

SUMMER 2026

DAIRY PROMOTION

Update



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**MAKING
EVERY
DROP
COUNT**



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A NOTE FROM OUR CEO



As dairy farmers, you all understand the importance of making smart investments and focusing resources where they can have the greatest impact. That same mindset is guiding how Midwest Dairy approaches consumer marketing today.

When it comes to reaching consumers, Midwest Dairy has adopted what we call our Key Markets strategy — a focused effort centered on Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Tulsa. Together, these five metro areas represent nearly 90% of the population across our 10-state region, and play a major role in shaping food trends, grocery purchases, restaurant menus, and consumer perceptions about dairy.

Simply put, if we want to grow dairy demand, we need to be where the consumers are.

This strategy is rooted in the same mindset that guides dairy farmers every day: making thoughtful investments that create the greatest long-term impact. While it's important to continue connecting with people who already know and love dairy, future growth depends on reaching new audiences and ensuring dairy remains relevant to the next generation of consumers.

What does this look like in practice? We will be showing up in new spaces and conversations through partnerships with retailers, health professionals, foodservice operators, and community organizations in our five key markets. It also means better understanding the changing needs, cultures, and preferences of consumers across our region.

The good news is that there is still a significant opportunity ahead. Several of these major markets are underperforming in dairy consumption compared to their population size, which means there is room to strengthen trust, increase sales, and create new dairy consumers.

As the marketplace continues to evolve, Midwest Dairy remains committed to making thoughtful, strategic investments that position dairy and dairy farmers for long-term success. ■

Committed to the future of dairy,
Corey Scott



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN



Hello, fellow dairy farmers and friends. As Midwest Dairy sharpens its focus on key consumer markets, we know that no single investment, partnership, or promotion can grow demand alone. Success comes from many people working toward a shared goal, each contributing in their own way.

While most of Midwest Dairy's 2026 consumer-facing investments will be concentrated in key markets, many of those partnerships and messages naturally reach far beyond those areas. Retail, influencer, and media partnerships often have broad footprints across our 10-state region, helping extend dairy messaging into surrounding areas. And I believe some of the most important work happens closer to home, when farmers carry those messages into their own communities.

Every dairy farmer has an opportunity to be a champion for our industry. Whether you're hosting a farm tour, talking with neighbors, serving on a local board, welcoming visitors to your farm, or simply sharing your story with friends and family, those interactions matter. Consumers want to know where their food comes from and who produces it. No one can tell the dairy story better than the people living it every day.

As farmers, we often underestimate the impact those conversations can have. A single farm visit can change perceptions. A conversation at a community event can build trust. A social media post can help consumers better understand the care, dedication, and pride that go into producing dairy.

Growing dairy demand takes both approaches: strategic investments that reach consumers at scale and local efforts that create personal connections. When Midwest Dairy's work is paired with farmers who are willing to share their stories and serve as champions for dairy in their own communities, that's when our message becomes strongest.

Together, we can continue building trust in dairy and creating a stronger future for the next generation of dairy farmers. ■

In partnership and gratitude,
Charles Krause

5 KEY MARKETS

REPRESENT NEARLY

90%

OF THE POPULATION

ACROSS OUR 10 STATE

REGION

**FIND
OUT
MORE**





BUILDING DAIRY'S FUTURE IN SCHOOLS

Helping keep dairy on the menu for the next generation

As students head back to school this fall, Midwest Dairy is helping ensure dairy remains a trusted and accessible part of the school day.

Across the region and nationally, dairy organizations are working with school nutrition professionals to support school meal programs and provide students with access to the nutrients found in milk and dairy foods. Midwest Dairy plays an important role in these efforts by helping connect science, education, and practical solutions that support both student health and school meal operations.

A focus on milk

One key area of focus is school milk. Through collaboration with the

National Dairy Council and other dairy organizations, Midwest Dairy is helping educate school stakeholders about the role dairy plays in childhood nutrition and wellness. These efforts include sharing the latest research, supporting conversations with school nutrition leaders, and helping evaluate innovative approaches that can increase milk consumption among students.

Midwest Dairy is also supporting a Minnesota school milk pilot program designed to demonstrate the operational, financial, and nutritional feasibility of offering whole and 2% milk in school meal programs. Insights from the pilot will help inform future discussions about expanding milk options available to students.

