

# Herds of Excellence

**H**olstein Association USA is pleased to present our 2016 Herds of Excellence. These four outstanding Holstein herds excel in production and in type—two of them are multi-year winners. All meet the criteria listed at right.



## **Brewer Family • Albany, Wisconsin**

First-Year Honoree • 94% Homebred  
Average Classification Score: 83.1  
ME Averages: 33,203M 1,303F 1,067P

Like a lot of great Registered Holstein breeders today, the Brewer family's involvement started with purchasing show calves for the kids. Among them, Glenn and Joann Brewer purchased J-J Jonette EB Bootie EX-91 GMD DOM for their daughter. She ended up being their first EX cow, and their first cow to make over 200,000 pounds of lifetime milk. Today, a third of the herd goes back to this one cow.

Glenn and Joann play very active roles in the

farm with their three children: Tami, Traci and Tony. Tami has a full-time job off the farm in finance, but feeds calves every morning before going to work. Her husband, Brian Behnke, works for Semex and helps a lot when he's home, making all the mating decisions. Traci left her job in finance in 2014 to come home to the farm full-time. She does the majority of the milking, along with brother, Tony, who also does a lot of fieldwork. Tony and his wife, Nicole, carry jobs off the farm in the Albany school district.

They milk in a 78-cow tie stall, with 200 head total on the farm, and farm 700 acres of land. With only one additional employee outside of family, Traci admits it takes a lot of planning to make sure everything gets done. She says, "Communication is key!"

Brian's breeding philosophy with the herd is every dairyman's dream. He says, "We are trying to make cows that make 150,000 pounds of milk in four lactations and score VG or better. That takes an open framed cow with a flat bone, open rib and quality throughout to go along with a great udder." They are using young genomic bulls Stantons High Octane-ET, Progenesis Novo, Regancrest Merjack-ET, Morningview Upright-ET, and KH Cinderdoor-ET while still using the two daughter proven bulls Amighetti Numero Uno-ET and Monument Impression-ET.

Their most cherished brood cow is Glenn-Ann Durham Sharla EX-93 GMD. Her daughters include Glenn-Ann Jasper Shiner EX-94. A barn favorite is Wilcoxview BC Phinale EX-92, who is still in the herd at fourteen years old. Another impact cow is Glenn-Ann Miss Pepperdine VG-89 DOM, the dam of Glenn-Ann Palermo-ET.

The Brewer family is proud of the dairy community they live in and appreciate the support. Traci says, "We live in a great county in Green County. There are so many outstanding homebred herds with wonderful people."

*(l to r) Brian & Tami Behnke (with dog, Jack), Traci Brewer, Nicole & Tony Brewer, and parents, Joann & Glenn Brewer (sitting).*

## **Behnke Family • Brooklyn, Wisconsin**

First-Year Honoree • 77% Homebred  
Average Classification Score: 85.8  
ME Averages: 35,328M 1,330F 1,098P

The Behnke family milks in a 58-cow tie stall barn and runs 265 acres. They raise all their own replacements and sell a handful of breeding bulls each year. Parents Wallace and Donna farm alongside their son, Bob (wife Denise) and daughter, Brenda, helps a lot on weekends. Their niece and nephew help time to time, and neighbors assist with the crops. Bob is quick to credit others for their success. He says, "It took a lot of help from family, friends and neighbors to help get us where we are today."

A lot of excitement surrounds the Behnke family as the new world record milk production cow Bur-Wall Buckeye Gigi EX-94 calls Bur-Wall Holsteins home. At 8-2, her 365 day record was 74,560 pounds of milk, 2,126 pounds of protein, and 2,251 pounds of fat. In four lactations, she has made 248,240 pounds of lifetime milk. She was the 2013 Star of the Breed, standing fifth in the 2013 Midwest Spring National Show aged cow class. Gigi has three milking daughters, scored EX-90 (Lheros), VG-88 (Talent) and VG-87 (Braxton).

Over the decades, they have bred and developed many outstanding cow families. Besides Gigi basking in her share of the spotlight these days, another family favorite is Rose-Lyn S Storm Cypress EX-94 2E. At 6-3, she made over 50,000 pounds of milk, and was first in the 150,000 pound cow class at the 2014 International Junior Holstein Show. Two other cows that showcased tremendous type, production, and transmitting ability in their herd were Wilcoxview Rudolph Cali-ET EX-93 DOM and Wilcoxview Rudolph Patrice EX-93 DOM.

Bob's breeding goal is to have an "outstanding, high-type herd that also has the ability to milk." For sires, they are using Mr Atwood Brokaw-ET, Mr Chassity Gold Chip-ET, Canyon-Breeze At Airlift-ET, Lirr Drew Dempsey, Regancrest Elton Durham-ET and Braedale Goldwyn. They have heavy type influence in their sire selection criteria, and use genomic



information as a tool. Additionally, Bob says, "I listen to people I respect in the industry."

To help market their cattle, Bob classifies every seven months and is on TriStar<sup>SM</sup>. They sell some show-aged calves and embryos, but hope to increase the farm's bull and embryo sales in the future. Bob cites his dad, Wallace, for helping him stay focused on the future. Bob says "He showed me the value of getting up in the morning and getting things done during the day, and eventually being rewarded for that."

