

SUMMER 2024

DAIRY PROMOTION

Update



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**MAKING
EVERY
DROP
COUNT**



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Since assuming the role of CEO in April, I've been on a journey of discovery. I have spent countless hours on the road and in the air, meeting with dairy farmers and dedicated Midwest Dairy staff across our 10-state region.

While traveling to different staff meetings, I've had the opportunity to learn more about the strategies and tactics staff are implementing to grow trust and sales in dairy. These efforts, from activities that grow trust in dairy among Generation Z (Gen Z) to uniquely themed sales campaigns with retail and foodservice partners that grow dairy demand, are making substantial progress across our region. We remain steadfast in these efforts to continue moving the needle for you, our dairy farmers. At the end of each meeting, staff gathered to represent dairy while volunteering at worthwhile events, including packing hundreds of hygiene kits for Heart to Heart International in Kansas City, Missouri. Seeing our staff's dedication to dairy farmers and their local communities is inspiring.



I have also spent time at each division board meeting, sharing Midwest Dairy's good work while learning about the challenges and opportunities dairy farmers face. I've learned just how resilient dairy farmers are, and yet our local board members continue to show up as leaders where and when we need them the most. Staff have had the opportunity to present their activities to board members, and alongside our board members, I have participated in phenomenal experiential learning opportunities that impact the work we are doing in our region. Board members are critical in guiding and leading Midwest Dairy in all that we do, and they do a wonderful job of representing their respective states and dairy farmers.



As I look forward to the future, I am excited to see how dairy is represented at local county and state fairs. We know that consumers love dairy, and this love shows up in unique ways at each of the state fairs Midwest Dairy participates in. We are excited to introduce new Flavor of the Fair dairy treats at the Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri state fairs. Fairgoers in Nebraska will have the opportunity to pair dairy with pork during a delicious cooking demonstration. In South Dakota, attendees will have fun experiencing a dairy scavenger hunt. In Kansas, fairgoers will have an opportunity to participate in an ice cream contest and learn about dairy in the Agriland exhibit.



And I would be remiss not to mention the butter carvings happening throughout our 10-state region—which are definitely fan favorites! I encourage you to follow Midwest Dairy on Facebook (@MidwestDairy) as we take you behind the scenes at each respective state fair through Facebook Lives!

I have learned so much in the few short months that I have been here, and it continues to be an honor to work diligently on your behalf. The work you do truly nourishes your local communities, our region, and the world!

Respectfully yours,
Corey Scott



New partner announcement: *Marco's Pizza*



Midwest Dairy is proud to announce a new partnership with Marco's Pizza, a national pizza brand, that brings an opportunity to connect consumers with dairy innovation. Using Undeniably Dairy branding, Midwest Dairy and Marco's are meeting customer demands by introducing menu items using a new Fiery Flavors spicy cheese blend.

exciting products with cheese—but not just any cheese—Carolina Reaper cheese, a spicy and in-demand flavor missing from their current menu.

This cheese was used as part of a limited-time offer featuring two of Marco's Specialty Pizzas, Marco's Pizoli, Marco's Cheesy Sticks, and Marco's Pizza Bowls. Each of these menu items could include the new Fiery Flavors spicy cheese blend. This product was proudly promoted to consumers along with dairy's powerful sustainability story.

campaign that launched in April with the tagline, "But wait, there's Marco's." The new items will remain featured on Marco's website and order platform for an additional month, through September 2024, with the intention of becoming a permanent menu addition.

In addition to support from Midwest Dairy, Marco's Fiery Flavors spicy cheese blend launch is regionally supported by the American Dairy Association Mideast, DairyMax, and United Dairy Industry of Michigan. The support allows the campaign to be seen in most major markets and achieve broader coverage and visibility across more states. The campaign is expected to reach more than three million consumers and drive dairy sales nationwide. Midwest Dairy looks forward to reporting more on this campaign as it wraps up and numbers are calculated. Stay tuned for results. In the meantime, see if you can handle the spice by finding a Marco's in your area to try! ■



Marco's received customer feedback requesting new flavors and menu items. In response, Marco's partnered with Midwest Dairy to offer new and

The campaign kicked off on June 18 and ran through August 4, 2024. To raise awareness of this new menu item, Marco's focused on six weeks of TV and video campaigns in major markets, digital and social media ads, website promotion, and order platform features. Midwest Dairy funds also amplified the promotion through social media and email messaging, tying the dairy story to drive more sales. Fiery Flavors is the second phase of Marco's rebranding



