Get to Know Stephanie Clark, Associate Director of the Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center

The Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center (MDFRC) wants to transform consumer perceptions of the dairy industry challenges through product innovation and process improvement. The MDFRC is located at the University of Minnesota Dairy Plant and is one of several associate directors of the MDFRC. In her role, she oversees the annual publication of checkoff dollars based on industry needs to the ISU’s MDFRC research teams of faculty, dissemination of checkoff dollars based on industry needs to the ISU’s MDFRC research teams, faculty, staff, and students.

Stephanie Clark, who grew up on a small farm in Massachusetts, feels a sense of satisfaction in her role as liaison between dairy farmers and ISU’s food science researchers. She is using her experience in food science to advance research that will benefit the dairy industry in our state and beyond.

Clark finds it rewarding to see her MDFRC student researchers succeed in answering important industry questions and communicating those results to partner audiences. “Sending well-prepared students out into the dairy industry workforce is a great feeling,” she says.

Clark believes the collaborative approach of the MDFRC is helping move the dairy industry forward. “It’s a win-win system, where dairy farmers do not have to reinvent the wheel and can benefit from the expertise of researchers and researchers benefit from the real-world applicability of the industry needs,” Clark says.

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Midwest Dairy Wants to Make Sure You Are Hearing From Us

Midwest Dairy wants to make sure you are hearing the latest updates on checkoff activities, highlighting how your investment is working to bring dairy to life. Help us make sure our email records are up-to-date by completing a contact form posted on MidwestDairy.com.

Are You Hearing From Us?

Midwest Dairy Resources

To get involved with Midwest Dairy efforts, or to access resources and information available through the Midwest Dairy checkoff, visit MidwestDairy.com. Use the Contact Us form to send your questions, comments, and ideas to midwestdairy.com.

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Additional events designed to foster influencer relationships by giving them unique experiences and placing them side-by-side with dairy farmers have occurred across our region. The University Dairy Culinary Experience at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota, also brought together food influencers, which again included Lane, and dairy farmers for conversation while enjoying delicious dairy foods. In addition to dairy farmer-led tours on both conventional and organic dairy farms, guests visited the cheese store in Faribault, Minnesota, and participated in a cheese tasting and food photography and communications training.

Said Lane of the farm experience, “The passion I witnessed by these farmers for their cattle and their communities really surprised me seeing how these farmers in action so aligned with how I approach my own work today. We both work to ensure we are putting the best products on our tables for our families.”

Culinary journalist Lauren Lane witnessed dairy farmers “understand our cows.”

Farm-to-Table Events Change How Food Influencers Think about Dairy Farming and Foods

The bringing Dairy to Life at Homecoming weekend at Iowa State University.

Ambar Morales-Cuadrado led a Corporate Communications team to reach out to influencers and food bloggers to help build a platform for dairy. The team consisted of a public relations agency based in Minneapolis, a regional dairy checkoff representative, and a dairy farmer leader. The goal was to create and manage a consistent message across multiple platforms to ensure dairy was a part of their conversation.

In a recent press release, Morales-Cuadrado shared her experience working with influencers: “One of the biggest challenges is keeping up with the ever-changing on-trend food topics. While it can be hard to keep track of all the latest food trends, it’s important to stay up-to-date on the latest research in order to provide accurate information to consumers.”

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Dairy farmers have the opportunity to help students understand more about dairy products come from. Since it's not always feasible to coordinate classroom field trips to the farm, online education programs make it possible to reach students at home. During Discover Education, a national program designed to bring dairy farming into classrooms, has introduced a new lesson plan: "A Farmer and Minnesota dairy farmer and cheesemaker, Alise Sjostrom. The new lesson plan featuring Sjostrom aligns with dairy. According to the USDA data, this is stronger growth over the same period last year. This is why you used to see. Years ago, we found that the national content have increased trust in the dairy industry by 40 percent. Two years ago, the dairy industry kicked off the Undeniably Discover Dairy encourages learning about where dairy foods come from.

Our nation’s dairy farmers and cheesemakers are two examples. Pizza Hut’s new pan pizza featuring 25 percent more cheese kicked off just this year. In 10 years of partnership with McDonald’s, their dairy use has grown by 1 billion pounds since we began partnering with them in 2009; and U.S. cheese use at Pizza Hut has increased by 14 percent in a partnership kicked off just this year.

