

Changing Occupations while Preparing the Next Generation

Preparation is critical in any occupation, especially in agriculture. Ken & Anne Becker of Brecknock township, have lived this philosophy in raising 3 boys and working with many 12–16-year-old interns. Ken stated, “Learning the disciplines of farm-work before their first “real job” leads to success in any profession.”

Ken grew up on a dairy farm in Elizabethtown and moved to Berks County after marrying Anne in 1986. They began farming with Anne’s father, Henry Horning on the 125-acre dairy farm. They have operated a grazing dairy for 30 cows. The animals graze 9 months of the year, getting a new paddock to graze every day. The pasture uses 24 acres with the remaining acres growing cash crops. The Becker’s said, “Raising our three boys on the farm and working together as a farm family has been very rewarding and something for which we are thankful. One reason we preserved our farm in 2018 is to keep this an option for future generations. We also have a deep interest in agriculture – making it a viable option for the future.”

Up until 2016, this operation was Ken’s fulltime job while he and Anne raised their 3 sons. With his interest in education, he trained to do nutrient management plans. Intended to be a self-employed part time project, it turned into fulltime employment at Homestead Nutrition Inc. in New Holland.

Currently Ken & Anne are both fulltime employees at HNI bringing innovative solutions for heal the soil, plants and livestock. Ken likes to experiment with new products on his herd and crops to see if they are viable options for the clients of Homestead. Meanwhile, their youngest son Doug manages the farm’s dairy & crop operation.

When asked what would Ken be doing if he wasn’t a farmer, he said, “I always wanted to be a high school teacher if farming didn’t work out. Though that may never happen, Anne and I have spent many years in ministering to high school students at church, including 12 years as a youth pastor couple.” Ken & Anne still mentor youth on a regular basis.

Ken states, “Looking ahead, infrastructure is very important to a thriving agriculture community. Farm suppliers are needed to provide price competitive services to farmers while local processors and markets are vital to farmers’ success. It is also critical to have good communication between farmers and local residents, so each can have a genuine appreciation for the other.”