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**Dairy Producer Sponsorship for the
Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge Improves in 2007**

2007 marked the five-year anniversary of the Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge. The Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge program brings together college students from across the Northeast and places them in mixed-university teams to apply knowledge learned in class to a working dairy farm. Teams evaluate all aspects of a participating dairy farm and develop a consultative presentation for a panel of judges and farm families. 2007 participating dairy farmer Jamie Robertson of Bohanan Farms in Contoocook, N.H., stated, "It's like having 40 consultants evaluating the farm. This is an opportunity to make my business better."

What began in 2003 with 77 students, two host farms and 12 participating colleges, grew to 126 students, three host farms and 16 participating colleges in 2007. The tremendous growth and success achieved by the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge program has been possible through generous contributions from the Northeast agricultural industry, predominantly from agribusiness, but more recently from a combination of dairy producers and agribusinesses.

John and Sheila Marshman of Marshman Farms in Oxford, N.Y., were the first dairy producers to financially support the Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge in 2003 and have remained annual patrons. The couple views their ongoing contributions as investing in the future of the dairy industry. Through the years 2004-2006 the Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge gained very few dairy producer sponsors but producer sponsorship grew dramatically in 2007.

Dairy farms providing sponsorship for the 2007 Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge were: Barnes Black & Whiteface Ranch, Addison, Vt.; Black Brook Farm, Shortsville, N.Y.; Cooperstown Holstein Corp., Cooperstown, N.Y.; Country Ayre Farm, Spencer, Mass.; Hanehan Family Dairy, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; Hanehan Family Dairy, Mount Upton, N.Y.; William Hanehan and Sons, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; Jalco Farm, Haverhill, N.H.; Kayhart Dairy, Addison, Vt.; Marshman Farms, Oxford, N.Y.; McKnight's River Breeze Farm, Chase Mills, N.Y.; Patterson Farms, Auburn, N.Y.; Sparta Farms LP, Dansville, N.Y.; Stonyvale Inc., Exeter, Maine; Stuart Farm and The Merrill Family, Stratham, N.H.; Table Rock Farm Inc., Castile, N.Y.; Tiashoke Farms LLC, Buskirk, N.Y.; Woody Hill Farm Inc., Salem, N.Y.; and Nordic Farms, Charlotte, Vt.

Dairy producers receive many benefits through sponsorship of the Dairy Challenge.

One major benefit of sponsoring the Dairy Challenge is dairy producer access to contact information for all student participants. "Dairy Challenge participants are a concentrated pool of highly qualified potential employees for today's dairy farms," said John Lehr, First Pioneer Farm Credit dairy consultant. Producer sponsors can endorse their businesses' image by contributing to a successful educational program that promotes the future of the dairy industry.

Also, dairy producers receive public recognition for their support and have the occasion to inform student participants about existing career opportunities on sponsor farms. Dairy Nutritionist and Dairy Challenge Judge David King describes benefits to dairy producers as, "A way to get their name in front of the sharpest students in the Northeast and provide students the opportunity to prepare themselves to be better problem solvers in everyday situations that they will run into when employed with the farm or agribusiness career they choose. Challenging the next generation to improve upon work that is being done now is what education is all about."

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