ECC Named Workforce Development Innovator

Recently we learned Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery was named Workforce Development Innovator by the Pierce County Economic Development Corporation. The Workforce Development Innovator Award is presented to an employer who uses innovative methods to recruit, retain, and develop their workforce.

Our organization’s human capital is an asset we work hard to maximize and develop. For so long we have been catering our efforts to Millennials. Now that Gen Zs are entering the workforce we must redefine our recruitment and retention strategies. A Millennial is anyone born between 1980 and 1995. A member of Gen Z is anyone born between 1996 and the early 2000s. To attract the next generation of workers, we need to be asking: What do our younger workers want from a job?

Millenials value stability, while Gen Zs puts more of an emphasis on finding their dream job. Millennials want to form strong connections with their coworkers and integrate their work into their lifestyle. Gen Zs tend to be more competitive and focused on their individual success, preferring to be in control of the end product of their work. Both Gen Z and Millennials want employers who care about their wellbeing and demand transparency and ethical leadership in their place of work.

At Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery we’ve been working hard to make every team member feel part of something bigger—a larger mission and worldview.

We’ve been remembering their need for recognition and taking the time to get to know them as individuals to support their personal interests and goals.

Our Internships Programs have been particularly successful by providing opportunities for those just entering the workforce to uncover hidden talents and hone their skills. PreCovid, we planned regular meals in the plants. During the pandemic we recognized the added pressures and stress on employees and sent them home with meals to enjoy with their families. Providing tickets to local community events helps our team members enjoy fun together and with family while supporting community initiatives important to them.

Offering opportunities for our young professionals to network with their peers outside of work helps them build relationships and ties to the community, leading to greater retention.

The above are just a few examples of how we are working to meet not only the expectations that our Millennial and Gen Z team members have, but making all employees feel valued and appreciated.

We’ve made some interesting discoveries along the way. For example, we’ve learned that when a new hire...
Influence Through Engagement

We are part of an ever-evolving industry. A change in the market, consumer trends, workforce patterns, regulations, and government policy can all have a substantial effect on how we do business. Waiting and reacting to change isn’t an option—to grow as a company and successfully navigate the business landscape a proactive approach is needed.

Rather than come to the table in times of volatility, our strategy is to already be at the table. We have been strategic in placing representatives inside key organizations to ensure we’re in the right place, in front of the right people, at the right time. We also recognize the value of having team members out representing our organization locally. This allows us to have our ear to the ground on local issues and quickly address problems and gossip that could reflect poorly on our organization.

Here are just a few examples of our involved team members and the roles they play in organizations influential in our industry and the communities where we do business.

Paul Bauer, CEO/Manager, makes a legislative impact serving on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). He works closely with lobbying groups to influence and guide Federal Milk Marketing Orders and farm bill issues. Paul is also passionate about making an impact locally, taking a leadership role to address community challenges such as broadband connectivity, workforce housing and development, education, and more. Serving on the Chippewa Valley Technical College District Board, and spearheading important community initiatives such as the Ellsworth Public Library Building Committee and presiding over the Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce, requires building alliances and partnerships with fellow community leaders and local government officials to become a trusted ally.

Kari Skibbie, our Senior Director of Sales and Marketing, has been actively involved in the American Cheese Society (ACS). The ACS is a leader in promoting and supporting American made cheeses. She was recently named Executive Board Secretary.

Michelle Steen, Human Resource Director, is an active member of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), an

Menomonie Project Update: If Those Walls Could Talk

While it may not look like it on the outside, the Menomonie Plant project is coming along, and just in time, too! Despite losing farms, milk volume is up again this year. This combined with increased sale volume applies added pressures to all aspects of our organization. To say we’re working at maximum capacity is an understatement and the question remains, how much longer can we continue pushing production processes and our equipment? Menomonie’s opening can’t come soon enough—while many factors remain out of our direct control, the focus is to get the Menomonie plant operational.

If you could look inside you would see progress is being made. "Every week there’s something new," said Paul Bauer, Manager/CEO.

The walls are complete and the epoxy is being applied to surfaces. The intake is in the final stages of completion. The wastewater building is in position, although we’re awaiting parts to arrive from Germany to complete the system.

The exact date of the project’s completion is yet to be determined as there are many remaining supply chain issues that could still cause extensive delays. However, recruiting for employees to staff the production and retail areas is already underway and it is hoped that the retail space can open in early November to take full advantage of the busy holiday shopping season.

Stay tuned for more details!

By the Numbers

Continued growth throughout the organization.