From rail to red

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Helping hand
USDA announces support for farmers impacted by unjustified retaliation and trade disruption.

Celebrating two of the state’s greats
Tennessee's annual Dairy Month Kickoff Luncheon honors a pair of cherished agricultural institutions, 4-H and dairy.

From rail to red
Chicago Heights Steel is a longtime manufacturer of Co-op’s iconic studded T-fence posts.

A lot to gain
Haleigh Biggar credits a steady diet of Co-op feeds in helping her show steers beef up.

The “hart” beat of Guys
Rineharts begin ninth decade of combining family and business in small McNairy County community.

Damage control
TFBF obtains depredation permits for black vultures.

All the difference
Co-op feeds a ‘lifesaver’ for Georgia’s Love Shack Boers.

IN EVERY ISSUE

4/Snapshots
Design enthusiasts are recycling agricultural heritage.

11/Priority Co-op Products
Learn about four products.

13/Neighborly Advice
Co-op feed safety protocols.

14/Legislative Update
Strong legislative session for ag.

38/What's Cookin’?
Here’s the beef.

42/Every Farmer Has A Story
Meet Lydell Meier, a native Texan making his mark as a cattleman in East Tennessee.
Salvage efforts

Design enthusiasts are recycling agricultural heritage

If you’re a fan of cable television design shows, the fanfare around simple repurposed barn boards comes as no surprise.

Tune in most anytime or log on to your favorite social media platform, and you can find someone crafting something ruggedly beautiful from the remnants of Grandpa’s cattle or tobacco barn. The boards are often repurposed as rich-colored flooring, a dramatic accent wall, or a rustic piece of furniture like a bookcase or entertainment center. I get it. I’ve found it’s hard to beat the weathered gray planks as a simple but stunning background for a quick portrait.

The popularity of the humble building material with creative do-it-yourselfers seems to have, in some cases, accelerated the demise of landmarks that were already disappearing. A recent article in the Louisville Courier-Journal related a number of rural capers where thieves were stripping boards from community barns in the dead of night. Local law enforcement was on the case but related that such incidents were common in many rural states, including neighboring Tennessee.

In many cases, time and weather have taken their toll long before woodworkers recognized the value of the common materials. I can remember so many of the beautiful barns and other buildings I’ve often driven past as I’ve crisscrossed the state for The Cooperator that are no longer standing: massive historical barns near Mooresburg and another near Maryville High School in Blount County. Numerous Rock City barns that directed travelers to the famous roadside attraction in Chattanooga. And, of course, many of the extraordinary cantilever barns found mostly in East Tennessee and Western North Carolina — predominantly in Blount and Sevier counties.

At my home place in Union County, our tobacco and cattle barn both succumbed to storms long ago. I spent many hours playing in them as a child and never gave a thought to them not being there one day.

I have a friend who recently decided to sell boards from one of the old barns and a corncrib on his farm. Both buildings had fallen into disrepair and their condition deteriorated over the years. They were no longer being used for their intended purpose. He is not a farmer, and honestly, he can certainly use the money. But it’s sad to see these connections to his family’s farming history disappear.

I suppose it’s better to see these beloved buildings recycled and repurposed rather than simply discarded. At least someone will get to enjoy them further.
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced on May 23 that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will take several actions to assist farmers in response to trade damage from unjustified retaliation and trade disruption. President Trump directed Secretary Perdue to craft a relief strategy to support American agricultural producers while the administration continues to work on free, fair, and reciprocal trade deals to open more markets in the long run to help American farmers compete globally. Specifically, the President has authorized USDA to provide up to $16 billion in programs, which is in line with the estimated impacts of unjustified retaliatory tariffs on U.S. agricultural goods and other trade disruptions. These programs will assist agricultural producers while President Trump works to address long-standing market access barriers.

“China hasn’t played by the rules for a long time and President Trump is standing up to them, sending the clear message that the United States will no longer tolerate their unfair trade practices, which include non-tariff trade barriers and the theft of intellectual property,” said Secretary Perdue. “President Trump has great affection for America’s farmers and ranchers, and he knows they are bearing the brunt of these trade disputes. In fact, I’ve never known of a president that has been more concerned or interested in farmer well-being and long-term profitability than President Trump. The plan we are announcing today ensures farmers do not bear the brunt of unfair retaliatory tariffs imposed by China and other trading partners. Our team at USDA reflected on what worked well and gathered feedback on last year’s program to make this one even stronger and more effective for farmers. Our farmers work hard, are the most productive in the world, and we aim to match their enthusiasm and patriotism as we support them.”

American farmers have dealt with unjustified retaliatory tariffs and years of non-tariff trade disruptions, which have curtailed U.S. exports to China. Trade damages from such retaliation and market (See Farmers impacted, page 6)
Farmers impacted
(continued from page 5)

distortions have impacted a host of U.S. commodities, including crops like soybeans, corn, wheat, cotton, rice, and sorghum; livestock products like milk and pork; and many fruits, nuts, and other crops. High tariffs disrupt normal marketing patterns, raising costs by forcing commodities to find new markets. Additionally, American goods shipped to China have been slowed from reaching market by unusually strict or cumbersome entry procedures, which affect the quality and marketability of perishable crops. These boost marketing costs and unfairly affect our producers.

USDA will use the following programs to assist farmers:

- Market Facilitation Program (MFP) for 2019, authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act and administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), will provide $14.5 billion in direct payments to producers.

- Producers of alfalfa hay, barley, canola, corn, crambe, dry peas, extra-long staple cotton, flaxseed, lentils, long grain and medium grain rice, mustard seed, dried beans, oats, peanuts, rapeseed, safflower, sesame seed, small and large chickpeas, sorghum, soybeans, sunflower seed, temperate japonica rice, upland cotton, and wheat will receive a payment based on a single county rate multiplied by a farm’s total plantings to those crops in aggregate in 2019. Those per-acre payments are not dependent on which of those crops are planted in 2019, and therefore will not distort planting decisions. Moreover, total payment-eligible plantings cannot exceed total 2018 plantings.

- Dairy producers will receive a per hundredweight payment on production history and hog producers will receive a payment based on hog and pig inventory for a later-specified time frame.

- Tree nut producers, fresh sweet cherry producers, cranberry producers, and fresh grape producers will receive a payment based on 2019 acres of production.

