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FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative Welcomes New Faces to Member Services Team

Zeleske, Hodgson Retire as Grzywinski, Walker Join FarmFirst as Field Representatives

Madison, Wis. [February 20, 2023] – FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative welcomes two new faces to its Member Services division as two long-time staff members look forward to retirement.

Barb Grzywinski joined the cooperative staff as a Member Services Field Representative on January 30. She is based out of Fond du Lac and will be serving members throughout Central and Eastern Wisconsin. Barb worked previously as a dairy nutritionist for a feed mill based in Manitowoc, Wis. and has also worked for a short time as a herd manager. With a passion for dairy and agricultural literacy, Barb is involved in several county agricultural organizations including the Fond du Lac Agribusiness Council and is currently the chair for the Fond du Lac County Breakfast on the Farm.

Her passion to promote agriculture resonates in the excitement she has for her new position at FarmFirst. "I am most excited to continue working with farmers – it's the best part of my job to work with and support them with the cooperative's programs and services," says Barb. Indeed, advocating on behalf of farmers has become second nature. "Farmers have a great story to tell, and I want to help share that message with non-farm families how we are doing the best we can with our land and animals to ensure a high-quality, healthy product."

As Barb joins the team, we also congratulate long-time staff member Dan Zeleske on his retirement. Dan began his career as a test-verification field representative more than 36 years ago when he first joined the Milwaukee Cooperative Milk Producers. In 1986, he joined the Manitowoc Milk Producers Cooperative and then continued through the merger of the three cooperatives to form FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative in 2013.

"You might call me old-fashioned, but even as it becomes the norm to connect digitally or online, I find it more important than ever to connect in person with members. I am grateful to have spent my career connecting with members and building relationships, and I consider many dairy farmers my friends," says Dan of his career at the cooperative.

Abby Walker joined the cooperative staff as a Member Services Field Representative on February 14 and will be serving the Southwest Wisconsin, Illinois, and Eastern Iowa membership region. Headquartered

out of Lancaster, Wis., Abby brings her experience of working in various roles on a dairy farm and the past four years of serving as an independent dairy nutritionist. She is also active as a member of the Grant County Dairy Promotion Committee.

Working for dairy farmers is nothing new to Abby, however she is eager to begin connecting with members in her area and to promote the cooperative's program and services. "I am excited to work with dairy farmers and to play a bigger role in the industry. I truly love dairy and agriculture in general as it seems like this position is more than a job but a way of life, and everyone involved in dairy wants to see everyone succeed. Even though the industry is very large, it is like a tight-knit, small community," says Abby.

As the staff member with the longest tenure of the cooperative team, Bob Hodgson celebrated his 38th year with the cooperative as he welcomes retirement. Bob began as a field representative in September of 1985 as a member of the Family Dairies USA team and has continued to serve dairy farmers and plant processors across Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana. He has seen the cooperative grow and evolve for nearly four decades. His career helped fuel his passion for high-quality cheese, and Bob and his wife Bev became known as 'Cheese Bob and the Cheese Lady' when visiting friends or family as they always brought cheese to share.

"The ride is coming to an end. I've met so many great people at farms and cheese plants spreading from Wisconsin to the UP of Michigan, to South Dakota and in between. Many are close friends today. It's been my whole life and will continue to be as Bev and I go on vacation. All we do is stop at cheese plants along the way to see old friends and buy good cheese! I wish Abby good luck and hopefully can have a successful career like I did," says Bob, reflecting on his career.

As Barb and Abby begin in their new roles on the Member Services team, the cooperative would like to congratulate Dan and Bob on their retirements.

FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, established in 2013 and based in Madison, Wis., represents farmers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana by providing legislative and regulatory advocacy, dairy marketing services, disaster protection, laboratory testing opportunities and industry promotion. Learn more about FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative by visiting: www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com.

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