For Immediate Release

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

November 20, 2026

HIGH SCHOOL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS, FREE COURSES AND CURRICULUM AVAILABLE

The Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow Program is Free for Teachers and Students

Harrisburg, Pa. – Two high school agriculture teachers from New York were awarded a $1,000 Educator Scholarship through the Dairy Excellence Foundation's Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow (DLT) program to fund professional development conferences or workshops. Arissa Hitchcock of Randolph Central School in Randolph, NY and Chelsey Mahany of Groton Jr. Sr. High School in Groton, New York each received the scholarship for the 2026-27 school year.

"Empowering the next generation of dairy producers and professionals wouldn't be possible without the educators who are in the classroom and leading students every single day," said Michelle Shearer, Workforce Development Manager at the Dairy Excellence Foundation. "That's why this Educator Scholarship program is so important. It directly supports agriculture teachers who are passionate about expanding their dairy knowledge and sharing what they learn at these trainings with their students."

Hitchcock is an Agriculture Teacher and FFA Advisor at Randolph Central School. She teaches courses in Animal Science, Vet Science, Farm to Table, Welding & Fabrication, Agriculture Science, Career & Leadership Development and Dairy/Equine Science. Her school is part of a small, rural community, about an hour south of Buffalo. Hitchcock's personal teaching philosophy ties very closely to the FFA motto: Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, and Living to Serve. She finds value in hands-on learning in and out of the classroom.

Hitchcock utilizes the free Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow Program in her Dairy Science class and encourages her students to complete several DLT lessons and labs. One of those projects involves students choosing a farm they want to make recommendations for, creating a presentation and farm layout, and then sharing their ideas to a panel of teachers and administrators.

"I am truly honored to receive the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow Educator Scholarship for 2026. The program has been tremendous in my classroom. I look forward to finding opportunities to better myself for my students, FFA members, school and community," shared Hitchcock.

Mahany serves a rural farming community in the Finger Lakes region of New York where agriculture remains a vital part of the local economy and culture. Her program provides hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for students in grades 7–12 through courses including Ag Tech, Animal Science, Plant Science, Food Science, Natural Resources, Wildlife Management, and Agricultural STEAM. Students engage in classroom instruction, laboratory experiences, field trips, supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs), internships, and leadership development through FFA. Mahany

believes students learn best through hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that connect classroom concepts to real-world applications.

Mahany has incorporated the Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow curriculum into several areas of instruction to provide students with industry-relevant, hands-on dairy education experiences. One example was within their Animal Science and dairy reproduction units, where students utilized DLT resources to analyze herd management practices, reproductive efficiency, and calf care protocols.

“Receiving this scholarship is an incredible opportunity to continue growing as an agricultural educator while connecting with teachers from across the country. I’m grateful for the support that makes professional learning like this possible,” Mahany said. “I’m excited to bring new ideas, resources, and connections back to my students, my program, and the agricultural education community in New York.”

The free Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow (DLT) program is designed specifically to prepare high school students to pursue careers in the dairy industry. Using a three-part model, the program offers online courses and classroom curriculum, on-farm experience opportunities, and annual scholarships for both educators and students. A total of more than 41,200 high school students have been impacted by the DLT program in the last year. Teachers can register for the free program this school year at www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com.

The DLT curriculum includes four main courses that teachers can incorporate into their classroom instruction or assign to students to complete independently. The courses include:

- **Introduction to Dairy –** By the end of this course, students will be able to describe the economic impact of the dairy industry, know historic events that have impacted the industry, identify different types of housing facilities as well as have a basic understanding of marketing dairy products.

- **Introduction to Dairy Herd Management** – This course provides a broad overview of how to manage a dairy herd. By the end of this course, students will be able to identify important feed types for a cow’s diet, how to interpret DHIA records, and recognize diseases by symptoms and how to treat them.

- **Introduction to Dairy Business Management** – This course provides a broad overview of how to manage a dairy business. By the end of this course, students will be able to perform a SWOT analysis, understand the factors that influence a farm’s profitability, and properly write a business plan.

- **Introduction to Dairy Technologies** – This lesson provides a broad overview of the various technologies our dairy farms use today. By the end of this course, students will be able to identify and explain several types of technologies that farmers are utilizing in their day-to-day operations to enhance the care they provide to their animals.

Lesson plans and associated resources can be accessed online and downloaded at no cost once educators or students complete the DLT registration. Certificates of Achievement are awarded in Introduction to Dairy, Dairy Herd Management, Dairy Business Management, and Dairy Technologies to students who receive a minimum of 80% on all lesson quizzes and the end of course examinations.

Student scholarship opportunities and on-farm experiences, including hands-on Exploration Experience events and an annual Farm Tour, are also available throughout the school year. To sign up for the free Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow program this school year or share with an agriculture educator you know, visit www.dairyleadersoftomorrow.com. If you have questions about the program, contact Michelle Shearer at mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org or by phone at 570-768-8316.

Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow is a program managed by the Dairy Excellence Foundation and designed specifically to prepare high school students to work in the dairy industry. To learn more about how you can support this scholarship fund or donate to provide DLT Exploration Experiences and Farm Tours to more students, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/donate.

Image:

Arissa Hitchcock



Chelsey Mahany



###

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.