

# Farm Show Means Svonavec Family Moves To Harrisburg

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ROCKWOOD (Somerset Co.)  
— Heidi, Luke and Gabe Svonavec need a caravan to haul all the baggage and equipment when they and their livestock head to the Pennsylvania Farm Show. But probably the animals need more stuff than the owners do.

They're showing lambs, pigs and a steer.

Dave and Betty Lou Svonavec's three offshoots just grin when their mother laments, "I wish they showed the same thing. I think the animals have far more luggage than us," obviously envisioning bags of feed, grooming tools and hefty storage chests before mentally organizing the family itself, which headquarters the better part of a week in a motel.

The kids say they don't mind all the work involved to show their animals at the Farm Show. They have terrific fun, despite keeping up with daily responsibilities.

For sheer personality, porkers are 10-year-old Gabe's favorite. Luke, 13, prefers the challenge of steers, while Heidi, 15, finds lambs just right for controlability.

Yet, when the swine and sheep shows get underway, all three Svonavecs will be lined up to show, unlike the steers where none of Luke's competition will come from his siblings.

Heidi states flatly, "The steers I have no way of controlling."

After joining the High Ridge 4-H at age nine, she knows by now what she likes — sheep. In 1995 she placed fourth and tenth in the North American International Livestock Exhibition in Louisville, Kentucky; had the grand champion at the Eastern National Livestock Show, Timonium, Maryland; was in the Keystone International Livestock Exhibition, and had the grand champion lamb at the Somerset County Fair.

Then she showed breeding stock for a family friend, Emmett McMillen from Brush Valley, Indiana County; at Dayton Fair, Indiana Co. Fair and Keystone International Livestock Exposition.

"There are so many good lambs out there, I think 'Wow,'" she says. "I always go in expecting to learn something. Like at Louisville, I knew I didn't have a chance but you always have fun," she says.

Her mom adds, "Going away (to tougher competitions) has made her better here. There's so much out there and it's like being a little fish in a big pond."

At Show Lamb Camp, held at B and B Livestock, Danville, Ohio, Heidi has improved her techniques for showing and fitting, has gotten the hang of giving shots, and educated herself with knowledge about feeding and breeding — all the important components that make a difference when it counts in the show ring.

One event she will miss at this year's Farm Show is the square dancing competition. For six years she's been whirled and twirled in the big arena with other Somerset County 4-Hers. Being a mere spectator this time may stir some sentimental feelings for the versatile teenager.

Anticipating her 16th birthday next March and the subsequent licensed driver privileges, Heidi states that school performance is still her priority. "I've got to keep my grades up," she says.

Somehow, despite being a cheerleader, school play cast member, Rockwood FFA member, cooking teacher of the learning disabled through the Intermediate Unit-8, and conducting ag-science, water testing projects in the hydroponic greenhouse, she manages to stay on the honor roll.

Luke is ready to exert his control over a 1,300 pound steer that he's been walking a mile each day regardless of the weather to keep its weight correct. Additionally, he's been closely monitoring the amount of feed the steer eats.

The youth is acquiring a confidence that took some time and experience. Earlier, when showing lambs he recalls, "I was afraid my lamb would get away and I wouldn't be able to catch it."

Now, however, he's learned that concentration matters the most. "I don't look at the audience, I look at the judge and concentrate. The worst thing," he says, "would be to lose control and have someone getting hurt."

One thing about a steer, he'll consume a lot of feed in 11 months and a fellow can depend on forking out some big bucks to support the animal's eating habits.

Of course, there's the lighter side, like the quip on one of Luke's shirts that somebody gave to him when he was showing sheep in Louisville. "I used to



Gabe Svonavec stands with a pen of pigs he will take to the Farm Show. He will show a lamb, too.

have money," it says, "now I show steers."

A cute joke that's pretty accurate when the family compares the difference in rounding out a steer and a lamb.

The vaccinated and tagged steer was shown earlier in Washington County and also at the Dayton Fair.

With his hog Luke has placed in the upper class and is anticipating the possibility of a sale when the champions are sold on Thursday.

The Rockwood eighth grader and FFA member as well as ski club and soccer player, at the Somerset County Agricultural Fair, has had two reserve grand champion lambs.

The Svonavecs' pigs did well in the past at the winter Farm Show, at least in "rate of gain" where all three were placed in the top six.

Unlike his sister and brother, Gabe attends the St. Peter's Catholic School in Somerset. He's in fourth grade.

Recently, he's been taking violin lessons. He says the instrument reminds him of a fiddle. Gabe definitely fancies the fiddle. And since Luke has no string teacher at school, and therefore doesn't play his violin any more, it has come in handy for the youngest family member.

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Luke Svonavec will show this steer plus a pig and a lamb.

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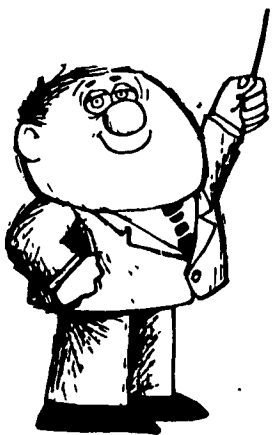
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