

# Good News

exchange

**EMILY ROCK**

## E-I-E-I-Oh, what a farm!

A day with  
Emily Rock and  
her farm school  
adventure

# FARM TABLE

ISSUE 9 2024

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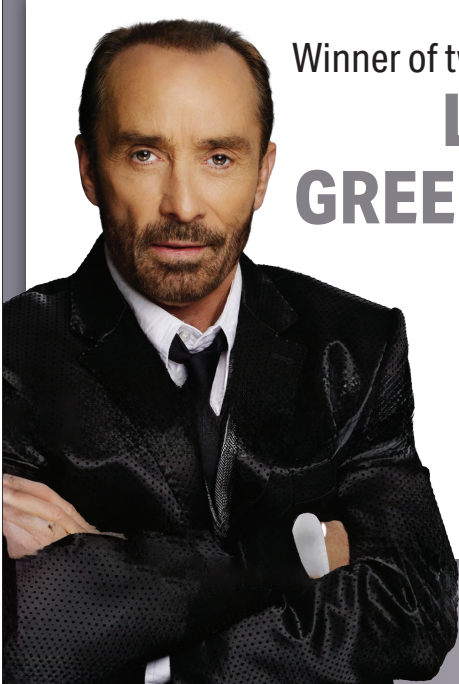


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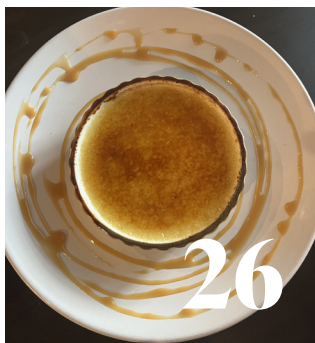
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Todd led with integrity in the U.S. Air Force, from the Pentagon to combat zones. Now, he's committed to continuing to make Bowling Green stronger and more vibrant.

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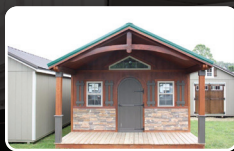


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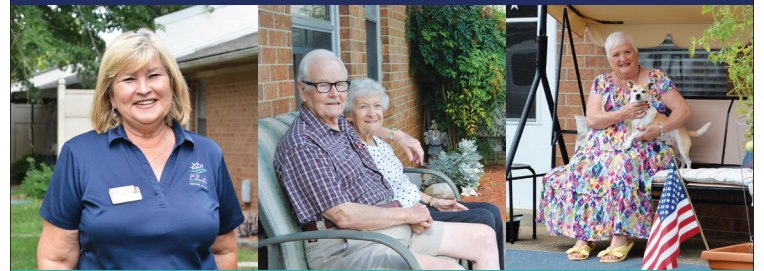
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Sprouting from soil, served at supper

Farm-to-table plants seeds generation after generation.

**O**UR FOOD nourishes us, from the soil beneath our feet to the table where we gather with family and friends. The hot sun beams from the sky into the field of sprouting seeds. Farmers rise early, tending to their crops with the same care and dedication that their families have shown for generations. The connection between the land and our plates is a story of hard work, love, and survival — a story growing more vital as we seek healthier, more intentional ways to nourish our bodies.

The beauty of farm-to-table lies in its simplicity. Cooks transform fresh, seasonal ingredients into meals that are delicious and rich in nutrients, just like nature intended. Each dish tells a story of the farmer who harvested the tomatoes, the hands that crafted the cheese, and the cook

who brought it all together like magic. When we eat farm-to-table, we're not just enjoying a meal; we're participating in a movement that values relationships over transactions.

When we focus on farm-to-table, it also reconnects us with the seasons, reminding us that food is more than a commodity — it's a gift from the earth that should be savored. There's a certain joy in eating what's in season, knowing that the flavors are at their peak and that you're supporting local farms that are the backbone of our communities. The people in this issue bring us closer to nature, yes ... but also closer to each other. This issue of Good News is a return to our roots — a celebration of the land, and a recognition of the hands that toil to bring us the freshest, most nourishing foods. **GN**

  
**Wesley Bryant,**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Catherine Malin, Susan Jones, and Staci Simpson

# KEEPING KENTUCKY FARMS SAFE:

## The Women Behind Bowling Green's Agricultural Health Mission

**I F YOU GREW UP** on a farm, you likely know the feel of calloused hands, the hum of a tractor, and the importance of safety measures that keep everything running smoothly. You understand the dangers that can lurk in familiar places — like the deceptively peaceful fields or the powerful machinery in the barn. But for those who didn't grow up to the roosters crowing, the early morning chores, the dusty roads, and the constant vigilance required to avoid injuries, farm safety can seem like an abstract concept. It's this gap in understanding that the Kentucky Partnership for Farm Family Health and Safety in Bowling Green is bridging, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, understands the critical nature of farm safety.

The group's passion and dedication have transformed lives, ensuring that farmers and their families stay healthy and safe. We sat down with three women from the board who shared their experiences and ties to wanting to help farm families in the area. These women work tirelessly to spread awareness about the importance of safety on farms, and their efforts have had a lasting impact on the local community.

Sitting in a room with them, you can almost feel the weight of their dedication as they talk about their plans and achievements, ensuring every farmer knows they are not alone and every family feels supported. Their work isn't just about safety — it's about sustaining rural communities, one seed at a time.