- These payments will help farmers absorb some of the additional costs of managing disrupted markets, deal with surplus commodities, and expand and develop new markets at home and abroad.

- Distributions will be made in up to three tranches, with the second and third tranches evaluated as market conditions and trade opportunities dictate. The first tranche will begin in late July/early August as soon as practical after Farm Service Agency crop reporting is completed by July 15. If conditions warrant, the second and third tranches will be made in November and early January.

- Additionally, CCC Charter Act authority will be used to implement a $1.4 billion Food Purchase and Distribution Program (FPDP) through the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to purchase surplus commodities affected by trade retaliation such as fruits, vegetables, some processed foods, beef, pork, lamb, poultry, and milk for distribution by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to food banks, schools, and other outlets serving low-income individuals.

- Finally, the CCC will use its Charter Act authority for $100 million to be issued through the Agricultural Trade Promotion Program (ATP) administered by the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) to assist in developing new export markets on behalf of producers.

Further details regarding eligibility and payment rates will be released at a later date.
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The contest will run from August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2019. A total of 1 Gator and 36 Co-op prize packs will be awarded by August 15, 2019. DELIVERIES WILL TAKE PLACE ON OR BEFORE AUGUST 30, 2019.

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Celebrating two of the state’s greats

Tennessee’s annual Dairy Month Kickoff Luncheon honors a pair of cherished agricultural institutions, 4-H and dairy

Story and photos by: Sarah Geyer

Tennessee’s 4-H program and its dairy industry took center stage in College Grove on May 30. More than 100 4-Hers, special guests, dairy representatives, farmers, and agriculture leaders gathered at Battle Mountain Farm to celebrate the 2019 Tennessee June Dairy Month Kickoff.

Celeste Blackburn, president of the American Dairy Association of Tennessee (ADAT), served as master of ceremonies for the annual event, the largest of its kind in the Southeast.

“I thank each and every one of you for being here,” she said, greeting the attendees. “As the dairy numbers get smaller in Tennessee, you are the ones we are entrusting to help us get the word out.”

Jeff Mitchell, University of Tennessee Extension specialist and statewide dairy youth coordinator, recognized the Dairy Bowl participants and winning teams. The State Champion Junior High team was from Sumner County. The State Champion Senior High team was from Lincoln County and will represent Tennessee at the National Dairy Quiz Bowl in November at the North American Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Ky.

Following quiz bowl presentations, Justin Crowe, UT 4-H Extension specialist, announced the state’s three winners of dairy- and nutrition-related projects. Kendal Penick is the 2019 Dairy Project State Winner, and Lindsey Hedrick and Santana Bingham are the 2019 Food Science State Winners. Penick and Hedrick shared brief remarks.

Crowe then presented awards to the 2019 4-H state dairy promotion winners: Jenna Cantrell, DeKalb County, Media Award; Hannah Brown, Sumner County, Best Use of Theme; Grace Rich, Clay County, Division I; Zoe Cowan, Lincoln County, Division II; and Hannah Brown, Sumner County, Division III.

Three 4-Hers were also recognized in the dairy promotional poster contest for incorporating the theme, “Dairy is in our DNA.” Each winner received a cash award and a ribbon. First-place honors and $500 went to Gabby Garcia of Sumner County.
Jessa Spears of Macon County was chosen as the second-place winner and received $300. Madison County’s Blane Lafferty was awarded third place and $200.

Crowe concluded his portion of the program by recognizing 34 June Dairy Month chairs from across the state.

Jeff Aiken, president of Tennessee Farm Bureau, introduced the featured speaker for the event, Charles Hatcher.

“We always look forward to this event for lots of reasons,” said Aiken. “But primarily because we recognize two great and important institutions in our state – 4-H and our dairy industry – and Charles embodies both of them.”

Hatcher, the son of Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M., is a fifth-generation dairy farmer in College Grove. He was an active member of Williamson County’s 4-H program and served as a June Dairy Month Chairman. Until last month, he split his time between Hatcher Family Dairy and Page High School, where he served as a football coach, ag teacher, and FFA adviser. He currently serves as president of his family’s dairy farm and is the newest member of ADAT.

“Dairy farming is hard work, as you all know,” said Hatcher. “There’s nothing easy about it. It is the passion that drives us. It’s the product and the animals. It’s the family that drives us. That’s what keeps us going in dairy farming. It’s not about the money, it’s about building the next generation.”

Hatcher then spoke directly to the 4-H members in the audience: “Any time you’re handed a microphone in front of a camera, embrace it. We’re counting on you to talk good about us, to talk about the benefits of milk, and to help support the dairy industry.”

Following Hatcher’s remarks, Blackburn presented two Outstanding Dairy Promoter of the Year awards, one to Wilson County Fair representatives for this year’s fair theme, “The Year of Milk,” and the second to Jai Templeton, former Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture.

Blackburn ended the luncheon with a challenge to the young attendees.

“There are a lot of hungry people out there, and in food banks, dairy is one of the things that is not there,” she said. “What I would like to do is challenge 4-H of Tennessee for each group to try to get at least 10 gallons of milk into your food bank in each county.”
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Food safety is critical to our national security. We are fortunate to live in a nation that puts so much effort and focus on protecting the integrity of our food supply. You can be sure the United States has the safest food supply in the world.

With that thought in mind, Tennessee Farmers Co-op takes its role in food safety very seriously as well. Customers using Co-op feed can have confidence that much care is taken to provide them with a safe, dependable product. The employees at TFC understand that, while we are not raising livestock, we are a vital link in the food animal production chain. TFC feed mills follow strict precautions and procedures to ensure the safety and quality of Co-op feeds throughout the manufacturing process.

Co-op operates three feed mills across the state — at Jackson in West Tennessee, Tenco near Rockford in East Tennessee, and at TFC’s LaVergne headquarters in Middle Tennessee. Each of these facilities follows safety protocols similar to those required of a food manufacturing plant.

To maintain these safety protocols, all Co-op feed mills are registered with the FDA and fully comply with the FDA’s Food Safety Modernization Act. In addition, Co-op mills are certified Safe Feed/Safe Food facilities. In all of the cases, the mills are inspected and audited on a regular schedule to ensure compliance.

