

Meyersdale FFA Recognizes Members, New Adviser

SANDRA LEPLEY
Somerset Co. Correspondent
MEYERSDALE (Somerset Co.) — "Get up and be willing to risk it all," said David Bittner, state FFA president during the Meyersdale FFA Banquet, conducted Tuesday, April 15, at the high school cafeteria. "Take a chance to make it to the other side in life."

Bittner, a member of the Berlin Brothersvalley FFA, a neighboring community in Southern Somerset County, served as the guest speaker at the Meyersdale FFA Banquet, where several officers and members were given awards, as well as the new adviser, Tim Kretchman.

"Leaders know what they want in life," said Bittner. "You can't be indecisive and ready to act at the same time. It doesn't work that way."

Bittner gave a testimonial about how he never took the time to really get to know his maternal grandfather and now after his grandfather's death, it is too late for a relationship. There are no memories.

"I was stuck inside my comfort zone," said Bittner, who has decided to delay his college education this past year because of his state office but plans to go to college this fall and major in education. "Because I never took the time, I never knew my grandfather Guy Marcellas Sechler. When opportunity knocks, look through the peep hole and see who is knocking. Are there opportunities that await you? Learn what you want in life and step out and act."

After Bittner's speech, many supporting businesses were recognized and several awards were passed out.

Tim Kretchman, new adviser for the Meyersdale Future Farmers of America (FFA), received the honorary chapter degree.

"It is an honor and privilege working this group of young people," said Kretchman, who took over after advisor Jim Stutzman took a recent sabbatical. "I am absolutely impressed with this group of leaders."

For the past three years, Kretchman has been a special needs teacher at the school district and became the vocational agricultural teacher in late Janu-

ary. Prior to Meyersdale, he worked for three years at Blairsville-Saltsburg Elementary School in Indiana County.

His background includes growing up on a local dairy farm. He and his wife, the former Christina Thomas, have one small child, Timmy. Kretchman received his undergraduate degree from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in special education.

"Obviously, in the transition, I didn't know a whole lot about the position and these students helped me lead," he said. "They are very, very active and dedicated and always looking to improve and looking to the future."

Jarrod Murray was recognized as the Dekalb Award winner for being the outstanding senior. Melissa Tressler received the Star Farmer Award. Brittany Wilson received the Star Greenhand Award. Other awards included ag sales and mechanics, second place — Crystal Shifflett, Missy Tressler, Mark Lowery and Jarrod Murray; tractor driving, second place — Bobby Gomer; small gasoline engines, second place — Jon Henry; and wildlife, third place — Matthew Perkins.

Public speaking awards included senior prepared — Beth Miller, first place; extemporaneous — Mark Lowery, second place; conservation — Crystal Shifflett, first, and Jon Henry; parliamentary procedure — Mark Lowery, Crystal Shifflett, Missy Tressler, Shawn Troutman, Matt Perkins, Beth Miller, all second place.

Record Books: On farm (second in county and bronze in state) — Jon Henry. Swine (fourth) and beef (second) — Matt Troutman. Beef — Beth Miller. Forestry (Somerset County Technology Center) — Norman Coberly.

Presentation Academic Excellence Awards: Missy Tressler, Crystal Shifflett, Matthew Perkins, Shawn Troutman, Mark Lowery, Beth Miller, Norman Coberly, Bob Gomer, Nicole Grof, Matthew Troutman, Jon Henry, Amber Bowman, Amy Fullerton, Travis Stanczyk, and Julie Weimer.

Dairy Showmanship: Jarrod Murray.



Meyersdale FFA officers received awards during the FFA banquet. Front, from left are Beth Miller, Crystal Shifflett, Missy Tressler, Jarrod Murray, Mark Lowery. Back row: Matt Perkins, Travis Stanczyk, Shawn Troutman, Norman Coberly, and Jon Henry.

Farmers Take Mission Trip To Albania

TRUMANSBURG, Ohio — George and Julie Holmes farmers in Trumansburg just returned from their 10th winter in Albania. They are under the umbrella of Fellowship of Christian Farmer's, International, Lexington, IL.

Holmes' spent two and one-half months doing missionary work in that third world country.

Albania is the size of the State of Maryland with the population of three and one-half million people. Per-capita income is \$1,200 per year with most of the people farming. Unemployment ranks more than 50 percent.

The Holmes hosted one group of Americans this winter. No one wanted to travel this year with the impending war with Iraq.

The Holmes couple worked in seven villages around the capitol city of Tirana. They do door to door witnessing, relationship building, home Bible studies and children's programs and a few English classes with a teen Bible study. While the Holmes returned home to do spring farming, the SOWERS Team, which is made up of eight Albanian Christians are continuing the village outreach. They go to the seven villages twice a month. A monthly report on the village work is sent to Holmes' by e-mail each month.

Vegetable and flower seeds were hand carried over last summer and this winter. They were made into family seed packets with nine vegetable and one flower packet. The Dutch group called "Hope for Albania" donated more than 100 pounds of seeds to the Holmes' for their use in the villages. More than 3,000 family seed packets were handed out in schools and over 36 villages.

Franklin Graham's children's shoe box ministry called Samaritan Purse, gave Holmes' shoe boxes for children in the villages of Albania. They were given 800 boxes that went to 12 schools and villages. Happy children carried home boxes made up in America. They were full of toys, candy, hygiene items, school supplies, and clothes.

More than 150 pairs of reading glasses were brought over to Albania. They are mainly needed by older people, so they can read a Bible or thread a needle. What

joy you see on a persons face, when they can see again. Many haven't been able to see to read in years. They simply can't afford reading glasses.

Holmes' had time this winter for language lessons. They are gaining more knowledge of the Albanian language to communicate better. With a larger alphabet and grasp of unfamiliar sounds, Holmes' slowly gained ground on language skills.

George and Julie's hospital visits to the orphan baby unit continued for its fourth year. Saturday nights were the appointed

time to spend holding, rocking, and feeding orphan babies. Most of the time, the unit averaged six baby's.

A summer missions trip is being planned for those interested in a two-week trip to Albania. Village visits, children's church programs, Vacation Bible School program, orphan baby visits, helping with bible study's, and a summer picnic are on the agenda. Also planned is a day trip of historical tours. Call for dates and an information packet (607) 387-6538.



George and Julie Holmes farm in Trumansburg, but have traveled to Albania for 10 years. They request others to accompany them for a two-week mission trip this summer.



Tim Kretchman, the new adviser for the Meyersdale FFA Chapter, received the honorary member award during the Meyersdale FFA Banquet. He is pictured with Mark Lowery, chapter president, and Crystal Shifflett, vice president.

FFA at 75
One Mission: Student Success