

Hugs And Kisses Dominate Farm Women's Rally



Dauphin County Farm Women officers, who presided at the Spring Rally, stand with Lois Hughes, state president of the organization. From left are Evelyn Helm, recording secretary; Martha Reed, corresponding secretary; Lois Hughes, state president; Sharon Strite, county president; Kathy Espenshade, post county president; Betty Etweller, vice president; and Shirley Radel, treasurer.



Happiness is hugs and kisses when greeting old friends. At left, Mary Denlinger of Lancaster County greets Louella Duppeth of Somerset County. The two formed a friendship years ago when Louella was state vice president and Mary was county president.

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Lancaster Farming Staff
HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — More than 780 members of the Pennsylvania Society of Farm Women gathered for the day-long Spring Rally held Tuesday.

The theme, "Happiness Is Hugs and Kisses," held a dual meaning since the rally was held at the Hershey Convention Center, home for the Hershey Kiss and Hershey Hug candies. Plenty of the famous chocolates were available for indulging while distant friends greeted each other with hugs and kisses.

Dauphin County members hosted this year's event. The program included an introduction by J. Bruce McKinney, chief executive officer of HERCO, who talked about Milton Hershey and how he built the town of Hershey from profits of his candy empire.

Hershey was born into a Mennonite home in Derry Church now called Hershey. After several attempts at business, Hershey launched his first successful business in Lancaster where he founded the Caramel Company.

In 1900, Hershey sold the Caramel Company for \$1 million. He

returned to his hometown to experiment with chocolate making. At that time chocolate was considered a luxury item. Hershey found a way to mass produce it and sell a candy bar for a nickel. Today the Hershey Foods Corporation is one of the largest manufacturers in the world with \$3 billion in annual sales.

With his profits, Hershey established a park in 1907, which has been expanded and is now known as Hersheypark. The chocolate company was so successful that even during the 1930's Depression, Hershey was considered a "boom town."

Because the Hersheys had no children of their own, they opened a home for four boys in 1909. From the Hershey \$4.1 billion endowment, the richest in the U.S., the school now has 1,100 students who live year-round on the 10,000-acre campus.

McKinney, whose father died when he was young, was a student at the school and considers it Hershey's finest endeavor.

Bag Lady Rita McGinty entertained the audience with antics typical of a homeless bag lady. McGinty has performed at more than 200 programs to fulfill a promise she made when her family was almost evicted from their home due to "a series of tragedies." All the proceeds given to her for performances are given to interfaith shelters.

McGinty said that 40 percent of the homeless are children. She told of meeting one boy who was on crutches after his toes were frost-bitten from sleeping in an abandoned car for shelter.

Accompanying McGinty was her family disguised as street people. Excerpts of the homeless were interspersed with McGinty's family singing songs such as "What A Friend We Have In Jesus."

The message of that and other songs sung from the perspective of the homeless took on new meaning for the audience, many of whom were teary-eyed.

In the afternoon program, the Hershey High School Chorus entertained with a collection of songs reflective of different regions.

Each year a different county hosts the Spring Rally of the Society of Farm Women of Pennsylvania. Due to better weather, the rally usually draws more members than the annual state convention held in

Harrisburg during the state Farm Show.

The Farm Women Society was founded by Mrs. Frank Black of Somerset County in 1914. The purpose is to contribute to the power and influence of the farm home; to contribute to the community activity of farm women; to develop leadership, and to promote better living and working conditions in farm homes. Current membership is about 2,750.



Officers from the 12 Dauphin County Societies of Farm Women planned the day-long rally held at the Hershey Convention Center. From left front: Lois Leshner, Group 11; Harriet Newtin, Group 4; Jane Fox, Group 2; Ruth Miller, Group 5; Naomi Donofrid, Group 8; and Martha Reed, corresponding secretary. Back row from left: Evelyn Keim, recording secretary; Shirley Radel, Group 10; Shirley Eckard, Group 9; Becky Elsneise, Group 16; Sharon Strite, Group 9; Betty Etweller, Group 15; and Della Parmer, Group 1.



Do you recognize these ladies? They are Farm Women members dressed to party with the Bag Lady.



With wit and poise Bag Lady Rita McGinty helps audiences understand the plight of the homeless. "Circumstances enter into life. One day you're something and another you're something else," she said.