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Harry N. Boone, Jr., Ph.D., Editor

Will History be Kind to You?

by Harry N. Boone, Jr.

A few weeks ago I was presented with a complete set of record books for Sam Cockayne, a student at Moundsville High School between 1935 and 1937. (For more information on the source of these books, please see the article on page 3.) With the end of spring semester fast approaching I have not had time to study these documents in detail, however, I have had the opportunity to briefly review the documents and reflect on what I might find inside. As I briefly reviewed these documents, I tried to put myself in the shoes of Ted R. Hash, the agricultural education teacher at Moundsville High School during this time period. I had to ask, would he have done things differently if he had known that historians and agricultural education professionals would be reviewing these documents in seventy years?

Let's assume it is 2040 and someone uncovered a set of record books from my teaching career at Greenbrier East High School. What would they find? What would historians find if they discovered a series of your students' record books seventy-five to one hundred years from now? It's a humbling thought.

It's too late for me to do anything different about my high school teaching career. History, good and/or bad, has been written and there is nothing I can do to change it. You, on the other hand, have the opportunity to make changes that will reflect positively on you and your program.

Please allow me to offer a few questions to assist your reflection. First let's examine your instructional techniques. Do you use a variety of teaching methods? Is your instructional program balanced between classroom, laboratory, and other experiential learning situations? Do you teach your students to solve problems? Are you teaching material in such a way that students develop higher order thing skills? Do you use good interest approaches to your lessons? Do you use techniques to maintain student interest in the topic? Does your instruction include activities for all learning styles?

Second, are your students developing leadership, citizenship, and scholarship skills needed to be successful in life? Are all of your students involved in FFA activities? Do all of your students have the opportunity to develop public speaking skills? Can all of your students actively participate in a business meeting? Do all of your students take advantage of the incentives available through the National FFA Organization?

Third, are all of your students required to participate in experiential learning activities? Are these experiential learning activities tailored to the individual student's needs? Do you provide supervision for these experiential learning opportunities? Are the students required to keep detailed and accurate records for these experiential learning activities? Do you sit down with each student and review/evaluate the results of these experiential learning opportunities?

If you haven't figured it out yet, I am talking about the implementation of the total agricultural education program. If you answered yes to every questions that I posed, I would like to offer my congratulations. History will be kind to you. If you answered no to one or more of the questions, then I have suggested an area(s) that you may want to review and develop ways to improve.

First and foremost you need to become an outstanding educator. Becoming an outstanding educator starts with well planned lessons that motivate and challenge students. The lessons are designed around problem solving situations that teach your students critical thinking skills. The lesson plans start with an interest approach that shows the students the need/importance of learning the material. The lessons include approaches to regain the wayward attention of your students. The lessons also include activities for the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners.

Learning that takes place inside a classroom will be enhanced if your students include an experiential learning component. The supervised agricultural experience program is the ideal component for using experiential learning. The experiential learning component is enhanced when the students know their decisions will result in the success or failure of the project. It is your role to supervise these activities and try to remove potential situations where the student could fail. The students must keep accurate records in order that every decision is an informed one.

Finally **all** students must be involved in the development of leadership, citizenship, and scholarship activities through active participation in the National FFA Organization at the local, state, and/or national levels. The key word is "all." The National FFA Organization is not for a select group of individuals. It is for every student in your program.

Very few of us will have the opportunity to be scrutinized by historians. If you implement the total agricultural education program concepts into your school, your students will benefit greatly from your instruction and if the opportunity presents itself, history will be kind to you and your program.

The opinions expressed are those of the editor and do not necessarily represent official positions and/or opinions of the Agricultural and Extension Education program, the Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Sciences, or West Virginia University.

Dr. Deborah Boone: 2008 Division of Resource Management Outstanding Service Award Winner

by Tim Phipps

Professor Deborah Boone recently received the Division of Resource Management Outstanding Service Award for 2008. Her award this year completes her Triple Crown of Division awards: she previously won the Outstanding Teacher Award in 2006 and the Outstanding Researcher Award in 2007.

