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## **For Immediate Release**

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**February 14, 2017**

### **CENTER, DAIRYMEN'S AND PDMP HONOR PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY INDUSTRY LEADERS**

*JoBo Holsteins, England, Itle, Smith and Kennedys Recognized at 2017 Pa. Dairy Summit*

**Harrisburg, Pa.** – The Center for Dairy Excellence, Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association, and the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania recognized five leaders who exemplify stewardship and excellence in Pennsylvania's dairy industry at the 2017 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit in Lancaster.

Dairy farmers and industry representatives are invited to nominate their peers each year in the fall. Applications are reviewed and recipients selected by a committee comprised of two Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association board members, two Center for Dairy Excellence board members, two Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania board members and one representative from the Penn State Extension Dairy Team.

Award recipients will be recognized with a place in the Dairy Hall of Fame at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex.

#### **2017 Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Producer: JoBo Holstein Farm**

The John Hess Family of JoBo Holstein Farm in Gettysburg, Pa., has demonstrated superior management capabilities with their dairy business and provided outstanding leadership and service to the dairy industry.

By the time John and Bonnie Hess were married in 1966, John had been operating his dairy farm for four years in Lancaster. In 1971, the Hess family moved to Adams County with their three children where they milked 50 cows. The farm and family grew to include five children, four of whom are active partners in managing and operating 1,000 acres of land and nearly 1,000 milk cows, plus 800 young stock.

The family developed an LLC to help identify roles for the family. John serves as the CEO while Josie keeps the records and completes bookwork, John oversees crops and repairs, Joy implements the herd health program as the herds person, and as the dairy operations manager, Dale sets the feed rations among other tasks. Together, the family has increased herd size and the rolling herd average with their management program.

John and Bonnie, along with their children and grandchildren, are active in many farm organizations including Adams County Farm Bureau, 4-H, Pa. Dairymen's Association board of directors, American Dairy Association North East's Speakers Bureau and they also represent their cooperative, Land O'Lakes, as delegates in addition to membership in many other community organizations.

The Hess family opens their farm to the public for agriculture education opportunities each year since 1978 when they began hosting field trips for nearby schools. They strive to connect

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students, along with teachers and parents, with the farmers that produce their food. Additionally, about 300 community members enjoy a picnic hosted at the farm each September. The Hess family has shown their dedication to connecting with consumers to better understand science, technology and efforts behind dairy farming.

### **2017 Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Woman: Laura England**

Laura England, of North Wales in Montgomery County, has distinguished herself in her leadership and service to the dairy industry, both on the farm and to the broader agriculture industry.

Laura's career in the dairy industry and agriculture was set in motion when she milked her first cow at the age of 10 on her family's dairy farm in Blair County. Since then, she has dedicated her time, energy and passion to promoting the dairy industry and its positive impact on health and wellness, local communities and the state's economy.

Throughout her career, Laura has directed communications and marketing programs to promote and build connections with consumers of dairy products. In the 15 years Laura worked for Atlantic Dairy Cooperative, which later merged with Land O'Lakes, she developed programs aimed at business leaders and industry partners to foster support for and understanding of dairy-led initiatives.

She is most proud of the campaigns and programs she created during her 16 years working with the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association team. Working together under Laura's direction, the staff launched the "Your Milk Comes from a Good Place" consumer education campaign. More recently, she played a key role in extending the *Fill a Glass with Hope*® fresh milk program to all eight Feeding Pennsylvania food banks, bringing fresh milk to families in a time of need. Laura was active on the national stage in developing an award-winning issues management and crisis preparedness program.

Laura's work promoting the dairy industry continues from her current position as the director of the Bureau of Market Development at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Her team works closely with the Center for Dairy Excellence on dairy-related programs and consumer initiatives like the PA Preferred Program.

### **2017 Pennsylvania Dairy Innovator: Jan Itle**

Jan Itle from Valewood Farms in Loretto, Cambria County, has provided tremendous innovation to progress Pennsylvania's dairy industry toward a brighter future, by advancing the marketplace and creating new opportunities for innovation on her family's dairy farm.

Itle has spent more than 40 years working with her seven brothers and extended family. From the barn to the milk delivery truck, Itle and her family process and package the milk produced by their cows into a wide range of dairy products. They operate a retail store in addition to a home delivery service in a 50-mile radius of the farm. The Valewood commitment to quality milk begins with Jan's management programs in the barn. She works as the herd manager directing nearly 50 employees. She focuses on improving herd health and under Itle's oversight, the Valewood herd of 200 registered Holsteins produces high quality milk for their customers. She believes good tasting milk begins with healthy cows.

A former member of the 4-H, Itle is dedicated to serving 4-H members as a long-time dairy club and livestock club leader and holds a seat on the county's 4-H advisory board. She has also volunteered as a leader for the county dairy princess and promotion committee and strongly supports the Ag in the Classroom initiative. Additionally, she developed a "Moo to You"



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formal school tour program which reaches about 5,000 students each year in addition to other community events hosted on the farm which reach thousands of more neighbors in their community.

She served on the Allied Milk Producer's Board for 27 years, holding the office of Secretary/Treasurer for many of the years. She was able to provide insight into consumer concerns and tastes for dairy foods.

She has devoted her life to Valewood Farms and the dairy industry with "a bright smile and warm optimism for the dairy cow and her life."

