

Svonavec Farm Is Site For Cancer Fundraiser

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Somerset Co. Correspondent
NEWCENTERVILLE (Somerset Co.) — Ten years ago, a farm girl from Somerset County fought a courageous battle with cancer and lost. She died without realizing the difference she would make in other people's lives someday.

Karen Marteeny, Somerset, was only 23 years old when she died from complications of a bone marrow transplant on April 28, 1993, at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Md.

She fought bravely. After she was diagnosed with cancer as a young college student, she and her family added several thousands of names of people who were tested for the National Bone Marrow Registry. During the transplant procedure, the community read newspaper articles regularly to see how she was doing.

Her parents, Bill and Connie Marteeny, retired from farming a few years afterwards. Connie continues to work as a registered nurse at the local state hospital, which was in the past few years converted to a prison.

"We have never forgotten about her," said Connie, who has an older son named Mark and two grandchildren. "She is in our

thoughts constantly. That's why we need to find a cure for cancer and help those suffering with cancer. We want to be able to educate others about early prevention."

The Marteenys became actively involved with fund raising for the American Cancer Society shortly after Karen died. Every year, their Awesome Angels team for Relay-For-Life, a Cancer Society event held in communities throughout the nation, has been a top fund-raising group.

This year, the Awesome Angels outdid themselves. They staged a farmland fantasy show with a Renaissance flair and raised more than \$16,000 in two evenings.

The Medieval Mayhem kingdom of Lamb-alot came into being primarily through the imagination of Betty Lou Svonavec, a local playwright from New Centerville.

"I was apprehensive when I was first approached," said Svonavec, "but then I saw how everyone helped out and believed in this cause. The teamwork was unbelievable."

The idea of the dinner theater fund-raiser was actually the brainchild of Sue Darr of Somerset, a close friend of the Marteenys

and a member of the Awesome Angels team.

Darr asked Svonavec to become involved because she knew that Svonavec wrote plays for high schools.

"This has come a long way. I didn't expect this to be so big but once everyone heard about it, it sold out. If we can get the teamwork we did this year, it will definitely be something that continues," said Darr.

The players came from all walks of life and from all different age groups, but every participant's life had been touched by cancer in some way.

Jesters and town criers, maids and wenches, Merlin the wizard, a king and queen and princes too made up the entertaining kingdom in Somerset County.

Svonavec estimated that more than 60 people were involved in the play and for each of the two nights, more than 160 people attended, 20 of whom paid \$500 each evening for a corporate table.

"I didn't expect to do this in a barn to be truthful," laughed Roni Bhullar of Somerset, who played a prince. "I expected to do this in a high school auditorium but that is one of the best features of this fund-raiser."

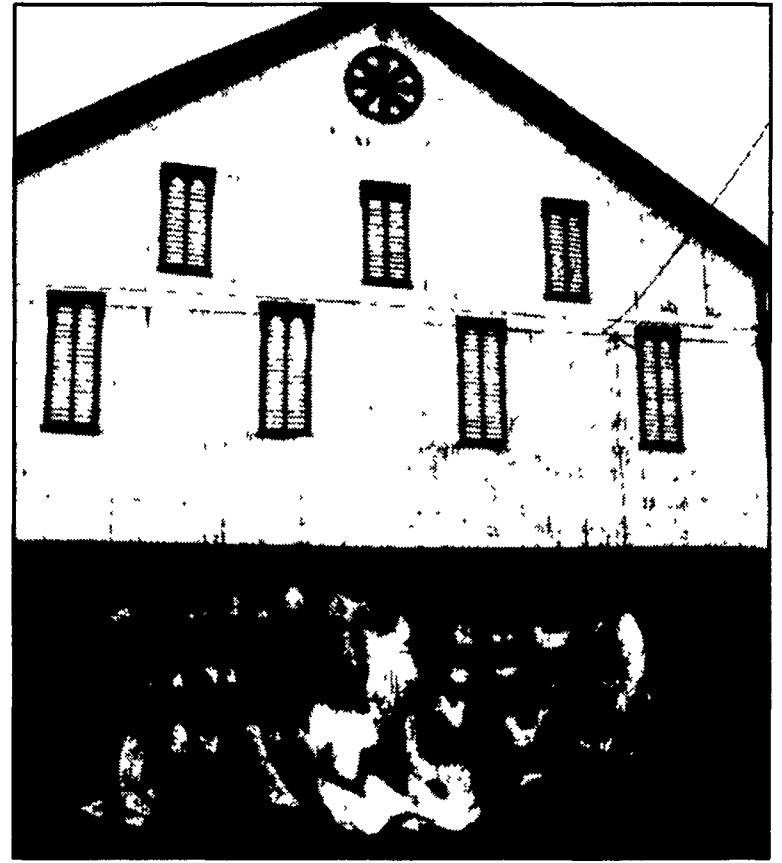
The distant cries of lambs, which were turned outside for the summer, could be heard during the event but most people didn't notice or didn't mind as they enjoyed the social atmosphere in the upstairs of Svonavec's barn, where a stage was erected earlier, and actors emerged from the hayloft.

