

Written By: Lisa-Jon Trinidad



*Manure Storage & Heavy Use Area*

Antonio Josiman 'Joe' Ferreira grew up in the Amazon in Brazil South America. Born in a canoe in Brazil, he is now a "fish" in the water. Joe and his five siblings were raised by his Mother, a single parent who worked three jobs. All the children, by the age of 6 years old had to work too. Joe sold popsicles to help buy food for the family. When everyone was paid, they all put their money on the table and paid their bills first. If any money was left, then they bought food. That was his mother's philosophy



*Photo By: David Schaffer*

NRCS staff meets Joe to rank his first EQIP application.

Back: Joe (L) & Peter Zakanycz (R)  
Front: Bill McFadden (L) & Lisa-Jon Trinidad



## *Brazilian Native Finds A Home In Lehigh County, PA*

and to this day Joe believes the same way: pay your lenders, then buy food, and necessities last.

Joe learned to hunt at an early age with his grandfather to get food to eat every day. They ate whatever they could find such as wild pig, snake, large lizards, tigers, crocodiles, and of course fresh fish from the Amazon River.

Joe's mother died at a young age from a heart attack when Joe was 13 years old so the children went to live with their grandparents.

In 1988, Joe came to the United States, knowing no English. He also had no money to his name, but a lot of passion to do something with his life.

He married his wife, Rachael when he came to America. Learning slowly by watching TV shows, such as Sesame Street and The Price is Right, and reading the newspaper, Joe was soon speaking English. Not too long after, they were able to buy their first car, and then in 1990 they bought their first house.

His first job in the states was painting and when they moved to Pennsylvania, he cleaned bathrooms at Day-Timer's. A man from church offered him a job doing landscaping and lawn care and Joe fell in love with working outdoors and being creative with his mind and hands. In 1991, he started a lawn and landscape business with a credit



*Joe & Rachael Ferreira*

card with a credit limit of only \$500.00. Joe and Rachael described this as definitely the American Dream coming to life for them as only in America can you start a business with a credit card.

Joe grew the business quickly because of his hard work, long hours, great work ethic he learned from his mother and above all, says Joe, with God's help.

## *NRCS Lends A Helping Hand*

In About 2005, Joe and Rachael were introduced to farming almost out of necessity after they purchased 40 acres in the rolling hills of Heidelberg Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. They were told that grazing these hills would be the best way to manage the farm. Although being new farmers and not too versed on the farming and livestock lingo, they were no strangers to hard work and were willing to learn. They soon began to love the farm lifestyle.

In September 2008, Joe contacted the NRCS to inquire about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and any other USDA programs that may be available to assist him on the farm. Lisa-Jon Trinidad of the Bethlehem NRCS office, William McFadden of the Lehigh County Conservation District, and Daniel Ludwig, Grazing Specialist at the NRCS Lebanon Technical Center, first met with Joe to discuss his goals for the farm and USDA programs that

could help him achieve those goals. They suggested that Joe become a conservation district cooperator, submit an EQIP application for his operation, and visit the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to become eligible for USDA programs. Soon after the visit, Joe did just that.

This first visit would soon be the catalyst for Joe being fondly referred to as "Joe the Beef Guy" by the NRCS staff.

# Working Together



*Joe explains his experiences working with NRCS and the EQIP program.*

Eventually, this initial visit led to Joe the Beef Guy receiving three EQIP contracts.

Through the first contract, he was able to set-up his fencing and grazing program. The second helped him to store and better manage his manure, and the third helped him develop a feed management plan.

Joe, Rachael, and their 2 daughters continue to manage and operate a 45+ cow/calf operation on 46 acres. In a letter

sent by Joe and Rachael to the NRCS staff they stated that “Peter, Lisa-Jon, Dan Ludwig, and Heather Smeltz have been unbelievably supportive through every phase we went through. They were always there to answer questions and came to help with the projects such as the Ag waste structure, piping for better runoff control, fencing, paddocks, and walkways.

“It’s been tough financially starting from scratch and building the farm



*EQIP Funded Animal Walkway to upper paddocks.*

business, but with the help from NRCS the journey has been so much better,” they continued. “We so appreciate all NRCS has done to help us improve our farm and to make the farm a better and safer place to live and work.”



*NRCS staff walks newly seeded pasture with producer.*



*Concrete floor is poured on the Ag Waste Structure.*



*Beef cattle grazing upper pastures.*

## Joe’s words to live by...



*Pasture walk at the Ferreira Farm.*

Joe and Rachael believe that if you are given an opportunity to succeed or improve your life, you should take full advantage of the opportunity. They hope that they’re good stewards of what has been entrusted to them and that they can be a model to others in a similar situations. As

Rachael says, “Never say never and don’t let people say you can’t do something because if you work hard and don’t give up and with God on your side Nothing is Impossible!” They are proud to be called American Farmers and they believe they live in the best country in the world!

