

# Around the FARM

Deanne Frieders

## Why does ag matter?

Although I grew up in Shabbona, a rural farming town, we didn't live on a farm. In fact, we lived in town, with many neighbors and the biggest thing I ever drove was our lawn mower.

And even though my grandparents and several other family members farmed, I still paid no attention to it. For whatever reason, it didn't interest me. In high school, when ag classes and FFA club were offered to students, I didn't even think for one second about signing up.

You might wonder why. If my friends were doing it, why didn't I even explore that option? Well, it never occurred to me that a non-farm living, non-cattle raising kid such as myself could even do such a thing. Why didn't I just ask questions about it? Oh that's right. I was a teenager and already knew everything! (Little did I know that I was going to marry a farmer someday.)

What I've learned from my 14-year-old is this – you can learn about agriculture, about farming, about animals without having to physically live on a farm. You'll appreciate more about where our food comes from, what lifestyles are like and what hard work looks like.

So I have to admit I was a little confused by her decision, wondering what she would possibly gain from it to apply to real life. But it was a path she wanted to explore, and I love to support my kids, so off she went.

Well let me tell you, my apprehension was *completely* unfounded.

Two semesters later, I can tell you this. The transformation we've seen since her exposure to agriculture teachings, technology and other offerings is monumental. It's more than feeding cattle or raising grain.

She's learned more than just the "farm things." She's worked on everything from leadership skills to public speaking. She's performed in competitions and has the opportunity to learn how to perform at a job interview.

We've had countless dinnertime discussions about where our food comes from, what products our soybeans help create (crayons, clothing, building materials, etc.).

She's helped to educate friends and family members when they didn't truly understand seed genetics.

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So when our teenage daughter entered high school last fall, she wanted to take a class in the ag department and also wanted to join FFA. She doesn't know how to drive a tractor like a lot of farm kids, and we don't raise livestock or animals other than our mini-schnauzer.



Deanne Frieders is a farm woman from rural Waterman who raises four kids and a dog, constantly cooks, blogs, and helps her husband with the family grain farm.

Our future needs people who can educate those who don't have real agriculture knowledge, to dispel misnomers and bring people together.

I asked my daughter why she enjoyed her involvement in agriculture at school so much. After all, she doesn't intend to major in agriculture. Her answer was this: "Because what I'm learning through agriculture is the essence of hard work, patience, and the joy of getting to see the end results first hand."

That's certainly good enough explanation for me.

So if you happen upon a chance to even get a glimpse into the life of farming, I encourage you and your family to seize that opportunity. You may come out knowing more than you ever expected. My daughter did, and so did I. ■