

# GoodLiving

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## Barnyard bonding

**between a trio of 4-H siblings and their animals has yielded a wealth of life lessons**

By MITCH MAERSCH  
Ozaukee Press staff

The Rehman family of Saukville will be easy to see at the Ozaukee County Fair this year, but glimpses may be blurry.

Jay Road 4-H members Zaara, Daniel and Sumrah will be rushing in and out of three different barns to show goats, chickens, cows, ducks, rabbits and a pigeon.

While the fair showcases the finished products for a few days, it's the rigorous work the 360 days before that makes it all possible.

Courtesy of their parents, the Rehman children make daily trips to their grandparents' and great-grandparents' farms in the Town of Belgium to tend to their collection of creatures.

Two hours on school nights and as many as four on other days are spent

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Caring for and showing animals has become a way of life for (from left) Daniel, Zaara and Sumrah Rehman of Saukville, who make daily trips to two family farms in the Town of Belgium. They will show several animals at the Ozaukee County Fair next week.

Photo by Sam Arendt



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## Ozaukee Gardener

Elizabeth O'Connell

### Ripening berries offer bounty of picking challenges

The cherries we picked may be pitted, but our fruit harvest is still underway — the berries are ripening. We don't have the usual suspects, but a bunch of northern fruits I learned to love at my mother's home in Canada.

We started picking a week ago. The first to ripen were the currants; we have red and pink. The pink ones are a relatively new introduction, a cross that combines the size of the red fruit with the increased sweetness of the white currant. The plants develop long racemes of flowers and the ripe berries hang from them like beads on strings. Currant shrubs are about four feet tall with stiff, brittle branches I carefully lift to expose the fruit.

It's easy to strip the berries from the stems, but don't get too frisky during this operation. It's easy to snap a branch tip.

Although I gobbled some of the fruit during the harvest, most of our currants were made into jelly. It's my aunt's favorite, so she always gets the first couple of jars. We used calcium-based pectin so we can decrease the amount of sugar in the jelly and maintain the tart character of the fruit.

By the time the currants were processed, the nearby gooseberries were ready. It's always a surprise to get enough to can since most years the rabbits gnaw down the bushes almost to the ground to get at the fruit. This year, however, the rabbit population crashed, so instead of short stumps displaying a cup or so of wine-colored berries, the gooseberry bushes are more than 2 feet tall.

Like currants, gooseberries have stiff branches that are prone to snap. Unlike the currants, gooseberries have thorns lining the branches — they're about half an inch long. Even if I'm very careful, I get stuck a lot while picking, not only on the fingers but on the derrière and legs.

The heavily laden branches arc over one another, and to reach the lower branches, the upper must be pushed out of the way. Whatever body part is used for this maneuver is impaled. The gooseberries come off the branches not only with their stems but the wizened remains of the blossom. Both must be removed before the fruit is processed.

Taste testing while picking is frequent and some may be saved for snacks, but most of our crop is turned into preserves.

Before coming to Port, my Missouri-born husband was unfamiliar with them since it's too hot to grow them there. But now he savors them all, including the rhubarb in the back yard.

His attention right now, however, is on one of his favorites, blueberries. The chipmunks stole the entire crop last year so he has constructed a sturdy defense system around the bushes. It's paid off — a quart of blueberries accompanied Sunday's breakfast.

Blueberries need acidic soil, so around here beds must be prepared before planting them. We added peat to our planting bed and apply a sulfur-based soil acidifier to the plants yearly.

Blueberries produce better fruit when different kinds are planted together so we have five varieties. They'll ripen in waves and, with so many kinds the harvest, will go on for weeks. I won't even pretend we won't gobble all of them fresh because we will.

*O'Connell and her husband Tom Hudson garden at their historic home on Grand Avenue in Port Washington and are members of the Port Washington Garden Club. Comments or questions may be e-mailed to mail@portgardenclub.org.*

## The Cover Story



**ZAARA REHMAN** (left) and Sumrah Rehman will be showing rabbits as well as other animals next week at the Ozaukee County Fair. *Photos by Sam Arendt*

# Love of 4-H inspires Rehman siblings

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feeding, watering, cleaning, training and grooming.

For Zaara Rehman, 15, that means sacrifices have to be made.

"I have to minimize time with my other friends," she said.

Just completing her first-shift role as a Port High student and what turns out to be a part-time job is a challenge.

"It's a task to find a balance between schoolwork and farm work," she said.

Her 11-year-old brother acknowledged, "We usually don't have much time at home."

Their mother Diana is OK with that. She and her brothers grew up showing cows and pigs in 4-H.

"It taught us respect, to work together, to work toward a goal," she said. "I want to provide the same things for my kids growing up."

Education goes beyond time management and cooperation.

"I've learned to have a lot of respect for all of the animals," Zaara said.

She has been showing animals for seven years. Rabbits are a favorite because they are "super friendly."

The angora rabbits get brushed every week, and before the fair get their wool

blown out to get them fluffed up.