Pitch competitions continue

Advancing dairy research is a key strategy of dairy checkoff. Midwest Dairy funds research that solves industry challenges and partners with those who drive demand for dairy. Over the past few years, we have expanded and nurtured the pitch competition concept in the Chicago metro with exciting results. The pitch competition has allowed Midwest Dairy and our partners to discover and support outstanding food and beverage entrepreneurs who value dairy products in their ingredients. Their passion and dedication to dairy have been instrumental in their business growth, and they continue to support hard-working Midwest Dairy farmers. With this exciting growth, Midwest Dairy is proud to say that our partnership with The Hatchery Chicago is continuing to thrive. We were also eager to extend the pitch contest concept to a new area in 2024 by announcing our partnership with No More Empty Pots in Omaha, Nebraska, this past spring.

The Hatchery Chicago

Midwest Dairy’s partnership with The Hatchery Chicago began in 2022 when we co-hosted a pitch contest offering the winner six months of free access to a commercial kitchen in Chicago’s Garfield Park. Since then, the contest has expanded to include a first-place winner and two runners-up, all awarded access to commercial kitchens. In 2024, the contest remained open to established businesses that use at

least 30 percent dairy in their ingredient base with no alternative dairy products. The first-place winner received one year of free rent at a commercial kitchen, while the runner-up winners received a six-month kitchen contract. Midwest Dairy was pleased to see this contest grow and offer more commercial kitchens which encouraged even more dairy innovation and sales. The goal is to help food vendors create a

sustainable business that can grow into their own space, continuing to sell and promote dairy products. The success of the pitch competition is a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit and the potential for dairy innovation, inspiring us to continue supporting these ventures.

The Hatchery Chicago is a non-profit food and beverage incubator that



to fuel checkoff research



supports local entrepreneurs in building and growing successful food businesses, cultivating local job opportunities for people from all backgrounds, and accelerating inclusive economic growth on Chicago's West side. It is one of North America's largest food and beverage incubators.

Midwest Dairy hosted the annual pitch contest in Chicago in late May. A judging panel of successful colleagues across the dairy industry provided

knowledge and feedback to help determine the winners. In all, six businesses were presented to the judges.

Congratulations to this year's contest winner, Crafian Artisanal Toffee. This unique product is created by hand in Chicago and uses only premium and real ingredients. Shawn Johnson, the founder, even envisions sourcing butter from Midwest Dairy farmers in the future, adding a local and sustainable touch to her hand-crafted toffee in specialty and international flavors. This first-place winner received a standard private kitchen with window co-branded signage for 12 months at The Hatchery Chicago.

The first runner up was Community Creamery, and the second runner up was Esculent Eats LLC. Both winners will receive a standard private

kitchen with window co-branded signage for six months.

"Winning the Midwest Dairy sponsored kitchen is a game changer for my business! Having access to a personal kitchen provides an opportunity to rapidly scale my production and flavor innovations that cannot be overstated. However, I find myself even more excited about the opportunity to establish direct relationships with local farms, learn more about their process, and gain access to amazing quality dairy that can further elevate, and differentiate, my toffee. I can't wait to get started," said Shawn Johnson, Owner and Founder of Crafian Artisanal Toffee.





Pitch competitions continue to fuel checkoff research *(continued)*

No More Empty Pots

No More Empty Pots and Midwest Dairy announced our partnership this past spring, launching a pitch competition to advance Omaha, Nebraska’s local entrepreneurship, foster innovation in product development, and contribute to the growth of the local dairy industry. Like The Hatchery Chicago pitch competition, applicants adhered to the same rules. The No More Empty Pots pitch competition awarded two winners a \$10,000 prize, earning six months of kitchen rental, and other business development opportunities.

No More Empty Pots is a nonprofit organization that connects individuals and groups to improve self-sufficiency, regional food security, and economic resilience of urban and rural

communities through advocacy and action. No More Empty Pots serves youth and seniors by providing educational and experiential learning and workforce readiness training. You can learn more about them by visiting www.nmepomaha.org.

Applications were due in early May, and contestants advanced through three rounds of pitches, with a final few contestants advancing to the last round held in early June. In total, five businesses made it to the final pitch round. Midwest Dairy is thrilled to congratulate the winners Dundee Popcorn and Coffee Alley. Their innovative use of dairy in their products and their dedication to supporting local dairy farmers impressed the judges.