The idea is to share the partnership's strategy and how to be your brand ambassadors. "We're excited to tour the ISU Dairy Research Farm. Leo Timms, Ph.D., ISU organization which Midwest Dairy has partnered with $10,000 grant offered by UnitedHealthcare, an innovation organization. More than 20 schools competed in the 2017 Innovation Challenge, in partnership with the Global Youth Institute to tour the Iowa State University (ISU) Dairy Leadership Institute and receive grant funding from No Kid Hungry to increase meal participation across the state. Midwest Dairy partnered with the Kansas Department of Education and No Kid Hungry to increase the funding available enabling more school districts to expand adoption. Grant recipients vowed to reach 10,000 students in Kansas to even greater access to school breakfast, lunch and summer meals.

Micro: Local Dairy Research Farms. Oklahoma: Drive Football game co-hosted by Midwest Dairy. Ambassadors interacted with consumers at The University of Tulsa, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, recently kicked off a new contest, "Plant-Based, Eat More Dairy," that offers a chance to win up to $10,000 for producing the most creative ad campaign for plant-based alternatives and making recommendations that help retailers maximize overall sales.

Through the Undeniably Dairy campaign, we’re also focusing on spreading the word about milk’s nutritional superiority as compared to plant-based alternatives. With a growing number of consumers looking for increased protein, calcium and other minerals in their diets, milk provides a smart option to meet their needs.

These are just some of the questions we have heard. If you have additional questions or want more information, please contact your local Farmer Relations team.

MISSOURI: More than 20 schools competed in the Missouri Kid Hungry (MD-NOH) Breakfast of Champions initiative, targeting the state's most vulnerable students at risk of summer meal participation, all of which could result in greater school milk sales. Each school team was awarded $15,000 in grants to the winning proposals.

NEBRASKA: Local leaders, including local school boards, daycare leaders, dairy science and teachers and school nutrition professionals, participated in the Undeniably Dairy challenge to tour and lunch with Nebraska dairy farmer board members. Followed by a mistakenly cheese-making contest. The experience fostered conversation and partnership, helping to ensure more students have access to the nutritious and delicious meal at school. The event raised $30,000 in scholarships, which will help dairy farmers and support students in need.

NORTH DAKOTA: Through the support of the Minnesota and South Dakota Dairy Councils, by Midwest Dairy, the Biomark School District has partnered to expand School Breakfast Program services at schools, including go and grab breakfast, breakfast in the classroom and a coffee shop. Each school has seen increased students’ access to, and participation in, school breakfast.

OKLAHOMA: Union 9th Grade Center in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, recently kicked off its own "Plant-Based, Eat More Dairy" challenge, with the first entries due in just a few weeks, more than 100 milk-based coffee drinks were served each day. The program is expected to grow in popularity and increase school milk participation and meal sales.

SOUTH DAKOTA: South Dakota dairy ambassadors connected with consumers during the recent Dairy Drive Football game co-hosted by Midwest Dairy. Ambassadors interacted with football fans on campus and through social media. By connecting on shared interests in school spirit and the community, ambassadors connected with consumers at the Arkansas State University: Dairy Science and Nutritional Sciences. Students to Midwest Dairy Farmers.

Minnesota: More than 20 schools competed in the Missouri Kid Hungry (MD-NOH) Breakfast of Champions initiative, targeting the state’s most vulnerable students at risk of summer meal participation, all of which could result in greater school milk sales. Each school team was awarded $15,000 in grants to the winning proposals.

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Dairy farmers have a variety of tools at their disposal to help them navigate the challenges of the current market. Some of these tools include advertising campaigns, market research, and partnerships with educational institutions. For example, the Undeniably Dairy campaign, which is supported by the Dairy Checkoff, has been successful in increasing consumer trust in the dairy industry by 40 percent. This campaign has helped to increase school breakfast participation and milk sales.

In addition to advertising, dairy farmers can also focus on sustainability, technology, and research to help build consumer trust in dairy. For instance, the Ambassadors program, which offers another option for high school students to earn college credit, has introduced new opportunities for breakfast in three states. Through the Undeniably Dairy campaign, partnerships with educational institutions, and advertising campaigns, dairy farmers can help to increase school breakfast participation and milk sales.

