



# home fields

## PASSING OF THE REINS

### MEET THE WEBERS

Many factors had to coincide in the planning stage of *Homefields* for our dream to take flight. A critical element was locating a suitable site and we were fortunate to find a perfect match in Earl and Margaret Weber's property. We are greatly indebted to them for their understanding during the lengthy process of



Margaret (front left) and Earl Weber (seated) giving a tour of the grounds.

closing, and we couldn't have asked for kinder people to pass the reins of responsibility for their horseboarding farm.

Earl was on the Board of Directors of what is now the *Occupational Development Center*, and is a former Professor of Industrial Arts and Dean of the Graduate School at Millersville University. Margaret, an Equitation instructor for thirty years, taught as many as 80 students a week. They took a personal interest in seeing that *Homefields* got off the ground, and warmly received us with produce

from their garden whenever we toured the farm.

The Webers regularly compete in pleasure driving shows; Margaret has won first prize in a sheep-to-shawl contest at the Pennsylvania State Farm Show, and they recently returned from a carriage competition in Canada. They're gearing up for the marriage of a friend, which will take place on the property in October. Earl and Margaret will be moving to Lititz in October, and our hearts will go with them.

### AND THE NEW SITE

The main building at *Homefields* is a three-story stone farm house built around 1800. It is flanked by a sun porch, protected by windows, that face seven acres of rolling fields. There are two barns which currently house horses and carriages, and a whitewashed tool shed. A detached ranch house was built for Earl's parents. This will become a home for three residents.

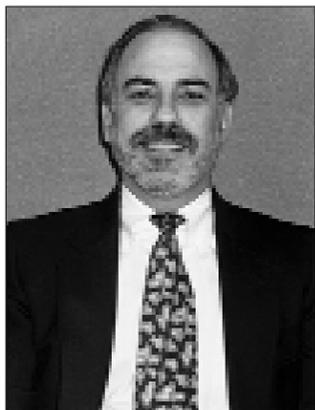
Earl planted all of the trees on the property save two. There is a willow behind the house, shielding a verdant backyard. Other deciduous trees fringe the property, coaxing wildlife into the area. A few evergreens dot the remaining acreage. A fenced-in garden rests between the main house and the ranch, providing plenty of produce. Accessibility is through public transportation, and a driveway leads from Letort Road, past the ranch house, behind the main building, and around the barns. Even the zoning is perfect. □

## KUDOS TO MH/MR

STU SYMONS, DIRECTOR OF THE LANCASTER COUNTY Office of Mental Retardation, deserves special mention in this edition of the newsletter. Without his guidance and knowledge of 'the system,' it is doubtful that we would have gotten to this point as quickly as we have.

We were initially hopeful that Stu would send someone from his office to attend a few of our meetings. It was a pleasant surprise to see him arrive in person at our

first meeting. Now, after two years of two-hour-long evening meetings each month, he's still