Reaching school nutritionists and other nutrition professionals

Another important initiative is Smart Swaps, a practical resource designed to help school nutrition professionals create appealing menus while maintaining strong nutrition standards. Midwest Dairy staff are actively working alongside other national, state, and regional organizations to develop Smart Swaps resources. These resources provide sample menus, recipes, training materials, and implementation tools that demonstrate how whole milk and 2% milk can be incorporated into school meals in ways that appeal to students.

Beyond the cafeteria, Midwest Dairy is helping build support for dairy among nutrition professionals. Through presentations at School Nutrition Association conferences, Midwest Dairy Wellness Warriors shared the latest science on dairy nutrition and healthy eating patterns, helping ensure influential health professionals have access to current, evidence-based information about dairy's benefits across the lifespan.

As school nutrition policies continue to evolve, Midwest Dairy and its partners are also translating changes and pilot program findings into practical resources and best practices that school nutrition professionals can put to work in their cafeterias.

Ensuring dairy stays in school meals

Together, these efforts help ensure that dairy remains a valued part of school meals while giving students access to nutritious, great-tasting options that support their growth, development, and long-term health.

For dairy farmers, this work represents an investment in the future. By helping schools successfully serve dairy and educating the professionals who influence student nutrition, Midwest Dairy is helping build lifelong dairy consumers one cafeteria tray at a time. ■

ADOPT A COW CONNECTS STUDENTS TO REAL DAIRY FARMS

Midwest Dairy continues to partner with Discover Dairy to bring the Adopt a Cow program to classrooms across the region. The free educational program connects students with a real dairy calf and the farm where it is raised, helping them learn firsthand where milk comes from and how dairy farmers care for their animals.

Throughout the school year, participating classrooms receive photos, videos, farm updates, and opportunities to interact with dairy farmers through virtual calf chats. Teachers use the experience to support lessons in science, math, nutrition, and agriculture, turning classroom concepts into real-world learning opportunities.

By creating meaningful connections between students and dairy farmers, the program helps build trust and understanding of modern dairy farming while introducing the next generation to the people behind the products they enjoy every day.



2026-2027 Adopt A Cow school year highlights

- Seven Midwest Dairy farms will participate in the program
- Free educational resources for classrooms and learning centers
- Virtual interactions between students and dairy farmers
- Hands-on opportunities to learn about dairy farming and animal care

HELPING TEACHERS BRING DAIRY AND AGRICULTURE TO LIFE

Midwest Dairy is helping educators connect science, agriculture, and nutrition through innovative learning opportunities focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects. By partnering with teacher organizations and providing classroom-ready resources, Midwest Dairy equips educators with tools that make dairy relevant to students while supporting state and national science standards.

One example is the Fields of STEM program, developed in partnership with the National Science Teachers



Association. The program provides educators with professional learning opportunities, networking, and access to agriculture-based STEM resources that can be incorporated into

classrooms across the Midwest. During the 2025-2026 school year, the program included 70 educators representing all 10 Midwest Dairy states.

By investing in educators, Midwest Dairy creates a ripple effect that extends far beyond a single classroom. Teachers carry these resources and experiences to hundreds of students throughout their careers, helping build trust in dairy and agriculture among future consumers and decision-makers. ■

MIDWEST DAIRY WRAPS UP A **BIG YEAR** WITH THE BIG 12 CONFERENCE



Midwest Dairy capped off its 2025-2026 season as a partner of the Big 12 Conference, showing up across six sports and three states to keep dairy front and center with fans, families, and Gen Z. From wrestling mats in Oklahoma to basketball courts in Missouri to football and soccer fields in Texas to softball and baseball diamonds out west, this partnership connected dairy to the food, energy, and everyday moments that bring sports fans together.

Two marquee events landed right in Midwest Dairy's key markets, with

wrestling in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and basketball in Kansas City, Missouri, putting dairy in front of fans in the communities Midwest Dairy is most focused on reaching. Across every event, the partnership linked dairy to enjoyment, performance, and great-tasting game-day food, all while building trust through the Dairy Does More messaging.

