

Food Fit *for his* Daughter



spends his time supervising the family-owned 1,000-acre ranch in Como, where they specialize in calf/cow pairs. He also owns and runs a grass-fed beef business, where he raises all his animals without supplements. Rusty uses an all-natural grass stockpiling method to feed his cattle. Basically, in stockpiling, the rancher forgoes the last pasture cutting, allowing the grass to get very long. Even when winter cold kills off the top of the grass, the last few inches remain green and retain protein, which Rusty says allows the cattle to gain weight even foraging in winter. Of course, the type of grass, fertilization and herd management all play a part in successful stockpile feeding.

But Rusty believes the end results are worth it. He is convinced his grass-fed beef contributes to a much more healthier diet than almost any other beef on the market. And on diet, on a personal



Rusty Roth is a 33-year-old cattleman, entrepreneur and, very importantly, the father of Shelbie Roth, a vibrant little girl and a second-grader at Como-Pickton Elementary. But Rusty was not always Shelbie's dad. His story begins in Farley, Iowa, long before she was born. That is where he learned the ways of farm life as the son of a dairyman. Rusty grew up working alongside his two brothers, Jim and Alan, on the dairy farm belonging to their parents, Steve and Pam. After years of fighting six months of winter, and the costs and labor associated with sheltering cattle for long periods of time, Steve began looking at property in both Florida and Texas for winter climate relief. Texas won.

As Steve and Pam set up their dairy and cattle operations in East Texas, their children and farmhands-in-training set to work. Since their first farm purchase in 1989, the family has succeeded in branching out and has made their presence known in the regional cattle and dairy industry.

Rusty says his dad has more or less relegated himself to consultant now, while Jim runs the dairy in Grand Saline and Alan runs the dairy in Quitman. Rusty decided to invest his time and talents outside of the dairy business, but he didn't stray too far from the family pedigree. He

TOP: Rusty Roth is proud of his nutritious all-beef snacks and is working hard to develop a market that extends well beyond East Texas.

ABOVE: Shelbie Roth enjoys one of the beef sticks named after her grandfather. In addition to liking the product, she also enjoys helping her dad with his business.

level, Rusty practices what he preaches. He's a self-avowed health nut, buying all of the produce that he feeds himself and his daughter at an organic cooperative.

"It's all about healthy living and why your body needs certain things in the diet," he said.

In addition to eating right, he also subscribes to naturopathy, focusing on natural sources for nutrition and remedies. And since natural is one of his resounding themes, it wasn't unnatural at all for him to find himself branching out into another business that revolves around his cattle expertise, his more natural lifestyle, and beef.

As Rusty tells it, for some time he'd been interested in making an all-natural beef jerky product. So he began discussions with T.W. Little, who is co-owner of 4-L Processing in Coke, which performs custom and private labeling. Rusty said T.W. encouraged him to try making beef sticks instead of jerky. Rusty thought that might be a good idea, but he said it took a little prayer to come to a full conclusion that it was likely a more marketable product. So, when T.W. agreed to invest in all of the equipment to be able to manufacture the sticks, Rusty switched gears, and after some experimenting with spices and flavors, came up with two distinct flavors of all-beef sticks. One has a mild flavor with just a few spices to enhance the natural flavor, while the spicy version has a bit more flavor, but is not hot.

To bring a food product to market, there are all kinds of hurdles to jump. In addition to T.W., he credits Johnny Jackson of American Solutions For Business for helping him with packaging. Johnny provides all of the packaging and printing for the beef sticks, with a twist. The company actually allowed Rusty to print at a very high volume, bringing the cost way down because Johnny warehouses all of the items and allows Rusty to purchase items as he needs them.

Among the many who have helped along the way, Rusty gives the biggest credit for his successful product launch to his parents and especially his dad, who he says has always given him a lifetime of support and knowledge. Rusty named his company Rusty's Snack Foods, Inc. But, the first product, his beef sticks, are called Steve's Rancher Snacks in honor of his dad. Rusty is proud of the end product and he leaned on the work ethic he learned from his dad when developing it.

