

Pettit...from Page 1A

ily," Pettit said. "As a growing population, how do we plan to feed so many people?"

Pettit explained that we cannot have expectations that food will just show up on a dinner table.

"It all has to come from somewhere," he said.

That lack of understanding is more evident in the Middle School, but Pettit explained that it does not take long for their young minds to understand agriculture is much more than just farming.

If there are 300 jobs in the field of agriculture, and as Pettit pointed out, that means 299 of those jobs are not as farmers.

For example, High School FFA President Hannah Taylor plans to go to college in Tifton at Abraham Baldwin College for Beef Cattle Management.

Even for those students who do not plan to pursue a career in agriculture, they can still benefit from participating in agriculture classes and FFA.

After all, it encourages students to work together,

helps them gain knowledge in gardening, and planting their own crops, and it even supplements them with math and science skills.

Just recently, students had to calculate food conversions so they would not underfeed or overfeed their animals.

Pettit said agriculture also helps students understand the importance of responsibility.

"Understanding that you have to be able to take care of plants, or an animal, carries over into other aspects of life," he said.

Students also like to see that what they do has meaning, and it encourages them to continue to do better at whatever they pursue, even if the task becomes difficult.

The UCHS agriculture students understand difficulty very well, as they recently realized their greenhouse was not allowing their plants to be pollinated properly.

Rather than giving up, Pettit helped the students pollinate the plants by hand with a very small paintbrush.

This meant they also had to be able to correctly identify the male and female parts of a plant.

Issues like this make Pettit appreciative of problems, because he sees them as learning experiences.

Pettit also is appreciative of the community in which he teaches.

He feels locals truly understand the importance of farmers.

"I mean look at the Union County Farmers Market, it is always packed," he said.

Aside from helping students understand agriculture, Pettit also wants to keep Union County safe by teaching the students farm-related safety precautions.

To help with this effort, Pettit's students have learned how to drive a tractor. After all, farm safety is important.

Based on the enrollment, it is obvious Pettit is doing something right.

In the high school, 90 students are studying agriculture and, are involved in FFA.

In the middle school, 100 students will participate in an agriculture class this year. That is an increase from last year, and Pettit attributes it to students seeing their peers involved in the classes, and discovering they want to get involved themselves.

Pettit makes the desire to be involved easy, since he assists his students far beyond the four walls of a classroom.

Pettit spends time helping his students after hours. Recently, he assisted a student in taking care of a sick pig.

"When students see a teacher is willing to go that extra mile with them, they want to get involved that much more," he said.

Pettit has helped ensure the students are knowledgeable, but he has also made them aware about how important that knowledge is.

"Only 2 percent of the population are farmers, but that 2 percent creates jobs; 1 of 7 Georgians work in Agriculture related fields," he said. "They need these skills. They need to be aware. Agriculture is life."

Lady Panthers...from Page 1A

"White County was a difficult game to play," Union County first-year Head Coach Michael Smith-Foot said. "They had some of the toughest pitching we've faced all year."

In the finals, the Lady Panthers beat Lumpkin County by a 5-1 score. Lawn took the ball for the Lady Panthers and recorded 10 strike outs.

"As far as stand outs, I have five pitchers," Coach Smith-Foot said. "Most high school teams do not have that depth. Lawn and Seabolt are my number one and two. They also play shortstop and have reliable bats."

Arnold, Union's seventh grade center fielder didn't play like a seventh grader. She had several amazing catches as well as driving in four of Union's five runs. Most of her damage came on a deep three-run home run to center.

"Arnold is one of the fastest girls I have ever seen, she plays center field, and has a big bat," Coach Smith-Foot said.

Lawn scored the fifth run of the Union-Lumpkin match up off a Lady Indian wild pitch.

Right fielder Ellie Garrison, another seventh grader, had an extra base hit, deep



The Lady Panthers celebrate after a three-run homer against Lumpkin County during the Middle School Softball championships at Meeks Park. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

to right field as well as an amazing running catch in foul territory.

"Our defense and depth are very solid," Coach Smith-Foot said. "I have back-up players that could be starters at other schools. I cut young ladies that would have made varsity at other schools."

Coach Smith-Foot admits that before the season, he was a bit nervous taking over a team coming off consecutive league titles.

It was like being handed

the keys to a Ferrari and simply asked not to wreck it.

Yet, having his wife Holly as an assistant coach has taken a tremendous load off his shoulders.

"It is very nerve-wrecking taking over a team with this level of success and talent," Coach Smith-Foot said. "There is a level of pressure, but only what I put on myself. You would think it to be stressful. "To know you have parents behind you that have many more years experience in the

sport coaching travel teams, recreation teams and just being parents of girls that have loved this sport for six to eight years means a lot," he said.

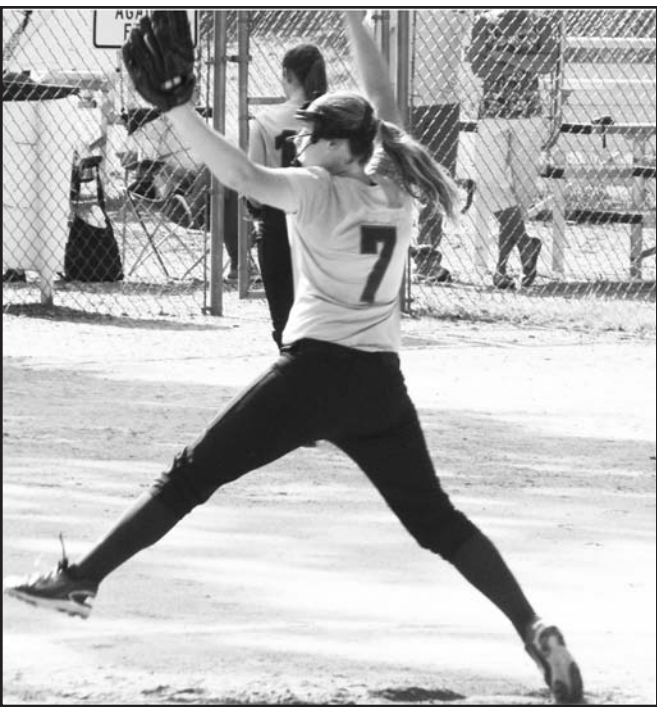
"There is only support and caring from the girls, parents, and administration," he said. "It is a very liberating."

"They let me coach and only offer support and opinions when I ask," he said. "To have them come up after a practice and tell me 'thank you' or tell me 'we coached a good game' means a lot."

"Of course, coaching with my wife also helps with the situation too," he said.

"She has played softball at the school level and on travel teams since she was a little girl," he said. "She has played at that upper level and has been on the state-ranked Loganville Red Devils in her high school years."

"So she has been there as a player and knows what needs to be done to get these girls to the next level," he said. "Much of our success has been due to her at practice and as a first base coach."



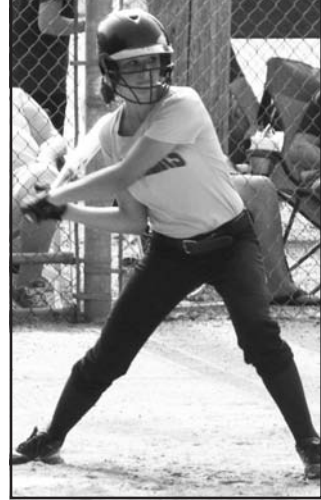
Jillian Lawn takes care of business for the Lady Panthers at Meeks Park. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Skylar Ludlum



UCMS Lady Panthers' Head Coach Michael Smith-Foot



Aladriel Arnold



Maddie Sutton