

Positive Thinking

(Continued from Page A22)

and it seems no matter who you talk to, all of our problems are the same. The one-on-one contacts we have made with Farm Bureau and the people we've met—that's been one of the biggest advantages for us."

He also believes good business planning includes meetings such as Farm Bureau. While he notes that it is challenging for young farmers to get off of the farm, he encourages them to take time to do so.

"A lot of people don't want to spend the time going to meetings, like being involved in Farm Bureau, but it's part of doing business. It's doesn't matter if you

are a doctor and are part of a medical group or a contractor and are part of a home builders association, its part of doing business."

The past five years have been successful overall for the Balliets, but one thing is clear — no matter how successful the year may be, they keep looking to expand and for new ideas to increase their profitability.

The Balliets are constantly looking for opportunities to expand their land holdings. In the outskirts of Hazleton, that can be challenging, because of the development pressure they constantly feel.

"We've expanded from 185 acres tillable, and this last year

we just farmed more than 500 acres. And I have almost 200 additional acres under contract for next year," said Matt.

The Balliets strive to increase their tillable acres to offset the farm's equipment expense.

"We want to keep expanding the grain operation. But, we have also branched out into two other areas. We have a small herd of beef steers that we have custom butchered," said Matt. "I definitely want to expand on that—I have more customers than animals right now."

Balliet said, "Last year, after the drought we installed two center pivots. We now have about 70 acres of the home farm under irrigation. We're looking at some vegetable contacts and things like that. Things (contracts) that are a little bit more profitable to put under the pivots."

In addition to finding new marketing ideas, the Balliets invest into stewardship of the land. To date, they are in the process of installing or rebuilding five miles of terraces and diversion ditches through an USDA-EQIP contract. Balliet has also made use of his engineering skills to convert his corn planter to no-till.

"I'm glad we did it (switched to no-till). We are 100 percent no-till with all of the grains," said Matt. "I don't think without no-tilling we would have ever gotten done this spring."

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is working with the Balliets to install deer fencing on the farm's state gameland border, hoping to alleviate some of the deer damage.

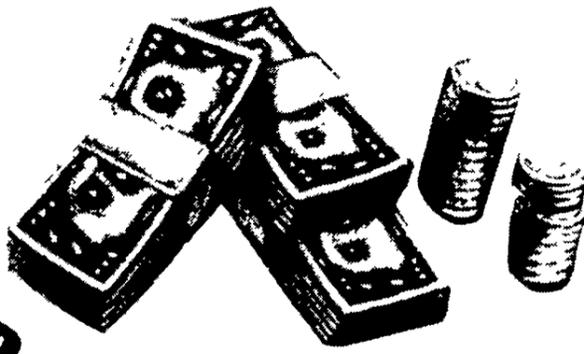
While the Balliets are a unique farm operation, starting from

nothing and building the business on their own, they see that they are in a larger minority of agriculture as young farmers.

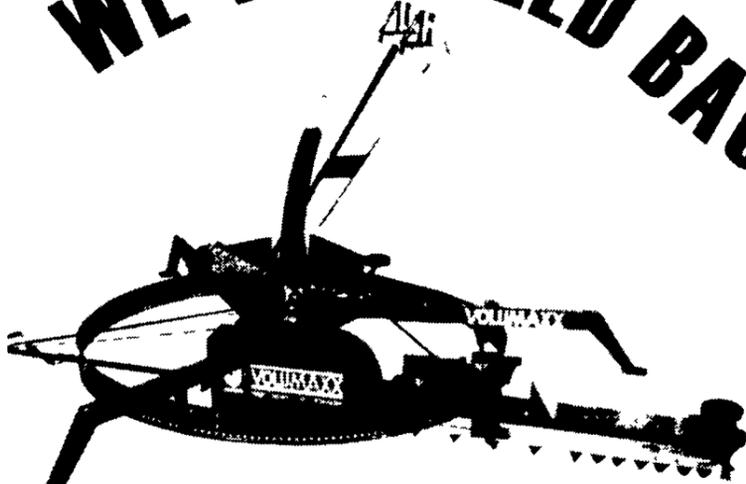
The face of agriculture is changing, as Matt points out. As he looks about, he sees farmers getting older. He noted that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and other organizations need to look at ways to make agriculture more profitable to attract a younger generation.

"You are not going to attract people that have the ability to farm into businesses that are not able to be profitable, no matter how hard they work," said Matt.