As a part of these food safety measures, we monitor the integrity of inbound feed ingredients, which will be used in the production of complete feed products. All ingredients are inspected, tested, and screened for foreign material before being unloaded. In addition, drivers delivering ingredients must verify what they last hauled and, if it was something not conducive to food safety, they must prove their equipment was properly washed out before hauling our ingredient. If these inspections fail, the ingredient is rejected. A sample is retained of all ingredients and finished manufactured products for accountability.

All medications used in Co-op feed products are strictly calculated, monitored, and reconciled each day. This ensures that if a medicated feed is produced, it is safe and has the exact amount of medication required.

All Co-op feed products can be tracked back to the ingredients which make up each feed. This tracking system saves valuable time if a problem ever exists and solutions can rapidly be put into place.

These are just a few of the many specific safety procedures in place at Co-op feed mills in order to do our part in protecting the safety of our food supply. Co-op animal feeds are made with integrity and food safety in mind. We have confidence that what’s on the tag is what’s in the bag!
Rookies help usher in strong legislative session for agriculture

In Tennessee, 2019 has brought a new governor, state department commissioners, legislative committee chairman, caucus leaders, several new faces in legislative leadership positions, and over 30 new lawmakers. Each had a hand in bringing the first session of the 111th General Assembly to a close in early May. The legislature fulfilled its constitutional obligation to pass a budget amid other controversies at the capitol.

Speaking of budget, Tennessee General Fund revenues at this point in the budget year are ahead of projections by nearly $500 million. Most of the increased revenues have been generated by sales tax. Tennessee was recently named by U.S. News and World Report as the No. 1 state on its list of fiscal stability rankings. The report used state credit ratings and public pension liabilities to measure financial health.

Agriculture and the farmers of Tennessee should consider the session successful despite undertones of legislative skepticism which, at worst, only remotely affect the state’s agricultural policies. A few of agriculture’s legislative highlights from the 2019 session include:

**Agricultural water:** Legislation passed to add agricultural water to items which are tax exempt for farmers of the state.

**Seasonal CDL for agribusiness:** The new law authorizes farm-related service industry employees to attain a restricted Commercial Driver's License (CDL) for the purpose of completing seasonal agricultural work.

**Agricultural trailers sales tax exempt:** Adds other trailers to livestock trailers which are currently sales tax-exempt under Tennessee state law.

**Resolutions:** Resolutions were unanimously passed to designate Tennessee Agriculture Farmer Suicide Prevention Day in Tennessee and to recognize Shooting Hunger for eclipsing the 1 million mark in providing meals for hungry Tennesseans.

The always anticipated Agriculture Day on the Hill was one for the record books in 2019. The event was led by freshman representative Chris Todd (R-Jackson), Tennessee farmers, and agribusiness. The event brings a diverse cross-section of commodity leadership to the state capitol, where they are joined by lawmakers. Gov. Bill Lee made a statement in his first year by competing in the annual crosscut log cutting contest and winning the event over the House and Senate.

Of general interest in the 2019 session, the legislature passed last-minute education voucher legislation. The voucher component of the new law will only apply to Davidson and Shelby counties; however, grant incentive dollars for rural school districts are also included in the language of the law. School voucher programs are designed to award private school scholarships to children who are in under-performing public schools. The legislature also extended a $22 million professional privilege tax cut to 15 professions, including veterinarians. Other budget highlights include:

- Increasing the state’s Rainy Day Fund by $240 million
- Designating $25 million for the Governor’s Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) initiative to expand K-12 CTE programs, primarily in rural areas
- Allocation of an additional $30 million for school resource officers
- Addition of $27 million to provide life-saving medical services through TennCare to Tennessee children with significant disabilities
- $222 million for economic development projects.

Thanks for staying engaged this session. Until next time, stay active in your Co-op and let your lawmakers know what matters to you.
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Julie Giles chosen as executive director of the Farm Animal Care Coalition of Tennessee

Julie Giles, a native of Williamson County, has been named executive director of the Farm Animal Care Coalition of Tennessee (FACCT). The organization was established in 2011 by animal agriculture supporters across the state to be a reliable resource for the public and farmers regarding humane care, well-being issues, and best management practices for farm animals.

Giles will be working with livestock producers across the state to develop networks to support the work of the coalition, which aims to reach out to producers, consumers, lawmakers, the media, and the public with facts about farm animal welfare.

“I look forward to continuing to be an advocate for agriculture,” says Giles. “I want to share information about livestock animals that aid in the successful future of our industry.”

Giles holds a Bachelor of Science degree in agribusiness from Middle Tennessee State University. Her work experiences include serving as a 4-H Extension Agent in Marshall and Williamson counties, where she served as chair for a number of livestock shows and taught youth life skills through participation in livestock projects.

Giles lives in Lewisburg with her husband, Doug, and daughter, Baylann. The family operates a cow/calf and stocker operation and raises hogs for local 4-H projects and for family members to show. Giles continues to be active in agriculture organizations, including Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers where she has competed nationally in the Collegiate Discussion Meet and the Excellence in Agriculture competition. She is currently pursuing a master’s degree from the University of Tennessee in agriculture leadership, education, and communication.

Giles started her new position July 1 and will operate out of the Tennessee Cattlemen’s Association office in Murfreesboro. She can be reached at juliefacct@gmail.com or 615-970-8065.
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From rail to red

Chicago Heights Steel is a longtime manufacturer of Co-op's iconic studded T-fence posts

Story and photos by: Chris Villines
There are more than 140,000 miles of railroad track in the U.S. Over time, the track naturally wears down and must be replaced for safety purposes.

But this discarded rail can still be used in important ways. The sturdy steel provides the perfect material for the folks at Chicago Heights Steel (CHS), located 30 miles south of Chicago, to use in the creation of long-lasting, 100-percent recycled, American-made products, most notably Co-op’s iconic studded T-fence posts. The CHS rail yard has a deep inventory of rail purchased from both the U.S. and Canada.

“The same qualities that are in a railroad track, where it flexes under the weight of a train and comes back to its original shape, work out great for a fencepost,” says CHS Senior Vice President and Sales Manager Steve Clark. “We take this rail, which can sometimes be more than a century old, and recycle it into products that can be used for years and years.”

To put into perspective the impact of this recycling effort, one mile of rail produces 64,000 6-foot-long sections — totaling 73 miles — of fence post. Laid end to end, these posts encompass 1,075 football fields.