Susan Jones, a retired nursing professor who has been advocating for farm safety since the early 1990s, said, "We started because of the number of injuries,



▲ This cover shows previous T-shirt designs dating all the way back to 1995, during the first Progressive Agriculture Safety Day

By Haley Potter  
Photography by Haley Potter  
and submitted by Staci Simpson



▲ Susan Jones holds a book showcasing shirt designs from previous Progressive Agriculture Safety Days, an event that has been taking place since 1995

illnesses, and fatalities occurring on farms, especially with children,” Jones explained. The foundation of the partnership was laid with a Kellogg grant awarded to the University of Kentucky, which aimed to reduce these alarming statistics. “It was about empowering farm women, who are often the health officers of the family, to take control and come up with strategies to decrease injuries and fatalities.”

From there, the Kentucky Partnership for Farm Family Health and Safety was born, officially incorporated in 1993. Since then, the partnership has worked with countless farms and families across the Barren River Area Development District region, focusing on education and prevention. One of the most notable accomplishments is the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day, which has been running since 1995.

“It’s a well-recognized event here in Bowling Green,” Jones said with pride. “We started small, but now we reach hundreds of children each year.”

Staci Simpson, a dedicated volunteer for the Kentucky Partnership for Farm Family Health and

Safety who works full time as an insurance agent for the Kentucky Farm Bureau, said the board works to make the area aware of the health and safety challenges surrounding our farm families.

Held annually at the Western Kentucky University (WKU) Ag Expo Center, Progressive Agriculture Safety Day targets fourth graders, teaching them essential safety skills through interactive stations.

Catherine Malin, the center director for South Central Kentucky Area Health Education Center, explained the significance of focusing on this age group: “Fourth graders are at a good age where they’re still excited about learning and can process the information. They also start to have more independence around the home or farm, so knowing how to stay safe is crucial.”

At the safety day, students rotate through various stations, each designed to teach a specific safety lesson. From learning the importance of wearing a helmet, demonstrated by dropping eggs in and out of “egg helmets,” to understanding water safety and the dangers of grain bins, the event covers a wide range of topics.

“The fire department is there, teaching fire safety, and we have large animal safety demonstrations for kids who might not have been exposed to farm animals before,” Malin described. “It’s all about making the lessons engaging and memorable.”

The day is also a valuable educational opportunity for nursing students from WKU, who participate as part of their coursework.

“They learn about the hazards on farms and how to communicate safety messages to different age groups,” Malin added. “It’s important for them to understand these issues so they can better serve rural communities in the future.”

The partnership’s impact extends beyond Bowling Green. Over the years, the group has helped other counties establish their own safety days, spreading their message across the region.

“We’ve worked with Edmonson, Allen, Logan, and Butler counties, providing training and funding to get them started,” Jones said. “Seeing this program grow and knowing we’ve played a part in that is incredibly rewarding.”

While Progressive Agriculture Safety Day is a major focus, the partnership also hosts a special



event every Labor Day to honor the hard-working farmers in the community.

Jones shared the significance of this event: “There’s no one who labors more than farmers, so it’s fitting to recognize them on Labor Day. We allow people to make a donation in memory or honor of a farmer, and their names are listed in a full-page ad in the local paper. It’s very touching, especially when families want to remember their loved ones in this way.”

Jones, who created the partnership due to her background in health and agriculture, reflects on why these events are so close to her heart.

“I grew up on a farm, and I have a very soft spot for farmers. They provide us with our food and fiber, and it’s our job to

do everything we can to keep them safe. Teaching kids these lessons early on can prevent tragedies and save lives.”

Each of these women has a personal connection to the agricultural world, which fuels their dedication.

“My dad is 79 and still farms full time,” Simpson said with a smile. “I see firsthand the importance of farm safety, and I want to make sure others do too.”

Malin brings a unique perspective as well. Although she didn’t grow up on a farm, her grandparents did, and she understands the critical role that farm safety plays.

“I work closely with health profession students at WKU, getting them involved in these safety initiatives. It’s about

building a safer future for our agricultural communities,” she noted.

The work of these women showcases the power of community and education. Their efforts not only protect the current generation of farmers but also ensure that future generations grow up understanding how to stay safe and healthy on a farm, whether they decide to have a farm of their own someday or visit a friend’s farm. As the Kentucky Partnership for Farm Family Health and Safety continues to grow and change lives in the community, its message is clear: Safety is a seed worth planting. **GN**

*This year’s Progressive Agriculture Safety Day will be held on Sept. 26.*

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# FEEDING HOPE

Anna's Greek Restaurant serves up food and community.

By Richard J. Klin // Photography by Amanda Guy

**T**HE AMERICAN immigrant saga is an enduring one. The circumstances that brought them here are wide-ranging, but the constant is that this can be the place to come and rebuild your life.

Vilson Qehaja left his war-torn country of Kosovo and arrived in the U.S. in 2000 with nothing. He found a home and a welcoming community in Bowling Green and set about rebuilding his life. After establishing himself in business, he vacationed in Greece and met a woman named Anna, who turned him down for a date three times. Persistence, though, paid off. After a three-

year long-distance relationship, Anna — a restaurateur — joined him in Bowling Green, and they married. The couple's next venture was Anna's Greek Restaurant & Venue.

