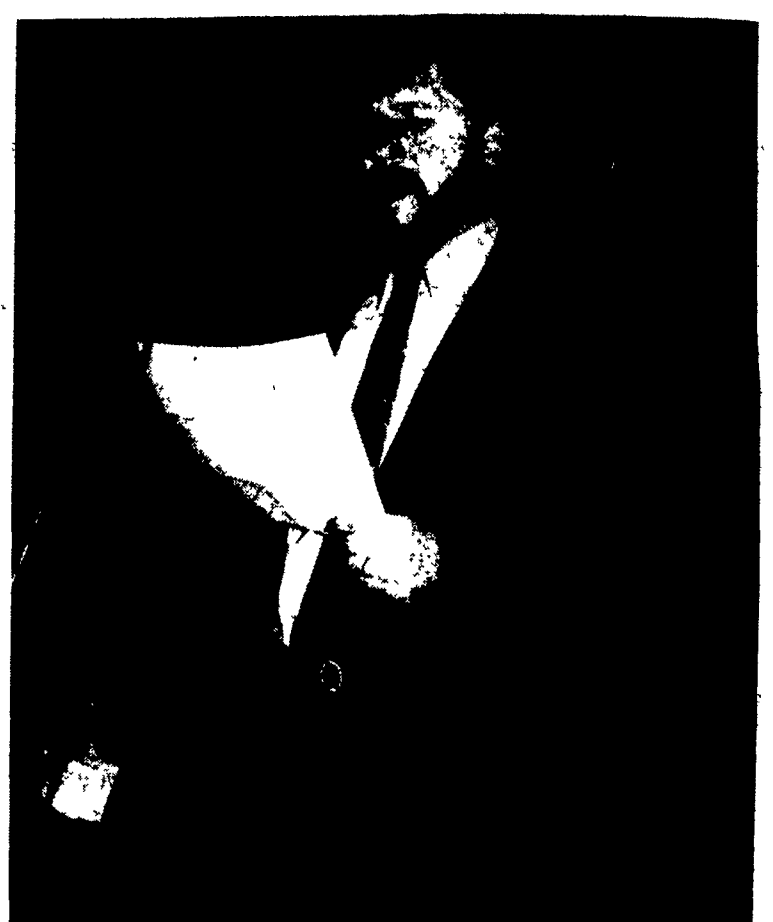
"We were working with computers in 1971. We started with a business simulation using the computers owned by businesses in the community. I took my own personal computer in and we had the first IBM in the building," Reinert said.

"My computer is still there, and if another teacher has a problem with computers, I'm one of the first ones that gets asked," he said.

The Kutztown Ag Advisory Council helps keep the ag program current.

"The advisory council reviews our curriculum. The latest revision of the curriculum was completed in July of last year and the advisory council is waiting to review it," Reinert said. "A core curriculum for agriculture is in the developmental stages at the state education department in Harrisburg, and the council wanted to see that, before giving final approval," Reinert explained.

Advisory council member Dr. Sam Yoder, a local veterinarian, was able to share his feelings dur-



Robert Tercha, president of the Kutztown Young Farmers Association, tells school board members that there are many adults and students asking for nothing more than education in the nation's number one industry, agriculture.

ing the meeting. He suggested that the administration and department need better communication.

"I feel that the administration is alienated from the department," Yoder said. "It has been suggested that ag is not part of the computer age. Computers are an important part of ag and they are part of the curriculum."

Yoder said he also felt junior high school students need more exposure to the ag program.

Phoebe Bitler - the Berks County coordinator for Ag in the Classroom, and a former National Young Farmer spokesperson for

agriculture - responded to a quote that ag is not trendy, that was attributed to Karr in a local publication. Karr later denied making that statement.

"Agriculture is the number one industry in Berks County and in Pennsylvania," Bitler said. "It is not a dying vocation! One person in five is employed in jobs that are ag dependent."

Bitler added that during the four years that Ag in the Classroom had been available, not one Kutztown teacher had ever been involved in the program.

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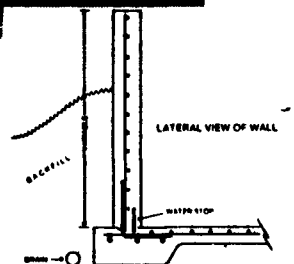
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