*Bob Behnke holds Gigi, along with the Behnke Family*

## HERDS OF EXCELLENCE CRITERIA:

Herd receiving the award must:

- Be 25 percent above breed average Mature Equivalent (ME) for milk, fat and protein;
- Have classified within the last year and have an actual average classification score of 83 points or higher;
- Have at least 70 percent of the herd homebred;
- Be enrolled in the Association's TriStar<sup>SM</sup> production records program.



### EVER-GREEN-VIEW FARMS

**Thomas J. Kestell • Waldo, Wisconsin**

Six-Year Honoree • 83% Homebred  
Average Classification Score: 84.9  
ME Averages: 37,887M 1,526F 1,156P

"The most pleasing thing is walking through a barn full of cows you are pleased to own, but when you sell them, the buyer is happy with them too," Tom Kestell says. Ever-Green-View Farms has had tremendous success marketing their Registered Holstein genetics around the world by making buyers happy. He continues, "Never promise more than you can deliver, and deliver more than you promise."

Tom, his wife Gin, and their son, Chris, formed an LLC this year, and milk between 86-100 cows in their tie-stall barn. They keep about 50 ET donor dams and produce a lot of embryos for export, as many as 3,000 a year. They raise all their bulls.

"You've got to have inventory so when things come up, you have a supply to meet the demand. A lot of sales are spontaneous, so we maintain a large, marketable inventory and keep up on testing requirements," says Tom.

Their export market determines a lot of the mating choices they make. They have had good success with Seagull-Bay Supersire-ET, Mountfield SSI Dcy Mogul-ET and De-Su Bkm McCutchen 1174-ET, and use some new genomic bulls. Tom likes to use a limited number of sires, but use them a lot to really see how they work in his herd.

Their most notable brood cow is Ever-Green-View Elsie-ET EX-92 2E GMD DOM, the grand dam of Ever-Green-View My 1326-ET, a former milk production world record holder. One of Elsie's great-grandsons, Flevo Genetics Snowman-ET, is a top TPI bull that Tom has been very pleased with, even in his own herd. The cow family boasts seven generations of 50,000 pound cows with EX udders. One Snowman daughter in his herd Tom is particularly excited about is Broeks Ann-ET. She is classified EX-91 and peaked at 200 pounds a day with a 6 SCC.

Ever-Green-View has been on Holstein COMPLETE since the program was introduced, and classifies at least four times a year. Tom also enjoys using Enlight to monitor his genetics.

Tom's future plans for the herd include reviving his Red & White Holstein program and working a little more on polled. His advice for budding Holstein breeders, "Do your homework on whatever it is you want to do and become a student of it. Don't invest without thinking it through, and follow through with a plan."

*Chris; Gin; Jennifer, Chris' wife; and Tom Kestell*

**Randy and Jana Kortus • Lynden, Washington**

Six-Year Honoree • 100% Homebred  
Average Classification Score: 84.5  
ME Averages: 36,018M 1,542F 1,034P

Randy grew up on a commercial dairy, but had built up a 30-head herd of Registered Holsteins by the time he graduated college. After getting married and a two-day honeymoon, Randy and Jana Kortus started Mainstream Holsteins 35 years ago. While his brother remained on the home farm, he went out on his own. Randy recalls, "Interest rates were quite high then. We did everything we could to survive."

Today, they are thriving. They had learned to feed, breed and manage well. They run an intensified grazing operation, where the cows are put on new pasture every 12 hours. They milk in a flat barn with only family as the labor force. He and his wife, Jana, have four children, Melissa, Mark, and Matt, who help on the farm, and Michael, who works and owns cattle at Mainstream. They are proud of their children, and the work ethic they learned being raised on the farm.

The family uses their quality time together to discuss genetics and potential matings. Randy says, "We want cows we love to work with every day." For sires, they have used a lot of Mogul and Mixer and are now using Holyland Elite Exactly-ET, Bacon-Hill Pety Modesty-ET, S-S-I Montross Jedi-ET and S-S-I Montross Jett-ET. They select for high TPI bulls, with an emphasis on high milk production.

The entire Holstein herd goes back to two cows: Lor-Les Moonlite Hazel EX-90 3E GMD and Starky Nick Magic EX90 2E DOM. These two cow families have been so prolific, at one point in time, they had six generations milking. Hazel's descendants include the bull Mainstream Manifold. He was born in 2004 and still ranks as the #52 TPI bull in the breed. When they ran out of H names for Hazel's offspring, they turned it into a C cow family,



### MAINSTREAM HOLSTEINS

including Mainstream OR Candace-ET EX-93 3E GMD DOM and National Elite Performer. With over 250,000 pounds of lifetime milk, Candace has eight milking daughters with an average classification score of VG-88. She has five sons in AI.

With development popping up all around them and land being used for berry production, they are feeling the squeeze on their 40-acre farm. They recognize that their thirst for knowledge has contributed to their success. Randy encourages others with the advice, "Look at those around you and learn from every person you meet."

*The Kortus Family:  
Michael, Jana, Melissa and Randy*