Dundee Popcorn is a gourmet microwave popcorn business that sells mostly at Omaha farmer’s markets. They use real butter and currently sell four flavors: salty, spicy, cinnamon, and kettle. Dundee Popcorn prides itself on being made in small batches and not with butter flavor—just butter. Coffee Alley is a Latina-owned business offering trendy and traditional drinks. Its menu features familiar cafe beverages with unique Mexican twists, such as its popular Mexican coffee, which is brewed with some traditional Mexican spices. The store also offers traditional Mexican baked goods.

As the winners, they will receive a prize package that includes a \$10,000 check, six months of kitchen rental, and other





business development opportunities. We are excited to see how they will continue to grow and innovate in the dairy industry. We also hope to expand our work with organizations like No More Empty Pots as our values line up and we look for businesses to help dairy farmers drive dairy sales.

“We deeply appreciate our partnership with Midwest Dairy for this shared venture. Their commitment to supporting dairy farmers and driving consumer demand aligns with our mission of promoting self-sufficiency. Together, we are creating impactful opportunities for food entrepreneurs in Omaha that support their livelihood, while stimulating community-wide economic growth,” said Talia McGill, President and CEO of No More Empty Pots. ■





Midwest Dairy and influencers

In a unique partnership that bridges the gap between traditional agriculture and modern digital influence, Midwest Dairy teamed up with 22 social media influencers to bring retro dairy nostalgia to a new generation. With an outreach that has already reached over 67,000 Gen Z consumers, this collaboration aims to highlight the timeless appeal of dairy products through the lens of social media unboxing and content creation.

The influencer box leverages Gen Z’s fondness for the past, their strong environmental consciousness, and their preference for products that align with their values. By partnering with influencers who have a passion for food and authenticity, we’re able to showcase dairy sustainability in a way that’s engaging and relatable, ultimately building trust among the Gen Z audience.



THE RETRO DAIRY BOX INCLUDED:

- Cooler Bag and Fanny Pack:** Remember those days when a fanny pack was your go-to accessory for carrying your treasures? The Retro Dairy Box revives this trend with a stylish twist, pairing it with a convenient cooler bag perfect for keeping dairy products cool on beach days.
- Color-Changing Spoons:** Eating cereal will never be the same with these spoons that change color when they come into contact with cold milk—a delightful surprise for kids and adults alike.
- Hot Chocolate Bomb:** A treat that’s as fun to make as it is to drink, the hot chocolate bomb adds a touch of magic to your evening routine paired perfectly with the “10 Best Milk Movie Moments Guide”.
- Playing Cards:** Whether you’re hosting a game night or simply looking to pass the time, the included deck of playing cards brings back memories of family gatherings and friendly competitions while highlighting dairy sustainability.
- Cereal Bowl with Straw:** Say goodbye to soggy cereal! This innovative bowl includes a built-in straw, allowing you to enjoy every last drop of milk after you’ve finished your cereal.
- Digital Pet Cow:** Remember the thrill of caring for a virtual pet? The Retro Dairy Box brings back this classic digital companion, allowing you to relive the excitement of feeding, playing with, and nurturing a digital pet once again. Players must keep their cows healthy and happy by doing what dairy farmers do for their cows.

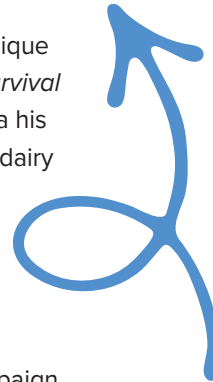
collaborate to bring retro dairy nostalgia to Gen Z

The influencers involved in the campaign have shared their experiences of unboxing these dairy products on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, generating enthusiastic responses from their followers. Many of these posts feature influencers discovering the joy of dairy's story in a unique way.

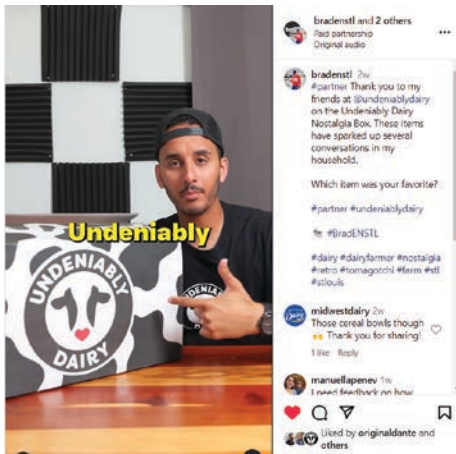


Braden Tewolde, a food and lifestyle influencer based in St. Louis, Missouri, shared his experience visiting a dairy farm during his unboxing video. He weaved in his firsthand account of dairy farmers' sustainability efforts and how they related to retro 80s items.

