



ACTION



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COW-A-BUNGA!

SLDDC School Breakfast Week promotion reaches 600 schools

SLDDC celebrated National School Breakfast week, March 4-8, with its "Surf's Up with Dairy" initiative. The campaign encouraged more than 220,000 students to grab milk, cheese and yogurt during the trip through the cafeteria line.

In the SLDDC territory, 600 schools received two different "Surf's Up with Dairy" posters for National School Breakfast Week. Of these schools, 150 school cafeterias also received a plus-up kit featuring dairy-themed sunglasses, festive leis and a larger poster for a photo backdrop. SLDDC invited these 150 schools to share their cafeteria celebrations by participating in a photo contest.

"Because the plus-up items were of a unique and entertaining nature, we were not surprised to receive the most-ever entries for the photo contest," Ellen Wheeler, SLDDC program coordinator, said. "This

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School nurses snap up toothbrushes and growth charts for Children's Dental Health Month in February

SLDDC annually celebrates National Children's Dental Health Month with school nurses and dental health professionals by providing resources that highlight the beneficial role of calcium-rich dairy foods in oral health. This year, SLDDC distributed growth charts to school nurses in 500 schools. The growth charts highlight the critical role that milk, cheese and yogurt play in building and maintaining a healthy smile. A select number of schools also received toothbrushes sporting the friendly reminder to "Drink Milk."

"This year, we were thrilled to provide nurses with toothbrushes, an item consistently on their wish list," Ellen Wheeler, SLDDC program coordinator, said. "This allowed us to provide a different kind of take-home message, as the toothbrushes will go home with students and should last for weeks! The program continues to help nurses, the gatekeepers of all-things-health at school,

remind students how to keep their smiles healthy with dairy."

During this month-long promotion, the nutrition educators also put cheese in the spotlight when working with the media. This dairy food is a reliable source of calcium and phosphorus, both of which strengthen teeth. The protein in cheese builds up the enamel in teeth, helping prevent cavities. Cheese is also a great way to finish a meal or snack as it helps clean teeth. Because the main ingredient of cheese is milk, cheese is packed with the same nutrients that milk has to offer, including many vitamins and minerals.



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SLDDC is keeping the pace to tell the incredible dairy story



We are deep into spring and quickly approaching the end of the school year. And, like we do every year during this hectic season, we find ourselves saying: Where has the time gone? It needs to slow down! And, just like every year, time basically ignores us and keeps marching on.

During these weeks filled with field trips and final school visits, we draw on the example set by dairy farmers, who have mastered the art of marching right along with time. Through planting, harvesting, milking, caring for their cows and operating their business, they keep the pace and get it done.

2024 has certainly been fast paced for St. Louis District Dairy Council. With eight initiatives in full swing throughout the 3,000-plus schools in our service area, our team has delivered dairy education to new audiences, including collegiate athletes. They've grown our program reach through the Adopt-A-Calf and Dairy in the Classroom initiatives. And, while they've been building relationships essential to local dairy promotion, the Mobile Dairy Classroom has rolled across

Louise is on the MOOve once again

The Mobile Dairy Classroom, featuring Louise the Jersey cow, returned to Missouri and Illinois schools in March. The Mobile Dairy Classroom also made another appearance at the St. Louis Science Center for the most recent SciFest: The Great Outdoors Expo. This April 6 expo highlighted the April 8 solar eclipse and drew more than 4,100 people.

Louise continues to educate and entertain both students and adults. To date, more than 32,000 students have met Louise and watched a live milking demonstration. In March, the Mobile Dairy Classroom visited 20 schools in nine counties. In April, Louise spent time at 22 schools in 11 counties. From the beginning of March through the end of April, the program delivered 4,095 minutes of dairy education.

The Mobile Dairy Classroom has a full schedule through the end of this school year and is booking visits into the spring of 2025.

"The program, which got off to a fantastic start in mid-2023, continues to draw large crowds and receive rave reviews," Margie Graham, SLDDC executive director, said. "When you are on-site at a presentation, it's evident that the Mobile Dairy Classroom is having a real impact. Both students and teachers walk away feeling a genuine connection with Louise and a personal connection to dairy farming. The opportunity to ask questions – from what Louise had for breakfast to how she got her name – adds such value to this learning experience."

the bi-state area, engaging tens of thousands of consumers with the dairy farming story.

