For Immediate Release

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DAIRY FARMS ENCOURAGED TO HOST HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AS APPRENTICES ON THEIR OPERATIONS

Dairy Producers Who Are Looking for Herd Managers Can Apply for the Apprenticeship Program

Harrisburg, Pa. – Pennsylvania dairy producers who are looking for an employee to serve in a herd management role are encouraged to apply for the Center for Dairy Excellence's Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program. The program is registered through the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and requires apprentices to master various competencies over 18 months of employment on a dairy farm. There are several high school graduates with an interest in herd management waiting to be placed with an employer dairy farm through the Apprenticeship Program. Applications for employer farms are accepted on a rolling basis.

"We've heard from dairy producers about their need for a more skilled workforce in management on Pennsylvania farms and the challenges they face in filling this important leadership role," said Michelle Shearer, Workforce Development Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. "Our Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program pairs you with a high school graduate who is eager and ready to work full-time at the farm level in the area of herd management alongside a current employee to develop the skills they need in herd health, reproduction, calf care, data analysis, and more."

Employer farms who are accepted into the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program must be willing to expose the apprentice to all aspects of a successful, progressive dairy operation with adequate training and consultation to master specific competencies in these areas. Farms must also be able to pay the employee a minimum starting wage of $11.00 per hour with a progressive wage over 18 months that ends with $16.00 per hour.

"The apprenticeship program was a great way to enhance our employee's knowledge while growing her role on our farm. There are only so many hours in a day, so we cannot possibly expose her to everything she really needs to know about farming. Having the outside educational components [through the program] allowed her to expand her knowledge without taking any of our time," said Katie Sattazahn of Zahncroft Dairy, one of the employer farms in the program. "We participated in this to help our part-time employee figure out her next steps after high school. Our farm benefited as she took over a lot of the reproduction work and excelled. She is also in charge of our evening milking, alleviating the need for an owner to be milking. Overall, the Apprenticeship Program has benefited both our apprentice and our farm."

Apprentices must be at least 18 years of age or older and have a high school diploma or GED. Throughout the apprenticeship, they must complete at least 3,000 hours of paid, on-the-job training and 216 hours of unpaid related technical instruction on a Pennsylvania dairy farm.

"I thought the apprenticeship could give me a better overview of what I want to do. If I decide to go to college, hopefully this will give me a better idea of what I want to go for. I'm a lot more hands-on and I learn better by doing versus just reading a book or going through it in a classroom," said Kristina Quinn, the apprentice at Zahncroft Dairy in Berks County, Pennsylvania. "My employer farm is a big part of it. If I didn't have them helping me through it and encouraging me, the experience probably wouldn't be as nice as it is. Once I have something down, they just let me do it."

Applications for the Apprenticeship Program are reviewed on an ongoing basis. For more information about the expectations for farms that are accepted into the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/apprenticeship.

Contact Michelle Shearer at mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org or 570-768-8316 with questions about the programs.

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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.

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www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/