



Featuring a holiday cow decked with ornament earrings and red hoof polish, this entry by Levi F. of New Athens (IL) Elementary won the Grade Pre-K–2 category in SLDDC’s Holiday Card Contest. Mollie D. of Holy Infant School, Ballwin, MO, won the Grade 3–5 category, and Meagan B. of Columbia (IL) Middle School took home first for the Grade 6–9 category. SLDDC received more than 2,000 submissions this year, a record-breaking number of entries.



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New Program Helps Dairy Blend In to School Menus

A new pilot program that provides school cafeterias with gallon-size blenders has gotten off to a smooth start, with 10 schools receiving the equipment this December.

“Smoothies are an ideal way to help cafeterias increase their dairy sales,” says SLDDC program coordinator Ellen Wheeler.

Smoothies made with milk and yogurt can be part of meals that are reimbursed by the federal government.

The commercial-grade blenders are placed with schools that have applied for a Dollars for Dairy grant, an initiative designed to help schools increase dairy consumption in the cafeteria.

Along with the blenders, the Servin’ Up Smoothies program provides each school with recipes for large quantities of smoothies and signage to draw attention to new smoothie flavors on the menu.

Initiative Add-Ons Add Up to More Fun

SLDDC’s Adopt-A-Cow initiative is giving teachers more to love about the program. Here’s a taste of its new add-ons:

Grass-to-Glass: 160 teachers were awarded funds for purchasing dairy products for classroom taste-testing. The funds are offered to Adopt-A-Cow teachers who take SLDDC’s 6-question pre-test on dairy farming.

See *Adopt-A-Cow*, page 3

SLDDC: Promoting the Product Right Here, Right Now



2019 has been a challenging year for the dairy industry, filled with unprecedented ups and downs and relentless twists and turns. While low milk prices, escalating costs, and uncertainty about the future of family operations have created instability, one thing remains steady.

Like clockwork, farmers continue to show up. They continue to spend their days taking excellent care of their cows and the land around them. They continue to produce a safe, wholesome product. They continue to explore and invest in ways to be more efficient. In the midst of these difficult times on farms across the country, the resiliency of dairy producers is on full display.

During this challenging time, our strategy of storytelling is more important than ever. Telling stories builds trust. And trust of the consumer—whether a teacher, student, patient, or parent—is a must. St. Louis District Dairy Council has long valued the importance of trust and credibility. It's the reason our team devotes their days to growing relationships throughout the bi-state area. It fuels programs like Adopt-A-Cow, which saw an 11%

increase in enrollment, and drives cafeteria initiatives to deliver more dairy foods to more students more often.

The future of the dairy industry relies on uncovering new opportunities across the globe and making the most of those right in our own backyard. Our commitment, focus, and charge as a local checkoff organization is to promote dairy right here in Illinois and Missouri. With 218 billion pounds of fluid milk being produced annually by 38,000-plus farm families across the United States, we recognize that it all starts with local.

You won't see an export promotion program, corporate partnership, or processing-plant redesign in the SLDDC lineup—it's the national checkoff that drives those efforts. What you will find are real, responsive, and relevant programs focused on encouraging more consumers to enjoy more dairy every day, right here and right now.

As we welcome a new year, we reaffirm our dedication to the organization's purpose. We are SLDDC: truly local in our approach, unwavering in our commitment to engaging schools, and dedicated to growing dairy devotion in the communities we serve.

Margie

Margie Graham
SLDDC Executive Director

FACS Teachers Get Cool Ice Cream Demo

Ice cream made with liquid nitrogen and using cream from a local dairy was a highlight for 31 family and consumer science teachers at the annual SLDDC Bringing Local to Life event in October.

The event featured ice cream-making demos by Ices Plain & Fancy owner Darla Crask, plus a mozzarella-pulling demonstration by her brother, chef Max Crask.

The ice cream shop was the first in the St. Louis area to use liquid nitrogen for making ice cream—a process that dates back to 1888.

"Dairy sometimes gets overlooked in the local food movement," says SLDDC nutrition educator Erin McGraw. "We continue to focus on dairy being a homegrown food. It helps when people can see a face behind the product and then make the connection to their favorite local restaurants."