Chicago Heights, with 250 employees, is the largest special market mill in the U.S. Its roots date back to 1893, when the current CHS site launched as Inland Steel. “At that time, other steel companies were starting locations on Lake Michigan, but the founders wanted something inland, thus the name Inland Steel,” Steve explains. “It retained the Inland name until 1969, when one of this plant’s largest customers, Keystone, bought it. In 1985, we formally became Chicago Heights Steel.”

Throughout the existence of CHS, its relationship with Tennessee Farmers Cooperative has been key to both companies’ business. CHS manufactures Co-op’s red T-posts, shipping out some 500,000 a year, and also creates green T-posts for Co-op and other companies for a total production of 20 million posts yearly. The company also manufactures two other products: U-channel sign posts and a plain T-post used for garage door opening systems.

“I’m proud of the fact that we’ve had such a long affiliation with Chicago Heights,” says TFC Farm Home Fleet Department Manager Jimmy Ogilvie. “Both TFC and Chicago Heights have an unwavering commitment to quality and to the member owners who use their products. Through open communication, we’ve enjoyed a great partnership I’m confident will continue for years to come.”

The multi-step process of transforming rail steel to fence posts takes a mere four hours and begins with sections of rail being loaded onto a conveyer, where any residual oil is burned off before the steel is moved into the furnace (see photo on cover). From there, the rail enters the furnace, where it is heated to 2,200 degrees.

“At 2,200 degrees, the rail still keeps its shape and doesn’t become liquid,” Steve explains. “After that, it goes through a series of eight rolls, and every time it goes through a roll, it takes a different shape until we have the final product — a 150-foot fence post.”

(See From rail to red, page 20)
From rail to red
(continued from page 19)

Once the rail is ready to exit the furnace after 20 minutes, it is pushed out by an operator using a water-cooled machine (image 1). Then, the section of steel moves into a slitting machine (image 2) where it is divided into three parts: head, web, and flange. T-posts are formed using the head.

After the posts form, the 150-foot-long sections cool to around 900 degrees and proceed to the shear where it is sliced to the proper size. CHS manufactures Co-op fence posts in 5-foot, 5.5-foot, 6-foot, 6.5-foot, 7-foot, and 8-foot lengths.

From the shear, the posts are then ready for painting.

“They go through a dip tank and come out for about 12 minutes of flash time before they head into the oven for 7 minutes at 255 degrees,” says Mario Cipolla, superintendent of the CHS post plant. “Once they come out, we put on the top coat of paint, and they go back in the oven for 20 minutes. When they come out of the oven again, the posts are cured, hard, and ready to be sent out.”

Completed posts (image 3) go through a cooling tunnel before heading to their final destination, a bundler, before their transport to the warehouse for shipment. The posts are stacked in five-piece “mini bundles” and wrapped with plastic straps (image 4). In an eight-hour shift, 48,000 posts can be painted on the two painting lines.

“Our manufacturing process is quick, efficient, and green,” says CHS President Brad Corral, who succeeded his father, Frank, at the helm after starting his 30-year career with the company by working in the mill. “We’re an effective recycling center that uses the least amount of energy possible to convert rail from a used material to a finished product. And we don’t have to re-melt it, mix it with other steels, or worry about the chemistry.

“We’re proud of what we do here, and we’re always looking at ways we can make the process even better.”

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A lot to gain

Haleigh Biggar credits a steady diet of Co-op feeds in helping her show steers beef up

Story and photos by: Allison Parker

When it comes to showing livestock, it’s no secret success in the show ring relies heavily on the judge’s opinion. But the Clarksville Area Junior Better Beef Show has one category that is strictly based on facts — the Average Daily Gain competition.

To be eligible for this competition, a steer must be brought in December to the Kentucky-Tennessee Livestock Market in Guthrie, Ky., to have its weight documented and be weighed again in May at the show. Steers are then ranked based on their average daily gain.

Haleigh Biggar of Clarksville was named the 2019 Average Daily Gain Champion with her show steer, Tank, which boasted an impressive daily gain of 4.49 pounds. The secret behind her success in producing better beef? High-quality feed, she says.

Haleigh and dad Tom, manager at the Ashland City branch of Robertson Cheatham Farmers Cooperative, give credit to Co-op Custom 14% Beef Feed with Rumensin (#94470) for helping the steer reach such a high rate of gain during the five-month period.

The ration is formulated to help increase feed efficiency in growing cattle on pasture and includes Rumensin to aid in the prevention of coccidiosis.

In addition to her winning steer, Haleigh’s second entry, Tyler, placed ninth in the Average Daily Gain competition with a daily gain of 4.02 pounds. Three of the other top 10 steers in the competition were also raised on Co-op feeds.

“During the prime preparation time for the show, the steers would eat over 35 pounds of the feed a day,” says Haleigh. “They simply couldn’t get enough of it.”

Haleigh, an upcoming seventh grader at Richview Middle School in Montgomery County, has placed in the top 10 with at least one of her steers in the Average Daily Gain competition since 2017.

Has been around cattle her whole life, thanks to the farming focus of her family, but had never considered showing cattle until her grandfather, Tommy Biggar, surprised her by purchasing a show calf.

“It was late on a Monday night when my dad called me to say he had bought Haleigh a show calf at the stockyard in Cross Plains that day,” says Tom. “Haleigh and I had not even talked about her showing cattle, so I worried how she would react. But as soon as she met her calf, Bentley, she was beyond excited and couldn’t wait to get started.”

Haleigh walked out of her first Better Beef Show as a class winner, and her competitive fire has burned bright ever since.

(See A lot to gain, page 26)
A lot to gain
(continued from page 25)

She is a regular competitor at the Clarksville Area Junior Better Beef Show, which provides an opportunity for 4-H and FFA members in Montgomery, Houston, Robertson, and Cheatham counties in Tennessee and Todd County in Kentucky to display steers at a local show at the John Bartee Agriculture Center in Clarksville.

“Students who participate in this show learn about the responsibility of taking care of livestock,” says Montgomery County 4-H and Adult Agricultural Extension Agent Rusty Evans, who has served Extension for 41 years. “[The show] also educates them as to how we as agriculturists produce good quality beef for our food supply.”

The Better Beef Show is unique because at the end of the show, the steers are harvested and a report on their carcass data is provided to the student. Later in the summer, the 4-H agents host a banquet where they discuss the results from the carcass show with students and their parents and explain how the show calf’s carcass did in quality grade, yield grade, and how much money the steer made.

