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Midwest Dairy Provides Funding for Food Banks to Purchase Dairy Foods

Midwest Dairy staff continues to be flexible as we work on your behalf to both get dairy foods to families in need and try to find a new home for milk during this pandemic. During this difficult time, Midwest Dairy Corporate Board Chairman, Allen Merrill urged us to think differently, to leverage dairy farmer values and get creative about how we can provide dairy foods to students not attending school or to the growing number of unemployed individuals who may be experiencing food insecurity. As a result, we are excited to announce that Midwest Dairy has allocated \$500,000 in checkoff funds to food banks in our region for the purchase of dairy foods.

To achieve this goal, we received a special waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for this one-time charitable initiative given that food donations do not fall under the strategic focus of checkoff. Our team is currently reaching out to food banks to assess their need and connecting them with processors willing to supply dairy foods for food insecure individuals and families. This donation will provide dairy foods, nutrition education materials and dairy promotion resources to communities and will create new pathways to help families in need during this challenging time.

In the articles below, you'll read about additional refinements to our plan of work in the last month to make a difference for our communities. Midwest Dairy staff are dedicated to answering Chairman Merrill's challenge to be enterprising and shift our work to continue getting dairy foods to families in need.

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Midwest Dairy Encourages Retail Partners to Stop Limitations on Milk Purchases

Midwest Dairy staff have been working closely with retail and regulatory partners to encourage them to stop limitations on milk purchases during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dairy aisle sales grew 30 percent in the week ending April 5 compared to one year ago. This increase was driven by individuals and families purchasing and replenishing food at grocery, retail and convenience stores over the past few weeks. While dairy farmers continue to produce an ample supply of milk sent to processors and bottlers, the supply chain has been challenged by a shift in demand from food service to retail which, in some cases, has caused retailers to limit milk purchases as they struggle to keep up with demand.

Midwest Dairy's Demand team has been reaching out to retail partners and state grocery associations asking them to remove signage that limits customer purchases of fluid milk and dairy products. Midwest Dairy's Farmer Relations team has reached out to state Departments of Ag leaders in Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and South Dakota, encouraging them to share the same message with partners about removing retail limits.

One positive result of this outreach occurred in Minnesota, where the Department of Human Services obtained a waiver to allow Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program participants to add 2% milk to the foods typically included in their benefits. This modification provided WIC families with the flexibility to redeem skim, 1% or 2% milk, rather than being limited to the lower fat options if stores were out of stock.

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COVID-19-related Resources on MidwestDairy.com

As news related to COVID-19 continues to evolve, Midwest Dairy is updating the home page of MidwestDairy.com in real time with expanded resources for farmers, partners and consumers. Whether you're looking for answers to staffing questions or best practices for keeping your family or employees healthy, these landing pages are being updated regularly with helpful links and information from National Milk Producers Foundation (NMPF), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other trusted sources.

Other sections include links for school nutrition teams that will allow them to continue providing as many fresh dairy products to students in need as possible, as well as a robust list of dairy-related curriculum ideas for parents who suddenly find themselves teaching their children at home. Students can take a virtual visit to a dairy farm, learn more about dairy farming, listen to daily dairy story hour and discover the importance of dairy's role in the world economy.

Please visit MidwestDairy.com to learn more about how your local and national checkoff team members are adapting to help continue driving dairy sales in this ever-changing environment. More than



ever, our organizations are unifying across the country to share ideas and help support farmers through these historic circumstances.

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Special Edition Dairy Promotion Update Highlights COVID-19 News and Resources

To quickly inform dairy farmer stakeholders of the work Midwest Dairy is doing during the COVID-19 pandemic, a [Special Edition Dairy Promotion Update](#) is now available.

A print version of this special edition newsletter was mailed to Midwest Dairy dairy farmers last week. Typically a quarterly publication, this special edition serves to provide an additional avenue of communication during this challenging time. It highlights information about several projects Midwest Dairy is working on, including new Community Relief Grants, refrigeration grants to food pantries and a partnership with NutriStudents K-12 to develop an emergency menu plan that is available for free to schools nationwide.

[MidwestDairy.com](#) is being updated on a regular basis with links to COVID-19-related resources for [farmers, partners and families](#), including information about the GENYOUth COVID-19 School Emergency Fund application available to schools nationwide.

If you did not receive a copy of the Dairy Promotion Update and would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact your local farmer relations manager.

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Research Uncovers New Application for Whey Protein

Digestive wellness has been one of the top consumer trends since 2018. With research indicating that probiotics support the immune system and overall health, more companies are offering a larger variety of products with the claim of "live active probiotics". However, one of the major problems in the practical application of probiotics is the loss of viability during processing and storage. In this month's Midwest Dairy Food Research Center (MDFRC) research webinar, Dr. Sanjeev Anand from South Dakota State University will be presenting about his team's work on modifying whey protein as a protective barrier for probiotics.



