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Contact: Amy te Plate-Church, NAIDC Publicity Committee, 715-304-7031 or amyteplate@crinet.com

Over 260 Future Dairy Leaders Take Part in the 2014 Dairy Challenge®

FORT WAYNE, Ind., April 8, 2014 – Optimism for the dairy industry’s future filled the convention center in Fort Wayne, Ind., where 264 college students congregated to improve skills, network, and learn about careers and innovation. The national Dairy Challenge held April 3-5, 2014, attracted students from 37 colleges in 25 states and three Canadian provinces.

“Dairy Challenge truly showcases cooperation of farmers, agribusinesses and academia, working together to train future leaders and promote agricultural careers,” said Dr. Maurice Eastridge, 2014 event chair and professor at The Ohio State University.

The North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge® (NAIDC) allows dairy students to apply theory and learning on a real-world dairy farm while working as part of a team.

In Fort Wayne, two programs ran concurrently – the 13th annual Dairy Challenge contest and the second annual Dairy Challenge Academy. The events were coordinated by the NAIDC Board of Directors and staff from the host universities, Purdue University, Michigan State University and Ohio State.



Dairy Challenge Academy participants work in mixed-university teams, with industry and university professionals, to analyze a dairy farm business.

we hope to achieve at the 2015 event in Syracuse, NY. The Academy allows a broader range of students to participate, integrates professionals and sponsors directly with students, and provides enhanced learning and networking while conducting a dairy farm business analysis.”

Dairy Challenge Applies Learning to a Real-world Dairy

Over its 13-year history, Dairy Challenge has helped over 4500 students prepare for careers in the dairy industry, farming and veterinary medicine.

“Dairy Challenge has provided a splendid opportunity for our students to integrate what they learn in classes with real-world situations, use problem-solving skills and network with leaders in the dairy industry,” stated Eastridge.



Fred Beer (far right) welcomes Dairy Challenge students to the farm he and his sons operate near Milford, Ind.

The 2014 contest included 32 universities, each with four students on their university team competing for awards. The Academy provided interactive training in dairy farm evaluation for 138 students, generally underclassmen at four-year universities or students in two-year dairy programs. Academy participants were divided into smaller groups, mixing students from various colleges, and their work was guided by Academy Advisors – agribusiness volunteers and university professionals.

“Thanks to support from industry and attending colleges, the second annual Dairy Challenge Academy grew to 145 students and 38 Academy Advisors, up from 90 students last year,” explained Dr. Mike van Amburgh, NAIDC Chair and professor at Cornell University. “Our long-term goal is 200 students in the Academy, which



Dairy farmers Bruce and Doug Bloom (center left to right), of Coldwater, Mich., explain farm procedures to college students participating in the Dairy Challenge Academy.

The three-day event began with a presentation on getting started in farming by Gary Matteson of The Farm Credit Council, the lead sponsor of Dairy Challenge. Next, a panel of young producers shared insights on joining a family farm business.



Four young farmers shared insight into entering the family business.

Producer panelists were Stacey Atherton of Shipley Farms, Newark, Ohio; David Brand, Brand Dairy Farm in Waterloo, Ind.; Brett Feldpausch of Rich-Ro Farms in St. Johns, Mich.; and Brian Houin, Homestead Farms in Plymouth, Ind. The morning concluded with inspiration and tips to speak out for agriculture, provided by Amy te Plate-Church of Cooperative Resources International, Raechel Sattazahn of AgChoice Farm Credit, Kimmi Devaney of Indiana Dept. of Agriculture, and Jolene Griffin of Dairy Management, Inc.

Next, students, industry specialists and educators worked in small groups at Bridgewater Dairy of Montpelier, Ohio, to learn how to evaluate specifics like milking protocols, calf care, reproduction and other areas.

The first evening, each group received data from an operating dairy to analyze and provide recommendations for improvement. Day Two included a thorough visit to the assigned dairy and question-answer session with farm owners. All groups – in both contest and Academy – developed recommendations for nutrition, reproduction, milking procedures, animal health, cow comfort and financial management.



Students review cow comfort, housing, nutrition and other aspects of milking cow management at Perkins Twin Creek Dairy Farm, Inc., near Wolcottville, Ind.

On Day Three, students presented their recommendations, visited with sponsor companies at the Career and Innovation Fair, and heard Corporate Technology Presentations from top-level NAIDC sponsors. These talks were presented by:

- Amanda Wright, DVM, Animal Health International
- Dr. Kate Cowles, Cargill Animal Nutrition
- Amy te Plate-Church, Cooperative Resources International
- Dr. Jill Davidson, Purina Animal Nutrition
- Todd Kranz, Select Sires, Inc.



