

SPRING 2024

# DAIRY PROMOTION

## Update



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**MAKING  
EVERY  
DROP  
COUNT**



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Spring is unfurling across the region, and as Molly Pelzer shared in our last edition of Dairy Promotion Update, change is blooming at Midwest Dairy. In mid-March, I joined you as the new Midwest Dairy CEO, and we celebrated Molly's retirement after many successful years as an influential dairy advocate.

To share a bit about me, I currently reside in Marine on Saint Croix, Minnesota, with my husband and many four-legged friends. I grew up in Massachusetts and spent my high school years in northeast South Dakota. I'm a University of Minnesota graduate and spent the first 15 years of my career working for Land O'Lakes in Minnesota. Most recently, I worked with an agriculture startup supporting beef and dairy producers on sustainability efforts within their operations that aligned closely with the sustainability goals of the major brands we see on store shelves.

I'll spend these first few months of my tenure at Midwest Dairy getting out in the region to meet with both staff and some of you in each of the divisions. I'm looking forward to seeing many new faces at the Annual Meeting and Division meetings.

With the economic headwinds that dairy farmers have been facing across the region in recent months, I know it is more important now than ever to be thoughtful and intentional about how we are utilizing checkoff dollars to realize a return on that investment for our dairy industry. It is also my responsibility to ensure that our Strategic Plan and how we deploy against that with programs and resources is in line with our mission to give consumers an excellent dairy experience and build dairy demand.

I would be remiss not to recognize the amazing opportunity we have in 2024 to build consumer confidence in nature's most perfect food. In these pages, you will find a sampling of the incredible efforts that the Midwest Dairy staff has made on behalf of our region's dairy farmers. You'll see reflected the dynamic work they are doing to target diverse demographics in and outside of your own local communities across the Midwest Dairy region.

I'm excited to be stepping into an organization with a deep legacy of collaboration to build trust in dairy and I will be intentional to thoughtfully continue that legacy with an enterprising eye to the future.

If you'd like to connect to follow my journey as CEO of Midwest Dairy and a behind-the-scenes look at the work checkoff does for you on a weekly basis, I welcome you to connect with me on Facebook or Instagram. Scan the QR code or find me at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61557610621152>.



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."* – Margaret Mead

Respectfully yours,  
**Corey**

# The 2023 Annual Report is now available

The 2023 Annual Report is now available at [www.MidwestDairy.com](http://www.MidwestDairy.com). Midwest Dairy's fiscal year runs from January 1 through December 31, with the annual report released every April. In the report, you will find an overview of the previous year's programs and activities, remarks from the board chair and CEO, financial reports, and more.

Dairy farmers from the 10-state Midwest region who directly pay into dairy checkoff know that the work of the checkoff doesn't start and stop within a single calendar year. Much of Midwest Dairy's work extends over several years as we establish strong partnerships and campaigns that drive trust and sales in dairy. This report will not share every activation checkoff staff worked tirelessly to achieve, but will showcase some highlights from

2023. The annual report highlights work under four important strategies: Sales, Trust, Research, and Developing Farmer Leaders.

