



**For Immediate Release**

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

August 9, 2021

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

**Harrisburg, Pa.** – Ten 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 and the Pennsylvania Dairymen’s Association, each scholarship recipient will receive \$3,000 to support their undergraduate studies in academic programs that support the dairy industry.

“This is a competitive scholarship program, and these 10 recipients represent true leadership and commitment to the Pennsylvania dairy industry. From interests in dairy promotion, education, dietetics and nutrition to veterinary medicine and dairy processing, these students are forward-thinking and extremely passionate about how they will impact the future of our industry,” said Michelle Shearer, Workforce Development Manager at the Dairy Excellence Foundation.

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.

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.

“These scholarships help ease the financial burden for college students pursuing careers in dairy, allowing them to spend more time focusing on their studies and gaining hands-on experience across the industry,” said Dave Smith, Executive Director at the Pennsylvania Dairymen’s Association. “The future looks very bright for these recipients, and we are confident they will make positive contributions to the Pennsylvania dairy industry for years to come.”

Congratulations to this year’s scholarship recipients:

**Mikara Anderson** is a senior studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. Mikara is the daughter of Gerald and Holly Anderson of Three Springs, Huntingdon County. Growing up raising livestock and working on her uncle's dairy farm, Mikara received a glimpse inside the business side of agriculture. She is pursuing a degree in animal science, business and management. With various agriculture-centered leadership experiences, Mikara is passionate about finding ways to help dairy farmers improve profitability. Her goal is to become a financial advisor or ag lender after graduation.

*"It is humbling to know the Dairy Excellence Foundation and PA Dairyman's Association believe in my ability to succeed in the dairy industry and agricultural community. Not only does this scholarship allow me to better focus on my animal science studies, but it will grant me the opportunity to further pursue outside experiences in the dairy industry since the financial burden of my education has decreased. Receiving this scholarship is validation that my efforts to positively impact the agriculture industry do not go unnoticed."* –Mikara Anderson

**Katerina Coffman** is a freshman studying animal science with a focus on international agriculture and food systems at The Pennsylvania State University. Katerina is the daughter of TJ and Elaine Coffman of Petersburg, Huntingdon County. She grew up on her grandparents' dairy farm and has experience with dry cow management, vaccinations, and milking procedures. As the 2020-21 Pennsylvania Alternate Dairy Princess and an active member of the PA Junior Holstein Club, Katerina is interested in working with dairy producers to find innovative ways to stay viable in changing markets. Her goal is to become an agriculture extension educator.

*"I cannot express just how grateful I am to be named a recipient of the 2021 Student Leader Scholarship. This scholarship will help me pay off a portion of my tuition this fall at The Pennsylvania State University. As the cost of college continues to increase, I am able to worry less about paying off school and focus more on class material. I am humbled to be named a recipient this year and hope to use the knowledge acquired from my post-secondary endeavors to serve the hardworking American dairy farmer."* –Katerina Coffman

**Dana Heltzel** is a freshman studying nutrition and dietetics at the University of Pittsburgh. Dana is the daughter of Andrew and Jennifer Heltzel of Martinsburg, Blair County. She has approximately six years of active, on-farm experience after growing up on her family's six-generation dairy farm. Through volunteering at several milk drives over the past year and beginning her studies toward a degree in nutrition and dietetics, Dana is eager to bridge the gap between consumers and agriculture. She hopes to use her passion for dairy to help improve nutrition misinformation as a dietician.

*"I am incredibly grateful for this award and the generosity of those in the dairy industry who make this scholarship possible. I cannot wait to share the powerful nutrition that dairy offers with consumers. Using my experiences in the dairy industry, I hope to shine light on many misconceptions and connect people with their food."* –Dana Heltzel

**Jessica Herr** is a freshman studying agriculture and extension education at The Pennsylvania State University – Berks. Jessica is the daughter of Eric and Melissa Herr of Lancaster, Lancaster

County. With deep roots in the dairy industry and hands-on experience working on her family's dairy farm, Jessica was active in the FFA program throughout high school and took on many leadership roles. Her goal is to pursue a career in agriculture education and help empower the next generation of agriculturalists.

*"This scholarship is not just an investment into my education, but an investment into the lives of my future students and colleagues. I have an expectant heart that these next few years spent studying, observing, and building relationships will equip me with the skills to tell the story of American agriculture."* –Jessica Herr

**Victoria Longenecker** is a sophomore studying biological engineering at The Pennsylvania State University. Victoria is the daughter of Doug and Yvette Longenecker of Williamsburg, Blair County. Growing up on her family's 2,000-cow dairy farm, Victoria has experience milking cows and feeding calves. She has been active in Dairy 4-H, FFA, Dairy Princess Program, and more. As a biological engineering major, Victoria hopes to be involved in creating and implementing systems that have a positive effect on dairy farmers.

