

# Farm Bureau Rolls With Ag Promotion Ideas

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) —

The farm community knows that the public has little knowledge of where food comes from and of the expense and difficulties in providing a safe product.

For this reason, more and more farmers are becoming involved in community activities in order to educate the non-farming public.

To ease planning and offer ideas, the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) has formed a resource committee.

Anna and Bill Swailes, who chair the committee called State Promotion and Education, said the members compiled a resource book filled with ideas.

"We don't encourage every county to have the same promotion. What works in one county might not in another. It's important to identify the need and tailor the event to that," said Mrs. Swailes.

During PFB's annual meeting, spokespersons from several counties shared the success they have had with promotional events.

Diane Schlauch from Lehigh County reported on the mini farm show that is held annually at Tixelertown Mall. She said that 48,396 people visited the mall that day. Although not every visitor participated in the agricultural activities, thousands did.

The agriculture-sponsored events included a petting zoo, where 4-H'ers handed out coloring books of farm animals with explanations of all the uses derived from livestock. Samples of meats, potatoes, milk, cheese, and fruit were offered by county commodities. A giant sundae served 2,600 persons. Displays of antique tractors, agricultural products, and country crafters drew lots of attention. A country music and square dance was held.

In addition, \$1,900 was raised through a mini-auction of agricultural products. These funds were used to send five teachers to the week-long Ag in the Classroom Seminar held annually at Penn State.

"Believe me, we need to get the ag story in the classroom," Schlauch said. "Animal activists are there. Many of the teachers are telling children not to eat meat and are giving the wrong story to our children."

## Kids Will Be Kids—Protect Them

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"It's been estimated that more than 27,000 children and youth under age 20 experience severe farm-related injuries and 300 die each year," said Scott Whitman, agricultural safety communication specialist at Purdue University.

Whitman held a workshop during the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau meeting held in Hershey last week to help parents prevent child injuries.

One factor leading to injuries is that children often help with chores that are inappropriate for their age.

Whitman identified the characteristics common to age levels and the potential dangers they face.

"The most common age ranges for farm child fatalities are 2-4 year-olds and 12-15 year-olds," Whitman said.

Tractors are involved in 50 percent of child farm fatalities.

Was it worth all the effort?

"You bet!" Schlauch said.

She referred to one teacher who had been influenced by animal activists, but after attending an Ag in the Classroom workshop, was convinced that farmers do care about their animals, and she is now an enthusiastic supporter of the agricultural community.

The teacher is reported to have said about the Ag in the Classroom Seminar, "It has changed my negative image of farmers into seeing them as hardworking stewards of the land who care about livestock and the community."

Craig Sweger, president of the Washington County Farm Bureau, told how their county turned a potentially negative situation into a positive one. When the county commissioners with farm background lost the election and the three who assumed office had no agricultural ties, the agricultural community was concerned.

"We decided we needed to establish a dialogue with the county commissioners," Sweger said.

A catered luncheon featuring county agricultural products was held at the courthouse. A resource book listing the county's agricultural statistics and those pertaining toward making it the state's number one industry was given to each commissioner. Ag commodity baskets were also given. The county commissioners were so impressed that they requested more commodity baskets to hand out to visitors.

But, more importantly, the commissioners have become enthusiastic supporters of agriculture and at their suggestion, a prime location was made available as a roadside market.

"We took this negative situation and through cooperation with all the agricultural groups turned it into a positive one," Sweger said.

George Reichard and Titus Martin of Franklin County reported on the success they had in working with the county fire and rescue life support team.

Farmers had the perception that more medic training and coordination was needed among the rescue teams when dealing with farm accidents.

They drew up a map pinpointing each farm in case of emergency. In one demonstration, local farm equipment dealers and farmers

portrayed tractor rollover and implement accidents. When the rescue workers attempted to extract the simulated victims, the workers discovered they did not have adequate equipment and valuable time was lost.

Because the rescue teams realized the potential problems if such an accident should happen, more suitable equipment was purchased and increased training was provided for rescue.

The rescue effort was also a time that built relationships between the agricultural and non-farming community, Reichard said.

Grants are available to fund farm safety programs. Also the Penn State Cooperative Extension and many farm-related organizations will work together on community projects of this sort.

For more information about the grants or for a copy of the idea book, contact the Swailes at Box 175, Willow Hill, PA 17271 or call (717) 349-2257.

Dr. George Conneman, economist from Cornell University, discusses the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau meeting with Jan Carson, communications director.

Three-year-old Nathan already likes to help hoe turnips and pull weeds on his parents, Tracie and Aaron Sturges,' vegetable farm in Beaver County. During the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, the Sturges attended a session on child development stages and implications for injury prevention to ensure a safe working environment for their son.



These people serve as the state Farm Bureau resource persons to help promote agriculture education in counties. From left are Bill and Anna Swailes from Franklin County and committee chairpersons; David and Patricia Sickler of Columbia County who represent Region 6; and Shelly Brown of Huntingdon County who represents Region 2.

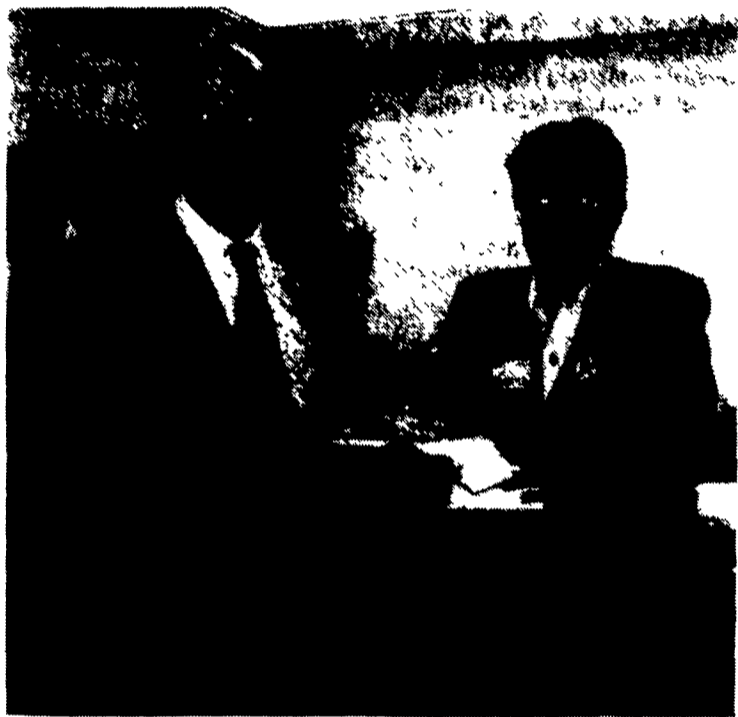
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# HOMESTEAD NOTES

