

# Little Red Barn is Important Part of Somerset Dairy Promotion

**BY MARGIE FUSCO**  
**Cambria County Correspondent**  
**JOHNSTOWN** — When the dairy industry is promoted in Somerset, Cambria, Bedford and Indiana Counties, it's a cinch the Little Red Barn will be there. The Little Red Barn is a mobile dairy bar, owned by the Somerset County Allied Milk Producers' Cooperative, Inc.

The barn was born three years ago, when a group of Allied members put their heads and hands together. Current Allied president Bill Blough, along with Mike and Ralph Stutzman, Lowell Friedline, and Gary Lynch planned and built the barn, with additional help from Richard Neri, a Somerset building contractor.

Technically, the Little Red Barn is an 8-by-12 aluminum outbuilding mounted on a house trailer frame. Inside, the shed is equipped with two freezers, a cooler, and a three-bay dispenser, as well as its own generator for electricity and running water. Total cost of the project: around \$11,000.

But the Little Red Barn is more than a shed. It has an identity of its own. The blue silo on one side and the homey cat in the rear window help to give the vehicle a special character. And its use, as a mobile marketing tool, has made it synonymous with the dairy industry. The Little Red Barn serves as a float for dairy princesses, a center for free recipes, a bar for tasty sampling. In short, it's become recognized by consumers as the source of something good.

For example at a recent shop-

ping center promotion, where customers could purchase ice cream cones for 19 cents, the barn attracted 250 customers the first day and 300 the second day, despite chilly, rainy weather. "And a lot of that was repeat business," notes Dorothy J. Naugle, Allied's dairy marketing specialist in the region.

"The Little Red Barn is one of a kind," Naugle notes. "You're not going to find another one like it anywhere." That uniqueness may explain the Little Red Barn's jam-packed schedule. For example, the vehicle has at least 20 bookings scheduled in June and nearly 30 set for July. The uses vary from parades to store openings to mall promotions.

One frequent user is Sani-Dairy of Jonestown, which incorporates the Little Red Barn into its store opening and new product promotions. This summer, Sani-Dairy is promoting its premium ice cream, 12 percent butterfat Country Classic. With events planned as far away as Jamestown, N.Y., the firm has hired a student who is specially assigned to the Little Red Barn for the summer.

"The barn is wonderful," says Sani-Dairy representative Bud Ward. "It catches people's eye. It brings them over to see what's happening. We love using it."

When the Little Red Barn gets a chance to rest, it can usually be found in Somerset County, on or near Bill Blough's Meadowbrook Dairy Farm. Blough is responsible for scheduling the Little Red Barn.



Student Greg Horner, a Sani-Dairy employee, will spend most of his summer behind coolers in the Little Red Barn promoting Sani-Dairy ice cream.



Dorothy J. Naugle, dairy marketing specialist for Somerset County Allied Milk Producers Co-op. Inc., poses in front of the Little Red Barn.



## Cambria Co. Correspondent Margie Fusco

Margie Fusco took the long way around to agricultural writing. In 1981, she turned to freelance writing after more than a decade in public relations, advertising, and technical editing. During dry spells in her home-based public relations and editing business, she wrote for the Milton (Pennsylvania) Standard. It was through the Standard that she was asked to write some agricultural features in 1984.

"I suppose I had two strikes against me as an ag writer," she admits. "I spent the first 29 years of my life in the city (Pittsburgh). And I'm allergic to milk."

"Living in Northumberland County for seven years, I finally realized that cows don't give milk in quart containers. Moreso, I've learned to value farm families and to care about the nation's agricultural future. And of course I've listened to enough dairy princesses to know that I can still get my calcium from cheese and ice cream."

In May she moved from Northumberland County to Cambria County, where she lives with her husband and four-year-old son in the Johnstown area. She says, "I'm looking



Margie Fusco

forward to getting to know my new territory. The Extension agents and farm folks I've met have already been a great help, and I know I'll enjoy telling Lancaster Farming readers about what's happening here."

Margie earned a bachelor's and a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from the University of Pittsburgh and has been an instructor in mass communication at Bloomsburg State University, in addition to her work in the communications field.

## Workshops Set to Help Farm Families Cope With Stress

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — A grain farmer, threatened with the loss of a farm his family has owned for generations, can't sleep, barely eats, and snaps at his wife and children without provocation. "My whole life seems pointless," he confides to a close friend. "Sometimes I just don't want to go on."

The 20-year-old daughter of a dairy farmer breaks up with her fiance while away at college, but does not tell her parents. She explains her silence this way: "They're under so much financial strain right now, that I'm afraid to add to their burden with bad news."

A farmer's wife complains to her doctor about sharp stomach pains. "There is no physical reason for your illness," he tells her. "Are you under any unusual pressure on the farm?"

These real-life stories are not about farm families from the Midwest. They are about farm families from rural Maryland — families who are hurting.

Faced with low prices for what they sell and high prices for what they buy, Maryland farmers are under severe economic pressure. And while this economic pressure is not as intense here in Maryland as it is deep within the Farm Belt, it still takes its toll emotionally.

"There's a lot of pent-up pain out there — pain which has a ripple effect on the entire farm family," says Elna Butterfield, Kent County agent with the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service.

She adds: "We haven't had the violent kind of tragedies making headlines in the Midwest, but

tension exists here and we can't afford to be complacent."

To provide support for Maryland farmers, Butterfield and Extension colleague Judy Pugh will give a public workshop on "Stress and Farm Families," at the Baltimore County Campus of the University of Maryland, June 11 at 10:30 a.m.

Designed to help farm families handle both minor and major stresses, the workshop is part of "College Days" — three days of informal, self-help classes sponsored by Extension.

Says Pugh: "Extension and other agricultural organizations are recognizing that in tough times like these, farmers need more than technical advice on planting, harvesting, and business management. They also need advice on coping emotionally."

Among the coping strategies that experts recommend:

- Be alert to the red flags of stress overload, such as irritability, unfocused anxiety, and changes in sleep, eating, and sexual habits.

- Talk about pressures and problems — openly and as a family. Suppressing tension can trigger illness, from ulcers to hypertension. Moreover, problems that aren't "talked out" often appear worse than they are.

Consider the predicament of a nine-year-old boy afraid to spend his allowance because he assumed that the family farming business was in worse financial shape than it was.

- Schedule leisure time and spend it away from the farm. Non-farm families typically leave their offices at the end of a pressure-pot day. Farm families need to get away, too — and regularly.

- Remember that exercise is a good release, but don't count farm chores as exercise. You need physical activity that will divert — not remind — you of farm-related tensions. So try running, swimming, or brisk walking instead.

- Re-establish your sense of control by setting priorities. For example, don't be overwhelmed with an impossibly large objective such as "saving the farm." Think instead of more manageable tasks, such as renegotiating financing, selling unnecessary machinery, or supplementing income with off-farm employment.

- Don't hesitate to seek help when stress mounts. Consult your physician, church or synagogue, or mental health clinic. Remember, stress is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of being human.

To register for the upcoming workshop, call (301) 454-5174 in College Park.

