

The Story of Us

The making of Conway Family Farms, LLC

Shaun and Lorrie met at work in the early 1980's. It was really a relationship that had no future. They came from totally different backgrounds: Shaun was raised in the suburbs and Lorrie was raised on a commercial beef cattle ranch in a small, close-knit community. They had nothing in common...they weren't even familiar with one another's favorite entertainment activities (Shaun liked golf and Lorrie liked rodeos)...but somehow, they fell in love and it worked. They were married in 1985 with the plans of buying a little piece of property somewhere and having a farm to raise their family. They even delayed their honeymoon a day in order to look at an old rundown farm in Stayton, Oregon!

In June of 1987, Ashley arrived as the newest addition to the family and Amber followed in September 1989. Shaun made a promise to his newborn daughter Amber as they gazed at the Portland lights on the evening that she was born, that they wouldn't be looking at city lights much longer. With two beautiful children to raise, the plans for the farm seemed more critical and so in April 1990 they sold their little 'starter' house and began a fervent search for land. Although not what they would have considered ideal in size or location, they found the 5-acre parcel that currently is Conway Family Farm. It was bare land, but it had potential and in their youthful enthusiasm, they hatched a plan to 'build a small farm' from the ground up! No house, no barns, no fences, not even a drop of water to be found, the family began an adventure to creating a life that they dreamed of.

With two toddlers in tow, Shaun and Lorrie began building the house and all the outbuildings that the farm is comprised of. No contractors used...they hammered every nail themselves!

By 1994 the farm had really begun to take shape and animals were abundant. Ashley was old enough to take a 4-H project and decided on a goat. Amber followed with a desire for a sheep project. Fairs and show competitions quickly became a way of life and the family began logging many miles driving to competitions with their sheep and goats enjoying the friendships and camaraderie offered by the interaction with like-minded people.

As the girls got older, this chosen lifestyle offered all of the amazing life-lessons that only a farm can offer; everything from learning about life and death to learning hard work, responsibility and compassion. The farm offered opportunities to become skilled at creating a business and selling products and learning to educate people about agriculture.

In the summer of 2004, the family planned a major marketing effort to 'get the word out' about their farm. They recruited 4 other farms and created a farm tour for the summer of 2005. The tour was a success enjoying more than 1000 visitors and offering an opportunity to let the communities know more about the farms around them.

In the summer of 2005, Conway Family Farms, become one of the first licensed raw milk dairies in the state of Washington and during the same time was honored with a nomination for the SARE Patrick Madden Award, which honors farms showing efforts toward exemplary sustainable practices.

In 2005 Ashley graduated from Camas High School and left home for WSU where she completed an undergraduate degree in Animal Science (2009) with hopes of Veterinary School after her return from Africa, where she is working on helping to create healthy food systems through the Peace Corps. She still maintains an active role in the management of the farm, calling often with new tidbits of interesting information and latest research.

In June 2008 Amber graduated from Camas High School and started her educational journey in Pullman at Washington State University as a Distinguished Regents Scholar. Amber is also working toward an Animal Science degree.

As Ashley and Amber are moving on to their lives independent of the farm, Shaun and Lorrie continue to develop new ideas for the farm and search for more efficient ways to do things (which is a must without the help of their amazing daughters) as they both continue to maintain full-time jobs off the farm.

Authors note: The struggles of balancing all aspects of our lives continue to provide challenges, but it also punctuates our commitment to agriculture and to this life! It is our sincerest hope that our story inspires you to recognize that, if it is your dream, you can have a farm too, no matter where you came from, what you do and what other commitments you have in your life.

Warm Blessings,

Shaun & Lorrie Conway