As the name indicates, the restaurant serves the fare you'd expect from Greek cuisine, but there are some crucial innovations. Anna has incorporated international cuisine into the Greek table: Italian, German, and French, all fused with a Greek twist. There is an extended menu and another innovation — vegetarian, organic, gluten-free, and dairy-free dishes. Those are the sort of



VILSON QEHAJA



things one doesn't usually associate with the classic Greek restaurant. Vilson and Anna also make it a point to work with local farmers and suppliers.

Anna's Greek Restaurant & Venue also played a significant role during the horrible devastation caused by the tornadoes of 2021. Vilson and Anna were setting up for a large wedding reception that was to take place the next day. He left late at night, forgetting his phone, and woke up the next day after the storm, without power or phone service.

The restaurant itself, luckily, had power. The family decided to proceed with the wedding festivities. If this wasn't a challenge enough, the wedding church, as it turned

out, had lost power. Now, Anna's Restaurant had to host not just the wedding party but the ceremony itself. This was a daunting task, as Vilson recalls.

"The internet wasn't working, [and] the phone lines weren't working. But luckily, I sent text messages to as many people as I could — employees and friends — to come help."

The wedding took place, which felt like a "rare, interesting dream." But there was a more considerable scramble to come. Because of the tornado, the community had undergone widespread devastation. To Vilson, this was horribly reminiscent of the wartime destruction he'd experienced. Most of the area's restau-

rants weren't functioning, and the Red Cross contacted them. Could Vilson and Anna fill the gap?

There was a need for 1,200 meals a day for the next two weeks, starting immediately. The usual capacity for the restaurant was 1,500 meals a week. Without hesitation, Vilson and Anna plunged into action, obtaining special equipment, including the hard-to-find military pot they needed to handle the unprecedented volume. They worked all through the night the first night and then kept up an unimaginable pace for the next 12 days.

"It was a challenge for us, and I don't know where we got the energy, but we made it happen," said Vilson.

"Making it happen" was an understatement. The restaurant



stayed open during the hectic season of Christmastime. Vilson and Anna went ahead with their usual schedule of lunch and dinner. The venue hosted parties and weddings. Vilson and Anna averaged around three hours of sleep a night, waking up around 3 a.m., going to the restaurant at 4 a.m., and cooking until 9 a.m. to prepare those 1,200 meals. The meals were then packed up and distributed to the volunteers. At 11 a.m., the restaurant opened for lunch. Their working day ended 12 hours later.

This trial by fire created lasting bonds with the volunteers and the community, so much that the town of Bowling Green has officially recognized it.

Vilson and Anna didn't publicize what they'd done. They simply sprang into action immediately and worked at the superhuman level. Both Vilson and Anna were and are more than eager to aid the community. This is also part and parcel of the immigrant ethos.

"I know how it feels to be helped," Vilson recalls. "It's a totally different feeling when you get to help others." There is always that automatic instinct to help. "The good you do always comes back," Vilson wisely concluded. **GN**



**Joel Hawkins**

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# HOPE SERVED FRESH

House on the Hill battles hunger with heart and purpose

By Kali Bradford // Photography by Amanda Guy

**A** **MERICA IS** one of the most food-abundant countries in the world. However, according to a 2023 Gallup survey, the U.S. scored at the top of the Group of Seven countries with the highest rate of people struggling to afford enough food to feed themselves and their families. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that 47.4 million people lived in food-insecure households in 2023. This issue affects millions of Americans who don't have enough food to eat or lack access to healthy food.

Despite the uphill battle against hunger in America, nonprofits like Bowling Green's House on the Hill

(HOTH) are fighting tirelessly to ensure their community is well-fed.

Along with food, HOTH helps provide affordable housing for low- to moderate-income individuals and families in need within the community. The organization's website states that each HOTH initiative is designed to help families and individuals on a path to self-sustainability by giving them the tools and opportunities to get there.

HOTH is board-directed and volunteer-run and operates through the generosity of others and the partnerships they build within the communities they serve.

## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

HOTH Executive Director Joel Hawkins said that, initially, the organization had been helping with food insecurity by providing food boxes each month. While this was helpful and well received by the community, they felt that they could reach more people by literally thinking outside of the boxes of the food they were distributing.





“We realized that in the area of Rich-ardsville, where the grocery store is located, there were a large number of clients that were spread out,” he explained. “It took those delivering the boxes a long time to drop them off. So, we talked about what it would look like if they had a shopping experience where they would still receive food, but they’d have the opportunity to choose what they wanted instead of getting a prescribed food box. So, we acquired our little store space. We have a produce and dairy section and provide staples like flour, sugar, rice, and oats — pretty much anything you’d get in a grocery store. They come and choose what they need or want based on the size of their family.”

Hawkins said the program kicked off in October and was piloted for 60 days to see what the response would be from recipients. While they accomplished their mission of feeding those in need, they also

realized that the small grocery store was becoming a beacon for the community.

