

Delaware Family Offers Farming Experience To Kids

NEWARK, Del. — On a winter's day the skies are overcast, but the mood of Sylvia and Bill Walther is anything but gray. They stand proudly beside the sign that proclaims their 109-acre farm a Century Farm — a distinction bestowed by the state to honor Delaware families that have farmed their land continuously for more than 100 years.

The sister and brother farming team makes up the third generation of Walthers to live and work the Bear, Del., farm since their grandfather bought the place in 1876. They raise beef cattle and a variety of fresh vegetables ("you name them, we grow them," says Sylvia) to sell at their summertime roadside stand. They also grow corn, barley and hay to feed the cattle. Until 1990, the Walthers had a dairy operation, but that ended with the increasing traffic on Walther Road, which divides their acreage.

"Because we pastured the herd across the road from the barn, we had to stop traffic twice a day to lead the cows over," relates Sylvia. "It didn't take long, but people in cars just got too impatient — they had no time to stop for such things."

Farming is how Sylvia and Bill Walther have made their living for more than half a century, and 4-H is one way they have given back to their community.

Sylvia is the leader of the oldest 4-H club in New Castle County. Founded in 1929, the Bear 4-H club was the one Sylvia and Bill belonged to as children growing up. Their mother, Dora, was leader. Sylvia, 71, took over club leadership when she was 20. In the time since, she has seen more than 1,200 youngsters grow under her guidance to become productive, skilled adults through 4-H.

As a young 4-H'er Sylvia says she "stuck with" the farm-related projects like raising broilers and vegetables.

"I wasn't into the sewing and cooking stuff, even then," says Sylvia, with a wink at her brother. Bill nods in amused agreement. For his projects, Bill raised swine and field crops, things he was already doing on the farm helping his folks.

"4-H has changed over the last 50 years," notes Bill. "Growing up, we had mostly farm and home-making activities. Now they also have things like dog training and computers."

The Walthers don't seem fazed by the continuous residential and commercial buildup surrounding their farm, which is just off Route 40. Instead, through 4-H, they have invited suburban youngsters to learn first-hand what it's like to be on a farm and take care of livestock.

For children who are three and four generations away from any kind of farm, what the Walthers offer them is an eye-opening, heart-expanding experience. Of the current 26 Bear 4-H Club members, seven are raising feeder pigs and steers, which are housed on the Walther farm. Each 4-H'er takes one day a week to take care of everyone else's pigs, a strategy that also teaches teamwork and cooperation.

"You should see them the first time they set eyes on a pig that close up," Sylvia says. She laughs at the recollection. "They back



Sister and brother farming team Sylvia and Bill Walther share their century farm with the non-farming community.

off, a little afraid, but soon they jump right in there, taking care of the pigs and loving it."

In addition to caring for the animals from day one, the 4-H'ers learn about showmanship in the ring — an important skill in exhibiting livestock. The Walters' nephew, Wally Gott of Glasgow, is their 4-H livestock project leader. Bear Club 4-H'ers show their animals at the Cecil County, Md., Breeders Fair as well as at the Delaware State Fair.

"The Walthers exemplify what 4-H is all about," says Mark Manno, Cooperative Extension 4-H and youth educator at the University of Delaware. "Their more than 50 years of leadership and commitment to 4-H offers the kids

of today a real stability and continuity. Sylvia and Bill generously share their farm and expertise, giving city and suburban kids a glimpse into a kind of life and an experience they would never get otherwise."

Sylvia shrugs off such praise. Recently, when she and her brother were named 1998 4-H Adult Volunteer Award winners for the Delaware, she wondered what all the fuss was about. For her, it's not that complicated: she continues to volunteer for 4-H because she cares about children, and it's the right thing to do.

"4-H keeps the kids off the street and gives them purpose," says Sylvia. "And it keeps me young!"

Mutual Funds Basics

HONESDALE (Wayne Co.) — A mutual fund is a company that collects money from many people and invests it in a variety of securities. Mutual funds are a good way to invest in stocks, bonds and other securities for three reasons. One, the securities are managed by professional managers. Two, because you have a collection of different stocks and bonds, your risk is spread out or diversified. And three, because the fund buys in large quantities, its costs are lower than what you would pay on your own.

There are thousands of different mutual funds. Deciding where to put your money in these mutual funds can boggle the mind. An educational program on "Mutual Funds: The Basic and Beyond" will be held on consecutive Tuesday evenings, April 13 and April

20 from 7 - 9 p.m. in the Wayne County Cooperative Extension Meeting room, Courthouse, Honesdale. The workshops will describe some of the information you need to examine when selecting mutual funds. It will describe the different types of funds, factors to consider in selecting, where to focus your reading of the prospectus, types of fees charged, how you can make money in mutual funds, and records you need to keep.

There is a \$5 charge for the program and registration is requested. To register, call Wayne County Cooperative Extension a (570) 253-5970 X 239.

The session will be held at the Wayne County Cooperative Extension Office which is located in the Wayne County Courthouse Basement, Honesdale.

SEE YOUR NEAREST



NEW HOLLAND

DEALER FOR DEPENDABLE EQUIPMENT & SERVICE

PENNSYLVANIA

Abbottstown, PA

Messick Equipment
RD 1, Box 255A
717-259-6617

Honey Grove, PA

Norman D. Clark & Son, Inc.
Honey Grove, PA
717-734-3682
Loysville, PA
717-789-3117

Annaville, PA

BHM Farm Equipment, Inc.
RD 1, Rte. 934
717-867-2211

New Holland, PA

A.B.C. Groff, Inc.
110 South Railroad
717-354-4191

Carlisle, PA

R&W Equipment Co.
35 East Willow Street
717-243-2686

Oley, PA

C.J. Wonsidler Bros.
R.D. 2
610-987-6257

Elizabethtown, PA

Messick Farm Equipment, Inc.
Rt. 283 - Rheem's Exit
717-367-1319

Pitman, PA

Schreffler Equipment
Pitman, PA
717-648-1120

Greencastle, PA

Meyers Implements, Inc.
400 North Antrim Way
717-597-2176

Tamaqua, PA

Charles S. Snyder, Inc.
R.D. 3
717-386-5945

Halifax, PA

Sweigard Bros.
R.D. 3, Box 13
717-896-3414

West Grove, PA

S.G. Lewis & Son, Inc.
352 N. Jennersville Rd.
610-869-2214
1-800-869-9029

MARYLAND

Frederick, MD

Ceresville Ford New Holland, Inc.
Rt. 26 East 301-662-4197
Outside MD, 800-331-9122

Hagerstown, MD

Antietam Ford Tractor, Inc.
2027 Leitersburg Pike
800-553-6731
301-791-1200

Rising Sun, MD

Ag Industrial Equipment
Route 1, 50 N. Greenmont Rd.
1-800-442-5043

Bridgeton, NJ

Leslie G. Fogg, Inc.
Canton & Stow Creek Landing Rd.
609-451-2727
609-935-5145

Washington, NJ

Smith Tractor & Equip., Inc.
15 Hillcrest Ave.
908-689-7900

Woodstown, NJ

Owen Supply Co.
Broad Street & East Avenue
609-769-0308



NEW HOLLAND
Credit Company