Reaching more students in new ways with the message that "Dairy is good for you!" has long been the rallying call of St. Louis District Dairy Council. Inside this issue of our freshly redesigned newsletter, you'll find stories that highlight those efforts. But, even in the busiest of times, the numbers are only part of our purpose. We're motivated to tell the incredible dairy story to as many consumers as we can because we believe in it. As nutrition experts, we know the science behind it. And as dairy advocates, we know the farmers behind it.

You could say that is what helps us keep the pace and get it done. Here's to a busy summer filled with even more activities!

Margie Graham

Margie Graham
SLDDC Executive Director



AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUE SUPPORT FOR THE MOBILE DAIRY CLASSROOM

Since the beginning of the year, six organizations have made generous contributions to support the Mobile Dairy Classroom, including the Illinois Farm Bureau, the Clinton County Farm Bureau, the Fayette County Farm Bureau, Farm Credit Illinois, the Madison County Farm Bureau and the Livingston County Farm Bureau. Overall, 14 organizations in the agricultural community have supported the Mobile Dairy Classroom since its 2023 debut in the SLDDC territory.

"SLDDC appreciates this outpouring of support from the local communities," Jessica Kassel, SLDDC nutrition educator, said. "The Mobile Dairy Classroom is a valuable experience that makes quite an impression on students. These contributions help SLDDC continue to offer this amazing learning opportunity that brings the farm to the schools."

SLDDC recognizes sponsoring organizations on social media and during SLDDC events throughout the year.



St. Louis District Dairy Council produces *SLDDC Action* three times a year.



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Contact Us

St. Louis District Dairy Council
325 N. Kirkwood Road, Suite 222
St. Louis, MO 63122

Nutrition educators build relationships with registered dietitians

This spring, SLDDC nutrition educators expanded their outreach to registered dietitians by attending two state-level conferences.

Monica Nyman, senior nutrition educator, and Kelsey Bentlage, nutrition educator, attended the Illinois Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Spring Assembly March 23 at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, IL. SLDDC sponsored an exhibit table, which allowed Nyman and Bentlage to speak with fellow dietitians about the importance of dairy foods. Bentlage, who is president-elect of the Capitol Area Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, also volunteered at the conference registration table.



It was a packed room at the Illinois Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Annual Spring Assembly held March 23 at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, IL. SLDDC staff members were on hand to meet and speak with nutrition professionals from across the state about the importance of dairy foods in the diet.

Nutrition educators Maggie Cimarolli and Jessica Kassel attended the Annual Conference of the Missouri Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MOAND) April 12-13 in St. Louis. SLDDC also sponsored an exhibit table at this conference, which had approximately 120 attendees. This was MOAND's second in-person conference since 2020.

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initiative has been a major way for us to engage schools with dairy. The reason is simple – milk is typically consumed at breakfast so celebrating milk in a fun and exciting way during National School Breakfast Week makes sense!”

During the month of April, SLDDC nutrition educators awarded prize packs to eight schools. The prize pack featured “Have a Dairy Good Day” tumblers, oven mitts, ice cream gift cards for students, crazy straws, and, of course, milk and donuts for the cafeteria staff. The winning schools were Belle Valley School in Belleville, IL; Claymont Elementary in Ballwin, MO; Dardenne Elementary in O’Fallon, MO; Delavan Elementary School in Delavan, IL; Nahed Chapman New American Academy in St. Louis; New Berlin Jr/Sr High in New Berlin, IL; Payson Seymour Elementary in Payson, IL; and Peoria Heights Grade School in Peoria Heights, IL.

Every year, the School Nutrition Association (SNA) promotes National School Breakfast Week to emphasize the importance of this first meal of the day. Students who eat breakfast are more likely to have higher achievement in reading and math, better concentration and memory, and a healthy weight. SNA reports that the School Breakfast Program provides 12 million breakfasts to U.S. students every day.



Maggie Cimarolli and Jessica Kassel, both SLDDC nutrition educators, attended the Annual Conference of the Missouri Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MOAND) April 12-13 in St. Louis. During this conference, Cimarolli and Kassel met with numerous registered dietitians and provided them with helpful dairy nutrition education materials.

The nutrition educators provided conference attendees with dairy-themed hot/cold packs and the Pocketful of Dairy resource. This resource is a collection of SLDDC dairy nutrition handouts designed specifically for patient and client nutrition education. The materials also direct registered dietitians to SLDDC's website for more resources. Equipping dietitians with the latest research and teaching tools on dairy's benefits helps to ensure the public understands science-backed recommendations regarding dairy foods and how to include these foods in meals.

