

CHRIS & KATHIE MCCULLOUGH OF ROCK-N-HILL-II HOLSTEINS

By Kathleen O'Keefe

With 31 Excellent cows standing in the barn and a BAA of 112.5%, it might seem that Juda, Wisconsin, breeders Chris and Kathie McCullough have already achieved many of their lifetime goals. However, a visit with this 30-something couple reveals that they are not content with the progress their Rock-N-Hill-II herd has made over the past 12 years, but are aiming even higher with their homebred cattle.

Chris grew up with registered Holsteins on his parents' farm located only two miles from his current location. Mike and Marcy McCullough are still operating with their Rock-N-Hill herd and helped Chris get started on his own farm in December of 1996 after he had completed the UW-Madison Short Course. Chris is quite honest about the early years – they were tough. "I brought 15 head over and bought a lot of cheap cows mainly to keep the water running that first winter." Over the years, they have constantly plowed money back into the farm and learned first-hand about all the "little" bills that eat up the proceeds from the milk check.

He and Kathie married in July, 1997, and kept their focus on the cows and on the farm. They had plenty of goals for their herd and their operation, but like most young farmers, not a lot of cold, hard cash. Looking back, Chris observes, "We farmed with junk machinery to start out with. We didn't have brand new tractors. It sucks, but you can't have everything new." But, they also admit that they enjoyed those early years on the farm.

They also were investing in reasonably priced cattle along the way. Soon after Chris started out on his own, they purchased

an August heifer from an EX Mark dam for \$1,250 at a local dispersal. They now call it the best investment they ever made as Spirited Encore Countess grew up to be an EX-92 Dam of Merit and is the foundation of one of their best cow families. She has a daughter scored EX-94 3E, two scored EX-93 2E and six VG 2-year-olds scored from VG-85 to VG-87. Her Astro Jet daughter, Rock-N-Hill-II AJ Colleen (EX-94 3E), was the 2006 Wisconsin Cornerstone Cow and is one of the headliners in the herd with a top record of 8-11 2x 365d

44,901 3.9 1748 2.8 1269.

From the start, high type has been the

priority of their breeding program. "I'm not getting up in the morning to milk 77-point cows," Chris frankly states. They aim for their 2-year-olds to score 86-88 points and for their mature cows to be Excellent and in the 92-93 point range. Chris is the first to admit that they don't push their 2-year-olds for production but just aim to get them bred back right away and let them develop during that first year in the milking string.

They do a fair amount of flushing, but have found that they have made the most progress by just getting cows bred back as soon as possible. "It's hard enough to get cows pregnant. If they're in a good heat, breed them. We like to show as

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A hard-working family with a bright future - Kathie and Chris McCullough, with their children Rachel and Mac.