

Fair Person Of The Year Named

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how to make it better.

It is in this atmosphere where Poggi said, "I get my batteries recharged."

Poggi celebrated her 25th year involved with the West End Fair this past summer. For 17 years, she has served as treasurer and has been chairperson of its committee

to book entertainment, print fair books, and do publicity work. And she has been involved with the state association for as long.

She was also appointed by Gov. Robert Casey to be a member of the agricultural fair advisory committee. She has one more year to serve.

The state Department of Agriculture is charged with administering the state fair fund, which was established early to continue support of Pennsylvania's many community fairs.

Originally, fairs in the continental United States were promoted and supported by the young government in order that most agricultural Pennsylvanians could better compete with British agriculture.

Since extension services were available and most people did not pursue higher education prior to farming, sponsoring community fairs was seen as a way to educate the general public and help retain the competitiveness of the industry.

Today, agriculture is still important to the county fair, according to Poggi.

"I think agriculture at fairs appeals to people more today than (it) every did," she said, explaining that previously, when many still were connected to a working farm, or not far removed, knowledge of farm animals was more widely prevalent.

Today, with few people and children ever getting a chance to see farm animals up close, fairs offer the general public that opportunity, she said.

But further, fairs offer communities a chance to be happy and involved.

Poggi said she came to fairs late

in life. Her first exposure was at a Union County fair when she was a little girl and visited with her grandparents on their farm.

But then, in her late teens, she started working for Wene Chicken Farms, of New Jersey. At the time, it was the largest baby chick farm in that state. She worked as office manager and secretary for business owner Elmer H. Wene, who was also New Jersey secretary of agriculture.

Following that she worked as office manager and accountant for private printing plant United Lutheran Publication House, in Philadelphia.

Her third job she held for 27 years, working also as an office manager and accountant, this time for the Visiting Nurses Association, in Ardmore.

Then she retired and moved to Mifflinburg with her husband Louis, where they bought a farm.

Mifflinburg was the area where both their parents were born and raised on farms. Poggi and her husband bought Hemlock Springs Farm, and more or less sharecropped it out for a number of years, until selling it.

But soon after she retired and they moved into their new place, a neighbor recruited her for service for the West-End Fair.

She said receiving the recognition from the state association is one of the greatest honors she has ever received.

"I was surprised and very flattered to receive, because it has always been a pleasure to work with all the fine friends. It seem

like (I've made) hundreds of friends.

"It's the most friendly group of people I have ever worked with," she said.

Why she continues to volunteer her time is not even a consideration. "It keeps me alert," she said.

"It helps you to stay young and vital and I think the most important thing as you get older is that people want you to do something."

She said that older people, though competent, don't get asked to do things. She said through that people suffer in self-esteem. Volunteering to work for a local fair, or any other volunteer work can make a big difference in attitude.

She said being involved, at any age, is a key to self-worth and self-growth.

But there are other reasons for helping with fairs. "I feel that people today are missing a big opportunity, especially if they have kids, (if they don't) visit a small country fair."

The success of small fairs to continue over the years, she said is directly attributable to the support by the state.

"Small fairs owe most successes today due to the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture with the fair fund.

"And too, we have been lucky that our governors have been gung ho on fairs. But the future (of fairs) hinges on what people think is important.

"I think education is important, no matter if its agricultural or whatever."

And fairs educate, she said.



Paulene Poggi was honored at the State Fair Association annual banquet.



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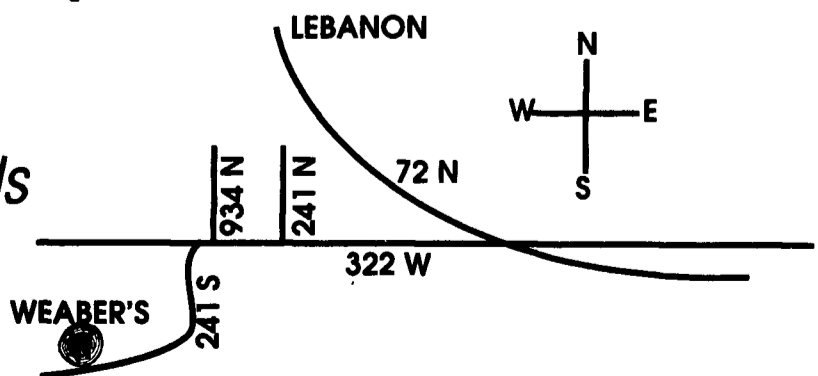
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