Dr. Boone has always had a very strong service component to her work, particularly for an assistant professor. She serves on the WVU Extension Visiting Committee, an important committee designed to bring teaching and research at the University into closer contact with client groups. Dr. Boone's activities involve State-level service, including serving on the West Virginia AgriAbility Project Steering Committee which assists farmers and their families in dealing with physical disabilities and illness; service to her profession by chairing or serving on numerous committees at the regional and national levels of the American Association of Agricultural Education and being a member of professional and honor societies; and service to the College and University through committee work and her work as College VISTA/eCampus point of contact and service on the WVU task force for Technology-Based Learning and Academic Programs. She plays a continuing role in the FFA Career Development Events.

Field Experience Reflections: Six Things They Don't Tell You About Student Teaching

by John Workman

As an Agricultural & Extension Education major at West Virginia University you become prepared for many challenges and tasks in life. Gaining a broad knowledge of many different aspects of agriculture I felt that I was prepared for many career paths in agriculture. We take classes ranging from education to plant science with special education and animal and veterinary science in between. We learn about IEPs and the digestive systems of every livestock animal. We take classes to learn the history of our great university and extension service and classes like agricultural communications and teaching methods to become well rounded graduates. There are hundreds, no thousands of things we learn in order to go out and teach young minds. But let me tell you, they don't tell us everything.

When I walked into Wirt County High School Monday February 2nd I felt prepared. I felt my time at West Virginia University had me ready to teach. As classes came and went I introduced myself telling each class this line, "I am a student teacher, I am here to teach, and I hope that you will learn." I stressed the student part with I know that I am going to learn a lot from you as well. Saying that I would learn a lot from these students might be the understatement of the year. Time spent at West Virginia University did prepare me for those twelve weeks, but there were plenty of things for which I was not prepared. I have not decided if they do it on purpose, but of the thousands of things you learn about educating youth, there is many more that they don't teach. I learned many things that not once did I hear a professor or advisor tell me, or maybe they did and I was more worried about the football game that Saturday.

Experiences can teach us a lot of things. Mark Twain said that "A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn in no other way." To all those who are about to have the experience of teaching or to those interested in it, I have had that experience. I have carried that cat by the tail so learn from me. Remember the University prepares you to go out but they don't teach you everything. The following are six things that they don't tell you about student teaching.

Number 6- Kids can be brats - You read that right. If you are wondering why it was six things and not five, well it is because I had to get this one in. There will be days in your teaching experience where you can not stand the little brats. Some days your mood and theirs mix about as well as oil and water. You will butt heads all day and instead of using the tools you learned, you will just want to yell at them. Don't get too worried though there aren't many of these days. This too shall pass.

Number 5- Don't Rush it- When I starting teaching I wanted to rush through everything. I would get more done that way, I thought. Well, one day I was rushing through a turn on my way home and a guardrail got in my way. I wasn't hurt but my vehicle was a little banged up. It taught me a lesson that translated well. If you rush through it all to get more done, at some point you are going to hit that guardrail. You will burn yourself or your kids out or will end up leaving out something important. Just slow down and enjoy the scenery.

Number 4- Don't sweat the small stuff- You will want to be the best student teacher to walk the face of the earth, and you should. If you spend all your time knit picking, you are going to miss out on a lot of good times, not to mention drive yourself crazy. You are working with high school kids, the public school system, and not everything is going to go smoothly. Some days things just aren't going to work out but you can not dwell on that. Simply regroup and come back the next day ready to go again.

Number 3- You are NOT just teaching agriculture. This cannot be stressed enough. When you step into that high school agriculture room be ready to answer anything. I taught everything from sex education to politics and that's what you are supposed to do. If something is going on and students have questions, take the time to answer them. There are hundreds of teaching opportunities missed because people don't want to get off task. Don't be afraid to take half a class period and talk about an issue in the news or something on your classes mind. In the grand scheme of things your students may learn more from those moments than any others.

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Cockayne House Mysteries and Discoveries

by Thomas J. Tarowsky

Editor's Note: *As educators we stress the importance of record keeping in day-to-day decision making to our students in agricultural education. Nicole Shipman, Agricultural Education teacher at John Marshall High School, shared the following story with me about the "historical value" of SAE records. I found the article very interesting and decided to share it with News and Views readers.*

The article was written by Thomas Tarowsky, Program Director of Education for the Cockayne Farmhouse. Permission to reprint the article is courtesy of Mr. Tarowsky and the Intelligencer and Wheeling News-Register. For more information on the project, go to:http://www.cockaynefarm.com/.

