

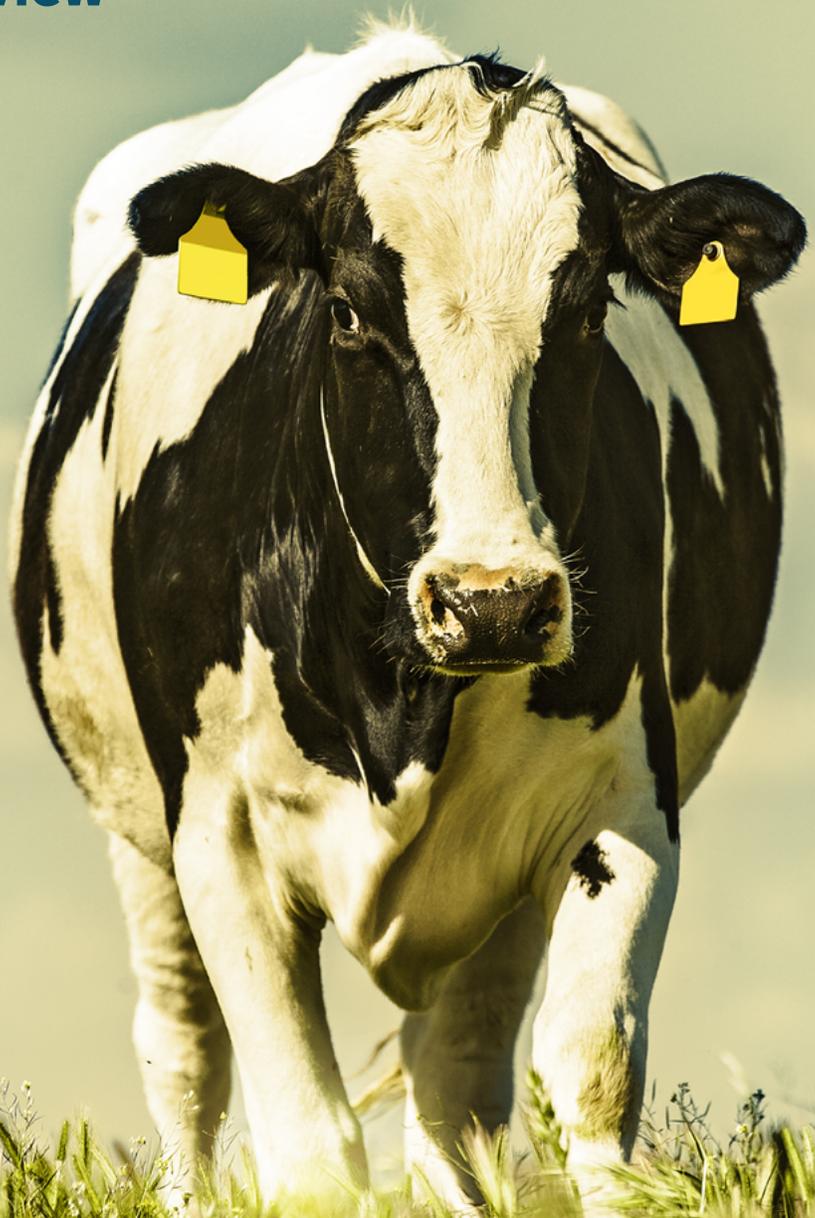
## Minnesota Milk 2019-2020 Year in review

*by Executive Director Lucas Sjostrom*

It is hard to think what adversities and opportunities we were dealing with just 12 months ago. For your Minnesota Milk staff and board members, our fiscal year, which begins October 1, included our annual trip to World Dairy Expo. This included meetings with other policy organizations, our associate members and networking with current and prospective dairy farmer members.

In 2020, of course, there is no World Dairy Expo, nor many other events including our annual conference and expo which will be replaced by digital sessions in January and February.

*(Continued on page 4)*





## 2020 Vision

By Dave Buck, President

Presumably on January 1 of this year we all had 2020 vision, but I do not think anyone saw all of this coming. There is an old saying that nothing changes in one year, but everything changes in five years. I think 2020 is the exception to that rule as it seems everything has changed in six months. As with most things, attitude is everything. If we would have had 24-hour news channels back when electric lights first became available, one headline would be that our day-to-day life was going to become incredibly better, while another channel would be screaming that the candle-making industry was dealt a severe blow. The challenge is not change but how we as individuals and organizations react to change.

