

# Congratulations 2018 Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the recipients of this year's Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery Scholarships. The goal of this program is to provide scholarships to members of our cooperative's families who wish to continue their post high school education in Agriculture at a two-year technical school or a four-year university.



Marsha Heck

Zachary Harms



Isabelle Lindahl

Mika Miller

**We wish you all much success in your future careers!**



**June is Dairy Month! Join us for deep fried cheese curds at these events:**

**Barron County - June 2**

*Barron County Fair Grounds, Rice Lake, WI*

**Dunn County - June 2**

*E9859 County Road M, Elk Mound, WI*

**Showdown in Curd Town - June 9**

*Pierce County Fairgrounds, Ellsworth, WI*

**Pierce County - June 16**

*Colbenson Family Dairy Farm/TI-SHI Dairy  
N6182 290th Street, Elmwood, WI*

**Buffalo County - June 16**

*Diversified Farms, W988 French Valley Road, Alma, WI*

**Wabasha County Family Night on the Farm - June 21**

*Luhman Farms, 37435 County Rd. 17, Zumbro Falls, MN*

**Pepin County - June 23**

*Four C Dairy (W4034 Highway 85, Durand, WI)*

**PLUS... St. Croix County Farm Days - August, 18**

*Johnson Holsteins, 1963 110th Ave, Baldwin, WI*

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**/EllsworthCheese**



232 North Wallace Street  
Ellsworth, WI 54011  
(715) 273-4311

www.ellsworthcheese.com



**May 2018**

## John Freyholtz Visits China (Part 1)



John Freyholtz presenting at the China Dairy Expo.

John Freyholtz, Director of Operations, recently returned from Beijing and Harbin, China. The purpose of the visit was two-fold; to strengthen relationships with current and prospective customers, as well as participate in a multi-partner trade mission with the Wisconsin Dept. of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection, and University of Wisconsin-River Falls. With a possible trade war on the horizon, it's important to connect with our buyers in China. Presenting a united front, the message from the Wisconsin delegation was that while we can't control what happens at a government level, as businesses we're committed to our Chinese customers.

The Chinese culture is very people-oriented and these meetings are important to our sales process. "Every person I met was concerned about my well-being and how I was adjusting to their country," said John.

The time change, heavy traffic, language barriers, and differences in cuisine can be an adventure, or a challenge. For example, most meals include 6-8 dishes. "They understand their dietary intake is vastly different from the U.S and would make sure to order at least one item that I would eat in case I did not like what they offered," added John. "They were never offended if I tried something and did not like it, but were equally impressed that I could eat with chopsticks and not a fork."

The UW-River Falls has an international business group that helps Wisconsin companies find business partners in Harbin Province, and works jointly with their university system for student and professor exchanges. They helped to cover part of John's travel expenses and arranged for him to meet with the China Agriculture University Departments of Food & Science and Animal Science.

John also attended the China Dairy Expo. Ellsworth's international broker, Fred Zhang, had a booth at the expo which featured our cheese curds. John was invited to give a presentation on the history of our cooperative and the evolution of our business model. The Harbin Province accounts for 25-30% of all dairy products produced in China. China has only been making cheese for 5-10 years and their output is very minimal. Many citizens have been around the world and are looking for a better product than what Chinese manufactures are producing. This presents a great opportunity for cheese producers like us.

Our goal in 2018 is to double our curd sales to China, and we are well on our way. In 2017 we sold 30,000 lbs of curds. Year-to-date we have already shipped 25,000 lbs and just received another order for 10,000 lbs to ship this month. *(More to come next issue)*



U.S. delegation representatives and representatives from China Agriculture University.

## Milk Quality Award Winners

At Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, it all starts at the farm. We look to our producers and require they meet strict quality standards. We recognize and reward their efforts by naming our top three farm Milk Quality Award Winners. It's a tight race each year, and we're happy to announce our 2017 winners.



FIRST PLACE: Robert & Terri Ketchum, Utica, MN.



SECOND PLACE: LBN Farms, Barron, WI.



THIRD PLACE: Berktoft Farm, Lake City, MN.

Congratulations and thank you to these winners, and the dedication of all our family farms, for producing milk of the highest quality!

## What Is Next For Us?

By Paul Bauer, CEO, Manager  
paulb@ellsworthcreamery.net



What's next for Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery? While I can't predict what is next, I do believe in being prepared.

