



FARM FAMILY TODAY

2011 Farm Families:

COVE CREEK RANCH, WEISER

Welcome to Cove Creek Ranch in Weiser, a fifth generation production farm. Kathy Skow owns this farm and ranch, raising registered Black Angus cattle, seed crops, alfalfa and corn. They also harvest landscape rock and provide hunting rights on 20 sections of their ranch and cultivated lands. Their environmental stewardship is a key component to their operation.

Cove Creek Ranch is an excellent steward, using non-polluting organics mixed with traditional farming practices. They work with Idaho Fish & Game to release monitor bird populations with no hunting. They also manage their crops for the benefit of bird habitat as those populations return to visit their area in their annual winter migration patterns.

This family always has a sense of humor regardless of the challenges put before them. After five generations of building the family business, they maintain their commitment to the economic environment upon which they serve. They are too proud to “toot their own horn” but are involved in local community activities and politics while not passing judgment on others no matter what their background.

DREW EGGERS FARMS, MERIDIAN

Welcome to Drew Eggers Farms in Meridian, a fourth generation farm. Raising peppermint, spearmint, sugar beets, silage corn and winter wheat, they even conduct custom mint harvesting with a mint still on the property. They are lifelong farmers with great grandfather Fred Eggers beginning farming in Ada County in 1924.

Drew and Debra Eggers use best farming practices on their daily operation. They maintain and keep abreast with the multitude of regulations from state and federal levels that can drain valuable energy from any farm family. Eggers Farms are very clean of weeds, always neat and tidy with a high visual appeal to neighbors driving by the farm.

Four full-time staff are employed with Eggers Farms and four additional personnel are employed during harvest. They try to purchase their inputs from the local economy whenever possible. Eggers Farms was one of the first family farms to bring mint production to the Treasure Valley, staying active in the industry. The purchase of the mint distillation technology was no small investment. Drew is constantly improving its efficiency similar to his other commodities, not afraid to try new practices to make his entire farm more sustainable.

The Eggers have served with the Northwest Farm Credit Services board, Food Producers of Idaho, the Board for Leadership Idaho Agriculture, Idaho Ag in the Classroom, Idaho Mint Growers and are members of Ten Mile Christian Church.

KAUFFMAN FARM, FILER

Welcome to the Kauffman Farm where if you visit them in a tour group, you will find that they raise malt barley, alfalfa, wheat, sugar beets, sweet and field corn, peas, onion seed, fresh market vegetables, pumpkins and squash. This diverse farm family has farmed since 1974 in Filer, displaying solid agricultural practices at all times.

Owner Clark Kauffman is not afraid to try new ventures. For several years he has supplied local produce (corn, tomatoes, pumpkins and more) to local food stores in the Magic Valley. Clark was way ahead of the “buy it local” theme. As an innovative grower, he is constantly looking for ways to cut costs and reduce overhead through careful hands-on management of his operation.

He works closely with the University of Idaho in barley research and has a portion of his farm dedicated to research with the Kimberly R & E Center. If you are familiar with the Hearty Barley Soup Mix, you will now know that that is a Kauffman Farm product. Clark has shown impressive leadership in the National Barley Growers Association and Idaho Barley Commission. He is very concerned about future varieties and hearty varieties of barley and ties that ambition to research.

The Kauffman’s are pillars of community involvement from the Filer Mutual Telephone Co-op to the highway district to Food Producers of Idaho. They are members of the US Bank advisory board, Idaho Association of Counties, Idaho Ag in the Classroom and more.

Strong leaders in their community, the Kauffman Farm is what everyone envisions as the American family farm: passion, dedication and hard work.

KERNER CATTLE CO., WEISER

Welcome to the Kerner Cattle Company where they raise cattle, hay and grain in addition to maintaining a feedlot operation in Weiser. They have remained state-of-the-art in cattle production for more than 104 years.

Through numerous feed trials, Bruce & Julie Kerner determine the best possible rations for the average daily rate of gain for their animals. At the same time, they remain connected to caring for the land and protecting the environment. While community impact of a feedlot can be viewed as challenging, the Kerners have made community relationships a top priority.

Kerner Cattle Company utilizes local feed products for their custom feedlot. They hire local employees and use local milling, farming support products and services. Any feed they cannot raise on their own place is purchased locally, helping to support and stabilize the local income for fellow farm families.

At the feedlot, the Kerners include processing, feeding and marketing to their business mix. They are recognized as top quality animal handlers who give personal attention to each head of livestock. Bruce and Julie are college graduates and have dedicated their careers to understanding cattle.

