

# Anspach Family Finds Adventures In Life

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SHILLINGTON (Berks Co.)—

Tall, slender timbers stand like sentinels on the steep snow-covered slope that rises behind the Anspachs' two-story frame house.

An occasional bleat from a sheep and the bawl of calf split the frigid stillness. A wooden jungle gym, a camper trailer, and a woolen scarf strewn across the porch swing are mute evidence that children live at Hillside Acres Farm.

At 3:30 p.m. those tell-tale signs burst into reality as four students spill from the van and tear into the house.

Tales from school, questions about the recent lamb birthing of Dallas and Buffalo, and details on evening chores are discussed during the after-school munch-out.

For the Anspach family, life centers around 4-H activities. Both Deb and her husband Dave are club leaders.

"Four-H has opened up all kinds of opportunities for us," she said. "It is not just a child event but a total parent event."

"Adventures in Life" is what I call this," Deb said of her children's involvement in 4-H clubs of sheep, beef, dairy, swine, air rifle, livestock judging, and science.

"Four-H is the best investment we ever made. It's made up of good, solid, conservative kids from good, solid conservative families. It's the best alternative I know to guns, drugs, and trouble that affect kids today," Deb said.

The oldest child, 15-year-old Theresa, is the Pennsylvania Hampshire Sheep Ambassador, who tends a flock of 45 Hampshires at home.

Because she grew tired of competing with an older sister in the showing and because she prefers to be unique, 13-year-old Krystal shuns Hamps in favor of nurturing the woolly Rambouillet breed.

"In blocking and grooming, she is one of the best in the state," Theresa said of her sister.

In addition to helping with the 49 sheep, David, 11, and William, 9, pamper 2 steers, a dairy calf, 15 chickens, 4 rabbits, 3 cats, and a dog.

The Anspachs are a prime example of what a industrious

family can do with a patch of ground that is only 2 1/4 acres.

The first few years that the kids began showing in 4-H competition required an outlay of money for the parents, but now with the premium prize money, the children are able to buy feed, pay vet bills, and reinvest in new stock.

They've even paid for a 30x50-foot solar/shade barn and bought a 5 1/2-ton load of hay.

The barn, Deb said, originated from England technology. Tubal aluminum poles hold up the two layers of polyurethane air inflated roof. It requires electricity to keep it inflated. If the electric is turned off, a generator must be used within 35 minutes. It has been tested in 90-mile-an-hour winds and has withstood this winter's heavy snows with the help of family shoveling off snow.

Open sides allow air circulation resulting in a 95 percent success rate in controlling ammonia. Healthy animals are the result of the open environment.

Although chores are split on a daily basis, each child has his own animals to show. Deb posts a new schedule every month so that each child knows who is responsible for water and feeding.

Each child rises at 5:30 a.m. to finish barn chores on time to catch the school bus at 7:15. Evening chores again find family participation in the barn.

Summer months the family travels around the state to compete in 12 different fairs.

Deb said she has a philosophy of four Golden Rules for the showing in the following order.

1. Be safe in the showing.
2. Learn something.
3. Have fun.
4. Earn a ribbon.

"A ribbon is nothing if you don't fulfill number two and three," Deb said. "The purpose of going into that showing is not to primarily win a ribbon but to learn something and have fun while doing it."

Deb is a crusader for safety in the showing. Some shows are downright dangerous when there are too many kids and animals crowded together, she said. She has prevailed to get classes broken down into smaller groups and in putting extra adults in the showing to help handle nervous steers.

"My first steer was 525 pounds of psychotics when I took him in the ring the first time," Theresa said.

With continual handling and experience, the steer calmed down, but adults are often needed to help during the transition period, Deb said.

The family is pleased that their homegrown stock is competitive with purchased stock.

"We want to improve our own stock rather than buy it from someone else," Dave explained. In recent years, the Anspachs purchased a ram to introduce structur-

al correctness for the breed. Now they are looking at purchasing a new ram to increase the size of their stock.

Dad Anspach thrives during the lamb birthing season. Two years ago he missed watching the Super Bowl but this year he was able to catch most of it although twin

lambs, Dallas and Buffalo, chose Super Bowl Sunday for their debut.

As the state Hampshire Ambassador, it is Theresa's duty to travel around the state to hand out fair ribbons. Theresa's duties as Hampshire Ambassador and in  
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Krystal raises rabbits and Rambouillets.



Pennsylvania Hampshire Ambassador Theresa Anspach hugs her favorite Hampshire.



Everyone works together in the Anspach family, who say that 4-H has opened up many doors of opportunities and is an investment in teaching fairness, clean fun, and learning adventures. From left are Deb and Dave Anspach with children, David, 11; Krystal, 13; Theresa, 15; and William 9.



Theresa and David climb this hill to feed the chickens and ducks located in an adjacent pen.



Nine-year-old William gets a smooch while caring for his 4-H project.

# Homestead Notes