

On Target with Promotion

MMPA member Earl Horning recognized for promotional efforts

By Melissa Hart



Although his name was on the plaque for the Richard E. Lyng Promotion Award, Earl Horning was quick to deflect the lime light and splash it back on the people in Michigan who have spent years promoting dairy products saying, "I'm extremely grateful to be honored but it wasn't just Earl Horning who brought this award to Michigan."

In November, Earl Horning of Horning Farms, Manchester, traveled to San Diego for the Joint National Dairy Board/National Milk Producers Federation/United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA) Annual Meeting. With humility, Earl accepted the award that puts promotion on a pedestal, the Richard E. Lyng Award. This prestigious honor is named

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for former U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Richard E. Lyng, who played a key role in implementing policies that led to the establishment of the National Dairy Board (NDB) more than 25 years ago. The Lyng Award honors dairy industry leaders who have made a significant contribution to dairy promotion that benefits the entire dairy industry.

"I'm deeply appreciative to be honored with this award and all the team work of those at United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM). But we also need to applaud all those promoting milk and for creating the programs that we do here in Michigan."

As the fourth generation to milk cows on their centennial farm, Earl and his wife Diane got started early with dairy promotion as the Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators for MMPA. Having the opportunity to serve as the young cooperators for MMPA, the Hornings took full advantage to promote dairy and haven't stopped since.

Although Earl says promotion is a moving target and changing all the time, the schools have been a fertile environment to promote milk. Earl was involved with getting milk vending machines into schools throughout the state of Michigan and is now working with UDIM to get chocolate milk as the official drink of the Michigan High School Athletic Association for every sport, not just basketball as in the past.

Providing chocolate milk to the student athletes may be a little easier in the future with the new program UDIM is developing. "There are a handful of schools who applied for a grant for a pilot program to have chocolate milk available in training rooms for student athletes to regenerate after practices and workouts. These grants were snatched up fast because schools want good nutrition programs for their students," Earl commented. He added, "U of M, MSU and several other universities around the state have milk in their training rooms for their athletes to refresh after practices."

Earl also touted UDIM's work on the school breakfast program where students start their day with a free breakfast which includes milk. And with an excitement in his voice, Earl was elated to explain that McDonalds will automatically be offering milk with every kid's meal they serve unless the customer asks for something else. "This is huge for our industry to have McDonald's cooperation on this."

While Earl gets excited about the programs like Fuel Up to Play 60, offered and promoted by UDIM and Dairy Management Inc., he doesn't leave it all up to the experts. "We hosted Breakfast on the Farm in 2010 and that was a lot of work but it was great to have 2,000 people come to the farm and learn about the dairy industry." He added, "It took a lot of volunteers to pull that off and it

was great to see so many in our industry come together to make it work.”

The Horning Family Farm, with most of the daily operations managed by Earl’s son and daughter-in-law, Jeff and Lynda, are also a feature family on another UDIM Internet project; Michigan

Dairy News Bureau (MichiganDairyNewsBureau.org). This website is the center for science-based information about Michigan dairy farming including cow care, environmental/sustainability practices and dairy food safety.

Packed with information about dairy farming, the Michigan Dairy News Bureau also includes a veterinarian’s perspective, a place to ask the experts, health information and profiles on several farm families that include a blog for each family.

The Horning Family blog is kept by Earl’s grandson, Mason, an 8th grader at Manchester Middle School.

“Mason knows everybody and everybody knows Mason,” laughed Earl. “We had some media experts come to the farm to give us training on how to best answer questions from the public and during a break in the action, I told Mason to take the people on a tour of the farm. When they got done with the tour, they said, ‘we gotta have Mason doing promotion’ and he’s been doing it



Earl and Diane Horning at the UDIA Award Banquet

ever since.”

Most recently Earl was interviewed by AnnArbor.com about the job opportunities in agriculture. Earl commented about doing media interviews, “I’ve gotten caught in traffic a few times, but I take every opportunity to visit with these people because it keeps you on your toes.”

Looking to the future of promotion, Earl is excited about the relationships Dairy Management Inc., has developed with restaurant chains and how this will increase the demand of dairy products. And as long as UDIM keeps coming up with

new promotion programs, Earl will be involved.

“Promoting milk is what we do and to have others recognize what you’re doing, then that’s just great.”

As part of the Richard E. Lyng Award, the NDB will make a \$2,500 contribution to the Michigan Dairy Memorial and Scholarship Foundation at Michigan State University.

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