



Past nutrition educator Mary Thompson was honored with the Pioneer Award for her exceptional devotion to dairy. Accepting Thompson's plaque is her son Wyatt Thompson, pictured above with SLDDC nutrition educator Ellen Wheeler.

## SLDDC Nutrition Educator Inducted Posthumously into Dairy Hall

Longtime friend and dairy advocate Mary Thompson was inducted posthumously into the Missouri Dairy Hall of Honors on February 8, 2013. Thompson worked as a SLDDC nutrition educator from 1985 to 2007.

In her role as Missouri Information Coordinator/ Nutrition Educator, Thompson communicated the role of dairy foods in a healthful diet with tireless dedication, genuine enthusiasm, and the utmost

professionalism. She brought the message of the goodness of dairy to thousands of teachers, health professionals, and consumers throughout the 19 counties she covered for more than 23 years.

However, Thompson did more than simply work her assigned territory; she thrived on building personal relationships with people who viewed her as a trusted nutrition education professional, according to her colleagues.

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## Students Vote Yea for Vanilla Milk

The voices of our schoolchildren have been heard — at least, the voices of the students at West Richland Elementary in Noble, Ill.

In a landslide vote, 191 of 240 students gave an enthusiastic yes to adding vanilla milk to the lunch menu. Children from kindergarten through 6th grade were the electorate.

"The kids loved the taste of vanilla-flavored milk," says Joyce Fikri, SLDDC nutrition educator.

Fikri handed out samples of vanilla milk during lunchtime on December 7, 2012, to give students an opportunity to try something new.

"Kids like to sample new foods," she says. Sampling a new flavor of milk lets students decide if they like the taste, Fikri adds.

"If the first time kids see vanilla milk is in the lunch line, they may not want to try it because they don't know what it tastes like," she says.

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## Targeted Dairy Programs Hit the Mark in Schools

When it comes to reaching school-age children with messages about the health benefits of dairy foods, relevance is key. You need to creatively approach students “where they’re at,” whether it’s in a kindergarten classroom

or a high school food science lab. St. Louis District Dairy Council has a decades-long commitment to delivering targeted programs to a variety of school-based audiences. Our aim is to help connect students to dairy in a way that makes sense to them, and to our dairy producers.

To make this happen, we conduct an annual needs assessment with our schools in Illinois and Missouri called the NENA (Nutrition Education Needs Assessment). This survey helps us keep a finger on

the pulse of what’s happening in our schools. We get feedback on current programs, along with valuable input on potential programs.

Armed with this information, our nutrition educators continue to roll out new school initiatives such as Build My Bones. They also build on the successes of established initiatives such as Dollars for Dairy, engaging more schools to help students develop healthy eating habits that include dairy. We’ve known, since 1932, that local promotion demands more than a one-size-fits-all approach. Our schools — and our funders — wouldn’t have it any other way.

*Margie*

Margie Graham, RD, LD  
Executive Director, SLDDC

### *Thompson (continued)*

She was likeable, loyal, and dependable; and she successfully portrayed the local dairy industry in the same light.

“I’ve had the good fortune to work with many dedicated professionals in the dairy industry over the past 15 years, and Mary Thompson stood head and shoulders above most, not only in her commitment and intelligence, but also in her ability to function as a supportive team player,” says Margie Graham, SLDDC Executive Director.

Graham says Thompson’s ability to communicate clearly made her an exceptional mentor to many Dairy Council staff. Thompson was able to project an open, friendly persona to others regardless of their level of expertise. She was instrumental in training new staff, offering practical tips on everything from how to share the spotlight with a Holstein during an on-farm television interview to how to convince a teacher to stay after school for a meeting. She was among the first to volunteer to serve on a committee and the last to leave an organization-wide event.

Thompson’s photo has been added to the Dairy Hall of Honors room at the University of Missouri. Her son Wyatt Thompson accepted the Pioneer Award plaque for his mother in honor of her outstanding dedication to the dairy industry.

### *Vanilla Milk (continued)*

The West Richland Elementary cafeteria, a Dollars for Dairy Grant recipient, is now offering vanilla milk, along with 1 percent milk, fat-free chocolate milk, and fat-free strawberry milk.

“We can hardly get enough vanilla milk because it’s as popular as the chocolate milk,” says Kara Garner, West Richland Elementary School nurse.

Studies show students are more likely to drink milk at lunch when they have a choice of flavors.

At the start of 2013, SLDDC created the Flavored Milk Promotion to continue encouraging elementary students in Missouri and Illinois to drink flavored milk.

## Did You Know?

Flavored milk has only 12 grams of added sugar per 8-ounce serving and has the same 9 essential nutrients as white milk.

Sweetened drinks have 22 grams of added sugar per 8-ounce serving and no nutritional value.

## Keeping up with Monica

Monica Nyman, the newest nutrition educator to join the SLDDC team, has hit the airwaves in central Illinois, spreading the word on dairy nutrition.

Radio and TV interviews are part of a monthly routine for the nutrition educators who give advice on eating healthy with dairy.

“We are all getting the same message out in our respective territories,” says Nyman, who works out of the Peoria, Ill., office and covers 27 counties in central Illinois.

Nyman has given more than 10 radio and TV interviews in Canton, Princeton, and Bloomington, and a food demonstration on WEEK, the local NBC affiliate.

When she’s not on the air, Nyman is coleading 7 SLDDC initiatives that educate health professionals and promote dairy consumption in schools and the community.

