

SLDDC in Action

Summer 2020 | Vol. 33



Adopt-A-Cow farmer Emily Reinhardt sent a personal video message to the 4th-grade students at Kreitner Elementary in Collinsville, IL (see photo on page 4) after their field trip to her farm was canceled this spring due to Covid-19. The three other winning classrooms also received video messages from their farmers updating them on their calf.

SLDDC Helps DPA Redirect 44,000 Pounds of Cheese to Food Bank

SLDDC arranged for a semi load of 44,000 pounds of cheddar cheese to be donated to the largest free food bank in the bistate area, Operation Food Search (OFS), in May, providing roughly 8,000 families in Illinois and Missouri with high-quality nutrition.

"This is a great partnership, and we hope to continue to work together," says OFS food donations relationship manager Jack Baran.

The donation (valued at nearly \$80,000 at time of delivery) was made by the Dairy Pricing Association (DPA), an organization comprising dairy farmers across 12 states. DPA members Derek England and John Good, who also reside on the SLDDC board, requested help in finding a food bank to receive the cheese.

SLDDC worked with Baran's team in arranging for the cheese to be transported from a plant in Mosinee, Wisconsin, to Minnesota to St. Louis. A local cheese processor, Swiss American, then cut down the 40-pound blocks and repackaged them into 5-pound blocks for distribution.

Thanks to SLDDC's connections with community members, the entire donation was orchestrated quickly and dispersed to more than 200 food pantries without using checkoff dollars.

"Our pockets may not run deep, but our personal connections do," says SLDDC program coordinator Ellen Wheeler. She says SLDDC's connections were key to ensuring that the cheese was delivered quickly to food pantries and to those neighbors in need.

bors in need.

"Promoting dairy through projects that have immediate local impact is at the heart of what we do," Wheeler says. "This is another way for us to connect the dots between the dairy producer and the consumer."

SLDDC board member England agrees: "The current pandemic presented an ideal opportunity for us to help families in need, along with dairy farmers. It's a definite win-win."

DPA uses producers' assessments to buy excess dairy products from the marketplace and donate them to the needy.

OFS is a nonprofit organization that distributes food and nutrition services to agencies in Illinois and Missouri with the goal of ending hunger in the greater St. Louis area.



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Local Connections More Important Than Ever in Pandemic



A lot has happened in the world of dairy, and the world in general, as the result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As reopening continues at different speeds across Missouri, Illinois, and the rest of the country, SLDDC is determined to keep making steady progress promoting dairy on behalf of local farmers.

It's encouraging to see retail shelves restocked and the supply chain improved. But we know we are in this for the long haul. And we recognize that our responsive, nimble approach is critical as we continue to help move more dairy in new ways.

New ways include expanding our traditional focus beyond schools to our neighbors in need. As you know, the enormous demand at food banks has spurred dairy purchases by the USDA and regional dairy promotion groups. When a local food bank opportunity came knocking in mid-April, we swiftly moved into doing what we do best: putting local connections to work.

It was our local connections that helped transfer 44,000 pounds of cheese to hundreds of community food pantries. It was those same connections that made this large dairy donation possible with zero impact on our programming budget.

Along with moving more dairy through the supply chain, we continue to protect your investment in schools. When spring field trips were canceled, we brought video messages from farmers to students. We successfully wrapped up the Adopt-A-Cow program for the school year, with students saying goodbye to calves from their living rooms rather than classrooms. And we worked with school nutrition directors to provide support as they transitioned from cafeteria to curbside service for school meals.

We recognize that fall's return to school will pose unknown challenges. But at SLDDC, we understand our charge in promoting dairy locally. And we are ready with a dynamic plan to engage students with dairy, and to create new avenues to reach them wherever they are.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margie".

Margie Graham
SLDDC Executive Director

Dairy Month Celebrated with Demos, Recipe Roundup

SLDDC nutrition educators hit the airwaves with 45 broadcast interviews during June Dairy Month to remind 3.2 million listeners that through the good times and the bad, dairy farmers continue to produce wholesome milk.

"This year we wanted to honor local dairy farmers during June Dairy Month and let communities know that when they purchase dairy foods, they are also supporting local businesses," says SLDDC nutrition educator Monica Nyman.

Additionally, SLDDC nutrition educators took turns creating 3 cooking demonstrations to share on social media each week in June and invited

consumers to email a favorite dairy recipe or to share it on social media to receive a dairy toolkit: measuring cup, whisk, frother, and ice cube trays. Twenty-four Facebook and Instagram followers shared their favorite recipes and received a toolkit.

"We want to provide people with recipes, especially since they are still cooking a lot at home," Nyman says.

Check out the popular recipes on Facebook and Instagram at [STLDairyCouncil](#).

Whisking up dairy deliciousness is in the works for this youngster after his family received a dairy toolkit for the June Dairy Month giveaway.



