

# The Next Generation Is Now Berks County's Outstanding Farm Family

**EVERETT NEWSWANGER**  
Managing Editor

**LEESPORT, (Berks Co.)** — Now it can be said that Outstanding Farm Family winners in Berks County propagate Outstanding Farm Family winners in Berks County.

Each year the Reading Fair, in conjunction with the Pamona Grange, honors a Berks County farm family that has shown leadership and achievement in the farm community. The 1995 winners are Ray and Frances Davis and their three children, Jeffrey, 23; Michael, 22, and Jennifer, 19.

But this all started back in 1967 when Ray's family, the Luther Davis family from Fleetwood, won the award, and in 1969 when Frances' family, the Leroy Heck family, from Leesport, was the winner. Ray and Frances were married Aug. 2, 1969, and that started the next generation of outstanding farm families in Berks County.

Home for the Davises became a 20 acre farmette where they raised chickens, turkeys, and muscovy ducks. At age 8, each of the children received a registered Holstein calf as a 4-H project. These calves and heifers were raised on the farmette until they were ready to calve. Then the children's aunt and uncle offered to take the cows on their 100-acre farm to milk.

The children kept raising heifers, and by 1989, Jeffery and Michael were ready to graduate from high school, and unlike many farm boys, they wanted to farm. So in November a small farm, located about four miles from their home, was purchased. The house isn't large enough to accommodate five

adults, so the boys moved into the farmhouse while Ray, Frances, and Jennifer stayed at the farmette.

The new farm was named JMJ SpringPond Farm after the first initial of each of the children's names. Today, both boys are employees on the family farm, and both parents work an eight-hour off-farm job: Ray at Dana Corp Parish in Reading as a welder and Frances as a customer service representative at The First National Bank of Leesport. Jennifer is a sophomore at the Berks Campus of Penn State, majoring in dairy animal science and works part-time at Way-Har Dairy Store.

On the farm, Jennifer feeds and cares for the calves and heifers and watches for health problems at the farmette. Oh, yes, you may know, she has just recently been crowned the 1995-1996 Berks County dairy princess, too.

Michael grew into the cow man of the family. He said he had no interest in cows until he started working at his uncle's farm. With maturity and the experience with his first 4-H calf, Michael developed the love of animals that is required for a dairyman. The 21,389m herd average on 64 head gives some indication of the care the cows get under his management. And the cows are big pets. For example, the two year-old, just-fresh heifer that was the reserve grand champion at the Kutztown Fair two weeks ago will stand untied and nuzzle her manager's hair just to show everything is all right between them. The cows are housed in a new freestall barn and milked in the old tie stalls with pipeline milkers.

Jeffery is the field man working



This row of registered Holsteins get plenty to eat.



JMJ SPRINGPOND FARM

The official registered Holstein sign shows the JMJ prefix that was derived from the first letter of each of the children's names.

best with the big tractors and equipment. This is no small job because the Davis family farms 407 acres in Penn and Bern townships. Clover, Orchard, and Timothy hay and haylage is made from 126 acres. Corn is planted on 175 acres for silage and grain. Other crops on the farm include wheat, barley, oats, and soybeans. The crops are rotated to utilize the ground to its fullest potential. A special emphasis is given to conservation and wildlife preservation with contour and strip farming, and a farm pond in the meadow.

Ray is known as the handyman around the farm, and Frances handles the financial end of the farming business.

Over the years the children have shown their 4-H animals at Kutztown and Reading Fairs, the Eastern Championship Show, the fall and spring shows in Harrisburg, and the Pennsylvania Farm Show. The family has received many ribbons and trophies, including the premier exhibitor award at Kutztown Fair in 1992. Currently, among the



This row of cows with quality udders shows the good genetics that have come into the herd that started from 4-H projects.

children, they own 50 of the 114 head of registered Holsteins on the farm.

"The entire family enjoys getting together with relatives and going to church," Frances said. "When it comes to participation at different fairs, we all pitch in to get all the work completed. Most of all we have to work together. Each person is capable of performing whatever task turns up, whether it be in the barn, field, or home. Cooperation and good management is needed for a family to work together."

The Davis family will be hon-

ored at the annual banquet scheduled for next Wednesday evening at the Fleetwood Grange Hall.

At the same time two outstanding 4-H and two outstanding FFA youths will be honored.

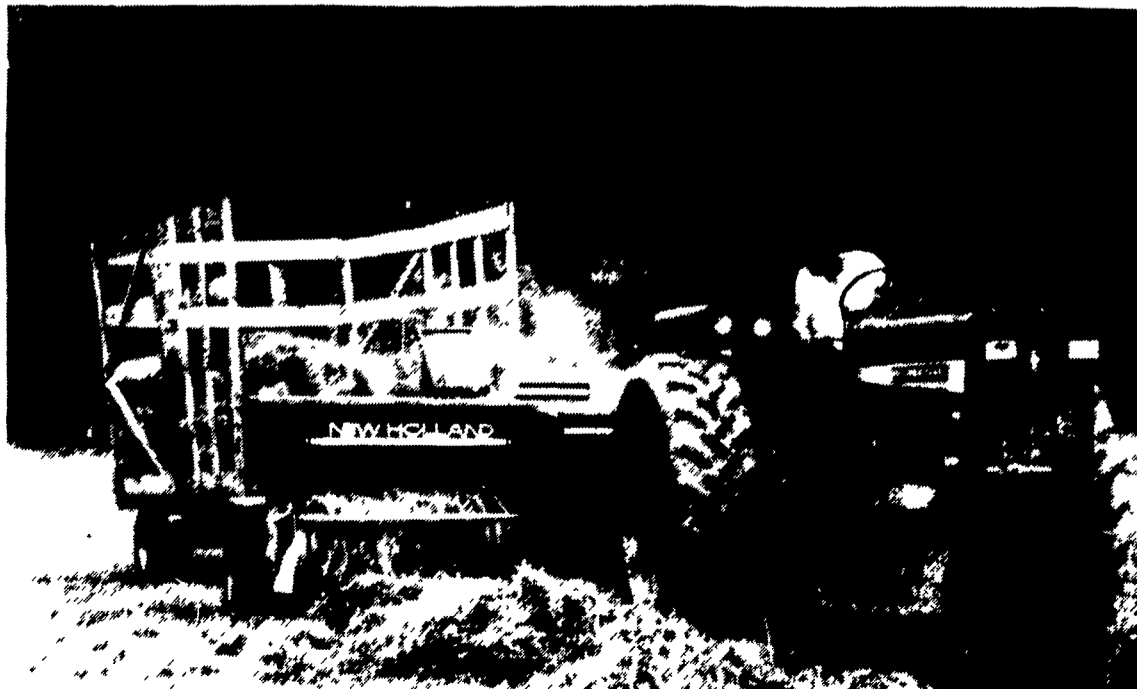
The 4-H winners are JT Ramsay, son of Jack and Susan Ramsay, Boyertown; and Stephanie Wojszwillo, daughter of Craig and Joanne Wojszwillo, Reading.

JT is a seven-year member of the Top Notch 4-H Equestrians and was the teen leader of the clubs community service project—a food drive for the Boyertown

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Jennifer with dad and mom at the Berks County Dairy Princess pageant.



Jeffery works the fields.



Michael takes care of the cows.