

Bright Future In Dairying

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Hill stands at about 21,000 pounds, with 3.6 milkfat and 3.0 percent protein.

Tim and Alexa were chosen earlier this year as 2001 Outstanding Young Cooperators by the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative for their knowledge and dedication to the dairy business.

The Stoners said that nine couples competed for the honor. Participants completed a four-page application, were interviewed by three judges, and took part in roundtable discussions where they were called on to speak their views on the dairy industry.

The judges grilled them for about 20 minutes with a range of questions pertaining to the cooperative, their own operation, and current dairy-related issues such as foot and mouth disease, niche markets, and smaller vs. larger dairy operations.

Alexa said that the competition was tough.

"It was a little exhausting," she said. "There are a lot of intelligent producers out there."

It came as a surprise to be announced in March as the winners.

"It was definitely a shock," Alexa said.

Part of their role as outstanding young cooperators includes attending monthly board meetings. It also includes the opportunity to attend national conferences, such as the National Institute on Cooperative Education in Atlanta this past July.

The conference included 70 young couples from cooperatives across the country, rural educators, and youth scholars.

Participants were divided into groups designed to simulate working cooperatives. Tim and Alexa found themselves in two different groups.

"I think in the long run my group beat out (Tim's)," Alexa said. "But everybody was a winner."

The Stoners agreed it was an enlightening experience which helped them understand the benefits and challenges of running a successful cooperative.

"It's not as cut and dry as you think," Alexa said. "It puts things in a whole different perspective."

The couple will also travel to Orlando, Fla., in November to attend a National Milk Producers Federation conference.

Alexa said that her involvement at Hijos Hill gives good incentive for her work promoting milk with the ADA.

"Being a producer, I want to be sure the program works because it affects our future," she said.

Tim also serves as director of the Franklin County Farm Bureau.

Recently married, the couple had first met in the late 1980s at Penn State, where Alexa was a dairy and animal science major and Tim was studying ag systems management. Alexa went on to graduate in 1991 and Tim in 1993.

According to the Stoners, dairying should offer a

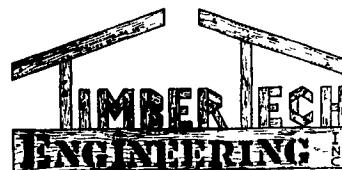
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