“We began to see that the community was gathering around the grocery store. Locals would drop off farm-fresh eggs,” he explained. “A pork farmer in the area brought us packaged pork products such as sausage, pork chops, and bacon. We’ve really seen the community, outside of our clients, coming together and supporting what we’re doing.”

Hawkins added that the strong sense of community around the grocery store is building stronger relationships.

“We’ve had more time for conversations with those that come in,” he said. “We get to know them, and they get to know us. We’ve also realized in those conversations what their needs are and what they’re going through. Through these conversations, we can get a better understanding of where our clients are

in their [lives] and what needs they may have other than food, such as housing and utilities.”

### THE MISSION GROWS

While thrilled with the grocery store’s success, Hawkins said the organization wanted to benefit the community more than just by giving food; it wanted to teach them how to grow it.

Following the 60-day pilot of the grocery store, HOTH took a leap and purchased the land on which it sits.

They will use the 1.4 acres of land for numerous community benefits. “Once we finished the pilot, we decided that if we’re going to do this, we need to do it long term,” said Hawkins. “We started discussing what would be helpful in the community and how [we] could partner more with the school when it comes to food and access to food for families.”



“

We have plans to build a pavilion for outdoor classes, but the extra benefit is that the community could come for a family gathering or event.

Joel Hawkins

Since purchasing the property, HOTH has begun installing raised garden beds. They are also working to start a 4-H club that will be able to take part in outdoor gardening classes and offer additional opportunities for the public to enjoy the land.

“We have plans to build a pavilion for outdoor classes,” said Hawkins. “But the extra benefit is that the community could come for a family gathering or event. We also have plans to make community garden plots that people can register for.”

**MORE LAND, MORE FOOD, MORE OPPORTUNITY**

Riding the excitement of the success of the grocery store and the possibilities of the organization’s recently purchased land, HOTH is already looking to spread the benefit of a community garden.

“We’re already looking at our next location so we can replicate this in another part of our community where we have a concen-

tration of our clients,” explained Hawkins. “We’d love for every store to have the garden aspect [and] some kind of community spot. Whether it’s a pavilion or a place for gathering as a part of that property, our goal is to have five of those within our community over the next couple of years.”

Hawkins added that they will continue to offer food boxes to the disabled or elderly. The mission is still to feed as many as HOTH is able.

Those looking to lend a helping hand to HOTH’s work can do so in several ways. In addition to volunteering, the organization offers a household sponsorship campaign. “Anyone can sponsor a household for \$300 a year,” Hawkins explained. “That’s \$25 a month — less than a dollar a day. It’s actually about 82 cents a day. That money, or household sponsorship, provides the food box or access to the free grocery store in their area. It also assists with housing.” **GN**

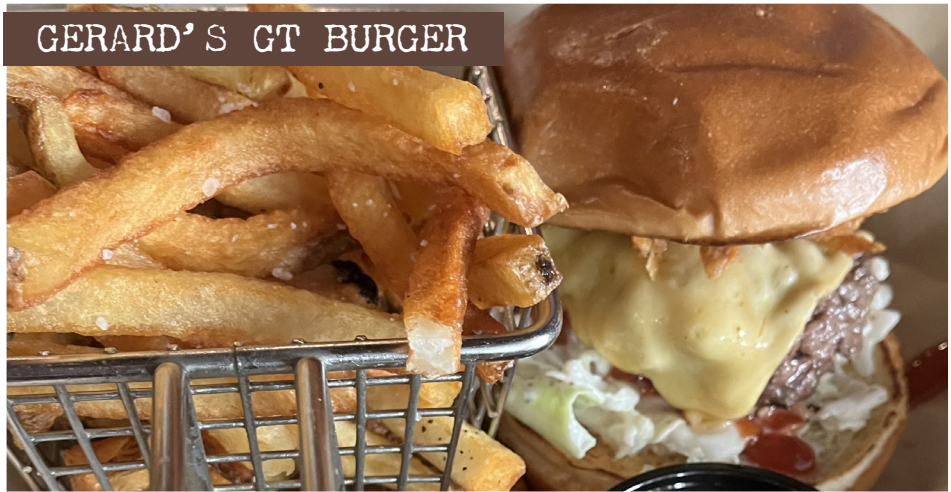


▲ Barbara Spencer, Cali Clayton, Donna Shand, and Joel Hawkins



GERARD'S CHEESE FONDUE

## GERARD'S GT BURGER



# HISTORIC AMBIANCE, MODERN FLAVORS: GERARD'S 1907 TAVERN

Exquisite dining and unmatched service in a stunning setting right off the town square

## GOOD NEWS IS COMING TO DINNER!

We will feature a local food critic's thoughts as they dine in Bowling Green. This month Eve Vawter visited Gerard's 1907 Tavern.

Eve Vawter  
FoodCriticBowlingGreen@gmail.com

## Gerard's 1907 Tavern

935 College St.  
Bowling Green  
gerards1907tavern.com

**I**F YOU'RE searching for one of Bowling Green's top dining spots, Gerard's 1907 Tavern is unbeatable. This restaurant stands out with exceptional service, a stunning historic building, and mouthwatering cuisine. Situated next to the charming Fountain Square Park, Gerard's offers a curated selection of craft beers, artisanal cocktails, and a menu that expertly blends tradition with innovation.

