

City Slickers program gets city, country folks together

By **CARI NOGA**
Courier Staff Writer

WATERLOO

Have you ever seen a 900-ton pile of anything? Sifted through a handful of cracked-shell corn? Have you seen a litter of 4-H pigs up close?

Participants in the Grout Museum's program, "A City Slicker's Look at Farming," beginning Thursday will get a chance to do all of the above.

Presented in conjunction with the Black Hawk Soil and Water Conservation District, the City Slickers program is an effort to get rural and urban citizens to interact, and to demonstrate the economic, environmental and cultural contributions of agriculture.

That's according to the mission statement on the program brochure. Put in plainer English, the goal is this: Teach city folk that a heck of a lot of effort goes into getting food to the grocery store.

"There's a need, even in Iowa, to edu-

cate people about farming," said Pat Lichty, who with her husband, Randy, will host a field trip for program participants Saturday. Their farm is the place where 900 tons of silage — livestock feed — is kept, as well as the cracked-shell corn and the 4-H pigs.

"It used to be, a generation ago, everybody had a connection to the farm. It was either your parents or grandparents. But now, those connections are fewer and farther in between," Lichty said.

Funded in part by a \$5,100 grant from the Iowa Humanities Board and the National Endowment for the Arts, City Slickers is a four-part series. Each part consists of two sessions — one Thursday evening lecture at the Grout and one field trip to a farm the following Saturday.

It all begins at 7 p.m. Thursday at the museum. At the first session, participants will hear speakers discuss how farms have changed in this century, from a cultural/family, environmental and economic perspective.

Then, on Saturday, participants will meet at the museum and travel by bus to the Lichty farm, 15 minutes south of Waterloo. The family farms about 1,000 acres of grain, half of which is fed to the 500 cattle they raise each year, and to their 400-500 hogs.

The business of farming requires considerable capital investment and ability to withstand risk, Randy Lichty said.

"People will see connections between their lives in the city and what is going on on the farm," said Carolyn Carpenter, Grout Museum education/programming director.

Subsequent program topics are "Dirt and Drink: Soil and Water Conservation" in July; "Bringing in the Sheaves: Harvest" in October; and "From Moo to Milkshake: Dairying" in December.

The Grout is combining City Slickers with an agriculture exhibit set to open this September, "Living Legacies: Black Hawk County's Century Farms and Businesses."

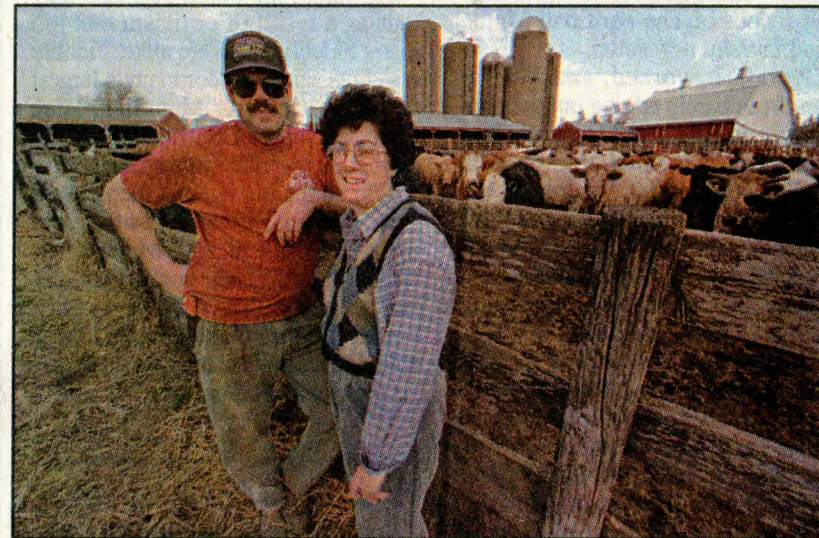
City Slickers is modeled after a program the Johnson County SWCD began in 1994, the Non-Farmers Guide to Agriculture. Amy Bouska, project grant coordinator there, said the demographics of the county, which includes Iowa City, made it ripe for such a project.

"There is a demand for this kind of information. We have a highly educated, environmentally active population here in Johnson County," she said. "It's an urbanizing county. We have a lot of people living in the fringe area."

During the two years Johnson County has run NFG, attendance has averaged between 40 and 50 people per session, Bouska said.

Carpenter hopes to attract 30 participants to the Grout's first program. Cost is \$2.50 per person per session (\$5 total for both the Thursday lecture and Saturday field trip) or \$15 for all four parts.

Interested participants may call the Grout at 234-6357 to preregister or for more information.



BRANDON POLLOCK / Courier Staff Photographer

Randy and Pat Lichty will open their farm south of Waterloo Saturday to participants in the Grout Museum's program "A City Slicker's Look at Farming." The four-part series begins Thursday and runs all year, combining lectures and field trips on different ag topics.