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The other outstanding presentation was earned by Susan Pardo of Sullivan County. Honorable mention went to Kathryn Jarrett of Lycoming County and Amy Espenshade of Lancaster.

Outstanding scrapbook awards went to Shannon Semmel of Northampton-Lehigh and to Shannon Hoffman, SUN Area. Honorable mention was earned by Amy Espenshade, Lancaster, and by Rachel Tanis, Centre.

Contestants selected Jani Burke of Bradford County as the recipient of the Miss Congeniality Award.

After individual interviews with four judges, seven finalists were selected for the final round of competition. In addition to Natalie, the finalists included Larissa Mellot, Franklin County; Melissa Bicksler, Berks County; Shannon Semmel, Northampton/Lehigh Counties; Rachel Tanis, Centre County; Farin Weltner, Beaver-Lawrence counties; and Jayne Burke, Bradford County.

Each of the seven finalists

needed to answer an impromptu question before the crowd of 600. The answers reflect the contestants ability to think quickly and to remain calm under pressure.

The question: The American school system is under a great deal of criticism recently. Do you feel it is justifiable and what suggestions would you offer to improve it?

Natalie answered that the question is very complex because the issues range from education to discipline. She believes that her own school district has a terrific educational system but test scores of American schools lag behind when compared with those in other countries. The lower test scores reflect the attitude of laziness, she said. It is no longer the American dream to build a future for one's self; instead people are content just to get a job.

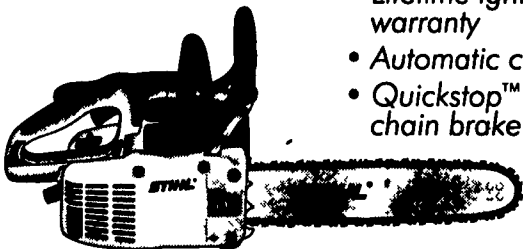
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Seven finalists, from left, are Farin Weltner, Beaver-Lawrence; Rachel Tanis, Centre; Larissa Anne Mellott, Franklin; Natalie Welch, Somerset; Shannon Semmel, Northampton-Lehigh; Melissa Bicksler, Berks; and Jami Burke, Bradford.

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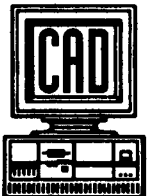
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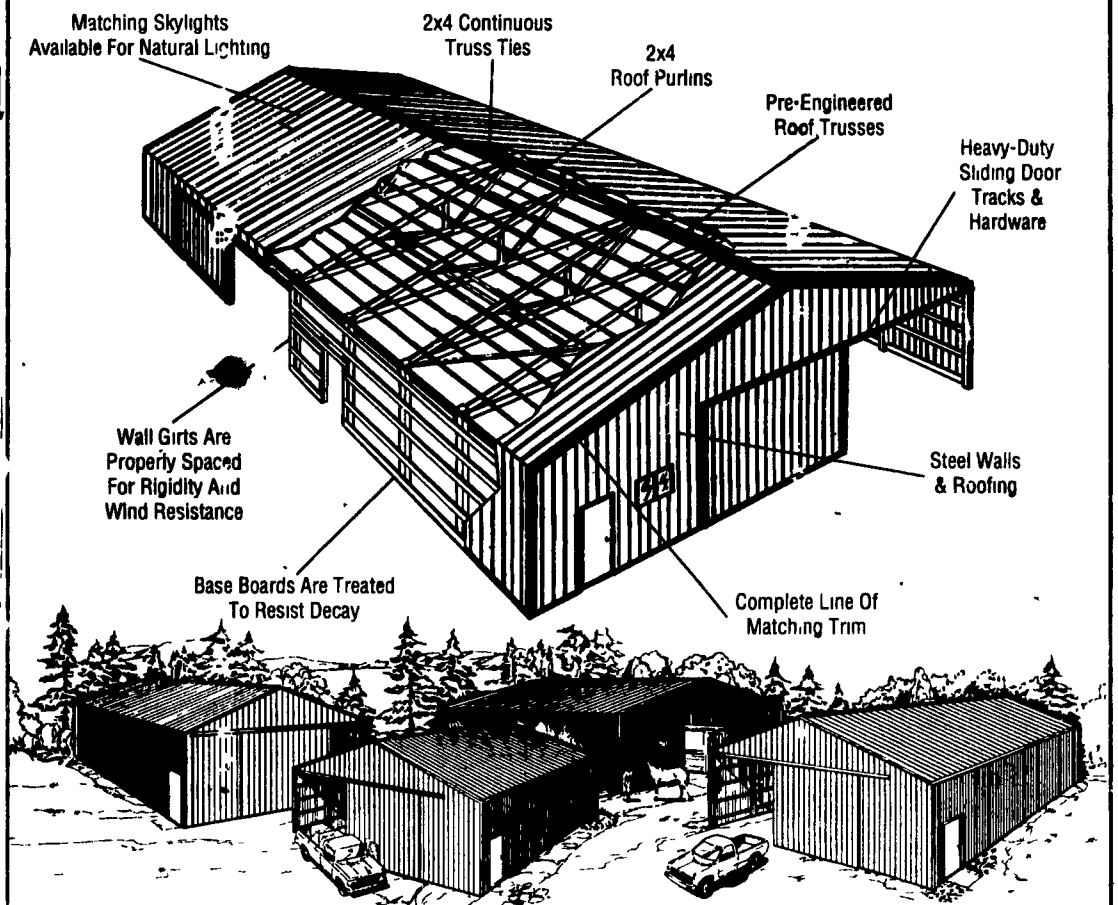
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