A big weekend in Tulsa

Midwest Dairy returned as a primary sponsor of the Big 12 Wrestling Championship at the BOK Center in

Tulsa, drawing more than 19,000 fans across two days. Fans were welcomed into a fun, interactive booth with games, branded giveaways, and milk sampling. The team distributed more than 1,000 milks and logged 2,700 game plays.

Dairy showed up everywhere, from LED signage and podium moments to the Big 12 Eats and Podium Club food experiences. The weekend also reached fans well beyond the arena, with commercials on ESPN+ and more than 332,000 impressions on YouTube,



putting the Undeniably Dairy and Dairy Does More brands in front of a wide collegiate audience.

Dairy takes center court in Kansas City

The Big 12 Women's Basketball Championship and the Big 12 Men's Basketball Championship brought dairy to Kansas City for a 13-day run. Total attendance inside the T-Mobile Center reached over 147,000, while the Big 12 BLVD Fan Fest welcomed another 14,150 fans into Midwest Dairy's hands-on activation space.

Big 12 Eats anchored the food experience with a premium dairy-first menu. At least 80% of menu items contained dairy, keeping milk, cheese, and other dairy ingredients at the heart of game day. A new addition, Big 12 TrEATS, brought a community element through The Yard: Milkshake Bar, featuring themed milkshakes for every team in the tournament.

The championships also put real dairy farmers in the spotlight. Stacy Rethman and family of Seneca, Kansas, were recognized during a women's game, and the Hemme Brothers of Sweet Springs, Missouri, were honored during a men's game. These appearances reminded fans that the milk, cheese, and ice cream they enjoy come from local farm families committed to caring for their animals and their land.

Strong showings across the Midwest Dairy footprint

The partnership spanned the entire conference map. Midwest Dairy teamed up with Dairy MAX, another dairy checkoff organization representing eight states, at football, soccer, and softball games to expand dairy's footprint across more of the conference. The season opened in the fall with the Women's 2025 Big 12 Soccer Tournament in Fort Worth, Texas, drawing 3,100 fans.

In December, the Big 12 Football Championship in Arlington, Texas, set a new conference attendance record with over 85,500 fans. More than 29,000 passed through Fan Fest, where dairy took center stage with 1,000 mac-and-cheese samples and a Big 12 Eats integration that generated 226,700 social impressions.

Spring brought the Big 12 Softball Tournament in Oklahoma City,

Oklahoma, drawing over 7,800 fans, and the Big 12 Baseball Tournament in Surprise, Arizona, drawing over 11,600 fans. The softball tournament featured in-venue signage with a Dairy Does More message, while Big 12 Eats kept dairy on the menu at the baseball tournament.

The final tally

Across six sports, three states, and a full season of championships, the Big 12 partnership reached more than 2.6 million consumers, welcomed more than 263,000 event attendees, and drove more than 17,000 total engagements through booth visits, sampling, digital clicks, and social interactions. It was a bold, multisport showcase that proved dairy belongs right in the middle of the action.

More than a sponsorship, the Big 12 partnership is an example of how dairy farmers' checkoff investment is working to build dairy demand with the next generation of consumers. By connecting dairy to moments fans already love and trust, Midwest Dairy is helping keep dairy relevant, visible, and top of mind with millions of consumers across the region.

Our work with the Big 12 isn't finished. Midwest Dairy and the Big 12 are also teaming up on a social video series spotlighting homegrown athletes, set to roll out to fans during the upcoming school year. ■

Watch Checkoff at Work to learn more about the Big 12 Conference partnership!



MIDWEST DAIRY ACCELERATOR

HELPS BRING DAIRY GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES TO MARKET

Midwest Dairy is investing in the next generation of dairy innovation with the 2026 Midwest Dairy Accelerator. A collaboration with VentureFuel, this 10-week virtual program supports promising food and beverage startups as they develop dairy-forward products designed to meet evolving consumer needs and drive dairy growth.

Now in its second year, the Midwest Dairy Accelerator program continues to expand on previous collaborations, evolving from one-day pitch competitions into a more robust accelerator program. While the format has grown, the mission remains the same: supporting innovative entrepreneurs and businesses that incorporate dairy

ingredients into their products and helping them bring their ideas to market. The program is designed to create value for dairy farmers across the 10-state region, with applicants demonstrating a commitment to sourcing milk from dairy farms within that footprint.