Influencer **Dante Barger** took a unique approach, posting "*Tamagotchi Survival Challenge: Can I Keep It Alive?*" via his YouTube channel, comparing how dairy farmers also provide the ultimate cow care comfort.



With 80s retro vibes and a commitment to sustainability at its core, the influencer unboxing campaign resonated with Gen Z consumers seeking both nostalgia and conscientious consumption. Dairy farmers stand poised to showcase their dedication to quality, sustainability, and community, ensuring that each Retro Dairy Box tells a story of responsible farming practices.





Fueling trust in dairy through student-athletes



Mia Takekawa

University of Illinois
GYMNASTICS

Mia, originally from California, began her dairy journey surrounded by local dairy farms. From a young age, she was

taught about the importance of dairy in a balanced diet. Dairy is important to her because it is an essential part of just about every meal she has, and as an athlete, it provides her with several nutritional benefits that have been instilled in her by coaches, dietitians, and family members. Mia wanted to be part of this program to, "Pass on that healthy relationship with dairy, specifically to other athletes and other people in general." She enjoys seeing the nutritional value of the dairy products she eats without having to worry about the stigma of diets. Mia also shared that her favorite dairy snacks are ice cream and cheese!

Follow along with her dairy story on Instagram @mia_emi.

 @mia_emi



Elli Dahl

University of Nebraska
**TRACK & FIELD AND
CROSS COUNTRY**

Growing up, Elli often visited her grandparents' dairy farm and had firsthand experience of the dairy industry. Over the past

three years, she has had four stress fractures due to a deficiency of dairy in her diet, and soon after realized how vital it was to have a balanced meal that includes dairy. She says, "Drinking enough milk and getting all the essential vitamins has helped me really strengthen as an athlete in a sport where fractures are very prominent." Now more than ever, she is grateful for growing up near the dairy industry and stresses how important it is for everyone to keep a healthy immune system and sustained energy in their daily life with dairy. *Find out more about how Elli is fueled by dairy on Instagram @ellidahl3.*

 @ellidahl3



Midwest Dairy works with college student-athlete influencers using Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) to reach the Gen Z audience. Our goal was to provide consistent messaging to their followers to increase familiarity and trust in dairy. Midwest Dairy partnered with 34 college student-athletes from September 2023 through May 2024. The athletes received information about dairy and then posted content on their social channels about how dairy fits into their daily lives. They were asked to make the dairy content authentic to them and their personality.

Keep reading to meet a few of the student-athletes Midwest Dairy was proud to partner with and scan the QR codes to continue to follow their journey!



Jaylin Noel

Iowa State University
FOOTBALL

As a D1 athlete, Jaylin believes that dairy plays a vital role in helping him maintain his athletic abilities. Ever since he was young, milk has been a staple in his household and is a personal favorite when enjoying some fresh cookies. Jaylin went as far as to say, “You can’t have cookies without milk—it is almost a crime.” *See more about his dairy journey on Instagram @jay.noe13.*



 @jay.noe13



Ayoka Lee

Kansas State University
BASKETBALL

Ayoka believed she wouldn’t be able to enjoy dairy growing up if she didn’t like milk. However, as she got older, she found several different dairy products that have encouraged a greater love of dairy. She shared that among several core dairy foods regularly on her shopping list, her favorite is cottage cheese, which she enjoys daily. Ayoka shares, “Every day of the week, without fail, I have cottage cheese with my dinner whether it’s served as a high protein dressing or on its own with salt and pepper.” As an athlete, she believes that she must fuel her body well, and having dairy as part of her regular diet has helped her meet her goals. Want to learn more about her dairy story? *Find her on Instagram @ayokalee.*

