

Julie Riggins – Goat Milk Soap

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Get steamed!” No, I don’t mean get mad. I mean this might be a time to try steam aromatherapy with natural products made from goat milk. Today we’ll learn about an innovative Kansas business that has created an entire line of goat milk products, including shower steamers, and is marketing those products across America and beyond. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Julie Riggins and her family are owners and creators of the Goat Milk Soap Store. Julie was living in Texas with her husband when his business transferred him to Kansas City. She left her corporate job to follow his career and became a stay-at-home mom. They chose to adopt additional children, and ultimately decided to move out of the city so the kids could grow up in a small town environment.

They found a farm in Franklin County, Kansas and decided they should try to grow their own food. They bought some chickens and made a big garden

“Two of our kids are (cow milk) lactose intolerant, so I figured I should get dairy goats,” Julie said. The Riggins family bought a herd of LaMancha dairy goats from a man in Missouri. They loved the goats. They also found themselves in a constant cycle of feeding and watering.

“We moved to Franklin County thinking we would find a slower pace of life,” Julie said. “We were definitely wrong, it never stops out here,” she said with a smile.

Now Julie and her husband have eight children, including six whom they have adopted, and seven of those are living at home. Even with their large family, they found that the goats produced more milk than the family could consume.

They thought about other uses for the excess milk. They learned that goat milk has selenium and is high in Vitamin A, which is especially good for the skin. They made the goat milk into products such as soap and lotion which sold well at farmers markets and craft shows.

In 2017, they opened a store in the nearby town of Ottawa. The store includes a showroom in the front and a production facility in the back. They also joined the From the Land of Kansas program offered by the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

Today, the Goat Milk Soap Store produces an entire line of hand-made goat milk products including soap, lotion, bath bombs, shower steamers, and various skin, lip, and hair products. They also offer soy candles and free range eggs.

“LaMancha goats are really good milkers,” Julie said. The Riggins family harvests the milk in season and freezes the excess to make their products year-around.

“We follow the FDA guidelines to blend the oils, additives, and milk,” Julie said. “The salts and oils crystallize with the milk to produce a bar of soap that is good for the skin,” she said. “Every bar of soap has a label telling which goat the

milk came from,” Julie said. The shower steamers can be used for steam aromatherapy.

Baby LaMancha goats are exceptionally cute. “They have tiny little ears and the personality of a puppy,” Julie said. “They’re so friendly and curious, they will follow you around,” she said.

In addition to the retail store, the Goat Milk Soap Store offers online shopping. The website even includes a link where a person can Meet the Goats. These include June, Jessie, Mabel, Lil’ Bit, and Peanut, plus many more.

Their products have gone from coast to coast and as far away as Alaska, Puerto Rico, and military bases in the middle east. “God has blessed us,” Julie said. “Last fall we hosted a community Thanksgiving dinner and 300 people showed up,” she said. “We want to give back to the community.”

The store is in Ottawa. The farm is near the rural town of Pomona, population 832 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, see www.thegoatmilksoapstore.com.

Get steamed. No, don’t get mad. Use steam aromatherapy and other products made by the Goat Milk Soap Store. We commend Julie Riggins and her family for making a difference with hand-crafted products from the farm. I hope their business continues to pick up steam.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.