



For Immediate Release

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Dairymen's, PDMP, Center Honor Dairy Industry Leaders with Awards *Hawbaker, Hoover, PA Beef Council and Mercer Vu Farm Named Recipients*

Harrisburg, Pa. – The Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association, Center for Dairy Excellence and the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania join for an industry-wide awards program that recognizes and showcases leadership, stewardship, and excellence in Pennsylvania's dairy industry, through four awards presented at the 2018 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit in State College.

All applications received were reviewed 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.

The four awards recognized through this program include:

- 1. Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Producer Award** – Recognizes dairy producers (either individual or farm enterprise) who have demonstrated superior management capabilities within their own dairy business and provide outstanding leadership and service to the dairy industry.
- 2. Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Woman Award** – Recognizes a dairy woman who has distinguished herself in her leadership and service to the dairy industry, both on the farm or to the broader industry.
- 3. Pennsylvania Dairy Service Award** – Recognizes an individual in the industry who has distinguished him or herself in serving the greater interest of Pennsylvania's dairy industry and its individual dairy farms.
- 4. Pennsylvania Dairy Innovator Award** – Recognizes an individual or business entity that has provided tremendous innovation to progress Pennsylvania's dairy industry toward a brighter future, either by advancing the marketplace or creating new opportunities for innovation on the dairy farm.

The **Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Woman Award** was awarded to Karen Hawbaker, who operates Warm Spring Dairy, a 180-cow dairy farm in Chambersburg in Franklin County that is a member of Land O'Lakes.

Karen and her late husband Rodney began farming in 1988. Over the years, the farm has been recognized for numerous production awards, consistently being in the top DHIA herds for production and milk quality. Since Rodney's passing in 2011 from a farming accident, Karen has continued to operate the farm business on her own with the help of several dedicated employees. Her focus is on the cows, with custom operators doing most of the field work.



Karen has been able to share her passion in dairy and faith with others through her work in Love in Action Ministries, which established a dairy farm at a Bolivia orphanage. Karen has served on the LIAM board and its dairy committee. She has also volunteered her time to work with the farm in Bolivia. In addition to her involvement with LIAM, Karen is a member of Antrim Brethren in Christ Church where she teaches fourth grade Sunday school, leads a grief support group and helps with audio visual ministry every other month.

The LIAM dairy project was started by Rodney as a plan to build a dairy in support of the orphanage, Andrea's Home of Hope and Joy. After planning the farm, Rod and Karen led fundraisers to build the dairy and then traveled to Bolivia in 2009 for the start of the barn, traveling there three other times before Rod died in 2011. The project was delayed at that point, but cows arrived in the fall of 2014 and are now doing well, with the farm providing milk and vocation for the children at the home.

The **Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Producer Award** was awarded to Reid Hoover. Reid, his wife Diane and son Brad, own and operate Brook-Corner Farms, a 400-cow dairy in Lebanon, Lebanon County. Brook Corner Farms ships to Swiss Premium in Lebanon, Pa. and has a rolling herd average of 28,600 pounds with 1130 pounds of fat and 854 pounds protein.

Reid grew up on the family dairy farm and began working there full-time in 1981, joining the family partnership in 1983. In 1996, he and Diane became the full owners of Brook Corners Holsteins, with their son Brad joining the partnership in 2015. Reid and Diane have three other grown children – Aaron, Brenden and Audrey.

Reid has shared his valuable time in various leadership capacities within the dairy industry. Currently he is the president of the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association and the chair of the 2020 Nation Holstein Convention being hosted by Pennsylvania. He is a past president of the Pennsylvania Holstein Association and a past president of the Lebanon County Holstein Club. He currently serves on the Center for Dairy Excellence board of directors and has served on the Lebanon County DHIA Board. Reid and Diane have hosted school groups, 4-H clubs, and other farm and community groups on their dairy farm. They also hosted the Northeast Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge and have opened the farm for Lebanon County Farm-City Week. And of course, he is serving as this year's Dairy Summit chairperson.

Brook Corners Holsteins received the National Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Award from the National Cattleman's Beef Association and has won many premier breeder and exhibitor awards at various state and local dairy shows. Reid gives freely of his time, not only to the dairy industry but also to his local community, having served on numerous church committees as well as serving several terms as an Annville Cleona School District board member.

