

Pa. State Grange Honors Members' Achievements

MEADVILLE (Crawford Co.) — Jennifer Viscusi was named Pennsylvania State Granger of the Year last week during awards ceremonies held in conjunction with the 126th annual Pennsylvania State Grange convention, held in Crawford County.

Viscusi received the highest honor bestowed a Grange member during the Grange annual banquet, held at the Saint Phillips Social Center.

A member of Wesley No.1675, Viscusi has been an active member since she was 5, and first joined the Junior Grange.

Her family has been active in Grange for years, and in receiving the award, she has repeated a family accomplishment — one her mother, Carol McCullon, accomplished 21 years ago.

Mother and daughter expressed their sentiments on the event.

"I feel very lucky that she has followed and has done the same things I have done," McCullon

said about daughter Viscusi.

"She is the fourth generation of McCullons to be Grange members, and she'll tell you that it is because of the Grange that she is involved in the things she is involved in."

With her subordinate Grange, Viscusi currently serves as lecturer, and chairman of the Grange Women's Activities Committee.

She has also served as Pomona lady assistant steward; chairman of the LAS Youth and Deaf Committee, as well as the Pomona Committee; and served with the state Grange Lecturer's and 125th anniversary committees.

"Not only is family the most important thing about the Grange to me," Viscusi said, "but Grange is about my 'extended' family as well.

"I have more 'grandmothers' and 'grandfathers' and every one of them is important to me."

Viscusi's work with the Deaf Activities Department has perhaps had the biggest impact on others'

lives.

Her mother said, "She volunteers her time to teach deaf signing classes at the local YMCA and to several local children who have expressed an interest in sign language after seeing her present sign language programs at elementary schools. She also works with Grange members in our county to teach them sign language."

According to Viscusi, "When I go into a (hearing) school and see the smiles on their faces as they learn sign language, it is really great. But, when I go back to see them and work them again, that's what really makes it worth it."

The Pennsylvania State Grange presented several awards to its members during its annual convention.

Members of the Grange took a break away from the convention business to honor those who have performed outstanding community service, or won departmental contests.

Women's Activities Awards

Awards were presented for achievement in contests sponsored by the Grange Women's Activities Department and in the Grange Youth Department.

All of the top awards are presented to those Grange leaders whose local or county Grange has excelled in competition with other Granges.

In the Women's Activities Department, that sponsors various contests involving members making items to be donated to charitable organizations, it was announced that more than 6,400 stuffed toys had been made and distributed to area charities, domestic abuse shelters, hospitals and ambulance services.

The toys are given to help calm children who have suffered a traumatic experience.

More than 1,000 ABC quilts for at-risk children were also brought to the convention and turned over to local charitable organizations.

"I don't know what makes some of (the members) do all of that," Becky Michalka, state Women's Activities director said, "but it would be nice if we could find out what it is and bottle it."

The awards for the top toy-making Granges are awarded according to membership level of the Grange.

Among those Granges with fewer than 100 members, Joyce Ross accepted the award on behalf of Lakeland Grange No.2095. The Grange made 1,646 toys.

Among those Granges with from 100 to 199 members, Betty Yeager accepted the award on behalf of Kutztown Grange No.1836. The members submitted 540 toys.

Among those Granges with 200 or more members, Eleanor Hill, director of Virginville Grange No.1832, accepted the award recognizing its members' contribution of 800 toys.

In the Youth Department awards, Carol Kushman of the Lawrence County Pomona Grange No.65 was named Pomona Youth Chairperson of the Year.

Cindy Leibensperger of Pioneer Grange No.1777 was named Subordinate Grange Youth Director of the Year. It is the fifth consecutive year that a director from Pioneer Grange has been named director of the year.

Leibensperger said the Pioneer Grange youth are very active,



Jennifer Viscusi is named the 1998 Pa. State Grange Granger of the Year.



National Grange Ceres Jamie Klenklen pins the Super Junior Granger Award onto the jacket of Nicole Blair.



From the left, Spirit of the Grange awards are presented to Isabelle Myers, James Wertz, and Brian Ebersole.



From the left, Pa. State Grange Master William Steel presents the Junior Grange Leader of the Year Award to Jane Reppert.

assisting Grange committees, helping with plans for the Annual Berks County Grange picnic, and assisting wherever needed.

In other youth awards, the Junior Department recognizes outstanding service by members. Junior Grange members are aged 5-14 years.

Jane Reppert, leader of Virginville Junior Grange No.1832, was named Junior Grange Leader of the Year.

The award is presented to the leader whose junior members have excelled during the past year. Among the achievements noted, the Virginville junior members placed first in the state in community service, first in the "Our Earth Needs You" program, and were name recipients of the State Grange Achievement Award.

Public Speaking
Sign-A-Song
The Pennsylvania State Grange

also offers public speaking and its Sign-A-Song competitions during its annual conventions.

According to one of the judges, Jim Strickler, an Allegheny College communications and arts teacher, said, "I was really surprised at the quality of the public speaking performances. They were all good."

"The most difficult part was determining which one of the good ones was best. Their poise was exceptionally good."

In the public speaking competition, in the 14- to 19-year-old age division, Brian Farkas of Fairview Grange in Beaver County was first place. His talk was "The Lesser Known Presidents of the United States."

Adam Britcher of Community Grange in Perry County was second in that age division.

In the 20- to 29-year-old age division, Stacy Ebersole with the

(Turn to Page B15)