



After conquering spastic dystonia, Lois Bohn appreciates the ability to speak with ease and the opportunity to head Lebanon County Farm Women and its 349 members.

Farm Women President Can't Stop Talking

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LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — Most people take talking for granted. Lois Bohn was one of those people. If she wanted to say something to one person or a hundred, she said it. It was easy for her to stand in front of a crowd and speak. In fact, several years ago, she was being groomed to become Lebanon Farm Woman president of 21 societies and 349 members.

Then the unthinkable happened. Increasingly as she was conversing with people, she felt a tightening in her throat. She could no longer speak even one complete sentence with smooth clarity. When her time came to become installed as president of the Lebanon County Farm Woman, Lois had to withdraw her nomination. How could she perform her duties, if she was unable to speak.

At first, doctors treated Lois's condition for allergies. When that did not help, doctors suspected she had a polyp on her vocal chords, but a throat specialist pronounced her vocal chords to be perfect.

Her malady was eventually diagnosed as spastic dystonia.

This involuntary tightening of the throat muscles, she learned, usually happens to people who rely on the use of their voice for a job and is often brought on by stress. Lois was a busy receptionist who was constantly on the phone. The hectic busyness of her job and the death of her mother was thought to have culminated in too much stress.

Lois began prescribed voice therapy. Within four months, to the surprise of her therapist, Lois's condition had greatly improved.

"Now, you can't shut me up," Lois said.

Indeed, there are no symptoms whatsoever of Lois's previous inability to speak.

But within, Lois said, she feels a gratefulness for the before-taken-for-granted gift of a voice.

"Now I appreciate being able to rattle off," Lois said.

She again regularly reads the scriptures before the Altalaha Lutheran Church in Rehrersburg. She recently spoke with confidence before hundreds of Farm Women when she was installed as president. Although her induction

as president is two years later than previously planned, Lois is now confident that she can do justice to her job of leading the organization for which she said, "Farm Women are wonderful. They put their heart and soul in whatever they are doing. That's what makes it worthwhile."

Lois became a member of Lebanon Farm Women Group 4 when she and her husband moved into the area more than 32 years ago. The Bohns' farm is only one mile from the Lebanon County line.

Since that time, Lois has held every office available at least once and some several times.

Lois and her husband, Frederick, have two married children and one grandchild.

Until two months ago, Lois helped her husband milk cows daily at 5:30 in the morning. Now, they dispersed of the herd but continue to crop farm and raise steers.

Lois said the transition from milking cows daily to not having cows is still new to her, but she enjoys decorating their large farmhouse and is putting in more time at her job at Farmer Boy Ag.

Her love for the family farm pops up again and again in conversation as she speaks of involvement in Pennsylvania Young Farmers of which her husband was president and she in charge of the women's activities. She spoke of raising "two wonderful children who married wonderful spouses." She credits that to the children's dedication to always helping on the farm and not having time to get in trouble.

"Our son wanted to stay on the farm, but it's difficult financially to support two families. Industry offered more money so it was with heavy hearts we said goodbye," Lois said.

"I hope the agricultural picture improves and farmers in general can prosper," she said. "I think agriculture is the backbone of the country and I hate to see family farms pushed out and children not

being able to afford to carry on."

Lois is grateful that she can work for an agriculture company. She has worked full time at Farmer Boy Ag for 10 years and is now in charge of purchasing and receiving. She enthusiastically speaks of her work with a company that, she estimates has tripled in size since her time there. The company erects agricultural buildings and provides all the equipment needed for poultry, swine and other related operations.

While Farm Women membership is decreasing state-wide due to deaths of older members, Lois remains optimistic. She said, "We must be doing something right that the organization has continued for so many years."

The organization was founded in 1914. Individual societies are scattered throughout the state with Lebanon County having 21 societies and 349 members.

Lois is working on increasing membership. One of the ways the society did so was last week when they held an annual bake sale at the mall. The group had brochures available about Farm Women and did sign up at least one new member.

"Farm Women aren't on the front pages of the newspaper and we don't want to be," Lois said, "but the organization does a lot for all kinds of projects in the county."

At the annual bake sale held last week, Farm Women raised \$1,000 for flood victims in the Midwest.

Some other projects include providing an entertainment fund and activities for Cedar Haven County Home and two other retirement homes in Myerstown, and adopting patients with no families. Scholarship money is also given and help to needy families.

In addition to her job, church, Farm Women, and Young Farmers, Lois has served on the county election board for 30 years as majority inspector, an elected position.



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