

# Farm & Ranch



Purdy farmer, Doug Clifton, raises cattle and chickens by day, and travels the Midwest with the Route 3 bluegrass band in his spare time. Contributed photo

## A FARMER BY DAY

### Local cattleman plays the bluegrass circuit

**BY SHEILA HARRIS**  
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**L**ike many Barry County residents, agricultural roots run deep in Doug Clifton’s family.

Ever since he can remember, he helped his parents — Loren and Sharon Clifton — milk cows on the family’s dairy farm, southeast of Purdy. The Clifton farm was one of over 80 local dairy operations in Barry County in

1980. That number has since dwindled to three, according to MU Extension agent, Reagan Bluel.

After Clifton graduated from high school, he accepted a job with Jack Henry & Associates (JHA) in Monett, where he met his future wife Leslea on his first day of work. Aside from Leslea, who wrapped strings around his heart, JHA couldn’t hold him — farming was in his blood.

“I stayed at Jack Henry for five years,” Clifton said. “Then, I built four chicken houses and started raising pullets for George’s.”

Pullet farms, explained Clifton, entail raising chicks for six months, until they reach laying-hen size.

“Then, the hens are transferred to separate egg-laying operations,” he said.

Clifton operated the poultry farm while continuing to help his

parents run their dairy operation until 2005, when the family called dairy farming a wrap.

“That’s when I switched over to a cow/calf operation,” Clifton said. “I have a mixed herd of 195 cattle right now, most of them cows with calves, and most of them black — my favorites.”

Clifton’s mother passed away in 2014 and his father in 2022, and Clifton continues with his own family’s farm on the same

land he was raised on.

The Cliftons’ son Evan is 22, and their daughter Mallie is 19.

“We put up our own hay and pretty much do everything by tradition where farming is concerned,” Clifton said. “I can’t think of anything we’ve done, or do, that could necessarily be considered out of the ordinary.”

What Clifton doesn’t say, and what a person might not learn

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## Harvick Farms offers fresh options

### Business shifts model to offering locally-grown produce



Harvick Farms, in Cassville, offers a variety of food from local producers. Kyle Troutman/ktroutman@cassville-democrat.com

**BY SHEILA HARRIS**  
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**H**arvick Farms — situated along State Highway 76/112, on the south edge of Cassville — shifted its business model this year to that of a community food resource.

With food-borne bacteria such as Cyclosporiasis making the rounds this summer, Harvick Farms’ new iteration could not have come at a better time. As a cooperative outlet where farmers and producers sell their fresh produce and other food items, the purchase of locally-produced foods can offer a type of consumer confidence that doesn’t come with purchases from large retail grocery chains.

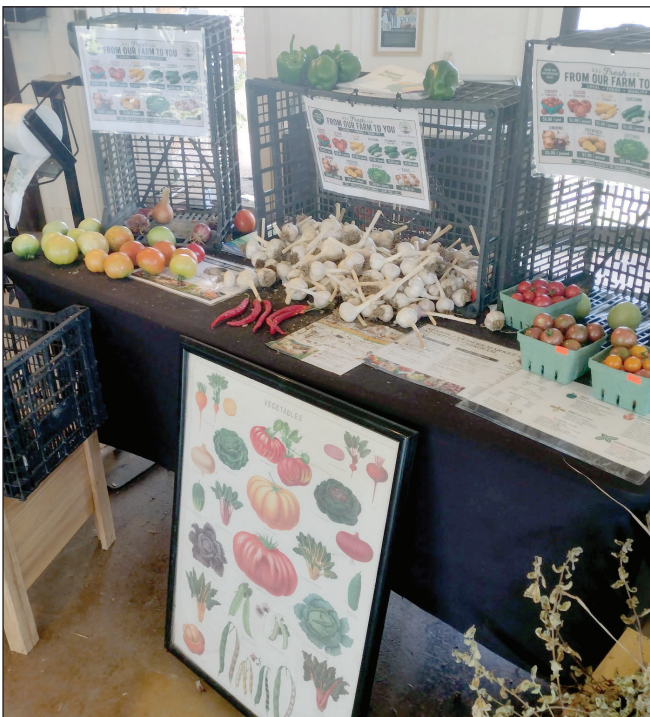
“Our cooperative is a win-win situation for producers and for the entire community,” said Lainey Harvick, who is excited about the role Harvick Farms has taken on in facilitating a local food hub. “We’re a farming community, so there’s no reason that people in this area should go hungry or shouldn’t have access to quality food.”

With its new business model, Harvick Farms hosts what is essentially a weekend-long, indoor farmers’ cooperative market.

“Area residents can buy fresh produce, eggs, milk, meat and other items here, directly from the farmers who produce them,” she said.

In addition to other forms of payment, Harvick Farms accepts SNAP and WIC benefits.

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Harvick Farms, in Cassville, offers a variety of food from local producers. Sheila Harris/sheilaharrisads@gmail.com

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FARM AND RANCH

Harvick: Hosts educational, practical gardening classes at Hwy. 112 location

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Lainey Harvick and her husband, Joseph Harvick, own and operate Harvick Farms in conjunction with their sons, Sam and Alex, and Joseph's father, Carlton Harvick. The couple purchased the 1.2-acre property after relocating to Eagle Rock from Fort Worth, Texas. With limited agricultural experience but a strong desire to learn, the couple dove in, renovating long-abandoned structures to open a nursery and bedding-plant business just in time for spring, five years ago.

Since then, the garden center has also become a community educational hub, offering practical hands-on classes related to gardening, cooking, canning, and skills important for self-sufficiency in a mass-production world.

"Food production is our main focus this year," Harvick said.

