



For Immediate Release

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[Photos of individual students available for download here.](#)

TWELVE STUDENTS RECEIVE ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS TO SUPPORT FUTURE CAREERS IN DAIRY
PA College Students Were Awarded Student Leader Scholarships

Harrisburg, Pa. – Twelve undergraduate students were recently recognized with Student Leader Scholarships, an award intended to encourage and empower the next generation of dairy producers. Supported by the Dairy Excellence Foundation of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Dairymen’s Association and Tröegs Independent Brewing for the 2024-25 academic year, each scholarship recipient received \$3,000 to support their undergraduate studies in academic programs that support the dairy industry. A reception was recently held at Tröegs Independent Brewing to recognize these students.

“These 12 scholarship recipients are highly deserving for this competitive scholarship due to their strong foundation in the dairy industry and their commitment to future careers that help advance Pennsylvania dairy,” said Michelle Shearer, Workforce Development Manager at the Dairy Excellence Foundation. “From interests in agricultural engineering and nutrition to veterinary medicine and dairy genetics, the passion these students have for their education and the future of dairy farming is inspiring.”

The Student Leader Scholarship program was designed to provide recognition, encouragement, and financial assistance to outstanding students enrolled in dairy-related academic programs—including dairy and animal science, agricultural marketing and business, nutrition, food science, agriculture and extension education, agricultural communications, agricultural engineering, or related fields.

“We continue to support this scholarship program each year because we are committed to helping college students who are passionate about the dairy industry have the financial support they need to find meaningful careers,” said Dave Smith, Executive Director at the Pennsylvania Dairymen’s Association. “It’s important to keep the Pennsylvania dairy industry vibrant and growing, and investing in our next generation and these 12 dairy leaders is a great way to do that.”

To qualify for the scholarship, students must be enrolled in a dairy-related undergraduate major and demonstrate a commitment to pursuing a future career in dairy. One scholarship is specifically designated for an incoming freshman.

“When we consider partnership opportunities, the first question we ask is ‘why,’” said Tröegs co-founding brother Chris Trogner. “With the Dairy Excellence Foundation, the answer came easily. We started working with local honey back in 2002 when we released our holiday ale, Mad Elf. Today, we source many other ingredients from right in our backyard: everything from malted barley and pumpkins for our beers to a wide variety of produce, cheese, and livestock for our Snack Bar menu. These scholarships are a terrific way to amplify our connection with Pennsylvania agriculture.”

Congratulations to this year's scholarship recipients:

Cheyenne Bastian-Brown is a senior studying agricultural and extension education at The Pennsylvania State University. Cheyenne is the daughter of Cory and Jennifer Brown of Ralston, Lycoming County. She has four years of on-farm dairy experience through her employment at Mont Dairy Farms and Goodview Dairy Farms. Cheyenne has carried out responsibilities with milking, sorting, breeding, and giving farm tours to the public.

"The Student Leader Scholarship will allow me to continue my path of cultivating future leaders through Agricultural and Extension Education, while still contributing to my community. I am extremely grateful for the Dairy Excellence Foundation, the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association, and Tröegs Independent Brewing for investing in students like me." –Cheyenne Bastian-Brown

Jay Bratton is a sophomore dual majoring in economics and agribusiness management at The Pennsylvania State University. He is the son of David and Alison Bratton of Millerstown, Perry County. Jay grew up working on his grandfather's dairy and beef farm and later took on milking responsibilities at another farm during his junior and senior year of high school. Jay hopes to utilize his experiences and education to pursue a career in dairy and agriculture where he can give back to the industry that made him who he is today.

"The dairy industry is the foundation and basis of my deep passion for cattle, the land, and the future. By receiving this scholarship, I am further assured that my future in this wonderful industry is going to be solid and steadfast as I continue my education. This has only expanded my ability to fulfill my personal expectations of making a true difference within the community, society, and the world that I am a part of." –Jay Bratton

Sarah Diehl is a sophomore majoring in dairy science at Virginia Tech University. She is the daughter of Joe and Kristin Diehl of McVeytown, Mifflin County. Sarah grew up on her family's dairy farm, Musser Run Jerseys, where they milk about 215 registered Jerseys. At the age of 14, she began officially working on the farm part-time and continued to work throughout high school. Calf management was her specialty with responsibilities such as feeding, bedding, observing, diagnosing and treating calves. She plans to attend vet school after completing her undergraduate degree.

