

LALKS HONORED AT STATE FAIR

Waverly family awarded 'The Way We Live' citation Aug. 17

ERIC VANSICKLE PHOTOS

Above: Among their favorite spots on the farm, Asher and Leah sit on a pile of hay bales in the barn. Below: The members of the Lalk family: front: Leah, 5, and Nathan, 11. Back: Rebecca, Skyler, 15, Tim and Asher 2.

by **ERIC VANSICKLE**
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A rural Waverly family had a very special day at the Iowa State Fair. The Lalk family was recognized as one of six "The Way We Live" award winners on Aug. 17. Tim and Rebecca Lalk along with children Skyler, 15, Nathan, 11,

"We kept thinking we were going too far," Rebecca recalled. "They were all just welcoming. All of the board members were there introducing themselves and shook our hands."

As part of the recognition, the fair had a display of nine pictures of the Lalks and their operation. Tim noted the display was very large.

"It gave a quick outline of how we came about and our operations," Rebecca said.

"There was a video of us explaining about what farm life meant to us."

Tim and Rebecca began their operation in 2010, as they raise 288 head of calves as newborns and feed them milk there twice a day for six to eight weeks. Then they wean them off the milk and onto feed and take them to their solar bard, which was built in 2012, and eventually outside to self-feeders.

"We raise them to about 400 pounds at that barn," Tim said. "We sell those as feeders."

Their nursery is split between themselves and a local dairy farmer. The Lalks mostly have dairy cattle, but have a few beef cattle inter-mixed.



I love the fact that it's a job that we can do together as a family. We can show the kids what it's like to work hard and be dedicated and to turn around and to see that. "

- REBECCA LALK

Leah, 5, and Asher, 2, were honored for their work raising calves at their nursery near Sumner as well as their family farm just a half-mile outside Waverly.

Tim said the family was shocked initially when they learned of the award, for which Dave and Angie Lindley nominated them.

"We think it's pretty cool," Rebecca added. "It was a very big deal they made for us at the fair and putting us on the stage and having a nice little ceremony for us."

"We're pretty small compared to a lot of people out there. We just worked pretty hard to get us where we are."

The award, which was co-sponsored by WHO radio and Tractor Supply Company, recognized six farm families who "exemplify hard work and a love for the occupation of farming," according to the nomination brochure.

"Selected families must show dedication to animal agriculture in their daily lives and in the lives of their family members," the brochure also suggested.

In receiving the award, the Lalks received a plaque, \$250 cash, fair admission tickets, parking, coupons to the Cattlemen's Beef Quarters, Iowa Pork Tent, Iowa Turkey Federation Turkey Grill and the Midwest Dairy Association, and a recognition at the Paul R. Knapp Animal Learning Center on the Christensen Farms Stage.

Rebecca said the parking impressed her the most.

"We were able to park right at the front door of the learning center," Tim added.



Five-year-old Leah Lalk is deep in thought as she looks out over the calves on the family's farm just outside of Waverly.

ball, as a wide receiver and safety, and also is in the middle school orchestra, playing violin.

Back on the farm, Nathan said he sometimes likes to feed the cattle. Skyler said moving the calves is the most interesting part of her chores.

"When they're stubborn, I push them by their butts," she said with a giggle.

"When they move them, they're just 150 pounds," Tim explained. "She likes it because sometimes they are out running and bucking and they run into the walls."

The Lalks moved to their current family farm along Iowa Highway 3 in 2013, where they have a few of their calves. A few beef cattle roam around in the

pasture of the Waverly farm.

Before he started the nursery, Tim, a fourth-generation farmer, managed hog buildings for a few years.

"I grew up on a farm," he said. "My dad had cattle, pigs and crops and worked at John Deere full time."

His parents, David and Debbie, ran their Sumner-area farm with their four children, Tim and brother Aaron and sisters Cathy and Brenda.

"I was the youngest, but they said I was spoiled," Tim said, "but I think I had the hardest life. I got beat up the most."

"We all helped out on the farm. I grew up driving a tractor, working with livestock."

Rebecca, originally from

Cedar Falls, met Tim at The Fainting Goat.

"I didn't know anything about farming or tractors or cattle," she said. "It's quite a different lifestyle, but I definitely don't want to go back to city life."

With four kids and a full-time job with Bremer County Case Management as a transcriptionist and social worker, Rebecca believes she has adjusted to rural life very well.

"I'm always helping out as much as I could," she said.

"She jumped right in, surprisingly," Tim interjected.

"It definitely gave me a whole new look of Iowa," Rebecca continued. "Growing up, I thought that Iowa was so boring. Now I see all of the work these farmers do. It's really quite beautiful. There's a lot of hard work, and it's dedication."

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AMERICAN
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ERIC VANSICKLE PHOTOS

Above: Nathan Lalk pours water for the calves as little brother Asher looks on. Below: Skyler Lalk gives a calf a bottle feeding.

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Leah said her favorite part of being a farm kid is feeding the cows. Tim said the West Cedar Elementary kindergartner likes to turn all of the calves into pets.

"She tries to name every one," Tim added.

When asked what was her favorite name she gave one of the calves, she said, "Cowie."

"Her and Nathan both, they love playing on the (hay) bales, the big, round bales, climbing in the hay mound," Tim said, "doing chores and making forts."

"Skyler also picks out the cows by how cute they are," Rebecca added.

When asked about the best thing about life as a farm family, Skyler said it is fun.

"You do a lot more things than if you were to be in the city," she said.

Rebecca added: "I love the fact that it's a job that we can do together as a family. We can show the kids what it's like to work hard and be dedicated and to turn around and to see that."

Tim said being on the farm makes a family stronger together.

"It makes more of a bond, because you are working together," he said. "You get to watch your work grow, and you get to see the end result."

"It shows the kids what hard work actually does."

ERIC VANSICKLE PHOTOS

At right: Leah Lalk looks at her favorite calf, Cowie. Far right: Asher and Leah pose with the "pet" of the family, Cowie.



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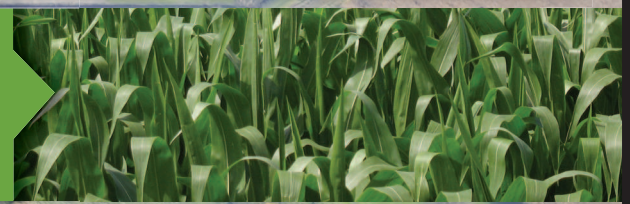


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