

# WVa. Women in Agriculture Conference Tour Bios

## Horticulture Tour Stops

### **Shafer Heritage Farms, Bruceton Mills, WV**

Joyce Shafer and her husband, Bob, own Shafer Heritage Farms in Bruceton Mills, WV. The land is Bob's home place and it's their goal to see it survive as a family owned and operated farm for many generations to come. Joyce is a retired Project Manager/Operations Manager who has dedicated her retirement years to finding ways to help make her farm sustainable.

While Shafer Heritage Farms has primarily been a cow/calf and field crop operation, Joyce has focused her work for the past six years on growing food products and adding some diversity to the farm. She works to ensure the farms viability by raising vegetables, operating a commercial greenhouse, and finding ways to minimize waste through use of her commercial kitchen to create Value Added products.

Joyce serves as President of the Preston Growers Co-Op, Inc., a newly formed growers' cooperative in Preston County, formed to bring together local farms to grow a larger volume and variety of foods to meet the needs of larger organizations who want local foods. Organizations such as schools, academies, resorts, large food chains, and hospitals are among their target customers.

Joyce believes we should always view barriers as challenges, and be willing to conquer those challenges by joining forces and thinking outside the box. Saving family farming is one of her highest priorities, second only to the love she has for her family and their rich heritage

### **Round Right Farm, Cranestown, WV.**

Round Right Farm is owned and operated by Steve and Sunshine Vortigern. The Vortigerns met while studying the arts in graduate school. Steve is a trombonist and Sunshine is a writer (and also a violinist). While in school, they fell in love and discovered they had a mutual curiosity about living more sustainably. After gardening for one summer (and having a baby) at Sunshine's father's farm in southern Kentucky, they accepted a farming apprenticeship in Oakland, MD at Backbone Food Farm. After six months there, they were ready to look for a farm of their own.

The piece of land they found, which is now Round Right Farm, is a beautiful 41 acre farm located in Cranestown, WV. It is one piece of what was once a large farm that raised sheep and corn. Before they bought the farm in 2006, it had been a hay field for many years.

When they first bought the farm, it had no buildings or any other kind of infrastructure. They eventually turned their 41 acre field into an organic farm of produce.

### **Montcroft Farm, Terra Alta, WVa.**

Over 58 years ago, Bill Grose, his wife Jean, and their two sons, Bill and Ed, acquired 232 acres and they have farmed up to 487 acres as Montcroft Farms – named for its high elevation and small fields.

Although the Groses have been involved in many enterprises, the main constants in their farming careers have been cattle and potatoes. A few cattle and a few acres of potatoes in the beginning became a manageable size registered Angus herd and 15 plus acres of certified seed potatoes. Their farming practices have served as models for others

Ed, Bill and John Grose, three-generations of potato farmers and owners of Montcroft Farms at Terra Alta, grow several varieties of potatoes, including many all-purpose culinary varieties like Salem, Elba, Chippewa and red potatoes New York 118 and 129. Ed says that by far though, his favorite is the Katahdin. They sell potatoes to local families that will buy 400 or 500 pounds of potatoes for their winter use. The Groses also market smaller bags as well.

### **Vested Heirs, Aurora, WV**

Vested Heirs Farm was established in 2014. The name comes from combining the names of the first generation of Stemples to farm our land. Fred and Vesta Stemple bought Four Winds Farm over 80 years ago and raised their family, crops and dairy cattle on it. Two of the partners, Darla and Debbie are true Stemple “Heirs” and are the third generation to be “vested” in this land. This is how they came up with the current name “Vested Heirs Farm”. Their motto is "We are growing our roots". They want to continue the stewardship of the land Fred and Vesta put so much of themselves into; and they feel truly "vested" in its success as work this family owned and operated farm. They have worked diligently to become GAP certified and take food safety very seriously. The fresh fruits and vegetables they grow are served in local schools and restaurants, and on the family table. They believe their customers deserve the very best! They are proud founding members of the Preston Growers CO-OP and enjoy working with fellow members to ensure greater productivity and availability for customers. There are four partners, BJ and Debbie Fike, Darla Stemple and Cindy Murphy. They have family and friends that help make them successful. They have two high tunnels in production along with field crops. They have a U-Pick strawberry operation that harkens back to the days of Darla and Debbie’s parents. People came from miles around to pick strawberries at David and Delores Stemples and now the children and grandchildren are coming to Vested Heirs Farm to do the same. They take very seriously the charge to grow high quality, fresh produce that will go into our customer’s homes from our fields to their fork.

