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SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN DAIRY LEADERS OF TOMORROW PROGRAM

The Scholarships Recognize Students Who Are Advancing Their Education in Dairy-Related Fields

Harrisburg, Pa. – Three students from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts were recently awarded scholarships through the Dairy Excellence Foundation’s Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow (DLT) Program. Norah Bechtel of Blair County, Pennsylvania, Mattie Casner of Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, and Erin Judd of Goshen, Massachusetts were recognized with the scholarships after completing and passing at least one of the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow certification exams and associated coursework during their high school careers. As college freshmen for the 2026-27 school year, all three students received a \$3,000 scholarship to support their academic studies in dairy-related fields.

“These students all have unique experiences in the dairy industry, and they are extremely passionate about making dairy a part of their future careers. From the time they have spent working on dairy farms within their community to the leadership roles they have embraced throughout high school, these students already have an active role in the dairy industry,” said Michelle Shearer, Workforce Development Manager at the Dairy Excellence Foundation. “Now college freshmen, they are expanding on the knowledge they gained throughout their high school Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow courses and applying it to their career goals. We enjoy being able to recognize students’ hard work and dedication with these scholarships each year.”

Congratulations to these students:

Norah Bechtel is a freshman studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of Jason and Sarah Bechtel of Curryville, Blair County, Pennsylvania. Norah served as the President of her school's FFA Chapter and was a member of Pennsylvania’s 4-H Dairy Judging Team. Throughout high school, the DLT program helped Norah think deeper about which career path interested her within the dairy industry. She hopes to one day pursue a career in animal nutrition, helping dairy farmers feed their herds efficiently to meet their production needs.

"Being part of the dairy community, I’ve grown up knowing about the Dairy Excellence Foundation and all the amazing things they do for youth and the dairy industry. Knowing that I

am continuing to grow my passion and career in the dairy industry, I am honored and grateful to be chosen for the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow Student Scholarship! I feel so lucky to be a part of an industry that has so many supporters and organizations like the Dairy Excellence Foundation that help youth grow and support their endeavors,” Norah shared.

Mattie Casner is a freshman studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of John and Sara Casner of Petersburg, Huntingdon County. Mattie served on her FFA Chapter’s officer team and also created and grew her own string of show cattle. She did not grow up on a dairy farm, so the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow coursework had a large impact on Mattie’s view of the dairy industry, influencing her to want to learn more and pursue a career in dairy. She hopes to find a future career in dairy genetics to help farmers improve their herds through informed genetic decisions.

“Receiving this scholarship that recognizes my passion for the dairy industry has been a huge opportunity for me. I will use this money as an investment towards my agricultural education to pursue my career within the industry. I am truly blessed for the generous support and the honor from the Dairy Excellence Foundation. It does not go unnoticed as I hope to one day give back to this organization and the dairy industry,” Mattie said.

Erin Judd is a freshman studying animal science at SUNY Cobleskill. She is the daughter of April and Albert Judd of Goshen, Massachusetts. Erin served as the Reporter for her FFA Chapter and helped lead several fundraisers and open houses. She was also a member of the New England Junior Holstein Association for five years. Erin credits the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow courses for teaching her real-world skills that she applies on the farm, including herd health and reproduction lessons. In the future, Erin hopes to work as a genetics consultant in the dairy industry.

“Receiving the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow Student Scholarship is a great honor I have been working on since my junior year. This scholarship reflects the years of work I have put toward the dairy industry and will help me further my education,” Erin said.

The Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow program is managed by the Dairy Excellence Foundation and impacts more than 41,300 high school students each school year. The goal of the program is to prepare high school students to work in the dairy industry through classroom instruction, independent studies and virtual learning, on-farm experiences, and scholarship opportunities.

To qualify for the scholarship, students must be enrolled in a college or university beginning in the fall following their graduation from high school. This year’s recipients were selected based on their academic performance, evidence of leadership, character and integrity, and their commitment to pursuing a future career in dairy.

To learn more about the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow scholarship program, visit www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com or contact Michelle Shearer at mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org or 570-768-8316. The 2027 scholarship application will be available on March 1, 2027.

Images:

Erin Judd



Mattie Casner



Norah Bechtel



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The Center for Dairy Excellence Foundation of Pennsylvania is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax deductible organization that is Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) approved. Established in 2010, the foundation's mission is to build and invest in programs that cultivate and empower the next generation of producers, consumers, and advocates for the Pennsylvania dairy industry. Learn more at centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/.

Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow (DLT) is a program designed specifically to prepare high school students to work in the dairy industry. A three-part model program, Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow offers classroom instruction, on-farm experiences and scholarship opportunities. The DLT curriculum includes four main courses: Introduction to Dairy, Introduction to Dairy Herd Management, Introduction to Dairy Business Management, and Introduction to Dairy Technologies. The program is managed by the Center for Dairy Excellence Foundation of Pennsylvania, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax deductible organization that is Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) approved. Learn more about the program at www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com.

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