

# Cooperation Builds Successful Grove Family Farm

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SHIPPENSBURG (Franklin Co.) — News keeps happening at Gro-Lan Farms, where Jeff and Linda Grove are raising their four children.

The 300-acre farm with 160 milking Holsteins recently was in the news when the Groves received the first agricultural loan for expansion offered through the Small Business First (SBF) Program.

While the family farm operation expands, the children of Jeff and Linda Grove are growing up and enlarging their own spheres of influence.

Emily, who celebrated her 20th birthday Wednesday, is the Pennsylvania Alternate dairy princess. Laura, 18, is a state FFA officer. Caleb, 12, and Renee, 10, are assuming more farm chores to enable their older sisters to crisscross the state, fulfilling demanding schedules.

Those responsibilities are only the beginning of a very involved family in community and ag-related affairs.

"Not everything is perfect here, but we live here and make it work," Jeff said. "We laugh a lot, and mealtime gets quite loud at our table."

Jeff's wife Linda works for the local Agway while he farms in partnership with his brother Jay.

"We're a four cell-phone family," Grove said of synchronizing family togetherness, while each pursues individual interests.

Morning milking starts at 3 a.m.

"Everyone pitches in. It takes cooperation to see the work gets done," Emily said of taking her turn milking, feeding, and bedding the cows and scraping the barn despite a busy off-farm schedule.

"We wouldn't be able to do all we do if our parents didn't respect our desires to become involved (in off-farm activities)," Emily said.

Her dad said, "Our children have never given us any reason not to trust them. I don't need to call them twice to get up to milk. They are always in the barn on time and willing to take responsibility. They work together and fill in for each other."

Linda said with three daughters she had expected to be assured of having plenty of household help. "But by age 2, they're out with their dad working in the barn."

That doesn't mean the girls don't do kitchen duty. Linda said, "We all help whomever needs help."

"We cook," Emily said of her and Laura's chores, "but it's not our favorite thing. We'd rather be in the barn."

Laura said that growing up with assigned duties on the farm taught her hard work, responsibility, and time management, a state sentinel needs.

"In a way, growing up on a farm involves us somewhat in the workplace before we even leave the farm," Emily said.



Gro-Lan Farm has been in the Grove family since 1918. It is home for Jeff and Linda Grove and their children Emily, 20, right, Laura, 18, left, Caleb, 12, and Renee, 10.

Emily said that comparing her life with her peers isn't an option. "Each person has her or his own way of life, and this is what we have been born into. It's a blessing most of the time," she said.

The sisters are grateful their dad is in partnership with his brother. This relationship enables them to have every other Sunday free from farm chores and allows them annual vacation time. In fact, the Grove family is spending five days in New York City during the Christmas holidays.

Gro-Lan, which stands for "Grove" and the old spelling of "land," was established in 1918, when Jeff's grandfather purchased the farm. Jeff and his brother Jay established a partnership in 1977. His grandfather died about 10 years ago, but his grandmother continues to help on the farm when needed. Their Aunt Esther, who lives nearby, often helps with the cooking and laundry.

Although Emily and Laura are only 19 months apart and involved in many of the same activities, sibling rivalry is of little consequence. Instead, they freely offer each other advice and help each other out with scheduling conflicts.

Emily was state FFA secretary last year. Her sister is the state sentinel this year. Emily freely shares advice and perspective that Laura finds useful in her duties of visiting FFA chapters across the state.

As the county dairy princess and as state alternate, Emily appreciates that Laura and Renee help with dairy promotion.

"Laura is walking in my footsteps, but leaving her own footprints," Emily said in recognition of her sister's similar choice of activities, but adding her own personal touch.

Emily served as a second-year scholar on the State Legislative FFA Conference, attended Mid-Atlantic Alliance of Cooperatives, and later returned as scholar staff. She was one the state representatives to the National Institute of Cooperative Education Conference, and served as the Pennsylvania agriculture ambassador for young farmers to a conference in Oklahoma City.

Although only 10, Renee is already showing signs of leadership

and interest in pursuing FFA and dairy promotion activities.

Of dairy princess promotion, Emily said, "It's awesome to meet so many farmers and learn about their farm operations. And it's a great opportunity working with Carla Martin (state dairy princess) and Pam Werley (first state alternate)."

Emily was named Miss Congeniality and a top award for her presentation at the state pageant.

The whole family extends hospitality to acquaintances who often hang out at the Grove farm. It's a Sunday evening tradition at the Grove family to have friends and relatives drop by for pizza and fellowship.

Emily said, "It started because we are busy milking every other Sunday evening. Our friends come and hang out here while we are cleaning up."

The family is active at Chambersburg Brethren in Christ Church.