In early spring, Midwest Dairy invited startups to apply. The six startups selected as finalists stood out from a highly competitive pool of applicants. We saw a 60% increase in total applications compared to last year, a testament to the power of dairy and the exciting future it holds. Each finalist brings a unique and creative approach to incorporating real dairy into their products.

(Continued on Page 10)

Finalist: Drippy Dip



Co-Founder:
Ryan Fitzpatrick
Headquarters:
Saginaw, MI.
Dairy sourced
from Minnesota.



Drippy Dip is the only clean-label, real dairy nacho cheese dip available as a shelf-stable product. It's made with real cheddar and Monterey Jack, zero seed oils, zero artificial dyes, and zero processed cheese products. Drippy Dip delivers the melty, craveable experience consumers grew up with — packaged in a shelf-stable recyclable glass jar, with zero compromise.

Finalist: Pretty Cool Ice Cream



Owner:
Dana Cree
Headquarters:
Chicago, IL.
Dairy sourced
from Illinois.



Pretty Cool Ice Cream makes gourmet ice cream bars, ice pops, and ice cream sandwiches. The frozen novelties are available in their flagship shop in Logan Square and at other retail partners throughout the greater Chicago area.

Finalist: (P)RiND



Founder & CEO:
Matteo Caloia
Headquarters:
Chicago, IL.
Dairy sourced
from Illinois.



(P)RiND makes artisanal oven-baked cheddar pops crafted from world-class cheddar with 30 grams of protein and just four all-natural ingredients, delivering a crunchy snack that's naturally lactose- and gluten-free. Founded in December 2024, the company is backed by the co-founder of DoorDash, the SVP of Feastables, the president of Mike's Hot Honey, and the University of Chicago. The product is currently sold by over 225 retailers nationally.

“ At Midwest Dairy, we believe innovation thrives when visionary entrepreneurs push boundaries and unlock new possibilities for real dairy. ”

– Michelle Watson, Vice President of Research and Innovation at Midwest Dairy

Finalist: MOOJ Foods



Co-Founder: Ritu Sreenivasan
Headquarters:
Chicago, IL.
Dairy sourced from Minnesota.



MOOJ Foods is a Chicago-based health foods company. Its flagship product is MOOJ Paneer — a 21st-century formulation of the traditional Indian cheese, paneer. It delivers 30 grams of protein with only 170 calories and 4 grams of fat per serving. Once launched, it would become the most protein-dense vegetarian protein source on the market.

Finalist: Yotopia Frozen Yogurt



Founder & Co-Owner:
Veronica Tessler
Headquarters:
Iowa City, IA.
Dairy sourced from Iowa.



Yotopia is a premium frozen yogurt brand based in Iowa City, crafting probiotic-rich frozen desserts with milk sourced from a local Iowa dairy farm. What began as a beloved community frozen yogurt shop has grown into a fast-scaling wholesale brand carried by regional retailers, including Hy-Vee, New Pioneer Co-op, Bread Garden Market, and John's Grocery. Yotopia is redefining the frozen dessert aisle with a “feel-good” alternative that blends indulgence, wellness, and Midwest dairy craftsmanship.

Finalist: Disco Cow



Founder:
Kate Colehour
Headquarters:
Chicago, IL.
Dairy sourced from Illinois.



Disco Cow is a line of whipped cottage cheese dips and spreads made with clean ingredients and packed with protein. Curd-free for a smooth texture, the products come in bold, craveable flavors like queso, lemon basil, and chocolate. Designed for modern consumers, they fit seamlessly into everyday moments, from post-workout fuel to social gatherings and late-night snacking.

HELPS BRING DAIRY GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES TO MARKET

(CONTINUED)

Accelerator program supports dairy-forward entrepreneurs

The Accelerator program kicked off in July, providing selected participants with an intensive learning experience designed to help scale their businesses. Through expert-led workshops, personalized mentorship, and hands-on guidance, participants explored critical topics including consumer insights, ingredient sourcing, co-packing, distribution, retail strategy, marketing, and investor pitching. Industry professionals from across the dairy value chain, leading brands, cooperatives, and universities will share their expertise, offering participants valuable connections and real-world insights to support their growth.

