

Gentle Giants Pull Together 4-H Youth

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Maryland Correspondent
WESTMINSTER, Md. —
Some of the members of this 4-H club don't say much at the meetings. They don't participate at all when it comes to bringing a snack or voting for officers. They would rather stay in the pasture. But no one could ever accuse these members of not pulling their own weight in the club, they do that, and then some!

They are the gentle giants, the draft horses and mules that a group of Carroll County 4-H equine enthusiasts meet each month to learn about.

Seventeen Carroll County young people are drawn together the first Wednesday of each month by their love of draft animals. The Gentle Giants 4-H club, the only draft horse and mule club in the state, often meets at the home of Terri Penick, one of the club leaders, a Percheron breeder who also has mules. The other club leader is Heather Bankard.

The two leaders started the club last year. "A lot of the kids that show in the group we show in are getting older. Some of them are in college now. We wanted to get some of the younger kids into it," explained Penick. "We do more with Percherons, but that's just because we have them here. It's not just Percherons," she said of the club's focus.

Some of the club members already participate in other light horse activities, like dressage and cross country. They are learning more about the unique characteris-

tics of the draft breeds. "Most members have horses that they show in equestrian classes," explained club member Bart Poole. Then there are other members who do not own horses, but are "horse crazy," and are taking advantage of the club's hands-on learning activities.

One member of the Gentle Giants, Lamar Johnson, lives in Ellcott City in Howard County, but makes the drive each weekend to the Penick's farm, where he works with a registered Percheron mare, Director Babe. A member since the club started last year, Lamar is the only club member who will show western at the Carroll County fair with a draft horse this year. He showed Babe last year in the Western Showmanship class at the county fair, and brought home a third place ribbon.

Each month the leaders plan a different hands-on learning activity for the club members. Topics center around draft animals and all the activities that go along with caring for, showing, and working with them. Last month, Bob Shirley, a very well respected horseman who recently retired from the cooperative extension service, held a judging and conformation class with the animals at the Penick's farm. One month a harnessmaker came and gave the young people a lesson on the fine points of the harness. Another time they had a farrier talk on the differences between Scotch-bottom show shoes, farm shoes, and logging shoes. They have had sessions on mane rolling and putting

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Members of the Gentle Giants 4-H club gathered recently at the home of leader Terri Penick. The club, now in its second year, is restoring this farm wagon that will be hitched to a mother-daughter team of Percheron mares at the Carroll County fair. The mare in the picture will be ridden alongside the wagon.

From left, back row, are Terri Penick, club leader; Toni Stambaugh; Sarah Backhaus, Jenny Kresina, Bart Poole, Ian Stambaugh, Kristin Engel, Kelly Shuster, and Lamar Johnson. Heather Bankard, club leader, is at the halter of Fox Brooke. In the front row are Sarah Friedel on the left, and Jacque Arnold on the right.



Lamar Johnson is the only member of the club who will show a draft animal in a western class at the Carroll County fair this year. Lamar, who lives in Howard County, drives to the Penick's farm each weekend to work with Director Babe. He will exhibit Babe in the Western Showmanship class. The two foals, one Babe's, and the other a foal the mare adopted as her own, insisted on being in the picture, too.

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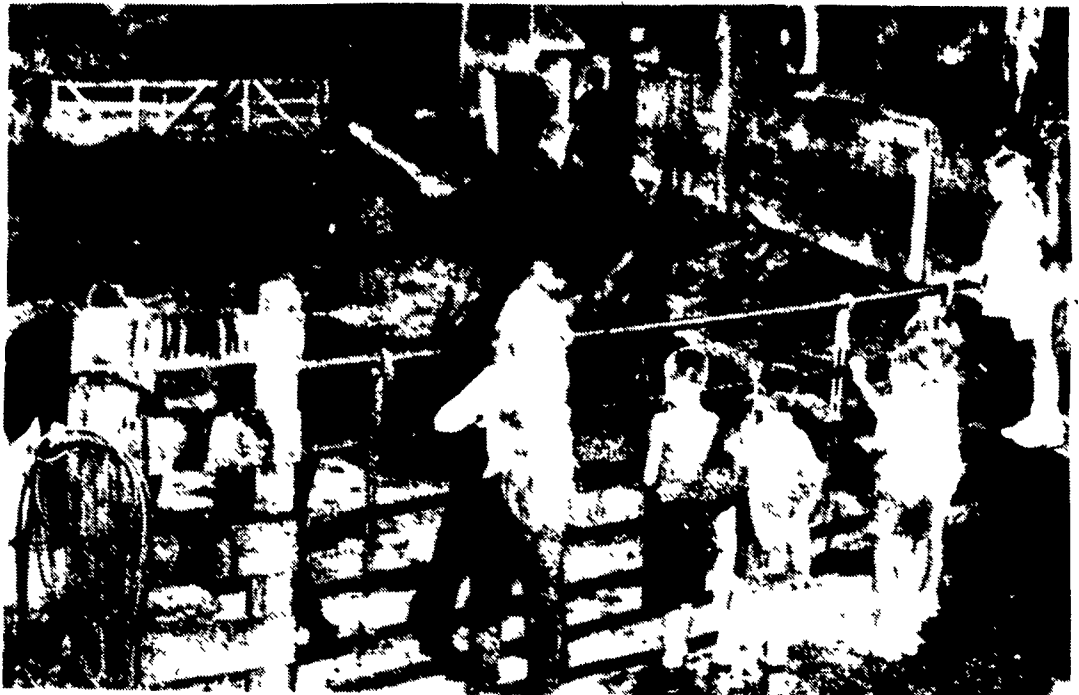
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