

# Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Does Balancing Act With Ease



**Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Lori Connelly hails from a 125-cow, 500-cow dairy farm in PA Furnace. This summer she plans to return to the farm to help her father when she is not busy with dairy princess activities.**

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**STATE COLLEGE** (Centre Co.) — It was a last minute decision for Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Lori Connelly to run for Centre County Dairy Princess.

Both Lori and the Pennsylvania dairy industry have been benefiting tremendously from that last minute decision ever since.

"I was a dairy maid for three years, and I thought about becoming dairy princess for a long time," said Connelly. "But I wasn't really sure if I should do it this year because of just starting school."

Lori, the daughter of Ronald and Denise Connelly, is a freshman at the Pennsylvania State University's University Park campus.

For most students, the freshman year is the most challenging of their entire college career. And Lori is balancing her coursework, along with both state and county dairy princess activities AND extracurricular activities in college and her community.

"It's challenging but not overwhelming," said Lori. "I've taken a light course load, but it's enough to keep me busy as a freshman."

The Connellys live on a dairy in PA Furnance that Lori's father farms with his brother Frank, Jr. They own 125 cows and 500 acres. Lori's mother Denise works in Penn State's Agriculture Administration office. Lori has a brother, Chris, who is 22, and a sister, Keri, who is 16.

Even though the farm is only 15 minutes away, Lori lives on campus at Penn State in order to get the full college experience.

"I wanted to experience being on my own," said Lori. "Living on campus also helps me stay focused. There's always a lot of distractions on the farm."

Since Lori started school, she hasn't been able to help that much on the farm. But, when she does go home, she helps take care of the calves, heifers, and show animals. This summer Lori is planning to work full time on the farm when she is not out on dairy princess assignments.

Although she did look into other schools when she applied for college, Lori always knew she would end up at Penn State. "You really can't beat its dairy science major," said Lori.

Living in State College year round helps Lori meet many of her dairy princess responsibilities. "I am fortunate to be here

in Centre County because a lot of the state functions are held here," said Lori.

On the county level, Lori and her court have finished up most of the state incentive responsibilities. They are finishing up the school appearances this spring.

"My county alternate, Emily Cloninger and I have 11 dairy maids who help us with county functions," said Lori. "We have a really great committee, and everyone really helps me fulfill my responsibilities."

Lori will hand down her county crown next month, and she expects Centre County to have two dairy princess contestants this year.

Lori has mixed emotions about handing down her county crown. Although she will miss doing county activities, she is looking forward to the remaining half of year as Pennsylvania Dairy Princess.

"I am anxious to see someone else get involved in the dairy princess program," said Lori. "And I am at a point where I can look back on the last half of year and decide what I want to

do for the remaining part of my reign."

Lori has been all over the state and into both Maryland and New York with her state responsibilities. Some of the events she has appeared at include breed conventions, city marathons, annual banquets, and dairy shows.

"I am really looking forward to the Governor's Conference, which is being held here in State College on July 10," said Lori. "The Secretary of Agriculture has promised us that the dairy princesses could host a welcoming reception and serve milk punch to showcase milk as Pennsylvania's official beverage."

Lori works with two state alternate dairy princesses, Amanda Gilkinson and Rebecca Kilgore, to fulfill state obligations. "We have done some things together, but we try to split up the duties," said Lori. "We keep in touch with each other through email and over the phone."

Lori also enjoys working with Jan Harding, Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Program and

Services program director, and the state committee. "They really do a lot on the scene and behind the scene to help out both the state and local princesses."

Along with being dairy princess, Lori is also involved in the Penn State Dairy Science Club and was recently selected to be one of Penn State's Ag Advocates, which is a prestigious group of students who help the College of Ag Sciences with student recruitment and promotion.

Lori is active in both her local 4-H dairy and swine clubs. She owns 10 dairy animals that she shows at county, district, and state level 4-H and Holstein breed shows. She has participated in dairy bowl teams for both the 4-H and Holstein clubs. In college, she is hoping to get involved in dairy and livestock judging.

Lori recently traveled with her family to Ohio to get this year's projects for the swine club. She has taken reserve grand champion market swine at the Pennsylvania Farm Show with past projects.

