

Poultry Ambassador Rijelle Kraft Raises Fancy Fowl, Teaches Embryology

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff

YORK (York Co.) — "I've grown up with poultry," said 17-year-old Rijelle Kraft.

She's also spent several years helping with the 4-H embryology program presented throughout York County schools. It seems a natural progression to assume the role of poultry ambassador.

Rijelle will represent Lancaster County and the state as poultry ambassador (formerly called poultry queen).

Rijelle raises fancy fowl such as Cochin and Silkies and capons for 4-H projects. Her dad raises layers, broilers, and fancy fowl.

It was through her mom that Rijelle's poultry interest piqued.

As York County's 4-H and youth development assistant agent, Rijelle's mom, Mary Jo, is in charge of the 4-H embryology projects, which are conducted throughout county schools. Rijelle often assists her mom by helping out at the schools.

The first time, Rijelle "adopted" a chick that didn't seem robust enough to survive.

"I fell in love with that chick, and one thing led to another," Rijelle said.

Her dad, George Kraft Jr., also raises fancy fowl, broilers, and layers in addition to operat-

ing a construction business on the family farm.

Although Rijelle has been helping with the schools' embryology projects, her responsibilities as poultry ambassador will expand to promoting the poultry industry as a whole.

"I like public speaking. I've been participating in 4-H public speaking events since I was eight years old," Rijelle said.

"Communication skills are critical today, and the ability to speak in front of others and convey my ideas to them in clear, concise terms is my main goal," Rijelle said.

Having her mother working with the 4-H program has its

treasurer and teen leader of the poultry club, vice president and teen leader of the swine club, and treasurer of the senior exchange.

She has been a 4-H ambassador, president and teen leader of the rabbit club, social chair of the county council, and member of the meats and the potato judging team.

Awards in 4-H include outstanding speech in county, outstanding role model in the rabbit club, outstanding horticulture member, top teen leader, and numerous other awards.

A senior at York Catholic High School, Rijelle is a peer

helper and a member of the National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, president of

the literary magazine, and Student Council.

Next year, Rijelle plans to major in animal science and swine production with a concentration in international agriculture at Virginia Tech.

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Rijelle Kraft
Pennsylvania Poultry Ambassador

pluses. Rijelle said, "She continually knows what's going on and what's required."

Her mother is evidently a motivator, because Rijelle's involvement in many different aspects of 4-H is impressive.

She has served as president of the 4-H County Council, teen leader of the social committee,



Poultry Ambassador Rijelle Kraft's favorite fowl is Cochin. Rijelle raises fancy fowl and capons in addition to assisting with 4-H embryology projects. Although a York countian, Rijelle will represent both Lancaster County and the state as poultry ambassador.

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OMESTEAD NOTES



'The Bigger The Animal, The Better'



As a town kid, Dave Ace did not seem a likely candidate for a farming career. In fact, as a 9-year-old, he was terrified of the seeing eye dog his group home at Milton Hershey School adopted as a 4-H project. The dog helped him overcome his fear of animals and now Dave says of animals, "The bigger, the better."

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — Dave Ace remembers the day his interest in dairy farming was piqued.

He was on an eighth grade field trip learning about old and new methods of farming. At the Landis Valley Museum, he saw farming as it was in the 1800s.

That was interesting, but when he and his classmates stopped by the dairy center at the Milton Hershey School, where he attends, Ace was amazed to watch cows being milked in the double-six herringbone parlor.

Instructors told the students they could sign up to help milk if they wanted to.

Dave signed up. "I thought it looked cool," Dave said. "I wasn't sure it would be something I'd want to do long-term, but I wanted to try it."

He tried. And, his life hasn't been the same since.

Dave believes he found his niche. He's learned all about animal husbandry, DHIA record-keeping, pasture rotation, and cow breeds.

He has won awards for showing cows, and the prestigious Clover award from Dauphin County 4-H. It's all rather impressive for a kid who had been scared of a dog when he was 9.

"If it wouldn't have been that our house got a seeing eye pup, I'd probably still be scared of animals," Dave said.

"Now the bigger the animal, the better," Dave said of his attraction to cows.

"I like Brown Swiss best because they're big, good all-round milkers, and I like their color," he said.

Working at the school's dairy center isn't a matter of picking and choosing to do whatever you want. It means eight-hour days during summer vacation and after-school chores. These include lots of parlor scrubbing, weed whacking, mixing feed, and bottle-feeding calves.

"I like it all. There isn't anything I don't like," Dave said.

He finds it fascinating to keep track of calves as they mature and become milk producing. He enjoys pouring over records and seeing how calves progress into mature cows.

He's assisted with research to determine how fast and how much cows eat.

"When it was hot, they didn't eat much during the day. But at night, when it was cooler they ate more," he said of the research.

He was able to raise his own heifers in three different breeds: Guernsey, Polled Herefords, and Brown Swiss to exhibit at the Dauphin County 4-H Fair and the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

Of his first experience with showing, Dave said, "The animals behaved well. It was me that was new," he said of his nervousness and the need to learn to be calm and in control

of the animal. He learned to clip and fit the animals to show them to the best advantage, to do top lines, and shave closer at the ears. He also learned how to look at the judge and still be able to control the animal.

"The best way is to work with animals to prepare them for showing is to work with them ahead of time so that they learn to set up themselves," Dave said of proper leg placement. To walk them backward — it's almost like training a dog," Dave said of the need for consistent reinforcement of expectations.

Recently Dave won the distinguished Clover award at the county show. He was a bit apprehensive going into the competition that required him to show not only a cow, but also a horse, sheep, dairy beef, a steer, a goat, and a pig.

It was his first experience with showing a goat, pig, and horse.

"I think I got lucky," Dave said of the smoothness with which everything went.

Dave said that originally he would have been happy to do well with the steer if nothing else.

"It was an exciting day. It was 10:30 at night before we finished."

Looking back over his involvement with dairying, Dave is a bit amazed at how it has changed him.

"It has really taught me that it

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