

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Dairy Industry of Michigan

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United Dairy Industry of Michigan

Michigan Dairy Offers On the Farm STEM Experience to Educators

United Dairy Industry of Michigan program helps high school and middle school science teachers explore Michigan dairy farms, food, technology and student careers.

OKEMOS, Mich. [Aug. 10, 2023] – For three days this summer, 22 urban and suburban high school and middle school teachers were immersed in Michigan’s dairy industry. From morning to evening, they learned first-hand from dairy farmers and the dairy supply chain about the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) used every day to care for cows and crops.

“The On the Farm STEM program packed an incredible amount of hands-on learning into this thorough experience,” explains Amiee Vondrasek, United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) Health and Wellness Senior Manager.

“It was an opportunity to show science teachers and curriculum administrators a new way to teach STEM, while demonstrating how much animal care, soil science, dairy and crop research, technology and business acumen are required for dairy farmer success, regardless of farm size,” she adds.

Event highlights included visits to:

- The Michigan State University (MSU) Dairy to learn about dairy research and the anaerobic digester
- De Seagher Dairy to see parallel and rotary milking parlors, and to hear from a veterinarian and an Alta Genetics representative about milk quality, genetics and data collected on cows to improve management decisions
- K & K Dairy to focus on dairy cattle nutrition and robotic milkers
- MidWest Cheese plant to see milk processed into cheese and whey
- AgroLiquid IQHub to participate in a cheese-making activity
- The MSU Crop and Soil Science Department to learn about agronomy

Each stop included small group breakouts and hands-on topic stations.

In addition to a greater appreciation of dairy farms, dairy foods and the science and technology driving them, the impactful event resulted in new friendships and fresh insights into the many career opportunities available to students.

“Our students, especially in Detroit, don’t know about these career opportunities,” says Allana Phifer of the Detroit International Academy for Young Women, Detroit, Michigan. “For me, not growing up on a farm, I didn’t know all the details that go into what we eat. But I can now share this experience with my students, and they can share what they learn about healthy eating. The impact will go beyond the students to the communities they serve.”

“It was great to see professionals in an industry talk about their experience and open my eyes to other opportunities that might exist for our students, our staff, our faculty and our community as a whole,” says Jonathon Marowelli, Superintendent of Jackson Preparatory & Early College, Jackson, Michigan.

“My perception of the dairy industry has opened up,” he adds. “I didn’t know of all the different careers and opportunities in the industry, and I’ve gained an appreciation for the levels of safety and efficiency as well as the family focus with so many Michigan dairies owned by families.”

Participants also earned professional development credits and gained access to resources to build accurate agricultural lesson plans.

“Our farmers opened their doors to connect with teachers and to help them learn about dairy,” says Jolene Griffin, UDIM Vice President of Industry Relations. “Their openness and passion for sharing their knowledge is a huge step in linking the science of farming and the opportunities in agriculture with the next generation.”

“The interactions between the farmers and the teachers were incredible; it was fun to see the change in perceptions during the event,” concludes Vondrasek. “We’re excited to see how the teachers take what they experienced back to their classrooms and incorporate dairy into lesson plans. UDIM will connect with the cohort of teachers throughout the school year to reinforce what they learned by providing additional resources and giving them an opportunity to share with each other.”

To learn more about UDIM, visit www.milkmeansmore.com.

About the United Dairy Industry of Michigan

The United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) is dedicated to serving Michigan’s hard-working dairy farm families and promoting Michigan’s locally produced dairy products. UDIM is the umbrella organization for the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council of Michigan. These non-profit organizations provide dairy product promotion and nutrition education services on behalf of their funding members.

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Download the release.

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Captions:

UDIM On The Farm.mp4: *See what teachers learned during UDIM’s 2023 On the Farm STEM event.*

UDIM STEM_Teachers in Freestall Barn.jpg: Teachers learned about dairy farms from Michigan farmers during the On the Farm STEM event this summer hosted by United Dairy Industry of Michigan.

UDIM STEM_De Saegher Group Photo.jpg: More than 20 middle school and high school teachers visited Michigan dairy farms this summer to learn how the principles of STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – are applied on farms.

UDIM_STEM_Whey Experiment.jpg: Cheesemaking requires a specific scientific process as teachers learned first-hand during this summer's On the Farm STEM event.