*"It is encouraging to know that the dairy industry has a long tradition of standing behind, and supporting, the next generation. It is evident through the generosity of organizations such as the Dairy Excellence Foundation and the PA Dairymen's Association. As a recipient, I am determined to give back to my agricultural community and grow my leadership skills through the opportunities that my education has to offer."* –Victoria Longenecker

**Donald Opp** is a senior studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. Donald is the son of Donald and Marcia Opp of Eighty-Four, Washington County. After growing up on his family's 120-cow dairy, Donald has experience with dairy nutrition, risk management, and pasteurizing and marketing milk products. As an Ag Ambassador and member of both Alpha Zeta and Dairy Science club, Donald is passionate about making a tangible impact on the dairy industry for generations to come. His goal is to one day help expand his family farm's value-added dairy products and expand their brand recognition.

*"To be honored with the Student Leader Scholarship means the world to me. Not only does it provide great financial support, but it also reinvigorates my passion and love for the dairy industry. To be named a recipient for this prestigious reward reaffirms that I am pursuing a career meant for me. It only inspires me to continue making a difference within the dairy industry."* –Donald Opp

**Paige Peiffer** is a sophomore studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. Paige is the daughter of Ammon and Brenda Peiffer of Lebanon, Lebanon County. Growing up on a small dairy farm and working on other farms throughout her county, Paige has a wide range of on-farm experience with different cow management systems and calf care procedures. As the 2019-20 Pennsylvania Dairy Princess and an active member of Penn State's Dairy Science Club, Paige is dedicated to promoting the dairy industry. Her goal is to pursue a career in veterinary medicine.

*"I feel incredibly honored to not only be selected for this scholarship but to be part of the dairy industry as a whole. Monetarily, this scholarship makes my dream with agriculture so*

*much more attainable, and it inspires me to continue academically. It is my hope that one day, with the aid of scholarships just like this, I will be able to use my education and passions to help dairy farmers and those in my agricultural community.” –Paige Peiffer*

**Elizabeth Stoltzfus** is a senior studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. Elizabeth is the daughter of Duane and Andrea Stoltzfus of Berlin, Somerset County. With 15 years of experience working on her family’s dairy farm and showing animals at fairs, she has become passionate about answering people’s questions about the industry and educating young kids about the importance of dairy. As a member of Alpha Zeta and the Dairy Science Club, Elizabeth hopes to continue serving the dairy industry as a herd manager or calf manager after graduation.

*“I am so honored to have been selected for this scholarship. I plan on using it to further my education and take the knowledge I have gained back to my family’s farm as well as share it with the next generation of kids in my 4-H and Junior Holstein clubs.” –Elizabeth Stoltzfus*

**Kara Stultz** is a junior studying animal science and minoring in agronomy and communications at The Pennsylvania State University. Kara is the daughter of Rob and Tammy Stultz of Williamsburg, Blair County. After growing up on her family’s fourth-generation dairy farm, she has witnessed the different aspects that make up a successful dairy operation. She has experience with calf management and raising heifers and has held leadership roles in the Dairy Princess Program, Dairy Science Club, and more. Her goal is to make a lasting and worthwhile mark on the dairy industry in years to come.

*“I am so thankful to have the opportunity to receive this scholarship to be able to further my academic career and expand my knowledge of the dairy industry. I was raised in my family’s fourth-generation dairy farm and have a love, passion, and drive for it since I remember. It’s amazing to be able to be supported by others in the dairy industry to help accomplish my goals and future plans with this scholarship.” –Kara Stultz*

**Katelyn Taylor** is a freshman studying animal science at The Pennsylvania State University. Katelyn is the daughter of Laura and Brett Taylor of Allenwood, Union County. Katelyn is passionate about raising, breeding, and marketing her dairy heifers and showing competitively. As an active leader in the FFA program and Dairy Princess Program, Katelyn has learned the value of networking and marketing. Her goal is to return to the farm after graduation and possibly pursue a career as an ag lender.

*“Being selected for this scholarship displays the appreciation of current agriculture leaders towards those striving to become an agricultural leader. I aspire to one day help others looking to expand their knowledge of agriculture, like this scholarship is assisting my educational career.” –Katelyn Taylor*

Visit [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/scholarships](http://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](mailto:mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org) or 570-768-8316 with questions.

**Images:**

[Photos available for download here.](#)

Mikara Anderson



Katerina Coffman



Dana Heltzel



Jessica Herr



Victoria Longenecker



Donald Opp



Paige Peiffer



Elizabeth Stoltzfus



Kara Stultz



Katelyn Taylor



###

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/).

**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/)**