Dairy farmers have a variety of tools at their disposal to help them navigate the challenges of the current market. Some of these tools include advertising campaigns, market research, and partnerships with educational institutions.
Dairy farmers have opportunities to help students understand more about dairy foods come from. Since it’s never too late to coordinate classroom field trips to the farm, online education programs, make it possible to extend classroom learning.

Education, a national program designed to bring dairy farming into classrooms, has introduced a new lesson plan called “A Farmer and His Dairy: The Farmer and His Dairy”.

The new lesson plan features Stokpes family dairy with a focus on the impact of dairy foods on consumer behavior.

Pizza Hut’s new pan pizza featuring 25% more cheese is two examples.

Pizza Hut Asia-Pacific has increased by 29 percent in a partnership with the dairy industry.

Domino’s has increased cheese use by 1 billion pounds since we began partnering with them in 2009;

U.S. cheese use at Pizza Hut Asia-Pacific has increased by 29 percent in a partnership with the dairy industry.

McDonald’s dairy use has grown by 1.2 billion pounds; Domino’s has increased cheese use by 1 billion pounds since we began partnering with them in 2009;

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To plant-based alternatives and making recommendations that help retailers maximize overall sales.

Through the Undeniably Dairy campaign, we’re also focusing on spreading the word about milk’s nutritional superiority as compared to plant-based alternatives. With a growing number of consumers looking for increased protein, vitamins and minerals in their dairy, milk provides a smart option to meet their needs.

These are just some of the questions we have heard. If you have additional questions or want more information, please contact your local Farmer Relations staff.

Midwest Dairy’s Farmer Relations staff regularly meets with dairy farmers throughout the region to share resources and have conversations about the checkoff. Some of the most frequently asked questions that come up during these conversations, along with answers, are:

Q: What is checkoff advertising?
A: Checkoff advertising is designed to increase dairy awareness and consumption by telling the story of dairy farming to more people, reaching people via virtual tours, with kids showing an interest in technology, sustainability and milk’s journey from farm to table. Learn more at DiveIntoDairy.com.

Midwest Dairy’s website is consistently one of the top referring websites to the Discovery Education program.

The Discover Dairy series is another educational program designed to connect students to Midwest dairy farms. Its popular Adopt-a-Cow program, which provides classrooms a year-long experience to virtually care for a dairy cow, features cows from both Tauer Dairy in Minnesota and Erdman Dairy in Illinois. Learn more at DiveIntoDairy.com.

Q: How do dairy farmers support local communities?
A: Dairy farmers are supportive of their local communities by donating money, time and resources to a variety of organizations.

Q: What are we doing to fight back against plant-based alternatives?
A: We are not going to be displacing other products, but we are going to be making sure there are more opportunities for us to be in the food system.

We’re working closely with retail partners to have direct input at the point of sale, where consumers make their purchasing decisions. More specifically, we’re sharing expertise and insights to help retailers evaluate the mix and sales performance of the dairy products in their stores and their positioning on the shelf as compared to plant-based alternatives and making recommendations that help retailers maximize overall sales.

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Q: What is checkoff doing to help my milk price?
A: Checkoff advertising can have a direct impact on your milk price, we are working hard to drive overall demand for dairy products.

Q: How can I contact checkoff advertising?
A: Checkoff advertising provides marketing opportunities for dairy farmers to bring more dairy to the table.

Q: What is the impact of dairy checkoff advertising?
A: The checkoff advertising program has helped increase breakfast participation in schools, resulting in a total cumulative increase of 1.2 billion pounds since 2010. We work closely with retailers and more organizations to market dairy to consumers through partnerships with our schools, with the goal of serving even more dairy foods during additional opportunities throughout the day.

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Get to Know Stephanie Clark, Associate Director of the Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center

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**Stephanie Clark**

Clark grew up on a small farm in Massachusetts. She feels a sense of satisfaction in her role as liaison between dairy farmers and ISU food research professionals. Her goal is to try to help them understand what other’s need to do to ensure their expertise to advance research that will best benefit the dairy industry in our state and beyond.

