

My [NATIONAL 4-H DAIRY CONFERENCE] Experience

BY ALLISON J. SCHAFER

Eleven Michigan youth delegates from across the state attended the 61st Annual National 4-H Dairy Conference in Madison, Wisconsin Sept. 27-Oct. 2. This conference, held in conjunction with World Dairy Expo, is designed to bring future industry leaders from across the nation together to build upon their knowledge of the dairy industry. I was among the group of Michigan delegates and we joined approximately 200 dairy youth from around the United States and Canada.

Over a five day period, we participated in team building activities, training sessions and learned from numerous speakers explaining their role in the industry. The industry speakers taught us how we can build our careers to excel to those positions. There were many lessons that people could take away from this conference, but one that stuck out to me was learning to take every opportunity presented to you.

Five of the 11 delegates attended the National 4-H Dairy Conference thanks to support from MMPA. Those sponsored youth, including myself, attended the MMPA 4-H Milk Marketing Tour, a short overnight conference in Novi, Michigan offered to all Michigan dairy youth. During this conference, the attendees toured the MMPA offices and the milk processing plant and learned about cooperatives. At the end of the milk marketing tour, we were tested on what we learned. Then the ten top test scores were asked back for an interview during the Michigan 4-H Dairy Days in July. If you were one of the five top interviewees, you won a paid trip to the National 4-H Dairy Conference.

Thankfully, I was one of the lucky few who earned a spot on the trip. Deciding to do all of this was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I took the opportunity and met people from across the nation and learned about new careers in the dairy industry.

The National 4-H Dairy Conference was not only educational, but also fun and entertaining. All the delegates learned new dances every night and had one free dance the last night of the conference. We also participated in fun games and hands-on presentations. Overall, I thought this conference was a very rewarding experience and I highly encourage any youth interested in the dairy industry to attend. Even if you don't want to have a career in agriculture, go anyway. You won't regret it. 🐄



ALLISON J. SCHAFER IS A SENIOR AT PEWAMO-WESTPHALIA HIGH SCHOOL AND HOPES TO PURSUE A DEGREE IN AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY. SHE LIVES ON A SIX GENERATION DAIRY FARM IN WESTPHALIA, MICHIGAN AND HAS BEEN IN 4-H FOR 10 YEARS. SCHAFER WAS THE 2013 MICHIGAN STATE DAIRY AWARD RECIPIENT AND IN SEPTEMBER PLACED SECOND OVERALL IN THE NATIONAL DAIRY MANAGEMENT CONTEST IN HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA.

THE MICHIGAN DELEGATES, LEADERS AND CHAPERONES GATHERED IN MADISON, WISCONSIN DURING THE CONFERENCE.

FROM LEFT, BACK ROW: CARMEN HICKS, MASON HORNING, TOM COOK, JOSHUA MARKEL AND VERONICA MEYER

FROM LEFT, MIDDLE ROW: MADELINE MEYER, FORREST NASH, CAMERON COOK AND JENNA KINGSLEY.

FROM LEFT, FRONT ROW: HOPE MCALVEY, ALLISON SCHAFER, MACKENZIE DELONG, MELISSA ELISCHER AND KRISTEN BURKHARDT.

