

Farmer's Market

Black sheep farmer breaks even with costly hobby

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

Mary Jo Griffith comes to Farmington Community Center's Farmer's Market, which runs on Saturdays from August through October, bringing black fleece, eggs, herbs and handmade quilts.

Offering wares in an open market is a first-time venture for the woman who tends about 50 black sheep, along with some goats, chickens and turkeys on her ten-acre farm in Northville.

Her husband, Dick, jokes that he has to work in the city to pay for his wife's hobby of raising sheep.

But she counters that she has been breaking even for a couple of years now which puts her ahead of most persons with expensive leisure time activities.

Mrs. Griffith says her weekly food bill for her family of four is the same as it was 15 years ago, and so far as she knows she has no competition for her black fleece in metropolitan Detroit.

MRS. GRIFFITH'S customers for

raw black fleece, sheared from the lambs each April, is sold to spinners and weavers from throughout Michigan. She is familiar with Michigan Handspinners, one of the more prestigious groups of spinners and weavers whose members meet monthly in Farmington Hills Community Library.

The fleece must be hand-washed, protected from the sun, teased to clean, then carded, (or combed) before it is ready for spinning.

"Spinning is simple," said the woman who spins and weaves herself.

"The finished product is spun yarn, the same as you would but in a store to be used for knitting or crocheting."

The real purists will even dye their own home-spun yarn with colors they make from the marigolds or violets in their own gardens.

Fleece comes in many shades, from white to black, in all the earth colors, "but for some reason black is either popular here or maybe rare here, I'm not sure," Mrs. Griffith said.

The sheep in Mrs. Griffith's yard



Sheep and goats get tender loving care from Mary Jo Griffith who traded life in the city for life on a 10-acre farm in Northville and now specializes in raising black sheep. She's one of several dozen nearby

farmers who will be bringing produce to Farmington Community Center's Farmer's Market that opens Aug. 2. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

looked to be of different colors this month, but weren't. "They have just started to oxidize from the sun," she explained.

THE GRIFFITHS traded condo living in the city for their farm, which at

first was stocked with horses for the couple's two children.

"But we gave that up when the kids found out it was work."

"Besides, I was having a rough time of it handling such large animals. We

bought some goats, then I got interested in black sheep," Mrs. Griffith said.

"Now one of the lambs thinks I'm its mother."

The lamb she spoke of is known as a "bummer lamb," one who has for no known reason, been rejected by its mother.

works with her 80-year old grandmother, Vera Segur, to fashion popular Early American designs.

"I do the patchwork and my grandmother does the hand quilting," Mrs. Brock said, showing an array of colorful and familiar samples.

"I have no favorites," she said. "I'd like to keep them all and I would if I had room for them."

Shopping hours in Farmer's Market is from 9 a.m. to noon for 13 Saturdays beginning Aug. 2 on the center's grounds, 24705 Farmington Road.

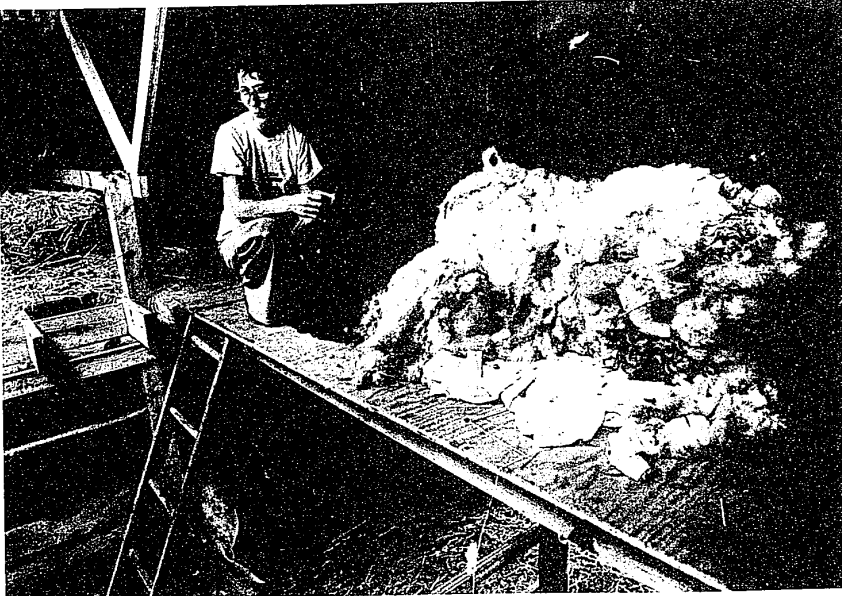
Goats serve as meal for the Griffiths, with recipes coming from one of the many farm and animal magazines the family gets each month. And the family has completed foregone cow's milk in lieu of goat's milk for both drinking and cooking.

Mrs. Griffith and Mrs. Brock will join vendors who will be selling fresh fruits and vegetables, honey, jelly, mushrooms, flowers and plants. There will be a few quality crafts for sale.

Some of the vendors are farmers. Some are backyard gardeners with home-grown surplus. Many are offering products and produce for sale for the first time.

MRS. GRIFFITH will bring her neighbor, Jody Brock, with her to help man their booth at Farmer's Market.

Mrs. Brock is a quilt maker who



Part of the Griffith's hay loft is used for storing fleece from the April shearing. Fleece from each sheep is baled and weighed, with an average of eight pounds to the bale. Fleece is sold to the weavers and

spinners throughout the metropolitan area. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Nutrition education efforts win award

Along with reducing America's waistline, one of Weight Watchers major undertakings has been the fostering of a greater understanding of the importance of improved nutrition for those of all ages and sizes.

For these efforts, Weight Watchers has been awarded "The Gold Leaf Certificate of Merit," a national award given by Family Circle Magazine and Food Marketing Institute.

The award cites Weight Watchers "for creating outstanding nutrition, educational and community public service materials."

Florine Mark, president of Weight Watchers in this area, said the distribution of the nutrition education literature created has reached expectant mothers, new mothers, teen-agers and families, and many are available without charge.

The scope and caliber of the nutrition educational programs being implemented by Weight Watchers are illustrated by a series of new brochures.

U.S. Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, and draws a parallel between these goals and the objectives of the programs offered by Weight Watchers.

"Be the Best" offers some answers to questions about overweight that are most frequently asked by teen-agers. This brochure tells teens that proper nutrition can be of immense importance in helping them to reach the top of their looks, their strength and their talent.

"The Fat Child: Born or Made?" talks about how heredity, early feeding practices and eating habits relate to overweight problems among infants.

"Overweight And Your Health: The Vital Connection" is an analysis of the impact obesity can have on general health. Specifically, the brochure details the relationship between overweight and a host of systemic ailments such as heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory problems.

"Snacking on a Weight Control Program" has information on how to snack without sabotaging a weight control program. The brochure spells out rules

for controlling the urge to snack and describes which foods are suitable for snacking.

The brochures are free and available by writing Weight Watchers, P.O. Box 125 LV, Southfield, 48076. Weight Watchers ask that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed with the request.

THE GOLD LEAF Award was established six years ago as part of a concerted effort to support education programs and improved nutrition for all Americans.

The panel of judges included home economics educators, government and public interest representatives who lauded Weight Watchers for its "leadership and important contributions to nutrition education."

This is the second time Weight Watchers has been honored with the Gold Leaf Award. In 1977 the organization received a "Certificate of Recognition" for a public service brochure called "Nutrition, Weight Control and You." Mrs. Mark estimates about 6 million copies of that brochure have been distributed.



FLORINE MARK

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