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HARMONY ACRES NAMED JUNE 'FACE' DURING DAIRY MONTH

Uniontown, PA – Family farms have always been one of the backbones of American agriculture. But the growth of large, commercial operations can make it hard for small farms to stay competitive and stay in business.

Harmony Acres in Belle Vernon has thrived by combining modern techniques with an emphasis on family, earning its owners, the Orr family, the Fayette County Faces and Places designation for June.

Jeff and Jennifer Orr took over the operation of Harmony Acres in 2013.

“My husband and I are the third generation here,” Jennifer Orr said. “The original farm used to be in Peters Township. When my husband’s grandfather was 20 years old, and he had to go through two red lights with a tractor, he said that was enough.”

Jeff Orr’s grandfather found a property for sale on Perryopolis Road, and that’s where the dairy farm still is located. Jennifer said the couple has a milking herd of about 150 cows on the farm, with another 75 at a property in Brownsville. Most of the cows are Holsteins, though a few Jerseys and Ayrshires can be found among the herds as well.

Jeff said he and Jennifer have tried to do things to make their family farm as modern and efficient as possible, all while remaining in harmony with nature.

“We really kind of focus on the health of the soil, the health of the ecosystem, making sure we’re working more with nature than against it,” he said.

Jennifer said she and Jeff both have agricultural backgrounds.

“I grew up in 4-H. We didn’t have a farm, so I raised sheep in 4-H,” she said. “I went to school at Penn State for animal science. I never thought about having my own farm. I’ve always loved animals, but I didn’t really know for sure where my path would lead.”

Thanks to mutual friends, it eventually led to Jeff, who was studying agriculture and dairy science at a college in Wisconsin.

“I think his dad told him, ‘If you find a girl who loves feeding the calves, you’d better keep her around,’” Jennifer laughed.

She does, indeed, enjoy feeding the family's calves, so much so, she said, that she was still doing it a week before she was due to give birth to the couple's first child, son Beckett, now 4.

A daughter, Rozlynn, followed a year later.

Jeff said both kids already help out with the farm.

"She'll go with me on the tractor all day," he said of Rozlynn, adding that Beckett is happy "as long as we're doing something."

There is plenty to do on a dairy farm, especially when you've just started a new venture, as the Orrs have with their Creamline milk. They recently opened the "Jug Hut" to sell the creamy milk, as well as farm-fresh eggs and other local items.

"The milk is pasteurized, but it's non-homogenized, so all the cream is left in," Jennifer Orr explained. "All the cream will rise to the top, so you get that cream line."

The Orrs' Creamline milk contains about 4.2% butter fat, Jennifer said. Jeff added that the couple decided to offer the product last year.

"We started the construction process in June of last year," he said. "Unfortunately, because of COVID-related delays, we didn't have our first product for sale until early May of this this."

The Orrs' new venture has been well-received by their friends and neighbors, and now, word is starting to get out beyond the local community.

"Local support has been pretty solid," Jeff said. "We were selling out after the first week. We do have a little bit of social media presence, but a lot of it's been word of mouth."

It could have something to do with their sales staff, too. Beckett and Rozlynn enjoy greeting customers and helping them with their purchases, when they're not staffing their own business.

"They had a lemonade stand a couple of weeks ago," Jeff said. "We might have to make that a little monthly thing."

Harmony Acres is located at 355 Perryopolis Road, Belle Vernon. Visit them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/HarmonyAcresFarmandDairy/> or stop by the Jug Hut from 3-6 p.m. Wednesday and Friday or 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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