

# Californians chase dream in Dakotas



## Imagining Sustainability

By DEAN HULSE

**I**NDEPENDENT. Conservative. Experimental. Enthusiastic. Curious. Practical. Friendly. Respectful. Faithful. Those somewhat conflicted adjectives are the words I've chosen to describe a North Dakota farm family I've recently had the privilege of meeting. Let me introduce Jim Williams, Ronda

### Key Points

- Family from California hopes to succeed in North Dakota.
- They will raise fruits and vegetables in a sustainable way.
- Business plan includes direct and Internet marketing.

Bachman-Williams and their children: twins Levi and Alex (a girl), Taylor, Bailey, Simon and Hunter. They live on a 10-acre farmstead west of Barton, N.D.

The Bachman-Williams clan doesn't

fit a stereotype any better than do the Dakotas. Those of us who've lived here for decades, or our entire lives (me included), understand the unfairness that results from the convenience of stereotypes. Like a broad paintbrush, a stereotype covers quickly, but it also can mask the character of the human timber it attempts to define. The reason for my diversion into stereotypes goes to the Bachman-Williams clan's residency status. They've been North Dakotans for only months. Formerly, they were Californians, dreaming of owning land.

As they did in California, the Bachman-Williams family will raise fruits and vegetables in a sustainable manner, which to them means relying more on cultural practices than on chemicals, but not discarding the pesticide option altogether. They intend to build their North Dakota business on familiarity and trust. Beyond jams and jellies, the Bachman-Williams family expects to use a trailer outfitted with a commercial kitchen to plug into the county- and state-fair circuit, as well as other community celebrations.

When in California, the Bachman-Williams family owned a home but rented land. They ran two roadside stands, frequented farmers markets, serviced several wholesale accounts and marketed their products via the Internet. They expect many components of their California business plan to succeed here. They will also be building the soy-based candle and soap business they took over from a friend who died. They've been selling their products under the California Kids Jam brand. Whether they keep that name, change it or expand their lineup will depend on reactions from their new customers.

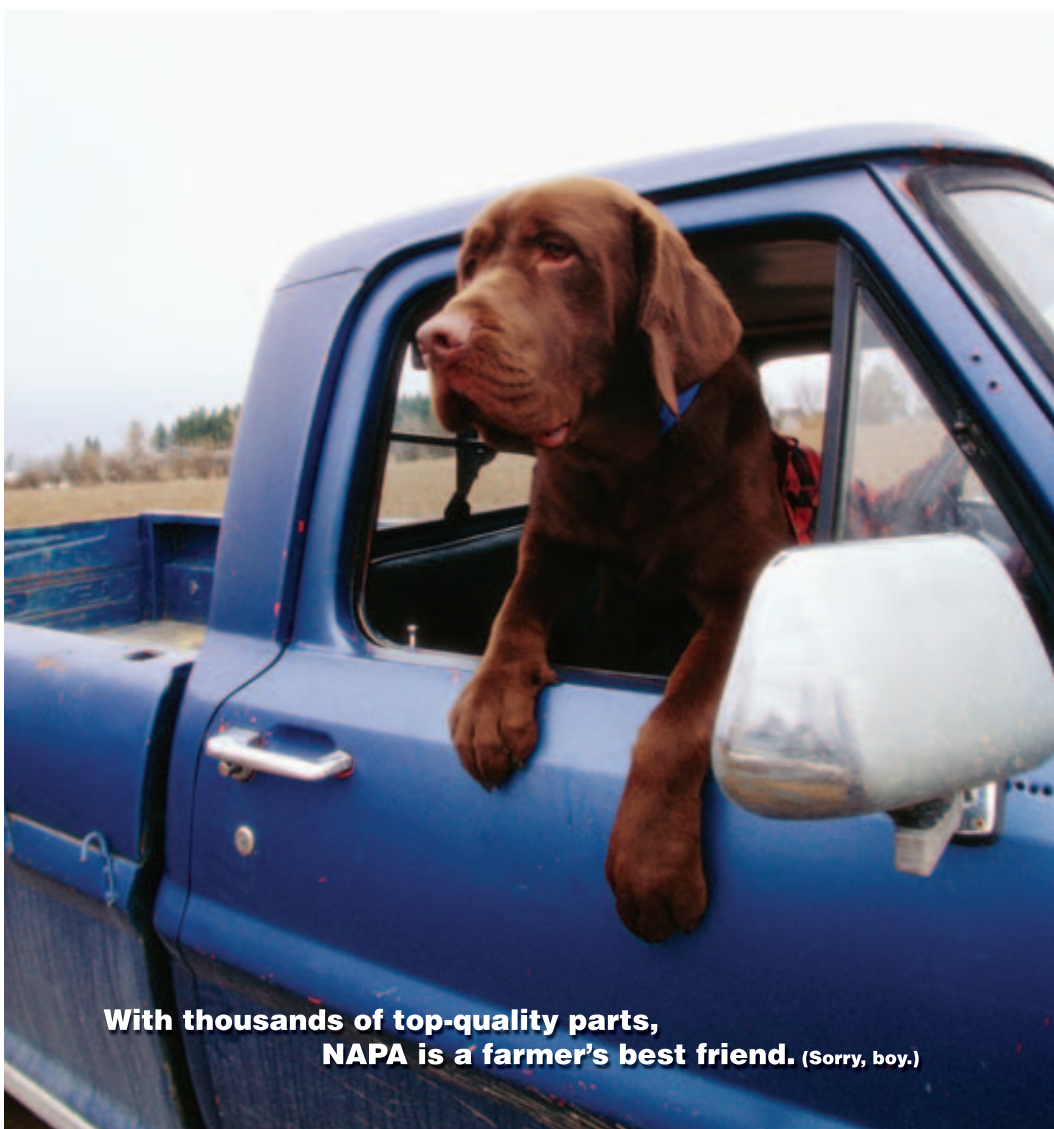
"We can't talk our way into success," Ronda stresses. Jim offers what he believes will be their formula for fulfilling their dream: "energy, experience and will."

Ronda and Jim say their most valued compensation is their ability to be with their children, whom they homeschool. They emphasize that theirs is a lifestyle choice, and they're willing to accept the trade-offs, such as fewer material goodies and frequent trips to Minot, N.D., so their "very athletic" children have an outlet for their sports enthusiasms.

Because in July we celebrate our freedom, I asked Ronda what the word "independence" means to her. She answered metaphorically: "standing on our own two feet."

I pray these former Californians catch the dream they're chasing as North Dakotans. We'll all be richer for it.

*Hulse writes from Fargo, N.D. He is the former chairman of the Dakota Resource Council.*



**With thousands of top-quality parts, NAPA is a farmer's best friend. (Sorry, boy.)**

At NAPA, we have over 310,000 parts. Parts that are built to stand up to the tough demands of your ag business. And from heavy-duty batteries to tools to filters and fluids, if it carries the NAPA name, you know it not only meets the manufacturer's specs it often exceeds them. It's no wonder that people who count on their parts count on NAPA.

800•LET•NAPA / www.NAPAonline.com



**Get The Good Stuff.®**

### RUBES



"Good news. I've decided to forgive your \$50 gambling debt."