## **Livestock Tour Stops**

### **Working H Meats and Market, Friendsville, MD**

Glenn and Terrie Hardesty along with their two boys Grant and Justin purchased Country Pride Meats butcher shop in Friendsville, MD and made it Working H Meats and Market. They their own animals as well as customers under USDA inspection. They also provide a retail area for meat sales.

The Hardestys have a family farm. Since 2004, they have raised grass fed beef, laying hens, pastured poultry broilers and turkeys, and free range pigs. They sold meat and eggs at farmers markets in Morgantown, WVa. and Oakland, MD for nine years building up a loyal customer base. They could raise the animals and retail the meat but processing became their bottle neck. They were having to spend two days a week running up and down the road to take animals to and meat from the processors. That is why they chose to open the processing facility after talking with other farmers that were having the same trouble finding a good reliable processor that was not over booked. Having no previous experience harvesting or processing animals, it has been a real learning experience. They hired experienced help and work along with them and they know what we want, as far as a finished product and what our customers like. They try new items to retail based on demand and sales.

In the spring of 2017, with help from MARBIDCO, they purchased two new items that have enhanced their processing as well as turn around on processing. A bowl cutter allows them to offer chopped beef and pulled pork to local restaurants and retail clients and a tumbler that takes 4-10 hours to brine hams and bacon instead of 7-10 days. They can now process pigs faster and their products are more consistent.

Business has continues to grow. The Hardestys work with local farms to raise animals for them using the Hardestys standards.

### **High Country Creamery, Grantsville, MD**

Ruth and Olen Beitzel own a local creamery that specializes in various artisan cow's milk cheeses and a locally sourced market and farm to table diner with a large viewing area. After retiring, Olen fulfilled a life-long dream of making cheese from all the farmers in their area. The couple, along with their daughter Linda King and grandson Brandon worked together to make Olen's dream a reality. Brandon became the cheese maker and Linda works with management and sales.

Along with making the cheese, they opened a market and eatery that are both sourced locally. The market showcases a very large viewing window for guest to view the cheese making. Their goal is to source more local farms and to expand their cheese production and sales.

### **Snowy Creek Dorset, Aurora, WVa.**

Snowy Creek Dorset Farm is a 126 acre farm owned and operated by Mark and LaDeana Teets in Aurora, WVa. They purchased the farm from LaDeana's parents in 1987. The farm has been in the family for over 120 years. Their flock consists of around 180 ewes and six rams of mostly registered Dorset sheep, with a mix of Texel grades in the flock.

The Teets' started to think of retiring after 25 years of dairy farming on Mark's family farm and after their two sons went to college to pursue careers outside of agriculture. But like most farmers they just couldn't stop farming so they sold the dairy farm to a young couple and moved to this farm to start their second career as shepherds. In 2015, their son and daughter-in-law return to the farm, from Savannah GA., along with their four sons making Snowy Creek Dorset a three generation farm again.

Along with being shepherds on the farm, Mark and LaDeana are both licensed and ordained ministers in the Church of the Brethren where they both shepherd churches. Mark retired from 30 years of driving bus in the Preston Co. School system and LaDeana is the Program Director for Preston Co. Farmland Protection Board. They both enjoy their work with The Bolivian Mission Team building orphanages, schools and churches in Bolivia, South America. But their favorite passed time is just being Grandma and Granddad to their four grandsons and teaching them to be the next generation of farmers.