This is the first in a series of columns about the curious and interesting items that the Marshall County Historical Society has identified and cataloged in the Cockayne House, and what they tell us about life in the Ohio Valley between 1850 and the turn of the current century.

Sam Cockayne's Vo-Ag Journal

It seems that most everyone in the Valley can recall the old, large farmhouse across from John Marshall High School. The Cockayne House has become a familiar landmark for the traveler on West Virginia Route 2.

As familiar as people are with the house, they know very little about the family that lived there for over 150 years. There is a good bit of curiosity and not a little bit of conjecture about the Cockaynes, and who they were, and what they were like.

Many Glen Dale residents recall the last resident of the house, Sam, as a very private (some would say reclusive) individual who led a solitary life in just a room or two of the farmhouse. From all accounts, Sam was passionate about his privacy, to the extent of quietly coming home from his World War II service a day earlier than expected, in order to avoid a hero's welcome at the train station.

Are there any clues about Sam hidden among the thousands of items that remain in the house today? Can we use these clues to figure out what made Sam tick? Can we gain an idea as to how he might have defined himself?

One of the little treasures that has recently been found and studied provides a good bit of insight as to Sam's interests through his high school career. From the fall of 1935 through the end of the school year in 1937, Sam was enrolled in the Vocational Agriculture curriculum at Moundsville High School. Each Vo-Ag student was required to keep a detailed record book of all his (or her) activities in the program, and Sam was no exception. This Record of Supervised Farm Practice in Vocational Agriculture provides much information.

His record-keeping was meticulous, and it tells us about the farm on which he lived and worked, his interests and the things that made him tick as well as his work ethic.

Just over an acre of the land that was the Cockayne farmstead remains with the house today. It is difficult for someone who wasn't here before the current high school was built to imagine that there was a large farm on the site of John Marshall High School, in what is now the middle of town. At the beginning of his enrollment in the Vo-Ag program at MHS, Samuel's instructor required him to document the scope of the farm at which he planned to work. On September 9, 1935, (according to Sam's Vo-Ag record book), the Cockayne farm consisted of 296 acres, of which 10 acres were planted in corn, 14 in oats, and 25 in hay. One hundred ninety-six acres were used as pasture. The rest was in timber. Sam also documented that the family's livestock included 15 cattle, 100 head of Merino sheep, 2 horses, and 50 chickens.

It was quite a large farm, compared to the average farm in Marshall County in 1935, which had 93.8 acres, according to the 1935 West Virginia Blue Book. We can also note that an important product of the Cockayne farm was Merino sheep, as it had been nearly 60 years before. (A framed certificate in the North Parlor of the house attests to the superior quality of the American Merino wool displayed by the Cockaynes at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.)

The list of farm equipment provides important information about the farm, as well. According to this list of resources, equipment included 5 walking/hand plows, 10 cultivators, 1 binder-thrasher, 1 rake-mower, 4 wagons, 1 sled, 1 lime spreader, 1 grain drill, 1 spike- and 1 spring-tooth harrow, 1 corn marker, 3 shears, 1 grain blower, 2 corn shellers, and 1 pair of harness. One item conspicuous in its absence from this list is a tractor.

Even in mid-1930's, young Sam and his father (also Samuel), and his brother (John) farmed 296 acres using what was (even then) becoming old-fashioned horsepower and a 2-horse team. There is no evidence of a motorized tractor, so the logical conclusion is that the binder-thrasher and rake-mower were horse-drawn, as were the plows.

So we have it: in living memory, less than 75 years ago, a prominent local farmer worked approximately 50 acres to raise feed for his livestock using horse-drawn equipment. This method of farming was beginning to fade in 1935, and became obsolete by the end of World War II.

Sam worked the land as did his father and grandfather before him. Photographs taken in the

late 1950's show him with his horses and his hay rake, in the field that has become the site of John Marshall High School.

Sam worked on 3 year-long enterprises during his enrollment in the Vo-Ag program: during his freshman year, he grew corn, raised sheep, and raised a sow pig. He rented the land he used from his father at the rate of $6.00 for the year.

In the end, his records indicated that there was more money, and better, in some phases of the business than in others. Growing corn proved to be the most labor-intensive of his projects, requiring 112 hours of Sam's time, with 54 of those hours spent using horse-drawn equipment. His profit of $68.45 came out to an hourly rate of $.60 per hour (which was comparable to that of industrial workers of the day.)