FACS teachers learned just how cool it is to make ice cream using liquid nitrogen during SLDDC's annual Bringing Local to Life.



Thinking Outside the Lunch Box



Gloria Stoverink, school nutrition coordinator for Jackson North Elementary in Missouri, is using SLDDC's Dollars for Dairy grant to increase lunch participation by offering bento boxes—dubbed “munchables”—in the cafeteria.

The munchables meet USDA school nutrition requirements and include favorite foods like pizza, which regularly sells out every Friday.

The recipe for success is combining classic favorite meals with trendy packaging. The meal comes in a clear plastic container and always includes a dairy component, like cottage cheese or yogurt.

Stoverink says that due to the popularity of munchables since launching in fall 2019, she hopes to offer them in all the schools in the Jackson R-2 School District.

Pizza “munchables” are a favorite for elementary school students in Jackson, MO, who are choosing the school-prepared bento boxes for lunch.

Adopt-A-Cow, continued

Classroom of the Month: Classrooms that participate in the Adopt-A-Cow contests—such as sharing a photo of their Thank a Farmer poster in November—are randomly awarded goodies like dairy bookmarks and stickers, and get a shoutout on social media.

Adopt-A-Cow gives classrooms the opportunity to choose a calf from an Illinois or Missouri farm and receive monthly pictures of it, plus monthly farm videos, games, coloring books, hands-on activities, and SMART board lessons.

The program will deliver 2,454 hours of dairy education to 40,234 students this school year. A total of 1,732 classrooms adopted a calf.

Sharing the Love

This is the 3rd year we have done the Adopt-A-Cow program, and each year my students have **ADORED** it. They love seeing our cow grow. I love the different opportunities you have provided this year!

*Alisha Worley
Teacher
Calvary Academy
Springfield, IL*



Activity sheets like these are available electronically for teachers to help students make the connection between their adopted calf and their carton of milk at lunch.

Students Have a Field Day with Dairy Tours

Besides milk, can you name an ingredient used to make cheese? If you can, then you join the majority of family and consumer science (FACS) students who now also know the answer after attending SLDDC's Dollars for Dairy in the Classroom tours. (See the end of the article for some possibilities.)

SLDDC awarded 4 schools a day of touring Marcoot Jersey Creamery and The Milk House in Greenville, IL, during October. The students were quizzed pre- and post-tour on milk processing. For example: only 18% of students knew what pasteurization does to milk, with some thinking that this process waters it down or reduces nutrients. After the tours, the number of students who answered the question correctly jumped 32 percentage points.

Fulton (MO) High School, Lindbergh High School of St. Louis, New Athens (IL) High School, and Salem (IL) High School were among 16 schools that applied for the tours through SLDDC's initiative. Dollars for Dairy in the Classroom encourages high school teachers to highlight and use dairy in cooking lessons.

(Other cheese ingredients may include: rennet or some kind of acid, bacterial cultures, salt, flavorings. Yeast and molds are included in cheeses such as Limburger and blue cheese.)



Say "Cheese" This Winter

Use dairy to add something extra to classic comfort foods: ✓ Make grilled cheese sandwiches with Pepper Jack, garlic-and-herb Havarti, or tomato-basil white Cheddar. ✓ Mix blue cheese or fresh mozzarella into mashed potatoes or mac and cheese. ✓ Sprinkle grated Asiago or Parmesan on pizza or casseroles. ✓ Add shredded cheese—try sharp Cheddar or nutty-flavored Fontina—to meatloaf or any hearty soup.



FACS students at Lindbergh High School, St. Louis, passed their dairy test after their field trip to Marcoot Jersey Creamery and Rolling Lawns Farm, both in Greenville, IL.

Sharing the Love

My students and I would like to thank you for an amazing field trip to Marcoot Creamery and The Milk House [Rolling Lawns Farm]. I heard several students comment how this was the best field trip they've ever been on.

*Tori McCarty
FACS teacher
Lindbergh High School
St. Louis, MO*