

## New president sets sights on unity

By SHERRY BUNTING  
Special for Farmshine

MILAN, Pa.—“I would really love to get people to realize that PDMP is for farms of all sizes. Membership in this organization brings value to dairy farms whether you have 60 cows or 600,” notes Glenn Gorrell, who was recently elected 2010 president of the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP). “We were all 60 cows at one time or another. This is not a ‘big farm’ club.”

Glenn should know. He and his wife Robin built their dairy business literally from the ground up as first generation dairy producers, with their daughter Jesse—Gorrell Dairy’s herd manager—representing the second generation and Jesse’s three month old daughter, Lauren, a potential third generation. They have been PDMP members for many years, and this is Glenn’s second year on the board.

While Glenn did not grow up living on a dairy farm, he and his twin brother Mike worked on dairy farms, so they grew up loving it just the same.

“We both had the opportunity to work for some top notch producers and we learned from them,” Glenn recalls. Today, he and his wife Robin have a 600-cow dairy in Bradford County, Pennsylvania. Glenn’s brother has his own dairy in New York.

Glenn and Robin moved from New Jersey to start farming with 44 cows in Centre County, Pennsylvania in 1981. Then in 1989, they moved up to Bradford County.

“We had 64 cows at that time, and then we grew internally to 175 animals before we started buying more cows,” Glenn reflects. “We were still milking in a tie stall barn until nine years ago when we put in the parlor and had the biggest chunk of the expansion.”

The Gorrells own 430 acres, but with the

rented acres included, they farm close to 2000. They do a lot of no-till farming and use cover crops to the extent possible in the northern tier. Gorrell Dairy grows all their own forages and grain for the dairy ration.

They employ 13 full-timers, including Glenn and Robin and their daughter Jesse, who is the herd manager. Jesse’s husband Dan Slaymaker also has cows with his brothers in a nearby dairy operation.

At Gorrell Dairy, Robin does the books and takes care of the calves. She and Glenn thoroughly enjoy hosting farm tours each year for 200 kindergartners from their local school district. “We’ve been doing this for 11 years,” Glenn reports. “It takes two days to get everyone through.”

“Most dairy farmers are proud of what they do,” he adds. “The rest of the world gets in the car in the morning, goes to the office and comes home at the end of the day to have weekends off, but we have a love for the animals and for the land and the crops. This is a nice life.”

He recalls starting out with nothing in an industry that is very tough. “We paid for our mistakes along the way and we have grown our business to be something for the next generation to continue,” Glenn explains.

“That’s what I really like about PDMP. I like being part of what the organization does and stands for, and that we have a group led by dairy farmers that is willing to take on the issues that affect our farms and our neighbors’ farms,” he relates.

Advocacy has been part of PDMP’s purpose for two years now, and the issues keep coming—in what seems, at times, like a freight train. From environmental issues, climate change, the Obama Administration’s Chesapeake Bay initiative, farm labor and immigration, to animal welfare and the dairy economy—there is no shortage of issues affecting the future of

Pennsylvania dairy farms.

“This is a great group of people. Being a PDMP board member, and now an officer, is worth my time and effort to help bring value to other dairy producers,” Glenn explains. “Here in the northern tier, we can get isolated. Being part of this organization and going to the meetings makes your world more ‘whole.’ I learn by visiting with other producers and the industry representatives.”

In 2010, Glenn wants to focus on unity. “We will continue to try to get people in Pennsylvania’s dairy industry to come together as one voice, and present one story, to get farmers farther down the road than the road we have traveled in the past,” he explains.

The upcoming 2010 Pennsylvania Dairy Summit in Lancaster February 3 and 4 is something he looks forward to every year. “It’s a great way to get everyone from the dairy industry together in one place to visit with each other, and the speakers are always terrific,” he says. “But the highlight, to me, is hearing from the showcase producers and the different things they have done on their farms.”

Glenn is enthused about the PDMP Dairy Tour to Vermont March 23-26. He has chaired the tour committee for the past three years. “This year, the focus is on value-added. There is real interest among dairy farmers in what other people are doing with their milk. Plus, we’ll tour farms with methane digesters.”

The tour committee also came up with the idea of meeting with Vermont-based Dairy Farmers Working Together and representatives of Holstein USA while they are visiting the Green Mountain State.

“Our committee thought it would be a great idea to touch base with them to see what



direction they are taking and what thoughts and goals they have,” Glenn explains.

“It’s tough to get going on the milk price subject. There are different ideas out there and it is something that requires in-depth knowledge. But the ball has to continue to move, so we are interested in talking to, and we surely want to support the efforts of, other groups (within the framework of PDMP’s position paper).”

He notes that the first PDMP Issue Forum in June will focus on milk pricing. The second Forum in August will look at who did ‘okay’ in 2009. “We’ll get producers to talk about this so we can drill down into what they did and how they did it,” he notes.

The issue at hand for the third Forum in November, may wind up being the one to have the greatest impact.

“When it comes to the Obama Administration’s Chesapeake Bay initiative and the EPA involvement here, we’ve scheduled this Forum because this issue is huge and affects all dairies—no matter what size. PDMP is keeping an eye on this as it unfolds. The November meeting will focus on what to expect and what steps can be taken on our farms.”

For more information on the Dairy Summit and the Dairy Tour to Vermont, contact PDMP at 877.326.5993 or visit pdmp.org.