"God is number one priority for us, family second, and friends

next," Laura said of the family's goals.

"Dad has always taught us to give 100 percent of ourselves," Emily said of their enthusiasm for farming and activities.

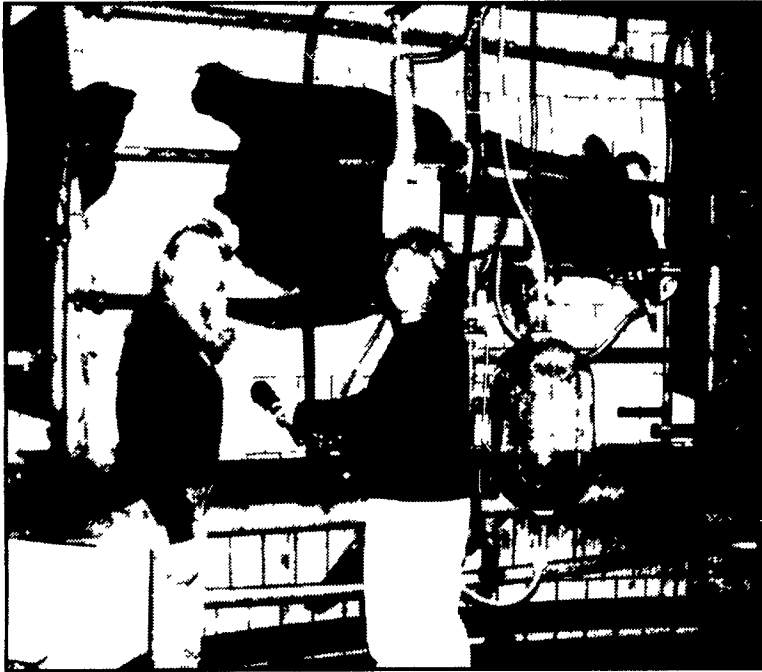
Laura and Emily refrain from taking credit for their achievements. Instead, their conversation often includes comments such as "It was God's will" and "If it's meant to be, it will happen."

Both Laura and Emily are unsure of definite careers.

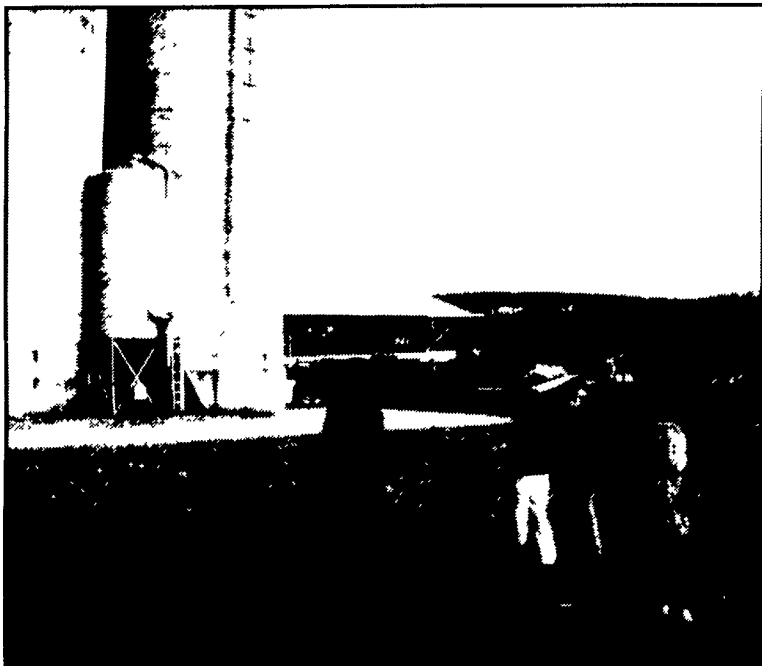
"I know I want to stay in agriculture, but I'm not sure where school will lead," Laura said of her plan to study ag business management at Penn State.

"Ag is so broad, and offers so many opportunities," Emily said. She is finishing a term in ag business at Penn State Mont Alto Campus and plans to take off the next semester to devote to dairy princess responsibilities. By that time, she expects to have a more

(Turn to Page B7)



Jeff said of his daughters Emily, left, and Laura, "They are always responsible and eager to help on the farm. I never need to call them twice for the 3 a.m. milking."



Jeff and Linda Grove with their children Emily, Laura, Caleb, and Renee walk toward the 186x113-foot freestall barn that is under construction. The Grove family was in the news recently for being the first farm to receive a low-interest loan through the Small Business First Program.



Who would think you could laugh with your father at 3 a.m. in the milking parlor? Emily said of the camaraderie that exists among family members. From left are Laura, Emily, their Uncle Jay Grove, and their dad, Jeff.