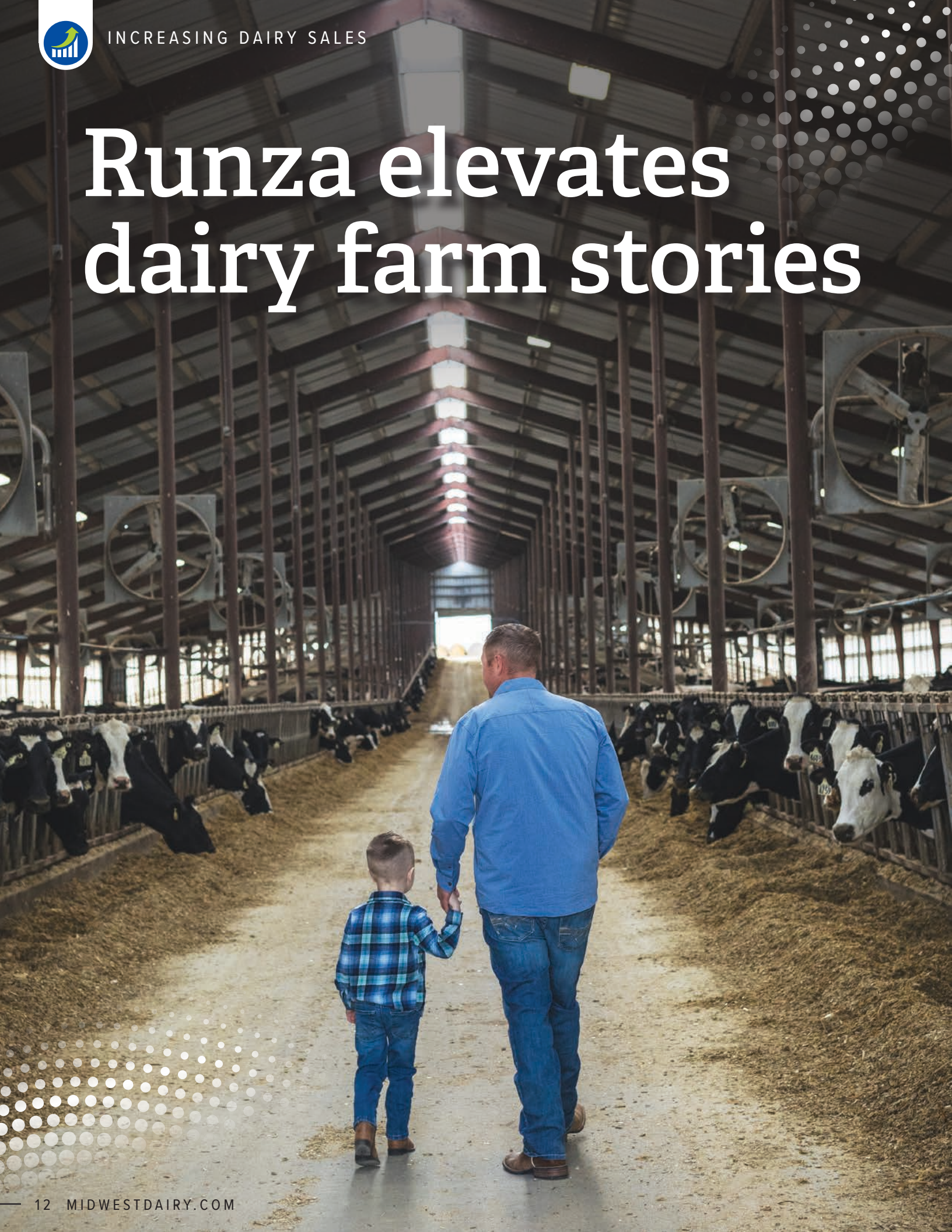


 @ayokalee

Working with student-athletes provided Midwest Dairy with a unique opportunity to connect with Gen Z. This campaign, which concluded in May 2024, generated 202,100 impressions, 169,400 total reach, and 12,200 total engagements. Our engagement rate (the number of people who interacted with the content through likes, shares, and comments) was 7.76 percent, which was above the industry average of similar influencers at 0.86 percent! ■



Runza elevates dairy farm stories



Midwest Dairy launched another campaign with Runza featuring a Midwest Dairy farm family. For the past three years, Midwest Dairy and Runza have partnered during the summer and fall to highlight a local farm family and feature a dairy product on their menu to drive dairy sales. This annual partnership is always one of Runza's favorites, providing farmers a platform to share their voices and farm stories.

