

FOLLOWING IN THEIR DAUGHTERS' FOOTSTEPS



It all started when Staci and Rodney Carr's oldest two daughters got interested in 4H, joining their fellow peers in an early love of animals. They began taking steps into agriculture by buying, raising, showing and selling livestock animals, starting with rabbits and chickens because that's all the family's yard could support. By the time their youngest daughter was ready to join her sisters in the family passion, they were ready to take the plunge into production agriculture.



To be fair, Rodney had always wanted to farm, and both he and Staci have fond memories of their grandparents' farms. In fact, the backyard of the family's home was spread edge to edge with produce plots. With the further incentive of supporting their daughters' interest in livestock, the Carrs bought three acres with a barn in 2011. Rodney was also interested in the remaining acreage that the barn originally belonged to. In 2016 that acreage became available for purchase and with FCV financing, the couple founded and moved to Three Sisters Farm in Accident, Maryland, named in honor of their daughters, Sara (21), Emma (18) and Kyla (14).

"When we first started looking into financing, conventional banks told us that farmland didn't have a quantifiable value, and they wouldn't lend to us," says Rodney. "Farm Credit understands farmland and agriculture, and what we're trying to do. They give us the right knowledge and support, along with a very welcome dividend payment in the spring."

Today, Three Sisters is a 30-acre, diversified farm raising produce and livestock and selling through the year-round Mountain Fresh Farmers Market in Oakland, Maryland. They raise a full range of vegetables within several high tunnels — adding a fourth in 2021 — as well as on their acreage, which includes hay fields and a small apple, peach, plum and pear orchard.

"Following my grandfather's advice, we want to have a little bit of everything on the farm so we have diversity if something goes wrong with one crop or another, and we have something to harvest and sell all year," says Rodney.

Three Sisters' is also diversified on the livestock side: they manage a small herd of beef cattle, breeding based on genetic traits that will build the herd for the future. They are also building up a sheep herd from one ram and a dozen ewes, and they produce about 20 pigs each year. The 100-bird or so poultry flock includes chickens, ducks and turkeys. The Carrs strive to build strong herds and flocks that will produce quality young for years to come, both to provide flavorful, high-quality meat to their customers, and to support future generations of children with good genetics for their 4H and FFA projects.

"We take great pride in the production and quality of everything we do, including spending



extra for quality feed regimens and a specialized butcher,” says Staci.

The sisters of Three Sisters Farm didn't just inspire their family's farm, they work it. Sara focuses primarily on flower production and livestock, including improving herd genetics and numbers. Emma also works with the livestock, cut flowers, produce and farmers' market. Kyla enjoys a little bit of everything, and is expected to thrive in the new farm stand the family is planning to add to the property.

Staci runs the farmers' market, where she educates customers and advocates for agricultural producers while selling her family's products. She also adds artistic touches from her background in retail display, and back home she oversees planting and harvesting. Rodney names himself founder, father, financier and farm hand, and also works a full-time off-farm job doing maintenance for the railroad, for which he travels Sunday through Thursday each week. Recently, that left Staci, the girls and son-in-law, Sean,



to rescue a cow delivering a breech calf. It took hours of effort, but when Rodney arrived home, they had saved both mother and baby.

The girls' love of agriculture goes beyond their own pastures. In 2016, Sara was selected Farm Queen and wanted to use the platform to spread ag awareness. Her solution was an initiative to collect ag related toys and books to give to local children, distributing the gifts through organizations like Ronald McDonald House, Foster Appalachia and the Dove Center. When Emma was named Miss Garrett County Farm Bureau in 2020, she stepped up to manage the drive, now formalized as a family-founded and funded non-profit called "Tractors for Tots." To date, the charity has collected and distributed more than 2,000 toys.

"Our hope is that one kid playing with a tractor or horse figurine or reading a book set on a farm will be inspired to join 4H or FFA, learn something about where their food comes from, or even think about a future in agriculture," says



Staci. "It's been gratifying that each year, more businesses and individuals step up to donate toys and help Tractors for Tots grow and educate more and more children about agriculture."

As diversified as their operation already is, the Carr family isn't finished by a long shot. In addition to the farm stand, they plan to add a greenhouse, watering systems and a grove of nut trees. They also continue to focus on making the most efficient use of land, keeping their maintenance costs low, and expanding and improving their equipment. Looking to the future, Rodney and Staci hope that their daughters will continue to play integral roles on the family farm as adults, though only time will tell.

"We want this farm to be multi-generational, something that carries on beyond our lives," says Staci. "In the meantime, we'll all continue working hard to deliver a wide variety of high-quality, reasonably priced, fresh food to our friends and neighbors."