The Board of Directors of MMPA has looked at the current situation and made some difficult decisions. Some of the issues are COVID related and some are more of an ongoing nature. Due to the ban on large gatherings, we have decided to cancel the Expo this year. This then required us to think outside the box for our annual meeting and elections. We will have mail-in ballots for elections this year and conduct our annual meeting online on December 2. We think this is the best outcome for the situation we are in. We look forward to your participation in this new way of getting things done. In addition to board elections on the ballot, we will also vote on a bylaw amendment to make dues collection more equitable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lucas, Jenna, Shannon and the rest of the staff we work with for getting things done in this tumultuous year. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with our board this year and would like to give a special thanks to our retiring board members Rod Schulze, Marianne Peterson and Tom Sedgeman. Their thoughts, insight and probing questions will be missed.

Take care and be safe.

Dave Buck, President, Minnesota Milk



**Dave Buck**  
President

## Minnesota Milk's 2019-2020 Board of Directors

Front (L to R):

Bob Dombeck, Marianne Peterson, Shelly DePestel, Dave Buck, Tom Sedgeman.

Back (L to R):

Rod Schulze, Ron Miller, Garrett Luthens, Aaron Vogt, Rick Smith, Paul Daley.

All Directors and their contact information are published at [MnMilk.org](http://MnMilk.org).



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## 2020 Legislator of the Year: Congressman Collin Peterson

Minnesota Milk Producers Association named Congressman Collin Peterson (District MN-07), as its 2020 Legislator of the Year.

As Congressman and current House Agriculture Committee Chairman, Peterson has been a great dairy and agricultural advocate for 30 years serving the Seventh Congressional District of Minnesota. “He really listens to the concerns that dairy farmers have,” said Dave Buck, Minnesota Milk President. “He truly understands the implications of dairy policy better than any lawmaker that we work with.”

Peterson is in his second term as Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, which has jurisdiction over a wide range of agriculture and rural development issues, including the Farm Bill, renewable energy, disaster assistance, nutrition, crop insurance, conservation, rural development, international trade, futures market regulation, animal and plant health, agricultural research, bioterrorism, forestry, and others.

“Representative Peterson is deserving of this award because of his overall dedication to all farmers nationwide,” said Garrett Luthens, Minnesota Milk policy chair. “He understands the role that farmers play in providing a secure food supply and works to ensure his colleagues on Capitol Hill recognize this.”

Congressman Peterson received this recognition in September during an awards presentation at Sand Hill Dairy in Perham, Minnesota.



From left, Bob Dombeck of Perham, Steve Schlangen of Albany, Rep. Peterson; Dr. Bozic, Lucas Sjostrom, and Tom Beringer from Bongards, attended the presentation at Sand Hill Dairy.

## Minnesota Milk seeks farmer mentors

By Jenna Davis, Education Director

While 2020 has tested our ability to remain flexible and nimble, the year has also been one of great opportunity. We’ve learned how to better balance home and work life, excelled at virtual meetings and worked to prioritize meaningful programs true to our mission of “advancing the success of Minnesota dairy farms”. This year also brings changes to our Minnesota Milk Mentorship program.

The mentorship program is your opportunity to give back to the dairy community and make a positive impact on the next generation of dairy farmers. The goal of the program is to build a lasting relationship between mentor and student.

This year, we’re implementing more touchpoints for the students to connect with their mentor. The mentor’s time commitment will remain at approximately four hours, but that time will be spread out over a few months. Mentor time commitments will include:

- Attending a “Get-to-Know You” student and mentor virtual social mixer

*“The mentorship program is your opportunity to give back to the dairy community and make a positive impact on the next generation of dairy farmers.”*

- Participating in a one-on-one interview with student while sharing relevant wisdom and experiences
- Attending two virtual winter educational sessions with your student

The mentorship program will begin in November and it will extend into spring. If you are interested in volunteering as a mentor, please send an email to [mmpa@mnmilk.org](mailto:mmpa@mnmilk.org) or apply online at [mnmilk.org/mentorship](http://mnmilk.org/mentorship).

