



Molly Pelzer
CEO, Midwest Dairy

Checkoff Establishes Farm to Classroom Connections

As the flurry of recent states fair activities gives way to new beginnings of a fresh academic year for students across the Midwest, I reflect on the opportunities that farmers and consumers have had to connect throughout the summer months. Farm tours, breakfasts on the farm and county and state fairs are just a few examples of how the dairy community has come together to create a positive dairy experience for consumers both on and off the farm.

As we transition our focus from the refreshment which dairy products provide during the hot, humid days of summer to the nutrition and energy they provide to students heading back to the classroom, our emphasis on dairy as a local, sustainable and enjoyable food source remains steadfast.

This school year, Midwest Dairy plans to continue working with and through Fully Developed School District Accounts to help implement programs, like dairy-based coffee bars, grab and go breakfast and after-school supper, that increase access and move more dairy in schools. Midwest Dairy farm families are also continuing to connect to students throughout the school year with programs like Adopt-A-Cow which allows students to virtually visit a dairy farm and helps illustrate dairy's farm-to-table story for a population that might not otherwise have exposure to agriculture.

Through these innovative programs that appeal to students, Midwest Dairy is continuing to provide schools and students with excellent sources of nutrition and opportunities to connect them to the farmers that produce the food. In addition, these efforts align with programs being implemented by other state and regional checkoff organizations across the country. The unified approach to connecting students to dairy showcases dairy farmers' commitment to nutrition and education and paves the way for Generation Z and beyond to establish a life-long love of dairy.

IN THIS ISSUE

Milk to My Plate Cooler Grants
Increase Milk Sales

Reputational Thought Leaders Visit
Lenkaitis Dairy Farm

Yogurt Smoothies Drive Dairy Sales
In Wichita Public Schools

[Learn more](#) about your
**checkoff investment at
work!**

[Back to top](#)

Milk to My Plate Cooler Grants Increase Milk Sales

To support increased distribution of milk and other dairy products to the food insecure, in early 2019, Midwest Dairy provided grant funding to Second Harvest Heartland for the purchase of dairy coolers to be placed in 37 food shelves across Minnesota. Results from six months of data show the effort to be paying off. Addition of the coolers has led to the distribution of 601,730 pounds of milk with an increase of 60,458 of incremental pounds of milk from the baseline usage.

In addition to funding, Midwest Dairy also provided Undeniably Dairy signage and dairy-related nutrition educational materials and recipes. Second Harvest utilized the resources to help agency partners safely distribute and market this nutritious product which is in high demand to families experiencing hunger.

One agency reported, "Previously, those who participated in this program could only receive shelf-stable milk. Now that fresh milk is available, we have a hard time keeping the cooler full as an additional 50 households are receiving the benefit of this generous gift."

To build on the success of the program and continue to generate milk sales, an additional eight agencies in the Second Harvest Heartland network, as well as nine agencies in the Channel One Network in Southeast Minnesota received funding. These coolers will be in place during the first quarter 2020.



[Back to top](#)

Reputational Thought Leaders Visit Lenkaitis Dairy Farm

A group of 10 reputational thought leaders—including a registered dietitian, a dairy case manager from Jewel-Osco and a representative from Feeding America—recently visited Lenkaitis Dairy Farm in St. Charles, Illinois, where they learned more about farm technology and responsible farm practices. The idea for the tour

originated after the group attended a Midwest Dairy-hosted Nourish Dialogue Dinner earlier this year.

While touring the farm, attendees learned about the robotic operation that Sarah and Andy Lenkaitis implemented on their farm two years ago. From robotic milkers to the giant Roomba-like automated feed pusher, the attendees experienced the farm's use of advanced technology. They also learned about cow care and comfort, the use of antibiotics and how dairy farmers are good stewards of the environment.

The attendees left with positive a impression of dairy farms. One attendee noted, "You can tell they care deeply about their work and the well-being of their animals." The Jewel dairy case manager, who engaged in conversation with the Lenkaitis' following the tour, expressed interest in bringing his whole team back for a similar experience.



[Back to top](#)

Yogurt Smoothies Drive Dairy Sales In Wichita Public Schools

Midwest Dairy provided [Wichita Public Schools](#) with an innovative breakfast grant to either start or help enhance grab and go breakfast and second chance breakfast options in 13 middle and high schools. As a result, dairy-based smoothies have been added to the daily breakfast menu in the district's 23 middle and high schools. Second chance breakfast programs across the district have also resulted in increased breakfast participation.

Data for October alone shows that these new options resulted in more than 24,000 additional pounds of milk. The projection for the 2019/2020 school year is more than 216,500 incremental pounds of milk will be used.

With vanilla low-fat yogurt as the base for the smoothies, they are a new dairy option on the school menu. Students can choose to add ingredients including fruits and granola. At Northwest High School, students can pick from four different flavors. Northwest's café manager says school breakfast participation has increased since smoothies were added. She also shared the new options and flavors appeal to both students and staff. [Click here](#) to see smoothies being made.

Because of the second chance breakfast program's popularity, some schools had to add service locations in the building to accommodate the demand. For example, at Marshall Middle School, breakfast participation has more than doubled since adding the second chance option in four locations throughout the building.



[Back to top](#)



MidwestDairy.com