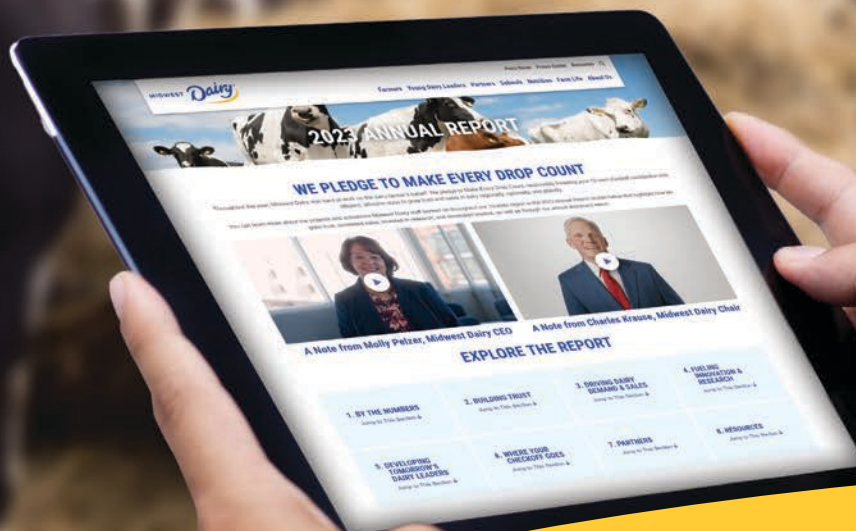
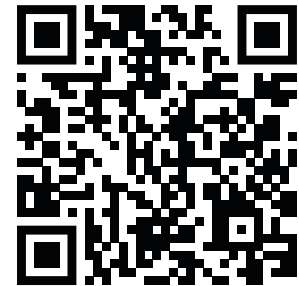
Midwest Dairy allocates checkoff funds to local, national, and global efforts, adapting to an ever-evolving marketplace. The checkoff's approach remains strong, working with and through industry partners that co-invest in priorities that amplify checkoff resources, the farmer's voice, and the impact of dairy products. The Midwest Dairy farmer-led board reviews and approves the strategic plan and provides guidance on checkoff's work. Strategies and outcomes are reviewed regularly to ensure work is aligned with board priorities and remains relevant in meeting the evolving needs of

consumers and adapting to the changing industry and marketplace.

Checkoff encourages farmers to visit this website page to see how far we've come and where we're going! Many exciting things happened in 2023, and Midwest Dairy is eager to share them with you.

*If you want a paper copy of the 2023 Annual Report, please get in touch with your Farmer Relations Manager.*

**Scan the QR code to view our Annual Report!**





# Midwest Dairy proudly announces

**Midwest Dairy has officially kicked off Class 3 of the Dairy Experience and Agricultural Leadership Program (DEAL), welcoming 18 new dairy leaders.** This 18-month program provides an opportunity for young dairy farmers across the region to learn how to engage with consumers, conduct media interviews, network with industry and peers, and gain a deeper understanding of the dairy checkoff.

New this year, Midwest Dairy is excited to partner with The Dairy Alliance, the dairy checkoff organization for dairy farmers in eight states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. This partnership enables young dairy farmers in those states to participate in our DEAL program alongside participants from Midwest Dairy. Our goal is for dairy farmers from

Midwest Dairy's region to learn from and network with dairy farmers from other parts of the country. Currently, two farmers from Kentucky and North Carolina are enrolled in Class 3.

"We are eager to partner with Midwest Dairy on this leadership opportunity for farmers across the Southeast. This program has proven successful in building leaders that support local communities and serve as advocates for agriculture," said Farrah Newberry, Vice President of Agricultural and Environmental Affairs at The Dairy Alliance.

The 2024-2025 Class was selected from applications across the Midwest Dairy region. These 18 young dairy farmers, ages 40 and younger, have a passion for sharing their stories and a desire to be more involved.

### Congratulations to the participants of Deal Class Three listed below:

- Amber Selman, IA
- Jennifer Bronner, IA
- Katherine Boelen, IA
- Matthew Lansing, IA
- Kendra Holland, IL
- Amanda Zigan, MN
- Brittany Moore, MN
- Cole Hoscheit, MN
- Elizabeth Golombiecki, MN
- Kennedy Youngren, MN
- Kevin Korbel, MN
- Quinci Schmidt, MN
- Jess Wohler, KS
- Todd Pauly, KS
- Aaron Stewart, MO
- Nicolas Dotson, NO
- Allison LaHaie, NE
- Rachel Gray, NC
- Caden Cowherd, KY



# DEAL Class 3

The DEAL Program is made up of three phases with in-person meetings and local assignments, such as meeting local leadership and participating in a consumer event. The first phase focuses on diving into the dairy checkoff and discovering the strengths of each participant and how to use them. Phase one occurred in February when the group traveled to Nashville, TN.

For more information about our DEAL program, check out [MidwestDairy.com/DEAL](http://MidwestDairy.com/DEAL).



