

Kutztown's Vo-Ag Benefits

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"I question how a science teacher could teach a program without a thorough understanding of agriculture. Agriculture teachers could serve as a reference for (other) teachers," **Billey** said.

Dairy farmer, Young Farmer, and Kutztown High School graduate Ken Sanner questioned whether sending students to other ag programs, or to vocational school, was more cost effective than the home program.

"We have to spread the cost of this program over all 67 students that are being served," Sanner said, "not just those 22 that are majoring in it. After all, I have to count the costs of the heifers and dry cows on my farm, not just the cows in milk."

Sanner added that the principal, who is an ex officio member of the ag advisory council, has never attended a meeting.

Young Farmers President Robert Tercha reported that there are 52 adults involved in that program.

"We have a large number of adults and a number of students that are asking for nothing more than an education in the nation's number one industry; the industry that feeds the world," Tercha said.

Don McNutt, an agriculture teacher from Conrad Weiser High School; Carl Rabenold, a parent; Jeannine Seidel, Kutztown FFA president; and Larry Shrawder, a Kutztown High School graduate and former FFA state president; all said they felt that the Kutztown vo-ag program needs more visibility.

"Junior high students have a window on music and art. They should be exposed to agriculture," McNutt said.

Reinert said the program would benefit, if junior high students knew more about what is available through the agriculture department.

"We have 15 minutes to tell junior high students what is in the program, before they make their selection for high school," Reinert said. "We also have 10 minutes to speak to parents during a night meeting. A junior high program is available and meets once every six days. The problem is that, it meets during club period, and if a student is involved in any other activity including band or chorus they can't attend."

"We also run a pumpkin growing contest for fourth, fifth and sixth grade students," Reinert continued, "and we do the Food for

America program for the third graders."

Carl Rabenold said that the district's guidance department was making it difficult for students to get into the program.

"My son Todd was told to forget the the agriculture program, because he was a college prep student," Rabenold said.

Shrawder said that when he was at Kutztown school he had a similar problem getting into ag classes, but was glad he insisted on an agricultural education.

"I was in everything the school had to offer, and I rate FFA as being the thing that benefited me most after graduation," Shrawder said.

Shrawder also pointed out that Kutztown is one of the state's premier FFA chapters.

"We have had state presidents, state officers, gold medal national teams, and many state winners," he said.

Bill Hughes, chairman of the Berks County Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, said that the school district should be spending more money on agricultural education, not less.

"Increase funding for this prog-



From the left, Dr. Robert Karr, superintendent of Kutztown School District, and school board president Monte Schroeder listen to testimony of state officials, educators, graduates and community members and expressed their support for the district's agriculture.

ram. Let the ag teacher take his computer home," Hughes said. "Obviously, listening to these students and graduates, someone is doing something right here."

According to Karr, the school board intends to make a decision about the program's future at Mon-

day night's meeting. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Karr said it will be held in the school auditorium instead of the library, depending on turnout.

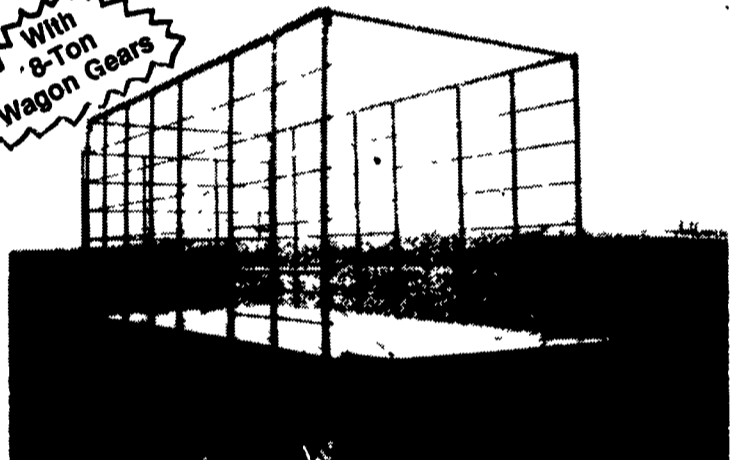
Reinert said he encourages all supports to attend this regularly scheduled meeting.



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