



PHOTO: JILL HAAG OF EQUI-KIDS

**ANIMAL MAGNETISM:** Randi Vogel '96, co-owner and general manager of Hunt Club Farm, gets friendly with Dahli the llama at the popular Virginia Beach landmark.

## ON THE FARM

**Randi E. (LaMark) Vogel '96**

**RANDI (LAMARK) VOGEL '96 WAS ONLY** looking for a place to live when she first came to Hunt Club Farm, an open-to-the-public farm in Virginia Beach, in the summer of 1999. It was a time of change in her life as she was divorcing and thinking about maybe getting a new job.

"I had dogs, labs, and needed somewhere that they were welcomed," she shares. "Hunt Club Farm had an apartment over the kennel available, and lots of room for the dogs to run. I took it."

Hunt Club owner J.D. Vogel got more than a tenant. During her free time, Randi Vogel, who was working as a pharmaceutical sales representative, offered a hand with just about everything.

"I was looking for something new. I was getting bored at work," she says. "I remember painting tables at the farm at first."

Initially, she had found pharmaceutical sales challenging. As a political science major at Virginia Wesleyan, Vogel didn't have much of a natural sciences

background. She had chemistry and medical terms to learn and a new skill—selling—to master.

"The fact that I learned how to *learn* at Virginia Wesleyan helped me," she says. "I knew I could learn anything I wanted to. Virginia Wesleyan made me want to learn."

Vogel also applied her selling skills to a part-time challenge at Hunt Club Farm: Group sales for Halloween 1999. The farm is well known for its haunted hay rides at night and its Harvest Festival with fun daytime activities.

"We wanted to start the corn maze, too," she says. "J.D. and I started dating, and later he asked me, 'How would you like to work [full time] for me?'"

By May 2000, the couple was married. They went on to have two boys, Nick, now 14, and Taylor, 7. Vogel became co-owner and general manager at the farm.

She regularly oversees 10 full-time employees. In the fall, her payroll swells to about 200 employees. Some 100,000 people visit the farm in October. The Christmas season with the farm's 4,800 square-foot Winter

Wonderland and Easter week with a huge egg hunt are busy times as well. Somehow, Vogel still finds time to volunteer for the Virginia Beach Events Steering Committee.

"We help plan the nightly entertainment during the summer, the American Music Festival, the She-crab Soup Festival and the Christmas Parade," she says. "Hunt Club Farm is a main sponsor for the parade. We build the float for Santa Claus."

Doing it all—running a successful business, raising children, volunteering— isn't as easy as Vogel makes it look. She says lessons learned in college help her.

"Virginia Wesleyan taught me to take a challenge head on; don't avoid it," she says. "I also say that teamwork is key. I did a lot of small group work, especially my senior year. Most important, I learned to be positive and work hard. Whatever you study, as long as you work, you'll be marketable. Virginia Wesleyan makes you well-rounded."

— Kristen De Deyn Kirk 