

# Cindy Neely shares ideas, experiences on dairying and promotion

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**MOUNT JOY** — Pennsylvania's Dairy Princess Cindy Neely is just beginning her busy season, having helped to kick-off June Dairy Month last Friday in Harrisburg. She was in the Lancaster area for five busy days of public appearances last week which included meeting with Governor Dick Thornburgh as he signed the June Dairy Month Proclamation, taping a television talk show and throwing out the first ball at a Phillies baseball game.

This pretty 18-year-old from Emlenton in western Pennsylvania is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence L. Neely, and she represents Clarion-Venango Counties as Dairy Princess. Although she says, "I never, never expected to win the state title," and admits that she had to be coaxed to enter the local contest, she is thrilled with the opportunities she has had to promote dairy products. She is a lively, articulate spokesperson for the industry.

A 1980 graduate of Keystone High School, she will be a sophomore at the Behrend College, a commonwealth campus of Penn State. She plans to study agricultural economics.

She took one morning out of her busy schedule and answered some questions about her responsibilities and activities as the Keystone state's Dairy Princess.

**LF: What is the most important thrust of your promotional message?**

Cindy: I stress to people the importance of using real dairy products. It is very easy to pick up an imitation product by mistake. Dairy farmers themselves must get involved in using real products. I think the Real Seal is very important and when it is used extensively it will be easy to identify real products.

At the June Dairy Month kick-off, we gave people the opportunity to compare real and imitation products. Imitation products look and taste different from the real thing, and people could notice it.

**LF: Which group of people most needs to hear the message of using more dairy products?**

Cindy: Everyone. But consumers not directly related to the dairy industry are the most unaware. Again, it is important for dairy farmers to realize that it is

their product and they must promote the product.

Teenagers and children must also be made aware of dairy products, but it is not easy to tell them, especially teenagers. I try to set an example when I am with a group and order milk when I'm eating out.

**LF: How does the Dairy Princess program benefit the dairy farmer?**

Cindy: "Dairy Princesses work with the Atlantic Dairy Association, which is the coordinating agency for the program, in their promotions to spread the word. It is beneficial to the farmer to be interested in the program and research shows there is a 120 percent return on each dollar invested in advertising.

**LF: Do you feel the current advertising programs are effective in selling the product?**

Cindy: Yes, I think they're good. The Soft, Soft Drink Campaign is big in this area, and we are promoting 23 crazy milk drinks which are delicious and fun to make.

Now, we also have Milky the Robot, and he gets a lot of interest. I think he's really beneficial. Milky is friendly and sings milk songs and dances. He answers questions when you talk to him.

The Real Seal will be a continuing program and that will benefit the industry a lot.

**LF: What do you feel is your most important job as you travel around the state representing the dairy industry?**

Cindy: I try and encourage all consumers to buy and use more dairy products. It is just as important to use all dairy products — I don't promote just fluid milk.

**LF: How has the opportunity to travel around the state benefitted you personally? Has it been a growing experience?**

Cindy: Yes, I really think it has been a growing experience. It has been an opportunity I never would have had otherwise. It is really wonderful to do so much and see so much. I took my first airplane ride and I visited Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. We'll be visiting Pittsburgh later this month.

**LF: Would you encourage young women to enter a local Dairy Princess contest?**

Cindy: Yes. There are so many opportunities to meet new people and to spread the word of milk. Even within their counties, they do

a certain amount of traveling. It is a good opportunity to grow personally and being in the spotlight is a nice experience.

**LF: What challenges have you had to face as Dairy Princess? Were there unexpected moments?**

Cindy: There have been a lot of different things to do and a lot of surprises. It's hard to visualize when your reign starts because you never really know what you'll be doing until you get into it.

**LF: Is it fun? What has been your most interesting experience thus far?**

Cindy: Yes, it's fun. I have really enjoyed it. There is always a new and different experience and every day is unique.

A highlight was participating in the Phillies baseball game on Sunday. I got to throw out the first ball, which I consider an honor at a Major League game. There was a milking contest near home plate with some coaches and radio personalities participating, and the official judge was Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell. The Phillie Phanatic tipped the scales by pouring milk in the Phillies bucket. Milky the Robot was there and talked to the players before the game.

