

Pa. State Grange Couple Repay 'Debt'

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — There are many important reasons why Michael and Janet Pratt feel indebted to the Pennsylvania State Grange.

If it hadn't been for the Grange, they most likely would never have met, got married, had a family, and enjoy their lives as husband and wife.

It's little wonder that they would seek to be elected as the 2000-01 Young Couple during the recent Youth/Young Marrieds Conference here. As the newly elected Young Couple, the Pratts of Polk, Mercer County, will represent the youth department at local, state and national Grange functions.

They will travel to Leadership School, the state convention in Carlisle and the National Grange Convention in Fresno, California, this fall, and the Pennsylvania Farm Show as well as visit local Grange meetings to discuss the youth program.

"The Grange has given us so much over the years, and we wanted to give something back to this wonderful organization," Michael said. "We are proud to be part of an ongoing organization like the Grange because there are many good things being accomplished by its members."

The Pratts should know about those good works.

They currently serve as the State Grange's Community Service chairpersons and have filled numerous offices at the Subordinate (local) and Pomona (county) Granges. Mike, who is a regional manager for Agway in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, is subordinate master of Millcreek Grange #1601.

Janet, who works part-time as an accountant for Agway and is a full-time mother to their children, Hannah, 7, and Daniel, 4, is chairman of the finance committee at Millcreek Grange.

"No matter where we have gone in our lives, when we found a Grange in a new town, we always felt like we were at home," Janet said. "Grange members are family to us."

Although neither elected to reveal their current ages, they did say that they first met at the age of 15 at Youth Camp in Huntingdon County. Although Janet lived in Allegheny County and Michael in Bradford County, they kept in touch during the following year.

As time passes and the long-distance relationship continued to grow, they went off to separate colleges (Michael to Penn State and Janet to Robert Morris) and even dated other people. Still, during the seven years of their courtship, neither distance or other people could keep them from being together.

"In 1987 I graduated from college, got a job with Agway in June and was married in July," Michael recalled.

During those hectic collegiate years, they never severed their ties with the Grange either.

"We never stopped being active," Janet said. "After we got married and had to move around for work, we knew that if we



Janet and Michael Pratt connect happiness with Grange activities. They relate how Grange involvement has influenced many aspects of their lives, including their marriage.

found a Grange, that we would always remain involved."

"The Grange has given us so much and we were raised in it, so we wanted to remain involved," Michael said. "Besides, we had many friends and have had many good times in the Grange and there was no way we could turn our backs on it."

Now, as directors of the statewide Community Service program, the Pratts look for ways to bring the various departments together.

"It is in the best interest of and the most benefit to the Grange to have the departments work together," Michael said. "Being Young Couple is another part of that equation of bringing what we do as individual departments together for the collective good of the Grange."

Outside the Grange, both are very active in Harrisville United Methodist Church. Janet is on the education and choir committees,

sings in the choir and is director of the children's choir while Michael serves as a trustee. The Pratts are also lay speakers for the church.

The runner-up couple at the Youth Department Spring Retreat was Eric and Tina Blatt of Shoemakersville, Berks County. The Blatts would fill the remainder of the Pratts' term if they become unable to fulfill their obligations.

The Pennsylvania State Grange Youth Department, for members ages 14-35, places an emphasis on education, leadership development, fellowship and fun.

The Pennsylvania State Grange is an agricultural, rural and community service organization with over 30,000 members in 66 counties. The Grange is dedicated to improving life in a rural Pennsylvania through grass-roots legislation, performing community service work and offering member services including health insurance and a credit union.

Brain Research

TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) — "What Brain Research Tells Us About Infant Care" is the topic of an upcoming workshop for child care providers. Sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension in Bradford County, the workshop will be held on Thursday, April 6, for 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Extension Office, Bradford County Annex, 701 South Fourth Street, Towanda.


Anyone who cares for other people's children is invited to attend this free informational program. Interested parents and grandparents are also welcome to attend.

This workshop will focus on how child care providers can stimulate brain development in infants. In the past it was felt that brain development was genetically determined. However, the newer research shows that development is an

interplay between a person's genes and the experiences they have. Early experiences have been shown to have a large impact on how the brain is wired. In fact, by the age of three, children's brains are twice as active as those of adults.

Participants in the workshop will learn ways to make caring routines a valuable experience for infants, how care practices change with the age of the child, and effective ways to communicate with infants both verbally and non-verbally. The workshop will be telecast live via satellite from Penn State University throughout the U.S.

All workshop participants will receive a certificate of attendance. Licensed child care providers who attend will receive credit for two training hours.



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