

# Ephrata High School Facility To Host Ag, Other Research

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EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — A drive to help pay for the construction of a regional first-of-its-kind small animal laboratory/headhouse through the efforts of the Cloister FFA is under way at the Ephrata Senior High School.

The FFA and the Vo-Ag Advisory Committee have joined forces to raise funds to construct a 24-foot by 40-foot building to be attached to an existing 26-foot by 48-foot greenhouse.

The purpose of the new headhouse/laboratory will be to house projects and materials that can be used by all departments of the high school, including the FFA, science department, and ag classes, according to Ernest Orr, chairman of the school's ag department.

Cost of the building will be approximately \$26,900. According to Orr, the new building will supplement the existing greenhouse and will be used by the ag department to help students incorporate various types of activity projects, including work with plant science, aquaculture, hydroponics, and aeroponics, and will include a small animal laboratory for students to monitor the growth and development of chicks and rabbits. Also included in the plans are rooms for incubators, chick brooders, cages for rabbits and other small animals, a pen for broilers, and space for three 300-gallon fish tanks. There is space available for the connection of another greenhouse to the laboratory at a future time.

In addition, the new building will incorporate a special retail sales room from which students can help sell the material grown in the greenhouse. A work area will also be established in the center of the building, according to the plans.

The Cloister FFA program has 70 enrolled now. Overall, the benefits of the facility will extend to the additional 80 enrolled in some type of ag program at the school. Also, the rest of the students involve in an array of science classes at the school will benefit.

More importantly, however, the laboratory will allow students to become more active in hands-on projects that the department promotes throughout the year.

"We'd like to do more research-type projects," said Orr. "That's the main thrust — to try to do something that has more substance to it, to make kids think more, to provide more hands-on activities."

Not only students who elect to sign up for agriculture-related projects will be using the facility. Also, students from all grades involved in various science courses will be allowed to conduct experiments and establish projects on their own, according to Larry Hess, chairman of the school's science department.

"There's a multitude of different types of project research the students can do," said Hess. "We may have somebody who wants to do something with antibiotics in feed, and so they'd do some testing. Or testing manure.

"Even though we're here for the ag students, we'd also have a number of science students," said Hess. Many would elect to conduct research if such a facility would exist. Right now, the school doesn't have the proper facilities to handle certain kinds of projects, such as DNA analysis, cholesterol

studies in eggs, electrophoresis (molecular study of materials or compounds), and other types of projects.

Also, students who need the proper facilities for building county science fair projects from the district could use the facility.

All in all, the new facility would "allow us to do things that we can't do now," said Orr.

The new facility would allow all the materials for the greenhouse to be stored in a nearby location. At this time, the materials, including soil, seeds, and other items are stored in a shed adjacent to the ag workshop, some distance away from the greenhouse. Equipment to run the various laboratories is also waiting to be utilized.

"The idea of this is to give us some additional work room," said Orr. "Right now, when we do things, we have to bring the plants down here. We transplant and take them up to the greenhouse."

The greenhouse schedule includes starting poinsettias the first week of school, followed by Easter lilies in the beginning of December, then mums, bedding plants, and flowers, and finally vegetables near the close of the school year.

So far, the FFA chapter has applied for and received a \$13,450 competitive matching grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. The school must raise a matching amount from nontaxable funds through the efforts of community based organizations.

Recently, the ag department mailed a request for help from area ag businesses to fund the construction. So far, according to Orr, about \$4,000 has been pledged, including \$2,000 from the Cloister FFA.

Individuals or corporations who want to contribute may contact the following Advisory Committee members: Kerry Boyd, president, (717) 626-0506; David Zimmerman, vice president, (215) 484-2718; Sam Beamesderfer, secretary, (717) 738-2929; or Ernest Orr at (717) 733-1478.