For their community, the Kerners often provide tours for school-age children. They have been active FFA and 4-H leaders, have been selected for the Bayer Award for their operation, and are active in Idaho Ag in the Classroom. They are members in Weiser Cattle Association, Idaho Cattle Association and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. In addition, they are active in their local church and members of Leadership Idaho Agriculture.

A long family history of raising cattle trails behind the Kerners. Bruce and Julie raised their children with an appreciation for farming and the quality of life it brings. They continue their goal of "riding for the brand."

ALAN & CONNIE KINYON, CASTLEFORD

Meet Alan and Connie Kinyon of Castleford, running a third generation Centennial Heritage family farm originally started by Alan's grandfather in 1906. They raise beans, wheat, alfalfa, corn and beef cattle. In past years they have also raised barley, sheep, pigs, goats, rabbits, ducks and chickens. Diversity is no stranger to the Kinyons.

Using feed ditches, siphon tubes and gated pipe rather than pivot irrigation, the Kinyons believe they are helping to stabilize aquifer levels. Their motto is, "Just because it is new, does not mean

it is better for the land or the environment.” The Kinyons repair and maintain their farm equipment in good working order rather than discarding and replacing it, whenever possible.

Alan and Connie are good fiscal stewards. Borrowing their operating funds from a local bank, they keep their debt-to-income ratio low and are frugal. They buy seed, animals, fertilizer and equipment and make good use of these assets.

The Kinyons use a low-impact plowing method to allow residue to remain on the topsoil to lessen erosion. Alan’s welding skills and modern technology make his equipment more efficient, following sound and proven farming techniques to maintain and preserve the land and water.

As graduates from the University of Idaho, Alan and Connie have extended their educations to the local community. Connie taught for 36 years and is busy in activities from chaperoning graduation parties to church fellowship to sewing uniforms for kids. Alan coached Little League and Hunter’s Safety, was awarded the Coors Barley Growers of the Year award in the 1980s and he and Connie have raised three sons.

Alan and Connie Kinyon love and value their land, treating it with respect as faithful stewards. They are caring, humble people who serve often and encourage many.

CINDY & GORDON OBERMEYER, EMMETT

Welcome to Cindy and Gordon Obermeyer’s farm where they raise specialty crops including vegetable seeds, grass seed, flower seed, wheat, corn and crops for dairy cattle feed. If you like sweet corn, radishes, bok choy, onions, collards or dill, these are just some of the varieties of vegetable seeds they raise.

The Obermeyer farm began with both grandfathers farming in the Emmett Valley in the early 1900s. Gordon’s father then operated a dairy beginning in the 1950s. Continuing the strong farm tradition, Cindy and Gordon have always tried to follow good farming practices, optimizing yields while taking care of the land. They purchase farm equipment and various inputs such as fertilizer, fuel and seed using local distributors of these products.

In order to farm fewer acres and still provide a solid income for his family farm, Gordon has diversified into specialty crops for the past 15-20 years. These seed varieties have helped Gordon find a niche in the world market and allow the farm to maintain profitability.

The Obermeyers are busy contributors to their community. They have been involved in the Payette Valley Co-op, the local FSA county committee, the Enterprise Ditch Company board, the Gem Country Farm Bureau, the Gem County Recreation District, Ag in the Classroom, and

Emmett High School activities. They have been helpful to FFA and the Kiwanis highway trash pick-up program, "Paint the Town" as well as participated in Lymphoma Society walks.

This family is a prime example of an Idaho farm family. They are involved in their community, committed to good agricultural practices, engaged in many activities related to the industry and serve in leadership positions. The Obermeyer roots go deep into agriculture history in Gem County. If you ask someone from the Emmett area if they know the Obermeyers, they will usually say, "Yes." Then they will say, "They are wonderful people."

SHURTLEFF FARM, PAYETTE

Welcome to Shurtleff Farm in Payette. Ron Shurtleff raises fruit, hay and timber and this farm has been dedicated to the agricultural industry for multiple decades. They have been prominent stewards of water use and conservation.

Ron is the water master for Water District 65 and his father, Cecil, was a long-time board member of local ditch companies. His love for water conservation has extended deep into his farm practices where they use innovative implementations to improve conservation on their farm.

Shurtleffs run a U-Pick operation in their vineyard where customers can come select choice grapes for their own harvest.

The Shurtleff Farm has been a strong supporter of the community while remaining small yet manageable. They are known for sharing their farm experiences with others, bettering the craft for fellow farmers.