"The first four months, I worked 18 hours a day. I wanted to develop a healthy, good-tasting natural product, and that is just what I did," he said.

He says when you buy his beef sticks, "You are not buying junk food, but a food that is natural and wholesome."

Steve's Rancher Snacks don't contain any preservatives, additives, fillers, nitrates or MSG. One of the hardest parts of developing, Rusty said, "was getting a satisfactory shelf life without chemicals, but we were successful in getting 8 months."

In addition to being so proud of his product that he put his dad's name on it, he says, "I developed the most healthy and nutritious food that I could. Just as if I am feeding my daughter."

While his love of family has been important in driving his business model, and he uses prayer to guide him, Rusty also says smart partnerships and timing have played a role.

"All things have just seemed to come together just as I've needed them," he said.

He gives as an example the story of the day his neighbor's calves broke through a fence. Afterward, he and his neighbor started talking about the beef stick project. From that conversation, Rusty learned that the neighbor's dad, Bob Leigh-Manuell, has over 28 years of experience with sales to convenience stores and retail outlets, and was looking for projects to lend his expertise. Today, Bob is the general manager of Rusty's Snack Foods, and under his informed leadership, the company and products are tracking nicely. There are now five independent salespeople representing the brand.

Also, for a business that just started in October, there's a nice little ripple effect that's been spreading to the local economy, providing the sales jobs and work for two local accountants and an attorney. Plus, Rusty says he's still looking for more independent sales contractors willing to travel or already located outside the immediate region.

Rusty is a high-energy kind of person, so his future plans for Rusty's Snack Food, Inc. include additional products beyond the two flavors of beef sticks he sells now. He plans to add hot and spicy and jalapeño flavors. And he's even looking to package a summer sausage. Then next fall, he thinks he may be ready with packaged vending machine portions. Serving size for the sticks is 1.98 ounces, and Rusty says his sticks only have 110 calories and 5 grams of fat per serving. In addition, the sticks are all beef, with only five ingredients; beef, spices, salt, dehydrated garlic and onion.

That's why he believes his marketing potential is just endless, and he's looking all over the map for sales potential. He's not just targeting convenience stores, but health food stores, vending sites at factories and mining facilities, stadiums and other retail outlets.

"There have been and will continue to be a few kinks to work out," Rusty says. "But all of the businesses I have and am working with have been so understanding and helpful. I am so grateful for that."

He also expresses thanks to one of his littlest but biggest helpers, Shelbie. Getting the business going has been time-consuming, and although they spend special times together, it has taken time away from her. "I do try every single day to shut down business time and have time just for her," he says. But there are times where he's needed to take a call or perform a task, and, he says, "she has been very understanding."

After all, it's all for a company named after Shelbie's dad and a snack food named after her grandfather—all made with the care, quality and nutrition that is fit to feed her. That's a beefy recommendation.

Many of the Roth family businesses are served by Wood County Electric Cooperative. To learn more about Rusty's various enterprises, go to www.rustysbeef.com or www.rustyssnackfoods.com or call (214) 929-6595.



\$25K in College Scholarships To Be Awarded in 2011

Wood County Electric Cooperative (WCEC) is currently accepting applications from area students interested in receiving college scholarship money. There will be 10 \$2,000 scholarships available. To be eligible, these students must be members or dependents of active members of WCEC. Applicants must write a 450- to 500-word essay describing themselves and their current interests and their plans and goals for the future (educational, professional, personal) and describe why they have chosen their field of study.

In addition to the essays, a completed WCEC application, two letters of reference and a school certification of academic standing should accompany submissions. The judging panel will give weight to the essay, academic achievements, civic participation, extracurricular participation and financial need. The top 10 scores will each win a \$2,000 college scholarship. All funds will be paid directly to the college, once the student is enrolled.