Look for Nyman in your communities and schools, or tune your radio to WBYS (Canton), WZOE (Princeton), or RFD Today (Bloomington) to catch her latest advice on dairy nutrition.

Nyman joined SLDDC in August 2012.

## My Week At SLDDC

*Lisa Abbott spent a week at SLDDC as part of her Morrison Chartwells Dietetic Internship. Abbott is completing her master’s in dietetics at Southeast Missouri State University.*

During the week that I spent at SLDDC, I learned so much about what the Dairy Council has to offer. I was thrilled to learn all about the current programs, grants, and reimbursements, and to work with school food services directors, nurses, teachers, and coaches. I went on several school visits with nutrition educator Rebecca Collier; we provided resources, tools, and information to promote dairy products. I even participated in a flavored-milk taste test at one school to increase their students’ milk consumption.

I also went with Collier to the KMOV television station, where she appeared on the *Great Day St. Louis* show and shared a recipe packed with dairy ingredients. We traveled to Sullivan, Missouri, where she promoted dairy consumption on a radio interview.

My internship has been enlightening and enjoyable. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to learn more about this organization and its goals — it was such a positive experience.

## Kids Have a Ball with New Dairy Initiative

Over 10,000 children in elementary and junior high are taking it upon themselves to keep their bones strong with the Build My Bones Tracker — a checklist reminding them to get 3 servings of dairy every day.

The tracker is part of the Build My Bones initiative created by SLDDC for the 2012–2013 school year.

“This is our first local initiative that focuses on PE teachers,” says Ellen Wheeler, SLDDC nutrition educator.

Each PE teacher receives a toolkit with resources to teach their class how much dairy it takes every day to keep bones strong.

And what better way to make sure kids are learning than to quiz



them with a 50-question Toss and Tell ball — a beach ball printed with trivia questions. The student who catches the ball has to answer the question under his right thumb.

The resources aren’t all fun and games. The kids also take a pledge to eat three daily servings of dairy and sign their names on a 3-by-4-foot pledge wall that hangs in the school gymnasium.

“We want schools to think and talk dairy,” Wheeler says. “PE is another way schools can promote dairy.”

To learn how successful the Build My Bones initiative is, SLDDC is holding a contest for PE teachers to show how they use the resources in class. The winner receives \$250 for classroom supplies and gets a pep assembly with a special guest and, of course, a dairy-themed giveaway.

Find out who the winner is in the June issue of *SLDDC In Action*.

# Dairy Grant Brings Popular Treat to Cafeterias

Eating healthy has never been such a delight for students whose cafeteria managers are using their Dollars for Dairy grant money to whip up delicious, healthy smoothies for school breakfast and lunch.

Ten schools in Illinois and Missouri were awarded \$1,500 to purchase an industrial-size blender for serving smoothies during their school's breakfast and lunch.

Rebecca Collier, SLDDC nutrition educator, says that more kids eat school breakfast because they like the smoothies.

"Kids find the smoothies really tasty and are drinking all of it," Collier says.

However, getting students to try new foods can be tricky.

"At the beginning when kids are reluctant to try the smoothies,



With smoothies added to the menu, more kids are eating school breakfast, including this student — a fan of the mixed-berry-and-milk smoothie.

schools give out promotional items to encourage the kids," she says. Some of the grant money can be used to buy jump ropes or school T-shirts to give away when kids buy a smoothie.

"Once the program is established in the school, kids come to expect smoothies in the meal plan," she says.

"We encourage the schools to serve smoothies as much as possible," says Collier.

A single 8-ounce smoothie is equivalent to one serving of milk and a half cup of fruit, meeting federal breakfast and lunch nutrition requirements.

"It's a good way for kids to get 30 percent of their daily calcium, 25 percent of their daily vitamin D, and 15 percent of their daily protein, as well as necessary B vitamins, magnesium, and potassium," Collier says.

## Conference Roundup: SLDDC Shares Dairy with Teachers, Nurses

Armed with chocolate milk and dairy handouts, Joyce Fikri, SLDDC nutrition educator, spoke to the fitness masses about the power of chocolate milk at a local conference last fall.

Around 3,000 PE and health teachers attended the Illinois Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (IAPHERD) conference, a two-day event in November 2012 in St. Charles, Illinois.

"The focus was to provide the research and effects of drinking chocolate milk after a workout," Fikri says. "Quite a few people are familiar with the benefits, but need the facts to help them encourage their athletes."

Power Up with Chocolate Milk, a program for high school athletes, is one of SLDDC's larger initiatives.

The SLDDC booth attracted a steady flow of teachers that were interested in the many programs and the chocolate milk donated by Prairie Farms.

"The more SLDDC is out providing information, the more interest we get about our resources," Fikri says.

Ellen Wheeler, another SLDDC nutrition educator,

agrees: "Our goal is to reach as many teachers and nurses and engage with them in depth."

Wheeler focused on educating school nurses on dairy nutrition at the Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition Conference (MCSHC) at Lake of the Ozarks, also held in fall 2012.

"When kids visit the school nurse complaining of stomach (hunger) pains, we want the nurses to get them to eat breakfast with milk," Wheeler says, adding that one of SLDDC's initiatives is a school breakfast with dairy food. To reinforce the message, SLDDC sponsored a healthy breakfast for the conference attendees, including yogurt, cheese for eggs, and milk for cereal.

Wheeler led a session on dairy myths and facts and gave out resources at the SLDDC booth for nurses to use in their offices.

Many nurses play an integral role on school wellness committees, Wheeler points out. "Nurses give us another way to share the message of dairy."