

# Lancaster County Farm Women President Talks Turkey

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Most members remain active as long as possible, but today, many are in nursing homes or have passed away and membership is dwindling. Society 14 has 29 members, but at one time the number was doubled with a waiting list for membership.

Today's busy lifestyles with many women working at off-the-farm jobs and transporting children to sporting events has cramped membership.

Participation in Farm Women-related events is so enjoyable to Gladys and other members that they are convinced that many women would enjoy participating if they would only try it.

Gladys said, "One no longer needs to wait until invited to join. Anyone who is interested in join-

ing our group or another one should contact me (717) 687-7632."

Members do not need to live on a farm, but should be supportive of farm life.

Goals that Gladys sets for the county societies are to continue helping people and working together as a unit.

Helping Gladys with leadership are officers Phylis Newcomer, Lancaster, first vice president; Mabel Hershey, Marietta, secretary; and Eileen Bruckhart, Manheim, treasurer.

Although turkeys are relegated to the background during Gladys' installation, the feathered birds will certainly move to the forefront during the remainder of the busy month on the Esbenshade farm.

This is the season when 10,000 turkeys are dressed for Thanksgiving and Christmas tables. November is also the month when school groups tour the Esbenshade turkey farm. It's Gladys that provides the tour complete with a hay ride — in which she drives the tractor.

The Esbenshades' family farm was established in 1858 and is known as the nation's oldest turkey farm.

The turkey business has a colorful history and the business has evolved over the years. Gladys said that in the beginning turkeys were raised more for their feathers than for meat. The colorful feathers were used in stylish hatwear in the day when every proper lady wore a hat when she left her home.

For many years, turkeys sported dark feathers, but today all turkeys raised on the Esbenshade farm are white.

"White turkeys are easier to dress and look nicer when finished," Gladys said.

During past generations, turkeys were expensive and traditionally served only for Thanksgiving and Christmas. But, today, turkey is considered year-round food fare, nutritious, and one of the most affordable meats.

Gladys grew up on a Millersville farm and married into the Esbenshade turkey business. At first, she and her husband lived on a neighboring farm and helped their in-laws with the turkey business. But they purchased the business and the 1858 farmstead in 1963.



Gladys Esbenshade and Molly the dog enjoy a romp beneath the Chinese Elm.

Gladys became immersed in turkey care. "In the beginning I made pets of some of them," Gladys said of her daily treks to feed the growing birds.

That stopped when she realized her next step was to dress the birds for the market.

The Esbenshades' son lives nearby and helps with holiday packing and is in charge of the chicken layer house.

The Esbenshades have two granddaughters and enjoy traveling to other countries. Gladys especially enjoyed trips to Europe.

Gladys also serves as a leader of the Awana Club at her church and is treasurer of the Strasburg Auxiliary for Lancaster General Hospital.

Live turkeys aren't the only birds found at the Esbenshades' farmstead. Gladys' friends and family members often add to her turkey collectibles.

Many people depend on traditional roast turkeys, but many cuts are available.

"We eat lots of turkey at our house," Gladys said. Here is one of her favorite recipes.

**Stir-Fried Turkey Tenderloins**  
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
 ¼-1 pound turkey tenderloins, cut into one-inch cubes or sliced  
 1 peeled, halved, thinly sliced onion  
 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms, optional  
 1 seeded, diced green bell pepper  
 1 cup diagonally sliced celery  
 ¼ cup turkey or chicken broth or use 1 bouillon cube in ¼ cup hot water

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet or electric frypan. Add turkey cubes or slices and stir fry two minutes or until a little brown. Add onion and mushrooms, optional, and stir fry one minute. Add remaining ingredients. Lower heat. Simmer, uncovered, stirring frequently, about 10 minutes. Makes four servings.



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