The restaurant exudes coziness, featuring plush velvet chairs, inviting banquette seating, and a bar area for those seeking a more casual dining experience. Our server, Savannah, was exceptional — attentive and knowledgeable, always ready to answer our questions about the menu and nightly specials. She graciously catered to our requests, including our indulgence in multiple bread baskets, perfectly paired with a starter of gooey goat cheese fondue, served with an assortment of crudites, apples, and delectable homemade croutons. The cocktail menu is extensive, and I enjoyed a seasonal cocktail made with fresh blackberries, vodka, and honey.

The dinner menu offers a selection of classic dishes like basil pesto chicken, seared salmon, and an outstanding beef

stroganoff made with tender beef tips, onions, and a rich Dijon cream sauce. Savannah mentioned that the stroganoff is served with mashed potatoes instead of the traditional noodles, a twist that some diners might initially hesitate to try. However, I can assure you that those diners are missing out — this substitution takes the dish to a whole new level. She also noted that for those who try it this way, it often becomes their go-to order. I can vouch for this, as I'm already planning my return just to enjoy it again.

Burgers are another highlight at Gerard's, with various tempting options like the Fig & Brie Burger and the signature GT Burger, featuring Henry Bain sauce, smoked Gouda, house coleslaw, and crispy tobacco onions. If you're ordering ketchup for your house-made fries, be sure to request their in-house version. It includes a secret ingredient (which I won't reveal here) that transforms this classic condiment into something truly crave-worthy.

We indulged in a classic creme brulee for dessert, which lived up to all our expectations. I'm already looking forward to my next visit to Gerard's for another delightful meal. **GN**



# *Better eating, better living*

Farm-to-table connects the community to the source of our food.

**E**ATING WITH produce, meats, and spices from nearby farms and growers brings the freshest flavors to our tables. And choosing local ingredients benefits our community while enhancing our family meals. These local products showcase our region's unique tastes, making ordinary dishes memorable. By supporting local producers, we strengthen community bonds while giving our families the best our area has to offer. It's a straightforward approach to better eating, connecting us to the source of our food. GN

## *Broccoli Salad*

Submitted by Cyndi Hunter

1 lb. fresh broccoli  
1/4 c. onions  
1 can sliced olives, 2 1/4 oz.  
3/4 c. ranch salad dressing  
purple cabbage leaves

Finely chop broccoli florets, reserving stems for other uses. Combine broccoli, onions, olives, and ranch dressing in a large bowl. Cover salad and refrigerate. Line serving bowl with cabbage leaves. Spoon salad mixture into the center of the bowl.



Submit your recipes to be included in  
*Good News Magazine and the Exchange Cookbook:*  
[www.southernaprons.com](http://www.southernaprons.com)

## Garden Tomato Soup

Submitted by Emma Hardin

1 c. celery, chopped  
1 sm. onion, chopped  
1 med. carrot, shredded  
1 sm. green pepper, chopped  
1/4 c. butter  
4 1/2 c. chicken broth, divided  
4 c. tomatoes, peeled, chopped  
2 t. sugar  
1/2 t. curry  
1/2 t. salt  
1/4 t. pepper  
1/4 c. AP flour

In a large saucepan, saute celery, onions, carrot, and green pepper in butter until tender. Add 4 cups broth, tomatoes, sugar, curry, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. In a small bowl, stir flour and remaining chicken broth until smooth. Gradually stir into tomato mixture. Bring to a boil. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly, about 2 minutes.

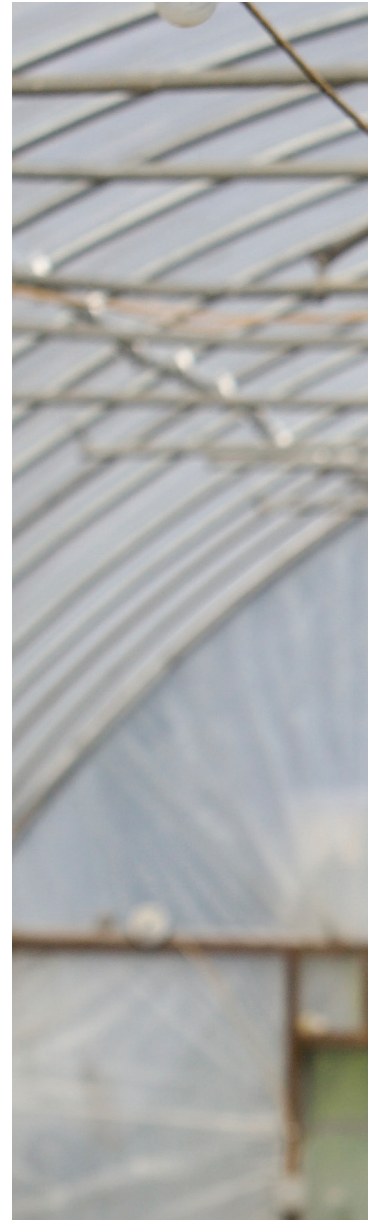
## Breakfast Casserole

Submitted by Renee Blackburn

1 lb. bulk sausage, browned and drained  
1 lg. bag hash browns  
9 eggs, beaten  
16 oz. sour cream  
1/2 to 1 lb. Velveeta® cheese  
5 green onions, chopped  
1 green pepper, chopped  
1 sm. jar pimentos  
salt and pepper to taste

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients except eggs and put into a 9 x 13" casserole dish. Pour eggs over mixture. Bake at 325° for 45 minutes. This can be made the night before and add the eggs in the morning prior to cooking.