Dr. Anand and his team have been testing the feasibility of using modified whey protein as a protective covering (encapsulant) for probiotics, providing a dairy-based protective barrier for probiotics that prevent them from losing viability. This research will enhance the availability of value-added benefits from both whey protein and probiotics by creating new applications for dairy ingredients. It will indirectly increase overall milk consumption by utilizing dairy ingredients and strengthen the image of the dairy foods in the area of health and wellness.

This webinar is part of a monthly research webinar series launched by the MDFRC in late 2019 in response to feedback received from MDFRC industry members. Reaching more than 180 registrants in 2019, these monthly webinars have been an effective tool to share research updates. Based on positive feedback received from attendees of the 2019 webinars, Midwest Dairy and the MDFRC will continue to offer the monthly webinars in 2020. Information about past MDFRC research update webinars is available [online](#).

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Refrigerators Donated to Food Pantries in Need

An insight from Feeding America about the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural food pantries led to the donation of 20 commercial refrigerators on behalf of Midwest dairy farmers. Midwest Dairy identified 20 rural food pantries in need of additional refrigeration to meet elevated demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic and connected them with a refrigeration unit to help them safely serve cold dairy products to patrons.

A cover letter on behalf of Midwest dairy farmers was sent to each pantry that thanked the food pantries for their work in keeping families fed during this unprecedented time and for years to come. Undeniably Dairy coloring books containing educational information about dairy farming, crayons, Undeniably Dairy posters and an Undeniably Dairy refrigerator cling were sent to each pantry to be displayed and utilized by patrons.

The food pantry directors and staff were grateful for the donations. One food pantry director remarked, "Thank you so very much! The unit has arrived and is being installed. Now I will be able to supply more milk and cheese to our families and seniors."

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Refrigeration Equipment Provided to Midwest Schools

As school districts remain closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Midwest Dairy continues to provide support to school nutrition partners by donating much-needed refrigeration equipment for the safe distribution of cold milk and dairy products.

To date, Midwest Dairy has distributed 1,550 soft-sided milk crate cooler bags and nearly 200 milk barrels to help school districts keep milk and dairy products cold as they continue to serve students. The bags and barrels were distributed to 100 different school districts across the region, with one fourth of the district requests made by Midwest dairy farmers. The largest school district in the Midwest Dairy region, Chicago Public Schools, requested 140 milk barrels to keep milk cold as they distribute meals from more than 200 sites across the city.

The equipment is making a difference to school nutrition professionals across the region. One Mankato, Minnesota-based school nutrition professional stated, "We are so grateful for the donation that you made to us, it has helped us immensely!" Another Aberdeen, South Dakota-based school nutrition professional remarked, "Thanks so much!!! This will be so helpful for two mobile home park sites!"

In addition to the refrigeration equipment provided by Midwest Dairy, Midwest Dairy partner NutriStudents K-12, a Minnesota-based company that helps schools manage their USDA compliant food service programs efficiently, added 2 more weeks to a [COVID-19 Emergency Menu](#) previously developed in partnership with Midwest Dairy. The six-week cycle menu is free for school districts to use during the COVID-19 pandemic. School districts with 5,000 students or fewer are the ideal target for this service.

Midwest Dairy will continue to be nimble and flexible in their support to school food service partners as the pandemic evolves.

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Thank You Videos from Farmers to Other Essential Workers

Dairy farmers understand the importance of essential workers, which is why Midwest Dairy will be thanking partners the next few weeks on social media. The posts will feature a video of a dairy farmer thanking essential workers, including healthcare professionals, grocery workers, truckers, food supply chain workers, school nutrition professionals and food bank employees all working to keep our communities nourished.

All videos are posted on Midwest Dairy's [YouTube Channel](#) and will also be posted on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) over the next two weeks. To



show appreciation to others in the community, dairy farmers can share the videos on their social media channels.

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Community Relief Grants Available for Dairy Farmers to Support Local Food Pantries

Dairy farmers now have an opportunity to apply for Community Relief Grants as part of the Undeniably Dairy Grant Program. These new grants will ship a commercial-grade refrigeration unit to a local food pantry in need. There is a limited number of units available [online](#).

Community Relief Grants were created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With school and business closures, many local food pantries need additional refrigeration to provide dairy products to families in need. Midwest Dairy also wants to give dairy farmers the opportunity to engage with their communities during a time when community gatherings and on-farm events are being cancelled due to social distancing recommendations.



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