

**Outgoing president reflects on 2008 and his four years of service****'We have opportunities to be at the forefront, to stand up for what we do'**

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"We are in the food producing business. But all too often it is easy to become indentured with today's task and let someone else—someone else with other interests—determine our future. It is no longer a boardroom issue. It is a living room issue. In the high-speed information world we are living in today, our consumers are constantly surrounded and easily influenced by misinformation. The enemy is ignorance and the three little words: "Stop doing that," will not allow for us to continue feeding the world in an efficient manner. As producers, we must not only be at the table where crucial decisions are made, we must stand up and lead the discussion. Democracy still works but it is not a spectator sport."

These words were written by Logan Bower, outgoing president of the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) at the start of 2008. Between the various meetings and the "homework," Bower has spent the equivalent of three 12-hour working days per month over the past four years—away from his own dairy farm business—serving the interests of Pennsylvania dairy producers as PDMP president. He says the time has been well spent.

"Our past president, Dave Hileman said it best with the proverb: "It seems the more you give, the more you receive," said Bower during a recent interview after PDMP directors elected new officers at their Dec. 5 board meeting in Camp Hill.

A lot has changed about the dairy industry since 2004, and the soft-spoken Bower has led PDMP's proactive leadership in many areas during these four years.

He has demonstrated his passion for strengthening Pennsylvania's dairy industry, and is quick to point out: "My heart lies with the producer, I'm here on the farm every day working 10, 12, 14 hours a day. I know what it is to get things done, to make a living on the dairy farm. I know what it's like to be in the trenches."

Bower is the third generation at Pleasant View Farms, near Blain, Perry County, Pa., where he operates his 500-cow dairy.

About his four years as PDMP president, he says, "I've had an opportunity to be at the right places at the right time, and I think it's important that our voice be heard. Our industry is changing so fast. Milking cows is not the same as it was 20, even five years ago. Today, it is more important than ever for producers to be up-to-date and dealing with today's issues to work toward helping to solve them. There are a lot of outside forces now affecting our businesses, so we have to stand up for what we do. No one is better to do that than we as producers. Unfortunately, not many of us have time to do it, but it is more and more important that we do."

Through its structure, mission and producer-driven leadership, PDMP offers an opportunity for producers to, collectively, have a voice with the public and in decisions made that affect the dairy industry.

In looking back on 2008, "We changed our focus a little this year with our professional development meetings to adopt more of an advocacy role," Bower reflects. "Our 2008 meetings finished on a high note with a really well-attended issue forum in November."

"We also furthered our mission of 'seeking to advance the dairy industry in Pennsylvania through improved productivity and profitability,' by opening our corn silage test results to non-members," Bower reports. "We had, once again, another outstanding silage trial, and this year, for the first time, we did not protect that information for just our members' use. We opened it to the public so that all dairy producers can access the information and results."

During 2008, Bower and PDMP, have been a driving force behind dealing with the animal care issue. Beginning with his representation



During their December board meeting, conducted at the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau office in Camp Hill, the 2009 board of directors of the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) elected new officers. Front Row (from left): Rod Hissong, Mercer Vu Farms, Mercersburg, incoming president; Logan Bower, Pleasant View Farms, Blain, outgoing president; Dina Zug, Zugstead Farm, Mifflintown, secretary; Lisa Holden, Penn State University liaison. Back row (from left): Alan Novak,

PDMP executive director; Glenn Gorrell, Gorrell Dairy, East Smithfield, board member; Mike Hosterman, AgChoice Farm Credit, board member; Jeff Harding, Elanco Animal Health, board member; Gary Kline, Y-Run Farms, Troy, incoming treasurer; Dale Hoffman, Kar-Dale-Acres, Shinglehouse, vice president. Not pictured is outgoing treasurer and board member Duane Hershey, Ar-Joy Farm, Cochranville.



