

# Highlight Year Unrolls For Pennsylvania's Dairy Princess

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AIRVILLE (York Co.) — Difficult as it is to imagine, Pennsylvania state dairy princess Raechel Kilgore was not even sure she wanted to compete for a county dairy princess position a year ago.

"Dairy judging was my priority last year," said Raechel of her initial reluctance to try for the York County crown. During an intense several months before that, Raechel wrapped up an extremely successful series of dairy judging wins with a first-place finish at the national competition, during the October 2001 World Dairy Expo.

While Raechel and her older sister Rebecca shared many interests, she nevertheless felt a little uncertainty about following "Becky's" footsteps, as she had in many previous activities. Becky had been a county and state alternate princess a few years earlier.

"So it was coming down to the wire last year for filling out the application, and I still hadn't decided," Raechel said. She was encouraged by family and many industry friends to run for the position and, at almost the last moment, signed and submitted the dairy princess form. That last-minute decision propelled her to wear the sparkling tiara at the finale of the state princess contest in Harrisburg in September.

"Becky was really happy for me," said Raechel of Becky's enthusiastic support for her. Becky is completing her degree as a chemical engineer at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.

"The whole year has been a highlight," Raechel said. She was unable to pinpoint a favorite from multiple appearances during a whirlwind schedule that has taken her to several surrounding states and dozens of in-state events representing the dairy industry. Learning how neighboring states operate their princess and promotion programs has been especially interesting to Raechel, since program size and requirements have a varying range.

"But we all promote dairy, regardless of how the programs operate," she said.

Raechel, Rebecca, and brother, Christopher, are the children of Pam and Doug Kilgore. The Kilgore's McCall's Ferry farm, near Airville, has been in the family for a couple of generations, milking cows and farming crops on land high above the western cliffs of the Susquehanna River, in southeastern York County. The Kilgore family has a long history of participation in industry and community leadership activities. Doug is a primary election candi-



The Kilgore family has always been active in agriculture and agriculture activities, and is especially supportive of youth programs. With state dairy princess Raechel are her brother, Christopher, and sister, Rebecca, and parents Doug and Pam.

date for York County commissioner.

Typical of dairy farm youngsters, Raechel began helping with chores, such as feeding calves, at a young age. Tending to 4-H show animals became another responsibility she assumed as she grew old enough to join the program and exhibit project calves.

When she was eight, Raechel got her first opportunity to work with dairy promotion, as one of the county's "little dairy miss" participants. Junior members of the county's dairy promotion team often help at major events

"Her involvement really helped me to see what the program was all about," Raechel said. With that boost of enthusiasm for promotion, she served in 2001-02 as a county dairy ambassador.

Fulfilling both her state and county princess responsibilities concurrently has kept Raechel's schedule crammed with events. School promotions, including "library readings," have been especially intense the last few weeks in the county, while state appearances kept her away many days throughout the fall and winter months.

"When I'm not busy with state functions, we do the county activities. I have missed about one-third of my school year," said Raechel, who works hard to keep her schoolwork a priority despite her other commitments. She is on Red Lion's distinguished honor roll, member of the school's National Honor Society chapter, and an Elite Eight-

teen student. She is a member of Red Lion FFA and has won numerous honors representing the chapter at dairy judging and public speaking events.

Raechel's ability to so ably maintain her scholastic achievements while fulfilling her dairy princess responsibilities has not been lost on her Red Lion Area senior-class peers. In early May, they elected her queen of their senior class prom.

Raechel's 4-H career has been equally accomplished, capped with her earning national high

gether alot and gotten very close." In fact, soon after her prom queen crowning, Raechel called these two close friends who had insisted she let them know immediately the outcome of the prom court selection.

Even while Raechel's state reign is winding down through its last few months, she is preparing for her next major life step, college. Raechel plans to major in animal science, and possibly minor in ag communications. Making her final choice has been difficult, with Penn State and Cornell in the final running.

Though she spent many days since September living out of suitcases and sleeping in hotels, Raechel still pitches in with farm chores on those rare days when she does get to spend a little time at home. There are her six show animals to care for, calf feeding, and helping to milk the Kilgore's 40 cows.

In a message included in the recent newsletter to York County dairy farmers from the promotion committee, Raechel summed up her whirlwind county reign coming to a close.

"My time as the York County Dairy Princess and the Pennsylvania Dairy Princess has been one of the best years of my life," she wrote. "Although I have been extremely busy, basically being a part-time high school student on the side, the experiences that I have had are unforgettable. I have enjoyed attending various events throughout the county, all to represent our local dairy industry. I am especially grateful for all of the support that I have had over the past few months. The committee, my junior representatives, and all of the supporters of the dairy industry have helped to encourage me through these busy times. It is hard to imagine that my county title will go on to another deserving young lady. I doubt that I will ever forget my role as a promoter of the dairy industry."



Despite her busy schedule, Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Raechel Kilgore still pitches in to help at the barn when she is home. One of Raechel's jobs is looking after the 4-H and FFA show animals.

and activities. Parade appearances to promote milk and helping with the annual Ice Cream Day at the Courthouse promotion left a significant mark on her memories as a little girl.

During Becky's dairy princess reign, Raechel became much more familiar with the promotion activities and commitment required by dairy princesses. She helped Becky compile her scrapbook for the state competition and often did the chores for both of them, such as looking after show calves, when appearances took Becky away from the farm.



Fulfilling her state dairy princess role has resulted in Raechel Kilgore's being a "parttime" student this school year. She has still managed to remain scholastically near the top of her Red Lion Area High School class and was recently elected senior prom queen by her peers.