

## **MN Agriculture: Tracy Gohlke, Goldkey Farms**

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Day 25 of my "30 Days of MN Agriculture" is Tracy Gohlke and Goldkey Farms. Tracy and her husband Owen and their children operate a farm near the twin cities. This farm has been in their family since 1905 and their determination to keep the farm in the family is paramount to their family values. They love the farm and take great pride in providing food and fuel for other families.

#### **Social Media Sites:**

Facebook: [Goldkey Farm](#)

Twitter: [Goldkey Farm](#)

#### **Tell me a little about your farm and/or business?**

"Our farm is comprised of 535 tillable acres. We grow corn and soybeans. My husband, Owen, and I both have full time corporate jobs with companies in the Twin Cities area. We reside in Lakeville, MN and our actual farm is about 45 minutes southwest of our home. My husband, Owen, is a 4th generation farmer and both of our boys Evan (age 17) a high school senior and Brodie (age 13) an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, are very interested in farming. They are both excited about continuing the farming legacy as the next generation of GoldKey Farm farmers. Our favorite time on the farm is harvest. The long days spent in the combine, running wagons, driving the grain semi, unloading corn and beans or chopping stalks and tilling fields gives everyone a true sense of purpose and a greater appreciation of the land. The stress can be high during this time but knowing that we are all

working together makes it all worthwhile."

**How long have you farmed or been in business?**

"Our farm has been in the Gohlke family since 1905. It was founded by my husband's great-grandparents and the family has lived on the property ever since. The most recent expansion was in 2011, when my husband and I purchased almost 200 acres to enlarge the operation. My family took over the entire farm operation this year after the death of my father-in-law. Since his passing, our boys have taken on a greater role at the farm. We think it is important for them to *appreciate* what past generations have accomplished but to also keep learning on how to improve the farming process and expand the operation for the future."

**Tell me a little about what you grown/raise/produce or service provided.**

"When my husband was growing up the family farm had dairy cows, beef cattle, hogs and crops. My father-in-law discontinued the animals in the late 90's, so we have transitioned to a cash crop operation raising corn, soybeans and alfalfa."

**Where do you sell or provide services to? Who is your end consumer?**

"We sell the corn and soybeans to various grain buyers, such as Cargill, Guardian Energy and Cenex Harvest States (CHS) Co-op. The hay is sold to local individuals that use it to feed their horses, sheep or the occasional beef cattle."

**What makes your farm/business unique or special? What are you proud of?**

"What makes us unique is that we live in the city, work full time jobs in Corporate America and still run the farm. In spite of the challenges we face from our non-farm commitments, we are proud of the fact that we are continuing to work the family farm. It takes some special juggling of the schedule, a lot of team work and a ton of patience but together we manage to get things accomplished. We have invested so much into the farm. The endless hours of work, the financial commitment it takes with no guarantee on return and the pride we have in how the farm makes us a better family. We take great pride in being the generation that will propel a 100+ year-old family farm into the future of agriculture."

**What is one interesting fact about your farm/crops/livestock/business you would like to share.**

"With the recent passing of my father-in-law there is substantial modernization that the farm is currently undergoing. Farming is very technologically advanced and very few non-farmers understand this, the surprise people exhibit when you explain RTK and precision agriculture to

them is interesting to watch."

**What is a most embarrassing moment you have had on the farm?**

"I would describe our farming operation as City Girl loves Farm Boy! Being was raised in a suburb outside of Dallas, TX makes me 100% a city girl. I had *NEVER* been on a real farm, much less understood what farming was about, and that gives me plenty of embarrassing moments and unique experiences ... more than I could ever tell you in one paragraph! I truly thought farming was like it is portrayed in story books you read as a child. Something like Charlotte's Web was my impression of a farm. Guess what? My storybook concept of a farm was really, really, really off!

Since I am not a native Minnesotan, being transplanted from the South to the Midwest was quite a shock. I could go on and on about my first winters here! Joining a farming family and not having a true understanding or appreciation of farm life was a challenge. My husband just shakes his head sometimes at the things that happen to me, but he really appreciates the effort I have put into truly learning and appreciating life on the farm!"

**What do you love most about farming/business?**

*The independence.* Our future plan is to move away from the jobs in corporate America to a full-time farming operation with our sons, and hopefully one day, in the distant future, their families. We also take great pride in knowing that we are responsible for making our make on this family legacy.

*The passion.* I love how happy my husband is when he is "playing in the dirt". The smile on his face says it all. It is where he is the happiest and most content. No matter how hard or long the work day at the farm is, it is always a great day!

*The work ethic.* Another great thing about the being a farmer is your work ethic. No one can out work a farmer! Being raised on a farm, Owen has an amazing work ethic and I love that my boys are learning their work ethic from their dad."

**What is one thing you wish consumers knew about what you do or your farm/business?**

"That we are stewards of the land and interested in keeping fertility up, erosion under control and building organic matter so that future generations can farm the land and have it be more productive in the future than it is today."

**What is one thing no one knows about your farm/business/product that you would like to share?**

"We care about each bushel as if it was our only bushel and each acre as if it was our only acre,

everything is done with a purpose and that purpose is to ensure we build a thriving and sustainable farm operation for many Gohlke generations to come."

**Who are your customers? Or what would you like to tell your customers?**

"Our customers are everyone who eats a meal, who puts on clothing, who drives their car and uses ethanol. I would tell them that agriculture is around them and while it is most often overlooked and forgotten the farmers who make it all happen are dedicated and unselfish."

**What makes Minnesota the place to farm/grow/raise/produce/service?**

"Really several things, the first is that is where our roots are. Four generations have run this land. Secondly is that Minnesota has very rich ground capable of producing excellent crops. Lastly, Minnesota has a great mix of weather and it's an excellent place to raise not only crops, but a family!"

**What is one thing about Minnesota that people from other areas do not know about or are missing because they don't live here?**

"You have to learn to embrace each season and all the good and bad that come with it. While the winters can be harsh, it really isn't that bitterly cold every single day. I don't think people, outside of Minnesota, know that we live in a spectacular state with a lot of diverse landscapes, industries and people."

**What is your favorite Minnesota location?**

"Northern Minnesota (especially the North Shore and Iron Range) with the forests and lakes, it's simply breathtaking!"

**What is one ag-related place in Minnesota that others need to know about. What is one non-ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about and why?**

"Ethanol Plants, they provide a cleaner solution and remove our energy dependence on foreign oil.

Our new Vikings stadium, it's going to be state-of-the-art and awesome. Skol Vikings!"

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

"The farm is a very special place for our family. It is the root of everything we do and helps to make us a better family unit. We are forced to always think and work like a team. The passion we have for this industry and for our land guides us in every decision we make. We take great pride in knowing that we play such an important role, albeit it a tiny role, in the

global agriculture industry. Our little patch of heaven may only be 535 acres, but to my family it is the entire world.

“WE DO NOT INHERIT THE EARTH FROM OUR ANCESTORS, WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN” - Native American Proverb"