



ACTION



Winter 2022 | Vol. 43



SLDDC In Action is a quarterly newsletter produced by the St. Louis District Dairy Council 325 N. Kirkwood Road, Suite 222 St. Louis, MO 63122

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These Adopt-A-Calf teachers at Russell Boulevard Elementary in Columbia, MO, were so excited to have a visit from Grace the cow that they brought out their entire school to watch the presentation. The traveling milking parlor received rave reviews from each of the school visits.

Popular Parlor Pilot Makes Its Way to Local Schools

A pilot visit from the Mobile Dairy Classroom at 10 Illinois and Missouri schools this fall was milked for all it was worth, with elementary schools bringing out their entire student body to watch a real-time demonstration of a milking parlor.

The mobile classroom features a Jersey cow, a parlor stall, and a big-screen TV as part of the 45-minute interactive presentation given by a trained instructor.

“This is really a unique opportunity for students to see the milking process in an up-close, kid-friendly

way,” says SLDDC executive director Margie Graham.

SLDDC organized the weeklong visit with Southwest/Southland Dairy Farmers, a dairy checkoff organization that covers 11 states. The organization operates multiple mobile parlors with instructors that travel to schools as well as fairs and other community events.

The 10-school tour was featured as a top story in local newspapers and TV broadcasts across the bistate area.

Texas FFA Tours Local Farm for Specifics on Dairy

Future ag teachers from Texas A&M University had their wish to visit a dairy farm granted when SLDDC organized a farm tour at the Meyer family dairy farm in Breese, IL, in October.

“The director reached out to us because they wanted to tour a mid-western dairy farm specifically,” says SLDDC nutrition educator Kelsey Bentlage.

SLDDC coordinated the tour during the group’s trip from Texas to the national FFA convention in Indianapolis.

See FFA on page 2

SLDDC Heartened by Increase in School Dairy



According to USDA Economic Research data, schools are among the richest sources of dairy foods in children’s diets. Years ago, the home refrigerator likely claimed the top spot. But, as they say, times have changed. Morning-milk routines have shifted from the kitchen table to self-serve kiosks in school hallways

and grab-n-go coolers in cafeterias. And the morning menu has expanded beyond milk and cereal to include smoothies, coffee drinks, yogurt parfaits, and cheesy breakfast sandwiches.

As we wrap up our fall semester of Dollars for Dairy projects in school cafeterias, it is apparent that schools are embracing these changes—launching smoothie stations, panini bars, and coffee carts to help students enjoy dairy the way they want it. And by amplifying access to dairy foods, schools are delivering much-needed nutrients to students of all ages. They are true partners, and we were thrilled to highlight our shared successes at a recent state nutrition conference (see page 4).

Success has not been limited to cafeterias, as programs like Cheese, Please! tap into new outlets for dairy excitement in schools. The way to a high schooler’s heart is indeed through their stomach, as our 200-plus dairy-tasting sessions have shown.

Along with showcasing dairy’s great taste, we continue to uncover new ways to deliver the ultimate experience of dairy farming to our local schools. There is no doubt that farm tours are back! This fall, we welcomed hundreds of pre-K through college students onto local farms, and also brought the milking experience directly to schools. Our collaboration with Southland/Southwest Dairy Farmers saw thousands of students participate in live cow-milking demonstrations.

As we get ready to roll into 2023, we are grateful for our strong relationships with schools, who truly are the heart of our communities. And we can’t wait to get back to engaging them with powerful dairy experiences in the New Year.

Margie

Margie Graham
SLDDC Executive Director

FFA, cont’d

Bentlage explains that the students were familiar with ranches, but not with dairy production—something they wanted to learn about before graduating as ag teachers.

The tour included learning about automation on the farm as well as feed production, like chopping silage.

“Helping future teachers and health professionals understand what happens on the farm is a priority for SLDDC,” Bentlage says.



Any Way You Slice It, the Charcuterie Board Is a Holiday Hit

SLDDC nutrition educators are keeping cheese in the headlines with a media campaign designed to help consumers assemble a charcuterie board for the holidays.

“Charcuterie boards are growing in popularity and are a festive way to serve cheese,” says SLDDC senior nutrition educator Monica Nyman. “Cheese pairs well with all food groups, and it’s an incredibly nutrient-rich food—a great source of protein and calcium. It’s definitely the star of the show.”

The media campaign focuses on teaching consumers how to customize their cheese boards by selecting cheeses with different flavors and adding foods with different textures, shapes and colors to round out the boards.

