



Tammy, Brian Jr., Katie, and Brad sort strawberries to fill orders.



Katie and Tammy work in the greenhouse, which has developed into a sunup to sundown business.

Hardworking Koontz Family Has Many Projects

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BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — Brian does the field work. Tammy raises flowers, vegetables, and strawberries. Together they milk 60 or more Holsteins. The Koontz family takes every advantage of utilizing the 200 acres they farm.

The Koontz' three children, Brian, 11; Brad, 10; and Katie, 8; are just as busy helping mom and dad with all the chores and taking care of their 4-H projects.

This year, for the first time, they will be participating in the Bedford County Fair with their Allegheny Foothills 4-H projects

of sheep and goats. Their 4-H leader, Michelle Anderson, DVM, has jokingly told them they have the most misbehaved goats she ever saw. The 4-kids are as lively as their three owners.

Brad likes the milking and proudly says he is the best helper mom and dad have. Brian Jr. prefers the machinery, and Katie lends a hand where she can but especially likes the flowers.

Two years ago, Brian encouraged Tammy's horticulture talents by building her a greenhouse. When he saw that project take off, he built her the second one.

The first was 22x96-feet. The new greenhouse is 22x48-feet. If everything continues in an upward direction, they may add a third next year.

"We don't use new parts if we don't have to," Tammy explained. "We've attended auctions and become very innovative with our heating and watering systems."

Her flowers bloom so profusely, it didn't take long for word-of-mouth advertising to bring a steady stream of customers searching for bedding plants, potted plants, and hanging baskets.

The walnut-sized strawberries

are sold before they are picked and Tammy has trouble filling all of the orders.

She has sold vegetables to local restaurants but also has a good business selling to those who want to put fresh veggies on the table or in jars.

Tammy's plant work begins in November when she plants the seeds in the basement growing room of the 1894 farmhouse, which they are also busy remodeling.

Each year Tammy's inventory of flowers increases and while she basically plants annuals she is experimenting with perennials. Vinca, petunias, snap dragons,

and shasta daisies, are a few of the colorful species which cause the greenhouse to look like a picture post card.

Produce includes mostly tomatoes, peppers, and green beans.

Eventually, Tammy hopes to expand into cut flowers.

"We're just a busy farm family," Tammy says. "We work from sunup to sundown, but we like it, and we keep trying."

Tammy and Brian met while they were both in 4-H. They started with 17 cows and a rented farm and feel they have made excellent progress in less than 13 years although it means nonstop work.

Dealing With Kids 'Home Alone'

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Developing Rules Of The House

Rules play an important role for children on their own because the rules help anticipate problems and arrange for solutions in advance. Rules reflect parent(s)' expectations and define boundaries for safety. If children understand the reasons for the rules, they are more likely to follow them.

Guidelines For Establishing Effective Rules

- Try to have the child participate in creating the rules.

- State rules clearly, specifically, and in a positive manner. For example: "The breakfast dishes should be done and the table set for dinner by 5 p.m."

- If the rule involves a task, make it a necessary one and appropriate for the child. It may be unreasonable for a nine-year-old to prepare dinner but appropriate for him or her to set the table.

- Build in an enforceable consequence with the rule. For example: After your math homework is done, you may watch television for a half hour. When parents are not present to enforce the rules, enforcement should begin shortly after parents arrive home. Remember to check and enforce rules consistently.

- Remember that mistakes can happen. Firmness, patience, and flexibility will help you and the child.

Some topics where rules might

help are homework, chores, play privileges, care for siblings, snack preparation, and television watching. What are others for your family?

Safety Skills

Personal safety skills will help children protect themselves as well as reduce fears when they're on their own. Teach them this information gradually rather than all at once. Too much information at one time is difficult to remember.

Present your children with a number of situations and have them act out their responses. Simply telling them the information is rarely effective. It is quickly forgotten.

The Telephone

The telephone is the lifeline between parent and child. If your work situation permits, have your child call when he or she arrives from school.

A call from parents once or twice daily can provide a feeling of security. A list of emergency numbers should be posted by the phone and children should be taught how to use them and what to say. Remember, it's a good idea to practice making these calls.

The phone can also provide a child with companionship. Some children on their own will hold long conversations daily with friends who are also on their own at home. If this is a matter of concern to you because you cannot get through when you try to reach your child, establishing some rules will help.

One way is to set a maximum time per call — for example, 10



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minutes maximum with a 15-minute (minimum) interval between calls. Have a kitchen timer available near the phone for this purpose. Or, make a rule that the phone must be clear for five minutes beginning every quarter hour.

Another strategy is to establish set times when the child cannot be on the phone — for example, 3:45 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. this enables you to contact the child during that time.

A major concern of parents with children on their own is to keep outsiders from knowing that there is no adult in the home. In some families children

are told not to answer the phone at all unless the "special ring" or "magic code" is used. A special ring or a magic code is a certain number or a combination of rings that the child identifies and knows that he or she can answer.

In some families, children on their own answer all calls. Directions like the following can be given to the child and practiced.

- Answer the phone pleasantly. Do not give your name.

- Never tell a caller that you are home alone.

- Tell the caller that your parent can't come to the phone right now.

- Take a message-name and

phone number of caller.

- If a message seems like it is very important and cannot wait until a parent comes home, call the parent at work.

- Do not give anyone your parent's phone number at work.

- If the same person calls more than once and you do not know the person, call your parent or contact person.

- If someone calls with a prank call — tries to play a joke, teases, threatens to hurt you, or scares you — hang up immediately and call your parent. Don't answer the phone or door until parent or contact person gets home.