## Federal policy: Minnesota Milk at front lines of COVID policy

After skipping a 2019 trip, in March 2020 Minnesota Milk's executive team, consisting of Dave Buck, President; Shelly DePestel, Vice President; Bob Dombeck, Secretary; Rick Smith, Treasurer; as well as Executive Director Lucas Sjoström, visited Washington, D.C., during the National Milk Producers Federation immigration fly-in. Cooperatives and state trade associations joined from around the country attempting to capitalize on excitement around bipartisan immigration legislation that would allow dairy farms more sensible access to legal immigrants willing to work.

However, that effort was quickly disrupted by rumors that the coronavirus, at the time known to be in California, New York and Washington state, was quickly spreading. Handshakes turned to elbow bumps, and disposable Zip-Loc bags appeared at every security location. The group from Minnesota Milk saw the final 5 p.m. ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier before pandemic restrictions were implemented in 2020.

Although it seemed to be a building chaos, Minnesota Milk's meetings and timing was very fruitful. The officers connected with staff and legislators at the last possible moment before we turned to video-only calls for the next several months.

Minnesota Milk staff and board members then kept the memory of legislators as it worked to implement three things of the utmost importance for Minnesota dairy farmers:

1. Elimination of a proposal for the government to run a temporary supply management program. Minnesota Milk worked with legislators to explain that supply management was already

underway, and any program run by the government would be too slow and wrong. With the help of Chairman Collin C. Peterson, this proposal was turned back. Minnesota Milk instead suggested the Dairy CORE (COronavirus REcovery) program, which would pay farmers for forward months based on previous production, ensuring farmers did not incentivize milk production. USDA not only implemented this program in the dairy industry, but throughout all commodities in the CFAP 1 distribution of funding.

2. Through the DAIRI program, as well as the Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP) program which had Minnesota roots through founder Dr. Marin Bozic working with American Farm Bureau Federation, Minnesota Milk worked hard to promote risk management in 2018 and 2019. Amongst major dairy states, Minnesota had the highest Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) and highest combined percentage of DMC and DRP by about 20 points,

with 77%. Wisconsin, the next leading dairy state had 55%.

When USDA proposed that any hedging through insurance should be taken out of CFAP 1, Minnesota Milk cried foul, quickly getting in touch with legislators they met with in person just one month before. Eventually, the proposal was thrown out, but only for dairy payments.

3. Finally, in effort to strengthen the milk price throughout the U.S., several cooperatives proposed through the federal order a sudden artificial floor for Class I. While this proposal seemed good at the surface for dairy farmers, Minnesota Milk showed it could backfire as government mandates – and not market forces – would be leading milk usage.
4. In CFAP 2, Minnesota Milk is fighting for more fair payment for dairy cull cows in the cattle payment section.

***Minnesota Milk board members met with Rep. Jim Hagedorn (R-01) and staffer Tanner Bridgforth in Washington, D.C., as part of meeting with seven of our ten federal offices.***



## State policy: 2019 capped with successful DAIRI enrollment

In 2019, a disastrous year for dairy farm profitability by most standards, Minnesota Milk developed, supported, passed and helped implement the Dairy Assistance, Investment and Relief Initiative (DAIRI) program through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Farmers paying for the five-year federal Dairy Margin Coverage program were offered a minimum of \$0.10/cwt as incentive to sign up for the \$0.1125/cwt program. Enrollments were June 17 through October 8, and then again in December 2019. About 1,800 dairy farmers in total enrolled, receiving \$0.25/cwt to offset their commitment of \$0.5625/cwt over five years. The final checks were sent in early 2020.

Over 55 fearless Minnesota Milk members braved a snowstorm to thank legislators at Dairy Day at the Capitol, held February 18, 2020, for the DAIRI

program amongst other items. We also asked for Section 179 and Like-Kind Exchange conformity with the federal government and the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit (BFTC) to be expanded to immediate family members, whom are currently forbidden from applying. To alleviate issues with family partners playing games with the numbers to obtain the credit, Minnesota Milk suggested using county tax assessments to implement the credit.

Producers of the Year Andrew and Fran Miron, Forest Lake, Minn., testified in front of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, explaining how a small farm can work with their neighbors, get creative and thrive in a competitive dairy environment.

Also, during Dairy Day at the Capitol, Sauk Centre, Minn., board member and dairy farmer Tom Sedgeman provided an impassioned testimony relating to farm safety amongst representatives from other commodity organizations.

The next day at the Minnesota Milk board of directors meeting, the board asked staff to intensely implement farm safety into programming for all three committees and Minnesota Milk as a whole; a task that is still in progress.