SUNNY VIEW FARMS, CALDWELL

Welcome to Sunny View Farms, where you will find third generation Idaho farmers coming from six generations of farming in Iowa and Wyoming. Sid and Pam Freeman have a long history of farm practices, maintaining sustainability. They raise sugar beets, commercial onions, seed beans, corn, seed corn, wheat and alfalfa.

Sunny View Farms have kept their land productive and in the best condition possible while ensuring profitability and longevity of the farm. They embrace low-tillage methods and the use of manure for fertilizer which reduces the amount of commercial fertilizer needed and makes the soil more viable.

One of the first to plant sugar beets to stand instead of thick planting, the Freemans were early purchasers of a one-step bean cutter and they currently use computer sonar technology in their operation. Sid says that staying successful in farming is about managing risk and using best practices.

The Freemans donated an antique tractor for the first Idaho FFA Foundation tractor raffle this year, spearheading the refurbishment and management of the project. Raising \$24,000, the money raised went to 14 - \$1,000 scholarships for FFA members next spring.

The Freeman family has been very active in local activities including Canyon County Farm Bureau, Caldwell Housing Authority, and the Farm Service Agency. They also are involved in a roadside initiative project to clean up litter and have been working on legislation to increase littering fines.

Sid Freeman, primary operator, recently broke both ankles in a snowboarding accident. His sons and father pitched in to help keep the farm on calendar, ensuring production would remain stable. Sid says his sons, "...stepped up to the plate in an unbelievable manner as men and farmers." The family epitomizes the strength and heart of a family farm.

TAKASUGI SEED FARMS, WILDER

Welcome to Takasugi Seed Farms in Wilder, owned by Pat and Suzanne Takasugi. The Takasugis raise seed crops like alfalfa, bean, corn, pea and sorghum as well as wheat, yellow and red onions. They have farmed for 34 years and Pat's grandfather started farming in the 1920s.

The Takasugi family came from Japanese roots. During World War II, Pat's father settled in Wilder after farming in Utah. They began a potato crop and built their first home, where they reside today. "Mich" as he was known started a new crop, alfalfa seed. This change in crops began a new trend for the farm, resulting in profitability. Pat grew up learning the working end of onion weeders, beet hoes and shovels on the farm. He started with a small farm loan for his own 32 acre farm. Today the Takasugis farm more than 1500 acres.

Pat and Suzanne produce in excess of \$2.5 million in revenue from crops alone and employ 10 full time employees. During shipping season, they employ more than 30 people to assist with packing. They donate time and product to the local food pantry as well as serve on local organizations to prosper new business in Canyon County.

The family has utilized many innovative farming methods including the leafcutter bee domicile for pollination and invented a tandem bee trailer for this application currently using 130 trailers. Plastic piping irrigates dry field spots and integrated pest management practices have included

testing fields, studying damage thresholds and spraying accordingly. In addition, Taksugis have increased onion yields 30 percent with modified planters.

Locally, the Takasugi's have helped to install a wetland project on their Homedale farm for Homedale High School. They have worked with Idaho Smart Growth to encourage better stewardship and land use, in addition to so many agricultural organizations too numerous to list. In 1996, Pat became the Secretary of Agriculture for Idaho and served under three governors. He was elected to serve in the Idaho legislature in 2008.

VERMEER DAIRY, CALDWELL

Welcome to Vermeer Dairy in Caldwell. Mike and Teri Vermeer own this dairy operation milking 1,100 Holstein dairy cows. When Mike turned 18, his father bought a 60 cow dairy and said, "Get to work!" Mike began operating this dairy immediately.

The Vermeers saw two major expansions of their business in 1987 and 1998. They needed to grow their business in order to support their families. Now there are three with Mike's dad, he and Teri, and now his son. There is always talk about the future and the changes it brings, particularly with discussion about the need for yet another expansion to keep up with the changing economy of scale in the dairy business.

This family farm supports the local economy through buying feed locally and employing 10 people fulltime year-round. The employees include 6 milkers and 4 additional staff that include feeders, herdsman assistants and general labor.

Mike says that computers have been the biggest impact on their business as they work to combine modern technology with the structure of a dairy. Yet even with all the new technology available for a dairy, Mike returned to some of the old school methods because the cost of maintenance of automation was so high. He now combines a modern facility with older technologies which has made them more efficient.

The dairy business is a tough life. A good work ethic--which a dairy demands--is shared with all members of the family. They keep an open mind to changing times, as the whole industry has adjusted its way of thinking. Those dramatic changes have forced the Vermeer family to think about business different, while remaining passionate about their dairy.

The Vermeers showed their true character when the economy crashed...they continued to support their local economy and they maintained their warm, positive spirit. They never stopped believing and giving to those in need.