

Jersey Youth Programs Equal Opportunity

Emily Chittenden, Schodack Landing, N.Y.

From the very beginning, Jerseys have been a tremendous part of my life. The daughter of Alan and Donna Chittenden, I grew up on Dutch Hollow Farm LLC, operated by my dad, his two brothers, and their parents. Both the farm and my family instilled an appreciation of Jerseys and the dairy industry in me at an early age and have fostered that love ever since. They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. With a pedigree like mine, I suppose the love for Jerseys is simply in my blood.

A highlight of growing up as a farm kid has always been exhibiting at the county fair, where I've been leading cows around the show ring since I could walk. One of my favorite pictures is of me when I was two years old, holding the end of the halter as my dad led our champion cow. My white Mickey Mouse sweatshirt was dirty and my black rubber boots were a bit too big, but my grin was as wide as could be. Once I was eligible for 4-H, I spent the summers getting the show string ready with my siblings, cousins, and neighbor 4-H kids. Working together made the chores much more fun and provided some valuable lessons on cooperation and teamwork that I wouldn't realize until later. My show ring experience has grown to encompass five local and district shows, as well as exhibiting on the green shavings at The All American Jersey Show four times. I've earned multiple showmanship honors with my Jersey animals and have learned to use my experience and knowledge to encourage and help younger showmen through my 4-H dairy program.

It was always exciting when some of my bred and owned animals made the cut and were included in the show string; many of these being descendants of my matriarch cow, LF Lester Emmi Lee-ET. "Emmi Lee" was part of my great-grandfather, Louis Fish's, "LF" herd and was given to me when I was two. She scored Excellent-92%, had nine lactations, eight daughters, and a lifetime production of 240,597 lbs milk, 10,880 lbs fat, and 8,410 lbs protein. In the 2010 Lifetime Production Contest she won for milk and protein in New England and placed 8th for milk and 9th for fat and protein in the national contest. She and her offspring uphold the philosophy I've heard from my dad and grandfather over the years: at the end of the day you want cows that make milk but they don't have to be ugly doing it. "Emmi Lee" lived to be 13 years old and has 42 current descendants in my herd of 31 cows and 27 heifers.

Jersey youth programs provided me with opportunities to represent the cows I love, expand my knowledge, and form valuable friendships along the way. I've attended six of the last 10 AJCA-NAJ Annual Meetings, was a runner-up in the 2014 National Jersey Queen Contest, placed nine times in the National Jersey Youth Production Contest, have won scholarships the past three years, and was a member of the third class of

Jersey Youth Academy. All of this has allowed me to surround myself with great people, form an ever-growing network of acquaintances across the country, educated me about our industry, and greatly impacted my future plans. In particular, Jersey Youth Academy opened my eyes to the possibilities our industry offers and encouraged me to learn about areas I wasn't familiar with, as well as further explore ones that I enjoyed. It was the most eye-opening week and altered my future plans more than any other experience to date. All I can say is APPLY! I

encourage all Jersey youth to apply to the programs available through the AJCA and take advantage of the opportunities Jersey cows provide. The people you will meet and the experiences you will gain are truly unlike any other.

Currently, I'm looking forward to my senior year at Cornell University, where I major in animal science with a concentration in dairy management and minor in agribusiness. The next two semesters will be packed full of activities with the university's dairy science club and collegiate Farm Bureau. Both have provided me countless opportunities throughout college, the

highlights being lobbying with New York Farm Bureau, talking to state legislators about current agricultural policies, and international trips with the Dairy Club to Italy and China to learn about agriculture in other countries. I pursued internships all three summers during college after realizing the importance of gaining experience away from home. I spent summers working as the development intern for the AJCA, conducting calf research with Cornell Cooperative Extension, and at Gold Star Cattle Company in Tulare, Calif. These experiences have built upon previous knowledge and provided a confidence that couldn't have been acquired from anything other than real world experience.

Although my time as a Jersey junior is coming to a close, I know the breed and industry will remain a dominant part of my life. I hope to work with dairy youth, consumers, and lots of little brown calves and cannot imagine a better career than working with and promoting the breed I love.

I want to say thank you to my family, particularly my parents, for providing me with the opportunity to develop my herd, encouraging me to participate in the many Jersey youth and 4-H activities, and for teaching, guiding, and advising me in the process. Their passion and devotion to the industry inspires me every day and I can only hope to follow in their footsteps and leave my own mark. A huge thank you also to anyone who has ever given their time or support to any of the Jersey youth programs and to all the staff at the AJCA for giving myself and so many others the opportunities to succeed with our breed. I am so very humbled to receive this award.



Emily and her father, Alan,—the 1988 National Youth Achievement Winner, take a moment for the camera with Dutch Hollow Valente Envylee and Dutch Hollow Vintage Sundae-P, respectively.