"Our swine projects originally started as college tuition funds, but now it's just a hobby that we all enjoy," said Lori. "It's something outside of dairy that our family could get involved with through 4-H. I've gotten to meet a lot of people outside of dairy who are involved in agriculture."

Although Lori has held many offices in both 4-H clubs during past years, she has stepped down to let the younger members take leadership roles. Instead, she is volunteering for leadership roles in the Penn State Dairy Science Club. She was recently elected as chairperson for the Penn State 2001 Dairy Exposition, which is held in April.

While Lori was hoping to do well at the state dairy princess pageant last September, she knew it could have been anyone's night.

"There were a lot of talented and knowledgeable girls who ran for the state title," said Lori. "I was really excited when I won."

Lori is the second dairy princess from Centre County to win the state title. "My committee was ecstatic that I won and thought it was great for the county."

Through being dairy princess, Lori has improved her public speaking skills and been made more aware of facets in the dairy industry she was unfamiliar with before this year.

"I know more about the promotion side of the industry, and I've gotten to see how the public views the dairy industry," said Lori. "I'm more open to getting feedback and listening to other people's perceptions of our industry."

One thing that Lori has stressed during her reign is improving the public's perception of the dairy industry.

"The public has a perception of the industry, not just the products, that needs change," said Lori. "Along with the nutritional aspects, dairy products offer a lot of benefits and attributes that our industry can focus on in the future."

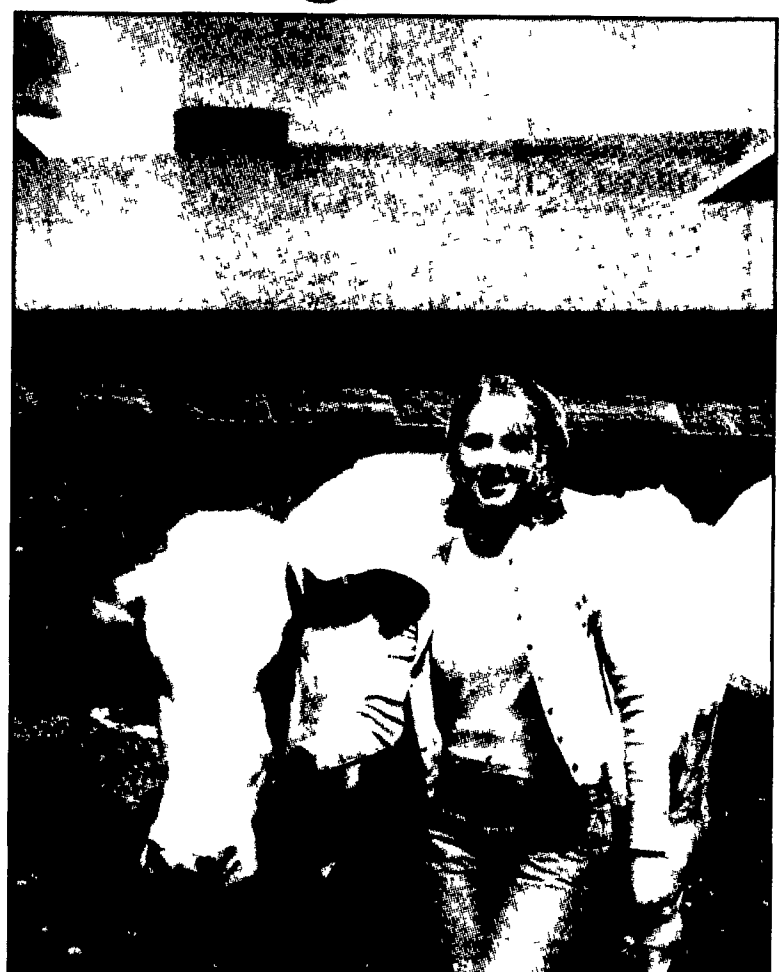
Some of those potential facets for promotion include the use of dairy in cosmetics, fertility research, and skin care.

"The dairy industry is looked as non-prosperous by both people in and outside of agriculture," said Lori. "Although we all need to realize that our industry does need a lot of help right now, we need to stress that,

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**A freshman at Penn State, Lori balances school, extracurricular activities, and dairy princess responsibilities with grace. Living on campus helps her stay focused.**



**Active in both 4-H and the Holstein Club, Lori owns 10 dairy animals, along with a 4-H pig project.**