



As we celebrate Mother's Day during the month of May, the *Angus Journal* again acknowledges the diverse and dedicated roles of women in the ag industry. This year we spotlight a Kansas State University (K-State) Extension economist, an Iowa farm wife who does double duty as a motivational speaker, and a Minnesota woman who operates a farm with her family along with being active in state and national cattlemen's organizations.

The common thread among these women is that they are making a difference through their commitment to ag education.

Helping farmers

Sarah Fogleman's foray into agriculture stems from her upbringing. As the daughter of a farmer who didn't have any sons, Fogleman says she simply grew up with farm life, which led to her involvement in FFA in high school and then to the College of Agriculture at Oklahoma State University (OSU).

"By that time, I was invested in the industry and never really considered leaving it," she says.

After graduating from OSU in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in ag economics, Fogleman earned her master's from Cornell University in agricultural resources and applied economics. She joined the K-State faculty in April 1999 and serves as the Extension ag economist for the Southeast area of Kansas.

Today, Fogleman's special focus is labor management for ag businesses. She has conducted research on the subject, coordinates an annual Employee Management for Production Agriculture Conference, and is frequently tapped to speak as one of the nation's leading experts on human resource management for production agriculture.

Of her efforts, Fogleman says, "I feel very blessed to be in a position to help so many large and small agribusinesses with this challenge that is extremely daunting for many producers." She adds that ag labor issues are a growing challenge with a seemingly shrinking resource base — especially as universities cut funding and Extension staffs shrink.

Fogleman acknowledges that working in a male-dominated industry can have some awkward moments, but she encourages women to be themselves. "When I first

Sincere commitment to agriculture shines through educational efforts.

by *Kindra Gordon*

started in Extension six years ago," she recalls, "I think I made some people, particularly older male agents, nervous. They weren't sure if I should be treated differently or not. That was a good problem.

"Everyone was courteous and gracious and wanted to be sensitive to the differences I might have brought to the organization," she continues. "Once they got to know me and see past the fact that I do, on occasion, wear panty hose, the awkwardness disappeared. I'm not 'one of the boys,' and I don't want to be. I'm a colleague and a respected professional. For me, that's the ideal."

Fogleman's advice to other women in balancing career and family is to recognize priorities and management. "The best thing I have learned is to trust the people around me," she says. "I work with an amazing office professional who shares a lot of my professional burdens and makes me look a lot more organized than I actually am."

Many successful women struggle with letting go and delegating, Fogleman says. "Great managers know that you don't have to do everything yourself — you just have to see it gets done."

Speaking like a true human resources specialist, she concludes by saying, "Hire, train and trust others to help you if you can."

Outstanding example

Like many "farm wives," Vicky Fick of Lake City, Minn., has been at her husband's

side for more than four decades in operating their family farm. The Ficks have had both beef and dairy cattle over the years, and today they operate a 65-head Angus-cross cow-calf herd and grain farm, as well as buy Holstein feeder steers to finish. They've also raised three daughters and a son during their 43 years of marriage.

"I made sure I married a farmer," says Fick, who grew up 4 miles down the road from where they now farm.

Along with her role on the farm, Fick has been active in the beef industry through various leadership positions in the Minnesota CattleWomen and the American National CattleWomen Inc. (ANCW). She served 18 years on the Minnesota Beef Council and two three-year terms on the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board (CBB).

Her passion is telling agriculture's story and promoting beef — especially to school children. She has appeared at many health fairs and has been a classroom presenter for more than 15 years. Additionally, Fick is a certified trainer for the Food, Land and People program, and conducts workshops for teachers using this curriculum.

For her many contributions, Fick was named the ANCW 2005 Outstanding CattleWoman of the Year during the Cattle Industry Annual Convention.

"When I started with cattlemen about 25 years ago," she says, "I just knew that was something I wanted to do — to get in the classrooms."

Fick adds that beef has a positive, healthy message, and she wants children to hear it. Annually, she visits schools surrounding Rochester, Minn., and the Twin Cities, taking pictures of her own farm for the children to look at as well as toy farm machinery and a barn with cows and calves.

"That way, the students can see what I'm talking about. I give them the opportunity to ask lots of questions," she says.

Her dedication to ag education led her to serve on the board for Minnesota Ag in the Classroom, where she was instrumental in successfully securing state funding for the program when it was in danger of being cut due to budget constraints.

Fick encourages others to share ag's story with schoolchildren. Her goal is simple: to instill the message that cattle

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producers are good environmentalists and stewards of the land.

“When students see a real producer, they believe what you have to say. You don’t have to be a college graduate to go and do this,” she says. “You just have to make the time to do it, and share what you do as a farmer. You have to be compassionate about production ag, so you can share the story.”

Fick is certainly an example that one person can make a difference. In 2004, she

visited 13 different schools and reached more than 1,900 students.

Motivating others

Iowan Jolene Brown has a dual role in agriculture — she is a farm partner with her husband, Keith, and also a professional speaker to many ag audiences around the country. Brown tackles tough subjects like “the top 10 stupid things families do to break up their farm operations” and “if you

couldn’t farm, what would you do?”

The mother of two grown daughters, Brown’s goal is to help those in rural America face the challenges of today. She finds that many farmers and ranchers in the industry wish for the good ol’ days to return. Instead, through her speaking, she aims to challenge them by saying, “Don’t dwell on the past and be victims; lead the pack, and find a way to change successfully.”

Brown covers topics from farm-family

issues to adapting to change. She says the four P's in agriculture — pace, people, process and products — have all changed, and reminds those in agriculture they must also change to keep up.

“There's a world out there that doesn't understand what we do,” Brown says. “We have to educate folks about things like GMOs (genetically modified organisms), chemicals and the like, because the urban population influences the world we live in.”

Additionally, Brown says that in the future buyers will want to buy an “ag experience” with their food. As an example, she says being able to show pictures of the land where animals were raised and tell the story of how animals were cared for is something consumers indicate they want.

“Consumers have to buy you before they'll buy from you,” Brown often tells her audiences.

Brown also reminds people to enjoy their

journey. “People like doing business with people who like what they do,” she says.

How do you bring joy back in to what you do? Brown says, “Accept the things you can't control or change — including the mistakes you make. Also, look for humor every day and associate with people who enjoy life.”

Her advice to others: “We may not live to be 100, but we can enjoy 100% of our life.”