The nutrition educators also appreciate the value of personally engaging with their peers.

“Being there in-person at conferences gives us the opportunity to share our resources and engage with fellow dietitians in a deep, meaningful way,” Bentlage said. “These connections are a cornerstone of what we stand for as an organization.”



Senior Nutrition Educator Monica Nyman, fourth from left, delivers the National School Breakfast Week prize pack to the cafeteria staff at Delavan Elementary School in Delavan, IL. The staff submitted a winning photo to the SLDDC photo contest. This year's photo contest had the highest participation rate ever. In all, eight schools across the bi-state region received a prize pack. SLDDC nutrition educators make a point of building relationships with school cafeteria staff, all of whom work hard to provide students with nutritious meals that include dairy.

[DAIRY UP! TEAM SPOTLIGHT]

Dairy Up! program connects collegiate athletes to the power of dairy

The new Dairy Up! program is in full swing as SLDDC works with 13 collegiate athletic teams, including women's softball and basketball teams, and men's soccer, volleyball and baseball teams.

The teams play for eight different schools, including Fontbonne University, Greenville University, Heartland Community College, Illinois Central College, Lindenwood University, Maryville University, Three Rivers Community College and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Currently, 200 student athletes are receiving in-depth nutrition information and dairy snacks as part of their training table. Completed surveys show high athlete interest in learning how dairy fuels performance.

"As part of this program, SLDDC's registered dietitians provide two nutrition sessions to each team," Monica Nyman, SLDDC senior nutrition educator, said. "The presentations cover basic nutrition for athletes, refueling with chocolate milk, and tips on how to prepare pre- and post-workout meals and snacks that include milk, cheese and yogurt. Fueling the body properly is essential to an athlete's performance, and the Dairy Up! Program educates these students on why nutrition is important. We are also showing them how to combine foods to get the ideal combination of nutrients."

The Dairy Up! program will run through 2024.



Chocolate Milk Night quenches fans' thirst

Not only are the men's volleyball teams at Maryville University and Fontbonne University participating in the Dairy Up! program but they are also cross-town rivals. This Instagram post showcases Fontbonne University's appreciation for the Dairy Up! program and its spirited rivalry with Maryville University. SLDDC staff attended the Feb. 27 game, interacted with fans and handed out flavored milk during the game.



[DOLLARS FOR DAIRY SPOTLIGHT]

MOOvelous smoothie recipe delivers full serving of dairy to students

Students are getting their day off to a good start with dairy-powered smoothies at three KIPP academies in St. Louis, thanks to SLDDC Dollars for Dairy grants. These yogurt-based smoothies deliver a full serving of dairy.

"Their recipe uses 8 ounces of yogurt per serving," Ellen Wheeler, SLDDC program coordinator, said. "Most other recipes use 2 to 4 ounces of yogurt per serving. I don't ever recall seeing a school smoothie recipe that used so much yogurt. It's phenomenal!"

While KIPP academies have a similar reach as other schools, the total amount of yogurt used for the entire fall semester was three times the average amount used at all other schools with SLDDC-funded smoothie programs. In addition, students are also served milk alongside the smoothie, further boosting students' dairy consumption at breakfast.

During this school year, 29 schools received Dollars for Dairy grants, which are designed to promote dairy consumption

among students. The KIPP academies' monthly participation rate, which is based on total servings and enrollment, is also the highest among all the smoothie grants and among the highest of the dairy food grants.

SLDDC Nutrition Educator Maggie Cimarolli credits foodservice director Janeane Cartagena for this success. KIPP St. Louis High School previously received a Dollars for Dairy grant in 2022. Cartagena used this initial grant to set up a pilot smoothie program, which has now rolled out to the three KIPP academies – KIPP Wonder, KIPP Wisdom and KIPP Victory.

"The foodservice team makes sure the smoothies are highlighted on the school menus and are brought to students' attention whenever they will be served at meals," Cimarolli said. "The staff also creates variety for students. They serve at least four different types of smoothies throughout the month."



Students line up for their breakfast smoothie at KIPP Wisdom Academy in St. Louis. Three KIPP academies rolled out a new smoothie program this school year. The standout smoothie recipe provides a full serving of yogurt (8 ounces) in each smoothie. On average, approximately 185 students, or 57% of the students participating in breakfast, choose a smoothie when it is offered for breakfast. KIPP Wisdom has an enrollment of 399 students.