

# Robb Meinen Joins Swine Extension Team

By Kenneth Kephart  
Penn State

Robert Meinen joined the staff of the Department of Dairy and Animal Science on July 1, as a Senior Extension Associate. He will be working with Ken Kephart and Bob Mikesell in the overall swine extension effort.

In addition, Robb will be helping to deliver environmental education programs for all livestock producers throughout the state.

Until June 30, Robb managed

Wide Awake Farms, a 1,400-sow operation in Bedford County. Through Robb's managerial and interpersonal skills, Wide Awake Farms has ranked at the top for productivity in the Purina system nationally for the last six months.

Robb's efforts at the Wide Awake operation also helped him to be one of five producers recognized in the nation for the "Environmental Stewards of The Pork Industry" award sponsored by the National Pork Producers Council.

animal aquaculture/hydroponics area, and a small group ("ag support") room for small group work and informal meetings. The school also acquired better equipment in the renovations.

In agriculture mechanics classes, students learn wood-working and welding and get the opportunity to work on small gas engines, electricity, and wiring.

In the animal science lab, students both care for and observe the small animals. Gerbils, for example, provide lessons on genetic studies and reproduction, as does the school's resident rabbit population. Students also breed guinea pigs and sell the offspring. Rats, snakes, ferrets, amphibians, and one pig are also housed in the lab for

student study.

"Most of our students have never been around a pig, period, so basically we're teaching kids ag literacy," said Franklin. "Most of our students are not from the farm."

Harold Dietrich has taught agriculture science at Twin Valley High School for six years. According to Dietrich, freshmen can only take two classes, either an environmental aquaculture science class or an agriculture mechanics class. Older students can take advanced levels of the ag mechanics class besides horticulture, aquaculture, animal science, and environmental science.

A wide variety of students take an ag science course as a biology credit. "We see the whole school. In any class there might be one student from the farm out of 30," said Dietrich. "Because ag is so broad — it is science, it is biology."

The greenhouse area has undergone complete renovation and expansion. This spring, Franklin expects to have a crop of bedding plants to sell to the community.

"We pot individual begonias and impatiens for Mother's Day and sell at the three elementary schools," said Franklin.

"One thing we want to do is put in rainforest plants. The kids have always liked rainforests, so we hope to put in a drip system with orchids and ferns."

Hydroponics projects are also part of the curriculum. "Students get to design their own system," he said.

Senior Beth Hafer has spent four years in the ag science program. "I love forestry. I got into it over the summer at the governor's school and decided to come back to environmental science," she said. "I stuck with it because I love the program."

Hafer is looking at several state schools to further her education in sports medicine or agriculture-education areas.

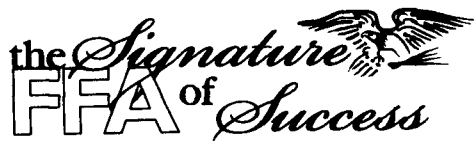
"I liked working with younger kids with Food For America," said Hafer. Food For America is a monthly program where FFA members teach agriculture and environmental lessons to the districts' third graders.

Twin Valley's 214-member FFA also participates in monthly litter pickups, runs a pet therapy program at a local retirement community, hosts a Christmas tree recycling program, bakes cookies for a homeless shelter, and hosts an Ag Day breakfast for staff and local agribusiness people from the community.

Angela Lengel, a senior, is also a four-year veteran of the program. "I was interested in the environmental aspect, in learning about animals, forestry and wetlands," she said. She plans to attend a state school next year to study marine biology.

Staff Writer

Andy Andrews assisted with this report.



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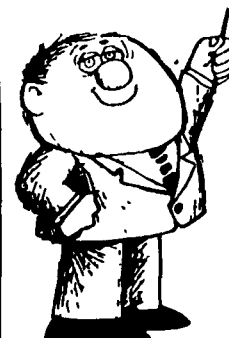
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