Minnesota Milk staff, board and committee members also spent time slowing and explaining why Water Quality Fees through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) were not good for farmers, and why the current proposal did not make sense in regard to our county environmental services teams, farmers, or the MPCA itself.

Finally, Minnesota Milk continued work and learning on the NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit program. Through member and consultant experience, we've learned that there is more Minnesota Milk needs to do to bring together MPCA officials and dairy farmers whom are considering expanding their operation into the NPDES program.

**Minnesota Milk President Dave Buck and Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka (R - Nisswa) discuss how important Section 179 is to farmers at Dairy Day at the Capitol.**

**Hastings dairy farmer Janet Bremer spoke at press conference on Minnesota Milk's initiative for milk or water as the default options for restaurant kids meals. Behind Bremer, L to R: Jodi Gerkin of CentraCare Health, Rep. Jeff Brand, Senator Dan Sparks and Senator Karla Bigham.**



## Minnesota Milk Expo combines with UMDIA & MFA

For a few years, Minnesota Milk has sought partnerships in our educational programming through our dairy industry as the number of people involved off the farm consolidates and speakers become able to speak to more audiences. In 2019, Minnesota Milk partnered with two organizations – Upper Midwest Dairy Industry Association (UMDIA) and Midwest Forage Association (MFA) – to hold joint workshops that targeted all three audiences. UMDIA consists of dairy sanitarians, milk inspectors, cheesemakers, lab technicians, dairy plant field representatives and others whom care about milk quality and safety. MFA is an organization of farmers and industry representatives who care about bettering the alfalfa and forage genetics and usage.

The addition of two organizations and a more diverse program brought about 100 additional people to the convention. In March, Minnesota Milk and UMDIA again teamed to bring together workshops in St. Cloud, Hutchinson

and Rochester. The mix of over 170 farmers and sanitarians amongst the three meetings again brought together diverse experiences and speakers for the attendees.

## Despite uncertainty, Minnesota Milk sees banner membership year

Over 20 dairy farmers became Minnesota Milk members in 2020, the biggest one-year gain in over 15 years, as result of a mailing related to the DAIRI program. Associate Memberships also stayed strong, with a new opportunity to advertise in the quarterly Insider newsletter for the first time.

During COVID-19, Minnesota Milk stood up a joint committee of the entire board of directors, members of the Minnesota Milk committees, and the Minnesota Dairy Growth Alliance consisting over about 55 people. Every Friday in April and May, and with additional meetings in-between for board members, Minnesota Milk

staff brought in speakers on a range of topics to quell rumors, look for policy solutions, and simply share information on what was happening in the world. Minnesota Milk staff will take these learnings and hope to turn them into more educational sessions during the winter months.

## Staff families experience big change

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, Minnesota Milk employees saw two babies and one engagement. Concert headliner Johnny Holm stopped the music during Minnesota Milk's convention to allow member and dairy farmer Mark Watrin to ask Shannon Seifert for her hand in marriage. On December 20, Communications Manager Alex Larson gave birth to her second son, Theo James Larson, while on February 12, Lucas and Alise Sjostrom welcomed Conan Herbert Sjostrom into the world.

*In September 2020, Ron Miller showed U.S. Senate Candidate Jason Lewis around his farm. Minnesota Milk is always happy to help or host political candidates and legislators when it comes to teaching about dairy.*

*With COVID-19 restrictions, Minnesota Milk shifted spring meetings to online and summer meetings to outdoor when possible. The Policy Committee held a June meeting at Warner Lake County Park near Clearwater. Pictured left to right: Brent Czech, Jenna Davis, Shannon Seifert and Shelly DePestel.*



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**Contract lobbyist  
Daryn McBeth  
Lathrop GPM**

## 2020 Legislative update

By Daryn McBeth, Contract lobbyist, Lathrop GPM

### Special sessions

Since the *sine die* (final) adjournment of the Minnesota House of Representatives and Minnesota Senate back in May, Governor Walz has called the State Legislature into Special Session five times, each time about 30 days apart. The most recent Special Session was October 11-13. Each Special Session lasted roughly one day until the October session. During each of the first four Special Sessions, the GOP-controlled Senate has voted to oppose or end the Governor's peacetime emergency powers and the DFL-controlled House has either voted to support the Governor or has not taken up the issue at all.