This summer, Runza rebranded its menu of shakes and introduced new flavors, including Strawberry and Mint Chocolate Chip. They also updated their ice cream packaging to include dome lids that allow whipped cream to be added to all shakes—a well-received enhancement. The rebranded shake campaign began in early April and ran through August.

To help introduce this upgraded shake campaign, Runza featured Holsteins Unlimited, a local farm family from Leigh, Nebraska. Holsteins Unlimited is a family affair owned and operated by Mike Malena, his wife, Joy, and their three adult children and their spouses.

posters, the branding efforts created an immersive experience for customers and brought dairy to life in a yummy way!

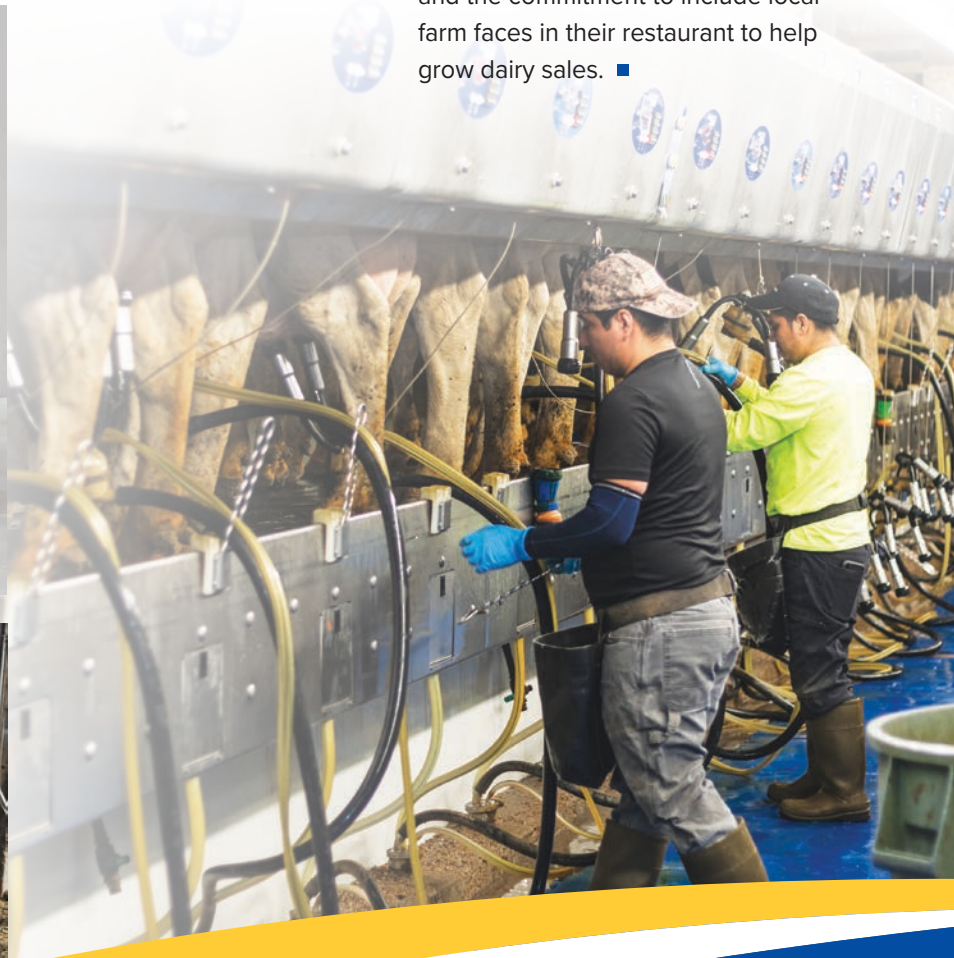
Midwest Dairy appreciates this partnership with Runza and looks

They currently milk 1,600 COWS and have 4,000 ANIMALS in total on the farm. In addition to family members, they employ 25 FULL-TIME WORKERS who help MILK 24 HOURS A DAY and FARM 2,200 ACRES of corn, alfalfa, and soybeans.

Runza went all out to promote the shake rebrand in its stores. Holsteins Unlimited and the Undeniably Dairy logos were prominently featured in campaign materials. From the drive-through to the store interior, including table tents, light banners, digital menu boards, and in-store

forward to sharing campaign results later this fall.

