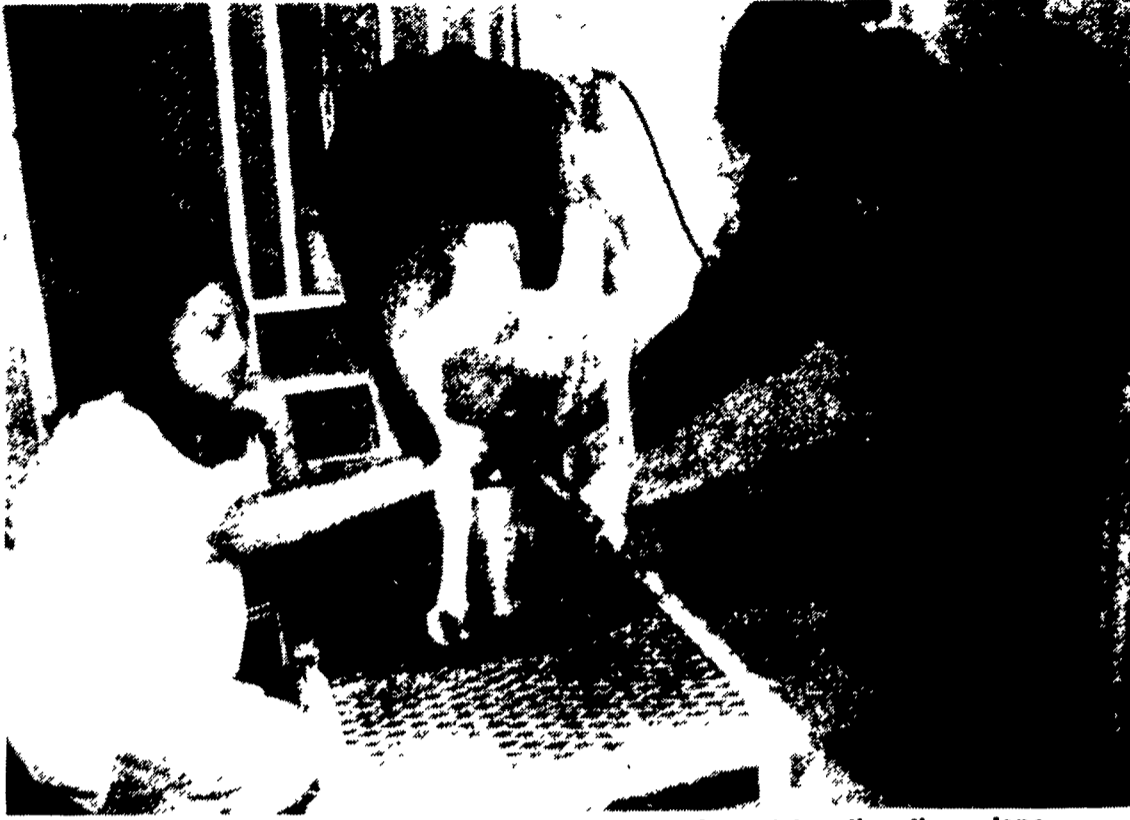


# Team Efforts Raise Status, Spirits Of Hershey Students



Tarea and Florence think it's more fun to milk goat together than alone.



Greg Laughlin stands in front of a chart that students fill out to record their feelings whenever they spend time at the animal center.

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — It's difficult to say who derives more from a relationship between kids and animals, but it's evident that in most cases both child and animal thrive from the companionship.

Chocolate magnate Milton S. Hershey knew this when he provided cost-free education and home to underprivileged children in 1909. He planned for children to grow up on a farm and help with the chores.

At one time students at the school were all involved in animal care. When the dairy barns were dispersed, animal care seemed to become a distant memory. Now the school is going back to animal chore plans with a slightly differently twist.

Animal chores are not mandatory for all students. They are mandatory only for students who sign up to become part of the 4-H and FFA animal clubs. Depending on individual schedules, students are assigned monthly, weekly, or daily chores.

Today, Hershey's \$60 million personal fortune is one of the largest educational endowments

that now provides home and schooling for 1,100 students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Although only one of the homes the children live in is located on a working dairy farm, the school is working toward students becoming more involved with animals and animal-related chores. Care for goats, service dogs, sheep, steers, horses, rabbits, and guinea pigs are considered a vital part of the program.

Four months ago, Todd Biddle, a Penn State graduate of ag education, came to the school with the goal to increase student enrollment in 4-H and FFA animal projects.

Biddle, who is the instructional adviser of the animal center and responsible for classroom teaching and curriculum for all grades, is enthusiastic about the benefits of student participation in animal projects.

"When students have an interest in a project, they tend to be more successful," Biddle said. "A live animal piques student interest. Students learn most through hands-on experience."

Clubs include multigrade levels. Older and younger students are generally paired together.

## Goats

The most popular club seems to be the Goat Club. No doubt it's the result of Todd Biddle's own enthusiasm for goats. He grew up caring and showing goats, and served as a former ambassador for the industry.

"Goats are such accepting and loving animals," Biddle said of his reasons for believing that goat projects are one of the better ones for students.

"Their size and personalities make it possible for students to have good success with sheep and goats. Although Biddle sees similar traits among goats and sheep, he said there is one major difference.

"Walk up to a goat and it runs toward you. Walk up to a sheep and it runs away."

Biddle brought some of his Saanen show goats to the school. Other breeds at the school include Alpine, Toggenburg, and Nubian.

Students milk eight of the goats daily. It takes 5-10 minutes to milk goats. Some students team together and each milk one teat at a time.

The milk is pasteurized by the students before feeding the milk to the baby goats and pigs.



Students learn to herd sheep, which naturally seem to want to go the opposite direction of where they should be headed.

Miller's wife bottle-feeds the goats at night when the students are in bed.

"Each little thing a student accomplishes is a success," Biddle said.

Success in the show ring isn't dependent upon ribbons and trophies, but upon a student following through with the techniques they've been taught.

Prosocial self esteem is the result of tremendous teamwork. Kids who share the same interests work with each other and monitor progress.

The goats are housed in the barn at the group home where Dan Miller is a houseparent. Miller teaches sanitation rules while Biddle concentrates on teaching breeding and showing aspects.

Not all the students involved in the goat club live where the goats

are housed. Some students are involved in sports and other programming. This means some students care for the animals more than others.

Students usually consider it a benefit to live on grounds with the animals and are pleased to spend more times doing chores.

Biddle is a certified judge who judges 10-20 shows annually. He also judges draft horses, dairy cows, and sheep.

## Animal Center

Psychologists assign some students animal care to instill love and bonding, responsibility and care. They learn that animals, like humans, will suffer if not treated properly.

Greg Laughlin, assistant

(Turn to Page B4)



Ten-year-old Stephen was terrified of dogs when his group home first became a foster family for raising a service dog, which are trained to assist parents with disabilities.