

On The Farm With Lebanon County Dairy Princess

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — Most teen-agers try to get out of work, but Amanda Martin is a dairy princess who relishes the rewards of labor.

According to her parents Eugene and Kathleen Martin, it was Amanda's idea to switch their herd to three times daily milking.

The Martins milk 95 registered Holsteins, raise their own heifers, and operate a 60,000 broiler chicken house.

Although the Martins' three children have been heavily involved in the day-to-day farming operation, Amanda is the one who is most enthusiastic. Perhaps that is because the Martins purchased the 163-acre farm the year Amanda was born in 1981.

She grew up playing with the calves and tagging along in the barn.

According to family tales, as a toddler, Amanda spoiled the calves so much that they acted more like loyal puppies than bovine cattle. The calves jumped over the fence whenever they saw Amanda coming and learned how to unlatch the gate.

The family teased Amanda that she is part Eskimo because frigid weather doesn't bother her. Maybe being born in December acclimated her to the cold from birth.

Whatever the reason, cold weather doesn't mean Amanda spends less time outside. She takes responsibility for almost all the calf feeding, cow clipping, and at least one daily milking shift, although she is still a high school senior.

"Working with calves is my specialty," Amanda said. In addition to feeding, she sees that each receives registration.

"She is very creative in naming the calves," her mother said of such names as Lion King, Hale-Bopp, and other names connected to events happening at the time of the calf's birth.

In addition to caring for her parents' herd, Amanda owns 14 cows and heifers.

It's been a year since the family has gone to milking three times a day. Each shift requires two people for 1½ to 2 hours of milking in the stall barn. The family tries not to schedule the same person to milk more than twice daily. That requires hiring a couple to help with the milking done at 5:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 9:30 p.m.

Generally, Amanda works the 9:30 p.m. shift and additional shifts on weekends and days off school.

The rolling herd average is 25,300 pounds. The family uses total mixed rations mostly with grain raised on their farm.

Eugene said that the summer drought has forced them to buy grain this year, but the family considers themselves fortunate to have been able to salvage enough grain for forage.

During the growing season, double cropping puts more pressure on them to harvest, spread manure, and replant. Eugene and his son do the majority of the fieldwork, and Kathleen helps out. During seasonal field work, it is not unusual for Andy, a full-time diesel mechanic, to work until midnight in the fields. Andy also helps clean out the chicken house.

Allison, 23, no longer lives on the farm. She teaches biology and animal science at Cedar Crest High School. But she continues to drop by the farm and often brings along some of her school students to show them a working farm.

Eugene grew up on the neighboring farm to one he now owns. He said, "I wouldn't want to do anything other than farm. We are blessed that we got to work with our children. They did whatever we asked them to do on the farm, but we always allowed them to pursue sports, and attend conventions and other off-farm events."

His wife grew up on a hog and beef farm, but had no adjustment problems to dairy. She said, "I bond with the animals. I'm like Amanda."

With a strong attachment to animals, milking and farming in general, it seemed natural to want to become a dairy princess.

Last June, Amanda was crowned the Lebanon County Dairy Princess and she's been busy ever since combining farm chores with off-the-farm promotions.

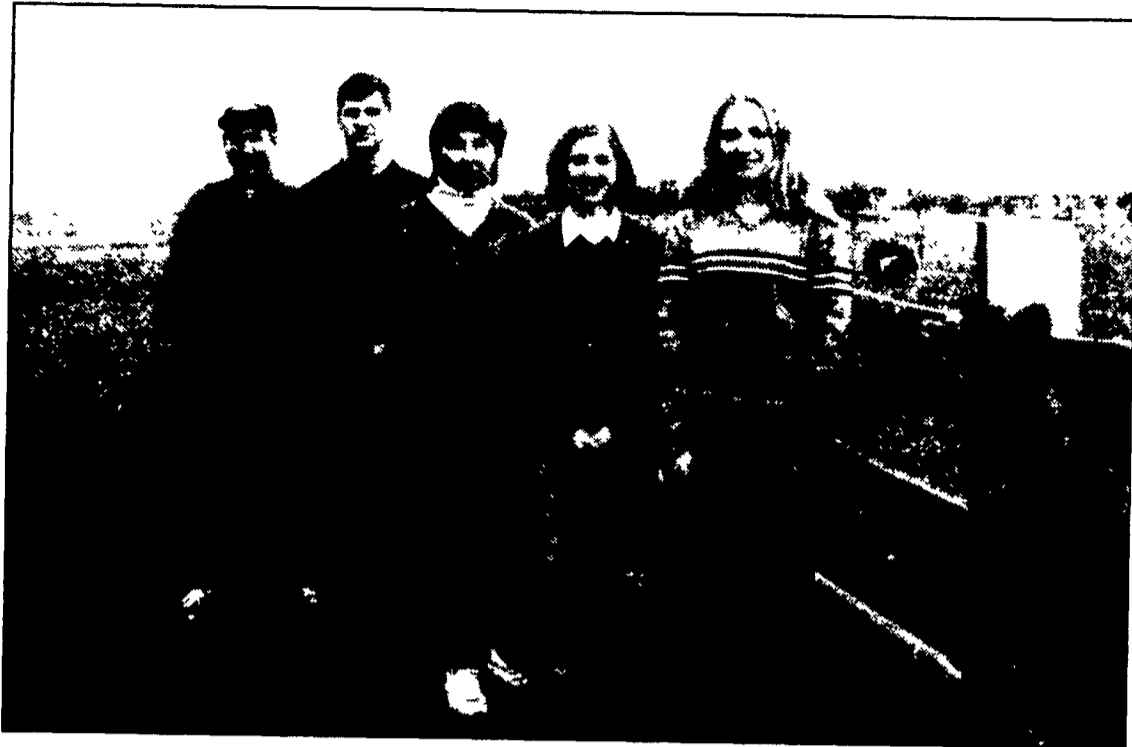
One of the most hilarious promotional events for Amanda was the milk chugging contest advertised at the fair. Contestants were in for a surprise when they were given baby bottles with nipples to chug — Amanda's idea.

