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The Day Family



2023 Drew County
Farm Family
Of the Year



Southern roots and family traditions drive Farm Family of the Year

By **JEFF McDONALD**
 editor@monticellonews.net

If there is one thing that can be said about people from the south, it's that our roots run deep. Part of this is due to the traditions that are passed down from generation to generation. Traditions like fried foods, sweet tea, and saying 'yes sir' and 'no ma'am'. For a select group, another tradition that is passed down is farming, and that is a tradition that has been passed now to the fourth generation of the Day family.

The Day family's first farmer was Clarence William (C.W.) Day. He started farming in Chicot County in 1935, and moved to Desha County around 1940.

In 1957, Charles Raymond Day began his farming legacy in the area. Mark Day would follow in 1984, and continues to be involved in the day to day operations of the farm.

In 2014, Stephen and Dustin Day, the 2023 Farm Families of the Year, began farming together to continue the family tradition that started nearly 80 years earlier.

Another tradition that has been passed down through the generations is being named Farm Family of the Year. The last three generations of Days have been awarded this title with Raymond winning in 1968, Mark winning in 2012, and now Dustin





Photos by Ashley Hogg, Jeff McDonald and Halen Murphy

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Three generations of Days. Stephen and his family (left), and Dustin and his family (right) along with their parents Mark and Denise Day.




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FAMILY

Continued from Page 2C

and Stephen winning in 2023.

For the Day family, farming is truly a family venture with Stephen, Dustin, and their father, Mark, handling the day to day operations of the farm. Sydney Day, Dustin's wife, along with her mother in law, Denise, handle all bookkeeping in the main office. The Days also have a crew of 12 workers who keep the farm running. Of these employees, three are full-time with George Garner handling trucking duties,

and Butch Fallor and Delores "Lolo" Magana helping run the farm operations.

"Lolo is the man. He is the farm," Mark Day said. "He runs things when Stephen and Dustin aren't around. He's been with us for over 25 years, and he is family to us."

The Days do more than just farming, as they have a couple of other business ventures going. The family owns several grain bins in the area, and they also run a dump truck hauling service.

Outside of farming, the Days enjoy hunting, fishing, and cook-

ing with their families. Dustin and Stephen are both very active in McGehee First Baptist Church and also serve on the leadership team of Delta Outdoor Church in McGehee.

Stephen, along with wife Julie and daughters Gracen and Mattie, also raise cattle, which allows them to sell homegrown local beef to area families. Raising the cattle is a family affair as well, with Stephen and Julie feeding and tending to the cows daily. Gracen and Mattie also have responsibilities, they have to feed their show cows daily, and weekly they wash and dry their cows.

They also clean the stalls. These show cows must be worked at least two to three times a week, which the girls diligently do. The girls also have horses and participate in barrel racing.

Stephen also helps out with security for the McGehee School District, and is a member of the Desha/Drew Cattleman's Association.

Dustin, his wife Sydney, and children, Dawson, Thomas, and Annie, stay busy when not on the farm as well. Dustin is the president of the McGehee Baseball Association, a board member of Dumas Cotton Warehouse, and

a member of McGehee Men's Club.

Both Dawson, 8, and Thomas, 5, play baseball and soccer. Annie who is eight months old, is "the blessing we didn't know we needed" according to her mother. Dustin and family enjoy watching the Atlanta Braves when they are not at ball games or practicing in the yard.

The Day family is the epitome

of what a southern farming family should be. A close knit family who loves each other, has a love for the land they work, and has a passion for seeing the fruits of their labor spring from the ground. Add to that a drive to be involved in their community and a strong faith, and you have Drew County's 42nd Farm Family of the Year.

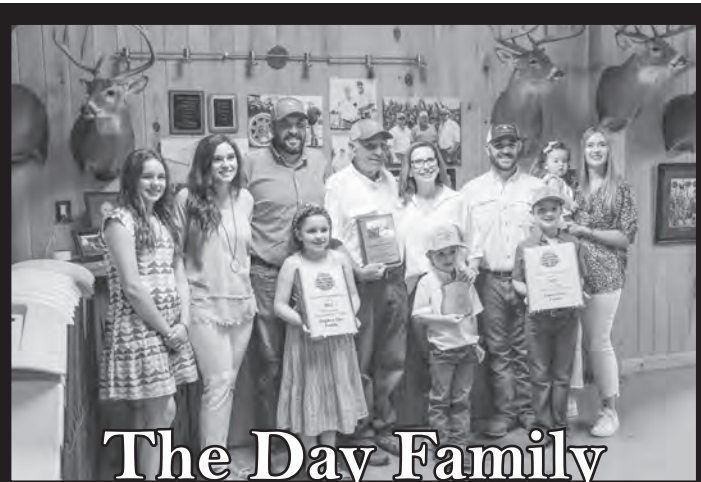
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Delta dirt helps Day family produce multiple crops

By **JEFF McDONALD**
 editor@monticellonews.net

Like most farmers in the United States, the Day family grows a variety of crops every year. The Days grow soybeans, corn, cotton, rice, and wheat for a total of 7,835 acres.