# 2024 Central Dairy Plains

Midwest Dairy participated once again at the Central Plains Dairy Expo (CPDE) in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in late March. The CPDE's vision is to facilitate and support the future growth, relevancy, and vitality of the dairy industry in the region. Midwest Dairy shares this vision and sees this event as a great way to connect with farmers through face-to-face conversations at our booth and share checkoff impact through a taste and learn session, bringing checkoff partners to life.

Midwest Dairy staff met with farmers on Wednesday and Thursday of the event at the Midwest Dairy booth. These interactions fostered educational conversations, allowing farmers to review available resources and learn more about local checkoff work in action. Midwest Dairy Farmer Relations managers and other Midwest Dairy staff, including exiting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Molly Pelzer and new CEO Corey Scott, staffed the booth.

Checkoff also invited farmers to an engaging Taste and Learn Experience featuring partners Domino's, Dollar General, and South Dakota State University (SDSU). These partners offered samples of innovative dairy products that consumers enjoy today and showcased information and campaigns. This allowed farmers to learn more about the "why" behind each partnership and how they are growing dairy demand and trust.



During the Taste and Learn Experience, farmers explored the Domino's partnership, learning about its potential to drive cheese sales. Domino's recently added Pepperoni Stuffed

Cheesy Bread to its lineup of Stuffed Cheesy Bread and is seeing success. The oven-baked breadsticks are stuffed with cheese and pepperoni, covered in a blend of cheese made with 100 percent real mozzarella and cheddar, and seasoned with parmesan and garlic. Dairy Management Inc. supported Domino's with consumer research, which helped make the Pepperoni Stuffed Cheesy Bread launch a success. Checkoff also plans



to work with Domino's on an enhanced loyalty program that continues to have growing appeal with customers and will drive pizza and cheese sales. Domino's is actively innovating, presenting new



# Expo recap

opportunities to collaborate to increase sales of U.S.-produced cheese on their products. Farmers had the opportunity to sample these new pepperoni-stuffed Cheesy Breads during the event as they learned more about the partner.

Another recent partner, Dollar General, collaborated with Midwest Dairy on a campaign during the 2023 holiday season and the 2024 new year. The partnership increased awareness and sales of fluid milk through strategically placed in-store signs. These signs focused on affordable nutrition by promoting milk as a good value, using our new Undeniably Dairy tagline “Real Milk. Real Nutrition.” Signage also promoted pairing milk with other popular snacks, like cookies. The signage used throughout Dollar General stores was on display for farmers to see, and milk and cookie samples were available for tasting. This effort began as a joint program with Midwest Dairy and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan, but has continued

growing as other dairy checkoffs joined the campaign to grow dairy’s footprint.

Attendees also took a trip back in time as they found themselves on a “college campus” by exploring Generation Z activations that build trust with SDSU students. Activations include checkoff working with the SDSU Miller Wellness Center, interacting with fans at campus athletic games, and partnering with athletes like track and field superstar Claire Beckman. Checkoff displayed a backdrop featuring this partnership and offered a build-your-own yogurt parfait station. This yogurt station was similar to the one students enjoyed at the SDSU Miller Wellness Center.

This session provided dairy farmers more than a tasting experience; it allowed them to see first-hand how checkoff insights and research can translate to product innovation and sales opportunities working with the right partners. During this event, farmers also discussed how these partnerships impact

dairy sales. Attendees engaged with some of the talented people behind the partnerships, including dairy scientists, dairy processors, brand managers, and national and regional checkoff staff. Attendees saw that behind every partnership is a commitment from both partners and checkoff to bring dairy to life in new and compelling ways.

During the CPDE, Midwest Dairy encouraged as much conversation and networking as possible. To do that, we partnered with the Iowa State Dairy Association, South Dakota Dairy Producers, Nebraska State Dairy Association, Minnesota Milk Producers Association, and Western Iowa Dairy Alliance for an evening of networking on Wednesday, March 20. Attendees had the opportunity to again interact with Midwest Dairy staff as well as their peers while enjoying a relaxed moment with appetizers for all.





# NOSTALGIC MILK AND CEREAL



**Midwest Dairy aims to bring dairy to life in fun and creative ways.** One innovative

approach is reminding Generation Z (Gen Z) of nostalgic childhood memories, including enjoying a bowl of cereal. Midwest Dairy has brought this childhood memory to life through cereal bars in 2023 and now in 2024. These events have proven popular and are connecting Gen Z to dairy products in an unexpected way.

