



For Immediate Release

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February 16, 2026

Group photo caption: (From left) Bernie Morrissey, Josh Brubaker, Tony Brubaker, Mike Brubaker, Jesse Bitler on behalf of David Bitler, and Jeremy Martin were recognized as the 2026 PA Dairy Industry Award winners at the Dairy Summit.

2026 PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY INDUSTRY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Bitler, Brubaker, Martin and Morrissey Were Recognized at the 2026 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 four dairy professionals with the 2026 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 community-focused dairy professionals who lead with heart and integrity. 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 2026 PA Dairy Summit:

Jeremy Martin of Mountain View Holsteins in Berks County, Pa. received the Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Producer Award. Jeremy Martin and his wife, Cindy, are quiet forces in the Pennsylvania dairy industry. Jeremy was raised on the 49- acre farm he now owns and purchased it in 2011 from his mother. His father passed away while he was a teenager, which thrust him into management at an early age. At that time, the farm was considered small and operated a small land base. Jeremy has been driven to quietly excel. He added a double-eight parlor and holding area, and over the next 13 years, he added calf housing, a free stall barn, concrete bunker silos, heifer barn, manure storage facilities and a shop. He adopted critical dairy management skills and

was not afraid to add technology such as a robotic feed pusher, heat detection system, misting system, cow mattresses, and automatic manure scrapers. Additionally, he improved his small herd to 140 milking cows and increased pounds and solids shipped per cow each year. Currently, the herd's RHA fat is 1,230 pounds and protein is 912 for his 2x milking herd.

In 2017, Jeremy saw the need to add diversity and added a small custom harvesting business. He also purchased an adjoining broiler farm which added more diversity and land base. As he grew, he saw a need to get involved and became a board member on Lancaster DHIA. He actively attends as many dairy events as he can, continuously looks for ways to improve his own operation, and operates every aspect of his own business to perfection. He recently lost his milk contract and remained confident and positive. He spoke on producer calls and was not looking to blame, but simply sought out a way to find a new market. With all this happening, Jeremy and Cindy graciously opened up their farm to host 300+ people for the Berks County Holstein Picnic. Jeremy's work ethic, integrity and selflessness are the characteristics that define what it means to be a Distinguished Dairy Producer.

"Dairy farming is a great way to raise a family. The dairy industry is something I enjoy, and I want to be a positive and professional face for the industry. Our farm is always open to visitors, and we're willing to show what we do and why we do it," Martin shared. "My philosophy is: if a job is worth doing, it's worth doing right. As a small producer, I can learn from others no matter their size or even if they are in a completely different industry."

David Bitler of Vista Grande Farm in Berks County, Pa. received one of the Pennsylvania Dairy Service Awards. David Bitler of Vista Grande Farm has enjoyed a career as a dairy farmer on his family's Berks County operation with his wife, Phoebe, son Jesse and daughter-in-law Becky. Over the past 30 years, he has also worked to help other dairy producers market and purchase cattle with honesty, uprightness, firsthand knowledge and marketing skills. Dave has been known to take interest in his customers not only for his personal gain but for the customer as well. He lives by the motto of treating the customer how he would like to be treated.

Dave provides a real service to the dairy industry through his model of marketing cattle. He offers assistance to those who are entering the dairy business, exiting the industry, expanding, or just have extra marketable animals. He strives to provide a service that is superior to both the buyer and seller, and keeps his fees for his service fair to both to the seller and buyer. One fellow dairy producer shared a positive experience working with Dave as he exited the dairy industry: "Having sold our milking herd and then as springing heifers came due, it was a wonderful experience from the beginning to the end working with Dave. In my years of working with him, I have never had a farmer, cattle dealer, or individual say a negative thing about Dave which is unusual."

When faced with health challenges or adversity on the farm, Dave always remains upbeat and a man of faith in business as well as each part of his life.

"I strive to be a 'cattle broker' rather than a 'jockey' – moving cattle directly from one dairy operation to another. Since I am working for both the buyer and the seller, I seek a fair value for both. I try to provide a service that is helpful to both. I have worked to build a large network of contacts on farms of various sizes, breeders, industry people, truckers and other brokers," Bitler said. "We have provided cattle to several beginning families so they could fill their stalls and provide an income until they could purchase cattle of their own. It has been a great satisfaction to

see many of these young people go on to develop successful operations, businesses, and careers.”

