

National 4-H Dairy Conference

At the end of September, I had the honor of representing our state at the National 4-H Dairy Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. Little did I know how much this five-day experience would affect me.

Through mixers, nightly country dances, and group activities, I had the opportunity to meet dairy enthusiasts from across our country. In discussing our farms, we learned the unique practices that differed between the states.

Touring local Wisconsin dairy farms confirmed this idea. In groups, we toured a heifer farm, an organic dairy farm, and a processing farm, as well as Hoard's Dairyman's Guernsey farm. Each of these farms had their own distinct farming methods and traditions, and gave ideas to how my farm could be run more efficiently.

Along with touring the Hoard's Farm, we were able to tour the magazine's publishing office in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. I found the Hoard's tours particularly interesting because of my love of the Guernsey breed and my constant use of the Hoard's magazine.

I also had the privilege of touring National Dairy Shrine's Museum, and loved learning more about the history of the dairy industry's most prized awards and most famous cows. Furthermore, we toured both ABS' and Nasco's national headquarters. Both tours helped to better understand the vast variety of the dairy industry.

However, my favorite tour was the time spent at the World Dairy Expo, the "greatest dairy event on earth." Walking through the barns, surrounded by the best dairy animals, breeders, and showmen in the world, was an amazing experience. One of my favorite parts of the Expo was recognizing farm names and cows that I had only heard and learned about. I am proud to say that I saw both Heronia Centurion Veronica 20J, 2006's Supreme Champion, and Indian Acres Pistachio Pie, the newly crowned Overall Supreme Champion. Touring the Expo and seeing all the dairy animals made me realize how much I want to bring one of my own to the show!

The unique part of the National Dairy Conference is the fact that you are not there to compete. The time is instead spent focused on learning more about the dairy industry and its opportunities. I attended several workshops highlighting different aspects of the industry and my interests. These workshop included learning about DNA, Dairy Foods, Interviewing, and Adapting with the Industry. However, my favorite workshop was learning the process of artificially inseminating, and then practicing the procedure!

Another unique part of the conference is the committees that each member is part of. Choosing between hospitality, transportation, recreation, head table, and other committees, each attendee is

responsible to help plan and organize events. I loved my Head Table Committee, and the opportunity I had to MC meals and meet dairy industry leaders.

Overall, the National Dairy Conference is an incredible experience. Not only did I meet new people, have a blast with those I already knew, and learn much more about the dairy industry, but I also regained my confidence in the fact that this is my industry, and the industry that I always want to, and will be, and strong supporter of.