

Kensington's Farm Center shows how a farm runs

By Lem Meese
staff writer

A tour of the Kensington Farm Center is more than an hour-long look at animals, crops and equipment. There's a message.

"The main theme is where our food comes from — basic processing," said Dave Mollanen, the one-time law student who loves the outdoors more than urban life.

"We're closely tied to the land. We want you to ask: When you plan a shopping center, is it on good farmland? We're concerned about the loss of farmland."

The farm center where Mollanen is supervising interpreter is on a former "gentleman's farm" at the north end of

outdoors

Kensington Metropark near Milford. People can see farm animals at the Belle Isle Children's Zoo and even at Greenfield Village, but the Kensington Farm Center shows visitors how a farm actually operates.

VISITORS can take self-guided tours (there are two-by-three foot signs at each stop), or arrange a group tour by calling the Huron-Clinton Metroparks main office in Detroit at 961-5885.

Mollanen and two assistants, Lori Anderson and Ann Wiersma, also offer

special programs in farm chores, garden insects, goat care, canning and drying food (but not freezing), spinning and quilting.

"I grew up on a small farm," said Mollanen, 31, a graduate of Western Kettering High. He earned a degree in economics from the University of Michigan in 1971 and put in a year in law school.

"But I wanted to be outside," he decided. He took a job at the Kensington Golf Course in 1974 while working on a degree in natural resources at U-M.

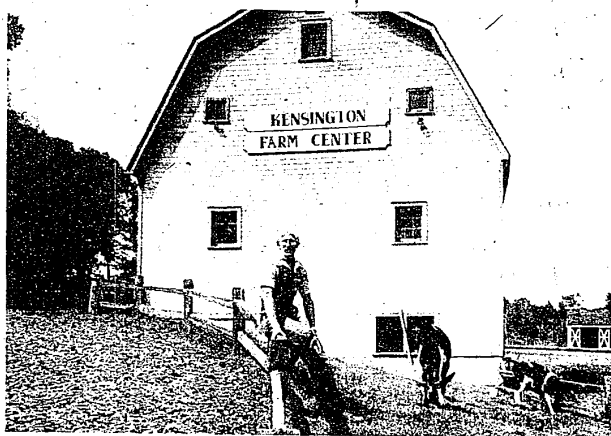
A part-time job opened up in 1976 at the nature center on the west side of Kensington, and Mollanen jumped at it. He led plant and wildflower hikes and developed a popular program on lumbering called "When Pine Was King."

And he helped make ends meet teaching courses on wilderness survival in Howell and landscaping with native trees and shrubs in South Lyon.

A PRIVATE corporation was first operator of the Kensington Farm Center but couldn't make a go of it, and the five-county Huron-Clinton Metroparks Authority bought out the farm assets early last year.

The farm center includes a restaurant (open 11-5 weekdays and 9-5 weekends and holidays).

Mollanen was appointed supervising farm interpreter in February and put in charge of the educational programs.



Dave Mollanen at the Farm Center, which he manages. He loves the outdoors more than urban life.

could you survive?

from the Air Force Survival School

During periods of dry weather, the potential for brush or forest fires is extremely high. In many forest areas restrictions are placed on the use of open campfires, even for cooking.

Some areas still will permit the use of gas or propane stoves during these periods. If you are in one of these areas, which of the following statements is true?

- Since these stoves are relatively safe, no special precautions are necessary.
- It is best to treat these stoves

as any fire and use them only in a safely cleared area.

This one is simple but still very important: "b" is the correct response. Although most of these stoves are safe if used according to the manufacturer's directions, don't take chances.

By the way, never use aluminum foil or similar material to line the bottom of propane stoves. It may keep the stove cleaner, but since propane is heavier than air, fumes can gather beneath the foil and cause an explosion the next time you light it.

Traffic is picking up. "Last August we had 4,000 come through, and we're expecting more this year," said Mollanen. Some remodeling and rearranging are almost finished. There are paved walks for the convenience of strollers and the handicapped.

A SUBTLE theme runs through ev-

everything Mollanen says and does.

It is more than identifying and classifying plants and animals for the curious. It is that human beings are dependent on the land for their livelihoods, and that someone has to do the work of caring for it all.

There is concern for the cycle of life. Two of the Belgian draft horses are

mares expecting foals in May or June. In the sheep pen, four of the ewes are pregnant. A cow has recently calved. A couple of neutered animals will be sold off and replaced with animals capable of reproducing.

Not only can kids see, hear and smell farm animals, said Mollanen, but some get a chance to milk Blossom, the cow.

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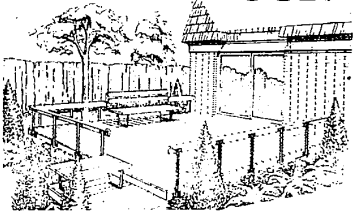
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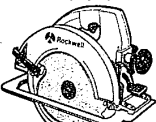
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