

# NMPF Young Cooperators Conference

By Bruce & Jennifer Lewis

**W**e arrived in San Francisco on a Sunday afternoon after having spent the weekend with relatives near Sacramento, California.

“Gateway to the Future” was the theme of this year’s joint annual meeting of the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board (NDB), National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), and the United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA). This was an awesome opportunity for us to interact with other YC’s from around the nation and we were looking forward to every moment.

We began on Tuesday afternoon mingling with other YC’s while a television reporter made her way around the room asking lots of questions and her cameraman taped all our responses. This was a little nerve-wracking to say the least. What we didn’t know was that we would see ourselves on the big screen the next day.

We soon felt right at home with a warm welcome from Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of National Milk, followed by Chair-

man of National Milk, Charles Beckendorf, and Mary Knigge, NMPF’s young cooperator (YC) coordinator. The 2005 NMPF YC Council introduced themselves and talked about their own operations. A fun game of dairy trivia with all the YC’s led us to Roger Cady from Monsanto Dairy Business discussing “Where is the U.S. Dairy Industry Headed: Behind the Trends.” After a wonderful dinner sponsored by the U.S. Dairy Export Council, we ended our evening with Trent Loos from Montana who asked us to “Stop Defending Agriculture.” This was a great start to an exciting week.

Wednesday morning’s YC leadership development session was all about media training with Joan Horbiak. With a giant screen in the corner, most of us got a chance to see how we actually



*The YC’s went through intensive media training during Wednesday morning’s session. Here, media trainer Joan Horbiak asks a tough question to MMPA OYDC Jennifer Lewis. Keeping her training in mind, Jennifer tactfully and skillfully answered the inquiry.*

responded to those questions she bombarded us with the day before. We were pleasantly surprised to see ourselves as some of the faces answering each question she discussed that day, and happy she didn’t show the bloopers! We left that session feeling more confident about how we can portray ourselves positively to the non-farm public.

Next on the agenda was the General Session which discussed “The Next Farm Bill and Beyond: An NMPF Town Hall Meeting” and the challenges facing dairy farmers today and how agricultural policy needs to evolve in the future to address these issues.

Wednesday’s Opening Luncheon featured guest speaker Rulon Gardner, the 2000 Olympic Gold Medal winner in wrestling with his speech, “Overcoming Adversity.” It was a very interesting and enlightening story of his life and how we can all overcome negatives to succeed in whatever we do. Then back to General Session where we heard keynote speaker, Jeff Thredgold, President



*From left: 2005 OYDC Runners-Up Leroy and Stephanie Schafer, 2005 OYDC Bruce and Jennifer Lewis and 2004 OYDC Jeff and Lynda Horning participated in the NMPF Young Cooperator session.*



*The Town Hall meeting on Wednesday gave the YC's and all dairy producers attending the annual meeting the opportunity to ask the NMPF staff questions.*

of Thredgold Economic Associates discuss the "U.S. & Global Economic Outlook." That evening, the YC's social event was dinner at Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. at Pier 39 on the San Francisco Bay where we had a great time interacting with more YC's.

Thursday's General Session included Lou Gentine, Chairman and CEO of Sargento Foods, U.S. Representative Devin Nunes, and Harry Balzer, Vice President of The NPD Group. After the Awards Luncheon, the YC leadership development program went into break-out sessions covering "Why is Dairy G.R.E.A.T. so Great?" "7.4 percent in 2004: Why Exports Should Matter to U.S. Dairy Producers"; "How You Are Setting Direction for Dairy Promotion and Research"; "Why All the Regulations?" These were very informative focus sessions for all of us.

Just before the wrap-up session, the YC Advisory Council held elections for officers in which we were elected to serve as NMPF YC Secretary Couple for 2006.

We would like to thank MMPA for allowing us the opportunity to represent our co-op in San Francisco. It is truly a pleasure to serve as MMPA's Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators for 2005. We are looking forward to the coming year as we pass through the "Gateway to the Future."

### **NMPF Annual Meeting**

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"One sale per day in 10 percent of these machines in hospitals, offices and schools would mean an additional 75 million units sold each year," Gallagher said.

Growth will happen through innovation in fresh fluid, extended shelf-life milk, and aseptic products, Gallagher said. He added that the checkoff plans to create alliances with "milk processors, bottle suppliers, blow molders, filler manufacturers, label providers, and sleeve manufacturers to spur production capacity of the plastic bottle.

"By 2010, total global dairy demand could increase by 2.4 billion pounds, primarily in cheese; the countries most likely to fill that demand will fall short by nearly 1.4 billion pounds, leaving nearly a billion pounds of unmet demand," he said, identifying cheese as another area of unmet demand.

U.S. retail sales can improve by introducing more Hispanic cheeses, kid cuts, snacking cheeses, and other product innovations. Partnerships with dairy cooperatives and processors also can help meet unmet cheese demand through new cheese-friendly

menu items at national restaurant chains.

Dairy ingredients like whey are moving more quickly than ever with the help of the dairy checkoff. Gallagher highlighted several partnerships that are underway: A whey consortium developed with 15 international companies; A whey research project co-funded with two global companies, Fonterra and Dairy Australia, to develop whey health-related claims that can help the dairy industry compete more strongly with soy; and an upcoming worldwide research and promotion effort to address potential research redundancies, make producer-funded research programs more effective, and make dairy more competitive worldwide with soy.

"Through partnerships and innovation, consumption can grow as quickly as the industry can accommodate change, as quickly as the industry can innovate, as quickly as the industry can give consumers what they want," Gallagher said. "That is growing your business."