Efforts to get a deal on a \$1.3 billion bonding bill and a tax conformity bill got nowhere through the first four one-day special sessions. The combined bill includes full state conformity with the Federal Section 179 tax deduction and like-kind-exchange provision causing unexpected tax liability especially when trading in used equipment. In October, Minnesota Milk cheered as the House passed the bill 100-34 with many rural Republicans joining Democrats to meet the three-fifths majority rule (needing 81), while the Senate passed the bill

64-3. As of this writing we expect the Governor to sign the bill. Bonding bills must start in the House, and all bills require a suspension of the rules to be acted upon in one day. Because Speaker Hortman did not have enough votes for quick passage, the latest special session needed the required three days time for the bill to be read on three separate days of session in October.

During the August and September Special Sessions, the Senate "unconfirmed" two commissioners: the commissioner of Labor and Industry, and the Commissioner of Commerce. To date the Senate has only confirmed Agriculture Commissioner Petersen and Public Utilities Commissioner Joe Sullivan. Also last month, well known Commissioners Myron Frans (Office of Management and Budget) and Cynthia Bauerly (Department of Revenue) announced their plans to leave their posts and seek different employment. Both Frans and Bauerly served in their commissioner roles under Governor Dayton and were kept on by Governor Walz.

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### General election & 2021-22 biennium

Election Day is coming up November 3, and Minnesotans are already casting their ballots by mail. As of September 18, more than one million voters have requested an absentee ballot. In 2016, nearly 680,000 voters cast absentee ballots.

For the State Legislature, all 201 Minnesota legislative seats are up for election this year. (134 House members face re-election every two years, and Minnesota's 67 Senators face re-election every four years and the terms are not staggered. Note: due to redistricting and completion of the 2020 Census, all 201 legislators will face re-election from potentially new districts again in 2022.) The battleground will focus on 14 seats currently held by Republicans in districts won by Governor Tim Walz in 2018 and the 19 seats currently held by DFLers in districts won by President Trump in 2016. At present, the DFL controls the House 75-59 and the GOP controls the Senate 35-32. In the House, there are 17 open seats and in the Senate there

are six open seats due to members retiring or running for other office.

After the dust settles from the November election and majority control is determined, legislators will start the next biennium January 5. In 2021, it will be a budget year, when the legislature must resolve and pass a biennial budget of around \$48 billion. They will start this process with a budget deficit of around \$2.5 billion. Whether legislators meet in person for the session and committee hearings is an open question. The Minnesota House has issued a request for proposals to invest in remote voting technology that would integrate biometric security. This change could eliminate the need for the lengthy roll call votes read by the Chief Clerk, expediting the proceedings of that 134-member body. The Minnesota Senate has not made any additional changes to its remote voting protocols since March. However, like most things these days, this could change.

# Annual business meeting and elections

As result of 2018's Annual Membership Meeting, Minnesota Milk's board of directors chose to adopt new districts and shrink the current board size from 14 members to 10 members from 2018 to 2020.

Instructions and ballots have been distributed to members by mail. Due to the pandemic, elections will be certified during a virtual annual meeting to be held December 2, 2020, at 12 p.m.

The following board members will have their terms expire in 2020: Marianne Peterson (new District 2), Rod Schulze (new District 3), Tom Sedgeman (new District 4), Aaron Vogt (new District 4) and Rick Smith (new District 6).

## 2020 Elections

### New District 3:

Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Douglas, Grant, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Pope, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Sibley, Stevens, Swift, Traverse and Yellow Medicine.

