

Lancaster 4-H Assistants Toil, Learn And Earn

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— Energy, laughter, and accomplishment abound at the Farm and Home Center, headquarters for four summer assistants and full-time 4-H assistant Lori Little at the Lancaster Penn State Extension office.

"We have an excellent core. We could not ask for better assistants," said Dr. John Schwartz, director of Lancaster Extension.

Summer assistants fill multi-purposes. The growing season coupled with many 4-H events brings an extra heavy load to extension personnel. Summer assistants help with the extra duties and allow extension agents to do a better job for people in the county. It's also a way of giving county students an opportunity to see what a career in extension would be like.

Of prime importance is Lori Little, full-time 4-H assistant whose job extends beyond the summer months.

She was hired in January of this year. Since the appointment of Dr. Zoann Parker, former 4-H extension agent, to state agriculture deputy secretary, Lori has assumed many of Parker's previous duties.

Duties include heading the embryology school program, working with horse, livestock and dairy programs, organizing the 4-H fair, fundraising, honor roll scholarships, and achievement night.

"The staff and the summer assistants are incredible in helping with everything," Lori said of the work overload.

She considers her duties similar to that of teacher, for which she received certification through Delaware Valley College, where she majored in ag education. Lori took a heavy class load to graduate in 3½ years.

Because Lori grew up showing horses when she was eight years old through 4-H Broken Bits and Boots and Saddles clubs, and competed in horse judging and hippology contests, she was familiar with the 4-H program. As an FFA student at Manheim Central High School, Lori also showed sheep and steers.

Summer assistant Kandi Mullen played a vital role in overseeing general 4-H program activities and events. After 10 years as a 4-H'er involved in sewing, foods, public speaking, strawberry club, archery team (went to state competition), and dairy club, Kandi wasn't ready to leave the 4-H program. When a job opened up last summer to work as an 4-H assistant, Kandi eagerly took advantage of the opportunity. She liked it so well that she returned this year between college terms.

She said, "Four-H did a lot for me. I learned leadership and communication skills — stuff that I haven't even picked up in college although I'll be starting my junior year. Even though it (summer assistant) is a paid position, you can return a lot to the program."

At Lock Haven University, Kandi is studying to be teacher. She would like to teach American history to 10th or 11th graders, but said, "Just to be in a classroom would make me happy."

She taught a two-week class in Philadelphia this past spring, which clinched her decision to work with inner-city kids.

Since Kandi lives in rural area of Peach Bottom, people are sometimes surprised by her choice, but Kandi said, "I like to do things out of the ordinary. I like the change. Although many people view inner-city kids as different from us, they aren't."

In coordinating 4-H activities, Kandi said that the best part was to



After returning from a 4-H event, Lori Little, center, Eric Houston, right, and Wendall Landis unload supplies.

actually go out and work with kids in both leadership and chaperone roles.

"Sometimes it was frustrating not to be able to do things without approval, which is required on a number of levels. As a 4-H'er, I didn't need to deal with that. But the supervisors and everyone I worked with were wonderful. I enjoyed everything that I got to do."

Eric Houston worked with the urban 4-H program and assisted Nancy Wiker, extension agent.

Unlike the other assistants, Eric had not been involved in the 4-H program growing up.

"Four-H is fantastic program. It gets a lot of kids involved in activities that benefit their future. Especially for inner city children, 4-H gives a window into a world that they don't know about.

Eric said, "I learned about farming and things I never knew before. All around me, people were working with livestock and stuff.

In his job working with kids, Eric made up projects, games, taught food and plant activities.

"I taught them to say soil not dirt when we were planting. That's one thing I learned while giving lessons. I made sure that whatever I did with the kids was fun. 4-H is not school."

A sophomore at Penn State University Park, Eric is a political science major and plans to attend law school. A Warwick High School graduate, Eric now plays on Penn State's men's varsity volleyball team and had helped with the democratic campaign in fall. When he isn't in college, Eric lives with Mike and Kathy Keeney of Lititz.

"Eric is an excellent role model. He relates well with kids and does a super job," Schwartz said.

Wendall Landis, son of Abe and Dottie Landis of Manheim, worked as the livestock summer assistant with extension agent Chet Hughes.

As a 4-H member for eight years, Wendall had showed sheep and hogs and was also part of both the champion state livestock team and the meats judging team.

This summer, he had a taste of what it's like from the other side. He worked with the livestock and meat judging programs. He attended 4-H State Days as a chaperone.

One of his main responsibilities was to visit each member in beef, sheep, and swine club. He checked

record books, took a survey, answered questions, and gave individual help to members.

This was a big responsibility since the hog club has 101 members; the sheep club has 93 members, and the beef club has 25 members.

"It was really interesting to see different ideas at farms and get to know the kids better," he said.

"I got to see the stuff I always did from the other side. And, I saw more of what goes on behind the scenes like getting ready for the 4-H Fair," Wendall said.