The Day family currently farms 2,130 acres of soybeans. Soybeans and soybean products are Arkansas' largest agricultural exports. Arkansas currently ranks tenth in the U.S. for soybean production, producing more than 150 million bushels per year which is valued at more than \$1.5 billion. Soybeans are also Arkansas' largest row crop with approximately 3.1 million acres grown in the state. This acreage is more than the rice, corn, sorghum, and wheat acreage totals for the state.

In 2014, Arkansas' yield of 49.5 bushels per acre was the highest ever in Arkansas. Of the \$3.72 billion in agricultural exports in 2014, the USDA estimates that \$1.2 billion was from soybeans or soybean meal.

Advancements in agricultural production have allowed Arkansas farmers to produce 38.6 percent more soybeans on 32.3 fewer acres compared to 40 years ago.

Soybeans have been referred to as a "miracle crop" due to the plants versatility to grow in various climates and it's flexibility in it's number of uses.

Mulberry, Arkansas is the "Edamame Capital of the United States". Edamame is another name for green or immature soybeans which are grown for human consumption. In Arkansas, there are around 2,000 acres dedicated to growing only

edamame. These beans are consumed by both American consumers, and they are exported to Asian markets as well.

Another of the crops the Days farm is corn. They currently farm 2,490 acres of corn. Corn is one of the most popular crops among famers these days. Over the last 15 years, the acreage of corn has increased. The increase is in large part due to the potential for profit over other crops. Most of this increased acreage has come from a decrease in the number of acres of cotton that is being farmed in recent years. The U.S. produces approximately 33 percent of the world's corn.

Corn is usually the first crop planted by Arkansas farmers, typically beginning sometime in March. In Arkansas, corn is primarily used a chicken feed as the state is the second largest poultry producer in the United States. Roughly 70 percent of Arkansas' corn is sent to poultry feed mills, with the other 30 percent being transported to terminals on the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers to be put into the export market.

Cotton is a crop that dates back to the early 1800's in Arkansas. The Natural State currently ranks fourth in cotton and cotton seed production in the U.S., and ranks fifth in the export of cotton with these exports valuing \$463 million.

As is customary in the Arkansas Delta, the Days also farm cotton. Their current acreage is 2420 acres. Cotton is a crop that as stated is heavily grown in the Delta region, but there is also a concentration in the far Northeastern corner of the state.

In the past decade, the average production of cotton has



Photos by Ashley Hogg, Jeff McDonald and Halen Murphy

The Days grow several crops including soybeans (above), corn (top left), rice (bottom left), wheat (right), and cotton (next page).

dropped significantly in Arkansas. Average production used to be around 1 million acres, but in the last 10 years it has dropped to around 250,000-300,000 acres. This decrease is due in large part to massive drops in the price of cotton at market.

Famers are luckily able to grow about two times as much cotton on a piece of land as they were 40 years ago, making the decrease in acreage less devastating.

Cotton is a very versatile plant. It is not only harvested to provide fiber for clothing production, but it is also used to make cottonseed oil and animal feed. The dried remnants can also be used to make packaging.

The Days also farm 570 acres of one of Arkansas' biggest crops, Rice. Arkansas ranks first among rice producing states, accounting for more than 40 percent of the U.S.' rice production, with long and medium grain varieties being the most

commonly grown. Arkansas rice is known for its versatility, and can be used in a wide variety of cuisines.

Rice production is typically concentrated to the eastern side of the state, stretching from the Missouri border all the way down to Louisiana. Each year Arkansas farmers plant an average of 1.3 million acres of rice and harvest over 200 million bushels on 2,752 farms. Farmers in the state produce more than 9

billion pounds of rice annually.

Rice is the second highest value commodity in the state, and is the top agricultural export. The annual rice crop contributes billion to the state's economy, and accounts for approximately 25,000 jobs, which are crucial in many rural communities.

With their rice production, the Days have started to use a technique that is slowly gaining popularity, Row Rice, with Mark Day indicating that he was one

of the first to use this method in the region. Row Rice moves away from the typical levee based, controlled flooding method, and go with the row method typically used for crops such as corn and cotton.