Midwest Dairy was excited to engage with festival goers through a pop-up

milk and cereal bar during the 80/35 Music Festival in Iowa. The festival celebrates music and culture presented by the nonprofit Des Moines Music Coalition. In its tenth year, the festival presents a diverse lineup of musicians across five stages in downtown Des Moines. Over 20,000 consumers attended the event during the two-day festival in July of 2023. Thanks to a generous donation from local processors, checkoff was able to hand out over 1,000 Undeniably Dairy branded cups of cereal and milk at the popular Undeniably Dairy-themed tent showcasing dairy's role in sustainable nutrition. We also reached over 100,000 consumers through social marketing, online presence, and in-person engagement.

Following the success of the 80/35 Music Festival pop-up milk and cereal bar, Midwest Dairy partnered with Iowa State University (ISU) AfterDark

to serve over 500 Iowa State students an excellent dairy experience. ISU AfterDark is a student-run organization that plans three late-night activities on campus each semester. Midwest Dairy brought dairy to life with an Undeniably Dairy-themed setup showcasing dairy's role in sustainable nutrition. Again, thanks to another generous donation from local processors, checkoff handed out over 500 Undeniably dairy-branded cups of cereal and milk in under two hours. ISU students eagerly lined up at the Memorial Union to enjoy the cereal bar, and many were posting their experiences on social media while recruiting their peers to attend. In addition, Dairy Science Club volunteers engaged with the students, answering questions about responsible dairy production and refueling with dairy.

In fall 2023, the versatile milk and cereal bar spread to Illinois. A pop-up milk and cereal bar served nearly





# AL BARS SEE SUCCESS

500 fans at the Illinois vs. Indiana football game during Dad's Weekend. Playing to the Dad's Weekend theme, participants enjoyed milk and cereal and participated in a football toss to win dairy swag, including *I Heart Milk* t-shirts.

The milk and cereal bar also served 600 Illinois student leaders during the 2023 Illinois High School Association Leadership Conference. Midwest Dairy provided a milk and cereal bar where the participants could choose their favorite cereal paired with regular or lactose-free milk. Nutrition messaging was included in the setup, focusing on milk's rehydration qualities. Later, dairy farmer Jenna Kilgus spoke in an open session to discuss sustainability with the attendees. Katie Knappenberger, Sports Nutritionist for Northwestern University, spoke to the adult chaperones about leading the students and themselves to make

healthy food choices and the role dairy plays in that. She also spoke about lactose-free and low-in-lactose options for consumption.

Lastly, to kick off 2024, Midwest Dairy held its first on-site activation at the Minnesota Varsity League's eGaming State Finals tournament at the Mall of America in January. Checkoff partnered with Wisdom Gaming to bring the milk and cereal bar experience to connect with students and give them an extra power boost while competing. With over 500 high school students competing, as well as coaches, family, and friends, Midwest Dairy was present and shared key sustainability messaging to this audience of young Gen Z in a way that made dairy stand out even in an exciting competitive environment.





# Checkoff continues to partner with Taco

Checkoff's partnership with Taco Bell can be described as an "innovation evolution" spanning more than 11 years. Throughout this partnership, Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) worked with Taco Bell to move cheese from a garnish to hero as the Taco Bell menu is now filled with cheesy offerings. By working hand in hand with the Taco Bell team to understand the needs of their target fans, the DMI team collaborates to deliver in a uniquely Taco Bell way. Farmer funding enables DMI to continue work with this popular fast-food chain to leverage DMI-dairy expertise with an onsite scientist. This arrangement helps support and develop the launch of delicious Mexican-inspired, craveable menu items featuring dairy, while supporting marketing promotions throughout the year.