His sheep enterprise, including both shearing of the ewe as well as breeding and care of lambs netted him $.26 per hour, for the 27 hours that he put in. He also documented 87 hours work in the sow pig enterprise with a net profit of $.34 per hour.

Although the family business had for many years focused on raising American Merino sheep for both shearing and breeding purposes, the market had declined for this product well before Sam's high school years. The boom days for American Merino wool were in the latter years of the 1800s, and Sam's slim profits provide a clear illustration of industry's situation in the mid 1930's. (The West Virginia Encyclopedia reports that the number of sheep in West Virginia peaked at more than 800,000 in the late 19th century. Today there are only between 40,000 and 60,000 sheep in the state.)

Even though the family had significant resources in 1935, it would become more difficult for the sheep farming business to remain profitable with each passing year.

Field Experience Reflections: Passing the Torch

by Stacey Gleason

My high school agriculture teacher was the single most inspirational person I have ever known, giving me advice and lessons to live my life. He taught with charisma, excitement, and experience. He knew just how to command attention and leave students hoping for his class to never end. I can still hear him shouting at the top of his lungs, "Potatoes LOVE organic matter!" and advising all of his students to reach for something greater with an infamous slogan of "Always give 110%." To discipline, he entrusted that what affects one, affects all. Meaning if one student forgot his/her record book for class, we were all writing sentences. I can accurately say that this man, Mr. Bill West, shaped the teacher in me.

Over the past twelve weeks, I have given even more credit to Mr. West. I have modeled, in more ways than one, his same excitement and teaching techniques that captivated me all those years ago. However, there were quite a few things that Mr. West, and other professors, forgot to tell me before I began my student teaching experience. They left it for me to learn the underlying tricks of the trade the hard way, the ones that only come with experience.

Alongside the teachers and students of Preston County High School, I had my share of incidents and occurrences that helped me learn lessons I will remember for the rest of my career. For future student teachers, these are my words of guidance that you may or may not wish to occur during your field experience.

- Never rely on computers or technology; they will always fail you when needed the most.
- Take the extra time to listen to a student's hunting story…for the third time. You will be a better teacher for it.
- While driving, it is possible to hit a large metal feeder in a forty acre field. Just remember to laugh and enjoy the bumpy ride.
- During a digestion lab, never give a student a mallet and an apple piece expecting them to crush it gently. You will never find the entire apple to clean it up.
- All of the extra time spent after school and during class pays off when you watch your smiling student earn an award and say thanks for your help.
- Never throw the shop keys; they just may land inside of an unfilled block wall. A lost magnet and eight holes later, you still may not find them.
- Believe that Supervised Agriculture Experience Programs bring families closer; the proof can be seen in old cluttered barns, small fenced-in fields, and a proud father's grin.

After a few weeks of student teaching, I was unsure if this lifestyle was the right one for me. My days consisted of very little sleep, constant reading and computation of lessons, and invariable travel to and from Kingwood; I do not recall many moments spent away from my computer screen. As the weeks went by, my work load increased. At the peak of teaching, I was in charge of all classes presented throughout the day. This is when time truly became an issue. My life revolved around teaching, preparing students for contests, and questioning my desire to become a teacher.

Not until the Regional Scholastic Competition did I see the reason for all of the madness a teacher withstands. I helped prepare two girls for the creed competition and the

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Field Experience Reflections: Student Teaching

by Sandra Surgeon

On February 2, 2009 I arrived at Shady Spring High School. I had no idea what to expect. As I entered the Agriculture building I was greeted by Mr. McDougal and Mr. May. We discussed a few items such as: what I would like to teach and what I expected to gain from the experience.

The bell rang for the first class to begin, and I observed Mr. May's Ag. and Natural Resource IV class. Of course all of the students were curious about the lady sitting in their classroom. I introduced myself and Mr. May started to teach. The first week I was at Shady Springs, I was getting to know the students and how they responded to different situations.

My second week I attended the chapter field trip to Louisville, Kentucky. Overall I had a wonderful time on the trip with the students. I learned a lot about what to expect when taking a trip with 40 students for 3 days. There are always a few who seem to just want to cause trouble, but that happens in any situation.

