

Diversification Is Key To Successful Vo-Ag Program

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TYRONE (Blair Co.) — When William C. Harshman first arrived at the Tyrone Area High School, there were eight active members in the FFA.

"My orders," says this tall, thin, fatherly, teacher who has the stamina of the Energizer bunny, "were to bring FFA back to life and to concentrate on areas of agriculture other than pigs and black and white cows."

"I think it is a total lack of diversification that has caused so many FFA's to fold up in high schools," Harshman continues. "You have to realize where agriculture is today and pursue all the avenues."

Diversification is the rule at Tyrone. Individual projects include sweet corn, alfalfa, wildlife conservation, green beans, hogs, vegetable gardening, poultry meat, flower production, beef growing, beef steers, pheasants, lawn care, dairy beef, lambs, dairy cows, silage corn, cold frames, soybeans, and capons.

"Many of the students have earned themselves extra spending money with their projects."

Communication skills are not left out of the Tyrone program. Each year nearly half of the FFA members participate in the annual speech contest for an extra 10% on their vo/ag grade.

With 105 students (50 percent girls) in grades eight through 12 enrolled in the vo-ag or vo-ag elective courses at Tyrone, Harshman is constantly busy exploring agricultural avenues. "I love my job and it is never boring. Sometimes I'm helping to build a building for a local community fair; then I teach a class in proper nutrition for animals including computer programs; the day might end with a horticulture class."

In the spring the horticulture class includes growing bedding plants and Easter plants. In the fall, they take in area geraniums, cut them back and restart plants for next year.

Plant work is done in a greenhouse built entirely with money furnished by a grant and constructed by students.

It's attracted such students as Julie Zang looking for extra credit in a science class. "I've always lived in town and we never had a garden," Julie admits. "But, this year, I grew my own flowers from seed and was very proud of what I learned. I can't wait for next spring to begin the process all over again."

Jason Day is another student

who has never lived on a farm. "But," says Harshman, "He gives 100 percent in the classroom. It doesn't matter if it's building a display for one of our fairs or working in the greenhouse, Jason is willing." The enthusiasm includes a few perks. He's the only boy in a horticulture class of eight girls.

Horticulture doesn't stop with growing plants. The students have

Adding to the classroom with his first hand experiences of Russian farming methods is Jeremy Rice who spent part of the summer in Russia. "I asked him if he would go and he jumped at the chance," Harshman says.

All of the eight students in the dairy nutrition class plan to enter into some phase of agriculture in their post high school days. Rice



Horticulture enthusiasts at Tyrone Area High School include, left right: Melanie McClain, Julie Zang, Avira Wilson, Leslie Hagen, Jessica Eaken, Jole Ieraci, Erin Little, Kelly Wagner and Jason Day.

a course in flower arranging done on a \$200 a year annual budget.

"We worked out a deal with the local funeral directors," Harshman explains. "Those involved with planning a funeral may choose to donate the leftover cemetery flowers to the school. We invested in a small refrigerator to keep them fresh, then recycle into arrangements for the home dining room tables. "These kids often walk out with flower arrangements worth \$25 or \$30," Harshman says.

At Christmas they make pine wreaths, swags, or centerpieces for their holiday tables.

Some of the excitement in this year's animal nutrition class revolves around two Polish exchange students who are in the United States to learn all they can about agriculture and eventually will take their knowledge back to their native country.

The girls, Renata Bajek and Holina Pietrar, complete the exchange by bringing knowledge of Polish farming to the students at Tyrone.

plans a career in conservation and raising wild game.

Another hopes to get into feed sales; a young man, growing up in Tyrone, hopes to work on a farm; another student eagerly anticipates exploring the same field; a young lady will be a floral designer and own her own flower shop; the girls from Poland plan to become county agents or conservationists.

Two of Harshman's students have been declared Regional South Central Star students with Andrew Harpster of Evergreen Farms receiving the "Farmer," award and Brian Harpster of Sinking Valley Farms, the "Horticulturist". The boys are not related.

Four will receive state FFA degrees at the 1995 Pennsylvania Farm Show.

Because Blair County has no central county fair, the students at Tyrone participate in a number of community fairs including Bellwood, Sinking Valley, Martinsburg, Williamsburg, Hollidaysburg, and Claysburg. Some also enter competitions in the Huntingdon County Fair.

"These smaller fairs can be a plus for our diversified program," Harshman explains. "If we only had county fair competition, the grand champion steer that goes for \$5 a pound would take all the atten-

tion. As it is, students growing vegetables or fruits are likewise in the spotlight. It's always difficult to get the same attention for prize winning vegetables lying on a plate as that of a champion steer."

"Diversification is the key to good vo-ag classes today," Harshman affirms. "We live in an area with 46 dairy farms where more than 5,000 cows are milked each day. Money has been invested in our local farms to stay in business well into the next century. It's very important for these students to learn the role of the dairy farmer as well as other diversified aspects of rural living."

Kristin Johnston Is Delegate to National 4-H Congress

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — Kristin Johnston, Gettysburg, will be among 1,400 youths gathering in Orlando, Florida for the 73rd National 4-H Congress, December 3 through 7. Delegates from all 50 states and Puerto Rico will be joined by state advisors, National 4-H staff, trustees, donors and volunteers for the 4-H Congress. While building on its history of educating American youth to solve "issues critical to their lives, their families and society," the 1994 Congress is leading the way into the future with its bold, new Workforce Preparedness Initiative.

Darlene Resh, Adams County 4-H agent, will also be attending National 4-H Congress. She will be on assignment as a chaperone to the 21 member Pennsylvania delegation.

Through the new program, which is being launched at this year's Congress, delegates will



Kristin Johnson receive information and skills to help them in career applications.

Visits to business will be the source or further exposure to various worksites and career opportunities. Industry leaders, trustees, donors and state advisors will address and interact with delegates in a variety of other sessions. Delegates will also learn more about living in a culturally diverse society including an international assignment to learn about the people, culture, history and economics of the 11 countries featured at EPCOT Center.

More than 5.4 million youths, ages 8-18, participant in 4-H. Members, of which more than 30 percent live in metropolitan areas and more than 25 percent are members of ethnic or racial minorities, are involved in diverse programs.

MILK AMERICA'S HEALTH KICK



Leslie Hagen gets a lesson in bow tying from Mr. Harshman prior to making Christmas wreaths.