Team members from Washington State University discuss their management recommendations with the judge panel, which included a farmer, financial expert, veterinarian and other dairy professionals.

In the contest, the college team presentations were evaluated by a panel of five judges, including dairy producers, veterinarians, farm finance specialists and industry personnel. All students, coaches, volunteers and sponsors joined together to celebrate at Saturday evening's banquet.

Eight College Teams Earn Top Awards

In the contest, First Place awards were earned by California Polytechnic State University, Cornell University, The Pennsylvania State University and University of Guelph. Each first-place student received a \$200 scholarship.

Dr. Mike van Amburgh. The Penn State team included Kristin Bigelow, Colton Hoffman, Jennifer Royer, Ariel Taxdal and coach Dr. Gabriella Varga. Guelph students were Alan Nanne, Peter Spruit, Hans Van Lith and John Wynands, coached by Dr. John Walton, Dr. Ken Leslie and Mark Carson.

The team from Cal Poly consisted of Dominic Assali, Hudson Hanlon, Taylor Pires and Justin Roeloffs, and was coached by Dr. Stan Henderson. Representing Cornell was Cassandra Chittenden, Rocco Cunningham, Anna Laggis and Patrick Redmond with coach

The following teams and students were awarded Second Place, with each student earning a \$100 scholarship.

- **South Dakota State University:** David Berning, Matthew Holdvogt, Chelsey Johnson, Holly Schmitt and coach Dr. Ken Kalscheur
- **University of Kentucky:** Kara Bekebrede, Meghan Grone, Patrick McCoy and Emily Morabito with coaches Dr. Donna Amaral-Phillips, Lauren Mayo and Derek Nolan
- **University of Wisconsin-Platteville:** Sarah Endres, Josh Joseph, Levi Martin, Darcy Steffes and coach Dr. Tera Montgomery
- **Washington State University:** Helen Floren, Kevin Gavin, Jessica Levy, Hannah Symonds and coach Dr. John Swain



Dairy Challenge participants learn about career options from Farm Credit and other leading event sponsors.

Total Industry Effort

Five dairy farms opened up their farms for analysis and in exchange, received a wealth of ideas from students and judges. Host farms for the 2014 Dairy Challenge were:

- **Beer Dairy, Inc.,** Fred, Jeff and Regg Beer, Milford, Ind.
- **Perkins Twin Creek Dairy Farm, Inc.,** Jim, Rod, Kirk, Todd and Eric Perkins, Wolcottville, Ind.
- **Sun Mountain Dairy,** Kent and Ted Sonnenberg, New Bavaria, Ohio
- **Blue Stream Dairy,** managed by Jon Morrison, Convoy, Ohio
- **Bloom Dairy, Inc.,** Doug and Bruce Bloom, Coldwater, Mich.



Ted Sonnenberg (far left) answers questions from students evaluating Sun Mountain Dairy near New Bavaria, Ohio.

“Dairy Challenge is an amazing program that is truly accomplished through many talented people that form a very functional team,” concluded Eastridge. “The success of the 2014 Dairy Challenge was possible through tremendous support of the participating dairy farms and their families in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan; the time and financial support from allied dairy businesses; and dairy product donations by dairy processors in the three-state area. Dairy professionals across the U.S. assisted as judges and Academy educators.”



*Earning first place honors at the 2014 North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge® were teams from Cal Poly, Cornell, Guelph and Penn State. **Front Row (L-R):** Coach Dr. John Walton, Guelph; Peter Spruit, Guelph; John Wynands, Guelph; Kristin Bigelow, Penn State; Jennifer Royer, Penn State; Taylor Pires, Cal Poly; Dominic Assali, Cal Poly; Anna Laggis, Cornell; Cassandra Chittenden, Cornell; and Coach Betsey Howland, Cornell. **Back Row (L-R):** Coach Dr. Ken Leslie, Guelph; Hans Van Lith, Guelph; Coach Mark Carson; Alan Nanne, Guelph; Ariel Taxdal, Penn State; Coach Dr. Gabriela Varga, Penn State; Colton Hoffman, Penn State; Justin Roeloffs, Cal Poly; Coach Dr. Stan Henderson, Cal Poly; Hudson Hanlon, Cal Poly; Patrick Redmond, Cornell; Rocco Cunningham, Cornell; and Coach Dr. Mike Van Amburgh, Cornell.*