### **2017 PA Dairy Industry Service Award: James and Rita Kennedy**

James (Jim) and Rita Kennedy from Four Seasons Farm in Valencia have distinguished themselves in serving the greater interest of Pennsylvania's dairy industry and its individual dairy farms.

Jim and Rita Kennedy both lived on dairy farms in western Pennsylvania. Jim grew up in the 4-H raising Brown Swiss on his family's farm and across the county, Rita owned Jerseys and Holsteins.

In 1968, Jim and Rita purchased his parent's farm in Butler County milking 28 Brown Swiss cows on 75 acres. Over the years, they more than doubled the herd size to 75 plus cows and purchased additional acreage to grow the farm to 700 acres. Their partnership on the farm worked well – Jim managed the crops and Rita was the herds person and cared for the calves. Jim's philosophy in managing the dairy farm and serving the industry is, "Always take care of your business to make the herd better, through better breeding stock, even in hard time. Don't quit – think ahead."

Over the years, the Kennedys have accepted every leadership or volunteer opportunity that came their way. Jim judged dairy cows at local, national and international shows, chartered the Butler County Dairy Promotion committee in 1973, served on the National Brown Swiss Cattle Breeders Association board and implemented the Agriculture Committee for County Commissioners of Pennsylvania. He also served on the Pa. Dairy Task Force and served on the Center for Dairy Excellence board of directors as the 1<sup>st</sup> president, and member of Dairy Policy Action Coalition. He has volunteered at the All-American Dairy Show and has been a member of the Grange for more than 50 years.

Rita served as director and coordinator for Pa. Dairy Princess and Promotion Services, Inc. and on the county dairy princess committee and as a 4-H club leader with Jim. Rita has also served as a board member for the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program and on the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association board of directors, holding offices on both boards. She led the Pennsylvania Dairy Industry and Allied Association Board from 1992 to 2016 in the positions of Vice President and President to plan the All-American Dairy Show. She has served on the National Dairy Board and national Brown Swiss Board of directors in addition to establishing the National Dairy Shrine scholarships for college students.

### **'Golden Milkshake' Honorary Service Award: David Smith**

In addition to the four annual awards, the board chairmen of the Center for Dairy Excellence, Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association, and the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania presented a special award, titled the "Golden Milkshake" Honorary Service Award, to David Smith for tremendous dedication and commitment to furthering Pennsylvania's dairy industry.



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A fourth generation member of a dairy farm family, Smith grew up helping to raise and care for his family's Guernsey herd in Annville. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Dairy Science from Virginia Tech in 1979 and returned to the family's Lebanon Valley Farms milking herd to co-manage with his father, Robert. He also worked in the family's dairy store, Ja-Mar Dairy, where they processed, bagged and sold their Guernsey milk until the store closed in the late 1980s.

Now owner of the family farm, Smith co-manages the operation with son Joel, a Penn State graduate. They raise approximately 140 head of cattle and farm nearly 400 acres including the 175 acres on the home farm.

Smith is active in the local Young Farmer's group, served as the leader of the county 4-H dairy club and dairy judging team coach, and was a board member of the Lebanon County Farm Bureau and a member of the Pennsylvania Guernsey Breeders' Association.

Smith became the executive director for the Dairymen's Association in 1995 after serving as a board member for six years. He has continued to give tirelessly to the organization and its mission of furthering the dairy industry for the past 22 years. He manages the daily operations of the organization, overseeing the Association's milkshakes and dairy foods business at the Pennsylvania Farm Show. Through expansion and new product introduction, gross sales have been increased approximately 500 percent in 15 years allowing for \$1 million in grants to be distributed to dairy and agriculture programs focusing on next generation development.

One of his most recent achievements has been building the relationship between the Central Pennsylvania Food bank and Feeding Pennsylvania to raise money to put fresh milk in food banks across the state with the *Fill a Glass with Hope*® program. Now, Smith is paving the way for the Calving Corner, Pennsylvania's Dairy Cow Birthing Center, to launch at the 2018 Pennsylvania Farm Show.

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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](http://centerfordairyexcellence.org).



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PHOTO CAPTION IMG\_1060.JPG: The John Hess family of JoBo Holstein Farm in Gettysburg was recognized as the 2017 Distinguished Dairy Producer. Pictured from left, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, Executive Director of PDMP Alan Novak, Jocelyn Riser, Hanna Riser, Dale Brown (back), Bonnie Hess (front), Josie Riser and John Hess.



PHOTO CAPTION IMG\_1077.JPG: Laura England, director of the Bureau of Market Development at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, was recognized as the 2017 Distinguished Dairy Woman. Pictured left to right, Bill England, Laura England, Bertha England, Executive Director of PA Dairymen's Association David Smith and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding.



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PHOTO CAPTION IMG\_1096.JPG: Jan Itle, from Valewood Farms in Loretto, is recognized as the 2017 Dairy Innovator, pictured here with Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding.



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PHOTO CAPTION IMG\_1124.JPG: PA Dairymen's Executive Director David Smith was awarded the "Golden Milkshake Honorary Service Award" for his years of service and dedication. Pictured left to right, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, Joel Smith, Sharon Smith, David Smith, Erin Smith Wachter and Aaron Wachter.



PHOTO CAPTION Jim and Rita\_Krieg2.jpg: James and Rita Kennedy from Four Seasons Farm in Valencia, were awarded the 2017 Dairy Industry Service award for their years of service to the dairy industry. Photo provided by Dieter Krieg, Farmshine.