"I love doing the care. It's a really big hobby of mine," Zaara said.

The time she has missed with some of her friends has been replaced by meeting new ones at the fair.

"It's so fun. I get to hang out with people," she said.

Daniel manages his time with schoolwork at Thomas Jefferson Middle School. This is his third year showing animals. He likes goats the best.

"They're cute and fun to play with," he said.

They're also unique.

"They have a mind of their own," Diana said.

Goats, she said, are more like dogs, especially Daniel's Jimmy, who will be pulling Sumrah in a cart at the fair.

Training goats to walk is the most difficult task, Daniel said. Just controlling the 150 to 200-pound animal is hard enough.

Jimmy is an alpine goat, a breed that is known to be mischievous, Daniel's grandmother Carolyn Strauss said. He has proven that to be true while living at her and her husband's farm.

"We can't have flowers," she said. "We're lucky if we can have laundry on the line."

Jimmy, a free-range goat who acts more

like a dog, gets into cabinets in the barn and once followed a neighbor family walking dogs to the lake. He is well known at Harrington Beach State Park, which is just down the street.

"People know Jimmy. He's famous," Strauss said.

He even has his own Instagram page called The Official Jimmy The Goat.

For Sumrah, who is showing animals in her first year with 4-H after competing in open class last year, winning is her favorite part.

"You get trophies," she said.

That's if she can get her animals to the fair. Her pigeon and chickens live in a barn on her great-grandparents' farm, and catching them has proven to be a challenge.

Sumrah said she is learning how to get the animals ready for the fair and what diseases they may get.

Cleaning and preparing the animals for showing is almost down to a science, but Diana said "It never feels organized enough."

But it has become the family's lifestyle. "It's what we do," she said.

For Strauss, who has been involved with the fair with her children and grandchildren for nearly 30 years, the effort is worth it.

"It's a lot of work, but it's fun work," she said.

## County fair opens Aug. 1 with load of family fun

Fun abounds for everyone at the Ozaukee County Fair.

The fair runs from Wednesday, Aug. 1, through Sunday, Aug. 5, at Fireman's Park in Cedarburg.

The All Star Monster Truck Tour is one of this year's highlights, including obstacle course racing, a no-rules free-style throwdown, pro ATV racing and monster truck rides.

Two shows are on Sunday. Grandstand gates open at 11 a.m. with a driver meet and greet until 11:45 a.m. The show will start at noon.

The second show grandstand gates open at 4 p.m. with a driver meet and greet until 4:45 p.m. The show will commence at 5 p.m. General seating is \$12 for adults and \$6 for children 12 and younger. Tickets can be purchased online or at the gate.

A fireworks display closes out the fair's first day at dusk on Wednesday.

The truck and farm tractor pulls will be at 7 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and younger.

The annual livestock auction will be at 7 p.m. Thursday in the Show Arena.

Demolition derbies will be held at 6:30 p.m. Friday and 6 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$13 for adults and \$6 for children 12 and younger.

The annual Small Animal Auction will be at 11 a.m. Sunday in the rabbit and poultry barn.

Craft vendors and 4-H projects will be set up throughout the event.

Fair visitors will be able to enjoy a variety of food, including the classic cream puff, fish fry and corn on the cob.

The midway offers unlimited rides for kids with the purchase of a wristband for \$20 from 4 to 10 p.m. on Wednesday, and from noon to 5 p.m. Thursday and Sunday.

Performing on the 5 Corners Centre Stage on Wednesday will be Addiction from 3 to 6:30 p.m. and Rebel Grace from 7:30 to 11 p.m., followed on Thursday by GrooveLine from 1 to 4:30 p.m., and The Playlist from 7:30 to 11 p.m.

On Friday, Screamin Cucumbers will play from 3:30 to 7 p.m. and The

Toys from 8 to 11:30 p.m. On Saturday, Everlong will perform from noon to 2:30 p.m. followed by Katie Mack & the Moan from 3:30 to 7 p.m. and Bella Cain from 8 to 11:30 p.m. On Sunday, Doo-Wop Daddies will play from 1 to 5 p.m.

Entertainment on the Boehlke Hardware Main Stage starts Wednesday with The Clique from 7 to 11 p.m., followed on Thursday with Dirty Boogie from 7 to 11 p.m. On Friday, Jim Gaff Trio plays from 2:30 to 6 p.m. and Crossfire from 7 to 11 p.m. On Saturday, Sound Therapy will perform from 2:30 to 6 p.m. and Highfield Drive from 7 to 11 p.m. On Sunday, Tim Castle & Dale Seller will play from 1 to 4 p.m.

There will also be performances in the Monticello Sno-Mobile Club food and beverage tent from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

Daily parking on the fairgrounds is \$10 for cars and trucks and \$5 for motorcycles. Free street parking is also available.

For more information, visit [www.ozaukeeountyfair.com](http://www.ozaukeeountyfair.com).