



Brian & Jodi Hill

A few years ago, Jodi Hill read a *Messenger* article about a married couple that had two separate dairies. She chuckles as she remembers thinking it was a crazy idea; especially now that she and her husband Brian are doing the same thing.

Jodi farms in an LLC partnership with her parents, Clark and Linda Humrich, on Clarinda Farms, a 40-cow dairy in Webberville. Just a few miles away, Brian and his brother, Mike, farm on their mother's (Patricia Hill) 110-cow dairy.

Dealing with the demands of two separate dairy farms can be stressful and time consuming, but the Hills find ways to make it work for them. For instance, they have adjusted milking schedules on both farms so they milk cows around the same time each day,

which keeps their daily schedules similar.

During certain times of the year, though, Brian and Jodi see each other when they wake up, go to bed and not much else. To keep up communications, the pair relies on cell phones. "They are also helpful if you need some quick advice," Brian says.

The four-mile distance between the dairies allows the two farms to help each other out when needed.

"While we don't own any equipment together, our farms are close enough that we can borrow wagons or equipment and lend a hand if it is needed," Jodi says. Both farms grow corn, soybeans, wheat and hay.

Brian performs much of the veterinary work on his farm, a skill that has come in handy when a cow on Jodi's family farm gets sick in the middle of the night.

"Brian enjoys solving cow health problems on his farm," Jodi says. "He can do everything from

administering I.V.'s and pumping stomachs to minor surgery, such as fixing a prolapsed uterus."

Both farms are feeling the squeeze of numerous new housing developments that have sprung up in the past five years. Located between metro-Detroit and Lansing, the area has received new residents from both city centers, making urban sprawl a concern for both farms.

"Urban sprawl is a big challenge for our farm," Jodi says about her family's 700-acre farm. "We rent some of the land we farm and when those people decide to sell, we end up losing the land to developers."

New developments pose less of a problem for Brian's family farm, which is located on 840 contiguous acres. However, future farm expansions in the area will be unattainable if the demand for new housing continues.

Iosco Township, where Jodi's farm is located, has helped deter some new residents by letting them know up front that there are no plans to add cable television service or city sewers to the area. To help keep a farming presence

in local government, Brian recently joined the Unadilla Township Board of Appeals.

"Our future really depends on the real estate market, I hope it starts to slow down," Brian says. "We really can't buy land now for farm ground because the land is appraised so high. No land has recently been sold for agriculture in this area – it is mostly sold to developers."

When former farmland is lost to neighbors who aren't accustomed to living near working farms and the dust, odors and sounds that sometimes occur, issues may potentially arise. Following neighbor friendly practices and keeping communication lines open help to curtail any difficulties.

"With all of these new homes coming in, it is very important for us to be open with our neighbors," Jodi says. "Hopefully people will understand that when they buy a house next to a pasture they are really next to a farm." The Humrichs' rotational graze their cows during the grazing season.

Many of the new neighbors have horses, giving both farms a market for the excess hay they produce. "We can sell a lot of hay to horse owners," Brian says. Having business dealings with new families also help foster relationships with the non-farming public.

Jodi and her family stress the importance of portraying a positive image about dairy and educating the public about farming. The family welcomes schools and other groups to schedule tours of the farm.

"We enjoy doing the tours and having people come out and learn about the farm," Jodi says.

"We have had a pretty wide range of visitors here; preschoolers, Brownie troops, foreign exchange students and even college classes. They all come here to learn more about farming."

Not all of the tours focus on the dairy portion of the farm. For many years, the Humrichs have welcomed a Natural Resources class from Lansing Community College to learn about conservation practices on the farm. Many are eager to learn more about farm life and ask to stay and watch the cows being milked, Jodi says.

A bonus to having farms and families so close to each other are two grandmas that help take care of the couple's children, Matthew, 2 and Brianna, 3 months. With such demanding schedules, Brian and Jodi appreciate the help from their parents. They also hold

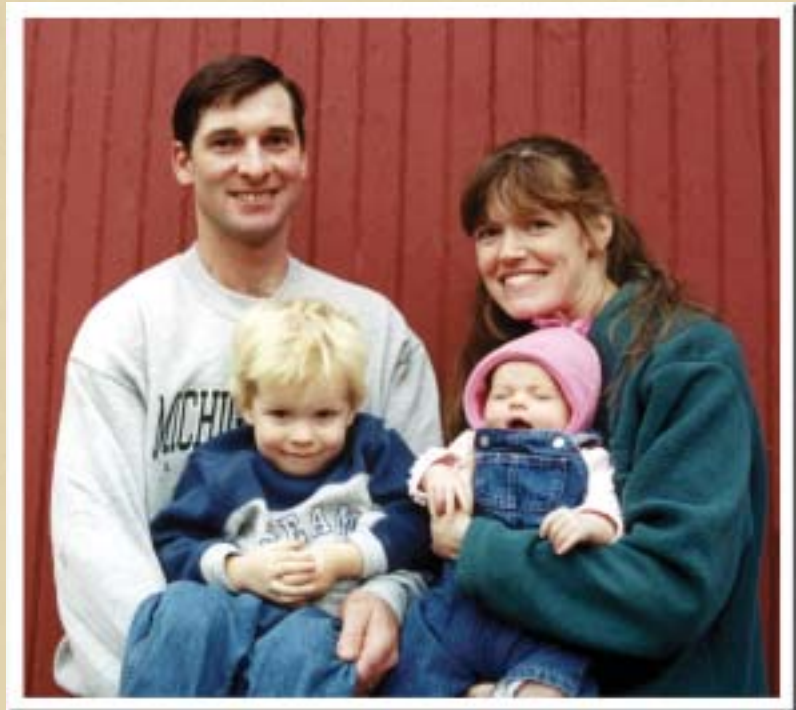
strong family values and make time to spend together as a family.

"Our schedules can get crazy, but we try very hard to keep family time," Jodi says.

Brian and Jodi represent MMPA District 7 and are members of the Livingston Charter Local where Jodi serves as a Dairy Communicator. The couple also serves on the Livingston County Farm Bureau Young Farmer Committee.

Jodi helps to organize the MMPA Little Red Barn at the Livingston County Fair each year, promoting the product she and her husband produce.

"Every year the MMPA Little Red Barn is one of the most popular food booths at the fair," Jodi says. "We sell milk and ice cream treats at a low price so families can afford to enjoy our dairy products."



The Hill Family: Brian, Jodi, Matthew and Brianna.

District 7