



For Immediate Release

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Group photo caption: (From left) Laura Paxton, Steve Paxton, Hayley Painter, and Raechel Sattazahn were recognized as the 2025 PA Dairy Industry Award winners at the Dairy Summit.

2025 PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY INDUSTRY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Painter, Paxton and Sattazahn Were Recognized at the 2025 PA Dairy Summit

Harrisburg, Pa. – At this year's Pennsylvania Dairy Summit, the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania, Center for Dairy Excellence, and Pennsylvania Dairywomen's Association awarded three dairy professionals with the 2025 Pennsylvania Dairy Industry Awards. The annual awards program recognizes dairy professionals who showcase leadership, service, and excellence across the state's dairy industry.

All applications were reviewed by an awards committee of dairy producers and industry professionals. Nominees were evaluated for their contributions to the industry and letters of support from their peers and fellow dairy producers.

"There was an excellent pool of nominees for this year's Dairy Industry Awards, but these individuals stood out for the impact they're making in both their local communities and the dairy industry at large," said Emily Barge, Communications and Marketing Manager at the Center, who oversees the award program. "These are hard-working, passionate and forward-thinking dairy professionals, and their accomplishments are impressive. They are true examples of the Pennsylvania dairy industry's commitment to service, innovation, and excellence."

Congratulations to the following dairy professionals who were honored at the 2025 PA Dairy Summit:

The Paxton Family of Irishtown Acres in Grove City, PA received the Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Producer Award. Irishtown Acres has been a staple of the dairy industry in Mercer County, Pennsylvania for at least six generations. The Paxton family, with 535 cows in their herd, exemplifies service and leadership within the Pennsylvania dairy industry and Mercer County agricultural community. The Paxton family is dedicated to safety on their farm and passionately shares this message with other farmers. In 2019, Irishtown Acres hosted a farm safety twilight meeting that more than 125 people attended. Several family members, including Jennifer and Sue, have been involved with farm safety days and served on the Mercer County Farm Safety committee. Additionally, at least three family members have served on the Mercer County Extension board in recent years. Their presence on that board was a voice for farm safety programming across the dairy industry.

Several generations of the family have also been involved with 4-H dairy clubs, with Steve previously serving as a 4-H leader. Irishtown Acres frequently welcomes students, college groups, and community groups to visit their farm, including the Mercer County Farm Bureau Legislative Tour. The family is very active in outreach to the public and posts videos and shares stories on social media. Laura has been involved with dairy education for urban youth at Farm Day in the Shenango Valley and is a member of the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program's Board of Directors.

More recently, the family has represented Mercer County dairy producers through the "Tractors & Tinsel Drive Thru" parade. Beyond their dedication to outreach and community service, Irishtown Acres has a reputation for strong production. They have been called upon by other Jersey producers looking to build their own herds or for improvement as a source for breeding stock and heifers. The Paxton family demonstrates a true desire to promote and grow the dairy industry through learning and serving.

"If you take care of the little things, the big things take care of themselves. My brother and I grew the farm very slowly, so I think we really had the chance to learn as we grew. When we were little, there were 35 cows. Today, we have 535 cows," shared Steve Paxton. "My grandmother always said, 'Find a job you love to do and you'll never work a day in your life.' That's the philosophy I live by. I really enjoy what I do. There are bad days, but overall, it's exciting and challenging. I look forward to it every day."

Raechel Sattazhan, Director of Industry and Membership Relations at Horizon Farm Credit, received the Pennsylvania Dairy Service Award. Raechel Sattazahn is a local, state, and national dairy industry leader who enthusiastically advocates and serves young and beginning farmers across many organizations and platforms – including in her role as Director of Industry and Membership Relations at Horizon Farm Credit and her family's dairy farm, Zahncroft Dairy. She is committed to Pennsylvania agriculture, investing her time and talents to develop the next generation of dairy leaders. In 2010, Raechel collaborated with 18 agribusinesses and organization stakeholders to brainstorm the needs of young and beginning farmers and ideate solutions to address those needs. Through her leadership, that group of Farm Credit "partners" developed the framework for the award-winning Ag Biz Masters program. The two-year program focuses on providing participants with the tools needed to help them as they launch or grow their business.

Raechel has also served in leadership for both the Northeast and North American Dairy Challenge Competitions, developing social media intern opportunities during the contest to expose college students to marketing. She has also been a key leader in the Pennsylvania Ag & Food Careers website, a project coordinated by a coalition of agribusinesses who support the growth of Pennsylvania's agriculture industry. Raechel regularly uses her passion and communication skills to tell the industry's story and develop dairy youth. She is a guest writer with Hoard's Dairyman and in 2024, spoke to the U.S. Senate Ag Subcommittee Hearing, sharing about her dairy farm and Farm Credit's young and beginning farmer mission. A previous state dairy princess and national dairy judging champion, she also volunteers with local dairy promotion and coaches the judging team.

