



Young chickens climb an “enrichment device” in one of Georgie’s chicken houses devoted to natural chicken production. Enrichments allow chickens to explore the space and exercise.

GEORGIE CARTANZA BREAKS NEW GROUND: *will travel the world as a Nuffield scholar*

STORY BY NANCY L. SMITH | PHOTOS BY NANCY L. SMITH AND GEORGIE CARTANZA | NFB, MEANING “NO FARM BACKGROUND,” IS GENERALLY A DERISIVE TERM DENOTING AN INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS NOT RAISED ON A FARM AND IS NOT IN TOUCH WITH AGRICULTURE OR THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY. BUT GEORGIE CARTANZA OF DOVER, DELAWARE IS LIVING PROOF THAT SOME SUCH PEOPLE CAN NOT ONLY SURVIVE, BUT SUCCEED SPECTACULARLY IN AGRICULTURE.

Late last year, Georgie, who has worked for Perdue Foods and Mountaire Farms and raises organic chickens for Coleman Natural Foods, became the poultry extension agent for the University of Delaware. Just two weeks after taking that position, she became the first—and only—American to win a prestigious Nuffield International Farming Scholarship.

Nuffield scholars travel the world studying agricultural issues in both the developed and developing world. The U.S. has hosted Nuffield study tours in the past, but 2017 is the first year it has

had a scholar. Support for Georgie’s participation and travel has come from MidAtlantic Farm Credit and the Delaware Department of Agriculture.

The Nuffield Foundation is a charitable trust established in Great Britain in 1943 by William Morris, Lord Nuffield, the founder of Morris Motors. The foundation supports work in many fields including children and families, early year education and childcare, economic advantage and disadvantage, education, finances of aging, law in society and building research capacity in science and social science.

The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, an offshoot of the Foundation, awards “life-changing scholarships that unlock individual potential and broaden horizons through study and travel overseas, with a view to developing farming and agricultural industries.” To date, there have been almost 2,400 Nuffield scholars.

After an initial week-long conference in Brazil, Georgie and seven other scholars in her group will endure 22 airline flights over two months while visiting Washington, D.C., New York, Brazil, Mexico, Ireland, France, and New Zealand.



Georgie's chicken houses are on the right and the manure facility is on the left. Georgie has been recognized for implementing conservation improvements on her farm including the heavy use area protection pads in front of the chicken house doors.



The Nuffield scholars visited an area outside Brasilia, Brazil, the site of the largest trash dump in Latin America. Local residents glean materials from the trash for reuse.



Georgie visits with Thato Moagi, "the face of the future of agriculture in South Africa," during a stop on the Nuffield scholar tour.

Following the group's travel, Georgie will spend several more months of individual study focusing on the poultry industry in Israel, South Korea, China, the Netherlands, Denmark, England and Canada. She will write a 10,000 word report on her findings and give a presentation, which comes naturally to an Extension agent.

Georgie says her project "will show how new poultry technology is implemented around the world." She reports that Israel has some of the most advanced poultry production in the world and she is eager to study it as well as environmental issues, animal welfare, and food safety issues there and in other nations.

"I hope to learn about the problems in other places and how they solve them. I want to bring home that knowledge so we don't have to reinvent the wheel," says Georgie, who hopes to gather information to help her anticipate some of the challenges that will face the U.S. poultry industry in the future.

In addition, she is interested in examining the transition from traditional poultry production to organic production, a shift she made on her own farm two years ago. Among other concerns, Georgie reports that growing grain organically has a bigger carbon

footprint than conventional production, complicating the metrics of organic chicken production.

Georgie's path to the Nuffield opportunity began when she went to college with the general desire "to help farmers." She graduated from Delaware State University and began work as a flock supervisor for Perdue. She became an area supervisor and later worked for Mountaire Farms where she "taught growers to be the best they could be."

She built her first chicken houses and delivered her first flock of large roasters in 2006. Two years ago, she switched to growing organic broilers for Coleman Natural Foods.

Georgie explains that growing organic required her to modify her chicken houses to provide natural light to the birds as well as "enrichments," such as stacked wood pallets, "for the chickens to play with." Her four 65' x 600' houses each hold 37,000 birds.

She is proud to be part of modern chicken farming. "We are growing more meat with fewer chickens with fewer houses with less people than in the past," she says.

Georgie's personal achievements have not gone unnoticed. In 2015, she received the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Environmental Stewardship

Award. In 2016, she won the Governor's Conservation Award.

Both honors were in recognition of the practices on the farm including heavy concrete pads outside the chicken houses and manure storage buildings, a vegetative buffer around the entire 20 acre farm, a drainage and retention pond with no outlet that also serves as natural habitat for wildlife, and LED lightbulbs throughout the chicken houses.

Georgie, who has two sons and a daughter, aged 10 to 14, says she loves being on the farm. "If there's anything that would have taken me off the farm, it was the Extension opportunity," she says.

As a woman in agriculture, Georgie considers herself very lucky. "Twenty years ago, Perdue was very female-friendly, more than other companies of the time," Georgie recalls.

She believes "a woman in agriculture has to be sharper and more emotionally mature to be successful. I take it as a challenge to be better, not to develop a chip on my shoulder."

Georgie reflects on her life which has taken several positive turns in recent months. "I am truly honored and very humbled," she says of her Nuffield scholarship. "If I didn't have the support of family and friends, this wouldn't be possible. I didn't do this all on my own." ●