

Brevard County Farm Bureau
2006
Outstanding Farm Family Award

Our recipients for the 2006 Brevard County Farm Bureau “Outstanding Farm Family of the Year” Award are Jim and Nancy Stephenson. They are 5th generation cattle and citrus family.

Jim was born in Germany while his father was in the military. He attended Titusville High School and was the President of the FFA, participating in land and horticulture judging. He now is working at the Space Center and has been there 19 years.

Nancy is a native Floridian, born and raised in Mims. Her background has always been agriculture. She participated and competed in many avenues of 4-H and Rodeo while growing up. She managed her family cattle and citrus operation since she was 18 years old.

Nancy and Jim met and he joined right into the program. They got married and went out on their own. They picked up several lease properties, purchased many of the family cattle, along with their own cattle and started their own independent business. They did a little venture with growing and selling vegetable. They have done a lot of side work helping people with their cattle, along with fence work and pasture renovation. As pasture space was fading fast, they sold many of the cattle and bought a 30 acre parcel where they now leave.

They raise commercial cattle and have a cow/calf operation. They raise Brangus and Braford crossbred and purebred cattle. The smaller the herd, the more focused you can be, better genetics and better heifer selection. Recently, they have started raising and selling replacement heifers. Jim has worked with the border collie dogs in the herding aspect of training and uses the dogs to help people with their cattle in the smaller pastures.

Jim and Nancy have three children; Katie is 11 yrs, Andy is 9 yrs, and Sam is 8 yrs. The kids all attend Lake Fern Montessori School in Titusville and have finished on honor roll. Jim, Nancy and the kids attend First Christians Church of Titusville.

All three kids are involved in the agriculture business. They have their own cattle and they are involved in 4-H. All three kids can operate and drive most of the equipment on the farm. Katie likes to work with her herding dogs. She has helped move cattle around pastures with her border collie. Katie has been showing commercial heifers for 3 years and has even traveled out of state. She also raises 4-H hogs. Andy has been in 4-H for 2 yrs showing hogs and won Grand Champion last year. Andy also is a Webelo Cub Scout and has the honor of have completing 100% of the achievement at each prior level of scouting. Sam is showing both a heifer and a hog this year. Sam has his own chickens and has taken his chickens to the fair. He is the ball player in the family both baseball and softball. They will have both hogs and commercial heifers at the fair this year.

Jim says that Nancy owns a feed store. They have had the store for 5 years and it is a family effort, kids and all. Nancy uses the store for an outreach source. She has held many meetings and seminars on many aspects of agriculture and promoting the agriculture center and extension service.

Nancy is also involved in many organizations. She is a past president of the Brevard County Cattleman's Association; Director of Brevard County Farm Bureau; she is serving her second term on the Soil and Water Conservation Board; she is the Chairperson for the Farm Services Agency; and she is the only female that is on the Brevard County Sheriff Dept. Special Agricultural Marine Unit.

Jim and Nancy were featured as the premier show for the Discovery Channel's Animal Planet and the series of Backyard Habitat featuring the Purple Martins. They were volunteered to participate and found out that they were selected. In the beginning the network would not consider having children or livestock on the show. With a little discussion and persuasion, the opening scene in the show is Molly (the TV host) in the center of the cow pasture with cattle all around her and 3 kids participating all throughout the show. Jim and Nancy saw this as a plus for agriculture and a little positive advertising. The purple martins eat bugs in the air on the fly, such as livestock and barnyard flies, which would lead to less pest control and more control from mother nature. Less pesticides around livestock and food sources.

During the taping of the show, the kids from the Montessori school came out as a field trip. That was fun, they were great. The producer was glad that it was a good group of kids.

Jim and Nancy both find spare time to participate in livestock shows, border collie demos, and are very involved in school activities and scouting. As a family, we take advantage of any outreach that they can do.

Jim and Nancy know that agriculture is a dying industry. The most exposure that kids get now is at a petting zoo.

When asked - What do you like most about being in Agriculture?

The answers were - You got to love it or you wouldn't be doing it.
If it were easy, then everyone would be doing it.
It is the way of life that we enjoy.
We are helping others and our lord.
Belief in a higher being and how everything must come together.

When asked - What are your biggest challenges?

The answer were - Peoples lack of understanding of the importance of Agriculture in our society. We have to be able to be self sufficient and be able to feed ourselves.
Poor planned development.
Societies thinking and attitudes.

It is with great pride that I nominate the family of Nancy and Jim Stephenson as the recipients of the 2006 Outstanding Farm Family Award.