

State Grangers Win Regional Competitions

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — Fresno is the next - and final - stop of a journey for three Pennsylvania State Grange members who won first-place honors at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Youth Conference here.

By winning the regional competitions, the three will travel to compete at the National Grange Convention this November in California.

Mary Ann (Keith) Buckley, Lincoln Grange #914, Huntingdon County, placed first in public speaking in the 30 and over age bracket. Jennifer Viscusi, Wesley Grange #1675, Venango County, and Brock Winger, Scrubgrass Junior Grange #348, also in Venango County, captured the group division of the Sign-A-Song contest.

Buckley, who resides in Huntingdon and is a State Grange officer, presented a motivational speech called "A Survival Kit for Living." In that kit were a variety of items designed to remind the owner about what is precious in life. For example, a tea bag symbolizes taking time for yourself to relax and rejuvenate. The other four are Hershey kisses, a pencil, gum, and toothpick.

"The tea bag is used last because it represents the highest level of importance to me," Buckley said, following the announcement of the winners. "This speech is designed to be given as a short presentation with five items or nine items with an expanded text that runs between 30 and 45 minutes. It

can even be used as a sermon with the addition of Bible texts."

Buckley, who works in the marketing department at J.C. Blair Memorial Hospital, will seek her fourth win at the National Grange Convention. She has previously won twice in the 14-19 bracket and the 20-29. A win in Fresno would make a perfect sweep of the three age groups for Buckley, who would like to pursue a career as a motivational speaker.

The Public Speaking and Sign-A-Song are two events that promote the activities of the Grange's Youth and Deaf Activities departments. Those individuals who win first in either competition in their home states advance to the Mid-Atlantic Region Youth Conference. The Mid-Atlantic Region encompasses six Grange states in addition to Pennsylvania. They are Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and West Virginia.

Tenacity was the key to victory for Viscusi, a manager at a mall in Grove City, and Winger, an 8th grade student at Franklin Area Middle School. The song they signed was "Love Makes a Friend Be a Friend Like You" by Sandi Patti.

"We worked hard for this," an elated Viscusi of Harrisville RR1 said. "And now we're going to California!"

The duo picked that song because it worked well with two people doing sign language. In the song, not only do you hear Patti's voice, but a little girl signs as well. The words sung by

the girl were signed by Winger of 512 Buffalo Street, Franklin.

The Deaf and Hearing Awareness Department is the community service project of the Pennsylvania State and National Granges. The Sign-A-Song contest is one the outreaches of the Grange Deaf Activities Department, which promotes sound hearing and works to assist individuals, schools and social agencies that serve the deaf community.

The Public Speaking and Sign Language judges said the competitions were exciting and enlightening.

"I wasn't sure about the quality of work I would see, but I was surprised and must say you all did an outstanding job," Sign-A-Song judge Beth Ann Monn, a doctoral candidate at Gallaudet University, said. "There was only an 11-point spread between first and fourth place. That is something that you need to know and be proud about."

Judge John Zinger said public speaking is so difficult that it is the number one fear for every human being.

"This is especially true for young people who are speaking in front of their peers," Zinger said to the group shortly before the winners were named. "The Grange is about sharing and trust, and that was demonstrated by these young people, who got up in front of their peers to speak without ridicule. My hat is off to you for what the Grange stands for and the exceptional performances that we saw here today."



Grangers with their honors. From left, Mary Ann (Keith) Buckley, Brock Winger, Jennifer Viscusi, and Chris Straub.

The Youth Department of the State Grange is for members ages 14-35. Youth members attend annual retreats, a summer camp and leadership training seminars to prepare them to be the leaders of tomorrow.

The youth program also promotes fellowship and socials that lead to friendships that last a lifetime.

Chris Straub, Stony Point Grange #1694, Mercer County, finished second in the 20-29 age group for public speaking.

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