

Contact: Chris Anderson
(309) 821-2031
news@countryfinancial.com

Aug. 3, 2012

COUNTRY Farm Family Lives and Breathes Safety

WASHBURN - Troy White has witnessed the hazards of farming firsthand. Besides being a farmer, he has worked as a volunteer firefighter. The worst call he ever answered occurred when a friend's child suffocated in a grain bin.

"It really sits in your mind when it's someone you know," says White.

Troy has responded to many calls that underscore the dangers of farming. He and his wife, Dana, use incidents like these to talk with their children, Mikayln, 15, and Kadin, 10, about the importance of staying safe on their Washburn farm. Dana, an X-ray technologist, also teaches a safety lesson with her mom, Cheryl Pfanz, as part of her Agriculture in the Classroom presentations coordinated through the Woodford County Farm Bureau.

With experience farming, responding to farm accidents and teaching farm safety, the Whites could be a poster family for this year's National Farm Safety Week theme, "Agricultural Safety and Health: A Family Affair". The COUNTRY Financial clients live and breathe farm safety.

Mikayln and Kadin have learned how to be safe around farm equipment and animals through 4-H projects and lessons from their parents and grandparents, Denny and Cheryl Pfanz.

One of Kadin's main responsibilities involves caring for the families' pigs, but he has recently started riding in their tractor. Troy and Dana began talking to him about the dangers that tractors present before he was allowed to be a passenger.

Brake and signal checks, seatbelts and safety lights are a few terms that can be overheard at the family dinner table.

"Safety always comes first. It's drilled into their heads," Troy says. "They know that buckling up is the first thing to do and they know to always make eye contact with the person who is on the ground before the tractor moves."

While Kadin continues to earn more responsibilities on the farm, Mikayln will receive her driver's permit this fall. For the Whites, roadway collisions are always a source of apprehension.

Mikayln says driving a tractor around the farm better prepared her to be a safe rural motorist when she gets her driver's license.

"Once you've been in that position, it gives you more respect for the people who are driving the equipment," says the Lowpoint-Washburn high school student.

Deaths from rural roadway-collisions continue to rank second only to tractor rollover/runover deaths. Seven rural motorists died last year in roadway collisions with farm equipment, according to a COUNTRY survey.

Last year, Denny teamed with the Woodford County Farm Bureau Manger Jolene Neuhauser to teach driver's education students in surrounding high schools about roadway safety. Students visited the Pfanz farm in spring and fall to get a better appreciation of large, slow moving farm machinery.

"We hope to expand the program to other schools in the county. If they're aware of the danger, they will stay safer," says Denny.

Paying constant attention to farm safety has allowed the White family to remain accident-free on the farm, but the family knows there will always be risks.

"The No. 1 rule is to be safe. We think about safety all the time. The first rule for operating equipment is turn off the key if anything happens. If something goes wrong, you should always know what to do," Mikayln says.