

Pennsylvania First Alternate Dairy Princess Is A Farm Girl At Heart

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TROY (Bradford Co.) - "A farm girl at heart." That's how Pennsylvania's First Alternate Dairy Princess Sara Jennings is described by many who know her.

The daughter of the late Ronald and Nancy Jennings, Sara firmly embraces everything that farm life has to offer. Although she wasn't raised on a farm herself, there were plenty of opportunities to learn about farm life from both sets of her grandparents, Don and Leah Jennings, and Mark and Louise Scott. She's sure that their influence had a lot to do with her running for the Bradford County title.

"I wanted to be able to support what they did for all their lives," Jennings said, although she admits that when she was smaller, she was somewhat scared of the big cows.

"I think I was afraid because one of my grandfathers is a cattle dealer and his farm was a stop for cows on their way from Canada to Florida, so a lot of the cows were really skittish. They were on unfamiliar ground. I loved the calves, and that's still one of my favorite jobs, to work with the calves, even though we just have beef cows now."

Jennings got over her fear of cows when she stayed with a friend who had a 4-H calf. She helped lead the calf and get it ready to be shown at the fair. She is now proud to say that she has



Because farming and quilting are both rich rural traditions, Sara chose to design her scrapbook with a patchwork quilt theme. Although she doesn't quilt herself, she has studied quilt designs and appreciates all the hard work that goes into each and every one.

state level. Her brother, Jeff, is also a willing participant, often finding himself inside a purple cow costume. He also helps set up props for her skits.

Because Jennings got so much out of the program, she decided to give it another try the following year.

"I want to be the county coordinator some day and I really thought that I should have at least two years of experience,

when I got down there, I had placed in all three."

Jennings came away from the pageant with an honorable mention award for her scrapbook, an honorable mention award for her skit, and a first place award for her speech.

"I had so far exceeded all of my goals by the time I had got to the pageant night, that I was happy already. I didn't have any more expectations for the night other than to get through it."

But there was one more surprise in store for Jennings. She would receive the title of Pennsylvania First Alternate Dairy Princess.

"When they called my name, I couldn't believe it," she said.

Jennings' achievements prove that if you really want something, you should never stop trying. At 21, Jennings thought that her age might put her at a disadvantage.

"I think a lot of people look at it and ask why is a girl this old interested in being a dairy princess. But I think when they realize that this is what I want to do for a career, then they see that there's a real strong potential there. This is like an internship."

She would like to see more older girls compete for the title.

"For me, I could put my college on hold. Other girls can lighten their class loads. I know that when I was in high school, I wouldn't have been able to put the time into it like I can now," she said.

Every day Jennings spends at least one hour completing dairy princess duties. Many days the tasks fill entire days or weeks. Even though it's a lot of responsibility, Jennings wants to encourage anyone who's interested to run.

"I want to encourage anyone to run, especially having served as an alternate and then becoming a member of the state royalty. That's just beyond my whole scope of things. It has changed my life so much. It would help anybody," she said.

Between the people she's met and the places she's gone, Jen-

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Sara Jennings is grateful that both of her grandparents were dairy farmers. Here she shares a special moment with her grandfather, Mark Scott, who loaned her his FFA American Farmer Degree certificate to be one of her good luck charms.

overcome her fear.

"It took me a long time to get to where I am now. I think that's one of the most ironic things for me," said Jennings.

Knowing what it's like to be afraid of the cows now helps her relate to young children who aren't sure they want to get close to such big animals.

"I like to tell kids it's all right to be scared of the cows. They're nice, but you have to remember to ask their owners before you pet them and that kind of thing."

Jennings first entered the dairy princess program after spending a year as the Endless Mountains Maple Queen. She enjoyed visiting schools and meeting new people. The first year she entered the Bradford County Dairy Princess pageant, she was chosen as the second alternate and learned even more about the dairy industry.

"I really didn't know what to expect coming in the first year," said Jennings. "I learned and I grew so much, and I really got a lot of encouragement."

Support came from family, friends and even workers at the

even if I was an alternate again," she said.

But the second time on stage proved to be a golden opportunity for Jennings who would now get the chance to compete for the state title. She didn't make the trip, however, without her good luck charms — her grandfather's American Farmer Degree certificate, one of his FFA pins, and her father's pin for 10 years of service with the Department of Environmental Resources. She didn't put all her hopes on luck alone, however.

"I had goals going to the state pageant. I wanted to get an honorable mention in something," she said. "The biggest surprise is



Sara Jennings' room in her home is a testimonial to her love of the dairy industry and quilting. Here she is surrounded by reminders of her role as dairy princess and the quilts that she loves.

"I've been in Harrisburg more times since September than I ever had been in my entire life. I've gotten more confident in my abilities to deal with complete strangers," she said.

Rewards come from every promotion that she is involved with.

"There's always that one person who tries that piece of cheese and asks what kind it is and de-

a cow and the farm kids will come out with one term and the other kids will all (gasp)," she said.

After completing her role as the state alternate, Jennings plans to resume her studies at Elmira Business Institute where she is working on an associate's degree in accounting. After that, she's not sure what the future has in store, maybe a career in agricultural communications or agricultural business.

Wherever life takes her, Jennings will always carry the memories of this year and the skills that she has learned with her. She will also continue to promote the dairy industry while encouraging others to promote it as well.

"There are a lot of misconcep-