



Future dietitians taste-test cheese at Marcoots Jersey Creamery during SLDDC's first Fall Farm Tour: Connecting Food to Farm. Read some of their responses to the event in "Sharing the Love" on page 4.

Farm Tour Shows College Students the Family Side of Dairy Industry

Forty-three Illinois dietetic students participated in SLDDC's first Fall Farm Tour: Connecting Food to Farm in October as a requirement from their internship directors.

"This type of a farm tour isn't part of the dietetic curriculum, but all 4 participating universities pulled out their students from class and rotations to participate," says SLDDC nutrition educator Monica Nyman. The goal is to arm future health professionals with the knowledge of how local food travels from farm to table.

"These students were able to see where dairy producers live, and that this is their family business," Nyman says. "It's really hard to bring in that aspect to a classroom."

The all-day event included tours of Marcoot Jersey Creamery and Doll's Dairy, both in Bond County, Ill., and a presentation by Prairie Farms field manager Candi Katchmar.

Dietetic students from Bradley, Eastern Illinois, Fontbonne, and Illinois State universities participated in the event.

"A lot of the questions, such as antibiotic use, asked by the students were the same questions that we hear from consumers," Nyman says. "These students are soon going to be out in the workforce, and if they have a misconception, then it's our job to correct that and teach them the real side of the dairy industry."



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New Cheese Guide Pairs Nicely with Holiday Season

Care for some cheddar with your kettle corn? Or maybe some Swiss with your chocolate-covered cherries? SLDDC's new guide on the art of cheese pairing is reaching the dairy lovers this holiday season.

"We've noticed a resurgence of consumer interest in cheese," says SLDDC executive director Margie Graham. "And we want to capitalize on this opportunity."

The 12-page guide is a new approach from SLDDC's traditional nutrition outreach in schools. "We made this resource for people that are interested in the food side of dairy nutrition," Graham says.

The guide will be placed with more than 500 family and consumer science teachers and offered as a downloadable copy off the SLDDC website to millions of radio listeners and TV viewers in Illinois and Missouri.

SLDDC Programs Support Farm-to-Cafeteria-Table Trend



How do you get a 10-year-old to skip the soda and make milk their “beverage of choice”?

Any parent knows it’s not always easy to steer them toward healthier options. However, the increasingly popular farm-to-school programs offer a great starting place.

These programs may appear to be the latest trend

in schools, but farm-to-school efforts have been around for years. Though they look different in every state, they share the same goal: to connect schools with local producers and teach students where their food comes from. Missouri and Illinois schools are bringing these programs to life by serving local products in cafeterias, teaching ag in classrooms, and planting school gardens.

SLDDC believes the programs present an enormous opportunity to make a difference for dairy in schools.

According to USDA, 75% of schools with these programs (in 2013–14) reported benefits such as better acceptance of healthier meals, increased participation in school meal programs, and more support from parents and community.

Programs like our new Dairy Dollars — that encourage students to try, like, and eat more healthy food — make a difference. Programs that actively connect schools with farmers — like our new Adopt-A-Cow — make a difference. Programs that help students understand how food gets from the farm to the table — such as our new Fall Farm Tour — make a difference.

We plan to reach more than 2,000 classrooms by adding these 3 programs to our 2016 initiative lineup.

By continuing to roll out unique dairy programs that support national efforts to build healthier schools, SLDDC is ensuring that dairy farmers are part of the farm-to-school success story. And, at the same time, we’re helping those 10-year-olds make the move toward milk.

Margie Graham
SLDDC Executive Director

Margie

Adopt-A-Cow Grows with 3 Calves, 50 Classrooms

Conner and Starfire are some of the names that 50 Illinois and Missouri classrooms have given their calf through SLDDC’s Adopt-A-Cow initiative.

“This pilot initiative helps to remind kids where their milk comes from,” says program coordinator Ellen Wheeler. Many schools don’t have the resources to visit an actual dairy farm, she explains. “This is the next best thing to going to the farm on a field trip.”

Adopt-A-Cow lets classrooms choose a calf to adopt and name and follow through monthly photos during the school year.

The initiative is website driven: teachers go online to download activity sheets and ask the farmer questions, and classrooms receive monthly updates on their calf via personal email.

As part of the pilot program, teachers have agreed to give feedback on the initiative, such as whether it is age appropriate for their classroom and how much time they spend learning about their calf each month. The feedback will be used for the full Adopt-A-Cow program that will roll out in fall 2016. “We plan to make Adopt-A-Cow open to all schools in our territory,” Wheeler says.



Students at Brown County (Ill.) Elementary proudly show off the official adoption certificate for Petey the calf. The classroom receives monthly photos and updates of Petey during the school year as part of the Adopt-a-Cow pilot program.

Have a Moo, Moo Christmas with Holiday Card Winners

A record number of 1,393 students in Illinois and Missouri drew their interpretation of a dairy holiday for the fourth annual SLDDC Holiday Card contest.

Schools were invited to have their students submit a drawing related to dairy and the holidays for a chance to win prizes. Eighty-nine schools participated in the contest, with one school, R.A. Doyle Elementary, East Prairie, Mo., submitting 189 entries.

“This is a fun contest that gets kiddos thinking about dairy,” says SLDDC program coordinator Ellen Wheeler.



Milk and ice cream make perfect gifts in the winning drawing by 12-year-old Nicole M., Kirkwood, Mo.

The following artists will receive their own set of holiday cards and have their artwork featured on SLDDC's 2015 holiday card:

Grade category K–2nd: Charlotte M., age 7, Lincoln Elementary School, Marion, Ill.

