

The “Disney” Image

NMPF Young Cooperator Meeting

By Aaron and Andrea Gasper
MMPA 2007 OYDC

Grass is perfectly cut...sand is freshly raked around the hotel pool...no trash to be seen...everything is polished and kept freshly painted...

Those are just a few of the things you notice when you are at the “Happiest Place on Earth,” Walt Disney World. Disney has spent years creating their image and no detail is overlooked. Every “cast member” that works for Disney plays a crucial role in keeping up the “Disney Image.”

Have you ever thought about the “Dairy Industry Image?” What are some things that come to your mind? How do you think the general public sees the dairy industry image, and what do they notice when they come to our farms?

As young cooperators at the Joint Annual Meeting of the National Dairy Board (NDB), National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), and the United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA), we took away many ideas on how we can create “The Disney Image” right in our own industry.

Building a Better Future was the theme of this year’s conference held at the Walt Disney World Dolphin Hotel November 12-14, 2007. The meetings provided us with so much great information, but it seemed that one key factor continued to come up, the dairy industry image. The consumers sway our industry greatly and how they view our industry plays an important role in our future.

We started off our Young Cooperator (YC) Leadership Development Program with a welcome from Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of NMPF, and Tom Gallagher,

CEO of DMI. We were among the 80 Young Cooperators representing 26 different states. The 2006 YC council introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of their operations.

Dr. Ron Hansen, Professor at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, got us all to think about family relationships on our dairy operations. His presentation “You can buy the family dairy farm but just remember that I still own it,” showed us some of the business ownership succession issues that dairy farm families may face.

Bruce Vincent, a logger from Montana, introduced us to a new program, “Provider Pals.” This program allows school children to adopt a farmer, dairy producer, logger, miner, etc, and learn what it is like to be in someone else’s shoes. The program goes into inner city schools with much success. This is a great program to help dairy producers show the general public what the dairy industry image is all about.

We ended our first day of the leadership program with a YC dinner under the stars of the Florida sky and fireworks over Epcot Center. This was our opportunity to start building our network with other young cooperators and learn what issues they are facing in their area and how things are done on their operation.



2006 OYDC Tom and Dianne Cook, 2007 OYDC Aaron and Andrea Gasper and 2007 OYDC Runners-Up Brad and Monica Crandall represented MMPA at the NMPF Young Cooperator session during the Joint Annual Meeting.

Our second day kicked off with 15 minute briefs on current dairy industry topics. Animal I.D./Animal Welfare, CWT, U.S.Dairy Export Council, Pfizer’s Dairy Wellness Plan, and the 2007 Farm Bill.

During the opening lunch we heard Pat Williams, Senior Vice President Orlando Magic, talk about the seven keys to leadership in the 21st century. His dynamic presentation taught us that leadership is the key to success — leaders need to stand up and speak out for our industry!

After lunch the general session continued with keynote speaker, Bob Graham, former Florida Governor & U.S. Senator, speaking about politics and current affairs that affect all of us. Immigration was a hot topic. The general session concluded with a chairman’s report from NMPF, UDIA, NDB.

Our day continued with a 2007 YC Advisory Council meeting where we got to know our fellow

council members that we will be going to Washington DC with in June.

That evening we attended the "Welcome to Orlando" reception where we were able to sample award winning cheeses. During the reception we were ambushed by a TV reporter and her camera man and we're asked, "What is the difference between an organic dairy farm and a conventional dairy farm?" Nothing pushes you out of your comfort zone more than being put on the spot with a camera in your face! We knew this was part of our training but we were definitely caught off guard. We later found out that we would be seeing ourselves on the big screen at the media training workshop the next day.

Following the cheese reception our dinner was spent with the entire MMPA group with good food and good conversation.

On the final day we found ourselves back in the general session with updates from the DMI chairperson and the NDB and UDIA CEO reports. Larry Jensen, President of Leprino Foods spoke about where our industry is headed. We were able to hear about the many different things happening with dairy promotion and dairy packaging. What an exciting time to be in the dairy industry and see the dairy aisle exploding with choices!

A roundtable discussion was held between a representative from Burger King, Shamrock Foods Co. and Farmland Dairies. During this discussion it was evident that the consumer is king and is the driving force in future trends for dairy products and packaging.

At the awards luncheon, former MMPA President Elwood Kirkpatrick was honored for his service on the NMPF and UDIA boards.

Lights, camera, action! It was time to see how we did when we were put on the spot at the cheese reception. Joan Horbiak's media training workshop gave us some great practice on how to deal with

the media and keep a positive image for the dairy industry. The workshop really pushed our limits and made us feel uncomfortable. Joan, a top media communications advisor, showed us how important it is to provide a face for the industry and highlight the positive contributions dairy farmers are making to the community. Media is the most powerful source we have for spreading a positive image of dairy farmers and the dairy industry. Joan said, "We have a beautiful story to tell and we need to tell it. As dairy producers we need to be a spokesperson not a spectator."

Outside the young cooperator meeting room was a large display of pictures of each YC's family and dairy operations with a map showing where the families were from. A Disney employee stopped to look at the picture display and said "Oh, it's so nice to see families; you don't see that much anymore." That made us think of what Joan had told us, we have a story to tell and we need to tell it! Family farms, just one of the many positive images we need to show our consumers.



The YC's went through intensive media training with media trainer Joan Horbiak. Here, MMPA OYDC Andrea Gasper answers a tough question.

This opportunity allowed us to gain a better understanding of the needs and problems facing the dairy industry. It also made us think:

- The general public loves what we do, but we need to do a better job of spreading the dairy image.
- It is our job to show consumers that we produce a safe, wholesome, natural product. Consumers are our future and by showing them what we do and how we do it, we will build a better future!
- The world has an appetite for dairy products, we need to feed it!

As "cast members" of the dairy industry, it is our turn to help create and spread "The Dairy Image" through leadership and teamwork.

Gaspers selected to NMPF Advisory Council

Aaron and Andrea Gasper, MMPA's 2007 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators, were elected as the Secretary Couple to the National Milk Producers Federation Young Cooperator Advisory Council during the recent NMPF Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida. In their role on the YC Council, the Gaspers will help coordinate and plan the Young Cooperator session of the 2008 NMPF Annual Meeting.

MMPA 2006 OYDC Tom and Diane Cook served on the NMPF YC Advisory Council that helped coordinate and plan the 2007 YC Session of the NMPF Annual Meeting. They and Brad and Monica Crandall, 2007 Runner-up YC Couple, also attended the conference.

"We were glad to represent MMPA and meet other YC's from throughout the country and learn how they do things on their operations," Brad reflected on his experience at the joint annual meeting.