Brubaker Farms LLC (Mike, Tony and Josh Brubaker) of Lancaster County, Pa. received the Pennsylvania Dairy Innovator Award. Brubaker Farms, LLC and its owners – Mike, Tony and Josh Brubaker – have consistently demonstrated a commitment to improving and innovating their dairy business over the last 10 years. The Brubakers have also remained closely focused on their community and the broader dairy industry. Over the last 10 years, the Brubakers have improved milk production per cow per day by 25% and energy corrected milk production by 31%. During this period, the Brubakers also managed the purchase and expansion of a satellite milking center that allowed them to grow cow numbers. They have demonstrated a commitment to innovative change and adopted common sense technology into their operation, whether that be cow/health monitoring systems, innovative feed ingredients to improve feed conversion rates (lbs. of milk per lb. of dry matter), or breeding programs to optimize days in milk levels to maximize production.

The Brubakers have recognized the shift in market demands for components in this 10-year period and have gradually made changes to achieve higher components while also increasing milk yield to achieve a top 10 industry energy corrected milk standard. The Brubakers have also made improvements to their agronomy program in an environmentally stewardship-minded manner, improving yields and revenue per acre while also staying committed to conservation practices, evidenced by receiving the Leopold Conservation Award in 2021. These practices include dragline application of manure, manure injection, and installing a pipeline to transport manure from the satellite to the main dairy where a digester is located. The Brubakers have grown their methane digester that recycles waste and produces power in an environmentally responsible manner.

Their commitment to their team is evidenced by a lower than industry average turnover rate and a seasoned workforce that Brubaker Farms recognizes with retirement and health insurance benefits. In 2025, the Brubakers purchased a nearby dairy operation to achieve greater efficiencies and grow their business. The Brubakers provide frequent farm tours, host events for residential neighbors, and are ambassadors for the dairy industry to the community. The Brubakers demonstrate the innovation and synergy possible between profit, people, production agriculture, and the planet.

“We believe in people first. We can only accomplish top animal care and environmental stewardship by surrounding ourselves with great people from outside our business and building and empowering great people inside the business,” the Brubakers shared. “We believe it is a privilege to be part of this industry. We want to create a business that is both financially and environmentally sustainable, so future generations can continue to be part of this great industry.”

Bernie Morrissey received one of the Pennsylvania Dairy Service Awards. A respected businessman of Morrissey Insurance, Bernie Morrissey has proven that he stands with farmers. That has especially true since 2009 when milk prices plummeted. Bernie relentlessly persevered to do all he could on the policy side. He attended local meetings, hearings, and press conferences, always speaking up for dairy farmers. Before long, he found a close ally in U.S. House Rep. Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson of Pennsylvania. When whole milk and 2% milk were taken out of the nation’s public schools by the federal government, Bernie got to work and gave Nelson Troutman’s hand-painted “Drink Whole Milk (virtually) 97% Fat Free” round bales his marketing touch. While Nelson painted more bales, Bernie set forth printing large replica banners and yard signs, and before long,

he had gone around and convinced other agribusinesses to join him – capturing the attention of policymakers and the general public.

Bernie's tireless work and his service as chairman of the Grassroots PA Dairy Advisory Committee started a movement and soon led to the creation of 97MILK to raise awareness and bring whole milk as a choice back to schools. These efforts by his Grassroots PA Dairy Advisory Committee and by 97MILK are all-volunteer. Bernie's committee has been invited to testify before the Pennsylvania Senate Majority Policy Committee (2021) and before the United States Senate Agriculture Committee (2025). Under his leadership and perseverance, the committee has hosted rallies and educational meetings for lawmakers in D.C.

Bernie's efforts have helped move the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act further each year, with the bill finally being passed in early 2026. Bernie continues to drive the message to those who need to hear it. That kind of drive comes from his big heart. Bernie has energetic determination and an outgoing personality to engage with everyone he meets. Bernie, who turned 89 in November, has a uniquely outstanding record of doing what's right during his time in business serving dairy farmers – taking genuine interest in knowing them and their farms and the landscape that affects their family businesses. In his retirement, he has served as a determined advocate and volunteer for dairy farmers.

“I've worked directly with state and federal legislators and government officials to pass meaningful legislation for dairy. I've worked to help insurance companies develop insurance policies and programs to properly insure against financial disaster and to make farm insurance affordable,” Morrissey said. “My 'why' is my love of God, family and neighbors, including farmers. They are hard-working people, and my dairy farmer clients are also my friends.”

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 2026.

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.