# A Journey From Hunger to Harvest

A family's dedication to sustainable farming and local support

*By Gabriel Grant Huff  
Photography by Amanda Guy and  
submitted by the Howells*

**M**ICHELLE HOWELL grew up hungry as a child — not figuratively, but literally. Her single mother could not drive, meaning they sometimes had no transportation to run to the grocery store or purchase water-fresh food while living in San Diego, California. After living through such an experience and being exposed to fruit and vegetable production during her childhood, Howell cultivated a drive to feed people whether or not they could afford meals. So she became a farmer.

In the outskirts of small-town Scottsville — a little over 25 miles southeast of Bowling Green — lies the Need More Acres Farm on Hickory Lane. The 20-acre farm produces

fruits, vegetables, beef, pork, and chicken. Row after row of green crops grabs the eye, and one may notice that the owners of this land have a fancy for tomatoes.

Howell's journey began when she took her first job at Jackson's Orchard & Nursery in Bowling Green at the age of 16 in the 1990s. She went on to attend Western Kentucky University (WKU), earning a bachelor's degree in agriculture in 2000. Shortly after graduation, the University of Kentucky (UK) hired her using tobacco settlement funds to help tobacco farmers transition to fruit and vegetable production. During this time, she met her soulmate, Nathan Howell. Coincidentally, the UK hired Nathan, also a WKU graduate, for




**NATHAN AND MICHELLE HOWELL**









the same purpose. Adding to their shared history, both were born in 1977. Full-time farmer parents raised Nathan in Hart County. Their similar backgrounds and passions brought them together, leading to a marriage and careers dedicated to helping farmers through education and support.

In 2011, they created the Community Farmers Market in Bowling Green with a group of farmers to help farm businesses thrive. The market ran all year, offering a variety of farm products. However, they one day did the unthinkable: They threw their careers away to actually farm. For Nathan, the best way he could help farmers was to join them, which exactly fulfilled Michelle's desire to feed the hungry.

"We had several barriers," Michelle said. "We had to find access to land, which was very difficult. That's why we ended up in Allen County, leaving our steady, secure, full-time jobs with benefits to have our own business. We knew it would be really hard work, and we were willing to put that work in."

The Howells take their harvests and sell them at the Community Farmers Market at 2319 Nash-

"For me, it's about the value of having a legacy that we can pass on to the next generation, teaching my kids the value of hard work and serving their community,"

**MICHELLE HOWELL**

ville Road along with a host of other vendors when the business opens on Tuesdays from 2-6 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nathan loves growing heirloom tomatoes, usually producing 20 to 30 diverse types. Their children — Carter, Elizabeth, Lilah, Adaline, and Sterling — are also heavily involved with the farm work, as one would imagine, fashioning a true family business.

Need More Acres Farms partners with the public health departments in Warren County and Allen County, the school systems, Refuge Bowling Green, Addiction's Salon and Spa, and several other organizations that distribute the farm's food boxes. As of 2024, Michelle said her family has recently been able to dispense about 10,000 food boxes a year.

"There's two things we're doing at the same time," Michelle said. "One of them is helping ourselves and other farmers be successful. It's getting better, but there was definitely a time when farmers had moved toward growing commodity crops like corn, soy, and wheat. [We are] trying to get farmers to be able to do profitable growing and healthier foods. And then, in addition to that, making sure that anybody in our community who needs access to that can have it."

The Howells strive for all this while not becoming too competitive, ensuring there is enough income for everyone. Furthermore, they still work to educate consumers about healthy, locally grown food and how to prepare and cook those blessings.

"For me, it's about the value of having a legacy that we can pass on to the next generation, teaching my kids the value of hard work and serving their community," Michelle said. "Then, in addition to our children, we have a lot of employees on the farm. A lot of them are high schoolers or young people, and [we] just try to encourage them to think about farming one day."

Michelle invites everyone to support them and other farmers by purchasing local food or backing organizations that assist local businesses. Kentuckians can also choose to volunteer at the Need More Acres Farm. More information about the Howells' work is available at [needmoreacres.com](http://needmoreacres.com). **GN**



## A day with Emily Rock and her farm school adventure

By Haley Potter

Photography by Amanda Guy

**I** MAGINE A place where children's eyes light up at the sight of a newborn calf, where tiny hands gather eggs from under clucking hens, and where the wonders of farm life unfold right before them. Welcome to Royalty Rock Farm, owned by the ever-enthusiastic Emily Rock. Located just off of Old Greenhill Road in Bowling Green, this farm isn't just any ordinary farm — it's a magical space for kids and a lesson in where our food comes from.

Rock's journey from farm girl to farm school entrepreneur is a heartwarming story of connection, inspiration, and a love for the land. "I grew up on a farm and didn't realize how lucky I was until I moved more towards the city," she recalled. "When I went to school at Western in Bowling Green, I met a whole different group of people and realized there's a lot of kids that don't make that connection to where their food comes from."