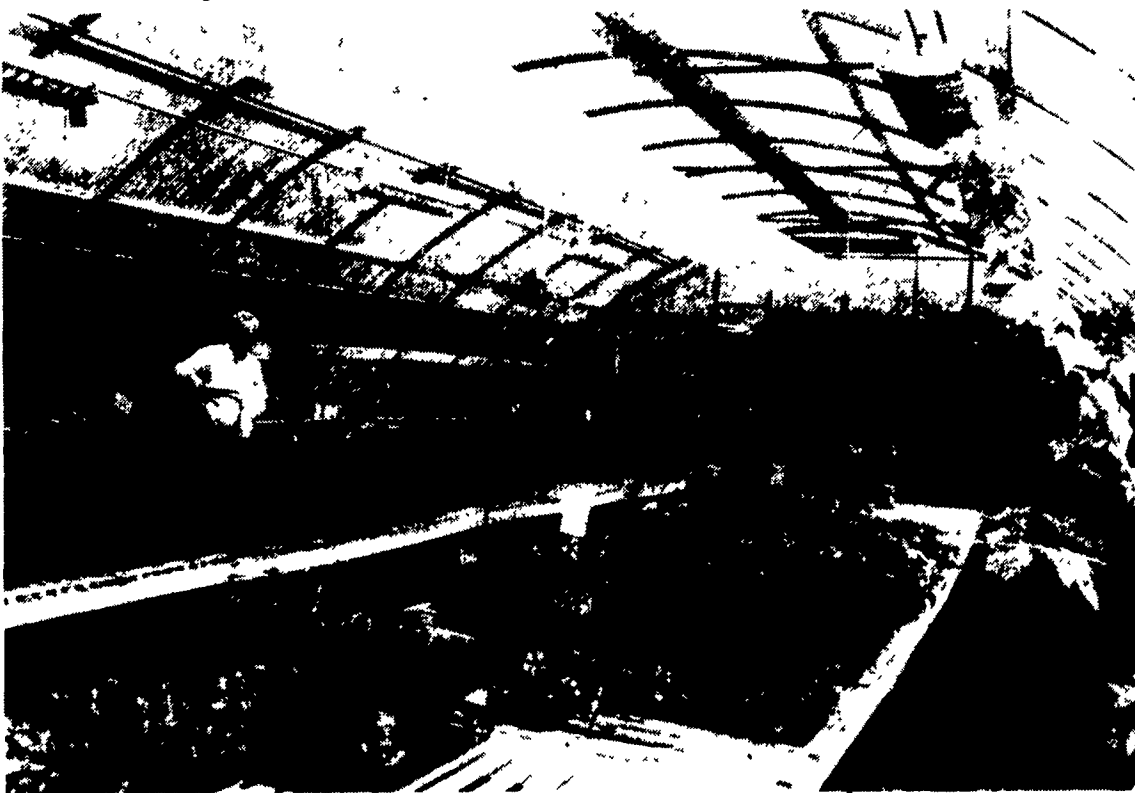
Orr said he expects construction to begin in September this year for completion at the start of 1994.

"We see a big window of opportunity," said Hess. The science department chairman said he has seen this kind of laboratory only in colleges, and doesn't recall anything of this sort in area high schools. "It's going to provide a window for some of these students to do some power-packed research."

Orr said the laboratory would provide a forum "where kids can see a lot of practical things, as well. They can see it, touch it, feel it, play with it... all kinds of



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Orr said the plans for the new laboratory will be studied at the upcoming Pennsylvania Agriculture Teachers Conference in Lebanon in July this year. On July 12, the department will be conducting a tour of the greenhouse at the school.

Hess said he has heard from several students who went on to study animal science at various colleges.

"What we hear the most is that the students who are doing independent research, which would be right in this area, the benefits of that have no equal when it comes to discipline, stoic

patience... they find it has helped them in all areas — the stoic patience thing, the stick-to-itiveness to research.

"Our department is excited," said Hess. "We push independent research, we push that a great deal. And the feedback we're getting is don't ever stop that push."

## Additional Bedding Plant Auctions To Be Held

CHELTENHAM, Md. — Because of the overwhelming success of the first-ever Bedding Plant Auction, the Southern Maryland Regional Farmers Market held an additional wholesale bedding plant yesterday, and has scheduled another for 11 a.m., May 21.

The first Bedding Plant Auction was held on April 23 and offered a wide selection of vegetable and flowering annual plants. Vegetable plants sold included tomato, watermelon, cucumber, squash,

pepper, cabbage, collard and kale. Prices for the vegetable plants ranged from \$1.50 to \$7.50 per flat with an average of \$4.77 per flat.

Flowering annuals sold included marigolds, snapdragons, impatiens, cockscomb, salvia, Dusty Miller, geraniums, pansies, and petunias. Prices for these ranged from \$5 to \$15 per flat with an average of \$7.38 per flat. Other items sold included 10-inch hanging baskets of impatiens with an average of \$7.89 per basket and various specialty type pots of

flowering annuals.

Buyer interest in the first sale was greater than seller interest. However, the market anticipates having additional sellers to participate in the upcoming sales. A similar selection and greater volume are expected for the sale on May 7. Additional produce items such as kale, greenhouse tomatoes, or other early spring crops that growers have ready may be sold in the bedding plant auctions.

The Southern Maryland Regional Farmers Market is located on U.S. 301, south adjacent to the

Veterans Cemetery in Cheltenham, Md. This location is approximately 10 miles south of the Capital Beltway (I-495) and 30 miles south of the Baltimore Beltway (I-695).

Commission rates for selling in the auction are 10 percent for Maryland growers and 12 percent for out-of state growers. Buyer registration fees are being waived for the bedding plant auctions.

For more information, call the Southern Maryland Regional Farmers Market, (301) 372-1066 or (800) 533-FARM.