

# After Tornado 'You've Got To Do What You've Got To Do'

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff

FLEETWOOD (Berks Co.) —

"May 31 was the worst day of my life," said Larry Mertz. "But the worst thing about that day is this ongoing mess."

May 31 marks the date that a tornado roared through the Fleetwood-Lyons area. The memory of it has faded from the minds of those who read or heard about it through the media. Unfortunately, the tornado's devastating effects drag on for the Mertz family and others trying to clean up from the aftermath.

"We are stressed to the max. We're working day and night and there is no end in sight," Larry said of cleaning up the debris flung across their 400-acre farm. In addition the family continues to perform the daily ongoing duties associated with milking 120 cows and raising crops.

When the tornado tore through the area on May 31, it hit the neighboring Luke Kurtz farm head-on, then sideswiped the Mertz farm and dumped most of the debris from the Kurtz farm on the Mertz's farmland.

The impact of the tornado cannot be described in words. For someone not involved in the damage, it might sound frustrating but not impossible to replace the roofs torn from both the barn and house, the chimney, the porch, the flattened equipment shed, and shat-

tered windows. In addition there was lots of equipment damage done to the forage wagon, manure pump, 10-wheeler truck, two pickup trucks, riding lawn mower, and the family swimming pool. Calf pens were picked up but calves stayed behind.

But it's the never-ending cleanup that constantly looms over them that is most frustrating.

The farm's formerly flat fields are now deeply rutted from holes, many inflicted randomly from the beams, metal, and steel the tornado gathered from the Kurtz farm and jabbed into the soil on the Mertz farm.

"There're holes all over the ground. You can't believe how beams and rafters were thrust right into the soil. You can remove the stuff, and there will be deep holes left," Larry said.

In fact hundreds of volunteers had combed the fields in the days following the tornado. They gathered wagonload after load of splintered work, twisted metal, and nails. Whatever could not be salvaged was placed on a pile, which burned for more than a week.

But one of the idiosyncracies of storm clean up is that a job may appear to be done, but isn't. A case in point is the result of what happened when Mertz attempted to harvest a 30-acre wheat field behind his house. To passerbys,

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Larry and Carol Mertz with daughter Michele and grandson Tyler stand in front of their home, which is being repaired after a tornado damaged it. Passerbys might think that rebuilding is almost completed, but it's the never ending cleanup that frustrates farmers. The farm's former tillable flat land is now rutted with holes from steel and beams the tornado thrust into the ground. Even after hundreds of volunteers removed trailer loads of debris, harvesting results in constant flat tires and machinery breakdowns from splintered wood, twisted metal, and nails imbedded in the soil.

# Homestead Notes

## Hearts And Hands Sew For Kids

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Lancaster Farming Staff

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) —

Fleece jackets are in vogue these days. Thanks to the efforts of Hearts & Hands, about 250 needy children will each receive a fluffy, warm fleece pullover.

According to Julie Wegelin, who operates Julie Wegelin's Sewing Cellar, Hearts & Hands is an intergenerational community awareness project in which experienced and novice seamstresses are teamed with school-age children to

assembly-line sew the jackets.

Even if you can't sew, even if you think the project is too complicated, Wegelin promises, "We have something for you to do."

In the assembly-line process, both sewing and non-sewing jobs are incorporated into finishing the fleece pullover.

The project has already begun and will continue on specified dates and places during September and October. Volunteers are encouraged to work in two-hour shifts during the designated days. Of course, those who wish to work longer are welcome to stay.

Already quality fleece fabric, zippers, and cuffs have been purchased. Volunteers have worked together to cut out the fleece and prepare it for sewing.

One of the people working hard behind the scenes is Terry Dillman, owner of Don Kauffman's Sewing located in Temple. He has designed a logo to stitch into each pullover. The colorful logo is made on a computerized sewing machine. Dillman said operators are needed for the sewing machines that his company will provide during each scheduled session.

Training of volunteers who are

helping oversee the project will be Saturday, Sept. 16, from 9:30 to noon at the Berks County Agriculture Center.

The actual sewing and finishing

of the fleece pullovers will take place at the Berks County Agriculture Center Oct. 1, 5, 6, and 8 from 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; and Oct. 15, from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the

Fairgrounds Square Mall.

Fay Strickler, home economist for Berks County Extension, is helping with the project. She said

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This logo designed by Terry Dillman will be inserted in each pullover.



Julie Wegelin, seated, and Terry Dillman, standing behind her, show volunteers how fleece pullovers will be constructed in assembly-line fashion. More than 250 fleece pullovers will be distributed to the needy. Volunteers, from 12 years of age and up, are needed to work in two-hour shifts for both sewing and non-sewing jobs during selected days.