J-STAR



WE'VE ROLLED BACK PRICES...



ALMOST
20 YEARS!!

Our SILO UNLOADER prices haven't been this low since the early 1980s!!

We've also ROLLED BACK the prices of these products:

- Feed Conveyors
- Barn Cleaners
- Manure Pumps
- Cable Scraper Systems



VAN DALE®

- **CABLE ALLEY SCRAPER**
- **WASTE HANDLING EQUIPMENT**
DUMPS - TANKS - TILLAGE APPLICATOR
- **FEED HANDLERS**
BELTS - FEEDERS - CONVEYORS

See These Dealers For Details Now...

FRANKLIN'S FARM SERVICE
Laceyville PA
717-869-2407

LAPP'S BARN EQUIPMENT SALES & SERVICE
Gap PA 17527
717-442-8134

ROVENDALE AG & BARN EQUIPMENT
Watsonstown PA 17777
570-538-9564
OR 570-742-4226

JAMES L. HOSTETTER
McVeytown PA 17051
717-899-6386

STAR SILOS
Chambersburg PA 17201
1-800-909-6909

AGRI EQUIPMENT
Myerstown PA 17067
717-866-0200

HISTAND'S FARM & HOME SERVICE
Rome PA
570-744-2371

SOLLENBERGER SILOS CORP.
Chambersburg PA 17201
1-800-909-6909

SOMERSET BARN EQUIPMENT
Somerset PA 15501
814-445-5555

MARYLAND
GLADHILL TRACTOR MART
Frederick MD 21701
301-663-6060

HOOVER EQUIPMENT
Tyrone PA 16686
814-684-1777

Lehigh County Conservation District Presents Awards

FOGELSVILLE (Lehigh Co.) — The Lehigh County Conservation District presented its Annual "Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year" and "Outstanding Conservation Educator of the Year" awards for 2003 on Dec. 12.

The Conservation District chose the Lynnares Farm, New Tripoli, operated by the widow and children of the late Russell Dietrich, as its 2003 Conservation Farmer of the Year.

Mr. Brian Campbell of the KidsPeace Washington School, has been chosen as the 2003 Conservation Educator of the Year.

Lynnares Farm is a dairy and cash grain operation. Lynnares first became a district cooperator back in 1964 when the late Russell Dietrich signed the first conservation agreement. Today, the family, including Elaine and their three children, William, Brian, and Robin Ressler, operate 1,074 owned and rented acres and care for 400 head of cattle. They participate in various conservation cost-share programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Ducks Unlimited, and Growing Greener Program. In 2002, they completed a project which included 4800 feet of streambank fencing, one stabilized cattle crossing and two watering troughs, all to protect the headwaters of the Kistler Creek. In 2003, they completed a 1997 EQIP contract. They currently have 127.4 acres under a perpetual conservation easement.

Campbell has displayed a sincere, focused, and dedicated interest to educate our youth about the importance of our natural resources.

With Campbell's guidance, the students are focusing on improving the local soil and water resources in numerous ways. The students have learned how to handle stream restorations and regularly monitor those streams to determine stream health. With their newly acquired knowledge of wetlands, the students will soon design and undertake a major wetlands restoration project at the Orchard Hills Campus. In addition, students are preparing for the 2004 Lehigh County Envirothon, which serves as the first stage of environmental conservation and stewardship through education and awareness.

Since 1972...

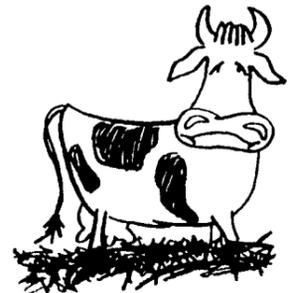
The Original & The Largest

POURED SOLID CONCRETE

STORAGE SYSTEM SPECIALISTS

ARE YOUR MANURE PROBLEMS KNEE DEEP?

If so, call Balmer Bros.



■ Poured Solid Concrete Steel Reinforced Walls.

■ The Wall is Only As Good As The Material Used.

- Manure Pit Walls
- Hog House Walls
- Chicken House Walls
- Concrete Decks
- Silage Pit Walls
- Retaining Walls

Balmer Bros.

CONCRETE WORK, INC.
Invest in Quality - It Will Last A Lifetime

243 Miller Road
Akron PA 17501
(717) 733-0353
6:30 AM - 3:30 PM
(717) 859-2074
After 6:00 PM