Runza operates 88 quick-service restaurants with locations in Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri. This campaign shows the depth of Midwest Dairy's partnership with Runza and the commitment to include local farm faces in their restaurant to help grow dairy sales. ■





Breaking Through the Noise

Throughout 2024, Midwest Dairy has continued its successful *Breaking Through the Noise* training program as more farmers gather to learn about communicating their dairy story. The program began in 2023 in collaboration with Janice Person, the founder and

farmers with a streamlined process to further enhance their storytelling abilities across all platforms and in person to share their dairy stories with consumers.

The tour was followed by a networking and social hour, and the night concluded with dinner and a delectable dessert—Bakr Cookies. The cookies, made with real butter, showcased Midwest Dairy’s partnership with The Hatchery Chicago, a food and beverage incubator that supports local entrepreneurs and encourages dairy innovation.



CEO of Grounded Communications. This distinct training initiative equips dairy farmers with essential storytelling and communication skills for today’s digital age. Midwest Dairy provides

This past March, 20 dairy farmers from Iowa and Illinois gathered in Le Claire, Iowa, for a two-day communications training and networking event that included the *Breaking Through the Noise* training. The first day featured Midwest Dairy staff sharing insights on retail and foodservice partners and highlighting how Midwest Dairy is building trust with Gen Z through university partnerships at the University of Illinois and Iowa State University. A farmer panel also showcased creative opportunities for local dairy promotion, emphasizing the Undeniably Dairy Grant program. Evening activities included a tour of the Mississippi River Distilling Company, renowned for using local grains and real dairy cream in crafting spirits that rank as one of the top craft distilleries in the nation.

Farmers participated in the *Breaking Through the Noise* training on the second and final day where they learned to develop compelling stories and identify the important outcomes that resonate with consumers, whether shared in-person or online. Survey





training continues in 2024



results indicated that after the event, farmers gained a better understanding of how Midwest Dairy builds sales and trust in dairy, identified leadership opportunities, and learned about available resources. The event provided helpful content and exceeded attendees' expectations. One participant shared, "The information was timely, practical, and cutting edge. We gained many usable gems, and the networking was wonderful."

Farmers from Missouri and Kansas also kicked off the spring of 2024 with a farmer gathering focused on sharing

their passion for the dairy industry with consumers by attending a *Breaking Through the Noise* training. The group emphasized harnessing passion and emotion through a sensory experience while also addressing that too much "noise" distracts an audience from focusing on their true story. This "noise" includes farm cats, baby calves, tractors, weather, strange smells, neighbors, misinformation, and bad attitudes. This training provided techniques to clear this noise and create a powerful and compelling story.

While in Kansas City, the group volunteered at Harvesters Food Bank and toured the facility. Harvesters provides food and related household products to more than 760 food pantries, community kitchens, homeless shelters, and children's homes. Attendees also enjoyed networking while trying their hand at axe throwing as a fun team-building activity.

Overall, these *Breaking Through the Noise* trainings continue offering insightful tools and tactics for farmers looking to grow their communication skills. Farmers interested in participating in these trainings and networking opportunities in the future are encouraged to reach out to their respective Midwest Dairy Farmer Relations manager to learn more. ■





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INCREASING DAIRY SALES

Loaded Cheesy Ranch Stix a success at Pizza Ranch



display ads, social ads, direct mailers, email marketing, in-restaurant point of sale, and more.

Pizza Ranch featured the Undeniably Dairy logo on its pizzaranch.com homepage and their online ordering website. This campaign garnered nearly 57 million impressions in total.

Remarkably, almost 30 percent of all out-the-door orders during the promotional period included Cheesy Ranch Stix (Regular or Loaded). Incremental cheese usage tied to this campaign resulted in almost 600,000 incremental pounds of milk.

In 2022, Midwest Dairy partnered with Pizza Ranch to enhance their classic appetizer, Cheesy Ranch Stix, by doubling the cheese on this customer favorite. It was so popular that Pizza Ranch kept this extra-cheesy item permanently on the menu.

To capitalize on consumers' love of cheese, Midwest Dairy partnered with Pizza Ranch again in early 2024 to launch a Loaded Cheesy Ranch Stix, where customers could add up to two toppings to their Cheesy Ranch Stix while still being able to add extra

cheese. This new cheesy menu innovation launched on February 5, 2024— just in time for the Super Bowl—and ran through April 30, 2024. It was available to-go as well as in-store on the buffet.

This launch was supported by many marketing tactics to ensure word got out about this exciting menu addition, including digital

