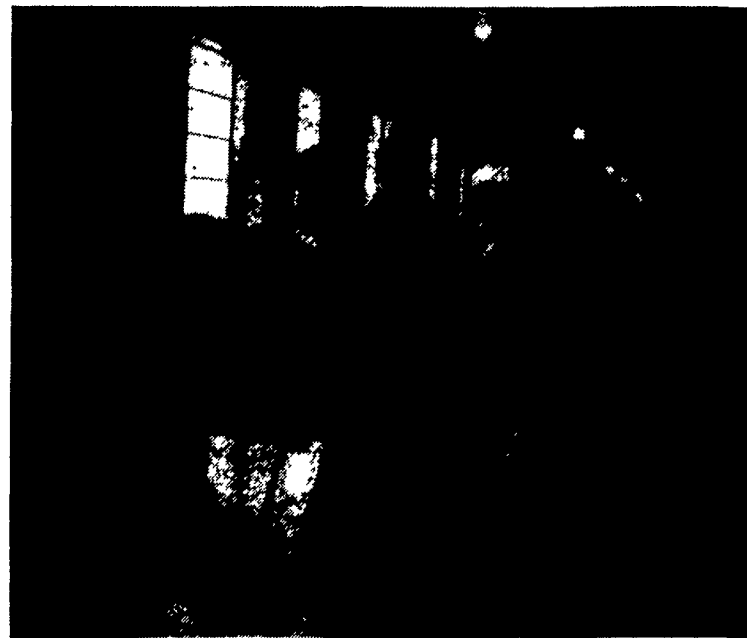




Home for the state dairy princess is Green Meadow Farms, with 320 acres in Erie County, which borders Ohio.



The Meabon family milks 110 cows. From left are Nichole, her mother Paula and dad Randy, and brother Brad.

On The Farm With State Dairy Princess Nichole Meabon

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WATTSBURG (Erie Co.) —

Nichole Meabon is only 18 years old, but she holds the enviable position of being the state spokesperson for the dairy industry.

Optimistic and effervescent, the Pennsylvania Dairy Princess also has her feet firmly entrenched in reality.

She knows firsthand of the rewards and frustrations of dairy farming. She has been exposed to the ravages of farm-related accidents, long hours of hard work, but she is also a firm believer that nothing is too difficult to overcome with strong family relationships and faith in God.

Her parents, Randy and Paula Meabon, recently celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. The Meabon family live on Green Meadow Farms in Wattsburg, which has been in the family since 1944. Nichole's parents purchased the farm from her great grandparents in 1976. The farm encompasses 320 acres, but with rented ground, the Meabons farm 500

acres and milk 110 cows.

Green Meadow Farms is the site for many international and school tours.

The herd was all Holsteins until Nichole started 4-H and began showing Jerseys because they were easier to handle. Her younger brother Bradley, who is 16, shows Ayrshires.

When Nichole was only eight years old, she won a Holstein calf through the Erie County 4-H Extension. No doubt her communication skills were evident at that young age. Of all the entries, Nichole gave the most convincing argument on why she should be the one to win the calf.

She named the calf, Limelight. Since then, Limelight has freshened and had a heifer, then twins heifers that freshen. The offspring keeps multiplying and Nichole now owns 16 animals.

Since her reign that began in September when she was selected from 29 other contestants, Nichole said, "Getting to know people is a highlight. I like to travel, take chances, and experience new

things."

The responsibility of giving a speech at the many appearances doesn't faze her. She said, "I usually write speeches on the way, while in the car. It's a natural gift and is easy for me."

Because Erie County is so far away from the state Farm Show and held during vicious weather, Nichole had never attended it before this year. While there, she was required to work in dairy-related events throughout the whole week. Despite the publicity, Nichole was surprised by the massive size of the annual show.

"It was lots more to see and look at than I imagined," she said.

At the Farm Show, Nichole's main responsibility was helping at the booth sponsored by Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Services. She helped operate the Wheel of Fortune and used Rosie the cow to teach a lot of children about nutritional facts.

Both sets of her grandparents live within 10 minutes of the Meabons' farm. The extended family has been really supportive of Nichole's role in the dairy industry.

In fact, it was her grandpa that influenced her to use a fishing skit for pageant competition. Unlike their many fishing jaunts, Nichole doesn't catch fish while on stage. Instead, she catches letters that represent the nutritional values of milk.

Her grandfather has a milk hauling business and an uncle owns a milk transporting business. The day after her coronation, her uncle created a banner proclaiming: Congratulations, Nichole Meabon, 1997-98 Pa. State Dairy Princess.

The banner is still on the truck and will remain there throughout her reign, which ends in September.

Nichole is a active at Beaver Dam Mennonite Church, which is also supportive of her dairy princess role. The Sunday after the pageant, the church bulletin board was decorated with the words: "Way to go, Nicki."

Having a dairy princess in the family is nothing new to the Meabons. Both her dad's sisters were county dairy princesses and one was a state alternate.

"I had no clue," she said of the shock of winning the state crown. "I left everything in God's hands and thought whatever happens..."

Unlike most contestants, the state pageant was the first one that she participated in because Erie County did not hold a pageant because they had no other contes-



To promote milk in the classroom, Nichole goes fishing. The skit was inspired by her fishing jaunts with her grandfather. Instead of fish, she catches letters that stand for nutrients found in milk.



Fish galore is common when the Meabons go fishing. Here is Nichole's grandpa, dad, and brother cleaning the fish she helped catch.



Nichole's mother Paula is a 4-H dairy leader. In addition to helping on the farm, she has an extensive cow collection in the kitchen.

Homestead Notes

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