Contact your local Co-op livestock expert for more information about Co-op beef cattle feeds or assistance in a feed and mineral program to meet your farm’s specific needs.

Haleigh was named the 2019 Better Beef Show Average Daily Gain Champion with her show steer, Tank.

Tom and Haleigh say some of their most treasured quality time together is spent working with their cattle.
Eighteen college students are exploring agricultural career opportunities this summer by interning at Tennessee Farmers Cooperative and its member Co-ops. Interns and their affiliations are, front row from left: Abby Bartholomew, First Farmers; Kayla Bilbrey, White County; Bridget Robertson, TFC Retail Development; Alaina Staggs, TFC Communications; Abby Watkins, Overton; and Allison Parker, TFC Marketing. Middle row from left: Currie McIntyre, Tipton; Wyatt Choate, Dickson; Callie Fisher, Lawrence; Katelyn Ballard, Franklin; Shawn Dillard, Jefferson; and Kailey Orrand-Hill, Wilson. Back row from left: TFC Training & Education Specialist Scott Bohanon; Caleb Akers, Henry; Tyler Millaps, AgCentral; Shelby Autry, Gibson; Cal Clardy, Robertson Cheatham; Katie Peery, Lincoln; Garrett Turner, Sequatchie; and TFC Director of Training & Education Paul Binkley.

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Ninety years after C.F. Rinehart launched his roadside cotton gin in Guys, the Rinehart family continues to draw from his example of embracing business opportunities, strengthening and supporting family, and cherishing life in one of McNairy County’s smallest communities.

Each generation has expanded, adapted, and reinvented the family business in response to changing and sometimes challenging times. Keith Rinehart, C.F.’s grandson and mayor of Guys, shares his family’s story, from the early cotton gin years to today.

From its humble beginnings, C.F. grew the business steadily over the next few years. In less than a decade, the roadside cotton gin had been relocated to a wooden building nearby. Tragedy struck in 1952, and fire destroyed both the gin and the building. C.F., however, refused to be discouraged. Instead, he viewed the loss as a chance to expand and upgrade with new ginning equipment and an expansive metal structure.

Adversity returned just three years later when C.F. unexpectedly passed away. His wife, Lottie, was faced with the choice — to keep the gin and contend with the new building’s debt or sell the business. She took a leap of faith and decided to continue running the gin with help from her son, Pete, and his wife, Shirley. The couple also settled in Guys, purchasing farmland where they raised their children, Keith and Pam, as well as cotton, cattle, and horses.

After graduating from high school, Keith joined the family business full time, and after he married, his wife Amber helped out at the gin, too. They also built a life in Guys. The farmland provided a place to raise their children, Jessica and Mitch, as well as cotton, cattle, and horses. Amber, a trained beautician, opened a small beauty shop on the farm and later started a floral business near the family’s gin. The couple also found time to compete in rodeo — Keith in roping and Amber in barrel racing. However, their main priority remained with the cotton gin, which required the whole family.

“Amber helped Daddy during the day, and I worked on the farm,” says Keith. “At night, Mother [who worked at ITT in Corinth during the day] helped me run the night crew.”
By the mid-1990s, the farming industry in the region had changed, and the Rineharts were faced with another difficult decision. “Cotton was down to about 200 total acres in the county,” says Keith. “At the same time, the UD [Universal Density] press came out, and cotton couldn’t be sold without it. Dad and Mom couldn’t justify that expense.”

With heavy hearts, the Rineharts decided to close the gin in 1995. Pete and Shirley were near retirement age, but Keith and Amber still had school-aged children.

“I wasn’t sure what to do, so I took a job at a local paper mill,” says Keith. “After the first day, I knew it wasn’t for me.”

Instead of staying at the mill, Keith found the courage to reinvent himself and the family business. He and long-time employee Gary Comer transformed the metal building into Rinehart Repair and Machine Shop. As with the cotton gin, this business also required a family effort. Mitch works at the shop full time, while Jessica and Mitch’s wife, Megan, help with billing and bookkeeping.

Inspired by their son’s courage, Pete and Shirley also took on a new adventure. With the encouragement of their daughter, Pam Wheeler, they opened Family’s Café in 1999. The three operated the popular Guys restaurant with Shirley’s brother, Raymond Price, for nearly 15 years.

It’s not surprising that Keith’s children, too, have created opportunities to combine family with business. Last July, Jessica opened Heart Pine Hall, a bed and breakfast/event venue in a local historic home that she and husband Brock, a radiologist, recently restored. Jessica and her mother decorate and prepare floral arrangements, while Jessica and her grandmother prepare the food. To date, they’ve booked 15 overnight stays with guests from as far as California and Pennsylvania and hosted nearly 30 events including retreats, parties, and weddings.

Mitch’s entrepreneurial efforts began much earlier. Four years after his parents decided to get out of the cattle business, the high school freshman convinced his dad to let him raise his own herd. Today, Mitch and Keith run a thriving cow/calf commercial operation with 100 mamas and their calves. Recently Mitch and Brock began cross breeding Herefords and Brahmas for F1 feed stock. Mitch and Megan are also continuing the family’s rodeo legacy; he is an avid team- and calf-roping competitor, and his wife is a barrel racer and national gold and silver buckle breakaway roping champion.

Both couples are also continuing the family tradition of raising families in Guys. “Everyone lives just a stone’s throw from each other,” says Keith, adding that his mother serves as the glue for their busy family.

At least once a week, the family gathers at Shirley’s to share one of her famous “Thanksgiving-like” meals, but the 83-year-old’s most important “job” is caring for five of her great-grandchildren: Jessica and Brock’s three — McKinley, 8, and twins Houston and Molly Brock, 7; and Mitch and Megan’s daughters — Fisher Ann, 4, and Halle Pete, 4 months.

In a few short years, the Rinehart story will be in the hands of the fifth generation, and Keith says he can’t wait to see their spin on combining family and business.

LEFT: Jessica Rinehart Dean opened Heart Pine Hall in Guys last July. The restored historic home doubles as a bed and breakfast and an event venue. This new business venture is a family affair; Jessica decorates, her mother Amber provides floral arrangements, and grandmother Shirley assists Jessica with the food. RIGHT: Mitch Rinehart, left, runs a commercial cow/calf operation with his dad and brother-in-law, Brock, far right. The Rineharts are customers of Stockdale’s in Selmer and Alcorn County Cooperative in Corinth, Miss. The young fathers enjoy sharing their love of cattle with their children, Mitch’s daughter Fisher Ann and Brock’s son Houston.
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CCA of the Year Award was created to recognize a Crop Certified Adviser – someone who delivers exceptional customer service, is highly innovative, has shown that they are a leader in their field, and has contributed substantially to the exchange of ideas and the transfer of agronomic knowledge within the agriculture industry.

