

Ag Progress Conducts 4-H Horse Skillathon

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Penn State Correspondent
ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.)
 — Amid the din of nervous laughter and the smell of dusty horses comes the crackle of a loudspeaker: "Will the participants of the eight through 11 age

group please approach the ring?" Hope Bailey, 11, of Emporium, waits with her horse, "Allie," in line with other girls her age. Bailey, along with 22 other young people, participated in the 4-H Equine Skillathon Aug. 16 at Penn State's Ag Progress Days.

The Skillathon, co-sponsored by The Pennsylvania Quarter Horse Association and Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Cooperative Extension, tests young equestrians' complete horse knowledge. Not only do contestants show

their horses in the ring, they also must answer a written test and identify objects relating to horses and horse care.

"I'm a little nervous," confessed Bailey, squinting into the sun from beneath her beige cowboy hat. "I'm most nervous about doing the pattern right," Bailey said, describing the steps that all contestants must follow exactly with their horse once in the ring. "Tell me the pattern," said Ken Bailey, Hope's father, and she did — perfectly.

Bailey and the other young participants visit about 12 shows a year, according to Ken and Sharon Bailey, who were delighted that their daughter had taken such a fancy to horses. The Baileys send Hope to the Elk County 4-H, where they said she has opened up as she found a passion in horses. "Hopie just kind of fit right in with them," said Sharon Bailey.

Meanwhile, Brooke Bricen, 14, of Weedville, prepared for her turn in the ring. Last year Bricen and her horse, "Billy Bixbee," won the 12-14 age bracket at the Skillathon.

Bricen brushed excess dust and dirt off of Billy's back and legs, while the horse struggled to reach a few branches of a nearby tree. Bricen scolded Billy, cleaning out Billy's mouth as well. "If her mouth was green that'd be the end of it," said Bethany Bricen,

Brooke's older sister. "The judges are really strict."

And strict they are — since contestants must follow the pattern exactly, they lose points fast for small mistakes or flaws in appearance and posture. As Hope Bailey exited the ring, she exchanged words with Brooke Bricen: "Don't go over there," Hope said, pointing to a far corner of the ring, "that's where I went and it was wrong. You have to turn 180 and go back that way."

Bricen thanked her and smiled. Bailey smiled gently back, and walked Allie out of the immediate area.

But the 4-H has taught young equestrians about more than being competitors. It has given them an outlet for their energy and enthusiasm, and friends to share it with, some who they can talk with, and some who they can talk to. "I've been riding my whole life," said Rebecca Barnhart, 18, who has been showing horses since she was 7-years-old and participated in the 15-18 age bracket. "I like horses because they don't talk back — they're better to talk to than people."

And some 4-H'ers even pursue a career with horses as a result of their time competing. Barnhart will attend the University of Finley, Ohio, this fall to study pre-veterinary science and horsemanship. Her horse "Happy," will make the trip to Ohio as well.

Farm Women Soc. 14

Farm Women Society 14 enjoyed the last two meetings outdoors. On the evening of July 12, we met at the Tinney Pavilion in Strasburg for our traditional family picnic.

Hostesses Rhoda Landis, Ruth Kreider, and Mary Landis received the carry-in dishes. Lloyd Kreider led in a devotional. Ben Kauffman, known for his Abe Lincoln impersonations, entertained us with a new monologue, "Farm Talk."

On Aug. 8, hostesses Pauline Stoltzfus, Helen Herr, and Dorothy Musser prepared a lunch at Paradise Park, the place for this summer's meeting. After President Gladys/Eshbenschade conducted the meeting (calling for a

devotional by Pauline Stoltzfus and reporting on the earning project at the Corn Maize, the group went to nearby Christ Home, where we took a tour of the facility home for children ages four through high school. A gift of paper supplies was given to the home.

Dan Jerchow, a Manheim Township policeman, took time out on June 20 to come to the Farm and Home Center where our society was entertaining Farm Women Society 27 to give most helpful and educational safety tips and warnings. Be careful when using an ATM machine, since there is a rash of stealing the cash. Form a neighborhood watch to keep an eye on the



house at vacation time. Do not react to road rage.

Hostesses greeting the guests and arranging the serving table were Eileen McComus, Viola Hostetter, Clara Rohrer, and Mildred Herr.

Lancaster County Farm Women Societies hosted the Spring Rally at Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, May 16.

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Two evening classes will be conducted at the Conestoga Valley Community Center from 6:45 to 8:45 on Mon. and Thurs., beginning the week of Sept. 24. For more information and to register, phone (717) 394-6851.

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