

Pennsylvania Farm Show

Animal Tech students show their worth



By Gary Weckselblatt

Casey Keeler can't remember a year she didn't attend the Pennsylvania Farm Show with her parents. But on Sunday, the Upper Bucks County Technical School junior from Quakertown got to show an animal at the the nation's largest indoor agricultural event for the first time.

And the results were a first-place ribbon for Casey and her pig, August. "I was nervous at first," she said. "He likes to run up to the fence. Once I got him away from it, we were fine and I felt better. He's my puppy dog. I love him so much."

UBCTS teacher Caitlyn Danka's Animal Technology team brought 16 students to the fair from Quak-

ertown Community, Palisades and Pennridge high schools. The 103rd farm show, which runs from January 5-12 and has nearly 6,000 animals, 10,000 competitive exhibits and 300 commercial exhibits, was first held in 1917.

Mary Miller-Ettwein, who taught the

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program at UBCTS for 38 years before her retirement a year and a half ago (her students included Mrs. Danka and Casey's parents), said the expo is an "unbelievable experience" for students. "This is a commitment that has some longevity, money and time to it," she said. "The teamwork and commitment is amazing. All of these kids work together. It's a team-building activity like sports."

That work includes class time, after school and even weekends caring for the animals. With that effort, students develop an affection for the animals they care for, which can be unsettling as the fair is a one-way trip.

"It's a really hard concept, and I'm probably going to cry when he goes," Casey said of August. "But you know what you're getting into."

Emily Minnichbach, a Quakertown senior, said "You've given them a really good life and cared for them in the right way." She received a fifth-place ribbon Saturday after showing her lamb.

Emily plans to be a dog groomer and shearing animals has helped her. "It all works together," she said. "I've always been interested in animals. The tech school has given me this extra opportunity. It's how I learned I wanted to be a dog groomer."

Mrs. Danka said "This has been an excellent experience for our students. They learn responsibility, and they see what good, ethical farming looks like."

Besides Casey and Emily, UBCTS students working the show included, Kiersten Divergigelis, Isabella Urban, Danielle Justice, Kristin Sanderlin, Casey Rotenberger, Nina Slifer, Courtney Wood, Alexia Peters-Strickland, Joyce Dowd, Katelyn Currier, Justin Rosenberger, Elyse Rosenberger, Brianna Bradley, Caleb Roth, Kerrin Long and Sierra Kapusta.

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Casey Keeler, above with August, sports her champion trophy in the Junior Market Swine category Sunday at the Pennsylvania Farm Show.





