

Mother's Advice Spurs Children To Achieve

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BUCK (Lancaster Co.) — Jessica Schmidt is 11 years old and a rising name in sheep show circles. Showing sheep is her passion, but it was only two years ago in preparation for her first show that Jessica sobbed, "I hate sheep. I don't want to do this."

The sheep had knocked her down, ran over her, and when Jessica stood upright, knocked her down again and put hoof prints across her back.

It's been many shows later with just about as many repeat performances but Jessica no longer gets upset. She merely jumps up, brushes off the dust, and takes a firm hold on the sheep.

What brought about this change

of attitude?

The credit needs to go to Jessica's mom, Lauria, who told her, "All you need to do is show this one time. After that, you can drop out."

That was all it took — one show, one ribbon, one premium — Jessica was hooked with show fever.

Now her mother couldn't stop her from showing if she wanted to do so.

Lauria admitted that she was a bit wary that one show could persuade Jessica to pursue sheep raising, but Mom was counting on the advice she was given as a child when she showed horses.

"If you fall off a horse, you must get back on immediately," her instructor insisted.

"If Mom wouldn't have said that



In front of the Schmidt home, John stands with the scarecrow he made. Jessica and mom Lauria are seated. Although dad Pete missed the picture because he was at work, you can see some of his landscaping talents and the snake fence that he built around the property.



"I will never sell Maggie. She's my first and favorite lamb," Jessica said.



The newest addition to the Schmidts' melange of animals is this peacock chick, hatched in the incubator.

I needed to do it one time, I would never have done it again," said Jessica, who has 16 Dorsets. Her 10-year-old brother John has three Montadales.

The siblings also care for an assortment of other animals on the family's four-acre farm a few miles from The Buck.

There are 3 Indian Blue peacocks, 2 pot belly pigs, 2 Holstein-Angus cross beef, 5 roosters, 2 dogs, 3 rabbits, cats, 1 goat, and 4 pigs.

Lauria and her husband Pete purchased the property with only a house and a garage. They tore down a barn in Lititz and rebuilt it.

"It took us five weeks to tear down and five years to put up the barn," Laurie said. Pete, who works in landscaping, also profusely landscaped the property with shrubbery and built a snake fence.

The family got into sheep raising when they traded a pig for a sheep several years ago.

"Maggie is my first and favorite. I will never sell her," Jessica said of her special affinity with the aging sheep.

The peacocks came when a store purchased them for a special event



Jessica and John admire one of the two pot-bellied pigs they raise in the barn — not in the house.

petting zoo and no longer wanted them.

The peacocks roam free but hang around for food. At first, the Schmidts clipped the peacocks wings but recent sightings of foxes have made them decide to stop that practice.

The peacocks lay eggs outside, which Lauria confiscates and puts into an incubator for 28 days. So far, they have only one successful hatch. A power outage earlier in the year resulted in only one of the four eggs surviving and producing a chick, which they raise in the house.

Lauria has lots of experience with using an incubator as she is a 4-H assistant for the Lancaster County 4-H program. She is in charge of the embryology projects in schools throughout the county. She especially delights in working with city children who have no other contact with farm life.

"They are always so amazed to see life inside an egg," she said.

Through some of these projects, the Schmidts have inherited some chickens and roosters that also roam free on the land.

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This is the barn that the Schmidt family said took them five weeks to tear down and five years to rebuild on their four-acre farm.

*Homestead
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