



Po-Cop Dairy Farm

Brent Pollard, a dairy farmer in Rockford, has a lot to be proud of in his 35 years. Pollard's great-grandfather started his family farm in the 1920s. Now, four generations later, it's Pollard and his family, his wife Carrie and their young daughter, who are keeping the Pollard family tradition going.

Farming with his family has given Pollard the desire and passion for the business his family started. "I'm proud of the fact that I am farming the land my family started farming on years ago. I have learned to appreciate what I have because I know how hard my family has worked to start it."

What started as a 148 acre farm with work horses, is now a farm that is home to between 80 and 90 dairy cows and 300 acres of corn and soybeans. The diversity of a dairy and grain farm means that Pollard can put all of his resources to good use.

Pollard said. "I sell the grain I raise to Mapelhurst in Oregon, IL but I produce enough grain to feed my own cattle the leftovers. After the corn is made into gluten, I can feed my cattle the rest."

Since Pollard starts chores at 5 a.m., his operation takes on a family feel. His 2-year-old daughter, Ainsley, is a big part of the day-to-day routine.

"She definitely isn't afraid of the cows," Pollard said. "She likes to tell the cows when to leave the barn and she really likes to play in the barn lime." When asked about his plans for his farm's future, Pollard said "I hope that Ainsley has every opportunity to come back to the farm if that is what she wants to do."

Pollard's wife, Carrie, is also an active part of the family farm. She plays an equal role in morning milkings, feeds the calves, takes care of all of the health and vet work for their cattle, and on the day of the interview she was even chopping corn.

Having a family-oriented operation is important to Pollard. His family farm's motto is, "If we take care of our cows, they will take care of our family."

Pollard's farm is proving that it can take care of his family because Pollard and his wife are the 2015 recipients of the Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leader Achievement Award. According to the IL Farm bureau, The Young Leader Achievement Award Program is a competition event highlighting your farm operation and growth, the financial progress of your operation, plus your Farm Bureau and community leadership.

The Pollard family stood out above the rest for several reasons. "We had a unique farm story" said Pollard.

The Pollard farm is located in an urban area. Before Pollard had decided to come back to the farm after college, his parents were worried about being developed commercially. Therefore, they did not make many strides to modernize the farm. Once Pollard made the choice to come back home, the economy fell and made it clear that the family either had to sell the farm, or expand the farm. Both Pollard and his wife are glad they chose to expand.

"Since my parents did not put much capital into the farm, when I took over Carrie and I had a lot to do to make the farm competitive and profitable" said Pollard.

The couple put up a new building to make the cows more comfortable and invested in equipment that would make harvesting corn and alfalfa easier. Besides the operation growth and financial aspects of this award, it also highlights the Farm Bureau involvement and community leadership. This is the area where Brent and Carrie Pollard really had the upper hand.

"I have always been involved in agriculture related activities. I have been the Farm Bureau District Representative, served as the Farm Bureau State Chair, as well as served on the State and County Farm Bureau Board of directors" said Pollard.

Carrie has also been very active in different organizations including Farm Bureau Young Leaders and the Illinois Pork Producers Board of Directors.

Both of their time and effort invested into the Farm Bureau and the future of agriculture has been acknowledged through this award.

"We were shocked and very happy when we found out. We knew how much work goes into the award. It is a very thorough application. We were nervous after our interview at the state level; we didn't think it went very well. We were pretty cautious but we were very happy when it was announced at the state fair that we had won" said Pollard. (Published September 18, 2015)