

Strong Families Become Involved In Community

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For her, family strength is not merely having an ingrown family unit, but a strong family that reaches out to meet the needs of the community.

Dottie said that her philosophy has always been "To establish reasonable balance in outside activities, work schedules, and family."

Her solution for simultaneously caring for children and becoming involved in outside activities was to involve the children in whatever she did.

That meant that when the children joined 4-H, she became a 4-H leader by teaching cooking and sewing. Later she joined the 4-H Development Board and became a clothing and textile master. She branched out into other extension services by become a board member of the Family Life Advisory Committee, and for the past 18 years, she has taught crafts at the Homemaker's Camp, sponsored by the extension.

Church activities also fills a big slot in family life. Now that the children are grown, Dottie is pleased that her grandchildren take an interest in getting involved. Recently, a daughter and a seven-year-old grandson joined Dottie and the Women's Fellowship at the Hain's United Church of Christ in Wernersville to make more than 200 pounds of candy as a fundraiser. It's something that Dottie and other family members have been doing for 30 years.

"I think it is important to involve family members to do things with your friends," Dottie said.

Dottie grew up in a family of seven children.

"My father was very strict. We worked all time," Dottie said.

There was no differential treatment between the boys and girls in the family. Dottie was expected to load and unload hay as fast as her brothers.

Unlike her older siblings, Dottie wanted to graduate from high school. When she approached her dad, he agreed to allow her to do so if she was willing to walk two miles every day to the bus stop.

She did.

"My father eventually bought me a bicycle to ride back and forth," Dottie said.

Situations such as this instilled the belief within Dottie that goals often require sacrifice.

After high school graduation, Dottie took over the housekeeping duties because her mother had health problems. A few years later, she married Wilbur, with whom she recently celebrated 50 years of marriage.

The couple moved on Wilbur's family's 113-acre farm. Starting off with a few cows, chickens, and pigs, the couple soon added another 78-acre farm, a full-size dairy, and did custom combining on the side.

Dottie worked side by side with her husband until the boys of their nine-children family were old enough to help outside.

Dottie concentrated her efforts in household, sewing, and cooking chores.

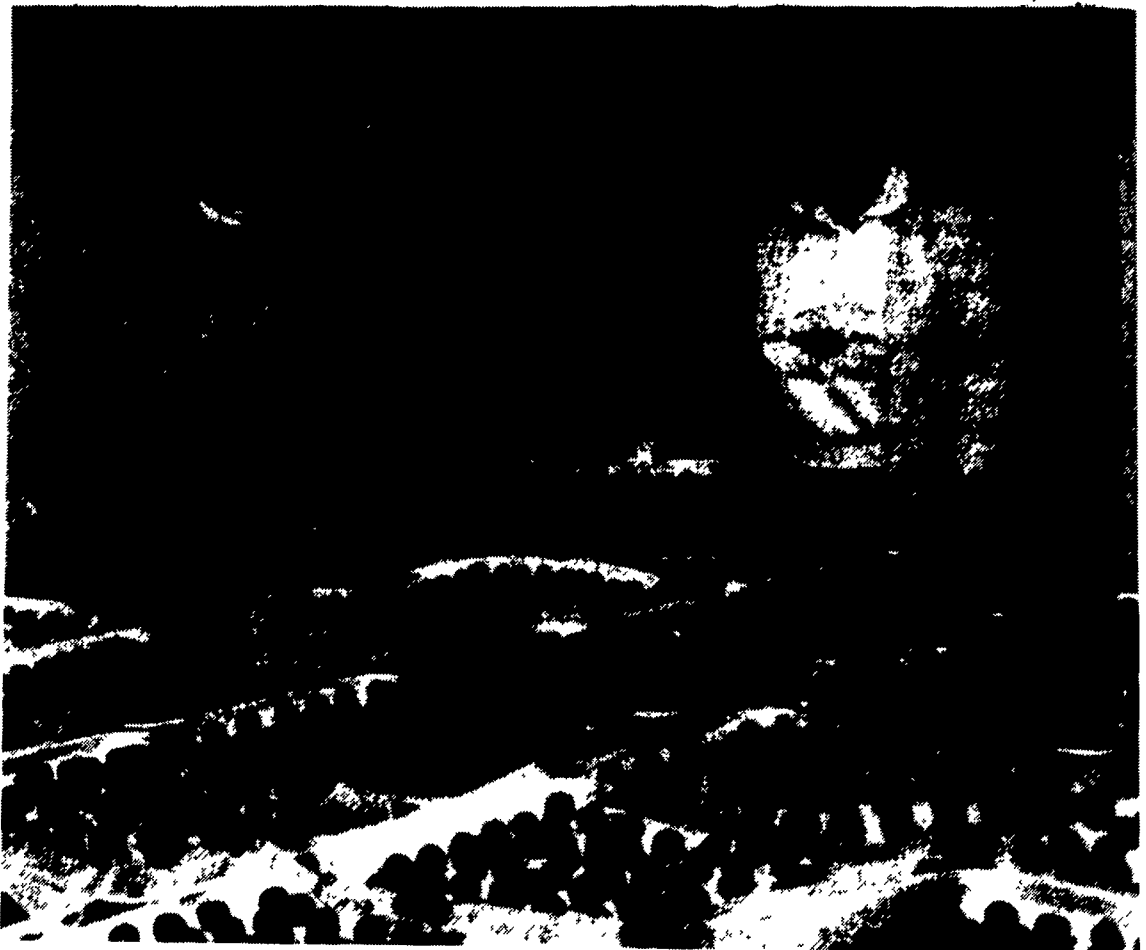
"Housework can be fun. I always enjoyed it," Dottie said.

