

# A WINNING HAND

# NMPF Young

By MMPA 2006 OYDC Tom and Dianne Cook

**A** Winning Hand was the theme at the joint annual meeting of the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board (NDB), National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA).

We arrived in Las Vegas on Monday afternoon. After a little rest we attended a Young Cooperator (YC) mixer where we met other young farmers and got to know everyone. This is a nice way for all the YC's to casually get together.

Tuesday started off with Charles Beckendorf, NMPF chairman and Jerry Kozak, NMPF president and CEO welcoming us all and talking about the dairy industry.

After that, there was a scavenger hunt for us to get to know our fellow YC's. After the fun was done it was time to get down to business. The 2006 YC Advisory Council introduced themselves and talked about their operations and families. Next, James Batman taught us about how to be a "better leader by dealing with people." He explained that there are four personality characteristics to look for in each person and gave us insight on how to identify and interact with each of them.

After a short break, Trent Loos spoke about how we should "Stop Defending Agriculture." He told us to stop watching from the shore and start riding the wave and become a spokesman for our industry. Those of us in agriculture have the most involvement and knowledge about our industry and we should be the spokesperson for our industry. Afterward, there was a brief reception

with all of the YC couples.

Tuesday evening we went to dinner with MMPA's Director of Member Relations Sheila Burkhardt and MMPA 2005 OYDC Bruce and Jennifer Lewis. Some older dairy farmers from Virginia sitting next to us overheard our farming conversations and decided to join in the discussion by asking us what we thought of certain issues. This is where you truly learn the most at these conferences – talking to others one-on-one. We also had the opportunity for this type of interaction during several breaks throughout the conference.

Wednesday morning started bright and early with Michelle Payne Knoper who spoke about "Responding to the Rhetoric." She told us to be an expert in the industry and to be more active in lobbying our politicians, because, on average it takes seven letters to get their attention. She said as farmers we need not confuse consumers with facts, but rather tell them how we value quality of life and how much we truly care about our operations. Ron Hansen was the other speaker that morning, his talk was titled "You can buy the farm but remember I still own it." He illustrated the challenges involved in transferring not just ownership, but control of the family farm.

We attended the NMPF Town



2005 OYDC Bruce and Jennifer Lewis, and 2006 OYDC Tom and Dianne Cook, participated in the NMPF Young Cooperator session of the annual meeting.

Hall Meeting where we got to hear about the CWT program from our old friend Walt Wojse. Even more interesting was to hear from economist Dr. Scott Brown who conducted the evaluation of the CWT program and its effectiveness, which showed an overall benefit of \$0.40 for our \$0.05 investment. He went into detail on how he came up with these results, which helped to silence the critics. We also had the opportunity to ask questions regarding CWT and its future plans.

Rocky Bleier was the guest speaker for our luncheon. His message for us was "Be the Best You Can Be." This man went to the Vietnam War and had his leg seriously wounded. He overcame this obstacle and fought back to become a running back who helped the Pittsburgh Steelers win four Super Bowls. His message was we all need to set goals for ourselves, do everything we can and let nothing stop us from achieving our goals.

At the Joint NDB/NMPF/UDIA General Session, Paul Rovey,

# Cooperators Program

chairman of DMI, told us how the checkoff program is being used to help minimize our risks and maximize our strengths.

Charlie Cook, political analyst, gave us an accurate prediction on how the election was going to shift power back to the Democrats. He cited how this shift has happened several times in the past and that it will shift back again.

Charles Beckendorf, NMPF chairman, touched on many issues facing us in the dairy industry and how NMPF is lobbying for our cause on issues concerning immigration, WTO, ensuring that laws do not classify manure as a toxic waste, and having the new low carb milk products classified as a Class I utilization.

Charles 'Woody' Byrant, NDB chairman, told us how their efforts to put single-serve plastic milk bottles in major fast food chains has resulted in 250 million pounds of additional milk sold.

Following Wednesday's General Session, we attended a "Welcome to Las Vegas" reception that featured award-winning cheeses for us to taste. Once the reception was done, we went to dinner with all the MMPA board members.

Thursday morning during the General Session we heard from Tom Gallagher, CEO of NDB/UDIA. Tom told us how DMI is working to meet the unmet demand for dairy products. We need to change the infrastructure to meet these unmet demands, such as Hispanic and low fat cheeses and more plastic bottling plants. Julian Toney, from



*Bruce and Jennifer Lewis (center) are presented a certificate from Gordon Hoover, NMPF Board of Directors (left) and Mary Knigge (right) for serving as secretary couple on the NMPF YC Advisory Council.*

DMI, moderated a panel on how DMI's partnerships with industry have helped to create new products and manufacturing facilities to help meet the changing demands of the industry.

Don Shriver spoke on the Global Dairy Platform, a worldwide alliance to help enhance the image of dairy. We were privileged to have USDA Secretary Mike Johanns, as a guest speaker. He shared with us his optimism for exports of agricultural commodities and how he conducted Farm Bill forums to get a fresh view on farm policy. Jerry Kozak, NMPF president and CEO, said that we may push for a 1 or 2 year extension of the Farm Bill rather than write a new one when we are in a budget deficit. Jerry emphasized the importance of grassroots involvement to get our voice heard as the numbers of dairy farms shrinks.

We attended the Awards Luncheon where MMPA's Sheila Burkhardt won an award for NMPF Outstanding Achievement in Communications Award, our congratulations to Sheila.

The YCs had some break out sessions for us to attend after the luncheon. We attended an EPA perspective on the California dairy industry and how they are working to study and make changes to the environment, by finding ways to reduce methane emissions. Matt McKnight from the U.S. Dairy Export Council spoke on their efforts to help improve the export markets. At the women's session, Ron Hanson talked about "I only need a minute of your time."

He stated that most husbands, wives and family members get so wrapped up in the farm or operation or other things in their life, that they start having problems with communication and the end result usually is we are talking to each other but no one is really listening. So we have to just take some time to communicate and listen more effectively.

All in all the whole week was full of information and tools for us to take back to our dairy farms and try to incorporate in our daily lives. It also gave us the idea that we need to get off our farms and to get out of our comfort zone and start becoming better leaders for our industry. It was not all work there either, but as they say "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." We would like to thank MMPA for giving us the opportunity to represent our cooperative. We are looking forward to next year when we will meet our fellow YCs in Washington D.C. to do some lobbying and plan for next year's conference.