

# Women in the Dairy Industry Unite - Many Voices, One World

Many Voices, One World is the new theme of the Third Quadrennial International Forum for Women in Dairy (IFWD) set for Sunday and Monday, Sept. 28-29, 2008. This conference will precede World Dairy Expo 2008.

The new theme represents the global event and its goal to involve, educate, inspire and bring together women in the dairy industry, according to the 2008 IFWD Chairwoman Kathy LaScala of Kansas. "It's our goal to provide workshops and speakers for dairy women worldwide to arm themselves with additional knowledge, skills and tools to implement within their own business and leadership roles," LaScala said.

The inaugural event was held in Sydney, Australia, in 2000 during the World Holstein Conference under the leadership of Sue McGinn, a dairy producer in New South Wales. In 2001, long-time dairy enthusiast Rebecca Long Chaney of Maryland, who had attended the 2000 event, took over as chairwoman and moved the international program to its new official home in Madison, WI, to be held every four years in conjunction with World Dairy Expo.

"I've always had a passion for the



**Jennifer Gross and her husband Randy operate a large herd in South Dakota. Jennifer works with their maternity pen.**

dairy industry and knew this was a program that could have a tremendous affect on dairy women around the world," Chaney said. "The success of IFWD is the direct reflection of a very talented and diverse group of committee members including dairy producers and industry representatives from the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Europe and Asia."

Tina McDonald, who grew up on a Wisconsin dairy farm and now owns her



own agricultural communications firm, TVM Marketing, joined the IFWD committee in 2005 and heads up promotion and advertising. "There is no other event like the Forum," McDonald said. "By learning from each other and working together, we can all benefit and prosper." According to the marketing specialist, the Forum is the only event of its kind to allow woman so many benefits. "It gives participants the chance to learn from renown speakers and other influencers involved in the dairy industry," she said. "Women can interact with peers from around the world and be inspired by a group of motivated individuals focused on making a difference."

In 2004, Virginia Ewing made a difference when she traveled thousands of miles from her South Australian home to be a featured speaker. She shared the



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day-to-day challenges and successes of her family's Holstein operation. "Attending the 2004 Forum was a huge and enjoyable eye opener," said Ewing. "The networking was incredible and I gained new ideas. I'm on the planning committee now and organizing a group to come to the 2008 Forum."

Ewing believes an event geared specifically towards women shows the strength and commitment they have towards the industry. "Women are the back bone of leadership in the industry," she said. "The Forum gives women a voice and a place to show their abilities and work together for a better future for our industry."

Gloria Edwards, office manager for the Washington State Dairy Federation, also attended the 2004 IFWD and was so inspired by the event she is now on the planning committee. "The information I gained and friendships I made with dairy industry related women from all over the world was invaluable," Edwards said. "What an opportunity to hear how things are done in different areas and countries. The similarities in problems and solutions were comforting in a common love of the dairy industry and lifestyle."

The West Coast dairy woman believes the Forum is the perfect venue to allow women to come together to exchange ideas and gain international perspective. "As our country and the world become more and more a global economy, the need to reach out and understand the dairy industry in other countries (and areas of our country) is important for the survival of our way of life and industry," Edwards said.

Agriculture is a way of life loved by Sarah Wilson of the North Dakota Farm Bureau. "We are paving the way for future generations of women in the world-wide dairy community," said Wilson who serves on the committee. "We dairy women are so similar, no matter what language we speak."

Wilson believes the IFWD is a chance to gain confidence by working with those who have a shared passion. "The 2004 Forum provided fantastic net-

working," she said. "I formed lifelong friendships and it was an eye-opening experience to see the difference in dairy products consumed world-wide. It made me realize we are just a small part of the big picture, but when we work together we can make a BIG difference!"

As the 2008 international program nears, the IFWD committee is fine-tuning details of the Forum and encouraging international participation. For more information or to become an IFWD sponsor contact LaScala at

klascala@food360.com, IFWD Vice Chairwoman Kylie Quesnel at kyliequesnel@mail.com or WDE Marketing Specialist Liz Matzke at lmatzke@wdexpo.com or call (608) 224-6455. And check out the IFWD Web site at www.dairywomen.com for updates and a registration form.

"Women in agriculture are often the behind-the-scenes folks that keep things going," Wilson said. "It's time for us to pat ourselves on the back a bit and showcase our successes." ❧

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