Being a speedy worker, Dottie was able to whiz through the housework and find other outlets for her energy.

Church activities have included Sunday school teaching and being superintendent, overseeing the Mother's Club and Guild, and Women's Fellowship.

Dottie became a member of Farm Women 28 years ago when she first heard about it and started Group #7 because there wasn't a group established nearby. Since then she has served on many county and state office and committees for the organization.

This year, as state president, Dottie looks forward to attending all the county conventions. She especially enjoys overnight stays in the homes of other Farm Women members. It was that enjoyment that gave her the idea for the tour that Farm Women organize every year. During the next two years, members will tour Pennsylvania, concentrating especially on those counties that have Farm Women groups. The tours will focus on culture craft shops



For 30 years, Dottie has been making Easter candy at her church. The importance of doing things with extended family members and with friends is continually emphasized in Dottie's conversations. With her are a daughter Jane Bezner, a sister Esther Groff, and grandson Michael.

and villages.

Members who cannot participate in the two-week long tours can join the group for one-day excursions to become better acquainted with other members.

Theoretically, Dottie and her husband retired six years ago. That meant they sold their farm to a neighboring farmer. But work hasn't stopped. Dottie is up at 7 a.m. and busy until 11 or 12 at night. She watches little T.V. because she prefers to sew or do things.

"I can always find something to do," she said.

Her daughter agreed.

"My mother has boundless energy. She is always doing something for someone and some organization. She is always strong, faithful, and committed to people."

"My mother has boundless energy," daughter Jane Bezner said. "She is always doing something for someone and some organization. She is always strong, faithful, and committed to people. No matter what happens, she keeps working."

Recently Dottie sewed 50 sleeping bags for the homeless, and two dozen wheelchair tote bags and lap robes for those in nursing homes because someone had given her boxes of material and she saw the need. She collects food for the Berks County Emergency Shelter and delivers it on a weekly basis. She sews throw pillows and quilts for all her children's and in-law's homes.

Dottie and her husband now participate in activities at three senior centers and are pinocle club members.

Profuse flower beds surround the Stricker home. "Last year not



Dottie is known as a person who is always doing something for someone and some organization. No matter what happens, she keeps working.

one weed could be found in all my flower beds, and I have a dozen of them," she said.

She uses her own flowers to make corsages for guests at church

banquets and other special occasions.

It's just like Dottie to find something that will strengthen family, church, and community ties.



Here is one the 50 sleeping bags that Dottie recently completed for the homeless. She said that her philosophy has always been "to establish reasonable balance in outside activities, work schedules and family." From left, Jane and Michael Bezner, Dottie Stricker, and Esther Groff.

A Dozen Ways To Strengthen Family

—Penn State Cooperative Extension

Millions of Americans, young and old, are doing things to make their families *stronger*.

They're working to strengthen family ties because they feel stress is upsetting to the family.

Everyday stress piles up as family members worry about many seemingly unavoidable problems.

Family members can help each other deal with everyday tensions and strains.

Building a strong family is the best insurance against the devastating effects of family stress.

Every family, including yours, has its strong points. What are *your* family's strong points?

To find out more about strengthening your family and how to do it, contact the Cooperative Extension Service office in your county.

1. Spend time with each other, do things together as a family.
2. Plan ahead with your family so things *will* happen and not *just* happen.
3. Establish a reasonable balance between outside activities, work schedules, and your family.
4. Talk with each other and listen carefully to understand the other's viewpoint.
5. Show each family member consideration and appreciation, especially in everyday ways.
6. Respect each person — his/her ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
7. Develop pride in your family.
8. Resolve problems and conflicts in a constructive way.
9. Help each other and be willing to let others help you.
10. Contact and build ties with other families.
11. Take part in community affairs and use community services.
12. Develop a spiritual focus within your family.