I also made a commercial with the Phillies promoting Dairy Day and Jacket Day. It was taped and played during Phillies games. For the commercial I drank a glass of milk and modeled the jacket. The jackets were given out at the game and said "milk the soft, soft drink" on the sleeve. It was exciting and that day they had 54,000 people, one of their largest crowds.

**LF: What is the significance of June Dairy Month?**

Cindy: June has traditionally been a time when more milk is being produced, although now that peak is usually reached in May. This is the 45th year for June Dairy Month, and it is a national event to promote dairy products. It comes at a time when children are out of school and that outlet of milk is no longer available. But we like to think that every month is June Dairy Month.

**LF: Do you have any suggestions about solving the surplus milk problem?**

Cindy: I think advertising is the primary way to sell milk, and I think we're doing some good. I'd also like to point out that we do not have overproduction but underconsumption.

**LF: Do you get a lot of support**



Cindy Neely, Pennsylvania's Dairy Princess, pours a "Grape Gatsby," one of the crazy milk drinks being promoted during June Dairy Month. She recommends this one made from grape juice concentrate, ice cream and milk.

from dairy farmers and the dairy community as you meet your obligations throughout the state?

Cindy: Yes, dairy farmers are always nice and friendly. They always seem very supportive and have been really wonderful to me. I really appreciate being able to meet so many nice people.

**LF: Tell us about the dairy farm you were raised on.**

Cindy: We have registered Holsteins and had been milking about 50 head. But in February we sold our milking herd. Now we are raising heifers and calves and will breed them. I have been in 4-H for 10 years and I own three animals, although I sold some others. I have three brothers and a sister who was Clarion-Venango Dairy Princess three years ago. My family is proud of my being Pennsylvania's Dairy Princess.

**LF: In your opinion, is dairy farming a good choice of occupation for a young person today?**

Cindy: I think it is, but only if you're willing to work hard and have a deep interest and desire. It is not an easy job, but it offers a lot of challenges. You must have the will to work hard.

**LF: What activities do you have planned for June Dairy Month and the last four months of your reign?**

Cindy: I am going to be on two television talk shows in Pittsburgh

and will be doing a cow milking demonstration on one of them. I'll be at the Laurel Festival in Wellsboro, Ag Progress Days and some county fairs. I am looking forward to participating in the state training seminar where I'll meet the new Dairy Princess. I have several radio interviews scheduled and several mall promotions.

It gets easier to make appearances with experience. I'm less nervous now. I enjoy being busy and know that I've only got one year to do it. So I want to make the most of it.

**LF: What kinds of appearances do you find most rewarding?**

Cindy: I like mall promotions and fairs where I can talk directly to people and get a conversation going.

In my county I have given presentations in schools and I enjoy that. I take a huge coloring book of Goldilocks and the Three Bears and talk about nutrition. Kids really like it. They want to hear about living on a farm and are interested in learning about cows.

**LF: Do you feel you have been successful so far in your reign?**

Cindy: We really try to get the message across. Yes, I feel we have been successful.



The Real Seal is designed to be a boon to the consumer who will know at a glance whether the product is real or an imitation. Here Cindy Neely displays some cartons showing the Real Seal.

## Dairy Idea

Perhaps you shouldn't mix apples and oranges in logic but you can team pineapple and oranges in a wonderful soda. Combine two tablespoons each crushed pineapple in unsweetened juice with frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed, and a scoop of ice cream in a 12-ounce glass. Gradually add one-half cup ginger ale, stirring to combine. Top with another scoop of vanilla ice cream. Add more ginger ale, if needed, to fill glass. Serve at once.

So something special with potatoes! Preheat oven to 450°F. Arrange one bag (two pounds) frozen French fried potatoes in a single layer in buttered, shallow pan. Combine one-fourth cup (one half stick) butter, melted, with one teaspoon onion salt and one-fourth teaspoon paprika; brush over frozen potatoes. Bake 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from oven; sprinkle with one-third cup Parmesan cheese, shaking pan to coat potatoes evenly. Return to oven to melt cheese, about three minutes. Serve immediately.