



Lancaster County Dairy Promotion Committee includes, seated from left: Glenn Shirk, Jill Harnish, Esther Groff, Robyn Groff, Donna Ruth Akers, Renee Breneman, Carole Binkley, and Ruth E. Bushong. Standing from left: Donna Kreider, Jim Barnett, and Arlene Harnish.

Unheralded Workers Behind Dairy Promotion

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— "Dairy promotion persons are the unheralded workers behind the scenes working hard at dairy promotion. I don't think people realize the hours the committee spends on a thankless job," said Glenn Shirk, Lancaster Extension dairy agent and advisor to the county dairy promotion committee.

Thankless job?

Depends on how you look at it.

If the committee expects financial payment or verbal affirmation for hours of manning the milk wagon at sales and festivals, handing out samples of dairy products and recipes, setting up school promotions, and planning novel ways to introduce consumers to the benefits of using dairy products, then, yes, dairy promotion is a thankless job.

But, ask any of the 11 members of the Lancaster Dairy Promotion Committee, and they will tell you, the work has its own rewards.

The comradeship that develops between those with the common bond of promoting their livelihood cannot be underestimated.

"I believe that dairy promotion should be the job of every person who produces milk and not just a few. If every one gives a little time for promotion than no individual is overwhelmed by the job," said Jan Harting, who is director over all the county committees in Pennsylvania.

The Lancaster County committee confirms Harting's statement. Donna Kreider, chairperson and member for 10 years, said that although she is primarily responsible for legislating the work of the dairy princess, it is not overwhelming because other members of the committee pitch in and help.

Kreider and her husband, Robert, farm more than 200 acres in Quarryville, south of Buck. They milk 120 milk cows and have two adult children.

People most often acquaint dairy promotion with the dairy princess, whose role appears a bit glamorous with crown and dressy finery. But, if it weren't for the dairy promotion committees in each county, the dairy princess's role would soon fizzle out.

These are the people who educate and train young women to promote dairy products. They set up appointments for her to talk with students, they solicit ag businesses for products, oversee

bookkeeping, and schedule store promotions.

They often provide transportation to promotional events, they search for new candidates for princesses, and for alternates and Dairy Darlings (young girls who assist the princess in dairy promotion).

Committee members plan informal get-togethers for potential candidates to meet and outline the responsibilities and duties of the dairy princess.

The booking chairperson attends the dairy princess three-day dairy princess training seminar held annually.

Committee persons synchronize schedules to utilize dairy princess, alternates and Little Darlings in milk promotion.

They order promotional materials, cow costumes, crowns, banners, videos and recipe cookbooks, posters, and handouts. All of which must be ordered three months in advance of planned promotions.

Promotion requires funding. It is the committee's responsibility to find it.

Most of the money is raised through setting up a milk wagon at sales and festivals. Matching funds are provided by the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program through the 15 cents per hundredweight of milk produced and sold. Ten cents of 15 cents are eligible to come back to the county for promotion otherwise all the money remains at the national level.

Jim Barnett, treasurer of the committee, said that about \$5,000 to \$6,000 is spent on county promotion every year.

Although the milk wagon is a dependable fundraiser. It requires much behind-the-scenes hard work by committee members and insurance for it costs \$500 annually.

Products sold include milk shakes, ice cream, nacho and cheese, string cheese, and ice cream sandwiches.

Supplies must be ordered in advance. It is a challenge to plan how much ice cream is needed. Recently it rained both days at a scheduled event, which resulted in slim attendance and lots of leftovers to store for the next event.

Transportation for the milk wagon is the responsibility of Ruth Bushong and her husband Glenn. The milk wagon is set up and leveled similar to setting up a camping trailer. If electric hook up is not available at the promotion site, generators must be used.

The Bushongs farm 200 acres and milk 90 to 100 cows on their Columbia farm. Ruth became a committee member when her daughter was county dairy princess in 1987.

"I felt this was something that I could do. I had been really involved in helping my daughter as dairy princess and enjoyed the meetings and helping people so I stayed on the committee," she said.