We've all heard the old saying, "When Opportunity knocks answer

the door." To take this further I believe you need to be prepared so when Opportunity knocks you are prepared to open the door, greet Opportunity, and let it come through the door.

The purchase of Wohlt Cheese is an example of being prepared. Every year, the board discusses how we can get more value for our members in the market climate we have. The course of action is to capture more of the consumer dollar and the board is putting capital spending behind those efforts.

The purchase of Wohlt was not a knee-jerk reaction, but rather a 5 year process of looking at our options in the marketplace.

We also talk to professionals about our long term goals for the Creamery and this opportunity came about from discussions with our accounting firm. They knew our long-term goals and recognized the opportunity and potential. From there we made a plan, which includes utilizing our own barrel cheese at a better sale price to pro-

duce value-added product at the Wohlt plant to sell at an increased margin.

During the next six months we will be looking to produce our products faster and better than before. We are going to improve our curd line to handle the additional sales tonnage with fewer employees. This theme will continue to other lines of products as well. A sealing machine will be retro-fitted to increase throughput by 20%. All these changes are needed to keep up with supplies of key products.

Beyond that, what does the future hold for Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery? While it's difficult to say, the general theme will remain the same: cre-

ating value for our members in the long term.

The board has expressed value to our members in having more processing capacity for our patron milk. In addition, value is making products for less. This could be realized from more throughput with the same equipment, or re-vamping equipment to spend less to make the same, or more, product.

One strength I've recognized in our board is their ability to vet the process—to ask "what if" and see "how" a decision adds value. The final product results from months of dialog and discussion with board members to find the right course of action. I am very confident that when we get ready for "what's next" it will be in the best interest of the cooperative's long term position.

**"During the next six months we will be looking to produce our products faster and better than before."**

## Welcome to Wohlt Creamery

Recently we made an historic announcement to our patrons and staff with the purchase of Wohlt Cheese Corporation in New London, WI!

*We wish to welcome Wohlt to the Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery family!*

After learning of this opportunity, our board of directors embarked on long discussions and a lengthy review of Wohlt's capabilities and infrastructure. It was determined this would be a very strategic acquisition for our organization.

We'll continue the company's tradition as Wohlt Creamery. As a supplier of barrel product to Wohlt Cheese, in a way it feels as though we've been working together for years!

Their production capabilities perfectly complement our desire to transition more barrel cheese into the value-added marketplace. Our experienced sales team is prepared to leverage our customer network and new combined cross-selling opportunities to increase sales. In addition, the purchase offers the potential for expanded sales internationally.

It's a win-win-win! Thank you to our board of directors for their hard work and careful consideration of this opportunity.

This is an exciting development sure to positively impact Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery's sustainability and profitability for years to come.

## OTHER NEWS BITES...

### Congratulations to Alesha Radke.

Alesha was awarded a scholarship from the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association for her continued studies toward a Master's Degree in Manufacturing Engineering from UW-Stout. Her career began 13 years ago while still attending high school, in our Ellsworth retail store. She has worked her way up to Packaging Supervisor, overseeing value-added packaging for Ellsworth and Blaser's product-lines. Well done, Alesha!



**Sen. Ron Johnson Visits the Cheese Curd Capital.** Sen. Johnson visited Ellsworth to take part in a round table event with local business and community leaders. Before leaving town, he paid a visit to the Cheese Curd Capital of Wisconsin for some fresh cheese curds and a photo op with Manager/CEO, Paul Bauer.



## Join us for the Cheese Curd Festival

Once again it's time to celebrate the squeaky white morsels that make our cooperative so proud. The Cheese Curd Festival takes place June 22-23 in Ellsworth's East End Park.

Part foodie event and part music festival, attendees get their fill of creative cheese curd dishes while enjoying an eclectic mix of music and interactive tasting experiences for adults and kids, alike.

Once again we'll be debuting an exclusive deep-fried curd flavor at the festival this year. Your taste buds are sure to drool over Hickory Bacon Cheese Curds!

We also have the WMMB with us again this year. The Pierce County's Dairy Promotion Council is hosting the Milk & Cookie Pairing, and UW-RF Food Science Program will host the Ice Cream Tasting.

And, new this year... Don't miss the biggest (and maybe only) Cheese Curd Brat Party, sponsored by our friends at Elliot's Meats! These and other events are designed to create engagement with our target market.

So come for a good time, and to satisfy your cheese curd cravings! Details about the event can be found online at [CheeseCurdFestival.com](http://CheeseCurdFestival.com).