A single \$5,000 scholarship is reserved for a college junior who has already been accepted and is enrolled in an accredited electrical engineering program. This recipient must be a dependent of an active WCEC member and must submit a 1,000-word topical essay outlining a major challenge they believe to be facing the electricity distribution industry in the future. Funds for this scholarship will also be paid directly to the college and split evenly between the junior and senior years.

These programs are funded entirely by unclaimed capital credit payments returned to WCEC by the state of Texas. All entries must be received at WCEC headquarters by April 1, 2011. Late entries will not be considered. To enter, students can pick up an application at WCEC headquarters at 501 S. Main Street in Quitman, or download it from: www.wcec.org/community/programs.html.

Staying on Top of Unsafe Products

BY CHRISTINE SMITH

Each year, thousands of product recalls — many of them electrical devices — occur in the United States. Given that some recalls involve items that have done great harm, it's important to stay on top of developments.

Recalls begin in two ways: A federal regulatory agency issues a mandatory recall, or the manufacturer voluntarily recalls the product after receiving information that it could be unsafe.

Stay on top of the dozens of recalls that are issued every week with these key sources:

RECALLS.GOV

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Coast Guard and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency joined forces to create the website.

In addition to having the latest information, www.recalls.gov allows users to perform a keyword search through its archives and boasts a mobile phone application, which enables consumers to get information when and where they need it.

Some of the agencies, including the CPSC, have RSS feeds, which provide users with new information automatically every day.

CONSUMERREPORTS.ORG

The popular website www.consumerreports.org contains a safety blog on recalls and additional information, including illustrations of unsafe products. Users can sign up for the safety blog to receive information on a daily basis.

Christine Smith writes about electrical safety for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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You Might Qualify for a Tax Credit

It's time for the most dreaded of all annual chores: filing your income tax return.

As you work on your 2010 tax return, consider any large home improvement purchases you made last year—new windows or doors, insulation, a new water heater, heating and air-conditioning system, or a new roof. If you bought super-energy efficient versions and you have the necessary documentation, you might qualify for a tax credit of up to \$1,500.

Visit the government's Energy Star website (www.energystar.gov) or consult with your tax accountant to learn whether your energy efficient home-improvement purchases qualify.

Legal Notice

The Elections Committee of Wood County Electric Cooperative, Inc., will meet at the cooperative office at 501 S. Main St., Quitman, Texas, at least 40 days prior to the annual meeting. The committee is composed of the following members:

GLENN E. MORRIS
268 FM 900 E
Mount Vernon, TX 75457

CLARENCE MEISKE
1547 FM 2659
Hawkins, TX 75765

CAROLYN BRYANT
201 East Oak
Yantis, TX 75497

BEVERLY WADDLETON
P.O. Box 996
Quitman, TX 75783

JUDY PEOPLES
1646 VZ CR 1222
Grand Saline, TX 75140-4628

WILLIE CICERO
1010 State Hwy. 64
Ben Wheeler, TX 75754-4331

MIKE GILES
690 PR 8571
Winnsboro, TX 75494

This committee shall arrange for a notice to be prepared and posted at the cooperative office at least thirty (30) days before the annual meeting that will include a list of nominations of directors. But any one hundred (100) or more members may make other nominations by official petition, but not before January 1 of this year and not less than sixty (60) days prior to the meeting; and the secretary shall post the same at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted.

The committee shall cause to be mailed ballots listing all qualified candidates and a notice of the meeting, at least twenty-one (21) days and not more than thirty (30) days prior to the meeting. This shall include a statement of the number of directors to be elected and will show separately the nominations made by the committee and the nominations made by petition, if any. The Elections Committee shall make nominations for directors for Districts 2, 3 and 7. Directors whose terms are expiring: Burke Bullock, District 2; Dennis Wright, District 3; and Lewis Young, District 7. The annual meeting of Wood County Electric Cooperative will be held at 2 p.m. October 7, 2011, at Governor Jim Hogg City Park in Quitman.

DEADLINE IS APRIL 1. ENTER TODAY!

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Turn fans off as soon as they have done the job.