### New District 6:

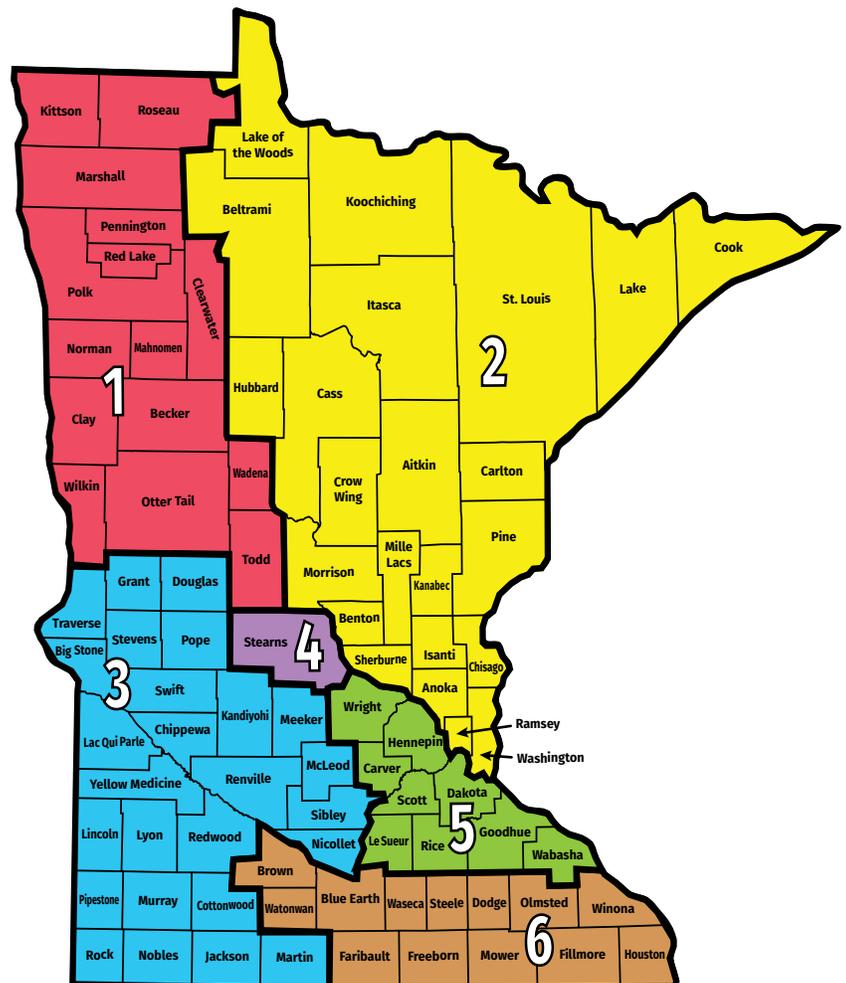
Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Steele, Waseca, Watonwan and Winona.

### At-Large 1:

Any Minnesota County.

### At-Large 2:

Any Minnesota County, unless the "At-Large 1" candidate comes from District 1, 3, 5 or 6, at which that District would be ineligible due to Minnesota Milk bylaws that prohibit more than two directors per district.





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# Congratulations to our 2020 MN Milk Scholarship winners!



**Kelsey Erf**  
 Parents: Dave and Kathy Erf  
 Hometown: Oakdale  
**South Dakota State University**  
 Dairy Science major,  
 Communications minor



**Gary Moore**  
 Parents: Greg and Becky Moore  
 Hometown: Minneota  
**Lake Area Technical Institute**  
 Dairy Operations



**Bethany Groos**  
 Parents: Sean and Linda Groos  
 Hometown: Howard Lake  
**Iowa State University**  
 Biological Systems



**Isaac Nelson**  
 Parents: Brian and Jill Nelson  
 Hometown: Sleepy Eye  
**University of Minnesota – Twin Cities**  
 Animal Science and Food Science



**Ashley Gruenes**  
 Parents: Arnie and Kris Gruenes  
 Hometown: Richmond  
**Ridgewater College**  
 Dairy Management



**Corey Roberts**  
 Parents: Tim and Sheila Roberts  
 Hometown: Menahga  
**Ridgewater College**  
 Farm Operations and Management –  
 Dairy emphasis



**Amy Kylo**  
 Parents: Paul and Susan Kylo  
 Hometown: Byron  
**Rochester Community and  
 Technical College**  
 Mass Communications  
 Transfer Pathway



**Catherine Thompson**  
 Parents: Donny and Holly Thompson  
 Hometown: Plainview  
**University of Minnesota – Twin Cities**  
 Agricultural Communication &  
 Marketing



**Katherine Maus**  
 Parents: Darrel and Lisa Maus  
 Hometown: Freeport  
**Minnesota State University – Moorhead**  
 Business Administration



**Jacob Twohey**  
 Parents: Edward and Sherri Twohey  
 Hometown: Stewartville  
**University of Minnesota – Twin Cities**  
 Animal Science





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## Inside this Issue

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Congressman Peterson*
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## You're invited! Join the virtual annual meeting on Wednesday, December 2nd, 2020.

Hear from keynote speaker, Phil Plourd, and join the annual meeting to celebrate Minnesota Milk award winners.  
Register for the meeting at [MnMilk.org](http://MnMilk.org).

