



By **Elwood Kirkpatrick**

President



## MMPA Local Meeting Season Begins Soon

**A**s we approach this year's local annual meeting season, I would like to provide a brief summary of a meeting that was held earlier this year to review our local meeting structure. The meeting was held as a result of a resolution that was approved by delegates at the State Annual Delegate Meeting in March 2005. The resolution directed the establishment of an ad hoc committee of members to review the current local meeting structure and provide a recommendation to the MMPA board of directors on how to restructure the local meeting season. The committee was formed consisting of local secretaries and District Chairmen.

The committee met in April to review various issues regarding local meeting structure. One of the areas reviewed was a 10-year comparison of the number of Michigan Grade A Farms that showed the number of farms going from 4,147 in 1994 to 2,381 farms in 2004 (a 42.6 percent decline). Of the total Grade A Farms, the number of MMPA farms went from 2,544 farms in 1994 to 1,713 farms in 2004 (a 32.7 percent decline). Even though farm numbers continue to decline, milk production continues to increase. Milk production in Michigan has increased nearly 14 percent since 1994 and has increased more than 15 percent for MMPA member farms during the same time period.

In addition to statistical information regarding farm counts and production trends, a review of how other dairy cooperatives handle their member meeting structure was provided to the committee. The committee also reviewed MMPA local meeting attendance. On average, about 50 percent of MMPA members attend their local meeting.

The committee spent some time discussing the things that were working at local meetings and those things that were not working. Some of the things identified by the group in the area of "what's working" included: the meal, door prizes, local control, MMPA staff at meetings, UDIM information, quality awards, short travel to local meetings, and information provided by MMPA.

Some of things identified as "not working" for MMPA local meetings included: not having new members attend, too far to drive, afraid of losing leadership positions if combined with larger locals, members are afraid they will "get a job," more MMPA staff than local members isn't efficient, and no "new" news – information is already out there.

A summary of the committee meeting was presented to the board of directors at our July board meeting. While there were no major changes made to the MMPA local meeting season as a result of the April meeting, there were some areas of consensus that came out of the meeting. One of the consensus areas is that the issue of restructuring the local meeting season needs to be more fully discussed during the upcoming

local meeting season so that all members are aware of the resolution and have the opportunity to provide input.

We are urging all locals to have a discussion during the upcoming local meeting season to provide suggestions on how we may be more efficient and effective in our local meeting season while maintaining the important grassroots involvement of our organization. Some locals are already exploring possibilities of having joint local meetings. In some areas, it doesn't make sense for geographic reasons to have joint meetings, etc. But in other areas of the state where meeting locations are much closer, there may be more potential to join some of the smaller sized locals together or have some joint meetings.

We currently have 42 locals who will all have a local annual meeting this winter. The 42 locals belong to one of ten districts. There are anywhere from three locals to six locals per district.

It was very clear at the April meeting that we want to keep the grassroots structure of our locals. I am asking that you give this matter some serious thought and be prepared to provide us with input at your local meeting. Hopefully we can maintain the grassroots structure of the local meetings while improving the efficiency of our meeting process. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding the local meeting season, please contact me at the Novi office.

*Elwood Kirkpatrick*