

HANDS-ON IN HIGH SCHOOL

Back To His Farm

Regional Agri-Science Director Retires After 37 Years

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SUFFIELD — The longtime director of the regional agricultural science program has retired after leading a significant expansion of hands-on education. Harrison Griffin, 65, joined the agri-science program as a teacher in 1968, four years after its start. The program, which serves nine towns, is based at Suffield High School.

"I've always just loved teaching high school kids in the way that we teach them," Griffin said. He said he's sad to leave his job but will have the chance now to spend more time with his family and put some "new life" back into his local farm.

Griffin was a key figure in the latest addition to the agri-science program — a planned large-animal facility and farmland that will give students more opportunities for hands-on learning. Town boards have endorsed buying the development

right is to 10 acres of land near the high school, part of which is to be used for the new large-animal facility. A proposal to spend \$30,000 toward the purchase is expected to go to a town meeting vote this month.

Griffin wrote the grant applications for the purchase and was active in negotiating the land sale from the Cannon family. With the new facility and land, students will be able to study and care for large animals on the school campus and grow crops.

"The large-animal facility will enhance the program," Griffin said. "We've always wanted a facility to house horses, lambs and sheep. It will give the students extra career opportunities."

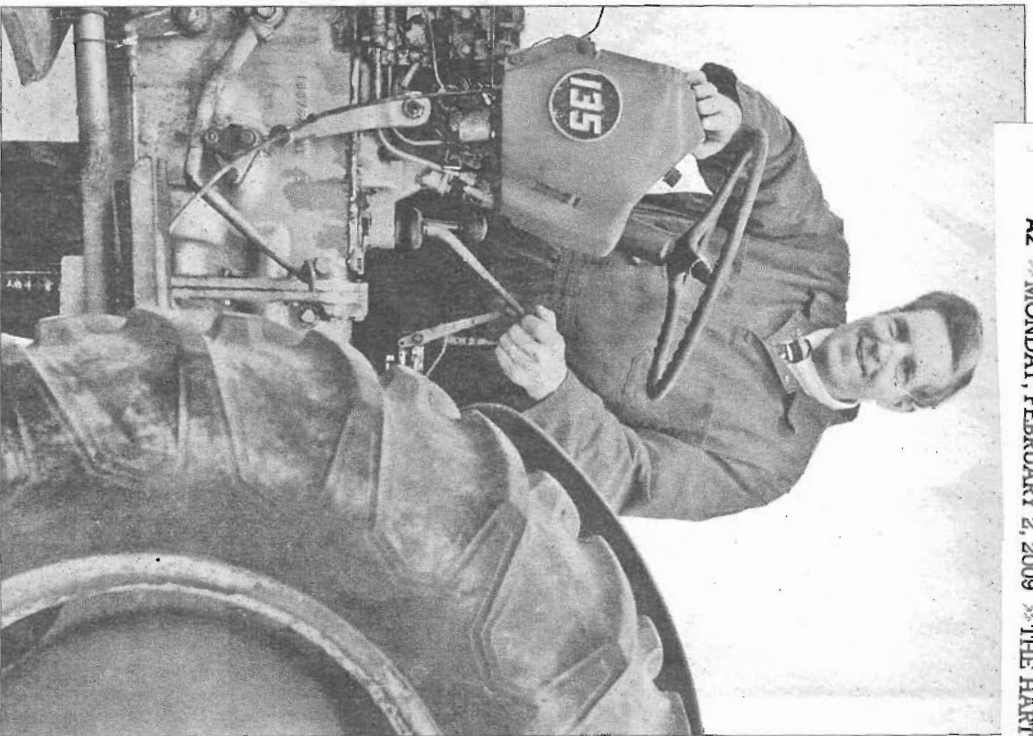
Students from Suffield, Enfield, Granby, East Granby, Windsor Locks, Avon, Simsbury, Canton and Hartford are enrolled in the agri-science program, which works like a magnet school: The district sending a student to the program pays annually.

Griffin is a lifelong town resident and runs a farm that has been in his family since 1647. He graduated from Suffield High School and studied agriculture at the University of Connecticut, graduating in 1966. He became director of the agri-science program in 1981 and has seen enrollment triple to 150 students from nine towns. The program's budget has increased from \$30,000 in 1964 to about \$450,000 last year.

"We think an awful lot of Harrison," said Anne Willard, who will step into his job as director. "We appreciate his dedication and commitment to this program. He's the type of teacher who is always thinking about the kids."

Griffin says the agri-science program is vital to preserving the agricultural heritage in the area, which has always been primarily farmland.

"America is baseball, apple pie and agriculture," Griffin said. "Agriculture is basic to all of us."



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HARRISON GRIFFIN, ex-director of the agri-science program at Suffield High School, is retiring to his 200-acre farm in West Suffield.