

On The Farm With Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Carla Martin

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Food And Family
Features Editor

MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) — Growing up in a family of 13 siblings no doubt is a noisy affair.

Maybe that's why Carla Martin was so shy during her elementary years. Or maybe it was because she followed two vivacious older sisters in the family lineup.

Whatever the reason, her parents, David and Robbin Martin, remember Carla, 19, as being so introverted that when she was homeschooled and required to write weekly speeches and present them before the family, she cried.

Her parents praised her efforts and taught her siblings to verbalize the positive aspects of each of Carla's speeches.

Slowly, Carla's confidence grew.

People who know her today say that Carla's strengths are definitely public speaking and writing. Those talents have been evident to audiences who heard her award-winning speech in September at the Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Pageant, Camp Hill.

Poised, articulate, and theatrical, Carla's performance was one of the reasons judges selected her as the state dairy princess.

In that role she continues to be called upon to present impromptu and prepared speeches before audiences of all sizes.

Now, Carla enjoys speaking so much that she is considering switching from a planned nursing career to one in ag sciences and communications.

"I had three jobs before becoming state dairy princess, but I cut back to one, so I can give more time to the dairy industry," Carla said. The one she kept is a certified nursing assistant at Mount Hope (Retirement) Home.

She also teaches piano lessons to five children, works on the family farm, and with the care of her siblings.

"Being the state dairy princess has really helped me realize how big the dairy industry is, and the many different aspects of agriculture. I've had the opportunity to tour other farms and see how they operate, which is really interesting," Carla said.

After being home-schooled all her life, Carla said meeting people from so many different backgrounds sometimes intimidates her.

"So many of them have been involved in extracurricular school activities, which sounds so impressive, but I haven't had that opportunity," she said.

Not that she's complaining. Carla loves her large family with siblings Melissa married to Ervin Stoltzfus; Josh, 22, in partnership with his dad; Laura married to James Stahl and with the only Martin grandchild; Abigail, 17; Susanna, 15; Naomi, 13; Ramona, 11; Caleb, 9; Noah, 8; Samuel, 6; Sarah, 4; Elijah, 2; and another baby sibling due Jan. 25.

On the Martins' 300-acre Danda Farm, with its organic dairy and beef operation, they also manage a small store to sell their organic dairy and beef products. Animals are grazed and fed only certified organic feed without antibiotics, synthetic hormones, pesticides, or herbicides. The farm also raises 50,000 broilers for New York's live market.

The organic milk is shipped to Natural by Nature, a cooperative formed by David and 18 other farmers about one year ago. The Martins have been an organic dairy since 1995.

The cooperative markets the milk and milk products such as cottage cheese, sour cream, whipped cream, and butter. The Martins purchase some of the value-added products back so they can sell them from their farm store. Although married and living off the farm, daughter Melissa oversees the store operation with other family members helping out.

In the debate about total grazing versus grain-fed, Martin takes a more middle-of-the-road stance. He believes in the value of grass-fed, but also believes feeding organic grains is beneficial.

In California, raw milk is sold at supermarkets. Pennsylvania law forbids this. Martin understands the government concerns but believes people should be allowed a choice. Growing up drinking raw milk, Martin still recalls the first time he tasted pasteurized milk at school.

He was astounded at the difference in taste and asked, "They call this milk?"

Now, he is concerned about another issue that affects taste

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Music plays a vital role in the Martin family, where all siblings learn to play the piano and sing. Carla, seated center, plays the piano and writes music, which the family sometimes incorporates into musical performances.

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| 8:30 am - 9 am | Registration |
| 9 am - 10:00 am | Boehringer Ingelheim
* Water Delivery Vaccines and Enterisol Ileitis |
| 10:00 am - 10:45 am | SWAP Overview |
| 10:45 am - 11:45 am | Intervet:
* Improve Breeding Herd Efficiency with Matrix |
| 11:45 am - 12 noon | National Pork Board Spokesman |
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