# E-I-E-I-Oh, what a farm!



**EMILY ROCK**

After the birth of her first child, Rock found herself with time on her hands and an idea sprouting in her mind. “I was home all day with a newborn, and I was bored. So, I thought, what could I do?” she explained. With a bit of inspiration from her Instagram followers, who were fascinated by her farm life, Rock decided to offer a farm school class.

In March 2023, the first session of Royalty Rock Farm School was born, and it was an instant hit.

“Kids come for an hour, once a week, for an entire month. The ages range from 1 1/2 to 12 years old, but usually it’s kids under 5,” Rock said.

The classes are designed to be fun and educational, teaching children about farm life and where the food they love to eat comes from.

“The best part is seeing their eyes light up when they make that real-life connection,” Rock said. “When we get to the chicken coop, and they lift up a hen to find eggs underneath, their first instinct is always, ‘Can we crack them?’ And I’m like, ‘Sure!’”

Watching the kids’ amazement as they crack eggs that look just like the ones they cook at home is a joy for Rock.

Rock’s farm school isn’t just for the kids. Sometimes, the parents are just as excited.

“I’ve had a lot of adults ask if I would do an adult farm school,” she laughed.

The sessions are a family affair. Parents stay with their children, often enjoying the experience as much as the little ones.

Aside from the educational aspect, Royalty Rock Farm also sells raw milk through a herd share program.

“The kids learn to milk the cow, and they’re welcome to try the milk if they want to,” Rock said.

The program has become a favorite among the families who visit the farm, with many parents falling in love with the fresh milk and signing up to get their weekly supply.


Each farm school class is a unique adventure. Rock limits the classes to 15 kids, though usually, it’s about 7 to 10 per session.

“I’ve had one class with just four little girls, and it was the funniest class I’ve ever had. By the second session, they were running the show,” she recalled fondly.

Rock runs the farm school from March through June, ensuring the children aren’t exposed to the extreme summer heat.

“Everything is outside, and a lot of these kids aren’t used to being outside all day in the heat,” she explained.

Though she’s taking a break this fall due to the upcoming arrival of her second baby, Rock has a homeschool field trip planned for October, ensuring the farm school magic continues.



“The best part is seeing their eyes light up when they make that real-life connection.”

**EMILY ROCK**

For a fee of \$150, children get four hours on the farm and a T-shirt to remember their experience.

“It’s a lot of homeschooled kids or younger toddlers that need some entertainment throughout the day,” Rock shared. “They come here and chase chickens around. It’s so cute!”

Rock and her husband both grew up on farms, so running Royalty Rock Farm is a way of life for them.

“We moved here in January 2021 with nothing — no fencing, not even a five-gallon bucket,” she laughed. “We bought our first show heifer in March, and eventually, she became a milk cow. That’s how we started selling raw milk.”

Beyond milk, the farm occasionally sells pork.

“Last December, we butchered two pigs and sold out of bacon and pork chops pretty quickly,” Rock said.

Rock’s enthusiasm for farm life and dedication to teaching kids about it inspire many in our community.



“Not everyone can be a farmer, but making a connection with someone local who can provide you with eggs or meat, or even starting a little tomato plant in your backyard — there’s always something small you can do to be a bit more self-reliant,” she advised.

Her message is simple: Understanding where our food comes from and supporting local farms can make a big difference. Emily Rock and her farm school are not just teaching kids about farm life — they’re planting the seeds for a deeper connection to the land and a greater appreciation for the food on our tables.

So, if you ever find yourself looking to explore some farm life, remember to visit Royalty Rock Farm, where the air is filled with laughter, the clucking of hens, and the joy of children discovering the magic of farm life. E-I-E-I-Oh, what a wonderful world Emily Rock has created! **GN**



# A Family Endeavor

Two generations bring fresh, healthy meat to Bowling Green.

By Sara Hook

Photography by Amanda Guy

**A** GOOD, FRESH, juicy hamburger can make any day better, and when the meat comes from Rian's Fatted Calf Meat Shoppe, it is almost guaranteed to be good. As a family-owned and -operated local business, Rian's works hard to bring healthy and local meat to the city of Bowling Green. The shop's success, through many challenges, speaks to the family's connection with the local community.

Rian Barefoot was not the original owner of the shop on 31 W. Bypass, but he has been the head butcher from the very beginning. He bought the shop in 2007 when the owner retired and has since grown Rian's Fatted Calf through a location change, a pandemic, a tornado, and all the other ups and downs of life. His wife, Penny, and his three children, Steven, Kathy, and Jamie, work with him. His son, Steven Bartos, said the store thrives on that family-friendly atmosphere. Working together drives each of them to work harder.

"Who you can trust most is your family," Bartos said. "We strive to always please the customer and to help each other out."

The first significant change at Rian's Fatted Calf was their move from 31 W. Bypass to Broadway Avenue in 2019. Bartos said this move gave them more space to grow and made the shop more comfortable for customers. The move was successful, and the shop flourished.





**RIAN BAREFOOT**



“We just continue to grow and just continue to be a staple and try to have a quality product.”

