



# THE RODENS

## A True Farm Bureau Family

By *Sheri Sutton*

**Farm Bureau's strength comes from families who are heavily involved in the organization. Families like the Rodens.**

(Front row left to right) Jacki, Chrit (Blakeney), Amy (Blakeney) holding Eleanor, Cindy and Bob. (Back row left to right) Eric (Assmann) holding Jady, Becky, Patti and Rick.

From grandma winning Farm Bureau Woman of the Year in 1981 to Patti joining Farm Bureau staff in 2012 to Rick completing his term on the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer and Rancher Committee this year, the whole family gives their all to Farm Bureau and agriculture.

With parents that can boast being Ozaukee County's Outstanding Young Farmer of the Year and Farm Bureau Queen, Rick Roden says he was "born into Farm Bureau."

Rick's involvement began when he was awarded a scholarship for UW-Madison's Farm and Industry Short Course and he went to his first Ozaukee County Farm Bureau meeting to thank them. He quickly became the county's Young Farmer and Agriculturist chair.

"I didn't know what I was getting myself into. I had no clue what to expect," said Rick, who began inviting his friends to YFA meetings and events. "Soon there were people coming to me asking to sign up."



Their cattle are crosses between Holstein, Montbeliarde and Swedish Red. "We feel like these genetics put more meat on their bones," Rick explained. "There is less maintenance for our herd; they don't get as many cases of milk fever or twisted stomachs. We have seen better health traits all around."





While Patti does enjoy helping with computer needs, mixing feed and doing other chores, her love on the farm is the equipment. "I could spend hours in the field," said Patti with a smile. "I do spend hours in the field."

Taking the next step within YFA took some encouragement by his field area's field supervisor at the time, Lindsey Prahl.

"Honestly looking back, I am glad it happened. I wouldn't trade it for anything. I got my arm twisted and it turned out pretty good."

He served on the state YFA committee (made up of nine young farmers and agriculturists) from 2008-2010, topping his last year off as its chairman. In 2012, Rick was selected to serve on the AFBF Young Farmer and Rancher Committee with 15 other

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farmers, representing Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan. He just wrapped up his term this month. His experience took him to Washington, D.C., Michigan, Texas, Indiana, Tennessee, Arizona, Kentucky, Virginia and Minnesota. His highlights including chairing the Discussion Meet contest at the AFBF Annual Convention last month, and working with a group of diverse farmers and ranchers from across the country.



In 2010, Rick led the state YFA committee (made up of nine young farmers and agriculturists) and this month he wraps up his term on the AFBF Young Farmer and Rancher Committee. He said, "I got my arm twisted (referring to getting more involved in YFA) and it turned out pretty good."

"The committee is a neat group of people," said Rick. "We are all in this business of ag together with the same common goal of producing safe, wholesome products."

Rick didn't want to keep his love of Farm Bureau to himself and made sure each of his four younger sisters all became members.

"Rick bought us all memberships for our 18 birthday," said Patti Roden, a speech communication graduate from UW-Oshkosh.

"They had no choice but to join Farm Bureau," Rick said with a grin.

It's paid off, as all of his sisters have flourished with Farm Bureau.

His youngest sister Jacki was a charter member and first president of the collegiate Farm Bureau at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. The recent graduate is beginning her own ag tourism business on the farm to educate others about where food comes from. She is part of the Ozaukee County Ag in the Classroom and YFA committees.

Sister Amy Blakeney is involved with the Rock County Ag in the Classroom program and works at Mid-State Equipment.

Becky Roden works at the State Bank of Newburg, is in this year's Institute class and is involved with YFA activities.

Patti was hired as WFBF's District 1 Coordinator in August 2012. She assists Farm Bureaus in Jefferson, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties to develop and implement programs that serve and attract members.

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“It is easy to see the enthusiasm that Patti has for Farm Bureau and for agriculture,” said Bob Legee, Wisconsin Farm Bureau’s Executive Director of Member Relations. “She has a history of involvement and leadership in organizations like 4-H and Farm Bureau and is eager to work with our county Farm Bureaus to help them continue to grow and carry out successful programs.”

The flexibility of her job allows her to help out on her family’s dairy farm near West Bend, where Rick farms in partnership with his parents, Bob and Cindy Roden.

“I have always wanted to be a farmer,” said Rick. “There was never anything else I wanted to be.”

The Rodens grow 1,800 acres of corn, winter wheat, soybeans and alfalfa, milk 470 cows and conduct custom work that includes

The Rodens host farm tours for numerous groups to learn about agriculture. They also tell their story on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/RobNCinFarms](http://www.facebook.com/RobNCinFarms). Here they post pictures and are transparent about the work that goes on day in and day out on their family farm.

chopping hay, combining, planting and baling for neighboring farms.

The Roden family has always been open to learning how to improve their business. Bob Roden went to a farm show in California five years ago and came back with an idea to implement the pro-cross breeding program into their herd. Their cattle are now crosses between Holstein, Montbeliarde and Swedish Red.

“We feel like these genetics put more meat on their bones,” Rick explained. “I love the switch. There is less maintenance for our herd; they don’t get as many cases of milk fever or twisted stomachs. We have seen better health traits all around.”

Whether it be farming, serving Farm Bureau, organizing a Breakfast on the Farm or hosting groups to their farm, for the Rodens, it’s a family affair. ■

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