By the third week I had picked up my first class. I found out real quick that 90 minutes is a long time to teach. It took me a few days to learn how much material I would need and how to use that material for an entire class period. Once I got that under control things seemed to get a little easier. I really enjoyed teaching. There were some students who would understand the information right away and others you would have to spend some extra time.

The fourth week I had the opportunity to pick up the freshman agriculture class. This was an experience in itself. I never realized what a difference there was in the maturity level from seniors to freshman. I had an eye opener the first day in the freshman class. They were full of questions for me and they never seemed to stay in their seats. They talked constantly! I learned to handle this problem by breaking the class up into sections so we did not spend the entire 90 minutes on one subject. This helped to keep their attention for the majority of the class period.

While in the freshman class I had a few individuals with IEPs. I, of course, had to modify some of my lesson plans so these students would not get left behind. After a while though, the students with the IEPs seemed to be getting some of the highest grades in the class and they were doing the same amount of work as everyone else. I found this to be rewarding because they did not need less work. They could do just as much as everyone else in the class and get a better grade.

I also had a student with cerebral palsy. He was in a wheelchair and did not have much vision. He was a very bright individual and anxious to learn. He needed assignments to be enlarged and had an instructional aide with him for the entire day. She told me that it was such a relief for her to come into the classroom and know that everything was already prepared and she did not have to worry about the student. This particular student came in everyday with a different story to tell. He would always ask how my day was and how I was doing. He put a smile on my face each and everyday. I could not wait for third block to come because I knew that he would cheer me up no matter what the situation was.

When I pick up my third class to teach, I soon realized this would be a great deal of work.

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Field Experience Reflections: An Unbelievable Roller Coaster

by Andrew Atwell

With my student teaching experiences coming to an end at Southern Garrett High School, I look back and it looks like I have taken a ride on a giant rollercoaster. Some days were completely awesome and some days just went to the bottom of the barrel. These experiences have proven that I really do wish to become an agricultural educator. It has been a long rough 12 week ride. Sometimes I wanted to jump but I am seriously going to miss my students and Mr. Kisner.

The day of my arrival at Southern Garrett was the first day of the new semester for these high school students. They were beginning a fresh change with all new classes. Most students that were coming into the new classes seemed to know Mr. Kisner and respected him.

I began by teaching a small engines class. I learned that the ag mechanics and ag science were split into term classes and so were landscape management and small engines. Plant science and greenhouse were paired during the whole semester. I felt privileged to be able to teach the hands on portions of small engines and agricultural sciences.

My first problem with my small engines and my agricultural mechanics classes was trying to get these students to pass their initial shop safety test. To me and you, it was not that hard right? Well, with some of these kids, they needed major motivation. I gave the students word banks, extra chances and tutoring, and eventually, I got everyone to pass that safety test. Maybe I could have changed the test, but it was a requirement in the program. That was one of the best days when the students passed all of their safety tests.

Now that we were through the safety and procedures portion of my small engines class, it was now time to pick up an agricultural sciences course and take on a bigger load. I thought we were ready to just hop out there in the shop! Wrong! I had to deliver several lessons before we could even begin on activities in the shop. It was like being a babysitter for high school kids some days and some days it was like the students were actually listening and raring to go use the techniques that I was lecturing about.

This is where classroom management comes in, and yes, I have learned a lot about classroom management. I have learned that your students will ask you anything and make some seriously rude comments. At the beginning, I did not know how to deal with these, but through my experience with Mr. Kisner, I have learned to not answer the students or divert their attention with a question not pertaining to the day's lesson.

I also learned to use Southern's discipline system. I had a lot of questions about it, but I eventually figured out how to use the level system. The system was hard to keep track of in the agenda book. Because of comments from teachers the school administration is going to change it so that each individual teacher can keep track of discipline records on one page.

I have learned that a lot of discipline issues stem from the teacher not being prepared or not having enough for the students to do for that particular day. I learned that the more you prepare the better off you are. If you prepare, you and your class will benefit and you won't be going crazy. This works unless you have a class where your students just refuse to do work. In an ideal world, you send these problem students to administration.

But that brings me to another issue: discipline and IEPs. I had to deal with a lot of discipline, behavior management and individual education plans. A number of my students had IEPs or BMPs or other special circumstances. I learned to work with these students and their special needs. My student teaching experiences taught me more about working with these special circumstance students than any other class at WVU could have.

