



Yippee!

Deborah Benner used to act in commercials.

She used to be a city girl.

New York City, in fact.

Not anymore.

Now, Benner's taken the role of a Lancaster County dairy farmer's wife, caring and feeding anywhere from 45 to 85 black and white Holstein calves at a time.

Her attitude (and her farm's name)? "Yippee!"

Four years ago, Benner traveled to Sight and Sound Theatres in Strasburg Township, to perform in the first run of "Noah," a Christian-themed musical produced by Sight & Sound Ministries Inc.

Benner, herself a Christian, only planned to stay in Lancaster County three months, just long enough to perform in the show. She wanted to return to New York to resume her commercial acting career.

But then, she met Arlin Benner, a Mennonite dairy farmer. She fell in love and married him, two months after her role in "Noah" had ended.

For a while, Benner still acted, mostly in local productions, sometimes in Philadelphia, although she eventually chose full-time work at the dairy instead.

Over time, the former actress learned to love dairy farming, although at first, the experience had its ups and downs, she said.

Her first night helping Arlin milk, she made the mistake of wearing a suede leather jacket and Donna Karin boots in the barn, both of which were ruined by the time milking was over.

Things gradually got better, though.

"I learned it was good when it rained and when a heifer was born, so I said, 'Yippee!'" She would also say, "Yippee," when the two-month-old calves kicked up their heels when they would go out to the pasture.

Benner wrote a book about these and other experiences she had as a city girl adapting to dairy farm life, and hopes to one day have it published.

The Benners' "Yippee!" Farms, is located in Rapho Township, just outside Mount Joy. It has about 700 acres, including three dairies. Arlin's parents' farm is home to 150 heifers — cows that haven't yet had calves. An adjacent farm the Benners purchased two years ago has 300 milking cows on it.

The Benners will start operating a neighboring dairy farm this fall.

—Amy S. Blough

Internet angels

People have long considered angels as guardians or guides. And angels guided two area pastors onto the Internet.

AngelGoods.com "went live" on June 28. It's run by Pastor Nancy Dahlberg of Trinity Reformed United Church of Christ in Mountville and Pastor Della Fahnestock of Emmanuel United Church of Christ in York.

Last year, Dahlberg considered retiring from the ministry and opening a store devoted to angels.

"Angels and angel-related items are very popular," she said.

But when Dahlberg looked for a place to put the store, she said she found real estate to be "ungodly expensive."

Fahnestock then suggested an Internet business, and the two women became business partners.

AngelGoods.com now sells more than 400 angel-related items, from figurines to angel teddy bears, Dahlberg said.

About 200 customers have used the site so far, and AngelGoods.com is attracting one to two new customers per week, she added.

"We're growing little by little," Dahlberg said.

—Christina Olenchek

Correction:

Armstrong World Industries Inc., now known as Armstrong Holdings Inc., no longer makes gaskets. Information about the company was incorrect in the Manufacturers Top List that appeared in the Aug. 18