

Cows Are First At Bashore Farm Where Whole Family Works Together In Dairy Promotion And Production

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LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) —

Jennifer Lynn Bashore has been active in dairy promotion long before she became the Lebanon County Dairy Princess last year. That's because her parents, Ricki and Roberta, believe every farmer should be doing something to advertise milk and its products.

Those who drive by Udder Valley Farm get the message that milk is important to this family. Emblazoned on the side of the white barn is the Real Seal emblem and the scarlet-colored message: Drink Milk.

The project was a family affair. Dad did the painting after Jennifer and her sister drew and cut out the stencil for the letters and emblems.

"It was so easy. It only took a little paint and time to leave, what I think, is a big impact," Bashore said. Several families told him that whenever they drive by the farm, their children chant: Drink milk. Drink milk.

"So I know some people are hearing the right message," Bashore said.

The Bashores purchased the 120-acre farm in 1987 at a bankruptcy auction.

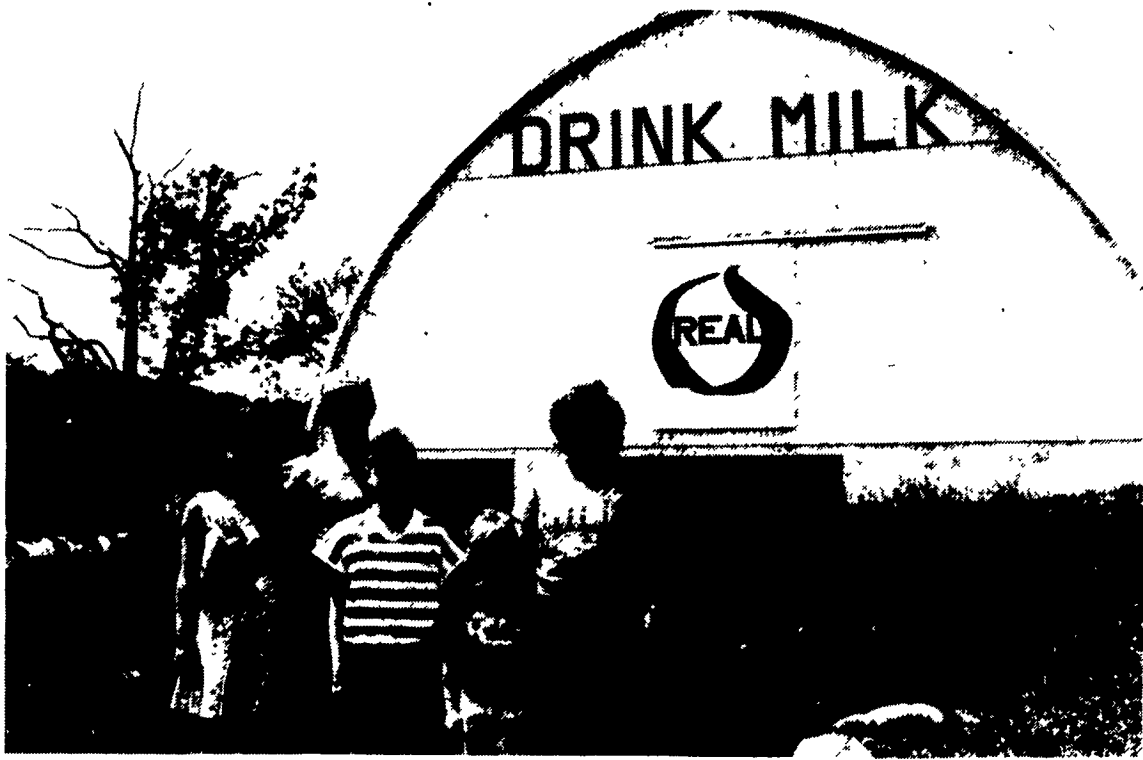
"The place was unbelievable. People said it was so bad they didn't want to touch it," Roberta said.

But the Bashores, accustomed to hard work and long hours, remained undaunted. They invited their Berks County family and friends to help clean up the property. The barn gutters were filled level with manure that had to be shoveled out by hand. Almost all the equipment had to be replaced. New stalls, a manure system, and pipeline milkers were installed.

Ricki said, "When I spend money, I try to spend it on things that will make everyday chores easier and more convenient rather than on a purchase like a big tractor that is only used seasonally."

His motto is: "No keeping up with the Joneses on our farm."

Nonetheless, Ricki did purchase a new tractor recently — but only because the larger tractor saves him time by allowing him to plow more in his allotted daily plow



Those who drive past the Bashore farm can't help but get the right message: Drink Milk. Jennifer and her sister drew and cut out the stencil for the words and the Real Seal emblem, and their dad painted the letters on the barn. From left: Jennifer, Ricki, Andrea, Melissa, and Roberta.

time.

In addition to the farm's 120 acres, the Bashores rent an additional 300.

"Although we farm a lot of land, cows are number one on this place," Ricki said. "It's the best part of farming. I could spend all day with the cows."

That preference was honed only after he farmed on his own.

He said, "When I worked for my dad, milking cows was just work. But when those cows became mine, and I needed to produce more milk to pay the bills, those cows became top importance. It was exciting to see how I could make the cows produce more milk by feeding them differently."

Ricki grew up on his dad's Berks County farm.

"Things have changed dramatically since then. Farming was just working hard then. Now farming is more than working hard. It requires spending hours pushing a pencil — but I love that part too," he said.

Ricki spends hours pouring over DHIA reports.

"You got to do that to succeed,"

he said. "It tells you everything you want to know. The bottom line for me is the income over feed costs."

"I don't work 16 hours a day for fun. All it boils down to is trying to make a living."

Bashore said, "When you farm, you've got to do a little bit of everything — mechanic, carpenter, accountant . . . At the same time, you've got to realize you can't do it all and learn to let consultants help."

A few weeks ago, Bashore hired a crop consultant. "I'm real tickled with his help. He already saved me more money than what he cost this year."

Forages are always carefully analyzed and formulated for total mixed rations.

"You've got to do a good job in the fields if you want the cows to give good milk," Bashore said.

The grain used is always home-grown but corn often runs short and additional needs to be purchased.

Bashore recalled that the first year he started farming on his own, he did things just like his dad had

Bashore said his dad was skeptical, but the next year, he didn't need to answer any questions "because Dad had seen the difference and he was convinced."

Roberta helps milk cows every day. "I did not grow up on a dairy farm, but I did know how to drive tractor and throw bales before I got married," she said.

When she married, Roberta determined to learn all she could about cows and attended breeding school and read articles.

Since high school graduation, Jennifer works from 6 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the farm. After milking, she does field work or whatever needs to be done — except planting.

"I don't plant because a shrill squeal sounds whenever the planter isn't planting for who knows whatever reason. I can't stand the noise," she said.

The family has devised an incentive plan to get cows bred. Jennifer gets \$2 per cow per day for every day the cows is under 125 days open. Currently, the cows average 113 days, which means Jennifer gets a \$77 bonus this month.

The animals on the Bashore farm are not all black and white. A pair of white pigmy goats run free on the land. The goats are tame as puppies and do not wander away from the farm.

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The sign at the entrance to Udder Valley Farm informs passerbys that this is the home of the Lebanon County Dairy Princess. Jennifer Bashore stands with her calf, Leaping Lilly.



Not all the cows are kept in the barn. This is just a small part of Roberta's cow collection, which also includes 55 T-shirts and sweatshirts. Roberta poses as Hildegard Holstein, left, an outfit she sewed for milk promotions at school and at the Reading Hospital. Roberta sews and sells many of the items shown.

Homestead Notes