"Growing up in the dairy industry, I have always been amazed by the passion, care, and dedication of dairy farm families and others who work in the agriculture industry. I strive to model their precedent in my future. To me, receiving this scholarship means that those dairy farmers whom I looked up to when I was younger believe and support me in my future career. I am extremely proud and honored." –Sarah Diehl

Brooke Gochnour is a sophomore studying veterinary and biomedical science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of Justin and Shelby Gochnour of New Enterprise, Bedford County. For eight years, Brooke has lived on a dairy farm and been heavily involved with both the milking duties and calf care responsibilities. She plans to further her education into veterinary school with hopes of continuing to work in the dairy industry.

"Being awarded this scholarship enables me to continue my academic career to hopefully become a veterinarian someday. My goal in accomplishing this is to give back to the dairy industry and the farmers who have done so much for me and my career. Thank you!" –Brooke Gochnour

Katelyn Heckman is a freshman studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of Tracie and Chris Heckman of Kutztown, Berks County. Having been more involved on her family's farm over the last few years, Katelyn has taken on the role of managing calf wellness and feeding. She also helps with milking several times a week and health and reproductive maintenance when needed. She hopes to stay involved on her family's operation while taking what she has gained from it and using that in a future career as a large animal veterinarian.

"I am extremely grateful to have received this scholarship. I will be attending Penn State this fall and then hope to attend vet school. Receiving this scholarship not only helps my education, but it also is incredible to be able to be recognized for my accomplishments and time in the dairy industry." –Katelyn Heckman

Dana Heltzel is a senior studying nutrition science (Dietitian Nutritionist Program) at the University of Pittsburgh. Dana is the daughter of Andrew and Jennifer Heltzel of Martinsburg, Blair County. Growing up on her family's dairy farm, Dana has more than 7 years of experience caring for calves, milking their 120-cow herd, helping with veterinary care and vaccinations, and more. With an interest in nutrition that grew from her experience growing up on a dairy farm, Dana hopes to share dairy's story as a widely accessible, affordable, sustainable and nutrient-dense food with consumers, her future patients, and her fellow health professionals.

"I am so inspired by the generosity of our Pennsylvania dairy farmers and their commitment to supporting students. I decided to study nutrition science because of the passion that dairy farmers have for producing nutritious products. I hope to continue advocating for the dairy industry that I love as I work with patients and clients in the future." –Dana Heltzel

Madelynn Hoffman is a junior majoring in animal science at Cornell University. She is the daughter of Curt and Psuche Hoffman of Manheim, Lancaster County. Madelynn grew up on her family's dairy farm and now manages their farm's reproductive management program as well as assists with breeding, nutrition and financial decisions. With her passion for working closely with animals and her awareness of the need in the dairy industry for veterinarians, Madelynn hopes to pursue a career in large animal medicine.

"I am thankful for being selected for the 2024 Student Leader Scholarship. In addition, I am very grateful to the Dairy Excellence Foundation, Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association, and Tröegs Independent Brewing for supporting my educational pursuits in animal science." –Madelynn Hoffman

Olivia Leshner is a senior majoring in nursing at St. Joseph University in Lancaster. She is the daughter of William and Lolly Leshner of Bernville, Berks County. Olivia is the fourth generation on her family's dairy farm, where they milk 270 cows and process their own milk and ice cream. With her vast involvement in the dairy industry, including 4-H, the Dairy Princess & Promotion Program, Holstein Association and more, Olivia is passionate about continuing to grow her family's dairy farm in the future while also working as a registered nurse.