**RIAN BAREFOOT**

▲ Kathy, Walker, Steven Bartos, and Teegan Harper





“Being on 31 W. Bypass, our parking was abysmal, and we wanted a larger space,” Bartos said. “We continued to just put our head down [and] grind forward. A lot of times, it was just me and [my dad]. Then my mom started really coming aboard, and then we just kept growing and growing.”

It wasn't long after the move that the pandemic hit, shutting stores down across the nation and making supply lines slower. For Rian's, however, it wasn't all bad.

“As much as it crippled our economy and hurt so many, COVID was a blessing and a curse for us at the same time,” Bartos said. “You had a lot of the grocery stores during that time that were limiting the amount of stuff that you could purchase. They were running out of it because they deal with primarily factory farms, and with us, we have a consistent supply.”

Rian's didn't change their price and kept everything as friendly and safe as possible, and in response, their business boomed.

“We grew so many customers during that time that just never really knew about us or gave us the opportunity,” Bartos said. “Once they found out our quality of product, they've been with us ever since.”

Even after the pandemic ended, things didn't remain positive for long. In 2021, the devastating tornado that swept through Bowling Green destroyed their building, forcing Rian's to close for over a year.

“It was devastating for residential properties, commercial properties, and unfortunately, the loss of life,” Bartos said. “We were shut down for 15 months. It really kind of boiled down to the supply chain. We couldn't really get [the] materials that we needed for our contractor to get us to open.”

The family was worried they would lose many of their long-term customers because of that closure, but when the shop opened again, the community came swarming back.

“[It] really meant a lot to my family,” Bartos said. “We just continue to grow and just continue to be a staple and try to have a quality product.”

One blessing that came during the tornado's aftermath was a new connection with a seafood provider. As a landlocked area, it is unique for the



shop to be able to carry fresh, wild-caught seafood alongside its beef, chicken, and pork. Now, after reopening, Rian's Fatted Calf is still steadily growing in customer base and products offered.

“We're continuing to grow here locally with everyone, and there's more demand as people are becoming more educated on the subject for more of an all-natural product,” Bartos said. “As our community becomes more educated, there's a higher demand, so our farmers are more inclined to supply that product. That way, they can put food on their table.”

Rian's Fatted Calf Meat Shoppe connects local consumers with local growers, and the family is proud of the work they do for the community.

“We will always pride ourselves with carrying only the best products for our great city of Bowling Green and surrounding counties — plus being as fast and as efficient and friendly as possible,” Bartos said.

With hard work and community support, Rian's will continue to provide excellent products for years to come, no matter what challenges arise. **GN**

# BiG Local Summerfest - Aug. 17



Photography by Gretchen Clark

On a hot summer day, the Bowling Green Community BiG Local Summerfest comes alive with a celebration that has something for all ages!



1. Jeremy Forsythe 2. Kolton and Rylan McKinney 3. Adam Tucker riding a bull 4. Fadra J. Russell, Adam Tucker, and Nick Abstom 5. Isa Mendozu and Riki Espiroza 6. Stacey Ewer and Sadie Mcnish

# Culture Awareness - Aug. 16



Photography by Gretchen Clark

The Cultural Awareness Corvette Weekend Inc. is a dynamic team of visionaries, creators, managers, and strategists dedicated to celebrating diversity within the Corvette community.

In partnership with the National Corvette Museum, this annual event brings together Corvette enthusiasts from across the United States and Canada. It's more than just a car gathering — it's a celebration of cultural and ethnic diversity among Corvette owners. The event also contributes to the host community by fostering educational and economic opportunities. This unique weekend blends passion for Corvettes with a commitment to inclusivity and community development.



1. Michael and Markitia Pye 2. Brian Miller Warrior, Tanisha Wesson, Shannon Bolden XMan, and Edward Payne  
 3. Kayla Smith 4. AC Cannon, Missy Wilcox, JoAnn Bailey, Ronny Mccoy, and David Bailey

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<https://www.biglocalclub.org/>

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Provides support, education, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by mental health conditions.

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[www.bowlinggreennami.org](http://www.bowlinggreennami.org)

## **Audubon Area Community Services**

Seeks out, identifies, and works toward mitigating causes of poverty within the community.

(270) 686-1600  
[www.audubon-area.com](http://www.audubon-area.com)

## **AARP Chapter 1967**

Empowers people to choose how they live as they age, and provides social activities and support for older people, while advocating for social change at the local, state, and national levels on issues such as health care, retirement savings, and livable communities.

(866) 295-7275  
<https://local.aarp.org/bowling-green-ky/>

## **African American Museum Bowling Green Area Inc.**

Recovers, documents, preserves, and presents the history of African Americans in the Bowling Green area for education and benefit.

(270) 745-5753  
<https://www.visitbgky.com/listing/african-american-museum/226/>

## **American Red Cross of South Central Kentucky**

Helps individuals and communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, as well as teaches lifesaving skills.

(270) 781-7377  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

## **American Marketing Association of Bowling Green (AMABG)**

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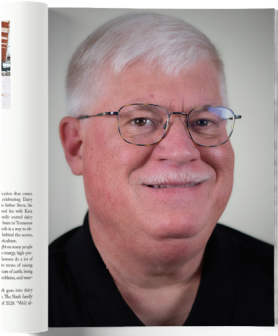
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