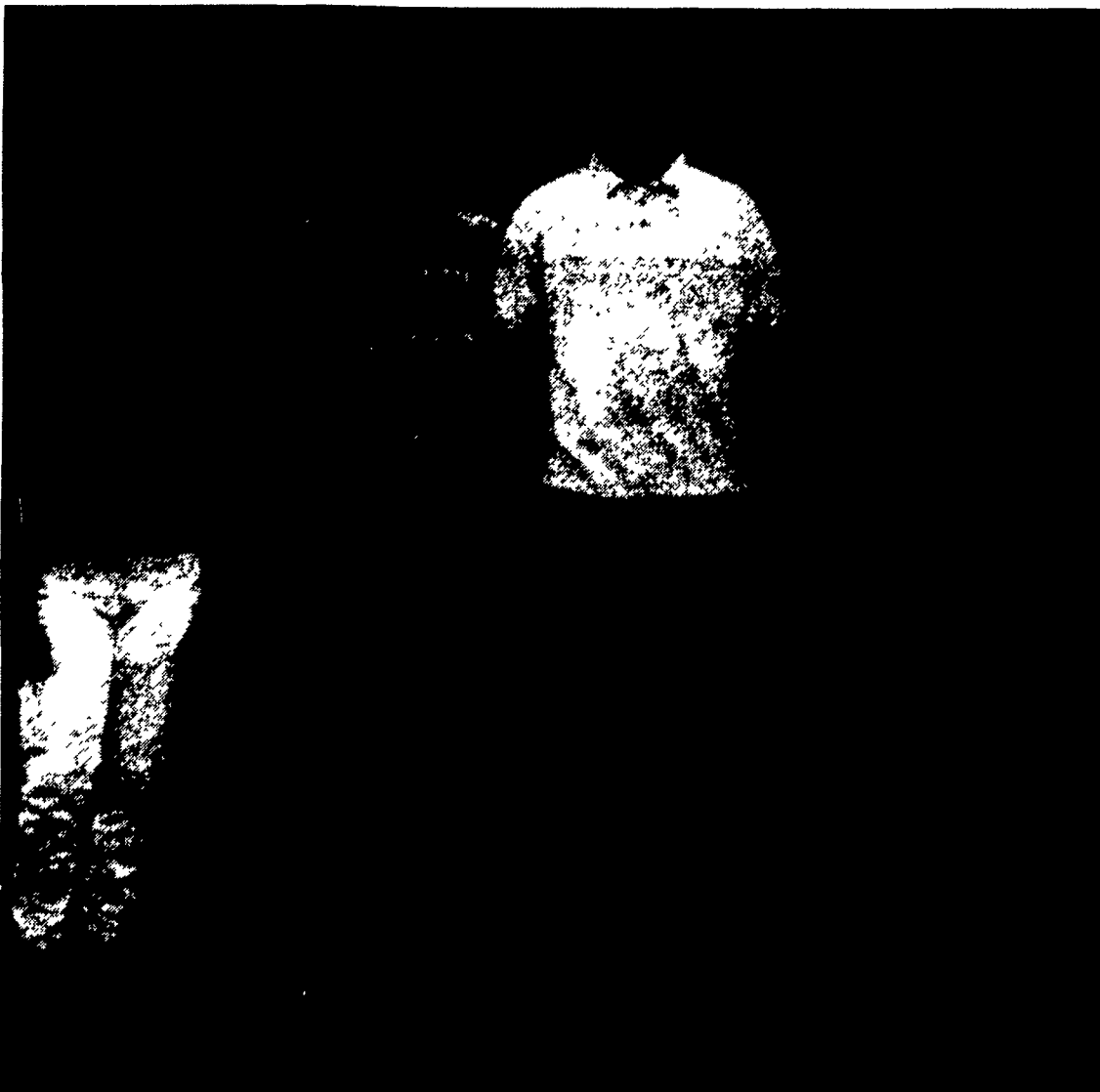
Wendall is studying animal science at Penn State where he is halfway through his junior year. He took off last fall to follow the harvest in the west.

"Although I never showed cattle in 4-H, now I am most interested in cattle. Next year, I'd like to work on an Angus ranch in the West. Eventually he'd like to work for extension and live in the West and raise cattle and crops.

Ross Wiker worked with integrated pest management and horticulture programs giving technical assistance to Dr. Timothy Elkner. He found his work fascinating. He especially liked the variety of outdoor work combined with working in a professional office, where he entered information derived from the studies into the computer. Wiker helped set up a series of insect traps, monitored, and reported insect counts for the produce auctions and the university. This information provides a great educational tool for farmers in county, according to Schwartz.

A sophomore at Penn State Berks Campus in ag business management, Ross is the son of the family and consumer sciences extension agent Nancy Wiker and her husband Robert of Lititz.

He applied for the position because he was looking for a job that would give him more insight into the agriculture world. He was not disappointed. Dinners at the Wiker household often includes scientific information on corn varieties and how pesticides affect plants and weeds.



After a stint as summer 4-H assistants Kandi Mullen, Wendall Landis, Eric Houston, and Ross Wiker spread enthusiasm about the 4-H program.