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Farm to Fashion Paulette Legred formulates Lis'n

By Amanda Dylin

For 40 years, Paulette Legred has started and ended each day on the same piece of land, which is just five miles from the previous property she spent her days and nights on before that.

This is, of course, aside from her time on the road traveling for school and business. But her farm in rural Bricelyn – where she has been happily married to her high school sweetheart, Kevin Legred, and raised her two children – was and remains her home base.

"It really does center you," said Legred, founder of Salon Lab Professional LLC and CEO of Lis'n premium professional hair care products. "You really do live in two different worlds. You find on the farm that honesty and integrity in those rural areas really is true north and really keeps you authentic."

But living the farm life certainly doesn't mean her ambitions or life experiences end at the property line. Legred – a savvy businesswoman and entrepreneur – is proof of that, having begun her own company after what many would consider to be an already full career in business.

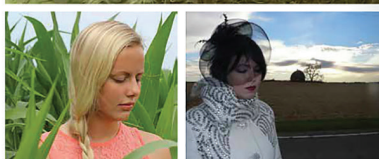
It all began on a farm in rural Bricelyn, where her family grew corn and soybeans and raised pigs and cows. She was the middle of five children.

"That's where I learned that a handshake was a deal and that your work ethic will take you far," Legred said. "About all you really have in life is your word. Really, when you look at it, that's the final thing. That defines you."

After graduation from high school in Bricelyn, she attended Ritter Beauty College in Mankato. She worked at the JCPenney salon in Albert Lea before opening her own salon in the Bricelyn countryside, which she said was quite a popular place and taught her a great deal about business.

"A sales rep said, 'You sell so much color, you should write a program about it,' like from a stylist's standpoint on how to talk to guests – what to say and what not to say," Legred said. "I wrote an educational program called 'The Colour of Money,' and it was picked up as an international program."

The program was designed to inspire audiences, "challenging them to turn every cut client into a color client," according to Legred's company story at www.lisnbeauty.com. "The program rewarded me



with international recognition and respect from industry great, Arnie Miller, founder of Matrix."

Legred became a Matrix guest speaker and traveled in the mid-1990s in the U.S. and Canada. But she began to feel pulled toward the next phase of her career in the beauty industry, which would focus on sales and marketing. She soon went to work for a distributor.

"It was a culture shock," Legred said, adding that she missed the personal interactions with the clients. "Nobody says, 'Thank you, you got my order right.' It was really a huge difference. As much as I did enjoy it, I knew there was something more, and that's when I decided to go to college."

In her mid 40s, Legred enrolled at Rochester Community College and earned her AAS degree in supervisory management in 2005. "It was one of the best decisions I'd ever made in my life, and I was excited to learn continually," Legred said.



Paulette Legred

Legred landed what she considered at the time to be her dream job at Brocato, a major manufacturer of boutique haircare products owned by Sam Brocato, who Legred called an "industry icon." She worked as the sales and education director and stayed with the company for nine years until 2014.

But once again, she felt a pull toward something new and different, and this time, she gained the inspiration from her life on the farm.

"I told my husband, 'I have an idea,'" Legred said with a laugh. "He said, 'Just a minute. I'm going to get a beer.'"

As it turned out, the idea was a pretty great one: the creation of Lis'n hair care products using trademarked "Farm to Fashion" ingredients. The concept behind the products is to celebrate the relationship between stylists and clients, while using nature's "gifts from the farm."

The ingredients include a moisturizer derived from cornfields; two proteins derived from sheep's wool; a foaming agent from coconut

farms; glycerin from soybean fields; and macadamia oil. Along the way in her career she had met various people in the industry, and so a chemist she knew (who also had a farm background) and a designer came aboard to help create and launch the products.

Lis'n launched in September 2016 and already is in dozens of salons in 10 states, including numerous places in southern Minnesota. Everything is Minnesota made, she said, and the products ship directly from a warehouse on her property.

"I was just at the point in my career that I really wanted to be a voice for the everyday hairdresser," Legred said. "And I mean 'everyday' very fondly and warmly. I was that everyday hairdresser – those are the hairdressers that nobody really tells their story."

Kevin – who grew up on a neighboring farm and has been her husband since 1976 – serves as the company's CFO. Their daughter, Alicia Shutes, is a lawyer, and their son, Justin Legred, is an RN and has a wonderful business sense, according to Legred. Both have helped a great deal with the business.

Even their daughter-in-law, Amy Legred, has been key with developing the website, and their son-in-law, Nate Shutes, who has a master's in business, is always there to give advice. A couple of Legred's siblings also have been quick to help and advise.

"My family is my total support team in all of this," said Legred, who also has seven grandchildren.

Being able to chase her dreams while keeping her feet planted firmly on the earth that she has loved all her life has been an amazing experience. Legred has no doubt this is her right path.

"I have the best of both worlds in Farm to Fashion," she said. RVW

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