



## For Immediate Release

**Media Contact:** Emily Barge, 717-346-0849; [ebarge@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:ebarge@centerfordairyexcellence.org)

February 19, 2026

**Photo caption:** A group of 31 young dairy professionals and one college educator received scholarships to attend the 2026 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit this February.

### **YOUNG DAIRY PROFESSIONALS RECOGNIZED WITH SCHOLARSHIPS AT DAIRY SUMMIT** *The Scholarships Allowed 31 Young Dairy Professionals to Network and Expand Their Skills*

**Harrisburg, Pa.** – A group of 31 young dairy professionals and one college educator recently received scholarships to attend the 2026 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit this February in Grantville, Pa. The Pennsylvania Dairy Men's Association, the Center for Dairy Excellence, and the Dairy Excellence Foundation awarded the Young Dairy Professionals Scholarships to individuals between the ages of 18-30 who are either in high school, college or working on dairy farms in Pennsylvania. The scholarships support young professionals who are passionate about the future of dairy and motivated to grow their skills through networking and professional development.

“It was nice to be surrounded by people whose lives, like mine, revolve around dairy. The speakers inspired me in my own career goals with what I want to do with my farm, and the mindset I need to achieve my goals. They also encouraged me to reflect on how the little things we do every day make a big difference long-term,” shared Claire Hahn of Silvercrest Farm, LLC. “One thing I wasn't really expecting was how much I learned from being around other farmers and listening to what they had to say with the knowledge they've accumulated over their years of experience. After the Summit, I was able to return to the farm with a clearer vision of my 'True North' and the confidence to handle difficult situations when they arise.”

Individuals who received the Young Dairy Professionals Scholarship and attended the Summit include Rebekah Aldrich, Isabella Anderson, Malayna Barnhart, Kelly Bliss, Sarah Bundy, Hannah Dice, Rylee Fuller, Sophie Griswold, Claire Hahn, Addison Harpster, Alanna Homan, Ava Kaskela, Bryanne Keller, Anna Kennedy, Sara Kennedy, Emma Kershner, Regan Kreitzer, Sophia Latour, Anna Longenecker, Miranda Nickerson, Joanne Powell, Kristina Quinn, Sara Reed, Jesslyn Risser, Jacob Schuckers, Lyndsey Smith, Caitlyn VanDeusen, Sophia Wendt, Abigail Winemiller, Ciera Wolff, Taylor Zacniewski, and Miranda Zimmerman.

The scholarship winners attended the two-day Dairy Summit as well as a Young Dairy Professionals Reception. During the reception, they rotated through different career areas where they could network with dairy professionals who work in various fields – from herd management, nutrition and veterinary medicine to marketing, business and more.

“I am incredibly grateful to be able to attend the Dairy Summit through the Young Dairy Professionals Scholarship. It was an invaluable experience that allowed me to connect with industry leaders, gain insight into current challenges and innovations in the dairy sector, and build relationships with other driven students and professionals,” shared Ava Kaskela, a student at the

University of Delaware. “I would absolutely encourage any college student to apply. It’s an opportunity to step outside the classroom, expand your network, and see firsthand where our industry is headed.”

The reception also featured three panelists who shared advice and insight about their careers in the dairy industry. Each panelist reflected on how their educational and life experiences prepared them for full-time careers serving the dairy industry. Paige Peiffer, one of the panelists, is a Sales Support Specialist at Premier Select Sires. She described the activities and opportunities she participated in during her college career at The Pennsylvania State University before joining the team at Premier Select Sires. She gave advice and reflected on her current role, where she provides reproductive and genetic consulting to customers as well as sales and technical support for CowManager herds.

Drew Walton, another panelist at the Young Dairy Professionals Reception, is the Herd Manager at Walton Farms, a family-owned dairy in Cochranville, PA, overseeing 1,500 cows and 1,000 youngstock. A 2020 graduate of The Pennsylvania State University with a degree in animal science, Drew shared his journey working at Oakfield Corners Dairy for a year before returning to the family farm in 2021. He talked to young professionals about working with different generations of family members and how he has enhanced herd management practices in his current role.

“I decided to participate in the panel because I remember how informative and helpful I found the advice shared by previous panel members when I was a recipient of the Young Dairy Professionals Scholarship. By sharing my career journey, I hope I could encourage more young people to pursue a career as a dairy herd manager and better understand the skills required for the role,” Walton said. “It’s always rewarding to connect with younger professionals in the dairy industry — there’s a lot to learn from them as well.”

George DeMers shared his journey during the panel discussion as well. DeMers is a dairy veterinarian based in Lancaster County. Currently employed with Quarryville Herd Health Associates, he works with farms of all shapes and sizes to achieve herd health and management goals. Following his undergraduate studies and dairy research at The Pennsylvania State University, he is a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine where he focused on food animal and dairy production medicine.

“I felt obliged to give back and participate on the panel after everything the Center for Dairy Excellence and Dairy Excellence Foundation have done for me. I wouldn’t be where I am today without the various internships I completed [through the Foundation],” DeMers added.

Young dairy professionals who are interested in receiving a scholarship for the 2027 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit should look for applications to be released in November 2026. Individuals who are attending high school, college or working on dairy farms between the ages of 18-30 are eligible to apply. The 2027 PA Dairy Summit will take place on February 3-4, 2027 in State College, Pa.

Visit [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/summit-scholarship](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/summit-scholarship) to learn more or contact Michelle Shearer at 717-346-0849 or by email at [mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org).

###

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/](http://centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/).

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](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.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](http://www.padairymens.com).

**Center for Dairy Excellence Foundation ▼ 2301 North Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA 17110 ▼ 717-346-0849 ▼**

**[www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/)**