"The crowd roared," Amanda said of the event that is sure to be remembered throughout a lifetime by the 12 contestants.

Helping Amanda with county dairy promotion are alternates Stacy Weidler and Amy Burkhart; dairy maids, Hannah Bomgardner, Kathryn Buck, Heather Chernich, and Sarah Krall; and Li'l Miss dairy princesses, Sarah Smith and Lydia Smith.

"We have a big court, so we try to have at least two representatives at each promotion," Amanda said of the county, which is known to have an active dairy promotion committee.

During a December dairy promotion at the local mall, Amanda had the idea to decorate a tree with cow



The Martin family milk 95 cows and operate a 60,000-head broiler house on their 163-acre farm in Lebanon County.



Milk is the beverage of choice in the Martin family. From left are Andy, 22; Allison, 23; Amanda, 18; and parents, Kathleen and Eugene.

key rings, which the promotional committee were distributing. Other promotional activities for the dairy princess include handing out ribbons at the fair, handing out ice cream, and helping make a giant ice cream sundae. Whenever she visits classrooms, Amanda finds that preschoolers and elementary students are enthralled by learning to make pudding and butter by using individual containers for mixing and shaking.

Amanda and Alternate Stacy have earned the reputation of getting lost whenever they travel together to promotions.

The two also team up for harmless pranks, one which hit the local news with a half-page color picture. In a novel take-off on the national campaign that poses the question to consumers, "got milk?", the two mischievous teens had spray painted hay bales left in several farmers fields with the words, "got milk."

Promotion isn't all fun and games. Recently Amanda rushed from making radio spots at an Ephrata station to make some more spots for a Lebanon station.

All her dairy promotions aren't limited to bona fide promotions. Amanda gives her friends "got milk" T-shirts, and expects them to eat plenty of ice cream whenever they are around her. She enjoys entertaining friends at her home, where she serves milk punches,

cheeses, and many home-cooked creations made with dairy products.

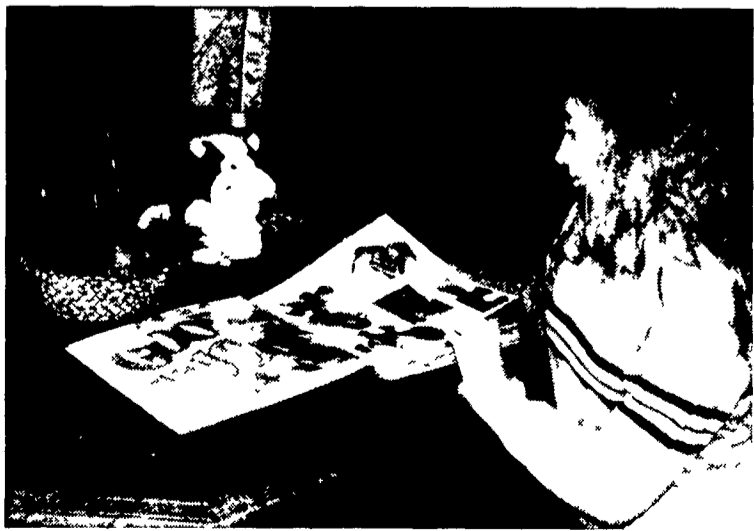
For two years in a row, Amanda has earned grand champion showmanship awards with her favorite cow Belinda at the local Lebanon County Area Fair. Although Amanda shows cows at the local and 4-H district shows, she does not compete at the state level with dairy. Instead, she enters vo-tech

projects such as dried flower arrangements.

This year at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, Amanda clinched "best of show" for her dried flower wall design and received three first placings and one third placing for other flower arrangements.

Amanda's skill in floral designing helps out with gift giving. For Christmas, she made dried floral

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At the state pageant, Amanda's scrapbook won honorable mention for its novel "puzzle theme" called "Pieces of My Year," which puts together her many promotional efforts.



For two years in a row, Belinda helped Amanda win showmanship at the Lebanon Area Fair. "She's my favorite. She's really tame," Amanda said of the 14 cows she owns.