With funds from a USDA food security grant, the Harvicks installed multiple raised garden beds for the production of sweet potatoes, cucumbers, and a variety of greens and herbs.

Through cooperative effort with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Harvick Farms has a new high tunnel on their home farm to accommodate turmeric, ginger and bell peppers.

"We also used a USDA Resilient Food Systems



Cassville Community Gardens organizer, Melissa Hamilton, makes purchases from Harvick Farms. Sheila Harris/sheila-harrisads@gmail.com

Infrastructure (RFSI) grant to remodel our storefront and install refrigerated shelving and coolers," Harvick said.

Harvick Farms is partnering with Roaring River Adventures - the concessionaire for Roaring River State Park — a partnership Lainey Harvick is excited about.

"It's an example of locally-produced food going full circle right here in Barry County," she said.

This summer, Harvick Farms is producing veg-

etables for the kitchen at Emory Melton Inn. In turn, the Roaring River Adventures staff prepare fresh lunches — including salads and wraps — to be sold on consignment at the Harvick Farms storefront on select days.

Harvick Farms also partners with the Carl Junction's ISD Farm-to-School program to help provide locally grown vegetables.

The cooperative concept developed when Harvick realized that it's difficult for one producer to provide a

full variety of food to a community.

"We each have our specialty — the things we like to grow or produce," she said. "So, it only makes sense to transition into a farm-stop model where multiple farmers can offer their products in one place."

Through cooperation with multiple vendors, among Harvick Farms' offerings are A2A2 milk; microgreens, frozen pork, sausage and chicken; eggs; kombucha; fresh mushrooms; fresh greens; floral bouquets; honey; produce; fruits; salsa and pickles; soup mixes; honey products; and handcrafted soaps.

"Teas are my thing," Lainey Harvick said, noting that she uses her own dried herbs to create blends sold under the Harvick Farms label.

Joseph and Carlton Harvick contribute to bak-

ing operations. Their fresh-baked bagels, cookies, and other baked goods will be available in limited quantities.

Another project underway is the conversion of an outbuilding into a commercial kitchen that local producers can rent to create value-added products.

"The health department requires that items like salsa be processed in a commercial kitchen if intended for public sale," Harvick said. "Right now, there are very few options nearby for small producers."

Harvick Farms will continue to host educational classes, with practical gardening classes such as "Composting" and "Pest and Disease Management" making regular appearances, as well as more whimsical tutorials for building a birdhouse and making a barn quilt.

For more information

about classes and events, visit the Harvick Farms Facebook page.

This year, Harvick Farms hosted its first "Baker's Exchange," an event so popular that it will be hosted the third Saturday of every month, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m., through November.

"We're looking for small-batch bakers to join us," Lainey Harvick said.

The storefront at Harvick Farms is staffed Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

"We are continuing to work on a self-serve option for the entire building to be more accessible throughout the week," Harvick said.

Information about partnering with Harvick Farms can be found at HarvickFarms.com.

Harvick Farms is located on the south edge of Cassville, at 16062 State Highway 76.

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FARM AND RANCH

Clifton: Playing Convoy of Hope benefit opened doors for band Route 3

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

unless they Googled his name to find his phone number, is that he's semi-famous.

Clifton has been playing the bass guitar since he was a teenager, where he often played along with a group at Macedonia Freewill Baptist Church, northeast of Purdy, a church he's been a member of since childhood.

Music is now Clifton's hobby, one that takes him farther afield than the cattle pasture behind his house.

"Ten years ago, or so, I started inviting some fellow musician friends over to play Gospel and Bluegrass music in my garage, just for fun," Clifton said.

The friends had so much fun that in 2018, they decided to form a band.

"We call ourselves Route 3, because at various times, each of us has received mail on a Route 3," Clifton said.

Fellow Route 3 mem-



Purdy farmer, Doug Clifton, raises cattle and chickens by day, and travels the Midwest with the Route 3 bluegrass band in his spare time. Contributed photo

bers include lead singer and song-writer, Jason Jordan, of Aurora, who plays the guitar; Craig Potter, of Ava, on the mandolin, and J.R. Freeland, of Ava, on the banjo.

Dobro player, Joshua Ulbrich, joins them when they perform in Nashville.

Since the group's inception, their demand has spread mostly by word of mouth, Clifton says.

Clifton says the attention started when somebody posted a video of one of their performances.

Afterward, the calls started coming in.

Clifton says each appearance often led to other appearances in different venues.

"Playing at an annual Convoy of Hope benefit opened a lot of doors," Clifton said.

"Now, we play at Bluegrass venues throughout the Midwest."

Clifton says Route 3 usually performs at a bluegrass venue in Nashville two or three times a year, as well as in Silver Dollar City.

In 2022, the group signed with Pinecastle Records and released three albums, including a Number One song titled, "Just Believe."

This October, for the first time, Route 3 will perform in Dollywood, an invitation they were honored to accept.

Clifton says Route 3 usually books about 12 to 15 performances a year.

"Each of us holds down another full-time job, so that number keeps us busy," Clifton said.

When asked if he was ready to cash in the farming to play music full-time, Clifton's answer was prompt.

"If we were playing music for a living, it would be work, and that would take the fun out of it," he said.

Clifton says he'll stick with being a farmer, one who plays music on the side.



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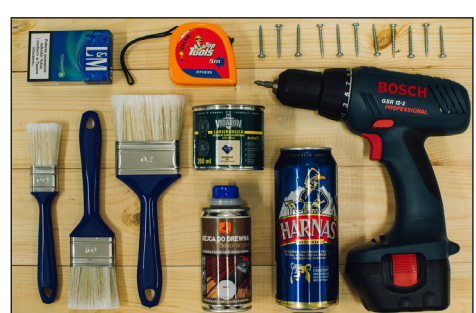


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