

Kearney Feed Store celebrates 30 years

Third generation hopes to continue business

By **CARRIE ALEXANDER**

Kelle Brammer can still remember her parents' discussion in 1978 in which her dad, Garold Webb, told her mother that he wanted to be his own boss and then opened the Kearney Feed Store on Washington Street.

Since then the quaint feed store has changed in appearance and in ownership from Garold's hands to Kelle's, but one thing that hasn't changed over the store's 30 years in business is the dedication its employees have for providing their customers with quality products and excellent customer service.

"When my dad died in 1999, I quit teaching and took over the family business," Kelle said. "I'm always here, 50 hours a week. I think that's what worked for my dad, too. It's us behind this counter having a genuine compassion for the people that walk through that door."

And it's that kind of hard work that has been successful for Kearney Feed throughout the years as competitors have come and gone. And even now, Kelle says her customers are loyal. Many drive past other feed stores to buy their feed from her.

"On some weeks we sell up to 72 tons of feed," Kelle said. "When you go through that much feed, everything is fresh. Because I am constantly moving product, I try very hard to never be out of anything ever. I never want a customer to drive here and us be out of something. It's just something that has always been important to me."

Now with her son, Zac, 17, working side by side with her, Kelle sees more than ever the view from her dad's eyes.

"You know, people tell me all of the time that my dad would be so proud of me," Kelle said. "But I know that he would have been proud no matter what. I want that for Zac; I want him to follow his dreams."

As the third generation, Zac is faced with some tough choices ahead, even though he still has

that running the family business wasn't out of the picture just yet. In the meantime, his mom and dad said they're just glad to have his help loading feed for customers and making deliveries.

"I'm glad he's here," Kelle said. "He's a good worker."

Kearney Feed isn't just a feed store, though it does sell its fair share of it, but it's also a place where people from the community gather, share stories, ask for advice and get the products they need to get their various jobs done.

"People come to us for advice," Kelle said. "Each year we hold an equine seminar that's free for our customers. We also know our products. My customers don't even have to read the label. I just tell them what they need to do. When you've got as much experience as I do, people come to trust your judgment, which is important because I sell a lot of animal products, and people need to be informed."

One customer who has come to rely on the store's selection and expertise is Christy Thomason. Thomason drives from Liberty to buy products for her rabbits, and while she can get similar products elsewhere, she said she can't get the service or the price that she does with Kelle.

"We've been coming here for four years," Thomason said. "We love the pellet bedding. The pet store carries a similar product, but it costs a lot more. Plus, they don't have Kelle."

Whether the Brammer family members are selling tons of feed, educating their customers or laughing at an old timer's story in the store, they try to keep one philosophy in mind: Hard work and customer service are the keys to success.

"We're working hard to serve our customers," Kelle said. "Whatever it takes, that's my philosophy. We appreciate our customers, and I think that has made all of the difference."

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