The **Pennsylvania Dairy Service Award** was awarded to the Pennsylvania Beef Council. The Pa. Beef Council is a partner to many in the dairy industry, working both to educate dairy producers in the importance of beef quality assurance and to serve as an advocate for the beef industry and for beef products on the food table. Executive



Director Bridget Bingham and her team are advocates for the industry and have worked to bridge the gap between dairy and beef producers, understanding how vital it is for both groups to respect the fact that they are all raising beef that will eventually enter the food supply.

The Beef Council's work has spanned the industry – from working directly with veterinary clinics to better prepare clients through protocol workshops to working with dairy groups to integrate beef quality assurance into educational events to leading tours of beef packing facilities for producers to better see the connection between what they do on the farm and how it impacts the product.

To date, the staff at the Pennsylvania Beef Council have trained more than 1,000 dairymen and women through their Beef Quality Assurance Program initiatives. They also hosted several producer groups at the Cargill Wyalusing plant and led tours of the Penn State Dairy Beef facilities during Ag Progress Days to share income opportunities in raising dairy beef. They also act as a sub-contractor through the National Cattlemen's Beef Association to administer the Northeast Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Program (NEDQA) Program in 12 Northeastern states.

The team at the Pennsylvania Beef Council has also worked to recognize excellence in Pennsylvania's dairy industry, guiding and encouraging several Pennsylvania dairies to successfully win the National Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Awards through the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. This award draws applications from every state in the country, and Pennsylvania has had more winners than any other state.

They also coordinate the work of the Pennsylvania Beef Working Group, an ad hoc group comprised of volunteers from across the beef and dairy industries created in 2014. The group oversees beef producer education efforts in the Commonwealth made possible by funding through the PA Department of Agriculture's (PDA) Ag Excellence line item.

The **Pennsylvania Dairy Innovator Award** was awarded to Mercer Vu Farms of Mercersburg in Franklin County. Mercer Vu is a family owned corporation owned by Rick and Rod Hissong.

Currently with 3,000 mature cows, Mercer Vu has facilities in Mercersburg and White Post, Virginia. In addition to the dairy, Mercer Vu raises 3,000 acres of crops in Pennsylvania and 1,450 acres in Virginia. In Virginia, they double crop rye with corn for silage and high moisture. In Pennsylvania, they grow alfalfa and double crop triticale with the corn. Mercer Vu does much of its own cropping with custom operators for manure hauling, planting in Virginia and combine work.

The Hissongs are Land O'Lakes members, with their milk sold to Schreiber Foods, White Wave, HP Hood and Land O'Lakes Carlisle. They haul all their own milk, hauling more than 80 million pounds in 2017. They have received the Milk Quality Award from Land O'Lakes for the last twelve years.

The farm has received numerous awards, including the 2015 Tuscarora Area Chamber



of Commerce Business of the Year Award, the 2016 Franklin County Area Development Small Business of the Year Award, the 2017 Innovative Center for US Dairy Sustainability Award and the 2017 Land O'Lakes Sustain Innovation Award.

Mercer Vu Farms is a third-generation dairy operation, with Rick and Rod returning to the home farm in the 90s. When listening to either one of them share their story, they often credit their father Ronald for providing a strong foundation and then giving them the freedom and opportunity to realize their dreams. They are leaders and innovators in nutrient management, community relations, labor management, animal care and milk quality. The Hissongs are also role models in engaging the community in what they do to produce food and take good care of their animals and the land.

For more information, contact Jayne Sebright or Myrannda Kleckner at the Center by calling (717) 346-0849 or visiting www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.

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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.

CAPTIONS:

Beef Council: Members from the Board of Directors at the Pennsylvania Beef Council stand with Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding after being awarded the Pennsylvania Dairy Service Award at the 2018 Pa. Dairy Summit, held Feb. 21 and 22 in State College.

Mercer Vu Farms: Mercer Vu Farms, owned by Rick and Rod Hissong and family of Mercersburg, Pa., stands with Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding after being awarded the Pennsylvania Dairy Innovator Award at the 2018 Pa. Dairy Summit, held Feb. 21 and 22 in State College.

Karen Hawbaker: Karen Hawbaker, owner of Warm Spring Dairy in Chambersburg, Pa., stands with Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding after being awarded the Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Woman Award at the 2018 Pa. Dairy Summit, held Feb. 21 and 22 in State College.

Reid Hoover: Reid Hoover and family, owners of Brook-Corner Holsteins in Lebanon, Pa., stand with stand with Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding after being awarded the Pennsylvania Distinguished Dairy Producer Award at the 2018 Pa. Dairy Summit, held Feb. 21 and 22 in State College.