

Opportunity For Farmers To Tell About Farming

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Lancaster Farming Staff
LANDIS VALLEY (Lancaster Co.) — Farmers have a chance to tell the true story about farming to a non-agricultural public through The Hands-On House Children's Museum of Lancaster.

The Hands-On House is a place where playing is the key to learning. Located in an historic Victorian farmhouse on the Landis Valley Museum grounds, the not-for-profit museum is self-directed and designed for adults and children to explore together.

True, the Hands-On House is designed for children ages 2-10, but parents or an adult accompany the children as they participate in the activities. It's a great opportunity to educate the non-farming community about the production of crops, livestock, dairy, and poultry, as well as equipment and technology.

The new farm exhibit being planned isn't merely an exhibit like that displayed in most museums. The exhibit will offer a whole roomful of activities in which children actually participate in a farm-like setting to learn about farmers' perspective on mechanics, food safety, soil conservation, pollution control, weather forecasting, and financial management.

Deborah Young, exhibit planner, said, "This will not be an

EIEIO exhibit where children gather eggs with a basket or milk a cow by hand."

Instead, it will show how computerized equipment is used throughout the farm, such as a sample of eggs rolling out on a conveyor belt and a milking parlor with a pipeline.

Young said the entrance will give the appearance of entering a real farm.

A tractor simulation activity will include real parts of a tractor such as gear shifts, steering wheel, and control panel. Sound effects and an interactive video will encourage role playing. The rider can push a button to select five different implements to attach to the tractor, then look out the back tractor window to see what the equipment does.

Children can participate in soil and planting, seed germination, soil and water conservation, crop identification, and see the finished products.

A season cycle puzzle will teach the planting and harvesting cycle. A weather center, complete with instruments and charts, will provide information about the impact of weather predictions on the farmer's planning, work, and production.

The business end will include a computer station and allow the visitor to find market prices for com-



Deb Young, exhibit planner for the Hands-On House, promises that the agriculture exhibit will not convey farming as an Old MacDonald type farm but will show the latest technology used in farming.

modities. Office items will encourage role-playing and visitors to search through files to see where the farm's products have gone to produce consumer goods and industry products.

"We need to narrow down what to show and pack as much into the

room as we can," she said. "We'd like to show more information than we can actually cover. Businesses such as New Holland will provide handouts for visitors to take home."

In the beginning, Young asked visitors to the Hands-On House what they would like to know about farming. The extensive list includes questions about production and the following:

- Why do farmers spread manure? How does it help?
- Why do farmers make those patterns with a plow?
- What is a typical day on a farm like?
- Do cows bite?
- Why do farmers leave the cows out in the rain?
- How do farmers stand the smell?

After Young read the questions, she decided that for the display to be complete, she should ask farmers: What would you like the general public to know about your job?

"The local people are surrounded by agriculture, but know little about it," Young said.

She hopes to address the misunderstandings that people have about farming. To do this, a community advisory panel who are involved in agriculture was selected. Members are Dr. John Schwartz, director of Penn State Extension; Jim Shirk, Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Tom Daniels, Lancaster County Ag Preserve Board; Don Robinson, Lancaster Conservation District; Darvin Boyd, CoreStates
(Turn to Page B32)



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