



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Emily Barge, 717-346-0849; ebarge@centerfordairyexcellence.org

November 13, 2024

NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK STARTS NOVEMBER 17, TWO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS CURRENTLY COMPLETING DAIRY HERD MANAGER APPRENTICESHIPS

Dairy Producers Can Apply to Be a Host Farm and Employer for Dairy Herd Manager Apprentices

Harrisburg, Pa. – National Apprenticeship Week is happening on November 17-23, 2024. With many Pennsylvania dairy producers looking for a more skilled workforce in farm-level management, the Center for Dairy Excellence’s Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program creates opportunities for employees to gain practical knowledge, information, and skills about progressive dairy operations that stretch beyond their past dairy experiences. The Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program is registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. Currently, there are two young dairy professionals completing Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeships on Pennsylvania dairy farms: Kristina Quinn, apprentice at Zahncroft Dairy in Berks County, and Rylee Fuller, apprentice at Laurel Grove Farm in Perry County.

“The Center continues to hear from PA dairy producers about their need for a more skilled workforce and how challenging it can be to fill this important leadership role within their team,” said Michelle Shearer, Workforce Development Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. “The Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program is an exciting opportunity for dairy producers and young dairy professionals alike. Now that we have several students in the process of completing the program, we are seeing how beneficial these apprenticeships are to developing a skilled workforce at the farm level.”

Dairy producers who are interested in developing their beginner-level employees into well-qualified candidates to serve in herd management roles are encouraged to apply to be a host farm for the Apprenticeship Program. Applications for employer farms are accepted on a rolling basis. The host farm and apprentice pairing is an important part of the apprenticeship experience.

“My host farm is a big part of it. If I didn’t have them helping me through it and encouraging me, the experience probably wouldn’t be as nice as it is. Once I have something down, they just let me do it,” said Kristina Quinn, one of the apprentices enrolled in the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program at Zahncroft Dairy in Berks County, Pa. “They’re very kind people and very understanding. It’s just small stuff, but it makes it so much better when they care about you as a person.”

The goal of the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program is to:

- Provide existing employees on dairy farms, as well as others looking for employment, the opportunity to receive related technical training and on-the-job learning as a Dairy Herd Manager.
- Create opportunities for employees to gain practical knowledge, information, and skills about progressive dairy operations stretching beyond their familiar past dairy experiences.

- Provide an employee with a position on the farm that is financially lucrative and competitive with industry standards.
- Allow existing dairy producers to develop beginner-level employees into well-qualified candidates to serve in herd management roles.
- Provide real farm perspective into what skillsets individuals need to develop to become qualified Dairy Herd Managers on mid- to large-sized dairy farm operations.

“I thought the apprenticeship could give me a better overview of what I want to do. If I decide to go to college, hopefully this experience will give me a better idea of what I want to go for. I’m a lot more hands-on and I learn better by doing versus just reading a book or going through it in a classroom,” Kristina added. “My host farm has taught me about treatments for sick cows and other protocols. I’ve expanded upon that over time. Since starting my apprenticeship, it has been a lot of growing so far.”

Dairy producers who are interested in serving as a host farm and employer for this program are expected to operate a progressive, well-managed dairy business with a positive outlook on the industry and an employee who demonstrates interest in enhancing his or her management ability. Host farms must also be willing to expose the employee to all aspects of a successful, progressive dairy operation — including financial information, management team meetings, and adequate training and consultation to achieve learning objectives. Farms must provide a safe working environment and conduct a safety and animal care overview upon the start of the program with the CDE Workforce Development Manager.

Host farms should be able to pay the employee a minimum starting wage of \$11.00 per hour with a progressive wage over 18 months that ends with \$16.00 per hour. This adheres to all federal and state employment requirements. Requested time off, hours of work, and additional details will be determined in collaboration with the farm and employee.

To learn more about the program and apply to be a host farm and employer, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/apprenticeship. Contact Michelle Shearer at mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org or call 570-768-8316 with additional questions.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 2004. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center’s mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more at centerfordairyexcellence.org.

Center for Dairy Excellence ▼ 2301 North Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA 17110 ▼ 717-346-0849 ▼ www.centerfordairyexcellence.org