By the end of the semester, I had picked up the key essentials of being a teacher. Planning, knowing your students and student management all came into play when we went from the shop back to the classroom mode with new subject matter. And man, did it pay off during my last 3 weeks teaching!

I think one of the biggest things that I can take home from this experience is one of communication. Communicate with everyone around you. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Use all of the resources that you have available to you, whether at the school, at the college, on the phone or Internet. You can learn a lot of things and hash out a lot of things just by talking to the right people.

Now, looking back over all of my experiences, I had an awesome time student teaching. I wanted to get up in the morning and drive the 62 miles to the school even though I was having a bad week or day. This in turn, underlies my principle: teaching can be a roller coaster, but I in fact know that I WANT TO BECOME AN AG TEACHER!

Andrew Atwell completed his student teaching experiences at South Garrett High School under the supervision of Mr. Steve Kisner.

Field Experience Reflections: Six Things ***(continued from page 2)***

Number 2- Enjoy it- A couple weeks before student teaching I had a bad attitude about it. I was sure I did not want to be a teacher and didn't know why I was student teaching. I was dreading it. Well this little brown haired girl I know gave me some advice. She simply said that it would fly by and it may be the last time I get to interact with students and the FFA so enjoy it. It sounds so simple and basic I know, but looking back it made all the difference in my experience. I decided to enjoy it and did I ever. Whether you are planning on teaching for the next thirty years or not, go into it with a positive attitude and enjoy the ride, because before you know it, it is over.

The number one thing that they never told me about student teaching I am not even sure I realized until April 30th, my last day. Wirt County's FFA Banquet was my last day at the school and as I watched those students accepting awards and putting on the banquet and as I said my goodbyes I realized something. Pay close attention cause this is the number one thing you need to know. You are going to love those kids - every single one of them - even the ones that often fell under number six. I shed some tears and so did the kids. I gave hugs and took pictures and promised I would come back often to check in on everyone. Not because that's what you are suppose to say and do, but because I love those kids, just like you will love yours.

I know that during my student teaching experience I did not do everything right. By no means was I the best student teacher to walk the earth, but what an experience it was. I have carried that cat by the tail and learned a lot of things I could not have learned any other way.

John Workman completed his student teaching experiences at Wirt County High School under the supervision of Mr. Nathan Taylor.

Field Experience Reflections: Passing the Torch *(continued from page 4)*

prepared public speaking contest. I, too, competed in these competitions in high school, with Mr. West as my coach. I cannot explain the nerves I felt before the winners were announced. My feelings were more so pronounced than if I had competed myself. Preston FFA took home multiple awards that day, and I feel I did as well. Those students thanked me for my time and commitment in assisting them to achieve their goals. This moment made it all worth it and made me less reluctant to give up my time outside of school.

Many other memories stand out in my mind. On the last day of student teaching, I assigned the students the task of writing words of advice for my future teaching career. I am so glad that I waited until after class to read their words, due to the emotions it would provoke. One student's advice was to always "wing it." I am sure you can figure out he was the class clown. Nearly all of the students asked me to never change. Other students wrote that they were going to miss me; some asked me not to leave. One student even said I was her favorite teacher. This made me truly appreciate my time and efforts spent at Preston County High School. My students were unforgettable. I had a new fish given to me as a gift to remember them. I have a letter that one student wrote to try to brighten my worse day. From time to time, I will read it and appreciate that this student thought enough of me to write those kind words.

During student teaching, I gave every ounce of knowledge, time, and energy I possessed. I dealt with hardships to the best of my ability. I gave 110% but was the recipient of so much more. I did not pursue a career in teaching for monetary reasons, but rather for the small daily rewards and blessings that present themselves in a student's smile or laugh. I feel that I have been passed the torch from any agriculture teacher, Mr. Bill West, to do everything in my power to create an excitement and passion for agriculture and, like him, instill in my students the love and contentment found in education.

Thank you to Mrs. Laah Wolford, Mr. Eric Frederick, and Mr. Ron Wilson. I consider you all true examples of heart and dedication in agriculture education. It was a pleasure to serve under you these past twelve weeks. To the students of Preston High, I can only hope my future students are as respectful, honest, and entertaining as you are.