One of the most recent successes is the Taco Bell Grilled Cheese Burrito, invented in partnership with Taco Bell by DMI onsite scientist Mike Ciresi. This new menu item is a first of its kind and includes approximately ten times the amount of cheese of a regular taco, as well as sour cream and cheese inside. The Grilled Cheese Burrito not only includes the cheese used in the filling, but it is also wrapped in cheese and

grilled from the outside. This product started as a popular limited-time offer, but Taco Bell was so pleased with its success that it is now a permanent menu item that can be purchased nationwide. DMI is proud of the investment to help give this product more media support. Innovation continues with new kinds of grilled cheese items on the menu, including the Double Steak Grilled Cheese Burrito, the Steak and Bacon Grilled Cheese Burrito, and Grilled Cheese Dipping Tacos.



# Bell after a decade of collaboration

What's next for this partnership? Checkoff continues to look for innovative ways to add more dairy to the Taco Bell menu. As consumers' needs continually change, other market opportunities present themselves. Research has shown increased interest in "destination" beverages across the quick-serve restaurant sector. Menu items like smoothies, shakes, and blended coffees continue to grow in popularity. Taco Bell recognizes this opportunity and recently conducted a limited test market in California to understand how it could offer destination beverages in a unique Taco Bell way. DMI supported the endeavor with dairy expertise and worked with the team by helping create Taco Bell Churro Chillers and Coffee Chillers that consumers loved. The test was successful, and there is certainly more to come from Taco Bell in this area.

More recently Taco Bell put on an event called *Live Mas Live*, where it announced new menu items, chef collaboration opportunities, and a year's worth of new announcements and partnerships. *Live Mas Live* gave fans a behind-the-scenes look into Taco Bell's 2024 marketing calendar, an exclusive tasting opportunity of new menu items, performances, and celebrity appearances. The Las Vegas strip was the perfect location to showcase these new menu items, including the Cantina Chicken menu, featuring cheesy favorites, such as the quesadilla and crispy taco. This event was attended by many social media influencers who helped share the experience on their channels.

DMI knows working hand in hand with Taco Bell to find the right dairy products for its consumer base is important and has led to significant menu changes funded by farmer dollars. This partnership allows checkoff to use dairy

science to support partner and dairy growth. The DMI team is committed to keeping this long-term relationship growing as it has proven positive for dairy farmers to grow demand and sales of dairy products.

**NEW**

## CHURRO CHILLERS

SWEET SHAKES TOPPED WITH CHURRO CRUMBLES

**Churro Chillers**  
Wild Strawberry, Sweet Vanilla, Dulce De Leche Coffee, Mexican Chocolate

\$4.19

For a limited time only, while supplies last.  
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# Make a local impact with

**Undeniably Dairy grants are available to Midwest Dairy farmers, dairy groups, and agricultural organizations to locally promote that dairy is good for people, the planet, and communities.**

These grants aim to help turn great ideas for promoting the dairy community to consumers into reality. Midwest Dairy proudly offers grants providing farmers support to interact and connect positively with their community, especially Generation Z (Gen Z).

Applications are evaluated by an Undeniably Dairy Grant selection committee and approved in three funding cycles. For 2024, the first funding cycle is closed, and the next is fast approaching. There is also a later application date in the fall. The application deadlines for the three funding cycles are March 1, May 1, and August 1. You can apply for up to \$5,000 in one calendar year. If you have any questions about applying for these grants, please contact your Midwest Dairy Farmer Relations manager as soon as possible and visit [MidwestDairy.com/UDGrants](http://MidwestDairy.com/UDGrants).

In 2023, 149 grants totaling over \$348,000 were awarded. Midwest Dairy is currently tallying the number of consumers reached through these programs and events, but we are proud to say that over 612,000 people had the opportunity to interact with dairy because of these grants so far. Do you need some inspiration for how to put your own grant to work? Below are a few examples of recipients who promoted dairy in fun and impactful ways.



**Scan the QR code for more information!**

## Minnesota

In 2022, the Eden Valley - Watkins Athletic Program used Undeniably Dairy grant money to promote the benefits of chocolate milk to their junior and senior high school athletes during their summer workout program.

In 2023, a farmer used another Undeniably Dairy grant to assist their athletic program again, but this time to

provide a bulk milk machine for their student-athletes. The bulk milk machine was put in the school's weight room to always be available for the student-athletes to consume dairy products after their workouts.

