

## David Shenk III Perry Co. Putnam Award



Dave Shenk

The struggle to be recognized for performing exemplary work is difficult when the competition is good. But for David Shenk III, years of trying to win the Putnam Award, an honor bestowed to the DHIA supervisor with the fewest errors per 1,000 cows tested, finally paid off.

In addition to the recognition from the operators of 23 Perry County dairy farms for whom he does testing, Shenk received an engraved pen and pencil set. He has it in a small trophy case in his house "in my den where I keep all my (DHIA) Dairy Herd Improvement Association records."

Last year Shenk made absolutely no errors on DHIA forms for more than 1,500 cows to win the Putnam Award. The award is a memorial honor to Dexter Putnam who was an extension dairyman from 1957 to 1982 and who worked with DHIA supervisors to improve their accuracy in reporting data on DHIA forms. A supervisor may win the award only once.

But according to Shenk, it would be difficult for anyone to earn the award more than once.

"I know it's a pretty tight race. In the past 10 years I seldom made four or five errors a year, so you can see it's a very, very tight race," Shenk said.

Shenk III lives in the river-edge town of Newport. Single, the 29-year-old doesn't come from a dairy background, but does come from a family crop farm.

He raised swine while in FFA, but it was romance that got him interested in the dairy industry and in DHIA.

"The reason I guess I got interested in dairy, I was seeing a girl who was on a dairy farm," Shenk said, he explained that her father

had taught him some things about dairying. "When it came to (high school) graduation, they were looking for a tester, I applied and was picked."

Shenk said the work is more than just a job. He has become deeply involved in it. He can give a detailed picture of the Perry County dairy scene.

For example, Perry County dairymen average about 60 head, close to the state average. In production, they tied for 13th place last year for fat and protein and were ninth in the state for milk.

And Perry County dairymen are continuing to increase participation in DHIA.

"We've been seeing fewer dairy farmers, but the number of those on DHIA has increased. We have a little over 60 percent of the cows in the county on test. We have around 8,000 cows, with almost 6,500 on test," he said.

"I have one owner-sampler herd; five AM-PM; and the rest 2x DHIA, 17 of them.

"Our county is predominantly still the 2x-per-day testing. We have a lot of registered cattle and a lot of our dairyman are still on the regular testing and most of those, I would say 97 percent of the herds I have, along with the records, we still keep and calculate the handwritten life history records for them, which our dairymen really appreciate."

Shenk has won a merit award for his work every year, and now with earning the Putnam award, his goal is to strive higher.

"I would like to strive to eventu-

ally win the superior supervisor award. This is sort of a step in the rung to reach this one," he said.

"I think two people stressed on me to strive for perfect work. They are the other supervisors in Perry County. One is Walter Stydinger, he was the tester who trained me when I started and emphasized doing everything correctly, and the same way with Micheal O'Toole," he said.

Shenk said he sees his future with the dairy industry.

"I hope to be with DHIA for a long time, I really enjoy working with the dairymen and providing them with the most accurate records possible."

But when he isn't pouring over numbers, Shenk has some hobbies to keep him occupied.

In addition to deer hunting (no buck or doe this year), he is a model train enthusiast.

"I do like to tinker, I quite a vast collection of model trains, that I've been working on, off and on, for seven years.

"When I find time, I have a 1929 Ford Model A sedan that I'm restoring," he said.

## Cindy Davis Erie Co. Distinguished Service



Cindy Davis

Cindy Davis knew a lot about horses but not much about cows when she took the DHIA position in Erie County. She worked for two veterinarians and on a horse farm, then switched to shop work. "I made good money, but I hated it," she said. She wanted to work with animals and when a DHIA testing job opened, Cindy applied. The first time she was turned down, but a year later, she was offered a part-time position.

"I didn't let the drop in salary stop me," the single mother of an eight-year-old said. "In the beginning, I had only 10 herds, but I supplemented my income by raising cabbage, working on a potato farm and helping with hay making.

"People think this job is a piece of cake, but they don't know everything it involves," she said. "When you're in charge, there's a lot more than meets the eye."

Because she had a non-dairy background, Cindy had a lot to learn. "I needed to beef-up on forages and their moisture values, and to learn breeding dates. She learned to sanitize meters, weigh and sample milk and test for butterfat and somatic cell count.

After three years, Cindy feels

comfortable with the job, which she equates to a walking desk for farmers to use as a management tool.

She now manages 33 herds, which require her to work six to six-and-a-half days a week. She starts between 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. and returns home between 9 to 9:30 p.m.

Cindy said that the downside of her job is the sympathy she feels for farmers. She said, "With the price of milk bottoming out and everything going sky high, I feel so sympathetic. I don't feel farmers get a fair shake. I smell a rat in the wood pile."

She finds that farmers are really using their DHIA records to get them through these tough times. She said, "Unfortunately many of the dairy herds in Erie County are old-fashioned and not on test. It's hard to change farmers minds, but when I talk to them I find them fairly receptive."

Cindy is pleased that she received the DHIA distinguished service award because farmers reported she had an excellent attitude toward the job. She said, "I try to do my best no matter what. I love working with farmers and I love doing what I do. I just hope the dairy industry doesn't crash in Erie County."

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