Criteria
1. Nominee must be actively involved as a CCA in the agricultural industry.
2. Nominee must be well respected in his/her agricultural community.
3. Nominee must have accomplishments in his/her field that have impacted, or will impact, many clients over time.
4. Nominee must have a lifetime of achievement in agriculture, be an industry leader, or be recognized as an up-and-coming, active, innovative crop advisor.

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Scan and submit a nomination package via email to Jaymie Seay at jseay@ourcoop.com by August 31. The following must be included:
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What do Daytona, Fla., Indianapolis, Ind., and Chapel Hill, Tenn., all have in common? Each of these cities hosts the premier motorsports event in its category.

And on July 19-20, the 43rd annual Lions Superpull of the South will return to Chapel Hill as the biggest and best in truck and tractor pulling compete at the Lions Memorial Sportsplex.

Sponsored by the Chapel Hill Lions Club, Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, and Lyons Chevrolet-Buick-GMC-Ford, the Superpull has been voted the No. 1 truck and tractor pull in the U.S. on multiple occasions. More than 20,000 people from across the U.S. and Canada attend the event each year in the rural Marshall County community 40 miles south of Nashville.

The Superpull got its start when a group of local farmers took the tractors they used every day and brought them together to see who could pull a weighted sled the farthest and have bragging rights for the year. From this meager beginning, the Chapel Hill Lions Club has built the event into one of the country’s most prestigious pulls.

Although the Chapel Hill Lions Club has 102 members and is the second-largest Lions Club in Tennessee, it takes 300 volunteers to make the Superpull happen. Not only do other clubs and organizations in the area participate, but members of other Lions Clubs from across the state of Tennessee come to help. After expenses, 100 percent of the money raised from the event is used by the Chapel Hill Lions Club to fund local and state community projects.

This year’s festivities begin at 7 p.m. each night. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.lionssuperpull.com or call 931-364-2236.
Tennessee cattle producers are under pressure due to a recent increase in black vulture attacks on livestock. In 2016 alone, Tennessee cattle producers reported a total of 233 cattle fatalities due to vulture predation in the state.

The Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation (TFBF) Board of Directors recently obtained a statewide Livestock Protection Depredation Sub-Permit for black vultures in an effort to aid cattle producers experiencing vulture predation on their herds. The TFBF has worked with both state and federal personnel to produce this U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-approved depredation permit designed for livestock producers.

Black vultures are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, along with varying individual state laws and regulations.

Per the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), there are two indigenous species of vulture to North America. Both black vultures and turkey vultures are scavengers that play a unique and critical role in maintaining an ecosystem. While these birds feed on carrion or the carcasses of dead animals, they act as a part of nature’s “clean-up crew.”

APHIS goes on to report that populations of both bird species have had a sharp increase in the last 30 years. Vultures nest in large roosts, also known as loafing areas. A single flock can range from only a dozen to hundreds of birds.

While these birds are beneficial in many ecosystems, the increase in concentration of vultures has resulted in a drastic situation for many farmers as vultures turn to cattle herds and smaller livestock as a food source due to increased competition in their environment. Vultures can deal serious damage to both livestock and smaller animals, and tend to target weaker animals such as calves, lambs, and piglets.

Approved in 2016, the initial version of this sub-permit allowed farmers legal “takes” on black vultures. Now, over 400 sub-permits have been issued in the state to farmers from TFBF.

There is zero cost associated with the TFBF livestock protection depredation sub-permit. Applicants are required to follow all rules and regulations set forth by the USFWS pertaining to the statewide permit. These regulations include: use of non-lethal measures to deter predation, use of shotguns and nontoxic shot in lethal “taking” of black vultures, quarterly reports on “takes,” and the use of vulture carcasses as effigies in depredation areas.

Individual black vulture depredation permits are also available to livestock producers through the USFWS at the cost of $100 per permit. These permits are issued only under circumstances of “extreme depredation.”

APHIS division of Wildlife Services National Wildlife Research Center is currently working on a science-based solution for wildlife damages. Studies are being conducted on vulture ecology and behavior in order to produce effective strategies for farmers and other concerned citizens to minimize property and agricultural damage as well as quell health or safety concerns caused by vultures in the U.S.

Human-vulture interaction is also inevitable as roosts increase and the birds come into closer contact with the human population. Negative impacts due to this environmental shift include property damage to vehicles or residences, agricultural damage including loss of calves or other small stock, as well as human health and safety concerns due to their proximity.

“In the past, when we saw a buzzard on the side of the road, we knew they were doing a job for us,” says Maury County cattleman Mike Ford.

Now, many cattle producers in the state feel overwhelmed at what they sense is an inability to prevent further injury to existing herds due to the protected status of the birds as large roosts increase across the state.

A group of black vultures roost in trees above farmland, where livestock grazing below are increasingly becoming prey for these birds.

The increasing black vulture population has become a threat to livestock, smaller animals, and even humans.
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One by one, their goats were dying. Judy Kimbrell and her husband, Johnny, were worried. And scratching their heads. The Kimbrells, who operate Love Shack Boers in Cornelia, Ga., couldn't pinpoint the root cause of the problem.

"[The goats had] quit filling out and putting on weight," says Judy, who began raising the popular Boer breed, known for their rapid growth and large muscular frames, with Johnny in 2006. "A lot of our pregnant does started dying on us, and it wasn’t because of pregnancy toxemia. It hurts when you lose a bunch, especially when you’re kidding out."

When some friends began having similar issues with their goats, closer examination revealed a common denominator — both herds were on the same feed.

Fast forward from that troubling time four years ago to the present, and it’s clear to see a 180-degree transformation has taken place at Love Shack Boers (named after the popular B-52's song). Around 60 Boers and crossbred goats, the majority of which are registered, thrive on gently rolling pastures among the Georgia pines. The Kimbrells regularly garner top awards at regional shows, and their breeding stock is in demand among other show participants seeking top genetics.