The Accelerator also serves as a launchpad for the other emerging applicants by providing the resources needed to scale up their entrepreneurship. By helping entrepreneurs move from concept to commercialization, the program further accelerates growth for promising dairy-focused innovations while creating opportunities for dairy farmers and the industry as a whole.

Winners awarded in September

The program will culminate in a live pitch event on September 16, 2026, at the Green Acres Event Center, a renovated dairy farm turned event center located outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota. There, finalists will pitch their businesses to a panel of industry judges for the chance to win \$20,000 for first place and \$10,000 for second place, allowing them to grow their businesses and, in return, increase dairy sales and loyalty among their customers.

“At Midwest Dairy, we believe innovation thrives when visionary entrepreneurs push boundaries and unlock new possibilities for real dairy,” said Michelle Watson, Vice President of Research and Innovation at Midwest Dairy. “By investing in emerging food and beverage companies, we’re doing more than supporting new products. We’re helping shape the future of an industry that has nourished families and communities for generations. This is where dairy checkoff can make a meaningful difference: driving innovation, creating new

opportunities, and ensuring dairy remains a relevant and valued choice for consumers in a rapidly changing marketplace.”

Delivering value across the dairy ecosystem

“Commercialization is where innovation creates real impact. The Midwest Dairy Accelerator gives founders the tools, connections, and guidance needed to bring dairy-forward innovations to market faster. By helping entrepreneurs successfully scale, we’re creating new growth opportunities for dairy and delivering value across the entire dairy ecosystem,” said Fred Schonenberg, Founder and CEO of VentureFuel.

The Midwest Dairy Accelerator helps ensure dairy remains competitive in a changing marketplace by creating new opportunities for dairy ingredients and products. By supporting entrepreneurs building the next generation of dairy-forward brands, Midwest Dairy is helping drive innovation and identify new avenues for dairy growth. ■

A large, stylized illustration in shades of blue and white depicts two hands cupping a coin. The hands are rendered with detailed line work, and the coin has a textured surface. This graphic serves as a background for the quote and the contact information.

“By investing in emerging food and beverage companies, we’re doing more than supporting new products. We’re helping shape the future of an industry that has nourished families and communities for generations.”

— Michelle Watson, Vice President of Research and Innovation at Midwest Dairy

Follow the journey and learn more

Go to midwestdairyaccelerator.com and check out the Winter Dairy Promotion Update to see which startup earns top honors.

CELEBRATING “DA GOOD STUFF” WITH GODFATHER’S PIZZA



This spring, Midwest Dairy and Godfather’s Pizza continued their partnership, which began in October 2025. Midwest Dairy and Godfather’s Pizza launched new broadcast and social media content for “Da Good Stuff,” a co-branded campaign celebrating cheese, quality ingredients, and the important role dairy farmers play in creating memorable food experiences.

The campaign includes bold, craveable visuals featuring bubbling cheese, dramatic cheese pulls, heaping piles of cheese, and close-up shots of ingredients designed to showcase the indulgence and abundance consumers associate with Godfather’s Pizza. These videos bring the “Da Good Stuff” message to life while putting real cheese at the center of the consumer experience.

Campaign execution includes content production, regional launches, and systemwide distribution of Undeniably Dairy-branded creative assets designed to connect with both traditional and convenience-store pizza consumers.

This has been a great opportunity to place real dairy front and center in

craveable, high-impact menu items that resonate with today’s consumers.

Bringing “Da Good Stuff” to Godfather’s Pizza Express

April marked the beginning of Godfather’s Pizza collaboration efforts within the Express channel, helping expand dairy-forward messaging into convenience retail locations where consumers increasingly seek quick, satisfying meal options.

The first phase of the campaign highlighted the limited-time Poppin’ Pickle Pizza available at participating Godfather’s Pizza Express locations. The promotion leaned into bold flavor trends and social-first food culture while continuing to showcase the cheese and indulgence consumers expect from Godfather’s Pizza.



