

# Women-operated Farm Is Home For Pennsylvania Dairy Princess

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
**Lancaster Farming Staff**  
**HONESDALE (Wayne Co.)** — "People say it is unusual to have a woman-run farm, but I grew up with it and it doesn't seem unusual at all," said Crystal Schweighofer, Pennsylvania Dairy Princess.

While some people believe farmwork is predominantly male work, Crystal disagrees.

"Women can do farm work just as well as men. It's like anything else, if it needs to be done, you do it."

It's no small farm that Crystal's grandmother owns and her mother operates. The 215-acre farm in Wayne County with about 120 Holsteins has been in the family for 150 years. They use no hired help except Crystal and her 17-year-old brother, Wayne.

Crystal was about five years old when her grandfather died and her grandmother decided to keep the farm with the help of Crystal's mother.

At an early age, Crystal began helping around the farm.

"I do pretty much whatever needs to be done," she said. "Milk, feed, clean, and build fence."

Now, that she is the state dairy princess, Crystal meets a lot of other girls who work on dairy farms.

She said, "When I tell them what I do on the farm, they ask in disbelief, 'You do what?'"

Crystal smiled and said, "I just do what needs to be done. Like anything else, you learn as you do it."

Of all the chores she does, she prefers to clean out the stable because "I'm usually alone; it's quiet in the barn, and I'm not rushed," she said.

One job that she does get tired of doing is building fence.

"It seems like we are always building fence," she said.

That is because four-strand barb wire fence surrounds much of the farmland that is mostly in pasture.

The cows and replacements graze on pasture except in severe winter weather. Some corn is grown for silage and the remainder is picked. Crystal's mom also rents flats for hayfields along the Delaware River.

In addition to her 17-year-old brother, Crystal has twin siblings, a 5-year-old brother and a sister.

"They're not old enough to do

much to help and they get into a lot of mischief, but I just love them," she said.

"They like to walk the calves each evening and let them loose and then it's a job to catch them," Crystal said.

Like the twins, Crystal admits that she also had a streak of mischief in her when she was a preschooler.

"I loved to run in the fields and when the adults were working in the barn, I'd take off. They needed to get in the car and drive up and down the roads until they found me in a field. Soon they learned to tie me to the clothesline or in the barn to keep me from taking off," she said.

Her love for running is still part of her life. She is on the track and field team at Honesdale High School, where she is a senior. She is active in student council, choir, and on the tennis team.

In 4-H, Crystal is a member of Pillsbury Kids, a 4-H cooking club, county council, and the Rilleville Coldsprings Ag club, where she has projects such as steers, sheep, market lambs, pigs, corn and hay. She likes to sew and do crafts.

After being named Wayne County Dairy Princess and then winning the Pennsylvania title, Crystal needed to find time to represent the dairy industry.

"There's a lot of going and coming in my job as dairy princess. I had hoped to take on more duties in high school, but I can't. Sometimes I feel a bit sad about that, but then I look at where I am going because of the dairy princess program. I know I have more opportunities with that than with school activities," she said.

The school allows Crystal to take off 40 days to attend to dairy princess duties across the state.

"It hasn't been easy to keep up my grades," Crystal said. "But the events often come in rushes of everything at once and then nothing for a while."

"I'm glad it is like that because sometimes I need time alone — a break — to just listen to music and relax."

Crystal enjoys the traveling that comes with her job, but it also has required the biggest adjustment to her reign — overnight trips.

"The twins are really attached to me and they cry when I leave and

when I phone them," she said.

Crystal gets a bit teary-eyed herself when she's away from her family, which, she says, is extremely close.

She also gets tears in her eyes when she talks about her Aunt Pearl. "She died about six months ago, but she was the biggest influence on me."

It was her aunt's input that saw Crystal through some difficult elementary school years when classmates made her feel left out because she was from the farm and from a one-parent family.

"She taught me that farmers can have class and style. She was a wonderful person with a neat personality," Crystal said.

When Crystal was in junior high school, she attended modeling school during the summer. "I was the youngest one, but the experience gave me a lot of self confidence and maturity," she said.

"I used to be really shy and I had this huge fear of saying the wrong thing," Crystal said.

She found that participation in 4-H, church youth group, choir, and teaching Sunday school has helped her become more outgoing and confident.

"But there are more important qualities than being confident and a good public speaker," Crystal said. "The best quality you can have is honesty. Trust, being gracious, generous, and kind are qualities that I think are important too."

As Crystal reflects on the past and thinks of the future, she said, "I think it is comforting to know that you may not always get what you want in life, but there's a reason for it."

That reason, Crystal believes, is God who controls the circumstances in life.

Although college is definitely in her plans for the fall, Crystal has not yet decided where, but she leans toward Keystone College in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre area.

She plans to major in accounting because she likes the business world and working with numbers.

As the state dairy princess, Crystal received a \$1,200 scholarship. She also received \$500 to go on a shopping spree for clothing. Because dairy princesses are required to wear dresses or skirts when representing the industry, Crystal said that she needed to get



**Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Crystal Schweighofer tells how she combines home, school, church, family, and dairy promotional duties.**



**Joan Schweighofer, right, takes a break from running the farm to play with twins, Tiffany and Timothy.**



**Part of Crystal's responsibilities as Pennsylvania Dairy Princess is to promote dairy products at fairs, malls, meetings, and at the state Farm Show where she appeared with "Half Pint," the robot milk carton.**

a whole new wardrobe. "I never wore a suit before and I find it is the most confining thing to wear," she said. She prefers wearing jeans.

Crystal knows that she will miss the farm when she goes to college. "We live at the top of a hill, which has almost a 90 percent drop, it gives us a great view. There's lots of trees and it's beautiful," she said.

With Crystal assuming dairy

princess duties, her mother, Joan Schweighofer, has even more farm duties.

Crystal said, "My mother just does more work when I'm gone. My grandmother is getting older, but she feels like she needs to be in the barn. She feeds the calves and scrapes down even when we tell her not to do it. It's really a woman-operated farm. They just do whatever needs to be done."

# Homestead Notes