

# The Fabric of My Life



American Cotton Growers  
**S \* A \* F \* E \* D \* E \* N \* I \* M**  
 WEST TEXAS DENIM

Found in many shapes and forms, cotton is a common sight in West Texas. Snow-white blooms rolling across seemingly never-ending fields, a comfortable old t-shirt with too many holes to count, or maybe a favorite pair of jeans that always fits just right. But to the communications specialist at the first fully-integrated vertical supply chain (from raw cotton to finished jeans) in the Western Hemisphere, cotton means so much more.

In 2006, Emma Matkin began her journey in the agricultural communications field soon after high school graduation. A native of Three Rivers, Texas, she started an internship program with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Bee County. A passion for writing, coupled with natural ability to interact with those around her, served as inspiration for Matkin to study agricultural communications.

Upon enrollment at Texas Tech University in fall 2006, Matkin eagerly joined many of the organizations the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) had to offer. She was an active member of the Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow and

even served as president for a term. Additionally, she was a representative for the Student Organization Advisory Committee, as well as an Agricultural Council representative.

Like many CASNR undergraduate students, Matkin was decided to perform an internship in the agricultural field before graduation. Acting on a lead from her adviser, Cindy Akers, she found the answer with the Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (PCCA).

"I interviewed and got the internship in May 2008," Matkin said. "This was really my opportunity to put my foot in the door and begin working with people in the industry."

Headquartered in Lubbock, Texas, PCCA is a farmer-owned cooperative that has been a leader in cotton marketing for the past 57 years. Matkin signed on at a crucial point for PCCA as the cooperative expanded its business model to include a new textile and apparel division.

The division was created because PCCA wanted to produce jeans. With that, its members could essentially say, "I grew these jeans." Along with the American Cotton Growers' (ACG) 34 years of experience in denim fabrics production, PCCA garnered the ability to carry its cotton all the way to fashion jeans.

Upon her graduation from Texas Tech in August 2009, PCCA created a position for Matkin as the new communications specialist. She was handed her first major role in the company as manager of the proprietary line of jeans produced at PCCA's Denimatrix facility in Guatemala. Matkin said the new line of jeans are referred to as SAFEDenim Jeans. The acronym stands for Sustainable, American and Friendly to the Environment.

According to the Denimatrix website, the facility produces jeans for brand-name clothiers such as Abercrombie and Fitch, Rock & Republic, Buckle, Guess, Lucky and many more.

Aside from her role as manager of the jeans sales, Matkin spends some of her time traveling to events such as the Beltwide Cotton Conference, the Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council annual meetings, Texas Cotton Ginners Association trade shows, and other small conferences to showcase the jeans.

Her duties also include writing for PCCA's member magazine, the Commentator, and the employee publication, the Common Thread.

In the past year alone, Matkin's department has been involved with many new and exciting projects that showcase her creative side. As communications specialist, Matkin is in charge of finding models, working with photographers on different shots, selecting photos, writing text for the website, and designing layouts for numerous publications. She recently produced a video entitled *Jeans on a Journey* that PCCA

uses on its website as a sales tool. PCCA wanted its clients to gain a better perspective of the company by taking the viewer through the entire process the cotton undergoes, from the cotton fields to fashion jeans. The video demonstrates how PCCA is

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completely vertically-integrated in its operation.

"*Jeans on a Journey* was the outgrowth of a unique capability we have at PCCA," said John Johnson, PCCA's director of public and legislative affairs. "We can trace a pair of denim jeans all the way back to the farms that produced the cotton used in manufacturing the jeans, and via a website, we can profile those farmers and their environmental stewardship," he added. "One of our customers already is using this 'traceability' feature in their jeans marketing program."

This past year, PCCA hosted its first Cotton Summit. At the conference, Matkin organized a fashion show to debut the current Denimatrix line for top executives of companies including Dickies, Levi Strauss, JC Penney, Hanes, VF, Gap, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Lucky Brand. Matkin's latest project has led her back to her roots. In collaboration with the Texas Tech Department of Design's Apparel Design and Manufacturing (ADM) program, PCCA and Cotton Council International sponsors a design contest called *Denim Runway*.

This contest began as a way for PCCA to build a lasting partnership with the ADM program and an opportunity for students to participate in the creation of new designs. Matkin said that the main goal of the program is to provide a learning experience for students and demonstrate that high fashion designs actually begin in a cotton field.





“The main purpose and idea for Denim Runway is to give contestants a unique ‘field to fashion’ experience with a valuable hands-on opportunity,” Matkin said.

Looking at her young career thus far, Matkin said there is not a single thing she would change. Less than two years removed from college, she has become a vital member of PCCA’s staff. From the field to the design room floor, Matkin’s involvement in many projects, on behalf of PCCA’s members, has led to successful, designer-quality products.

“Upon my arrival at Texas Tech, I never imaged I would be working in the cotton industry,” Matkin said. “The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources led me to this exciting career.” 🇺🇸

Jeffrey Lisle | Stamford, Texas