With her family's dairy farm located in Berks County, Pennsylvania, Raechel is actively involved in the Berks County agricultural community working with youth. She and her husband chaired the dairy cattle show at the Berks County Fair for over 10 years. She is a long-time dairy cattle judging coach of Berks County 4H and FFA youth, and her expertise and training has led to numerous state and national winners.

“The dairy industry has always been a part of my life, and I honestly can’t imagine my life without a connection to dairy. I desire to support this great industry so that others can have similar opportunities that I’ve been blessed with over the years,” Sattazahn said. “After graduating from Penn State with a degree in Animal Science and marrying my college sweetheart, my path took me back into dairy on his family dairy farm in Berks County. Nothing is better than seeing the excitement in my children when working with dairy cattle and learning about other aspects of the farm. My greatest hope is that my contributions to the dairy industry have made a positive impact on others’ lives.”

Stephanie and Hayley Painter of The Painterland Sisters received the Pennsylvania Dairy Innovator Award. Stephanie and Hayley Painter demonstrate exceptional innovation in the dairy industry. They have built a strong, values-driven brand, The Painterland Sisters, that incorporates regenerative agriculture and delivers high-quality products. Their organic Skyr yogurt, available in all 50 states, is a testament to their product excellence, backed by a deep commitment to environmental stewardship and their vision for a better agricultural system. The Painterland Sisters began business planning in 2018 and sold their first yogurt in March of 2022. Fast forward to today, they have a nationally distributed yogurt line and produce approximately 270,000 units of yogurt each week. They use milk sourced from 25 PA dairy farms, including their own family’s fourth-generation dairy farm in Tioga County, Pa.

The Painterland Sisters consistently leverage partnerships, marketing strategies, and leadership development to grow their business. Through their focus on continuous improvement and collaborations with organizations like the Center for Dairy Excellence, Pasa, PA Preferred, and more, their story is one of young female entrepreneurs who are succeeding and reshaping the industry landscape for generations to come. The sisters have had the distinguished opportunity to serve on the board of Team PA and be part of the new Pennsylvania Organic Center of Excellence Advisory Committee to the Secretary of Agriculture. They have prioritized their products being certified as “Pennsylvania Preferred,” ensuring their yogurts are produced and processed in Pennsylvania to reinforce their commitment to supporting Pennsylvania farmers. The Painterland Sisters are the first brand to be PA Preferred Organic.

They are also actively involved in various dairy industry initiatives – from engaging with grade-school students and speaking to the PA Dairy Princesses to engaging with the community at events like the Farm Bureau’s Annual Meeting, Ag Progress Days, and local county fairs. The sisters work to communicate directly with youth and spread awareness of the various opportunities available in the agricultural sector through platforms like the PA Friends of Agriculture’s Mobile Agriculture Immersion Lab. They have also hosted over 45 tours of their family’s farm, Painterland Farms, to FFA, 4-H, Youth Leadership groups and more. In 2023, Stephanie and Hayley were named Forbes’ “30 Under 30 for Food & Drink,” and they have been recognized on the Congress Floor twice for their work in agriculture.

“We began our brand for the future of our family’s dairy farm, but now our ‘why’ continues to grow. We recognize that the challenges facing dairy farmers today—such as fluctuating market prices, environmental concerns, and changing consumer preferences— require innovative solutions and a supportive community,” shared Hayley Painter. “We aim to connect with consumers on a personal level, sharing not just our yogurt but also our story behind it. By doing so, we hope to foster a genuine appreciation for the hard work and dedication that goes into farming.”

The Dairy Industry Awards are offered annually to Pennsylvania residents. Qualified applicants stay in the nomination pool for three years after being submitted for consideration. Nominators can update the nomination each of the two years following their original submission. Once a candidate is honored as a

winner in an award category, they or individuals representing them are not eligible to win in any other category for two subsequent years. Nominations for next year's award program will be accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year, closing in November of 2025.

To submit a nomination and for more information about the awards program, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/awards or call the Center at 717-346-0849.

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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 www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.

PDMP is a not-for-profit, farmer-driven organization advancing the state's dairy industry through improved productivity and economic viability with continued stewardship of our animals, environment, and community. Programs offered by PDMP are designed by dairy producers, for dairy producers. For more information on PDMP, visit their website at pdmp.org.

The Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association is the oldest dairy group in Pennsylvania. The Dairymen's Milkshake is the top-selling food item at the Food Court. The Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association has been supporting "Fill a Glass with Hope®" with agriculture partners, Feeding PA, American Dairy Association North East, corporate partners and food banks since 2015. Over the past three years, the PA Dairymen have donated more than \$1.4 million to programs including The Calving Corner; agricultural and educational projects; initiatives and scholarships; the Fill A Glass with Hope® fresh milk campaign for neighbors in need; the Choose PA Dairy consumer education and awareness campaign; the PA Farm Bureau Mobile Ag Education Lab that travels to schools; and the PA Dairy Princess and Promotion Program. Their philanthropic efforts build a brighter future for all Pennsylvanians. For more information, visit www.padairymens.com.