PDMP Premier Partners participated in discussion and planning for PDMP's 2009 educational program schedule, during the December PDMP board meeting. In addition to their memberships in the producer-led organization, these Premier Partners have provided the highest level of sponsorship for PDMP programs in addition to their sponsorships of events like Dairy Summit. Front row (from left): Gordon Hoover, Land O'Lakes Milk Producers Cooperative and Dr. Charlie Gardner, Cargill Animal Nutrition Consulting Services. Back row (from left): Dennis Milhoan, Lancaster Dairy Farm Automation; Matt Antos, Pioneer Hi-Bred International; Jeff Harding, Elanco Animal Health (formerly Monsanto Dairy Business); and Mike Hosterman, AgChoice Farm Credit.

of Pennsylvania producers in the National Dairy Animal Well-Being Initiative (NDAWI) as well as input on speakers selected for last year's Dairy Summit, 2008 culminated with Pennsylvania's launch of a collaborative effort: The Dairy Animal Care and Quality Assurance producer certification program. This program has received national attention as the first producer-led program developed specifically with the NDAWI guidelines in mind.

Bower was instrumental in moving this producer-led effort forward as he served on the NDAWI coalition as well as the Pennsylvania Beef Council board of directors and was in a unique position to bring groups together around shared concerns and ideals.

"We also had, again this year, another very successful dairy tour outside of the state," he notes. "I don't think there's any other formally organized group that has toured as many areas in the country as our group has. We have visited and networked with dairy producers from shore to shore, literally. These tours give producers from Pennsylvania the chance to network with other producers in other states. Naturally, they do things differently, and on a larger size and

scale, but there is always something to learn and bring back to help us improve and make our industry more efficient here."

During the past year, PDMP has also strengthened its working relationship with the Center for Dairy Excellence. "We've worked with CDE on many common objectives, including the Dairy Animal Care and Quality Assurance program effort. What sets us apart is we are producer based and producer-driven, and our mission is directed beyond the membership to collaborate with others to strengthening the dairy industry as a whole. If a producer has an idea, we can consider it and run with it."

Over the past four years, the Pennsylvania Dairy Summit has also evolved to become the premiere collaborative event it is today. The 2009 Summit is set for February 11 and 12 at the Lancaster Host Resort.

"What we have seen in 2008, more than anything else, is the influence of our end users on our day-to-day operations on the farm," Bower observes. "I think this year we really realized the influence that the consumer has gained on shaping our management practices."

Bower notes another emerging issue is the

'green' movement. "As we look forward, our focus should be on these opportunities—everything from recycling of nutrients to producing energy on the farm. As dairy farmers, we are recycling our nutrients back into plant material. We have a great, 'green,' positive story to tell about the things we've already been doing for years and years, but nobody has taken notice to it," says Bower, who, like many members of PDMP, has been using conservation practices such as no-till farming and cover cropping for nearly 20 years on his 650-acre farm.

"We have new opportunities to be at the forefront in solving our country's dependence on fossil fuels with the generation of renewable energy on dairy farms," he adds. "This is really an exciting time for farmers: the original innovators."

As the world changes, PDMP has evolved as an organization also. Professional development meetings are planned each year to give dairy producers not only educational opportunities to improve their dairy farm businesses, but also networking opportunities and insights into issues from within and outside of the industry.

The organization has also stepped up its communication effort with other dairy producers through their weekly page in *Farmshine*. "This has been a huge breakthrough, a big step for us," says Bower. "It has given us exposure not only across the state but also around the country, and this has heightened the awareness of our organization here on the East Coast."

As outgoing president, Bower will continue with an honorary seat on the PDMP board of directors. In December, the board began planning professional development meetings for the coming year with some great meeting topics to look forward to in 2009.

Elected at the December board meeting were: Rod Hissong of Mercer Vu Farm, Mercersburg, president; Dale Hoffman of Kar-Dale Acres, Shinglehouse, vice president; Dina Zug, Zugstead Farm, Mifflintown, secretary; and Gary Kline of Y-Run Farm, Troy, treasurer.

What will Logan Bower do with his extra free time? "I'll spend time here giving attention to my dairy business," he says, adding that through his experiences as PDMP president, "I've gained a lot of education and met a lot of people. I enjoyed working with the people within the industry in the state and across the country and with all of the traveling, I had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what the issues are facing dairymen here and across the country, and what directions they are focusing on in their businesses. I've made a lot of contacts and a lot of friends."