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Program announced for 2009 Dairy Summit

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LANCASTER, Pa. — “If we’re not learning we’re standing still and going backward, quickly,” says Penny Ulmer. She and her husband Dan and their children milk about 170 cows at their Guided-Path Farms near Bellefonte, Pa. They have been members of PDMP for five years.

“The challenge, sometimes, can be in getting away from the dairy farm,” she admits. “But the biggest benefit of membership has been the exchange of ideas through continued education and opportunities to talk with fellow producers.”

The annual Pennsylvania Dairy Summit in February is the pinnacle of idea exchange in the dairy industry.

Past attendees praise the Summit as not only educational, but also motivational, inspirational: The go-to event for giving dairy farm families, managers, and key employees a progressive edge, a forward-thinking perspective, tools of the trade for improving their day-to-day operations, and the counsel of countless peers and experts during full group sessions, small group breakouts and mingling in the hallways and dining areas over the course of this premier two day event.

The atmosphere is positively electric: From the programming to the trade show to the networking opportunities.

As November kicks off the winter meeting season, there are plenty of worthwhile seminars to attend in the coming months. But there is nothing on the calendar that quite compares with Dairy Summit.

The annual two-day event at the Host Resort in Lancaster is hosted by the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) and Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders in partnership with the Center for Dairy Excellence, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and Penn State Dairy Alliance.

The program for the 2009 Summit, Wednesday and Thursday, February 12 and 13, promises to be another good one, largely because it is planned with the input of dairy producers.

New this year on Thursday is the opportunity to participate in two open discussions about dairy in the Northeast. These discussions will delve into the processing and retailing side of dairy, with a look at how this sector meets the needs of its consumers as well as future opportunities for processing capacity in the Northeast.

On Wednesday, Feb. 12, keynote speakers include:

◆ Dr. John Stanton of St. Joseph's University will share emerging trends in the food industry. Stanton has spent the past 30 years working in the food marketing industry with many nationally-known companies, including Campbell Soup, PepsiCo, and Kellogg.

Stanton has addressed many major U.S. and international food association groups and is regularly quoted in the media and serves as the current editor of the Journal of Food Products Marketing.

◆ Dr. Wes Jamison, a professor at the University of Florida and Dr. Jim Reynolds, a bovine practitioner with the University of California Davis Research and Teaching Center will discuss "Animal well-being: An opportunity and obligation."

Jamison is well-recognized for his research in the U.S. and Europe on agricultural politics, especially related to the animal/human interaction and urban-rural issues. Reynolds serves as the chair of the American Veterinary Medicine Association Animal Welfare Committee.

◆ Third-generation dairyman, John Vrieze, will talk about "Capturing value and creating innovation."

Vrieze—a 2001 recipient of the International Dairy Foods Association's Innovative Dairy Farmer of the Year Award" and founder and president of the Wisconsin Dairy Business Association—will showcase his family's three dairy enterprises: Emerald and Baldwin Dairies as well as The Transition Management Facility (Emerald Dairy II). Vrieze Farms celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 2007. Combined, the farm's three western Wisconsin locations milk 2,500 cows.

The program for Thursday, Feb. 13, will include:

◆ "Sustainability and dairy's carbon footprint." This timely topic will highlight the new Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, established to bring together milk producers, processors, and manufacturers to collaborate on major issues affecting the dairy industry, including sustainability.

◆ "Sharing the secrets to 52 years of profitability and steady growth." George Mueller will showcase Willow Bend & Spring Hope Farms—a merger between two neighboring dairies in Clifton Springs, New York.

◆ Thursday's program will also include inspirational speaker and fellow dairy producer Hank Wagner.

Breakout sessions during Summit will include:

◆ "Feeding alternative energy: Solutions for maintaining energy levels from non-traditional feeds," led by feed efficiency expert Mike Hutjens, University of Illinois.

◆ "Passing on the dairy legacy: Ideas for transitioning the dairy farm and bringing new producers into the business," led by George Mueller, Spring Hope Farm, Clifton Springs, NY.

◆ "How to profit from telling our story: A look at how one dairy farm reaches out to the local community," led by Ron Robbins, a dairy producer from Sackets Harbor, N.Y.

◆ “Dairy Animal Care and Quality Assurance: The benefits of doing the right things,” led by Drew Wilkins, Cargill Meat Solutions and Paul Slayton, Pennsylvania Beef Council.

Also, on Wednesday, an early-bird special for those arriving at 8:00 a.m. A free showcase of resources for dairy farms will be presented by Brad Hilty, Penn State Dairy Alliance; Martin Brill, Kutztown University Small Business Institute; and Willard LeMaster, risk management specialist with the Center for Dairy Excellence.

Don't miss the opportunities to learn and grow at the 2009 Dairy Summit.

A complete program brochure and registration materials are available online at www.padairysummit.org. For more information, keep watching future editions of Farmshine and contact PDMP, toll-free, at 1-877-326-5993.