Greetings from Farmers Day
China Grove, NC
Saturday, July 15 on Main Street in China Grove
A family affair: Hopeful Acres Farm & Gardens still strong after a century

By Brad Dountz  
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A century farm is a farm that has been officially recognized as being in operation for at least 100 years. Since 1914, six generations have been working at Hopeful Acres Farm & Gardens, allowing the rest of Rowan County to experience the fruits of their labor and to hear about their long and rich history.

Chris Morgan and Stephanie Frisbee are siblings who work together to keep the memories of their father, Perry, alive. They both grew up on the farm and still live on the property with their mom and Stephanie’s children.

“We’re all like a little family compound on the family farm,” Frisbee said. “We share the same passion for our farm, for our farming heritage, and are trying to make it be there, so if my boys want to farm, it will be there.”

They cultivate several crops like hay, corn, and soybeans while also raising their own cattle. Frisbee takes pride in that she works on her family farm, and even though she is confronted with the obstacles that go along with it, she relishes the opportunity to make it successful.

“If you look at statistics you see that family farms are declining. So, that’s something my brother and I are faced with. He doesn’t have children, I have two boys. Are my boys going to want to keep farming? What happens to the farm if they don’t want to keep farming? I kind of look at ourselves as the stewards of the farm. We are doing what the generations have done before us to ensure
that it thrives,” Frisbee said.

In 2014, Perry passed away. Since then, Morgan and Frisbee have been stepping up to make sure Hopeful Acres doesn’t fall behind in all of the progress it has made over the decades. Stephanie did not have a degree in agriculture, so she began participating in NC Farm School through NC State, where she decided to include specialty cut flowers as a crop.

While selling her flowers, Frisbee realized she could monetize other aspects of the farm more effectively like by acquiring their meat handlers license for their cattle. She also created the tagline “beef and bloom” to make people aware about the new direction Hopeful Acres is taking.

By still having relationships with their customers and other farmers, Hopeful Acres offers a unique slice of what Rowan County agriculture is all about. That connection lets them stand out amongst everyone else. Hopeful Acres peels back the curtain on their practices, processes, and background to create an intimacy with their customers that makes them a place people want to return to.

“We try to tell our story because we want people to know where we came from. We were raised with these extreme values that your word is everything, your word to someone,” Frisbee said. “I think it’s us bringing that personal touch. When people say know your farmer, know your food. If people know you then they will support you.”

Having that love for what they do helps make the tough days go down better, but when someone has been farming for practically their whole lives, it becomes a part of them and what they’ll leave behind.

“Farming’s in my blood. You can’t get away from it. I guess it’s an energy you can't get anywhere else or a feeling you can't get from doing anything else. Doing what your family has been doing for generations, we’re just trying to carry on the legacy,” Morgan said.
Fourth generation of Millers provide produce to China Grove

By Robert Sullivan
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Out on Miller Road, halfway between Mooresville Road and West Church Street, stands a lone produce store on the corner of a road. Miller Farm Fresh Produce is the face of the farm that has been in the Miller family for five generations.

Ever since Mike Miller’s great-great-grandfather founded the farm in the 1890’s, it has been worked by every generation of the family. Each member of the Miller family grew up working the farm, spending hot days in the summer hand-picking produce.

“No pool days, no beach days, no vacation days during the summer. It was hard work and I’m sure we butted heads with my dad about it back then. But that was when we were kids, now I understand it taught us respect for the work. And now we just go out and have fun, we don’t work. We enjoy our jobs,” said Mike, whose son Adam represents the sixth generation that stands to inherit the farm.

By this point, Miller Farm has grown to become a member of the community in the area it was founded in. Just recently, the family installed an ATM outside the farm store for people from the area to use.

“One of our workers actually mentioned that there wasn’t one nearby, and so we thought it would be helpful. It’s open 24 hours and we don’t make a dime off of it,” said Mike. The Miller family made it out to the first Farmer’s Day at China Grove 42 years ago, but Mike said that his family stopped going around 25 years ago when the festival evolved from focusing on local farmers selling produce into the large-scale event it is today. Five years ago, however, the family began to return to the festival and have been there every year since.

Mike also stated that despite the fact that his brother spun off his own company, Miller and Sons Produce, the two still work closely together almost every day. Miller and Sons makes it out to the Cabarrus farmers’ markets throughout the week while Millers Farm Fresh Produce take their products to the Salisbury Farmers’ Market every Saturday.

Ultimately, Miller Farm leans fully into an enjoyable family-owned and -operated work environment. Mike stressed that even though they are picking corn and other vegetables in 90 degree Fahrenheit and up temperatures, the family loves what they do.

“We don’t work, we have fun,” said Mike.
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Forged in Earth and Iron: James Wise applies job skills to art form

By Chandler Inions
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Honing a skill that turned into a passion proved the perfect seed for an entrepreneurial opportunity for James “Jimmy” Wise.

Owner of Wise Earth and Iron, Wise will be among the local vendors at the China Grove Farmers Day on Saturday.

“My background is in industrial systems,” Wise said. “I have worked in maintenance for 12-13 years. During that time, part of my task as a maintenance guy was welding and fabricating. I realized that I really enjoyed fabricating.”