Fastgas promotion highlights dairy in convenience retail

In addition to the Poppin’ Pickle Pizza launch, a paid campaign featuring two Godfather’s Pizza Express locations within the Fastgas family is currently underway. Fastgas convenience stores partner with Godfather’s Pizza kitchens and have video capabilities at the pump to showcase promotions and products.

These videos broaden the storytelling beyond a single pizza offering, showcasing several menu

items while continuing to emphasize “Da Good Stuff” and the role cheese plays in creating a satisfying pizza experience.

Banana Pepper & Sausage Trio pizza campaign

Godfather’s Pizza also launched a separate set of broadcast and social media content promoting the Banana Pepper & Sausage Trio pizza across several locations.

This campaign focused on bold flavor combinations, premium ingredients, and abundant cheese coverage. The layered flavors and strong cheese visuals helped continue the “Da Good Stuff” message while creating excitement around a limited-time menu innovation.

Driving dairy forward through foodservice partnerships

Partnerships like this continue to demonstrate how dairy can remain relevant and exciting in today’s evolving food landscape.

Through strategic promotions, engaging content, and dairy-forward storytelling, Midwest Dairy and Godfather’s Pizza are continuing to bring consumers more of “Da Good Stuff” in 2026 and beyond. Stay tuned for a full results breakdown and impact recap later this year. ■

Learn more
from Midwest Dairy
Business Development
Manager - Foodservice
Crystal Sinn’s radio
interview with Chad
Moyer at KTIC.





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DEAL CLASS 4 LAUNCHES IN CHARLESTON

The fourth class of the Dairy Experience and Agricultural Leadership (DEAL) Program held its first meeting in February in Charleston, South Carolina. The class includes 20 dairy farmers from Midwest Dairy and The Dairy Alliance. As part of its continued partnership, The Dairy Alliance hosted the group and welcomed participants to its region for the kickoff meeting.

The three-day event focused on relationship building, leadership development, and gaining a deeper understanding of the dairy checkoff. Participants had opportunities to network, learn from industry leaders, and share insights from their own farms.

Three days of valuable training

Day one began with a Four Colors personality leadership training led by Executive Coach Tracy Bowe. Participants explored their leadership strengths and learned how to work more effectively with others. Later that day, they took a deeper dive into the dairy checkoff. Mitch Schulte, Vice President of Agriculture Affairs; Stacy

Dohle, Senior Farmer Relations Manager; and Alyson Fendrick, Farmer Leadership and Development Manager for Midwest Dairy, led discussions on Midwest Dairy's history, mission, and strategic plan. The day concluded with a group dinner.

On the second day, Elizabeth Moretz, Senior Manager of Agriculture Affairs for The Dairy Alliance, shared how the organization works to build trust and drive dairy sales. Participants then toured Low Country Creamery in Bowman, South Carolina, and viewed the dairy farm located across the road. The day wrapped up with a walking tour highlighting Charleston's rich history.

The final day featured a presentation from Stan Erwine, Senior Vice President of Farmer Relations for Dairy Management Inc. (DMI). Erwine discussed the history and purpose of dairy promotion and DMI, as well as the collaborative relationship among DMI, Midwest Dairy, and The Dairy Alliance. He emphasized how partnerships help maximize the impact of dairy checkoff investments. Participants said the session provided valuable insight into the dairy

checkoff and its role in supporting dairy farmers.

Participants embraced learning and networking

Throughout the meeting, each participant delivered a presentation about their family and farming operation, helping the group build connections and learn from one another. Networking with fellow dairy farmers was consistently identified as a meeting highlight.

"It's nice to have Q&A time with fellow producers," one participant said. "It was nice to bounce ideas around and get feedback from each other."

Participants also rated the meeting highly, giving the session an overall score of 4.9 out of 5 stars.

"I loved it," another participant said. "I had such a good time and enjoyed exploring Charleston and connecting with fellow producers outside of the meetings. I thought it was fabulous."

By investing in programs like DEAL, Midwest Dairy is helping cultivate the next generation of dairy leaders. Participants leave with a stronger understanding of the dairy checkoff, valuable industry connections, and the skills needed to help tell dairy's story and support a strong future for the industry. The group will reconvene later this year for a session focused on consumer engagement. ■

