

*Sent on behalf of NAIDC*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Midwest Dairy Challenge draws 79 students to Manitowoc, Wisconsin**

The ninth annual Midwest Dairy Challenge, which ran February 6-8, 2013, attracted 79 students from 19 universities and colleges to the event hosted in Manitowoc, Wis., by Lakeshore Technical College.

“The heavy snow presented a challenge to our students, but the outstanding group rose to the challenge to analyze the two dairies,” said Contest Chair Bryan Horn from Semex.

Dairy Challenge is an innovative dairy analysis competition developed by industry and university professionals, which exposes students to opportunities in a vibrant dairy industry. Working in five-person, mixed-university teams, students at the Midwest Dairy Challenge assessed all aspects of a working dairy farm and presented recommendations for improvement to a panel of judges and participating farm families.

This year’s contest drew students from Chippewa Valley Technical College, Dordt College, Fox Valley Technical College, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Lakeshore Technical College, Michigan State University, Northeast Iowa Community College, Purdue University, South Dakota State University, Southwest Technical College, The Ohio State University, University of Illinois, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Platteville and UW-Madison Farm and Industry Short Course.

After arrival, students participated in educational seminars by industry leaders. Kristi Fiedler of Genex Cooperative, Inc. shared approaches to evaluate dairy reproductive performance, followed by Paul Jandrin, AgSource Cooperative Services who spoke on using DHIA records. Laurie Schetter, GreenStone Farm Credit Services, presented financial ratios to evaluate economic position of dairy operations, followed by Darin Bremmer of Vita Plus Corp. who demonstrated how to evaluate nutritional health of a dairy operation.

During and after dinner, the students joined their new teammates for a team building exercise and to begin learning about the dairy they would analyze.

The next day, students visited one of two dairies for on-farm analysis. Host Farm 1 was Soaring Eagle Dairy, Newton, Wis., owned by Jim and Sandie Fitzgerald and daughters Kelly, Julie and Stacy, while Farm 2 was Meadowbrook Dairy, Manitowoc, Wis., owned by the Pete and Shellie Kappelman family.

After farm visits, the student teams developed questions for herd owners, who then answered questions about their farming operations from all students and judges. Armed with detailed production and financial paperwork, as well as their own observations, the participants developed a presentation including recommendations to improve profitability.

Friday was presentation day, when each team gave a 20-minute presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session and critique by the judges.

Throughout the event, participants networked with industry volunteers who assist in contest coordination. Representatives from many platinum sponsors – several looking to hire interns and full-time employees – were available for a career and innovation fair. Representatives were also able to share new technologies

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and trends emerging in their industry.

Also on Friday, Shelly Mayer from Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin provided an inspiring communication training program for the students.

Judges chose two teams as 1st place winners, Team Select Sires from Farm 1 and Team Virtus Nutrition from Farm 2. Individuals on the winning Team Select Sires were Ben Thorpe, University of Minnesota; Samantha Mamarow, Michigan State University; Alaina VanWesten, Northeast Iowa Community College; Trisha Blaser, University of Wisconsin-River Falls; and Sara McCullough, Purdue University. Individuals on Team Virtus Nutrition included Jordan Hanson, Iowa State University; Vernon Oostra, Dordt College; Dillan Schumacher, Northeast Iowa Community College; Nick Miles, Lakeshore Technical College; and Katie Haerr, University of Illinois.

A complete list of Midwest Regional Dairy Challenge contest participants and their placing can be found on the Dairy Challenge web site at [http://www.dairychallenge.org/mw\\_event.php](http://www.dairychallenge.org/mw_event.php).

The national Dairy Challenge contest will be April 4-6, 2013, in Fort Wayne, IN.

North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge was established in 2002 as a management contest to incorporate all phases of a specific dairy business. Its mission is to facilitate education, communication and an exchange of ideas among students, agribusiness, dairy producers and universities that enhances the development of the dairy industry and its leaders. NAIDC is supported completely through generous donations by 125 agribusinesses and dairy producers, and programs are coordinated by a volunteer board of directors.

For more information, visit [www.dairychallenge.org](http://www.dairychallenge.org) or [www.facebook.com/DairyChallenge](https://www.facebook.com/DairyChallenge).

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### **PHOTOS:**

MDC2013FarmAFreestall21

Working in five-person, mixed-university teams, students at the Midwest Dairy Challenge assessed all aspects of a working dairy farm in Manitowoc County, Wis.

MDC2013FarmAFreestall16

Dairy Challenge is a hands-on opportunity for students from four-year universities and two-year dairy programs to apply classroom learning to actual dairy farm analysis.

MWDC2013\_Farm2\_producer interview2

Students from 19 post-secondary dairy programs gather at Meadowbrook Dairy in Manitowoc, Wis., for welcome from owner Pete Kappleman.

ShellyMayer-PDPW-VisibleVoice

Shelly Mayer of Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin helps participants learn ways to share positive dairy messages to inform consumers and policy leaders.