

Lebanon Farm-City Program Catalyst For Mutual Respect

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about the day-to-day worlds of others within a farm-city community, and most have said they enjoyed the experience and gained a new or heightened respect for others.

This year was no different, except that (perhaps this year especially) the city participants seemed especially awed by the amount of business work and business attitude with which their farmer-partners operate their farms.

In most years past, in describing their experiences, it seemed that city participants put more emphasis upon the long hours and intense physical labor and dedication that characterized the work of farming partners in the job-exchange program.

This year the highlight of expressions of mutual respect between the farm and city participants seemed to be that they really face the same types of business workload challenges and demands — financial awareness, paperwork, planning, searching for efficiencies, continuing education, sharpening business skills and relationship skills, and being still being involved in their families and communities.

While the farm participants commented on the city workers hours or service to their businesses, the city participants commented on the fact that the entire farm family works in the family farm business, and that it is still a seven-day, 24-hour job to operate a farm.

In his discussion of his experience, Phillips gave a humorous accounting.

He said that as a youth and a member of the Boy Scouts, he had the opportunity to go to a farm and milk a cow by hand.

As an adult on the Dale Hostetter and Sons Farm in Belle Grove, with a herd of about 100 registered Holsteins, Phillips said, "All the imagery I had, and the recollections I had, gave way to the reality.

"The Hostetter family opened their barn door to me and gave me all the chores I guess they thought I could handle," Phillips said.

He shoveled manure.

Phillips talked about the large meals provided him and the work that burned it off.

He also commented on the decorations in the Hostetter household, telling the audience about these pictures of cows hanging on the walls and all with an apparent "Greta Garbo" complex, on profile, facing to the right.

Phillips continued, talking about the equipment, the ride he

got in the tractor while spreading manure, modern milking techniques, the medical care and environmental attention that the cows receive, the attention to dietary and nutritional needs of the cattle for peak health and performance, the telephone calls, the paper and office work, the labor, the organization, family support, and the fact that work is everyday.

"There is quite a different amount of commitment (on the farm) than folks in the city are used to working with," he said.

Both men seemed to easily find words of mutual respect and admiration for each other.

Hostetter told of his city-work experience with Bob and visiting Phillips' insurance office, describing the many person-to-person relationships that are part of the job, the computerization, the paperwork, the efficiencies and efforts to provide a competitive service that attracts and keeps customers.

Hostetter said it was also very obvious that Phillips truly cared about the people he served, recalling that Phillips made a distinction between the difference of being an insurance "salesman" and an insurance "agent."

According to Hostetter, Phillips said he does not push people to buy anything they don't want or need. Hostetter said Phillips described his role as one who is to talk with customers about what they want and to answer questions and facilitate their claims as quickly as possible.

On the women's side of the exchange program, Jan Boyer told of her visit with Bonnie Wenger. She said that Steve and Bonnie Wenger and Steve's father Glen run their farm "much like anyone would run a business."

She said she was impressed with the efficiencies in feeding and caring for the turkeys, the dairy cattle, the fact that they daily track feed costs and futures, their custom field work business, and that they diversified.

Boyer talked about helping to "dump" (place by age groups into rearing areas) turkeys in the barn. She said that in less than two hours the work crew had placed 27,000 turkeys.

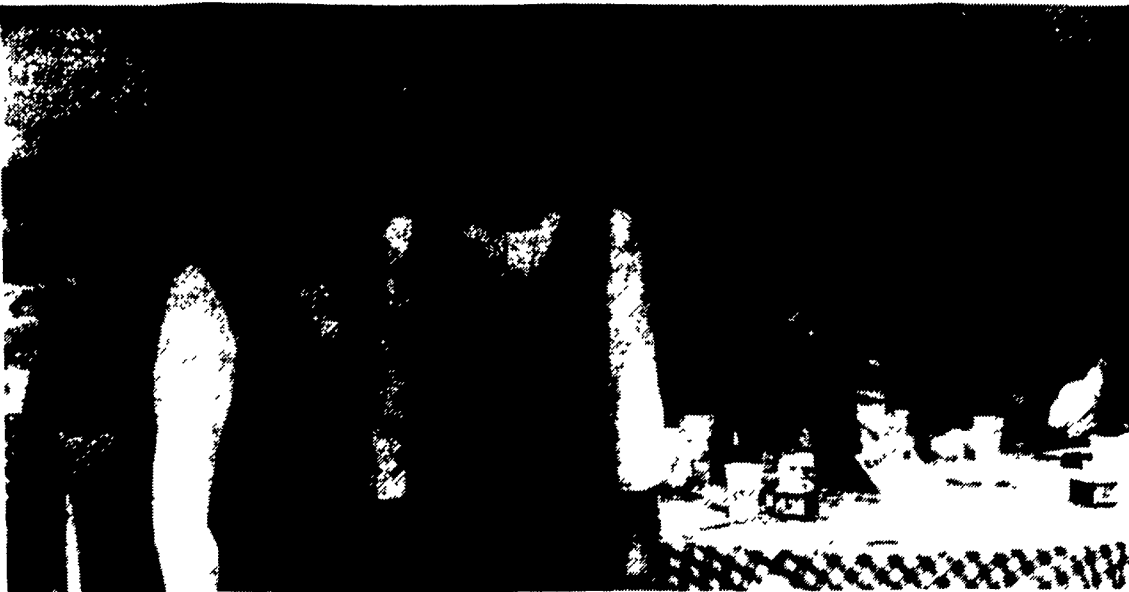
She also mentioned visiting a neighboring farm where calves were being raised, and riding the farm's combine and tractor.

Perhaps the most striking statement was Boyer's observation that many small businesses involve a husband and wife team effort and that most farms are that way.

Boyer said the impression may



From the left, dairy farmer Alan Hostetter and insurance agent Bob Phillips share their experiences working at each other's jobs for a day.



From the left, Jan Boyer, advertising consultant, and Bonnie Wenger, dairy and turkey farmer, stand together in front of more than 500 people to tell of their mutual respect and new understanding.



From a straw bale lined stage, Miss Pennsylvania Linette Mertz sings country songs to entertain attendees at the Lebanon County Farm-City Program. The items around the stage are some of the door prizes donated by businesses.



In a lighter moment, from the left, Rita Myer looks at her surprise door prize — a live turkey — while at the microphone, Patricia Houser announces the prize.

be that farm women get to stay home instead of working, but that she learned that farm women are very much, "working mothers," who probably have it tougher than working mothers outside of farming, because, "It's tough to get a babysitter at five in the morning, or around midnight when calves are being born."

Of Wenger, Boyer said, "I admire her ability to juggle all the responsibilities and to do it well."

Boyer also commented on how Steve and Bonnie went to Germany for two weeks to share knowledge of farming and efficiency. She said that it spoke of the Wenger's devotion to their family and business.

On top of that, Boyer said, "Farmers do a lot of volunteering. Bonnie is involved with the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, FFA and Ag in the Classroom."

For her observations, Bonnie said she never realized how much work went into creating advertising for newspapers, magazines and television.

And she said that she noticed the two actually shared some things in common when she arrived at Boyer's house to report for work to find a copy of *Lancaster Farming* at the door.

Wenger said the phone calls, the ideas, the homework needed in knowing her clients' businesses and all the followup work made her realize, "All in all, we face the same challenges."

The Lebanon Farm-City Program has been recognized by the state in previous years for its tours and mall events, in addition to a job exchange program and banquet.

Under the leadership of the

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