"When you look at me, you do not see me, but rather every person I have met, every experience I've shared in my life. I've kept them with me." - William (Bill) Harmon

William (Bill) Harmon completed his student teaching experiences at Preston County High School under the supervision of Ms. Laah Wolford, Mr. Eric Frederick, and Mr. Ron Wilson.

Field Experience Reflections: Student Teaching (continued *from page 4)*

The class was Aquaculture and I had no idea what I was doing. I had never had an aquaculture class before, but I took it in stride. Once I had gotten through my first few days in aquaculture class I felt more comfortable with the subject. Mr. McDougal told me that even though I might not have known the information, that the students had no idea that I didn't know. This boosted my confidence, and I felt like I could teach any subject as long as I put my mind to it.

A week or so later I moved into the Meat Processing class. This too was an experience. The only background I had in meats was what we had done on the farm. I had helped slaughter a few pigs and cut some beef, but other than that I had no clue as to what precautions had to be taken or how the equipment worked in the lab. The students in the class also knew that I did not have much experience with meat processing. The students were all willing to answer my questions and explain to me how everything operated. I was not afraid to jump right in and help with the task at hand. We sliced hams for a week straight and I helped package all of the hams. By the end of that week I was so sick of ham, I couldn't even smell it without my stomach turning.

While at Shady I also had the opportunity to experience their Ham, Bacon, and Egg show. Their show is just for their school. There were 9 students in the show who each sold two hams and two bacons. Each student received about $1,000 each by the end of the night. I realized how much work had to be put into the process. The students had to secure bids from different companies in the area to ensure that their product would be sold. All of the students had stayed after school for several days trimming their hams and bacons so they would look their best for judging. I think the Ham, Bacon, and Egg show is a wonderful FFA activity.

Overall I would have to say that my student teaching experience was wonderful. I learned a lot about how to deal with students in different situations, and how to teach a class with a mix of students at different levels. I also found out that a teacher never has the full 180 days of instruction. There are so many interruptions in a day that no matter how organized you are, you never stay on task. I think that I will truly enjoy the teaching profession.

Sandra Surgeon completed her student teaching experiences at Shady Spring High School under the supervision of Mr. Joe McDougal and Mr. James May.

Field Experience - Spring 2009

Front Row: Jessica Shockley - Jefferson County Extension Service; Sandra Surgeon - Shady Spring High School; LeeAnn Miller - Cameron High School; Stacey Gleason - Preston County High School

Back Row: Joshua Rice - Hundred High School; Andrew Atwell - South Garrett High School; Cody Dent - Preston County High School; John Workman - Wirt County High School

Research in Action: *Current Practices Utilized by Independent Garden Centers to Extend the Profitable Season by Returning Customers, Raising Profit Margins and Implementing New Practices*

by Nona Hunt, N. K., & Gartin, S. A.

Horticulture is a vast global industry that involves everything from nursery-plant growth to grounds maintenance, to retail production and sales. The green industry has a tremendous economic impact on the United States. According to Hall, Hodges and Haydu (2004), the green industry economic impacts in 2002 for the United States were estimated at $147.8 billion in output, 1,964,339 jobs, $95.1 billion in value added products, $64.3 billion in labor income, and $6.9 billion in indirect business taxes. For the wholesale/retail sectors, total output impacts were $55.5 billion, employment impacts were 910,104 jobs, and value added impacts were $35.5 billion (Hall, et al., 2004). In the United States lawn and garden stores were second to landscaping services in employment at 347,916 jobs and $14.8 billion value added products (Hall, et al., 2004).

Retail horticulture is a seasonal business in parts of the United States. The retail sector of the green industry experiences highs and lows in sales volume that is linked to the season and weather conditions. The growing season for annuals and vegetable plants in West Virginia is approximately from mid May to mid October according to the National Weather Service Forecast Office (2005). The majority of gardening done by the typical consumer is usually completed during this time because vegetables and annuals will have completed their growing cycles.

The purpose of this study was to identify the measures that independently owned retail garden centers subscribe to extend their profitable season beyond the spring and early summer. This study was descriptive survey research conducted with independent retail garden centers (N=248) that were members of the Ohio Floriculture Association as of November 2006, and resided in West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky. A total of 32 completed surveys were returned, for a 12.9% response rate.

