

Learning By Showing More Important Than Winning For Berks Farm Show Family

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WOMELSDORF (Berks Co.)
— Perhaps when showtime nears but before the exhibitors hear the announcement for an approaching judging class, the hogs get their nicknames.

These names could be Freddy the first, in honor of that prehistoric cartoon character on TV. Some could be named after a friend or family member that you can't forget. Maybe after some famous personality. Maybe after a movie, like "Thelma and Louise." Or maybe just the way the pig behaves.

"Last year we named them after friends or neighbors," said Matt

Manbeck.

Matt, 13, together with his sister, Anita, 16, are preparing for the big show. Right now they know their hogs by numbers. But at Farm Show, before the show ring is no longer a dream but a reality, the hogs will get their names.

In the meantime, two weeks before the big event, the son and daughter of Herman and Connie Manbeck of Womelsdorf were making the final decisions on what two hogs they would take to the show.

For both, this is their fifth Farm Show.

So far, the Berks County 4-H Swine Club members have their sights on Cambrio 22 (C-22) hogs



Two weeks ago, Matt Manbeck, 13, right, together with his sister, Anita, 16, were preparing for Farm Show. Right now they know their hogs by numbers. But at Farm Show, before the show ring is no longer a dream but a reality, the hogs will get their nicknames. Photo by Andy Andrews



Anita and Matt Manbeck help feed and care for 200 sows and 1,000 head of finishing hogs in Womelsdorf. They also care for a 240-head finisher and another 400 head of finishing swine at a nearby farm, for a total of 4,000 head per year.



Anita Manbeck's advice to would-be Farm Show swine exhibitors? "Stay calm and relaxed," she noted. "Don't get frustrated. Groom and prepare them — use good old Ivory soap. And clean out the ears of the pigs."

from a 405 boar. Matt's gilt weighs 180 pounds and Anita's about 210 pounds, two weeks before showtime. The Hampshire/Duroc/York/Landrace gilts are both the products of their own farm and out of a program that has already garnered awards at the county level.

Matt, in the 8th grade at Conrad Weiser, was named champion fitter and champion heavyweight at this year's county roundup. At Kutztown, Matt, five-year 4-H member, won first place in the heavyweight class.

Anita, a junior at Conrad Weiser High School and vice president of the school's FFA chapter, also serves as president of the county swine club. The eight-year 4-H member was named grand champion showman in the senior division at this year's roundup and reserve overall. Anita captured grand champion in the swine market classes at the 1996 roundup.

She also won grand champion carcass on foot in 1996 at the Kutztown Fair.

Anita was quick to point out that competing is not important to them — learning and making friends are.

The competitive events at 4-H, Anita noted, are "so overrated. We like to have fun." Without having the opportunities available through 4-H, "I wouldn't know half the people I know," she said.

Matt agrees. He noted it was vital to prepare the animal well and more important to have the "proper instructions in fitting than just getting first place," he said.

Matt said that as a result of his 4-H experiences, he has learned how to properly walk and care for the swine, how to groom them for the show, and get the hogs to be cooperative in the show ring.

At last summer's Kutztown Fair Beef Show, swine judge Keith Bryan, a Penn State instructor who speaks about show ethics in his *Lancaster Farming* column, "It's Showtime," took time with each exhibitor at the event to point out what they did right — or wrong. "I never saw a judge do that,"



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said Connie Manbeck. "It is a learning experience and so important for the kids."

Matt recently undertook a 4-H beef heifer project. He cares for a purebred Angus heifer, Peaches, and two Angus/Simmental crossbreds. One crossbred, "Mary," was bred and Matt became the "toast" of the 4-H club.

Anita recalls that during the Mardi Gras at the Kutztown Fair, the Manbecks took along Mary. They "borrowed" a lamb from another exhibitor and kidded Matt. They spoke about how "Mary had a little lamb," and had a good time.

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Matt, already an FFA member, works with the county 4-H team and is on the school's wrestling team.

"We're just everywhere," said Matt.

Both help feed and care for 200 sows and 1,000 head of finishing hogs in Womelsdorf. They also care for a 240-head finisher and another 400 head of finishing swine at a nearby farm, for a total of 4,000 head per year.

Both are heavily involved with the 4-H livestock judging team.

"They did well with livestock judging," said their mother, Connie Manbeck. In 1997, team members placed second in the junior division at the state level — up from 7th place in the division in 1996.

As for the Farm Show, the Man-