

Mentone Library Beefs Up Agricultural Section

by Heidi Carpelan

It took the combined efforts of Floyd Fithian, Mentone area farmers and librarian Madeleine Fisher, but the Bell Memorial Public Library in Mentone now has an up-to-date, expanded agricultural section.

The library, which serves three townships in Kosciusko County, even offers an after-hours number for farmers needing repair manuals in an emergency.

Former farm girl Fisher was aware of the inadequacy of most small libraries in carrying farm publications, and as she says, "after all, the small library is the one most likely to be serving rural communities and their farmers."

Today her yellow agricultural book list can be found at several places in the community including the local coffee shop and tucked in with billing statements from a Mentone agricultural supply firm.

From a veterinary guide for farmers to beginning hydroponics, from information on gate-building to beekeeping and welding, the Mentone library has just about everything that a farmer could find of in-

terest. The books were selected from publishers' catalogs by area farmers, who indicated what they thought would be interesting as well as useful.

The result? After several months of advertising the availability of the books, Fisher says she hasn't had "a horde of farmers," but many are coming in.

"Farmers gave up on the libraries long ago," she notes. "There was nothing for them there, so they're out of the habit of going. The process of reeducation is a long one."

However, she said, she does have many young farmers coming in. One woman continuously checked out a book on dairying until she finally decided to buy her own so others could have a chance to read it. Another young man, who was working on his car, contacted Fisher after hours in order to borrow a manual with reassembly instructions.

Fisher initially had a difficult time getting a list of available agricultural publications. Several letters to Purdue went unacknowledged, so "after steaming awhile" she wrote Congressman Floyd Fithian and asked

"Where can I turn if extension ignores me?"

Several days later Fithian responded that she could expect a book list from the university shortly. And shortly Purdue did send her "an enormous computer printout."

From there on the task was given to area farmers to select worthwhile publications. So far the library has purchased almost \$2,000 of agricultural materials, and Fisher expects to spend about that much again this year.

"I'd like to get to the point where farmers think there is something for them at the library," Fisher said.



MADELEINE FISHER, librarian at Bell Memorial Public Library in Mentone, was instrumental in the building of the library's expanded agricultural section. (Exchange photo)

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The Farmer's Exchange

Handicapped Farmers in Session

There are several hundred working handicapped farmers in the country.

About 15 per cent of Indiana farmers have some types of physical disability and three to five per cent of

of his frustrations is not being able to work with his hands and his body any more.

Field said that most of the about 50 farmers who attended the conference

with the help of a portable lift mounted on a tractor. He also does some cultivating, after he is helped onto a smaller tractor. His father does the planting.

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