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'Mission: Possible' FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative Celebrates 12th Annual Meeting

*Delegates, Members, & Industry Friends Gather to Share Information and
Network*

Madison, Wis. [February 12, 2024] – FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative members and delegates gathered at the cooperative's 12th annual meeting on February 9-10, 2024, in Wisconsin Dells, Wis. The event highlighted important industry topics, including the outlook for the industry in 2024, mental wellness on the farm, the cooperative's resolution session and presentations by DMI and National Milk Producers Federation.

The Producer Discovery Workshops kicked off Friday afternoon, featuring Leonard Polzin, UW-Extension Dairy Markets and Policy Outreach Specialist, who shared his knowledge and insight on the current market situation in the dairy industry and the outlook for this coming year.

The second workshop featured Jeff Ditzenberger, former farmer, auctioneer, and founder of TUGS, a non-profit dedicated to addressing the stigma surrounding mental health. He shared his personal story and struggle with mental health, and engaged members on how they can look out for themselves and their neighbors from a mental health standpoint.

During its awards program, the cooperative recognized its 2023 scholarship recipients with several in attendance who shared their career aspirations and gratitude for the cooperative's support of their education. Top quality milk awards were presented to eighteen Family Dairies USA producers. Family Dairies USA is FarmFirst's milk marketing division. Board member Dan Vandertie was recognized for his 5 years of service as a director.

At the cooperative's business meeting the next day, President John Rettler, Tin Valley Farm of Neosho, Wis. reflected on how dairy farmers have faced challenges this past year, but that we must acknowledge and celebrate the small things in life and be sure to focus on the good in our lives in order to remain resilient in the face of adversity.

General Manager Jeff Lyon shared similar thoughts, stressing the importance of trying each to keep one's gratitude higher than their expectations, and that FarmFirst cares about its members on an

individual and personal basis which includes their wellbeing. Lyon, who serves on the board of directors for Easterseals Wisconsin introduced a video highlighting the available services provided by AgrAbility of Wisconsin and Easterseals Wisconsin to assist farmers with disabilities from injuries or a medical diagnosis that limits their ability to farm.

Delegates approved public policy related to supporting improvements to federal milk marketing orders, getting whole milk into schools, enforcement by FDA of dairy labeling, opposition to lab grown and plant-based products being labeled as dairy products and making sure that green energy initiatives remain voluntary.

The annual business meeting continued with a presentation from Nate Janssen, Vice President of Farmer Relations and Outreach with Dairy Management, Inc. who provided an in depth look at where dairy farmers checkoff dollars are being used and the successes of the checkoff program in the past year. The business meeting concluded with keynote speaker, Alan Bjerga, Executive Vice President of Communications and Industry Relations with National Milk Producers Federation. Bjerga presented an overview of NMPF, a recap of NMPF's efforts with respect to dairy policy including the FMMO hearing, Farm Bill, feed additives, nutrition, and dairy labeling.

As part of the annual event, a live and silent auction was held and raised nearly \$5,500 youth educational programming and college scholarships.

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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