"This was a great time for a good cause," said Svonavec. "We had so much fun and people were asking if we would do it again soon if there would be enough people interested."

Connie Marteeny believes Karen would have enjoyed the event had she been here and would have appreciated everyone's help.

Shortly before she died, Karen became a home economics teacher at Somerset Area High School, her alma mater. Her parents have established an annual \$300 scholarship in her name for home economics students.

"Karen would have liked this event very much. She was a special person. We appreciate all those who were involved," said Connie.



Wenches or servant girls in the Medieval Mayhem play in Somerset County strike a pose outside the Svonavec barn, where the play was held earlier this month as an American Cancer Society fund-raiser.



Betty Lou Svonavec, playwright and farm owner, talks with Merlin the Wizard, played by John Hilligoss, Somerset, who served as the narrator for the Medieval Mayhem play, recently conducted in Svonavec's barn.



Connie Marteeny, left, and Jessica Darr, a friend and neighbor, look over corporate banners for the Medieval Mayhem play. Marteeny sewed the banners, which were hung on poles on the entrance to the farm. Marteeny is instrumental in this fund-raiser and has been involved in the Relay-For-Life event after her daughter Karen died in 1993 from complications from a bone marrow transplant required for cancer treatment.



Dinner theater actress Heidi Svonavec is best known to readers as the former Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen and the recipient of numerous Pennsylvania Farm Show trophies for exhibiting grand champion market lambs.

Attend Youth Theatre Camp

COLLEGEVILLE (Montgomery Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension of Montgomery County is offering a Youth Theatre Arts Camp July 21-25 at the Montgomery County 4-H Center on Route 113 near Skippack.

The camp is open to all youth ages 10-13 years old who are interested in the theater arts. The five-day program (from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) will include improvisation, pantomime, the roots of musical theater, physical and vocal

warm-ups, and performing techniques. Guest artists will talk about special programs such as make-up techniques, audition tips, and careers in theatre arts (and it is not all acting!).

In addition, a field trip to the People's Light and Theatre Company in the Malvern area is planned. The camp cost is \$60 per child, and enrollment is limited. To register, call the 4-H office at (610) 489-4315 for a brochure.



Books and magazines of interest to Lancaster Farming readers

ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL FARM COLLECTOR SHOW DIRECTORY 2003. Ogden Publications, 2003, 480 p.p., \$11.95. No ISBN.



Tractor, implement, and memorabilia collectors take heed — this book has your show!

Truly, **FARM COLLECTOR SHOW DIRECTORY** is a "complete directory of antique farm equipment events," as Ogden notes, and the rest of this year is included here. Show listings throughout the country, listed by state, are included.

It was easy to find the Threshers' Reunion listing for the annual Rough and Tumble Engineers Show in Kinzers, scheduled Aug. 13-16 this year. But this directory has it all, even the Shenandoah Valley Steam and Gas

Engine Show July 25-27 in Berryville, Va. and the National Threshers Association, Inc. 59th Annual Reunion at the Fulton County Fairgrounds in Wauseon, Ohio (just passed us on June 26-29).

There's even the 6th Annual Southern Maryland Farm-Life Festival Oct. 11-12 in Charlotte Hall, Md. and the Mason-Dixon Historical Society, Inc. 41st Annual Steam and Gas Roundup at the Carroll County (Maryland) Farm Museum Sept. 5-7.

Included in this comprehensive guide are a show directory for national clubs and publications, show features by manufacturer, a chronological show listing, and an ad index.

For more information, contact Ogden at 1503 S.W. 42nd St., Topeka, KS 66609, (800) 682-4704. Ogden publishes Farm Collector, Gas Engine Magazine, Steam Traction, and John Deere Tradition.