Sample Charcuterie Board

- 8 ounces sharp Cheddar, cubed or sliced
- 8 ounces Gouda, cubed or sliced
- 8 ounces Havarti, cubed or sliced
- 1 wedge Brie
- 1 can black olives, drained
- 2 cups fresh fruit (for example, grapes, berries, apple slices)
- 2 cups fresh vegetables (for example, carrot sticks, cucumber slices, snap peas, cherry tomatoes)
- 2 packages salami, Prosciutto, and/or pepperoni
- 2 packages crackers, any kind
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup cashews
- ¼ cup jam or preserves, portioned in a small bowl

Gather the ingredients and arrange them on a rimmed baking sheet or large serving board:

- Space out the cheeses. Provide cheese knives or tongs if needed.
- Fill in some of the gaps with the olives, fruits, and vegetables.
- Roll, stack, and tuck the meats into clusters on the board in between other ingredients.
- Add the crackers and the nuts. (Other crunchy options include baguette slices, pita chips, or pretzel chips.)
- Place jam or additional crackers in small bowls around the board, instead of upon it, if more space is needed. (Other extra elements that add unique flavors include honey, hummus, dill dip or spread, salted butter, or pickled vegetables.)

Cheese Takes the Lead with New FACS Campaign

Cheese, Please!—SLDDC’s latest campaign for family and consumer science (FACS) teachers—celebrates all things cheese by inviting teachers to send in photos of their favorite cheese recipes.

“This campaign allows us to emphasize cheese as a nutrient powerhouse and flavorful ingredient in recipes,” says SLDDC nutrition educator Monica Nyman.

More than 50 teachers submitted a photo of their favorite cheese recipes for a chance to win a basket of cheese utensils.

Nyman explains that contests like this are a hit with FACS teachers and health professionals, who are always coming up with fun activities, like this cheese board, created by registered dietitian Megan Busacker, that celebrates SLDDC’s 90th anniversary (see photo).



Merry Christmas 2022



1,776 student artists in Illinois and Missouri submitted their best artwork for a chance to be chosen as the SLDDC holiday card design.

Three grand-prize winners receive their own set of holiday cards, a gift basket, and a visit from an SLDDC nutrition educator. This year's Merry Dairy Holiday Card contest winners are:

Lucy S., 1st grade, St. Joseph Grade School, Josephville, MO. (Winning artwork pictured.)

Rylee L., 4th grade, Wesclin Middle School, Trenton, IL

Sophie B., 8th grade, All Saints Academy at St. Ferdinand, Florissant, MO

Sharing the Love

Thank you so much for helping set up and coordinate our visit to the Meyers' dairy farm. As future ag teachers, we really appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to teach and inform us about the dairy industry.

The FFA of Texas A&M

Thank you so much for visiting Henning School with Grace the cow! The kids loved seeing her and learning about dairy farms! We love the program you offer, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

The kindergarten teachers of C. A. Henning Elementary, Troy, IL

Cimarolli Features Dairy Grant Program at School Nutrition Conference

SLDDC nutrition educator Maggie Cimarolli was selected as a speaker to present to school nutrition professionals from across the state at the annual Missouri School Nutrition Association Conference in November.

Cimarolli's presentation, "Powering Up School Meals with Dairy," focused on dairy recipes, menu ideas, and tips to improve lunchroom participation.

The presentation included results from 3 Dollars for Dairy schools that improved school meal participation with smoothies, paninis, and cafés. Cimarolli shared recipes and projects that have been successfully implemented in cafeterias, and explained how schools can apply for the Dollars for Dairy grant.

"Our Dollars for Dairy schools have been very creative and continue to expand beyond the grant to keep students eating school meals," she says.

Nutrition Educators Zoom In on Dietetic Student Programs

SLDDC is partnering with university instructors in Illinois and Missouri this fall to educate dietetic students on nutrition resources for the farm-to-table movement.

SLDDC's registered dietitians are presenting virtually to students and clubs at Eastern Illinois University, St. Louis University, and the University of Illinois. The virtual presentations highlight the organization's popular initiatives like Adopt-A-Calf, and include information about community collaborations and media interviews.

"We want future dietitians to approach us as a trusted resource for dairy information and a local partner for health professionals," says SLDDC nutrition educator Kelsey Bentlage.

SLDDC offers webinars and educational pieces for both dietitians and their clients, as well as professional workshops that are eligible for continuing education credits.