

Singing Dairy Princess Captures Audiences' Attention

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HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Make it fun, keep it light, and make it milk sums up Heidi Miller's philosophy for teaching folks the importance of indulging in Pennsylvania's official beverage.

The Pennsylvania First Alternate Dairy Princess delights audiences with her hand-clapping, country-style singing that endorses drinking milk to ensure healthy bones and delightful smiles.

Singing and being a spokesperson for milk is "genetics," according to her grandfather Paul Miller.

Heidi's Aunt Debbie (Miller) Brubaker was the state dairy princess in 1974, and her grandmother Pat Miller served on the state Dairy Princess Promotion board for 20 years. Heidi was Dauphin County's Little Miss when she was seven years old.

For many years, her grandparents and their children (including Heidi's dad), known as the Singing Millers, presented programs at churches and agricultural meetings.

Now the third generation, which includes Heidi, her sister Holly, 17, brother Harrison, 15, and many cousins excel in singing talent.

"I'm a genetic nut and a strong supporter of depth of pedigrees in cows. It carries over to humans too," their grandfather claims.

Heidi, daughter of J. Michael and Linda Miller, helps on the family farm. The 253-acre farm, about 15 minutes from Harrisburg city limits, was purchased by her grandfather in 1957.

In 1989, Heidi's dad Michael purchased the farm. About three



Evidence that dreams do come true is shown by this photo of Heidi, 5, who dreamed of becoming dairy princess by playing dress up. This was also the year that Heidi sang her first solo at church. Today she is both an accomplished soloist, sings alto in a gospel quartet, and is the state alternate dairy princess.

years ago, the Holstein herd was dispersed, and the family raises replacement heifers and hay for horses. Both parents hold down full-time, off-the-farm jobs.

When it had been suggested that Heidi and Holly sell their calves at the dispersal sale, both balked. "No way," said Holly, who is nicknamed the "Cow Girl" because of her affinity toward cows.



The whole court in Dauphin County Dairy Promotion participates in singing milk's message in karaoke. Heidi and Holly with, Little Misses including their cousin Emily Miller with her mother Christy, and sisters Rachel and Abigail Crissinger.

The sisters kept their calves to show at county and state levels. Both have achieved success. Several weeks ago, Holly's cow, Christmas Belle, went Excellent. Previously, it had placed first as a 4-year-old at the State Junior Show and at the 2001 State Farm Show.

Heidi's heifer, Marsha, was named junior champion at the Dauphin County 4-H Roundup and first at the 2000 Lebanon Area Fair. It's due to calf any day, in time for Heidi to prepare her for her last year of 4-H showing.

"Be proud to be a farmer," Heidi tells people involved in agriculture.

It's advice she credits her grandfather for instilling in her. That advice, Heidi believes, has enabled her to be a positive spokesperson in the Central Dauphin High School, where she is the only farm girl in her class.

She allows her farming knowledge to permeate her activities. For example, Heidi took advantage of a class assignment to prepare a persuasive speech by talking about the importance of drinking milk. Classmates graded the speeches, and every one credited her with having one of the top three placings of the whole class.

Heidi backs up her talk with action. "I always drink my milk," Heidi said about school lunches.

"My classmates and teachers

At right, J. Michael and Linda Miller with daughters Heidi and Holly, and son Harrison.

think it is so neat that I live on the farm," she said.

In fact, many of Heidi's friends show up at the farm at 3 a.m. to help her prepare her animals for showing.

"They think showing is so cool," Heidi said.

Heidi said the school has been so supportive of her need to miss school in order to promote the dairy industry. It is surprising, since the school is not in an agriculture district. Teachers and classmates have dubbed Heidi "Dairy Fairy."

In the fall, Heidi plans to study music education at Lebanon Valley College.

Heidi was first crowned dairy princess for Dauphin County last June. In the fall, she was crowned Pennsylvania Alternate, which gave her unique promotional skit more exposure.

In addition to singing at local events, Heidi has sang before Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Ridge, opened Pennsylvania Farm Show the past two years by singing the National Anthem, and sang at many other state functions.

"Secretary of Agriculture Sam Hayes has really opened some doors for me," Heidi said.

Few dairy farms are left in Dauphin County. In fact, the dairy promotion committee had not been active for about 14 years until resurrected last year by Heidi's mom and grandmother.

"The hardest part was getting the program started here again, and making all those contacts. We'd like to keep it going," Heidi said of the promotional opportunities in the county.

Heidi and Holly are also part of a Gospel quartet that performs in churches and other events. Heidi and Holly play piano and study private voice lessons. Voice lessons are in classical music, which Heidi doesn't enjoy as much as Southern Gospel, but she said the training really helps in all styles of singing.

Heidi provides piano accompaniment for four choirs at Central Dauphin High School and is the church pianist. She also plays for weddings, funerals, and other events. Heidi can also play violin and French horn.

Holly sings soprano and plays the flute and cello.

"I think it's really neat that I can combine my two loves," Heidi said of dairy promotion and singing.

Bookings can be made by contacting the Millers at (717) 599-5818.



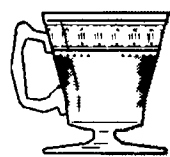
This cowgirl, Pennsylvania Alternate Dairy Princess Heidi Miller, sings a country western tune she wrote in praise of milk.



Grandpa Paul Miller likes to sing with his granddaughters, Heidi and Holly.



Pennsylvania Alternate Dairy Princess Heidi Miller, left, and her sister Holly, Dauphin County Alternate, combine passions for singing and farming.



OMESTEAD NOTES