And the centerpiece of this turnaround, they emphasize, began the day they switched to Co-op goat feeds.

"If it wasn’t for the Co-op feed, we would have more than likely sold our goats," says Judy. "Nothing we’ve tried works for us as well as the Co-op feed does. For the price, you can’t get anything around here that matches it. It’s not even close."

What also wasn’t close, however, was the nearest Co-op store. Some 100 miles separated Judy and Johnny from Smoky Mountain Farmers Co-op’s Waynesville, N.C., branch. And with their main business, JK’s Paving, running wide open at various points throughout the year, that distance posed a potential problem.

But they soon discovered the Waynesville store provided an easy fix.

"They told us that they could deliver the feed to us in bulk," says Johnny. "That
suited us perfectly because we don't always have the availability to go get it.”

The Kimbrells utilize two Co-op Goat Feeds for their herd: 16% Pelleted Goat Grower-RUM (#93461) and 17% Pelleted Show Goat Grower-RUM (#93326).

Formulated for growing goats for sale or show, 16% Pelleted Goat Grower is medicated with Rumensin for the prevention of coccidiosis. This vitamin- and mineral-rich feed contains ammonium chloride to help reduce urinary calculi (water belly), selenium and added vitamin E to help prevent White Muscle Disease, organic zinc to promote hoof health, and a probiotic to help maintain proper microflora balance in the digestive tract.

“We start them on [the 16% feed],” says Judy. “I introduce the babies to the feeders to where the mamas can teach them how to start eating. They usually start eating it within a matter of weeks. I learned really fast that there’s more to Boer goats having babies than just throwing them out in the pasture and letting them go.”

To prepare show goats for the ring, the 17% Pelleted Show Goat Grower-RUM provides multiple sources of high-quality protein, energy from a variety of carbohydrate sources and fat sources, and selenium, organic trace minerals, and added vitamin E to help support immune function in times of stress.

Judy and Johnny are adamant that working closely with Smoky Mountain Farmers-Waynesville animal health sales specialist Crystal Greene has been a value-added benefit to them. Crystal helps out when animal health issues arise, either by phone or in person at the farm.

“She has been a lifesaver,” says Judy. “Crystal has given me some great advice on what dewormers to use, and I can call her and she’ll have product on the next truck that comes in. I like that a lot. When I go to a local feed store and ask for goat products, they look at me and laugh.”

Crystal says the Kimbrells are on target with the health of their herd.

“Every day, they continually monitor the condition of such things as the goats’ hooves, gums, and eyes,” she explains. “They are top-notch when it comes to animal husbandry.”

Crystal also stresses how impressed she is with Johnny and Judy’s “kidding house,” an actual 100-year-old house that once belonged to Johnny’s grandmother.

“After we acquired it four years ago, I thought it would be perfect to use for kidding out,” explains Johnny. “We took the three bedrooms and turned them into kidding rooms with pens so we can house three goats in each room. And there’s a gas heater and kitchen in the house, so we’ll basically move there and stay until the babies are all on the ground.”

Though the Kimbrells started their goat operation in 2006, they didn’t embark upon showing until 2012. Judy says they did plenty of homework first.

“I don’t like to go into something unknowingly,” says Judy. “I’ve done that too many times. We went to several shows to learn what had to be done and what kind of goat you had to have to show.”

After initially being “terrified” at the notion of being in front of an audience, Judy now says showing is a fun experience.

“I bounce in the show ring,” she says with a chuckle.

She and Johnny have even created a contest between each other at shows.

“We try to have two goats in the same lineup at least once,” Johnny says. “Then, it’s a competition on who places better and the loser has to buy supper. Lately, I’ve had to buy a lot of suppers!”

For more information about Co-op’s complete line of goat feeds, visit with the professionals at your local Co-op or www.co-opfeeds.com.
Harriman — Utopia of Temperance — was intended to be “an ideal industrial city, an object lesson for thrift, sobriety, superior intelligence, and exalted moral character,” says the historical marker outside the Harriman City Hall at the corner of Walden Avenue and Roane Street. The distinctive building with its picturesque Norman towers is near the city’s Cornstalk Heights area that features a number of ornate Victorian-style homes. — Photo by Glen Liford

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HERE’S THE BEEF
**Sweet and Saucy Meatballs**

**Casie Spencer**  
Lester, Ala.  
Giles County Co-op

1 pound ground beef  
1 egg  
½ cup quick cooking oats  
1 ½ cups water  
1 ¼ cups ketchup  
½ cup sugar

In a bowl, combine beef and egg. Sprinkle in oats and mix well. Shape into balls. Place in a lightly greased baking dish. Combine water, ketchup, and sugar. Pour over meatballs. Bake uncovered at 350° for 40-50 minutes or until meat is no longer pink.

**Simple Beef and Macaroni Casserole with Cheese**

**Dr. Jean Lewis**  
Oneida  
Scott Morgan  
Farmers Cooperative

1 large onion, diced  
1 tablespoon canola oil or vegetable oil  
Salt to taste  
1 tablespoon chopped garlic (or substitute garlic powder)  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
1 teaspoon basil  
Other optional seasonings according to your taste: oregano, cumin, coriander, chili powder  
1 (28 ounce) can whole tomatoes, pureed in the can with a hand blender or in a blender  
2 pounds lean ground beef  
1 (16 ounce) box macaroni  
1 cup grated Cheddar cheese  
1 cup mozzarella cheese

Shape into balls. Place in a lightly greased baking dish. Add 1 cup mozzarella cheese and 1 cup cheddar cheese. Bake in a 350° oven until it's piping hot (about 30-45 minutes).

**Beef Pot Pie**

**Linda Bain**  
Bethel Springs  
Mid-South Farmers Cooperative

1 medium beef roast, cooked and chopped  
1 large onion, chopped  
1 large bell pepper, chopped  
2 (12 ounce) cans mixed vegetables, drained  
2 (8 ounce) cans cream of chicken soup  
1 (16 ounce) bag shredded cheese, your choice  
2 deep dish pie shells  
2 regular pie shells

Cook both deep dish pie shells; set aside. In a large sauce pan, cook onions and pepper until tender. Add beef and mixed vegetables; mix well. Add cream of chicken soup. Stir all together and let heat through (add salt and pepper to taste). Divide into pie shells. Divide cheese on top. Add regular pie crust on top; try not to break. Place in top part of oven and bake at 250° until top pie shell is browned.

