

# Kid's KOrner

## Dairy Darling Follows Mother's And Aunt's Example

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GAP (Lancaster Co.) — Eight-year-old Laura Blank is called a Lancaster County Dairy Darling. That means she helps Lancaster County Dairy Princess Robyn Groff hand out samples of cheese and milk punch to show others how good dairy products taste. Often Laura hands out stickers to children that say things such as "I love milk" or Milk is good for you!"

Laura lives on a farm named "Smiling Holsteins." It was named "Smiling Holsteins," Laura's mother explained, "Because we tell people, 'Our cows are happy to be making milk and now your job is to keep them happy by drinking milk.'"

Being part of the dairy princess royalty seems to run in Laura's family. Laura's mother, the former Joyce Stoltzfus, was the Lancaster County dairy princess in 1978-79. Laura's aunt, Becky Blank, was crowned Chester County dairy princess in June 1991, two weeks before Laura was named Lancaster County Dairy Darling.

Becky also credits Laura's mother for inspiring her to be a dairy princess. Becky was only four years old when Joyce was dairy princess. At that time, Joyce was dating Becky's brother, Cliff, whom she later married. Cliff often helped Joyce in dairy promotions by wearing a cow costume.

At the time, Becky was terrified when her brother dressed as a pink cow, but she thought it would be neat to wear a dairy princess crown.

Now that Becky is the Chester County Dairy Princess, she said, "It's even more fun than I thought it would be — and more work too."

Becky lives with her parents, Elam and Dorothy Blank on a 75-acre Parkesburg farm. They milk 50 Holsteins and Becky owns one cow. She is the youngest in the family of four brothers and one sister.

Laura's parents, Cliff and Joyce Blank, own 55 registered Holsteins and rent 60 tillable acres.

Laura's mother said that Laura was only six days old when she made her first trip to the barn. Her mother said, "We put her in a

swing, and the sound of the vacuum running put her to sleep."

Laura has always loved being in the barn, but she doesn't help often because she needs to babysit her younger brothers while her dad, mother, and sister milk and feed the cows. She also sets the table so that when the family is finished with the barn chores, they can eat the meal their mother has in the oven.

Sometimes Laura becomes a "walking gate." That happens when the family moves 8 to 10 calves to a new area. The fence is a single strand fence that the calves do not notice immediately. So Laura and her sister and brothers stand behind the fence and move alongside the fence to keep the calves from breaking through. It takes about one hour to train the calves, and Laura said that it isn't a very fun job.

Last year, Laura showed a calf in the kiddie class at the Solanco Fair. She is happy that she will be nine years old on Sunday, March 8. That is old enough to join 4-H. Laura wants to join a 4-H dog obedience training club because

she has an AKC German Shepherd puppy that her parents gave her for a birthday present.

Laura's job as Dairy Darling will be finished in June. Then her sister, Lisa, who is also 8 years old hopes to become a Dairy Darling. The two sisters are 10 months apart in age.

The opportunity to be a Dairy Princess Darling is open to any 8- to 10-year-old girl who lives on a dairy farm. According to Laura, "All you have to do is tell the dairy princess coordinator and then walk in front of the audience during the pageant and answer a few questions."

Four other girls in Lancaster County are also Dairy Darlings. Although the Dairy Darlings do not receive crowns like Dairy Princesses, they do wear banners.

Laura said that she hopes to be a dairy princess when she gets older. One time she got to wear her mother's crown. That happened when her Laura dressed as Bible character Queen Esther for church event. "I love wearing the crown," Laura said.



Lancaster County Dairy Darling Laura Blank drinks milk to keep her cows happy.



Although it has been 14 years since Joyce Stoltzfus Blank was Lancaster County Dairy Princess, she still has her crown, banner, and cow puppet that she used to tell children: "Clarabelle the cow is sad to see boys and girls drink root beer and orange drink. He likes to see them drink milk."



The tradition of dairy royalty is kept alive in the Blank family. Standing in the back, is Laura's mother who was Lancaster County Dairy Princess in 1978-79. From left: Dairy Darling Laura, Lisa, Chester County Dairy Princess Becky Blank, Laura's aunt; and Daryl.



The Blanks raise AKC German Shepherds. Her the children play with them. From left: Daryl, 5; Laura, 8; Lisa, 8; and Dwayne, 3.



As Dairy Darling, Laura Blank rides in parades with Buttercup the cow.