

## Penn State Council Visits Ag High School In Philadelphia

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the more than 650 students is a member of the Pennsylvania FFA and 4-H clubs.

Because of the college prep status of the Saul curriculum (every student must take the prerequisite college courses) 60 percent of their graduates from the inner city go on to college and postgraduate studies. And because students are exposed to practical hands-on education, they are prepared to enter the work force with knowledge and experience--especially in the golf course and green house industries. Of course, exposure to the work ethic around the farm helps in their future job resumes too.

More than 1900 students and their parents apply for the 260 slots that open for freshman each year. Students must qualify with a minimum grade average and find their own transportation to the school. At present,

students come from 72 different areas of the city. Absenteeism is only 5 percent average. This is at least 30 percent better than in other schools in the city school system.

Judging teams from Soul have won local and state honors and the present "export for learners" program sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Holstein Association has students raising heifers at school to be exported to Puerto Rico and Mexico. Over the next six months, students will manage the heifers, select sires, breed the heifers, learn about export regulations, and observe port operations. Money is being raised so that the involved students can put the heifers on board and then fly to the destination country and meet their heifers and visit the farms where the heifers are going in the foreign country.

The school is a 50-acre work-

ing farm.

During the Council session, Philadelphia's state legislators took part in both formal and informal discussion with representatives from major food-related trade groups and businesses, as well as leaders from Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and other organizations. Rep. Ray Bunt, chairman of Pennsylvania's House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, and Philadelphia Rep. Kathy Manderino provided formal comments. A tour of the Saul High School grounds and buildings gave the Council members first-hand exposure to the programs of the school.

"The council is reaching out to urban legislators to help them become more familiar with the agricultural sector and its impact on the welfare of constituents in the Philadelphia area," said Jerred Golden, president of

the Penn State Ag Council. "We also have the opportunity to tour the most successful urban agricultural high school in the country and meet with some of its students."

Of special interest on the program was Fred Davis, southeast regional director for Penn State cooperative extension who discussed the extension programs in the urban environment. A panel discussion on the perspectives on land use was conducted with panelists James Shirk of Penn Ag Industries; Mary Bender, policy director, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; David Sheppard, executive vice president, Pennsylvania Builders Association; Tom Stouffer, Lancaster Farmland Trust; and Stan Lembeck, Penn State professor of ag economics.

The Penn State Agricultural Council is an independent association whose membership is comprised of more than 90 organizations that represent agricultural or related interests in

Pennsylvania. They include trade associations for various agricultural, forestry and food processing industries; commodity groups and cooperatives; media; organizations that provide products and services to the agribusiness community; government-related organizations; and related general interest groups. The council advises Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and serves as an advocate for agricultural education to both legislative policy makers and agricultural leaders.

Penn State and Saul High School share an ongoing relationship through the Adopt-a-School Program that includes a designated Penn State scholarship, summer apprenticeships, college courses offered at the high school, and special demonstration projects. The next meeting is scheduled for October 19, 2000.

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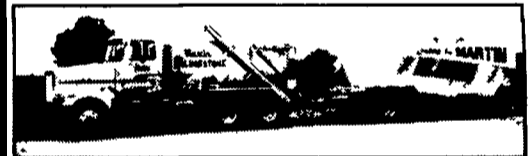
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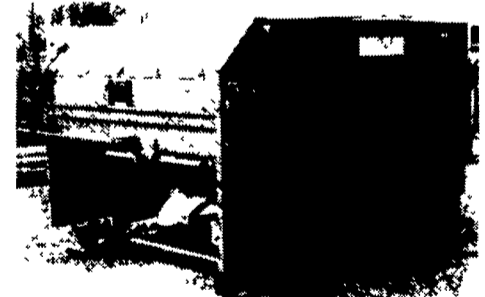
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