

What does the dairy industry mean to me? To me it means a group of hardworking people, working to produce a quality product, who share a common bond like a family. Every farmer I have ever met has been kind and nice to me and treated me like one of their own family members. I have learned so much about the dairy industry from these farmers at cattle shows, county fairs, and dairy gatherings.

This amazing industry has impacted my life in many ways. I wasn't lucky enough to grow up on a dairy farm, but we live a couple minutes away from my grandparent's farm. I loved going on Friday nights and weekends to help milk and feed the baby calves. During the summer I enjoy going to the farm to work with my 4-H calves. I learned what hard work and dedication was from watching my grandparents put their heart and soul into making sure their cows stayed healthy and produced clean milk for us to enjoy. Their reward was a healthy happy herd of cows that they loved. For several years in a row they earned an award for having the lowest somatic cell count in the county and even the state one year. I was so proud of them for this. Watching them work so hard and with such dedication, helped me learn to never give up and always try my hardest. I think that's why I've always done well in showmanship at the fair.

Sadly on January 1, 2015 dairy farming became too much for my grandparents to handle by themselves. They got a great offer on their herd of cows, and sold them to a young farmer. That's the day I lost my best friend Clarabell. She was my 1st show calf and favorite cow in the barn. Clarabell's stanchion was at the beginning of the barn, so everyday she got extra attention and love from people who came to visit the farm. After watching Clarabell leave I cried for days. I kept asking myself, why didn't I try to buy her before it was too late?

A few months later I heard some great news. Clarabell had a baby girl.....and even better it was red! I was so happy! A month later we traveled to Iowa to pick up Clarabell's calf named Cinderella. Getting to see Clarabell again that day may have been the best day of my life.

Several months later Cinderella was placed in our County Dairy Sale. I got to lead her in the ring as she was auctioned off. My eyes filled with tears as the bids got higher and higher, because I knew she would soon belong to someone else. What I didn't know was that my Mom was one of the bidders, and Cinderella was about to become my animal. She is one of my show animals this year. I am so excited to show my favorite cows' baby girl at the fair this summer.

By Emily Makos