"Receiving this scholarship means a lot to me, because it displays the opportunities there are in agriculture and the programs that support it. I am proud to be awarded this scholarship. As a nursing major, I plan to pursue a career I love as well as support my family farm and the agricultural community." –Olivia Leshner

Sara McNichols is a junior majoring in animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of Timothy and Mary McNichols of Scranton, Lackawanna County. Sara grew up on her family's dairy farm and exhibited beef and dairy cattle through her 4-H program. With that foundation, Sara developed a passion for animal medicine and hopes to find a career as a veterinarian in the future.

"The Dairy Excellence Foundation, the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association and Tröegs Independent Brewing ensures strength in the roots of such a valuable industry that takes part in feeding the world. I am grateful and honored to receive this award to assist in the financing of my education. The generosity of these organizations does not go unnoticed, and I am appreciative for all that they have done and will continue to do." –Sara McNichols

Skylar Peiffer is a freshman majoring in agricultural engineering and animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of Ammon and Brenda Peiffer of Lebanon County. Growing up on her family's 80-cow dairy farm, Skylar has been responsible for caring for their 60 replacement calves and heifers – managing feeding, vaccinations and more. Skylar has watched the evolution of technology on dairy farms and has a strong interest in robotics. She hopes to pursue a career as an agricultural engineer in the future.

"Being awarded the Student Leader Scholarship, especially as an incoming first-year student, means not only financial assistance but also recognition and encouragement for my commitment to the agricultural industry and its future. It allows me to focus on my studies and future contributions to the field with confidence and determination." –Skylar Peiffer

Sara Reed is a sophomore majoring in animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of Leonard and Erin Reed of Columbia Cross Roads, Bradford County. Sara has seven years of active, on-farm experience with her family's small Jersey herd, including managing the day-to-day care of their cows, customizing nutrition programs, researching genetics, and raising quality cows for the show ring and in the barn. With her interest in breeding and genetics, Sara hopes to work in the genomics side of the industry and research genetics for dairy cattle breeds.

"I am truly honored to be named a 2024 Student Leader Scholarship Recipient. It is because of the generous support from organizations such as the Dairy Excellence Foundation, the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association and Tröegs Independent Brewing that I can pursue my passions within this fulfilling industry. I'm very grateful for this investment in my future, and I plan to utilize these funds in continuing my education to one day give back to the dairy community." –Sara Reed

Ainsley Sellers is a freshman majoring in animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. She is the daughter of Kraig and Meranda Sellers of Lebanon County. Ainsley has grown up working on her family's dairy farm, where she feeds calves, vaccinates and treats animals, milks cows, fixes pulsators and other broken parts, and other daily responsibilities that come with farming. She held multiple leadership positions in her high school's FFA programs and hopes to find a career at the farm level that allows her to continue with her love for agriculture.

"After being born and raised on a dairy farm, I developed a love for the agricultural industry. I have been a part of many organizations such as 4-H, FFA, and Pennsylvania/National Jr. Holstein Association that continued to nourish my love for dairy and agriculture. This scholarship gives me an opportunity to ignite my passion and continue my future in the dairy industry." –Ainsley Sellers

Visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/scholarships to learn more about the Student Leader Scholarship program and how to support the scholarship fund. Contact Michelle Shearer at mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org or 570-768-8316 with questions.

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About the Dairy Excellence Foundation

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/.

About the PA Dairymen's Association

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.

About Tröegs Independent Brewing

Founded in Pennsylvania in 1997 by brothers John and Chris Troegner, Tröegs Independent Brewing is driven by a sense of adventure and curiosity. From the beginning, the brewery has been built by family, friends and kindred spirits who share a love of great beer.

Tröegs is widely known for award-winning beers like Perpetual IPA, Troegenator, Nugget Nectar and Mad Elf, as well as its experimental Scratch Series. Tröegs started working in earnest with local ingredients back in 2002 with the debut of holiday favorite Mad Elf. Today, the brewery buys about 25,000 pounds of local honey and 250,000 pounds of Pennsylvania-grown barley every year. Tröegs also works with a local creamery to create beer cheeses made with 100% Pennsylvania cow's milk.

"We're drawn to people with a sense of adventure," says co-founder John Troegner. "And we think they're drawn to Tröegs."

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www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/our-foundation/