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**The Future Growth System**

Where dairy farmers, industry representatives and researchers meet regularly to talk about how to use dairy farmer money to address the most pressing industry needs.

**WINTER 2019**

**IN THIS ISSUE**

- Connecting with Influencers
- Annual Meeting Recap
- Dairy in Schools
- Your Frequently Asked Questions

Register online at Midwest Dairy Products Resources Center 1-877-385-6586 (3276)

**WINTER 2019**

**Dairy Farming and Foods**

Farm-to-Tables Events Change How Food Influencers Think about Dairy Farming and Foods

**Lauren Lane**

Lauren Lane is an Instagram post she shared following her attendance at Midwest Dairy’s Bringing Dairy to Life dinner event in Kansas City. Why did she change in her perspective? Because of the emotional, personal connections she made with local dairy farmers who also attended, along with 40 influential food professionals. During the event, Lane engaged in conversations with dairy farmers from Missouri and Kansas. Through the stories they told, she picked up on the commitment, pride, and joy they have for their animals and work that goes in to delivering delicious, quality dairy products to her family’s table. Her view of milk now embodies these values. It’s no longer just milk. It’s about the people who produce it and the care with which they do so.

**Lauren Lane in an Instagram post she shared following her attendance at Midwest Dairy’s Bringing Dairy to Life dinner event in Kansas City.**

**“The passion I witnessed by these farmers for their cattle, and the pride they take in their work, is truly inspiring. It is honestly surprising to see how farmers are on social media and it aligns with how I approach my own work today. We both work to ensure we are putting the best products on our tables for our families.”**

Cultivate: Lauren Lane witnessed dairy farmers’ commitment to cow care.

**Alex Peterson (right) engaged Lauren Lane on Midwest Dairy’s Bringing Dairy to Life dinner event in Kansas City.**

**Lauren Lane (right), editor, brought the creative and diverse content on dairy to numerous platforms.**

**WINTER 2019**

**Dairy Promotion Update**

“Looking ahead, I am confident checkoff-led programs will continue to produce results that will drive sales locally, nationally and internationally.” Lucas Lentsch, CEO, Midwest Dairy

**“Whether it’s connecting influential bloggers, thought leaders and dairy farmers over a delicious meal, giving them unique experiences and plaats, they are contributing to the work for building trust and sales locally, nation wide and internationally.”**

**“With Fuel Up to Play 60, students learn beneficial habits they can build on and apply throughout their lives...times throughout the day.”**

**“We’ll draw the winning name February 4, 2019. Enter to win an Undeniably Dairy Bluetooth speaker!”**

**“With Fuel Up to Play 60, students learn beneficial habits they can build on and apply throughout their lives.”**

**“A variety of cooking classes throughout the Kansas City area.”**

**“The Bringing Dairy to Life event held in Bloomington, Minnesota, and dishes.”**

**“Whether it’s connecting influential bloggers, thought leaders and dairy farmers over a delicious meal, giving them unique experiences and places.”**

**“With Fuel Up to Play 60, students learn beneficial habits they can build on and apply throughout their lives.”**

**“Challenges, it’s exciting to see our work is having an impact.”**
Giving Consumers an Excellent Dairy Experience Reaps Benefits

The Midwest Dairy Center, an industry-funded research center, has seen success in bringing dairy products to consumers in a way that educates and inspires them to Incorporate more dairy into their diets.

Belinda Bailey, the center's director, attributes this success to a focus on building relationships with consumers and understanding the challenges they face. "By connecting with consumers where they are, we're able to tailor our messaging and provide education that resonates with them," she says.

One of the most successful initiatives has been the "Farm-to-Table" series, which brings chefs and food bloggers to dairy farms to learn about the process of dairy production and then use what they've learned to create recipes.

"This hands-on experience helps consumers connect with the dairy farmers and understand the care that goes into producing dairy products," Bailey says.

Another key strategy has been the development of partnerships with major retailers like Walmart and Target. "By working closely with these large retailers, we're able to get our dairy products into the hands of consumers who are more likely to purchase them," Bailey notes.

These efforts have led to a significant increase in sales of dairy products, as well as a higher level of consumer satisfaction. "We've seen a clear correlation between our efforts and an increase in dairy sales," Bailey says. "And that's what we're all about - helping the dairy industry succeed through education and outreach."