

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ashley Mohn  
NAIDC Publicity Chair  
(610) 463-7517  
[amohn@agchoice.com](mailto:amohn@agchoice.com)

### **Wisconsin welcomes students to the 20th annual Dairy Challenge®**

Green Bay, Wis., March 31 to April 2, 2022 – The snowy scenery of northeast Wisconsin greeted 208 students from across 32 different states and Canadian provinces for the 20th annual Dairy Challenge®. After three years apart, students, mentors, and judges were eager to return to an in-person format.

Green Bay, Wis., was home base for the 2022 North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge® (NAIDC) held March 31st to April 2nd, with four area dairies participating in the educational event. Dairy students from 33 colleges worked to improve their dairy management and communication skills, networked with other students, and explored industry careers.

“It is really incredible to see the Wisconsin dairy community come together to make this premier event possible for these college students – from host dairies, to agribusiness sponsors, and dairy product donors, to the more than 168 volunteers that helped plan and coordinate the Dairy Challenge,” explained Dave Whitlock, Cooperative Milk Producers Association and NAIDC Board Chairperson.

Dairy Challenge is a unique, real-world experience where dairy students work as a team and apply their college coursework to evaluate and provide solutions for an operating dairy farm. In Green Bay, two programs ran concurrently – the 20th annual Dairy Challenge contest and the ninth annual Dairy Challenge Academy. The events were hosted by University of Wisconsin-Madison, Fox Valley Technical College and the Midwest Regional Dairy Challenge Planning Committee.

This year’s contest included 22 universities, whose four-person teams competed for awards based on the quality of teams’ farm analysis and appropriate solutions. Their farm presentations were evaluated by a panel of five judges, including dairy producers, veterinarians, finance specialists, and seasoned agribusiness personnel.

The Academy provided interactive training for more than 112 students from four-year universities or two-year dairy programs. Academy participants were divided into smaller groups including students from various schools, and dairy industry volunteers worked as Advisors to coach these less-experienced Academy participants as they assessed the dairy and developed recommendations.

### **Dairy Challenge applies learning to a real-world dairy**

Over its 20-year history, Dairy Challenge has helped more than 10,000 students prepare for careers in the dairy industry, dairy production, and veterinary medicine.

The three-day event included learning stations at Majestic Crossing Dairy, Sheboygan Falls, Wis., where the team and their consultants helped students better understand Wisconsin dairy conditions and shared details about milking robot transitioning, robot nutrition management, robot economics, and robot functionality. Students also visited the Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center, where they heard from three industry individuals about sharing their stories and being an advocate for the dairy industry.

Day two began with the on-farm analysis, with all students having just two hours to visit their assigned dairy and witness the dairy's operations. After a question & answer session with the farm owners and advisors, the student teams developed recommendations for nutrition, reproduction, milking procedures, animal health, cow comfort, and labor and financial management.

On day three, students presented their recommendations to the judging panel, visited with sponsors at the Career and Innovation Fair, and learned through presentations from top-level NAIDC sponsors. These talks were presented by:

- Matt Lange, Compeer Financial – “Evaluating Technology Investments”
- Mateus Peiter, Cargill, Inc. – “Building Credibility with the Use of Technology on Farm”
- Jack Hippen, STgenetics – “What Companies are Looking for in New Grads”
- Dave Thorbahn, Select Sires, Inc. – “Enhancing Sustainability through Reproductive and Genetic Performance”
- Curt Gooch, Land O'Lakes-Truterra, LLC – “US Dairy Sustainability-Applied Solutions”
- Jenny DeMunck, GENEX – “Breeding Strategies and ROI”
- Sarah Anderson, Allflex Livestock Intelligence/Merck Animal Health – “Beyond Heat Detection-How Monitoring Technology Helps Maximize Labor Efficiency, Automation, and ROI”

### **Eight college teams earn top awards**

At Saturday evening's banquet, the following contest teams and students were announced as first place winners, with each student receiving a \$200 scholarship.

- California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo: Lantz Adams, Callista Dyt, Genevieve Regli, and Mitchell Wesen. Coached by David Vagnoni & Julie Huzzey
- University of Wisconsin-Madison: Gaelan Combs, Josh Gerbitz, Colin Uecker, and William Zeimet. Coached by Theodore Halbach
- University of Minnesota: Leif Annexstad, Matthias Annexstad, Nick Seitzer, and Jacob Twohey. Coached by Marcia Endres
- Michigan State University: Mikayla Bowen, Jessie Nash, Derek Vanderhoff, and Katie Wilson. Coached by Roger Thomson

Teams and students earning Second Place and \$100 student scholarships include:

- Cornell University: Alexander Dawson, Johnathan King, Elizabeth Maslyn, and Cole Schaap. Coached by Mike Van Amburgh
- Iowa State University: Beckie Burns, Ben Cooper, Anna Hanson, and Brianna McBride. Coached by Gail Carpenter
- South Dakota State University: Carter Espinoza, Ross Herber, Amber McElmury, and Lukas Pierson. Coached by Tracey Erickson and Tiffany Van Buren

- Kansas State University: Grant Fincham, Morgan Kunkel, Nathan Leavitt, and Patrick Vanderknaap. Coached by Mike Brouk

### **Total industry effort**

Four dairy farms opened up their farms for analysis and in exchange, received a wealth of ideas from students and judges. Host farms for the 2022 Dairy Challenge were:

- Soaring Eagle Dairy LLC, Newton, Wis.
- Strutz Farm Inc., Two Rivers, Wis.
- Brickstead Dairy LLC, Greenleaf, Wis.
- Collins Dairy LLC, Greenleaf, Wis.

“Dairy Challenge is one of the most memorable events in a student’s college career. It is a real-life application of knowledge and skill packed together with networking and teamwork,” said Kristi Fiedler, co-chair of the event. “Sponsors and dairy farmers have the opportunity to recruit the upcoming industry stars. We are fortunate in Northeast Wisconsin to have so many prestigious dairies, and this week we had the honor of working with several of them. This event impacted over 500 students, volunteers and farm staff. It takes an army to make it successful. We are thankful for everyone who gave their time and dedication towards the future of our industry.”