Cheddar 'n' Ham Muffins



3/4 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 3/4 cup all-purpose baking mix
1 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup diced ham

Preheat oven to 400°F. Combine cheeses in a bowl; add baking mix and milk; stir together. Add pepper and ham and mix well. Spoon mixture into a lightly greased muffin pan, each cup about half full. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes or until muffin tops are golden brown.

Pandemic Leads to Surge in SLDDC Social Media Following

Dairy has become a mainstay on the table for the hundreds of consumers flocking to SLDDC's social media pages, looking for new recipes to try and fun dairy activities to do with their kids.

"Since April we have ramped up our social media not only to promote dairy but also to keep our personal connection with consumers," says SLDDC executive director Margie Graham. She explains that the record highs in fluid milk purchases over the past few months due to pandemic stay-at-home measures correlate with the amount of interest in dairy recipes they are seeing online.

Engagement on SLDDC's Facebook and Instagram pages has grown rapidly, with a 76% increase during June Dairy Month.

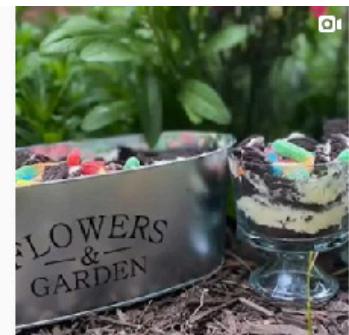
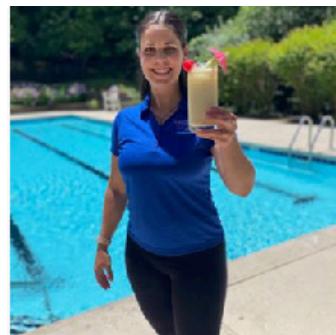
Popular posts include video messages from Adopt-A-Cow dairy farmers, cooking demonstrations, and recipe-sharing contests.

Each week, SLDDC's nutrition educators take turns posting videos of themselves at home in their kitchen giving a cooking demonstration and offering tips, such as how to freeze milk.

SLDDC's Facebook page has also become a community cookbook with promotions like the June Dairy Month recipe-sharing giveaway, which invited consumers to share their favorite dairy recipe in turn for a dairy toolkit.

"The pandemic has caused us to think about dairy a little differently than before," Graham notes. "We've

shifted from encouraging kids to drink milk at school to encouraging the whole family to consume more dairy at home around the kitchen table."



Cooking videos and farm photos like these on SLDDC's Instagram page continue to be a hit for families during the current pandemic.

Adopt-A-Cow Adapts Well to Home Learning

SLDDC's popular Adopt-A-Cow initiative was a perfect fit for distance learning this spring and continued to be a highlight for students—and their parents.

"We heard from teachers who had comments from parents on how much they liked hearing about their calf," says SLDDC program coordinator Ellen Wheeler.

Teachers were able to continue forwarding the monthly pictures of the classroom calf as well as share activity sheets with the students.

The winning classrooms of the photo contest that had their field trip canceled were also surprised with a personal video clip from their farmer assuring them that their calf was growing well.

SLDDC is continuing to promote the program this fall, with a goal to enroll 2,000 classrooms.



These 4th graders at Kreitner Elementary in Collinsville, IL, submitted this winning photo showing their enthusiasm for their adopted calf, Diamond, for a chance to visit Emily Reinhardt's farm.

Follow SLDDC

Instagram: @stldairycouncil

Facebook: stlouisdairycouncil

Sharing the Love for Adopt-A-Cow

I am so thankful to be included in this program. My students love our cow, Oreo. It has been such a comfort to continue to learn about her even when we cannot be together as a classroom.

*Taylor Koenig
Remington Traditional
Maryland Heights, MO*

I absolutely love this program. I love bringing agriculture and health into my classroom for the little ones to enjoy. Having their own calf is such a joy, and they look forward to the updates and activities. I was the first in my district to start this program and it has grown so much.

*Holly Whitacre
Kirksville (MO) Elementary*

We loved all the extras the program offered. We took advantage of the Dairy Dollars program and enjoyed taste-testing several different dairy products. All in all, I would absolutely recommend this program to other teachers!

*Kelly Wilson
Mt. Zion (IL) Grade School*

My class absolutely loved the Adopt-A-Cow program. I was able to share the pictures of our cow with my class via e-mail for the last two months (due to e-learning) and had many parents comment on how excited their child was to see their cow!

*Katherine Masla
Oakdale Elementary
Normal, IL*

Mobile Dairy to Help Schools Serve Students This Fall

Popular initiatives and grants such as Dollars for Dairy are helping schools adapt to operating under Covid-19 guidelines by providing them with the opportunity to purchase equipment like carts and coolers for mobile dairy service.

In addition, schools are receiving a "Welcome Moo Back to School" kit with reusable clings (large stickers) with dairy messages, such as "Power Your Day the Dairy Way," that can be used in the cafeteria, hallway, or classroom—wherever students will be served breakfast and lunch.