Findings

Demographic data indicate that 19 of the respondents (59.4%) were male, while 13 (40.6%) were female. The highest level of education of 14 respondents (43.8%) was high school diploma while the highest level of 14 respondents (43.8%) was a bachelor's degree. Three respondents (9.3%) held an associate's degree while one of the respondents (3.1 %) had a two year post secondary degree. Six of the respondents (18.8%) were between the ages of 30-39 years. Nine respondents (28.1 %) were between the ages of 40-49 years and 11 respondents (34.3%) were 50-59 years old. The remaining six respondents (18.8%) were 60-69 years old. Of the respondents two (6.3%) were certified horticulturists and 30 (93.7%) were not. The number of years of operation for all garden centers was identified by the respondents. Three of the respondents (9.4%) had been in operation less than five years. Five of the respondents (15.5%) had been open for 6-10 years while two garden centers (6.3%) had been in operation for 11-15 years. Two (6.3%) garden centers had been in operation for 16-20 years and 20 of the respondents (62.5%) had been operating for 20 or more years. Respondents were asked whether or not garden centers as a whole should close during the winter and only be open for the spring and summer months. Nineteen garden centers (65.5%) said no to closing for the winter. Ten respondents (34.5%) said yes garden centers should be closed during the winter.

The top three practices currently subscribed by garden centers to extend the profitable season were identified in each of the 10 questionnaire categories. Live pumpkins, Halloween decorations and custom made decorations (e.g., wreaths, swags) were the most used Holiday Merchandise or Services. In the Children's Activities category letting children plant their own plants to take home, photos with Santa and a petting zoo were the most popular. The newspaper, utilizing a company website and the radio were the most used forms of advertisement.

Gardening basics, planting and plants that attract birds and butterflies were used the most as educational seminars. The most widely used services for the community was donation of plants to public areas, donation of supplies to public areas (e.g., mulch) and a local craft show. The most widely used services for customers were custom container design (e.g., hanging baskets, patio planters), landscape design and landscape installation.

The most popular lines of plant material were summer blooming perennials, perennials and summer annuals (e.g., wave petunias). The most popular lines of merchandise were hard goods (e.g., pottery, statues, etc), hummingbird supplies and wind chimes. The top three adjustments to the business or location garden centers already had in effect were knowledgeable and experienced staff, customer friendly staff and neat and clean aisles and displays. The three most popular forms of customer appreciation were percent-off sale events, seasonally dated coupons and spend $50 get free gift.

Conclusions

The ten most successful practices *in getting customers to return* identified by independent garden center retailers, were (in order of successfulness); customer friendly staff, knowledgeable and experienced staff, growing your own plants to allow for diverse product mix, larger sizes of annuals, summer annuals (e.g., wave petunias), neat and clean aisles and displays, perennials, customer designed containers (greenhouse grows until pickup date), larger sizes of perennials and summer blooming perennials.

The ten most successful practices *in raising profit margins* identified by independent garden center retailers were (in order of successfulness); customer friendly staff, knowledgeable and experienced staff, growing your own plants to allow for diverse product mix, raise prices on all items, larger sizes of annuals, custom container design (e.g., hanging baskets, patio planters), display gardens, establish a "greeter" at entrance, summer annuals (e.g., wave petunias) and customer designed containers (greenhouse grows until pickup date).

Seven practices in the study were not being used by garden centers. These included: sell Easter pets (e.g., chicks, ducks, bunnies), maintaining deck wood, maintaining outdoor furniture, preserving birdhouses and feeders, using landscape lighting to accent gardens at night, add a bakery and add an ice cream shop.

Recommendations

The researcher makes the following recommendations based on the results of the research: Independent retail garden centers should continue to look "outside the box" for ways to return customers to the store as well as raise profit margins. Independent retail garden centers should acquire retail horticulture publications which are often full of ideas on returning customers to the store and raising profit margins.

Nona Hunt earned Bachelor (2006) and Master of Science (2008) degrees in agricultural education from West Virginia University. Dr. Stacy Gartin was Nona 's graduate advisor. The complete thesis can be accessed at https://eidr.wvu.edu/etd/documentdata.eTD?documentid=5630.

Important Dates

Jul 8-11	WV State FFA Convention	Cedar Lakes
Jul 29-31	Technical and Adult Education Conference	
Aug 16	4-H & FFA Dairy Cattle CDE	Jackson's Mill
Sep 22-24	Career Development Events	Morgantown

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