

# City teenagers learn farm life

By GARRY MURDOCK  
The Herald

Ross Johnstone, a 17-year-old Mississauga youth, has been spending his summer at Georgetown's Falgerbrook Farms on Trafalgar Road.

Richard Kunica, owner of the farm, has become Ross's sponsor, partaking in a Junior Agriculturalist program which is designed to bridge the rural-urban gap between city teenagers and farm life.

The program began on June 25 and involves 130 city teenagers who are working on farms for the first time.

The host farm family teaches a student about life on a farm and in return, receives summer assistance.

Junior Agriculturalists, such as Ross, are chosen for the program because of their interest in agriculture.

Although no experience is required, a desire to learn must be shown by the student as well as enthusiasm and a sense of maturity.

Host families, on the other hand, must have an interest in both the student and the goals of the program. The program has been implemented all across Ontario and is now in its 19th year.

The program has three primary goals: 1) Give the youth the chance to gain valuable experience on a farm; 2) Allow the individual to develop an appreciation and understanding of rural living and 3) The farmer is given aid in return for teaching.

Ross, whose primary goal is to be a veterinarian, has been in-

terested in farming for the past few years.

Although his duties mainly confine him to the barn working with animals, which consist mainly of cows, he does from time to time engage in field work.

It was with this goal in mind, to someday be a veterinarian, that Ross undertook the program, knowing this would be a good opportunity to learn more about animals.

For the last four years, he has worked at the Southdown Animal Clinic in Mississauga, usually on Saturdays and one day a week after school.

He has done everything from assisting in operations to general clean-up duties.

Ross finds the program exciting, saying working on a farm is a "different experience from working with dogs or cats." The animals he works with, although somewhat larger, present no real dangers.

His work day is a long one, from 5 a.m. to 6 p.m. He starts off the day with the feeding and cleaning of the herd, followed by breakfast at 8 a.m. Then his regular clean-up chores begin. He gets every other weekend off.

He receives \$35.00 a day for his efforts, \$18.00 provided by the Human Resources Secretariat and



Ross Johnstone from Mississauga is one of over 140 students participating in the Junior Agriculturalist program. The program allows Ross to work and live on a farm for close to two months while learning about animals and various farm duties. (Herald photo)

\$17.00 by the host family. The host family also provides room and board plus access to laundry facilities.

The program, which has so far allowed 3,000 young people to participate over the years, is run by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food through a management staff located in Guelph, as well as nine regional supervisors.

The program allows students to

learn all aspects of farming, not just dealing with herds. Youth from urban areas ranging anywhere from 15 to 24 years of age can learn about a variety of farm areas - from dairy, beef and swine to fruit, vegetable and cash crops.

Although Ross thought about being a large animal veterinarian, he feels he will stick to small animals.

After having worked on a farm

for two months, he thinks although it would be fun to be a farmer, it wouldn't be realistic. Starting costs today are too high, he said.

The program will be ending for Ross in two weeks, on August 17th.

Ross feels he's learned a lot, although he wishes the program wasn't ending so soon. "I wish it were longer," he said. "I'm going to miss it."

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