

Western Iowa Dairy Alliance Reaches Milestones

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The Western Iowa Dairy Alliance (WIDA) officially became an organization early in 2007, completing a 3-year long process that included shaping a vision, building a structure, and creating an image and presence in the Iowa dairy industry. The purpose of WIDA is to serve as a voice to represent the interests and concerns of the western Iowa dairy industry in the region situated west of I-35. The dairy producers and industry leaders serving as first officers and initial Board of Directors opted to establish WIDA as an affiliate of ISDA (Iowa State Dairy Association). This will encourage communication and collaboration within the Iowa dairy community, and will help dairy producers develop a unified “voice” to represent the industry to consumers and state legislators.

There are five key elements to WIDA's mission:

Public/community/political relations: WIDA works to increase support of the dairy industry through public and political awareness efforts. This includes serving as a critical link between producers, industry partners, consumers, and legislators.

Education: WIDA strives to expand continuing education for dairy owners and herdsmen, and support dairy science education in high schools and colleges. This includes assisting with programs to encourage and train the next generation of dairy producers and dairy families.

Producer assistance and advocacy: WIDA serves as a liaison to help establish beginning farms, and assist the successful continuation of existing farms.

Information and technology: WIDA members serve as leaders in the use of technology and dairy science to sustain the environment and raise healthy, productive herds. As an alliance, WIDA will monitor and

disseminate developments and issues in our industry, keeping members on the leading edge.

Growth: WIDA is an advocate for dairy growth and the advancement of the supporting dairy infrastructure, working to build a thriving industry for producers, their families, employees, and stakeholders in Western Iowa.

With official legal status established, the group conducted simultaneous membership campaign and a search for an Executive Director. Kayla Lyon was selected as WIDA's first Executive Director, commencing her assignment in late September. Under her direction, WIDA is continuing membership campaign work, fine-tuning by-laws, and developing policy statements.

Despite its brief history, WIDA has taken actions since Spring, 2007 to carry out its mission:

- Sponsored the first NW Iowa 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl
- Participated in forums with Senators Harkin and Grassley and Congressman Steve King regarding immigration policies and related issues
- Co-sponsored the North America Dairy Challenge Contest tours of dairy farms
- Hosted a visit with IFBF President Craig Lang and WIDA members at Fall Steak Fry
- Co-sponsored and coordinated Dairy Career Opportunity Day and Tour for ISU and NICC – Calmar dairy science students
- Represented western Iowa dairy industry at Iowa Dairy Coalition meeting

Preparations are underway for the WIDA's first Annual Meeting planned for January 15, 2008. Maynard Hogberg, Chairman- ISU Animal Science Department and Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey will be guest speakers at the Annual Meeting.

For more information about WIDA, e-mail or call Kayla Lyon, phone: (712) 441-0893; email: office@westerniowadairy.org or visit the WIDA website at <http://www.westerniowadairy.org/index.htm>.

