

The Baxley family, (front) Lloyd, Connie, Annie, Josh and Jesse with (back) Cully and Halle.



JOANNA ARNSMEYER

A family affair

The story behind Baxley Family Farms and Black Mingo Produce

BY JOANNA ARNSMEYER

LLOYD BAXLEY ALWAYS KNEW he was going to be a farmer. He began helping his grandfather, who was a farmer, when he was in high school. When Lloyd was 17, he grew his first acre of tobacco. Soon after, he bought a tractor and began renting property.

Fast forward to today and the Baxley family is farming over 2,000 acres of land in Georgetown and Williamsburg counties. They currently farm around 175 acres of tobacco, 600 acres of soybeans, 600 acres of corn, 175 acres of Coastal Bermuda and the rest of the acreage is for their famous cattle.

“It is what we have been willing to sacrifice, we have put all our time and effort into it. It hasn’t been a big jump at any time. It’s just been slowly picking up pieces of ground,” says Baxley.

Connie Baxley, Lloyd’s wife, has been by his side for the majority of it. She helped “take tobacco off the stick” before they ever got married, then helped sustain the family while the farming



Beloved employee Kimberly (center) with Connie (left) and Halle Baxley.

JOANNA ARNSMEYER

business was just beginning.

“If it wasn’t for her, there probably wouldn’t be a farm,” Lloyd Baxley says.

Lloyd and Connie have two sons, Josh and Jesse, who have joined the family business. Along with Josh’s wife Annie and their two children, Halle, who is 12, and Cully who is 9.

Their day in the farming life begins with a question: “What is the highest priority?” And they start there. Each member of the family has specific duties, and they work together to get everything done.

“There has been a lot of risk, and times have been tough, but we tighten our belts

and work hard,” says Lloyd Baxley.

The Baxleys give a lot of credit to their 16 employees. Fourteen are H2A workers who come from Vera Cruz, Mexico, and spend a lot of time away from their families.

“We know all our employees personally and we know their families. They are absolutely fantastic. And they are a key part to this farm,” says Connie Baxley.

Baxley Family Farms stands out because of its dedication to the environment. Burning less fuel than ever before and using cover crops to recycle nutrients are just two of the ways the



Myra Owens (left) and Sally Gardner enjoy seeing each other each week.

‘With us from the beginning’

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

THE PASTURE AND FIELDS

surrounding Black Mingo Produce create a bucolic scene that is reminiscent of the days before Santee Electric Cooperative brought power to the family farms in the area.

According to Baxley Family Farms proprietor Lloyd Baxley, Santee Electric Cooperative has been crucial to their development from a small single acre farm to the 2,000-acre, multi-crop operation they are today.

“I go all the way back to (former Santee Electric employee) Danny Cox,” says Baxley. “My dad knew the guys before him. They’ve been with us from the beginning. We just couldn’t operate without them.”

Farms like Baxley Family Farms are substantial power users. Over the years, as the Baxleys have added new technologies and facilities to enhance their operation, they’ve worked closely with Santee Electric.

“Joe Adams has been absolutely the best,” Baxley says of Santee Electric’s energy services manager. “We talk to him ahead of time and let him know what we want to do. He’ll come back to us with the best way we can get power to it. He’s helped us out tremendously.”

Baxley says he doesn’t mind knowing that his operation has the electric meters spinning.

“I understand that a cabin a mile off the road can cost a lot to put in and maintain,” says Baxley. “I feel like our power use helps the co-op cover some of those costs.”

family is being eco-conscious.

For the last 20 years they have practiced “precision agriculture,” taking thousands of soil samples and learning what nutrients are present so crops can be grown as efficiently as possible. Another innovative farming technique Baxley Family Farms is using is the 360 Y-Drop, which provides precision placement of nitrogen at the base of corn. This helps lock the nitrogen into the soil, which is essential for growth.

The Baxleys have been in the livestock business, raising cattle and selling beef, since the 1970s. In the last 35 years they have expanded significantly. They raise the cattle on their farm and focus on quality genetics in the herd. The herd is fed a ration that consists mostly of products grown on the farm. The Baxleys work with a nutritionist who continually monitors and adjusts the analysis of the feed to the needs of the cattle.

They sell breeding stock and bulls across the country. In the beginning, they sold bulls to their neighbors, and that has evolved into having an annual sale every January. Now they also sell their beef through Black Mingo Produce.

Black Mingo Produce started when the eldest Baxley son, Josh, wanted to start selling strawberries. Originally the plan was to put up a tent, but then they decided to build a store. And they are happy they did.

Once they opened Black Mingo Produce, they also started to sell squash and sweet corn. It has since evolved into the store it is today, selling their beef, seasonal produce, baked goods, milk from Milky Way Farm and many more treats.

“We have farmed for years, but never had a connection with the people. Now,



When setting out tobacco this year, 9-year-old Cully drove one of the tractors, carrying the family tradition forward.



The family dogs, Gus (left) and Indigo, share a quiet moment with one of their humans, Jesse.

through Black Mingo Produce we have built a great relationship with the public and get to show them what we do on our farm,” says Connie Baxley.

People come from all the surrounding counties to get produce. The store now even has some regulars that come weekly.

“We load up right here every Thursday. I have not been to the grocery store in five weeks. Plus, it is just a fun place to come,” says customer and SEC member, Sally Gardner.

People leave Black Mingo Produce happy. From the family friendly environment to the smiling faces and

great prices, it is an experience you do not want to miss.

“We know that we are blessed to be caretakers of God’s creation,” says Lloyd Baxley. “He allows us to tend to his soil and we humbly strive to do the best possible job.”