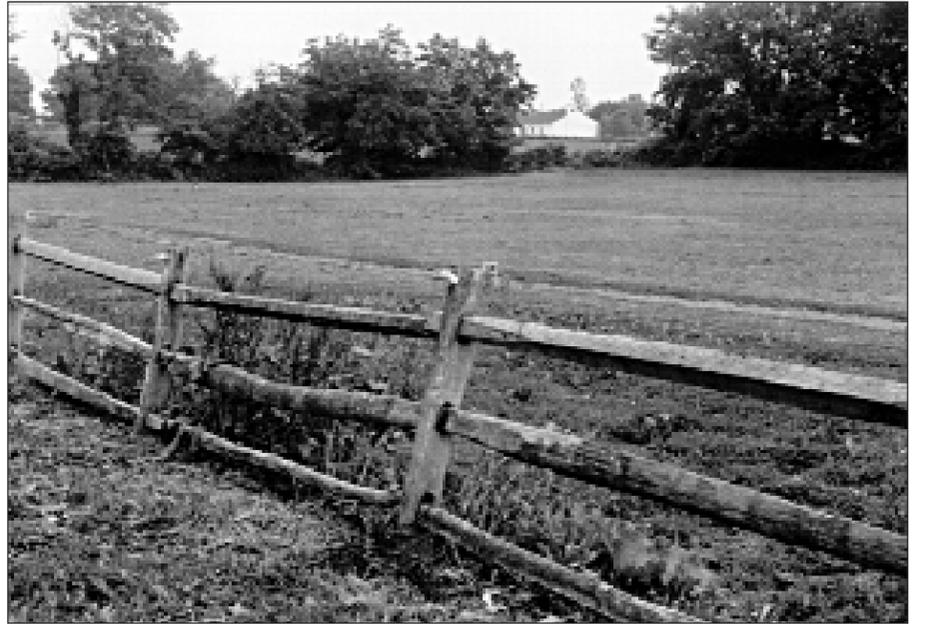


coming in person, pointing out pitfalls and possibilities.

In future editions of this newsletter, we will have columns that introduce you to members of *Homefields* Board of Directors, examples of community support, resident and day program participant profiles, and family members who made *Homefields* possible. □

## LOGOTYPE

A note about the new logo (above) and the typesetting of this newsletter. A Boston artist and a New York designer collaborated with us on the logo, which combines a rooster—implying awakening and a new dawn—with a weather-vane—symbolizing direction and guidance. All work was performed free of charge. The logo will appear on our stationery and business cards, to be printed soon. This newsletter is edited and produced pro bono in New York, and printed in Lancaster County. □



# WELCOME TO HOMEFIELDS

by THOMAS STRAUSS

As adolescents, we all dreamed of following self-determined paths toward independence and restlessly pursued that goal until it became a reality. At some point, we moved away from home and began to explore a larger world, mixing new friends with old ones and facing challenges previously unthought of. This is all a natural part of growing up.

Unfortunately, many differently-abled adults are prevented from experiencing this joy for themselves. In Lancaster County, there are twice as many individuals on waitlists for group homes as are actually housed in them, with openings available only for emergency placements. What this means is that there are a lot of young men and women living with parents too long. This situation limits the growth and happiness of both parents and children—a double tragedy. Furthermore, if employment opportunities are available, they're often limited to infrequent contracts and governmental supplements.

*Homefields* is a non-profit organization comprised of families and professionals in fields ranging from agriculture to mental health. We were formed in 1992 to ameliorate the aforementioned situation as the only agriculturally-based day program in Lancaster County. Our two major purposes are: To create a residential program for those unable to find another, and; to enhance existing day programs, both under the auspices of the Lancaster County Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation.

The former goal is well in sight. Federal and state governments have approved our non-profit status, funding for staff has been secured, and an eight-acre farm has been purchased (see side story) with a down payment generously provided by family members. The second goal—the day program—will involve a minimum of fifteen individuals in primarily agricultural endeavors. Being situated on Letort Road, a few blocks from Millersville University, affords us an excellent opportunity to develop a symbiotic relationship with students and professors of agriculture and special education. These innovative academicians will complement our core group of experienced members.

Our immediate concern is to be nurturing, stable, and secure, however long-term endeavors are limited only by the ingenuity of those involved. One necessity is to fully employ residents' and day-program participants' abilities through the winter season. Firing mugs and pots, growing Christmas trees, arranging flowers, and selling baked goods are only a short list of alternative possibilities. The underlying philosophy is that a farm setting not only provides innumerable options for adults to explore at their own rates, but is actually shaped by their interests. Participants will have the chance

**Homefields will be a desirable setting for people of various abilities to be self-supporting while having fun.**

to sell their products at an on-site stand and market them in neighboring communities, allowing them to be active and social presences. The farm, ringed by trees and visited by birds and rabbits, provides a serene and 'grounding' environment that will only become more so with the addition of farm animals and house pets. *Homefields* will be a desirable setting for people of various abilities to be self-supporting while having fun.

Among other sources, our current support of time and talent comes to us from **The Sight Saving Center · Farm-land Preservation Trust · Barley, Snyder, Senft and Cohen · The ARC of Lancaster County · The Intercourse News · Community Services Group · Derck & Edson · Ephrata Area Rehabilitation Services · Occupational Development Center and Trout, Ebersole and Groff.** This newsletter is our voice. If you would like to add a friend to it—or send us comments or suggestions—our address is always listed below. □