This grant benefits more than 100 student-athletes weekly, from 7th- 12th grade. The farmer applauded

the grant program, saying, "It is easy and rewarding, especially when you get to physically see checkoff dollars making such an impact." The school's athletic director also commented, "The kids love the fresh milk, and it helps get more students into the weight room!"



MINNESOTA

# Undeniably Dairy Grants



IOWA

## *Iowa*

At the Shelby County Fair, over 10,000 consumers had the opportunity to interact with an expanded “Little Hands on the Farm” exhibit, made possible by an Undeniably Dairy grant awarded to the Shelby County Fair Board. This hands-on, educational-based agricultural exhibit focused on young families and children. With the grant money received, they

enhanced the learning experience for kids by incorporating a mechanical dairy cow along with several flip-ups and questionnaires providing valuable learning points and information about the dairy industry. This exhibit emphasized the importance of dairy products and that their consumption is vital to everyone’s well-being. Their “Little Hands on the

Farm” exhibit engaged kids, who have no idea where their food comes from, through educational programs and exhibits. The organizers reported outstanding attendance at the 2023 exhibit and continue to hear positive comments from attendees. They hope to grow the exhibit more in years to come.



# NORTH DAKOTA



## North Dakota

The *Legendairy* event is hosted every two years at VanBedaf farm. This farm used an Undeniably Dairy grant to host a farm tour and open house event that welcomed over 900 people from the local community and across the state to enjoy a working farm. The event featured an informative farm tour that included refurbished tractors pulling participants through the barns and around the farm, as they learned about different areas of a farm and had their questions about the dairy industry

answered. Several farm employees served as tour guides, using their industry knowledge to connect with participants. These tour guides included other dairy farmers, farm nutritionists, feed reps, and the farm family. Educational signage filled the farm, and participants took home cow hats, coloring books, and other materials displaying the Undeniably Dairy brand.



**Kansas**

Thanks to an Undeniably Dairy grant, Rottinghaus Holstein Farm shared sustainability efforts with students of all ages. The Earth Day Farm Field Trip was a fun success, consisting of two sessions: a farm tour and education stations in the shop. Around 50 students and their parents learned about on-farm processes, specifically how farmers and cows recycle nutrients. Students were from the local private school with parent chaperones and teachers present, many of whom

were removed from the dairy and agriculture industries. Kids were excited to see how cows turn food waste into milk that humans can consume. Many students had family members who worked at the local cabinet factory, where the farm receives wood shavings for animal bedding—a fun connection for all. At the education stations, students had hands-on experiences with nutrient recycling, such as planting a seed into a composted cow manure pot and playing with the different feed

byproducts used on the farm. Undeniably Dairy graphics and informational signs were placed at the stations for parents to read to the students. Students also had fun petting a baby calf and learning about calf welfare. At the end of the event, participants received an Undeniably Dairy bag with Undeniably Dairy goodies and their planted cow pot to take home.





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## INCREASING DAIRY SALES



# Godfather's Pizza and Midwest Dairy Promote New Bacon Ranch Cheesesticks



**Midwest Dairy partnered with Godfather's Pizza traditional locations on a limited-time offer promoting an exciting menu innovation; the new Bacon Ranch Cheesesticks.** The dairy-infused Bacon Ranch Cheesesticks menu item

adds 15 percent more cheese and bacon pieces and includes buttermilk ranch sauce for dipping. Research shows Godfather's customers enjoy trying new flavor combinations, making this limited-time offer particularly exciting. Godfather's Pizza is an Omaha, Nebraska-based fast-casual restaurant company with 445 locations, many throughout the 10-state region.

The campaign ran from October 1 to December 31, 2023. Midwest Dairy provided promotional support through digital and print ads, in-store point-of-purchase materials, email campaigns, and social media ads.

All promotion assets also included the Undeniably Dairy logo. In addition, the campaign ran as a featured product on the Godfather's Pizza Loyalty app and website.

The campaign reached over 1.4 million people with a total incremental dairy volume of 650,000 pounds of milk. The new item was so popular that it will continue to be a permanent addition to the Godfather's Pizza menu in both traditional and express locations.