See Wise, C10
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WISE

Continued from C6

Wise went to work for Taylor Pump and Lift in Concord. “They had a great fabrication shop,” Wise said. “I went there so I could hone in on running the shears, press breaks, and make my fabrication skills more well-rounded. “When the company learned what I was able to do, they started sending me decorative-type jobs to do.” Wise wanted to go out on his own. After talking with his wife, they decided it was a possibility. He built a shop in his spare time. “I decided that I wanted to have my own name on the company,” Wise said. He officially wrapped up his stint at Taylor Pump and Lift in October of last year and began his adventure as a small business owner.

Some of Wise’s handmade work is displayed at the Rowan County Sheriff’s Office. He recently completed artwork recognizing retired officers and former military personnel that now hangs in the lobby. “We do a lot of decorative art, like monograms and a lot of custom, military and first responder type things,” Wise said. “I have a lot of friends that are state troopers, sheriff’s deputies and police officers.”

Recognizing those who served is also important to Wise. “My grandfather retired from the Air Force,” Wise said. “I have always respected him and listened to his military stories.” Wise’s abilities allow his creative liberties to take flight. “We like to create a lot of nature scenes and such,” Wise said. “We have done a lot of address signs for houses in the mountains, and they have asked for bears and trees and stuff like that, which fits. We wanted an earthy metal theme to our business that was naturistic.”

Wise has been pretty successful through word of mouth and social media, but he loves getting out into the community when he can. “We were trying to hit some events to get our name out there,” Wise said.
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The Farming Facts:

- Raising beef cattle is the single largest segment of American agriculture. One pound of wool can make 10 miles of yarn. There are 150 yards (450 feet) of wool yarn in a baseball.
- The average dairy cow produces seven gallons of milk a day, 2,100 pounds of milk a month, and 46,000 glasses of milk a year.
- Soybeans are an important ingredient for the production of crayons. In fact, one acre of soybeans can produce 82,368 crayons.
- Like snowflakes, no two cows have exactly the same pattern or spots.

Ready for a chuckle?

Q: Why do cows have hooves instead of feet? A: Because they lactose!
Q: What is a farmer’s favorite Bruce Springsteen song? A: Born in the USDA.
Q: As farmers, we hear a lot of jokes about sheep. A: We’d tell them to the dog, but he’d herd them all!
Q: What did the farmer say when his fat pig wouldn’t fit into the pen? A: “There’s more there than meets the sty.”
Q: Why did the pig take a bath? A: The farmer said “hogwash”!
Q: What’s black and white and eats like a horse? A: A zebra.
Q: Why were the baby strawberries crying? A: Their ma and pa were in a jam.
Q: What did the neurotic pig say to the farmer? A: “You take me for granted.”
Q: Why shouldn’t you tell a secret on a farm? A: Because the potatoes have eyes and the corn has ears!
Q: What farm animal keeps the best time? A: A watch dog.
Q: How did the organic vegetable die? A: Natural causes.
Q: What did the mommy cow say to the baby cow? A: “It’s pasture bedtime!”

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Pepperoni Pizza Dip with Breadstick Dippers

Makes 8 to 10 servings

1 jar (26 ounces) spaghetti sauce
1 large Vidalia onion (or other sweet onion), sliced
1 green bell pepper, cored, seeded and sliced
1/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
Italian rolls, cut in half
Provolone cheese, sliced (optional)

1. Combine sausages, spaghetti sauce, onion, bell peppers, and brown sugar in slow cooker. Cover; cook on low 4 to 6 hours.
2. Place sausages in rolls. Top with vegetable mixture. Add provolone cheese, if desired.

Tip: Instead of large Italian rolls, use slider buns or medium kaiser rolls to stretch the sausage mixture further and make it easier to eat while watching the game.

Recipe courtesy of Pillsbury™

Easy Apple Turnovers

Serves 4

1 1/2 cups thinly sliced, peeled apples (roughly 11/2 medium-sized apple)
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 box Pillsbury™ refrigerated pie crusts
1 egg

1. In a 2-quart saucepan, mix apples, brown sugar, 1 tablespoon of the water and lemon juice. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until bubbly. Reduce heat to low; cover and cook 6 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until apples are tender.
2. In a small bowl, mix flour, granulated sugar and salt. Gradually stir into apple mixture, cooking and stirring until mixture thickens. Remove from heat; stir in butter and vanilla. Cool 15 minutes.

These recipes for "Pepperoni Pizza Dip with Breadstick Dippers" and "Big Al’s Hot and Sweet Sausage Sandwich" from "Crock*Pot® 365 Year-Round Recipes" (Publications International, Ltd.)

Big Al’s Hot and Sweet Sausage Sandwich

Makes 8 to 10 servings

4 to 5 pounds hot Italian sausage links

1. In a 2-quart saucepan, mix apples, brown sugar, 1 tablespoon of the water and lemon juice. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until bubbly. Reduce heat to low; cover and cook 6 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until apples are tender.
2. In a small bowl, mix flour, granulated sugar and salt. Gradually stir into apple mixture, cooking and stirring until mixture thickens. Remove from heat; stir in butter and vanilla. Cool 15 minutes.

Old Fashioned Evening in Hanna Park

180 N Main St China Grove, NC 28023
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7:15 PM Live Music by Creek Music

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Town Hall "Front Porch"
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Free - Children Under 3

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Rowan Public Library - South Branch
Roller Mill Parking Lot
10:30 AM
11:30 AM
12:30 PM
1:30 PM
Free

Crafts 10AM - 2PM

Mr. Archer
Twisted Balloons
Corner of Main & Centerview
1 - 3 PM
Free
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