**Cabbage Casserole**

**Polly Dodd**  
Toone  
Mid-South Farmers Cooperative

1 pound ground beef  
1 medium onion, chopped  
3 tablespoons butter  
6 cups chopped cabbage  
Brown beef and onion in butter in a 2-quart baking dish. Spread 3 cups cabbage in the bottom and add meat mixture and top with remaining cabbage. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. If desired, pour one 10-ounce can of tomato soup over top. Bake at 350° for 1 hour.

**Correction**

While The Cooperator strives for perfection with each recipe published monthly, occasionally mistakes are made. In the June 2019 issue, the Frozen Cheesecake recipe listed 4 eggs in the ingredients without mentioning that if eggs are to be used, they must be cooked. If using eggs, cook in a 325° oven until top is golden and center jiggles slightly, about 45 minutes.

Get “Hooked” on Seafood

Baked and broiled, grilled and sautéed – seafood is delicious every way! Low in calories, sodium, and cholesterol, and high in omega-3 oils, vitamins, and minerals, seafood may help reduce the risk of heart disease and lower blood pressure. Each year, the average person will consume around 16 pounds of seafood. Share with The Cooperator readers your favorite recipes using these delightful treats from the ocean waters.

Send us your favorite seafood recipes—shrimp, crab, mussels, salmon, clams, lobster, and more. The person submitting the recipe judged best will be named “Cook of the Month” for the September Cooperator and receive $10. Others sending recipes chosen for publication will receive $5, and each winner will also receive a special “What’s Cookin’?” certificate.

**Monday, July 29, is the deadline for your seafood recipes.**

Only recipes with complete, easy-to-follow instructions will be considered. Send entries to: Recipes, The Cooperator, P.O. Box 3003, LaVergne, TN 37086, or email them to pcampbell@ourcoop.com. Include your name, address, telephone number, and the Co-op with which you do business. Recipes that are selected will also be published on our website at www.ourcoop.com.
Hampshire First Baptist Church
in Maury County

Hampshire First Baptist Church is located at 4063 Hampshire Pike in Hampshire. The church has a mission to go and show the heart of God to the world and to welcome any and every one into their church family. Hampshire First Baptist also holds monthly food giveaways to people in need. Join them each week for Sunday school at 9:15 a.m., Sunday worship at 10:30 a.m., and Wednesday night Bible study at 6:30 p.m.
July 2019

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See store for details
Strong suit

Show ring experiences of Lydell Meier and wife Holly set the stage for family success

Story and photos by: Glen Liford

It's a hectic life. Clinton's Lydell Meier was in Middle Tennessee delivering a load of cattle on Friday. It's now Monday morning, and he is sitting down with The Cooperator for a quick interview. Wife Holly is at the family business, Holly Gamble Funeral Home. Son Andrew is at a basketball camp in Cookeville. Youngest daughter Alyssa is attending volleyball practice. Middle daughter Annie doesn't have cheer practice this week, so she is home for a change.

Good luck gathering the crew for a picture. How could Lydell have known this flurry of activity and family bliss would come as a direct result of his experiences showing cattle, which began when he was a first grader in Fredricksburg, Texas, exhibiting his Hereford heifer? He couldn't. But he's betting his children's experiences showing cattle will benefit them in much the same way as they have Holly and him.

Lydell grew up in the rolling hill country of Central Texas. His dad worked at, and later helped manage, the historic LBJ Ranch — the centerpiece of Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park, so young Lydell was exposed to the intricacies of a successful cow/calf operation from the start. His show career took off from that first competition and is still going strong. "I was active showing cattle in 4-H and FFA and later competed at the national level on 4-H and FFA Livestock Judging Teams and the FFA Meat Judging Team," he says.

After high school and throughout his college years at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, where he obtained a B.S. degree in animal science and business, Lydell had his own business custom fitting and clipping show cattle. His business acumen allowed him to make enough to pay for his education and graduate with no student loan debt.

Lydell met Holly at the Roll of Victory Atlantic National Angus Show in Baltimore in 2002. Holly and her dad, John Gamble, were showing cattle from their purebred operation. Lydell and Holly hit it off and began dating, and before long, Lydell had relocated to East Tennessee to help out with the family's cattle operation.

"They had a good base herd they had put together as part of Holly's junior show [efforts]," says Lydell. "We quickly teamed up, and John began to let me manage much of the farm operation."

Going on the show circuit to promote the operation, Lydell and Holly racked up impressive wins. Their Gamble's Hot Rod bull was chosen Grand Champion at the North American International and at the National Western Stock Show in Denver in 2003. They also had a heifer, Shadow 2062, that was chosen Reserve Champion ROV Heifer that year. And the awards kept coming.

"Showing and competing helped us get the farm known on the national level," says Lydell. "We did quite a bit of embryo transfer work, and we built up the herd to around 275."

Holly and Lydell married and soon welcomed children — Andrew in 2004, Annie in 2006, and Alyssa in 2007. As the kids began to enter the show ring, the Meiers decided to diversify and added Red Angus and Simmental to the farm's mix, renaming the operation Three Aces Cattle Company in honor of their kids and carrying on the Gamble theme.

Andrew, now a high school freshman, began his own show career at the age of 8 in 2012. While Lydell and Holly were the typical proud parents when they saw him show for the first time at the University of Tennessee Rocky Top Block & Bridle Show, they emphasize they weren't concerned about how well he placed.

"Needless to say, I was a nervous wreck that first time," says Lydell. "He got spoiled because his heifer ended up taking Supreme Champion honors. [Watching the kids show] is intense and kind of gut-wrenching but gratifying all in the same breath. It's a whirlwind of emotions."

Lydell and Holly enjoy seeing each of the kids progress and further develop their skills and abilities. The show ring, they say, has instilled a competitive spirit, and they have watched as their children quickly realized they had to earn their accomplishments.

"That's key," stresses Lydell. "We want them to realize you have to work and do your part. Success will follow."

Conversely, he says competition can also teach a person to be a gracious loser.

"Showing cattle is a biased opinion of the one person who is judging that day," says Lydell. "You can get your feelings hurt, but that's life. It's not always going to be roses. You're not always going to get the big purple banner at the end. You have to figure out a way to regroup, come back home, work harder, and go back at it again."
“Our whole business is focused around the show ring and showing cattle.” – Lydell Meier