Between 2015 and 2020, the amount of row rice being grown increased from less than one percent to 10 percent in Arkansas. Famers say that they are

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CROPS

Continued from Page 4C

going to this method because it cuts down on labor, due to not having to do the soil work associated with constructing and deconstructing levees, and it is less costly. Some farmers have even said that after tracking numbers for several years, they are using less water than the normal cascade flooding of levees. The risks and benefits are highly debated, but most farmers who utilize

this method say they suffer no significant losses in yield, and are able to bring in more profit due to reduced labor and fuel costs.

Last but not least, the Days farm 225 acres of wheat. In recent years, Arkansas has averaged 600,000 acres of wheat with yields averaging 58 bushels per acre. Most wheat acres are double cropped, with soybeans being planted following the wheat harvest.

The majority of Arkansas' wheat is grown in the Missis-

sippi River Delta, the Arkansas River Valley, and the Red River Valley. Soft Red Winter Wheat (SRW) is the dominant type of wheat grown in Arkansas. It is usually planted in October or November and harvested sometime in June. SRW has lower protein and less gluten than other types of wheat which makes it ideal for cookies, crackers, pastries, flat breads, and pretzels. SRW is even used in the manufacturing of other products such as Twizzlers and Maker's Mark Bourbon.



The Stephen & Dustin Day Family Drew County Farm Family of the Year



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A snapshot of Day Family activities



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Day family gets involved in McGehee church

By **HALEN MURPHY**
reporter@monticellonews.net

Stephen, Dustin, and Mark Day are all part of a leadership group for the Delta Outdoor Church that helps provide meals and set up events.

This church was started by Scott Johnson in 2014. Johnson wanted to make a more laid back church that people could go to during the week.

"Scott Johnson is a big outdoorsman, and he made this church to be a place that is more inviting for similar people," Stephen Day said. The church is a less formal meeting where people can come in their work clothes as opposed to getting dressed up after work.

Ruell Cruce preaches, sings gospel music, and plays guitar before his sermon.

Stephen went on to discuss the church itself. The church has wood walls and ceiling with deer heads mounted on the wall. They hold events at the church such as a bow shooting tournament between churchgoers, fishing tournaments, fall festivals in October with hay rides, and Valentines Day banquets.

The church also volunteers doing things such as working the concession stand at the baseball field, buying meals for the baseball teams, and building wheelchair ramps for people in the community.

Approximately 50 people go to the church located at 4404 High-

way 65 North in McGehee and they hold service every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Their service consists of the leadership team helping provide a meal, followed by a group Bible study. The leadership team that the Day family is a part of is partially in charge of providing the meals to the church members.

The leadership team provides meals such as spaghetti, barbecue, fried chicken, and burgers. The menu varies depending on the week and the time of year with soup and chili during the colder parts of the year.

The Day family participates in this as a means of being involved in their community as well as spreading the word of God.



Day daughters compete in rodeo events

By **HALEN MURPHY**
reporter@monticellonews.net

Aside from being daughters of a farming family, Gracen and Mattie Day compete showing cattle in the Arkansas Junior Cattlemen's association as well as the Arkansas State Fair. Gracen Day, 11, and Mattie Day, 8, have both been competing in the rodeo for two years.

Gracen likes to compete in barrel racing as well. "I love riding my horse and spending time with him," Gracen said.

Barrel racing is a horse racing event where the racer runs circles around barrels set in specific patterns for the fastest time. The times are scored based on how fast they complete a circle around all barrels, and try not to commit any fouls which would lead to point deductions.

The Arkansas Junior Cattlemen's Association works to

further the education of young people interested in the cattle industry through using funds for things such as scholarships, life skill training, and more.

"I just really love my animals and spending time with them, it gets hot in the summer but that's okay!" said Mattie.

Show cattle is judged in a wide range of ways depending on what kind of cow it is and whether it is male or female.

Steers are judged by things such as the degree of muscling, degree of finish, growth capacity, structural correctness, balance, and frame size. Some of these are judged by measuring certain areas of the cow to determine things such as degrees of muscle and finish, but some of these categories have to do with how the cow looks or are based on the judges knowledge of cattle.

Heifers however are judged on a different category called

"femininity". Steers are judged by muscle most importantly, but it isn't the most important thing on a heifer. "Femininity" is similar to structural correctness and balance because of how the judges look at the cow and use their knowledge to decide which parts of the female cow should be leaner in comparison to the male cow.

"Showing cattle is a lot of hard work and takes a lot of time, I love going to shows though and showing my cattle," said Gracen.

Gracen won an award for showing the Mini Hereford of the Year this year. A Mini Hereford is a cow that ranges up to four feet tall and can weigh up to 1,000 pounds.

"It takes a lot of hard work but they enjoy seeing it pay off," Julie Day said.

The Day Family



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