

The trip I went on was the National Holstein Convention in Sioux Falls, South Dakota from June 19th through the 25th. On this week-long trip, I gave an 8 minute public presentation on Artificial Insemination versus Natural Service, spent a day playing miniature golf and swimming at a huge water park, toured a Hutterite colony, went to dances two different nights, supported the other Washington delegates in Dairy Jeopardy and Quiz Bowl contests, danced to old-time fiddlers, watched part of a National Holstein sale that was too expensive for me, went to a Sioux Falls Canaries minor league baseball game, and saw the incredible Sioux Falls. We also had the opportunity to meet, and take pictures with Rulon Gardner, Olympic gold medal wrestler and dairy farmer, who was our fantastic keynote speaker at the awards banquet.

The educational benefits of this trip included learning lots of information about AI while preparing my speech, such as its cost efficiency, effects of having a bull on insurance costs, absence of risk for venereal diseases, improved pregnancy rates, more dependable recordkeeping, and calving ease, genetic, and production benefits.

The Hutterite colony we visited also had a 60-cow Jersey dairy farm, 70,000 turkeys, lots of vegetable gardens, and delicious food in addition to an extremely successful hog raising operation. There are about 49 colonies in South Dakota, and they live communally, sharing everything with other members. Colonies in South Dakota account for an estimated 40 percent of the states hog production, and our tour was very informative.

At the Junior Forum, we had the chance to debate and discuss important issues in the National Junior Holstein Association. Some of the items discussed were changes in the Dairy Jeopardy format, and a national lease program to allow leased heifers to be shown at national shows. While meeting and talking to people from different states, I learned a lot about dairying and Holsteins in other parts of the country. I also got to know people from my own state better, and learned about how they support their projects and what kind of work they do on their own farms.

I told the other 17 delegates I went with, as well as my 4-H club, that I had gotten help paying for my trip from the Washington 4-H Foundation. The knowledge gained and the experiences I had on this trip were shared at a 4-H meeting with members of my club, some of whom will be going on the same trip next year to Knoxville Tennessee.

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