

Poultry Ambassador Does More Than Crack Eggs

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Food And Family
Features Editor

DENVER (Lancaster Co.) — Why is a 17-year-old Rebecca Highley—with no farming roots—named the Lancaster County Poultry Ambassador?

Rebecca might not have farm family roots, but she certainly has more hands-on agriculture involvement than most students.

She works on two neighboring dairy farms—which means milking cows and baling hay. And she raises a Brown Swiss heifer.

Of course, milking cows has nothing to do with chickens, turkeys, or eggs. But Rebecca is also immersed in poultry knowledge.

This year she joined the FFA poultry judging team. After hours of studying stacks of information on eggs and the poultry industry, Rebecca and her teammates (Brandon Gingrich, Dan Fox, and Sarah Nolt) placed first in the state and headed for national competition in Louisville, Kentucky on Tuesday. (However, no results were available by presstime).

Today Rebecca is quite versed in explaining such subjects as the interior and exterior of eggs, culling, broilers, and laying hens.

"I have a good memory if I want to use it," Rebecca said of her ability to retain scientific details related to eggs and poultry.

Another plus is that Rebecca wants to be a teacher. As the poultry ambassador, she is required to present programs through the Ag in the Classroom program.

"I'm really looking forward to that. I have some ideas on some things I might do," Rebecca said. She especially is eager to don the chicken outfit she's been offered



Poultry Ambassador Rebecca Highley serves Savory Eggs and provides the recipe to readers.

and looks forward to hamming—or is that "clucking it up" a bit.

"Farming is a good fit for her," Patty Highley said of her daughter. "She's always been a hard worker and she never minded getting dirty, unlike her two sisters."

Patty, her husband Robert, and two other daughters are a bit amazed at how quickly and thoroughly Rebecca immersed herself into the farming industry.

Although Rebecca was born with a love for the outdoors, dirt, and work, it wasn't until she chose an ag science class in ninth grade at Garden Spot High School that involvement in farming-related activities became a part of her life. She was so intrigued by the subject matter, impressed by the ag teachers (Robert Lauffer and Cliff Day) that she joined FFA.

"I love FFA. It opened so many doors for me. I wouldn't be the same without it," she said.

In FFA she needed a supervised ag experience project. She applied for a job on a dairy farm. She was the first girl hired to milk cows. During the summer she worked seven-hour days six days a week.

"I like working on a farm because every day is different. Some days, you get kicked by a cow and the next day she's nice to you. Some days there's hay to bale — every day is different — that's what I love about it," Rebecca said.

Rebecca is now a senior, vice



In addition to competing nationally in poultry judging, Rebecca raises a Brown Swiss heifer, and milks cows on two farms.

president of her FFA chapter with about 100 members, and still milking cows.

She also plays on the school volleyball and softball teams, is a member of school band, jazz band, orchestra, chorus, and marching band.

Scheduling conflicts are common in the fall, but Rebecca said her teachers are very understanding and compromise their requirements to allow her to participate in so many activities at the same time.

With so many activities, Rebecca makes a startling confession. She said, "I'm a procrastinator. I end up studying lots of late nights and Sunday afternoons."

At Pine Grove Mennonite Church, Rebecca is active in the youth group and participated in a mission trip work camp to Puerto Rico.

"It was called 'The Hole' where we went. People lived in houses that looked like a hut that a kid could build. But the people are so kind, gentle, and open," Rebecca said.

She even got to practice speaking Spanish, which she had studied three years in high school.

After high school graduation, Rebecca wants to study ag education at Penn State.

She said that by becoming entrenched in farming activities, she has more appreciation and respect for farmers than ever.

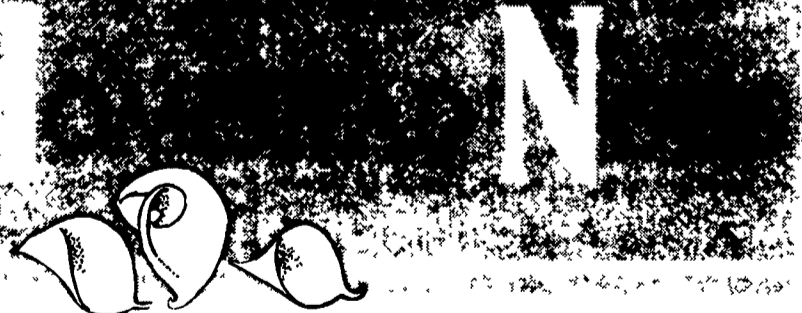
She plans to portray that message while encouraging others to use more poultry products. While most ambassadors learn to make the perfect omelet, Rebecca sees her role encompassing more than cracking eggs. Nonetheless, she hopes readers will enjoy this family recipe.

Savory Eggs

- 1/4 cup butter
- 2 cups grated American cheese
- 1/4 pound chipped ham
- 1 dozen eggs, beaten
- Cream mixture:
- 1/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 cup light cream
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- Spread cheese and ham on bottom of 9x13-inch pan.
- Dot with butter.
- Pour half the cream mixture over the cheese and butter.
- Add beaten eggs
- Pour remaining cream mixture over the eggs.
- Bake at 30-35 minutes in 350 degrees. Savory eggs are finished when the mixture is stable and set.



Rebecca, her mom, Patty, and a sister, Rachel, check out FFA literature.



Grants Available For Agricultural, Rural Youth Organizations

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — State Agriculture Secretary Sam Hayes recently announced that grants through the department's Agriculture and Rural Youth Grant Program are available to foster educational projects and activities for Pennsylvania's youth.

"We continually need to develop innovative educational programs to provide our youth with the tools they need to succeed and to keep our agriculture industry strong," Hayes said. "Our Agriculture and Rural Youth Grant Program helps us accomplish this goal by award-

ing grants to 4-H and FFA organizations and vocational agricultural programs, to fund educational projects, seminars and field trips that increase awareness of agricultural and rural issues."

A total of \$100,000 is available for direct and matching

grants to qualifying projects. Organizations can apply for matching grants of up to \$10,000 and direct grants of up to \$2,500. Applications must be postmarked by Nov. 15.

A 13-member Agricultural and Rural Youth Grant Advisory Committee will review the applications.

For more information about the program or to receive an application, contact the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Market Development at (717) 787-3181 or visit the department on the Web through the PA PowerPort at www.state.pa.us or directly at www.pda.state.pa.us.