

Newlyweds Share Passion To Teach Kids About FFA Possibilities

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Somerset Co. Correspondent
BERLIN (Somerset Co.) — Nathan and Doreen Jamison, Berlin in Somerset County, share ideas as vocational agricultural teachers at the neighboring school districts of Berlin Brothersvalley and Meyersdale Area in Somerset County.

The Jamisons, who met through collegiate FFA at Penn State University and were married on April 5 of this year, never planned to be working in neighboring school districts in two of Somerset County's five vocational agricultural programs but the result has been to the newlyweds' advantage.

Nathan took over the position in Berlin Brothersvalley after Michael Clark left to accept a position at Greenwood High School in Perry County. And, Doreen is a full-time half-year teacher at Meyersdale Area.

"We never planned it this way," said Nathan, who graduated with an agricultural and extension education degree from Penn State University in May of last year. Doreen graduated with a degree in animal science last December from Penn State and is pursuing her teacher certification. It was FFA that put the two

together and their shared belief in the program is astounding.

"Everything goes back to FFA," said Nathan. "We have to try to keep agriculture going with the younger generation or it will disappear. I have a lot of farm kids enrolled in FFA, but then I have a large percentage whom are not on farms but have a deep interest in agriculture. Either way, FFA is about improving yourself and your community."

Both Nathan and Doreen were actively involved in their high school FFA programs. Nathan graduated from United High School in Indiana County. Doreen graduated from Williamsburg High School in Blair County.

"FFA sparked my interest and I have a deep fondness for it. I stayed very active in it through high school and college," said Nathan, who first got into FFA in ninth grade.

He did not grow up on a dairy farm but worked extensively on a dairy farm in high school and raised ring-neck pheasants as farming projects for FFA.

Doreen grew up on a family dairy farm in Blair County and learned about a family business with her parents, Durell and Don Delp, and three sisters, including

Deanne, a junior at Messiah College, Donna, an 11th grader, and Danielle, a second-grader.

Nathan's parents are Lynn and Deanna Jamison.

"Growing up on a dairy farm taught my sisters and I so much responsibility and a good work ethic," said Doreen, the oldest of the four girls. "Nathan and I are country folks, and we enjoy being here in Somerset County because it reminds us of the rural area we grew up in."

Doyle Paul, longtime vocational agricultural teacher at Berlin Brothersvalley who retired recently, believes the Jamisons are the perfect match for the school districts.

In addition to being the adviser for the Berlin Chapter of Young Farmers, Paul also works through the Center for Professional and Personal Development at Penn State University to supervise new teachers in Western Pennsylvania. He supervises both Jamisons.

"I think that Doreen and Nathan will share ideas and encourage one another," said Paul. "Penn State offers an excellent program these days for their graduating students and the Jamisons have been part of that new learning. They will no doubt be helpful to students in the



Nathan and Doreen Jamison work together as new vocational agricultural teachers at the Somerset County school districts of Berlin Brothersvalley and Meyersdale Area, respectively. They are both graduates of Penn State University and met through collegiate FFA.

classroom." Nathan hopes to continue Paul's "history of excellence," as Nathan describes it, at Berlin and use Paul's many years of experience as a resource.

Berlin has about 100 members from eighth to 12th grade. This year, in support of state FFA president, David Bittner of Berlin, the Berlin chapter attended the national FFA convention in Louisville, Ky., with seven Berlin Brothersvalley members and two from the Meyersdale chapter.

"I try to stress to the younger vo-ag kids," said Nathan, "it's

not always about traditional programs in FFA, it's also about leadership and public speaking. These things get you somewhere in life."

He adds: "It breaks your heart a little when you see an agricultural program closing. Unfortunately, agriculture is dwindling to a point, but agriculture is something that will never go away because people will always need food and clothing. That's why we have to keep vocational agricultural and FFA going with younger generations. It's absolutely essential."

Farm Fatality Rates Higher For Seniors

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Farmers aged 75 and older are more than twice as likely to die on the job than their younger counterparts, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

NIOSH statistician Dr. John Myers reported that farmers over age 75 had a death rate of 57 per 100,000, compared to an overall death rate of 21 per 100,000 for all agricultural workers.

Much of this increased risk is related to aging and involves a decrease in sensory abilities that can impact the safety of older farmers. Vision is known to be consistent throughout a person's

adult life, but begins to decline by age 60.

Hearing also degrades as people age. Nearly one-half of adults have some level of hearing impairment. Some of this is normal; however, hearing loss is also attributed to noise exposure while working.

This is especially true among farmers, who experience the highest rate of hearing loss among all workers.

Hearing protection at an early age is crucial. Ear plugs or ear muffs will protect hearing. Repairing machinery and equipment that are generating excessive noise is also crucial in reducing the exposure.

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