

Tar Heel Footprints in Health Care

A periodic feature that recognizes individuals whose efforts—often unsung—enhance the health of North Carolinians

Tami Thompson



After her father died, Tami Thompson left her job in medical technology at a rural physician's office and, along with her husband, returned to the small farm she grew up on, raising goats and cows. To help sustain the farm, Mrs. Thompson and her husband became involved in agritourism by hosting educational field trips for children, to get them excited about farms. Mrs. Thompson quickly realized the dangers that can exist on a farm and that her visitors, especially the children, were usually unaware of those dangers. That is when Mrs. Thompson began attending classes and workshops on agricultural safety held by organizations such as the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, AgriSafe, and the North Carolina Agritourism Association.

Today, after lots of hard work and perseverance, Lazy-O Farm, in Smithfield, North Carolina, is the first farm in the state to be a Gold Star Certified Safe Farm. It is also the first-known farm in the United States to have adopted the health and safety guidelines created by the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (NCCRAHS).

Mrs. Thompson is now using her experiences from becoming a Certified Safe Farm and from implementing the NCCRAHS guidelines to help other farm owners. Lazy-O Farm hosts tours and gives presentations to teach other farmers how to put safety precautions in place. Most recently, the farm has been involved in activities such as the Progressive Agricultural Safety Day and the Southeast District Agritourism Tour.

Mrs. Thompson has worked with many people over the years on the path to becoming a Gold Star Certified Safe Farm. One of her colleagues from AgriSafe, Barbara Gallagher, RN, says that Mrs. Thompson is successful because of her determination and persistence. She says, "Any task we ask [Mrs. Thompson] to do gets done. She makes work fun, instead of a chore." Another colleague, from the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Bryant Spivey, says that Mrs. Thompson is "a very hard worker and very committed" and that she "isn't afraid to do anything—she's a very tough person."

Mrs. Thompson is also involved in many organizations and activities in her community. She is chairperson of the youth livestock program, vice president of the goat producers association, district supervisor of the Johnston County Soil and Water Conservation, and treasurer of the North Carolina Agritourism Association, and she participates in Johnston County 4-H and Prevent Blindness North Carolina.

Mrs. Thompson credits her husband with helping her in all that she has accomplished, saying, "I couldn't do anything without my husband, David. We are a two-person team and cannot function without each other." NCMJ

Contributed by Rachel E. Williams, MPH, research assistant, North Carolina Institute of Medicine, Morrisville, North Carolina (rachelemilywilliams@gmail.com; present affiliation: research associate, SciMetrika, Durham, North Carolina).