

Program Allows Environmental Education Coordinator To Reach Out To Schools

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Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— Charlotte "Chotty" Sprenkle has had to answer some real "doozies" in her previous position as senior information representative for Muddy Run Park.

Questions included, "What kind of bird do I have in my feeder?" And "I've got this snake in my basement. Can you tell me what it is?"

Answering those kinds of questions has prepared her for her newly accepted position as environmental education coordinator for the Lancaster County Conservation District.

She still recalls the "dooziest" question:

"Whatever happened to the deer in the jar?"

The *what?*
It's true. Years ago, the Park recovered a pregnant deer that was hit by a car. The fawns were preserved in separate glass jars and encased in an educational display. After 10 years and a \$1 million redesign of the exhibit area, the deer were finally disposed of.

But after the redesign, Sprenkle remembers the first question she fielded from a visitor was, "Where are the deer in the jar? Where did you put them?"

Sprenkle admitted that although there are challenges for her position, her new post will allow her to remain in touch with all the schools in the county who will depend on her to help coordinate environmental and agricultural programs through the district.

Sprenkle began with the district

last week. As environmental education coordinator, she will travel with school groups to various sites in the county, including parks and demonstration farms, to help students from kindergarten through grade 12 learn about naturalization and conservation.

In 15 years of work with Muddy Run, Sprenkle said she "probably dealt with more than 1,000 educators in Lancaster County alone." She also dealt with schools in adjoining counties, including Maryland.

"There are a lot of environmental programs going on at the county park system," she said. "I want to complement what they're doing."

A Solanco High School graduate, Sprenkle was graduated from Penn State in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in recreation and parks with an environmental interpretation. She said she always wanted to work in a park system.

She interned with the National Audubon Society at the Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm in Dayton, Ohio. After graduation, she was employed with Philadelphia Electric (now PECO Energy Company) at Muddy Run Recreation Park as park naturalist.

During her 15 years of service with the 700-acre (including 1,000-acre reservoir) Muddy Run, she was responsible for creating and instructing environmental education programs for school groups and conducting community recreation programs. Those included Envirothon competitions

— which test youths' knowledge and understanding of the environment — in York, Chester, and Delaware counties.

While at Muddy Run, Sprenkle was involved in shad restoration education, eagle awareness programs, and an 80-box, several-mile-long bluebird nesting box workshop, trails, and programs. "We came into contact with more than 40,000 people per year at Muddy Run," she said. Sprenkle was responsible for implementing the white-tail deer management plan for the Muddy Run Project.

For a variety of efforts, in the program's first year, the Park was recognized with the "Take Pride In Pennsylvania" and "Take Pride in America" national awards in 1986. The awards, presented by the then-U.S. Vice President George Bush, were the result of a culmination of work for the project team.

"That was *the* highlight," she said.

Also, her final project at Muddy Run involved the redesign and development of the Muddy Run Information Center, which included the construction of four additional classrooms, a 130-seat auditorium, office, and meeting space.

Sprenkle said that the conservation district already has a lot of educational programs through the Envirothon and conservation school. However, the one aspect that has been missing, until now, is

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Charlotte "Chotty" Sprenkle will help administer educational programs through the Lancaster County Conservation District. One of those will include use of a special "bat box," which she holds, to show nesting habits of common bats.

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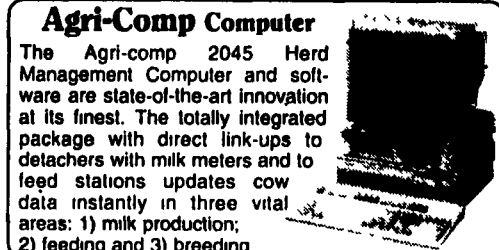
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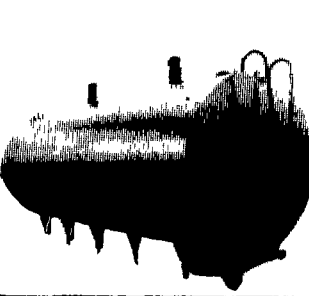
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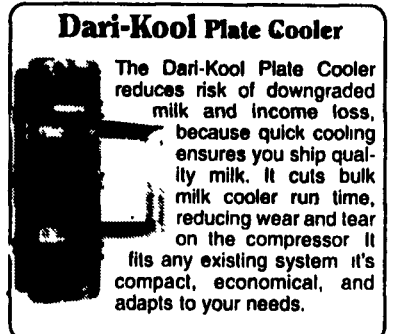
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