Grade category 3rd–5th: Jillian S., age 9, Eureka Elementary School, Eureka, Mo.

Grade category 6th–9th: Nicole M., age 12, Nipher Middle School, Kirkwood, Mo.

Event Brings Local to Life for Area Teachers

The story behind cheese was a highlight for the 40 food and consumer science teachers who attended SLDDC's Bringing Local to Life event at Eckert's Country Store and Farms on October 20.

The 3-hour event included baking pumpkin pie with yogurt topping, plus a lesson on cheese tasting from cheesemonger and dietitian Lana Shepek.

Shepek emphasized many aspects of where cheese comes from: who produced the cheese, the family background, how the diet of the cow affects the taste, and how it was produced, says SLDDC nutrition educator Joyce Fikri. Learning the background of the farmers that produced the cheese was especially interesting for the teachers, she added.

“This was a great way to draw a connection from local to dairy,” Fikri says. “A lot of people don't realize that dairy is also local.”

The event was held during National Farm to School Month.

“The goal is for teachers to take what they learned and relay it back to their classrooms,” Fikri says.

Bringing Local to Life is part of the Dollars for Dairy in the Classroom initiative that reimburses teachers for funds they spend on classroom dairy products.

New Dairy Program Gives Flavor to Preschool Lessons

In response to popular demand, 3- to 5-year-olds are taste-testing yogurt and cheese as part of Dairy Dollars for Early Childhood Teachers, a SLDDC pilot program.

Dairy Dollars was born after an overwhelming number of teachers asked if there was a program available for introducing dairy foods to their early childhood classrooms. “We had 128 teachers apply for Dairy Dollars,” says SLDDC program coordinator Ellen Wheeler.

Two hundred classrooms received funds for purchasing dairy products. One classroom taste-tested white, chocolate, and strawberry milk, while another classroom made butter.

“Dairy Dollars helps put into action the message of getting 3 servings of dairy every day,” Wheeler says. The pilot program goes hand-in-hand with the Adopt-a-Cow and Healthy Me initiatives that teach children where their food comes from and teach food nutrition, she says. “This gives children the chance to eat the dairy foods that they're learning about.”

Get your guide to cheese pairing:
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Conferences Showcase Variety of Positive Dairy Trends

High Marks for Milk Smarts

Children in the St. Louis area know quite a bit about dairy nutrition, according to a research project that was revealed during a seminar at the national Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE) in October.

“I like to think that the results of students’ dairy knowledge is because of us,” says SLDDC nutrition educator Erin Rich.

The research, funded outside of the dairy industry, studied 30 school districts throughout the US on their preference and perception of milk. “The researchers were surprised at how much students in the St. Louis area knew about the nutrients in milk,” Rich says. The study also showed that kids like milk — especially chocolate.

SLDDC nutrition educators Rich and Ashley Waters were among the 10,000 food and nutrition professionals who attended FNCE, held in Nashville, Tenn., to learn the latest trends and information in the field.

Dairy at the Table

The “farm to table” trend is becoming more common, according to feedback from 230 school food service directors and staff who attended the annual Missouri School and Nutrition conference in November.

“We hear so much about farm to table, and we want to make sure that milk is part of that story,” says SLDDC nutrition educator Erin Rich. “These conferences are for people looking for ideas on how to get kids excited in cooking, and how to teach them where their food comes from.”

Rich says SLDDC’s grants are especially popular with food service directors who have boosted milk consumption in their schools by using the grants for school coffee bistros and to offer smoothies at lunchtime.

“We fit in really well because we have the materials and grants that help schools,” Rich says.

SLDDC Support in Schools

From school nurses to PE teachers to school wellness coordinators, SLDDC provided these key school health contacts with the latest resources on dairy nutrition at the 24th annual Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition Conference in December.

“The conference is a great way to not only show that we support school health and wellness, but that we’re also able to directly provide them with resources to support their wellness initiatives within their schools,” says SLDDC nutrition educator Ashley Waters. “School nurses and PE teachers are always looking for resources to help educate their students on how to be and stay healthy.”

Roughly 200 people attended the conference and received information on SLDDC’s dental health and Build My Bones kits as well as the Power Up with Chocolate Milk initiative.

Treats Get Cheesy with Candy Exchange

SLDDC joined Delta Dental Clinic the day after Halloween to collect 400 pounds of candy from trick-or-treaters in exchange for cheese sticks and toothbrushes during the annual Great Candy Exchange at the St. Louis Science Center.

“People bring in their candy because it doesn’t always get eaten, and sometimes having candy in the house is a distraction to eating good foods,” says SLDDC nutrition educator Erin Rich. “This is a great way to promote

alternative snacks, like cheese sticks, that still taste really good and may help prevent cavities.”

More than 300 people brought in candy that will be sent overseas to US military troops.

“A lot of the people that came through knew that dairy is good for healthy teeth, but not a lot were aware that cheese prevents cavities,” Rich says. “And if they know that, then they’re more likely to have cheese at home.”

Sharing the Love

*from dietetic students
at this year’s Farm Day*

I really appreciated the explanation of organic versus nonorganic and the use of antibiotics. It decreased my worries about milk.



The farms we visited today cared about their animals and were very humane. I think some media has portrayed most farms as mistreating. It definitely is a lot of work getting products from the farm “to the table.”



It was a great experience. I learned a lot and found I was sharing a lot of the information I learned yesterday with my patients today!



I’ve always loved dairy, cows, and farmers!