

# A DAIRY GOOD TOUR

## EASTERN IOWA DAIRY WELCOMES VISITORS FROM NEAR AND FAR

See a robotic milker, snack on cheese curds and enjoy a day in the country at Cinnamon Ridge Farms near Donahue.

**A** tour bus of Hungarian business executives traveled across the Midwest from Chicago to Kansas City last month for meetings and a little sightseeing.

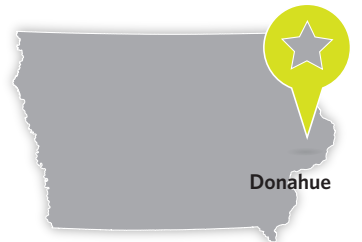
Along the way, their bus took a detour down a gravel road, miles away from any skyscrapers, for a stop at a family-run dairy farm northwest of Davenport.

Farm Bureau members John and

Joan Maxwell, who own and operate Cinnamon Ridge Farms in Donahue, greeted the Hungarian visitors and ushered them into their farmhouse for lunch. The group gathered at a long table in the dining room, helping themselves to pulled pork sandwiches and homemade banana bars.

**HALFWAY THROUGH LUNCH**, one of the visitors got up to play a few tunes on the Maxwell's baby grand piano, while his colleagues snapped photos and clapped along.

"You never know what's going to happen here," said Joan Maxwell, listening to the music before she



helped her husband, John, lead the tour.

**WELCOMING GUESTS** from around the world is a routine part of the Maxwells' day, just like feeding the cows and scouting the crops.

Last year, Cinnamon Ridge Farms hosted more than 3,000 international visitors, plus 1,000 grade-school students and 1,000 U.S. visitors.

In fact, the dairy farm was built to accommodate tours. The milking parlor is lined with large viewing windows so guests can watch the Jersey cows walk in and out of the robotic milking machines.

**THAT'S RIGHT: THE COWS** are milked by robots. Whenever a cow is ready to be milked, she walks herself up to the robotic milker, where she is treated to a high-energy feed mix sweetened with molasses that the cows love to eat.

"I'm actually a dairy farmer who doesn't milk cows and doesn't like to milk cows," John said with a laugh.

"But I love figuring (the cows) out. I love seeing them — seeing what makes them tick, how to get more milk from them, how to improve the breeding. That fascinates me, the genetics and everything else," said John, who also has a degree in psychology from the University of Iowa.

**BACK IN 1998**, John received a national outstanding young farmer award, sponsored in part by John Deere, the manufacturer of the green tractors you see rolling in many Iowa fields.

John Deere's headquarters is across the Mississippi River in Moline, Ill., and draws visitors from around the world.

John Deere contacted John Maxwell soon after he won the award, asking if the company's visitors could tour his dairy farm and check out the John Deere equipment he uses to grow corn and soybeans.

**OVER THE YEARS**, Cinnamon Ridge Farms has grown into a Midwest agritourism destination. During the Farm Progress Show in late



STORY BY TERESA BJORK  
PHOTOS BY GARY FANDEL

A group of Hungarian business executives toured Cinnamon Ridge Dairy near Donahue this spring. The dairy welcomed more than 3,000 international visitors last year.

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