

Dairy Promotion Grants Help Producers Continue to Connect with Community

Connecting with community is the cornerstone of consumer confidence. That wisdom drove the 2013 initiation of the Dairy Promotion Grant Program by the United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) to encourage producer outreach to their closest consumers.

“Opinion polls show the public is most trusting of promotional efforts that involve those who work directly in dairy,” said UDIM CEO Sharon Toth. “The Dairy Promotion Grant Program capitalizes on that trust by supporting grassroots promotional efforts.”

Research-based and community-oriented, UDIM’s Dairy Promotion Grant Program fostered 77 successful promotional events across the state. Dairy producers applied for the \$50,000 earmarked for promotional grants, with local promotion efforts building on ongoing larger-scale, industry-wide positive dairy messaging.

Grant proposals represented a myriad of promotional opportunities, ranging from race sponsorships to parades, school events, farm tours, summer camp activities and health expos. As diverse as the promotional events were, they were united in the common theme of giving the public a chance to sample dairy products

and interact directly with those who bring them to the table.

The goal of the Dairy Promotion Grant Program is to promote the dairy industry by enhancing awareness of the nutritional and health benefits that come from including dairy products as part of a balanced diet, to increase consumer knowledge about and awareness of the dairy industry and to advance the image of the dairy industry and foster public trust.

During the 2013 inaugural year of the Dairy Promotion Grant, applicants could apply for a maximum of \$1,000 in grant funding, 80 percent of which needed to be used toward the



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Cole (left) and Ty (right) Wardin enjoying chocolate milk at the finish line of the St. Johns Mint City Races thanks to a UDIM Dairy Promotion Grant completed by MMPA Dairy Communicator Carla Wardin.

purchase of dairy products. Some grant applicants requested the entire amount of funding available for one promotional event, while others set about increasing dairy awareness in their communities through seeking funding for two or more smaller events.

"We listened to what our producers were telling us in 2013 and received valuable feedback that has led to changes in the grant program for 2014," said Toth. The result is a grant process that is even more user-friendly. Those changes include:

- An overall grant cap increase to \$1,500 per applicant/farm entity
- Up to \$500 of the \$1,500 may be used for promotional support items, such as signage, banners, coolers, ice and event-specific gear for volunteers
- Photos of the promotional event must be submitted along with purchase receipts to trigger reimbursement

"The photos are extremely important because they show consumers enjoying dairy products, which helps us visually share promotional event successes," Toth said. "We hope even more dairy producers will use the Dairy Promotion Grant Program in 2014 as an opportunity to increase dairy awareness and promote consumer confidence starting with where they live and work."

The grant process remains simple and straightforward. Grant information, answers to frequently asked questions, and the grant application form can be found at UDIM.org. Further inquiries can be directed to UDIM's Michelle Hart at 800-241-MILK (6455), ext. 213 or mhart@udim.org.



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