

## State President Shares Words Of Wisdom At Meyersdale FFA Annual Banquet



Meyersdale FFA President Dan Miller congratulates Richard Diest, who received the Honorary Degree at the chapter's recent annual banquet. Diest's wife Mary Ann is also pictured.

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MEYERSDALE (Somerset Co.)

— "Life speaks to your heart, but it whispers to your soul." Pennsylvania FFA President Elio Chiarelli, Jr., told guests and members of the Meyersdale FFA at its annual awards banquet in April.

"Winners are heroes who never give up," said Chiarelli. "They accomplish a little at a time."

It was a lesson that Chiarelli himself had to learn first-hand after joining the FFA with mediocre expectations. Instead of achieving one lofty goal, Chiarelli realized it was all of the little goals he met along the way.

Chiarelli, who is running for office in the National FFA Association, concluded his speech by saying that "You, the Meyersdale FFA, are standing out in a world of followers and making a difference."

During the banquet, state senator Richard Kasunic of the 32nd senatorial district, which encompasses Somerset and three other counties, also addressed the audience.

As a member of the state agriculture committee, the legislator noticed in particular the leadership of Somerset County in sending youths to the state capital to experiences the workings of government with their representatives.

"Anytime we have youngsters there, we are very proud to show off the capital," said Kasunic. "It is rated by the Smithsonian as the

most beautiful capital in the United States."

According to Kasunic, what most concerns him is the family farms that are being depleted at an alarming rate. He expressed a strong desire for young people, such as the FFA students, to be able to continue in the family tradition of farming. If the downward spiral is not stopped, Kasunic warned that someday a heavy price may be paid for allowing it to happen.

"I am committed to do what I can to keep agriculture the number one industry in Pennsylvania," said Kasunic.

Several members and guests were honored during the annual banquet. Richard Diest of Meyersdale received this year's Honorary Chapter Degree for his contributions to the Meyersdale FFA. Diest attended the banquet with his wife Mary Ann.

Jason Knotts and Philip Petenbrink both received the Keystone Degree and were honored in the record book competition. Knotts received an award for his record book in beef finishing, while Petenbrink was honored for his record book for his on-farm work over 2,000 hours. Matthew Emerick also received a record book award for his maple syrup production project. Knotts and Petenbrink also won state gold medals in the record book competition.

Matthew Emerick received the Entrepreneurship Award, while other awards went to Knotts for his beef production project, Peten-

brink in dairy production, Ken Sanner in ag mechanics, Earl Shaffer in horse judging, and Thomas Sanner as the wildlife contest winner.

Emerick received the communications award, along with Knotts, Heidi Knopsnyder, and Matt Gauntz. The outstanding sales award also went to Emerick.

Academic awards went to Tiffany Feeney, Valerie Bender, Shirley Tressler, Andy Marteney, Robert Weimer, Peggy Butler, Matthew Emerick, Heidi Knopsnyder, Kristin Schardt, Kristi Michael, Mary Deal, Ken Sanner, Dan Miller, Thomas Sanner, Jeremy Knieriem, Heath Lohr, Sara Hoover, Bob Gomer, Jarrod Murray, Julie Weimer, Jonathan Henry, Matt Perkins, Mark Lowery, Shawn Troutman, and Anthony Bittner.

Spring flower awards were presented to Peggy Butler, Mary Deal, Dan Miller, Jeremy Knieriem, Shauna Porter, Jon West, Jennifer Decker, Tim Holt, Josh Sutton, Norman Coberly, Holly Smearman, Robert Sterner, and Travis Stanzyck.

Fruit sales awards went to Matthew Emerick, Thomas Sanner, Heidi Knopsnyder, Stacey Miller, Albert Welsh, Jeremy Knieriem, Dustin Wilt, Sara Hoover, John Robinson, Norman Coberly, Holly Smearman, Tim Emerick, April Speicher, Jonathan Henry, and Jarrod Murray.

Fall flower awards went to Matthew Emerick, Mary Deal, Matt Gauntz, Jeremy Sleasman, Stacey Miller, Heath Lohr, Dustin Wilt, Darrick Miller, Debbie Faner, Norman Coberly, Holly Smearman, Chris Lepley, Justin Baer, Amanda Custer, and Shawna Durst.

Basketball awardees were Jason Knotts, Dustin Wilt, Galen Wilt, Matt Gauntz, Andy Marteney, Dan Miller, Mary Deal, Mike Ohler, Tommy Shaffer, Virginia Tressler, Dan Artice, Heidi Knopsnyder, Josh Slifco, and Brian McKenzie.

Volleyball awards went to Earl Shaffer, Jason Knotts, Josh Slifco, Tom Shaffer, Mike Ohler, Matt Gauntz, Bob Weimer, Andy Marteney, Heidi Knopsnyder, Virginia Tressler, Galen Wilt, Brian McKenzie, and Mary Deal.

Deal was also names the FFA sweetheart. James Stutzman was recognized as the adviser to the Meyersdale FFA Chapter.



Top award winners at the Meyersdale FFA annual banquet are from left are Matthew Emerick, Earl Shaffer, Jason Knotts, Philip Petenbrink, and Thomas Sanner.

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