Previously the milk wagon was available for organizations to rent, but the committee ran into problems with hauling and clean up so now it is limited to the committee's use.

Popularity has increased, with more bookings for the milk wagon this summer than ever before.

In the 10 years that Donna Kreider has been on the committee, she said that it has had about the same number of people involved. Some things have changed. In those beginning years, the committee only planned the pageant and then all the responsibilities for the dairy princess fell on the chairperson. Now monthly meetings are held and many promotions are organized throughout the year.

Incentive awards are given to county dairy princesses for the number of events she attends to promote dairy products. These vary, depending on the dairy princess's schedule. She has the option of deciding how many or how few promotions she will do, but her goals are established at the beginning of her reign. Although the dairy princess sets up some of the promotions, the committee must constantly plan how to best meet the goals the dairy princess has established.

June is an especially busy time for the committee. Because it is Dairy Month, the committee provides a basket of dairy-related items in recognition of the June dairy baby, the first baby born on June 1 in the county. Included in the basket are a stuffed cow, a little bib decorated with cows, mugs, chocolate mix, milk, chocolate milk, cottage cheese, cream, sour cream, velveeta cheese, string cheese, and a variety of other cheeses, and yogurt. Also, included are coupons for ice cream.

"I love milk" T-shirts are delivered to five county hospitals for babies born during the month of June.

Carole Binkley, who is a five-year member of the committee,

orders the T-shirts and contacts the hospital to set up these activities. She also buys the items for the June Dairy Baby.

She said that she finds the hospitals nice to work with and the recipients grateful.

Carole did not grow up on a dairy farm. She and her husband started dairying about five years after marriage. "It's a small family operation," she said. They milk 35-40 Holsteins and rent about 250 acres on which they grow corn, soybeans, and alfalfa. She and her husband, Glenn, have three children, 19, 16, and 9-years old.

Carole is secretary for the committee and expects to continue this duty as long as no one else volunteers.

Carole finds her work with the committee rewarding. She believes their work helps the public become aware of the dairy industry. She often works four- to five-hour shifts at the milk wagon and finds it most enjoyable to serve ice cream and watch the public as they eat it.

One of the new events for the committee this year was to print 40,000 placemats and distribute them for use in local restaurants during June Dairy Month. Ruth Akers was in charge of the placemats.

She and her husband Curtis farm 159 acres in Solanco and milk 60 cows. As a 10-year-member, Akers believes dairy families should all pitch in and do whatever needs to be done.

"For the amount of dairy farmers in the county, we have poor representation," she said.

Her sentiments were echoed by fellow members who said that the most frustrating thing about serving on dairy promotion is involving other farm families.

"Maybe we don't ask the right persons. But involvement is open to everyone. Whoever would like to help with the milk wagon or other dairy promotion should call Donna Kreider at (717) 284-4776

or one of the other committee members.

The committee's newest recruit is Renee Breneman who attended a committee meeting for the first time this month. She has helped with the milk wagon and plans to become an active member. She, her husband James and two children live in Lancaster. James is in a farming partnership with his two brothers.

New members often become part of the committee when a new dairy princess is crowned. She and her mother are urged to attend the meetings to help plan promotions for the princess.

Lancaster County Dairy Princess Jill Harnish and her mother Arlene became involved this year.

Former dairy princess Robyn Groff and her mother Esther joined last year and plan a long association with the committee.

During her reign, Robyn had no alternates to help her with promotional activities yet she attained the top level of promotions for the county during her reign. Instead of burn-out from overwork, Robyn became an enthusiastic promoter.

Her parents, Esther and Robert farm a small 50-acre tenant farm in Lancaster. The Groffs also have three sons.

"I'm happy to pass the word along about the benefits of dairy products," Esther said. "I like store promotions, especially the Shopper Stopper. That is when the committee designates a certain aisle at a grocery store where the dairy princess introduces herself to customers and pays for the dairy products the customer has placed in the cart.

"When I tell them to put their dairy products on the check out counter, they put margarine up," Esther said.

She is thrilled to educate the shopper that margarine is not a dairy product.

Esther is not on the committee because she has nothing else to do.

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Homestead
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