



NEWS RELEASE

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Central Plains Dairy Foundation awards scholarships exceeding \$15,000

New Prague, MN (April 14, 2025) – With an increased focus on investing in higher education, the Central Plains Dairy Foundation (CPDF) named four scholarship winners – up from one in previous years. Ashley Brandel, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, and Benjamin Styer and Rachel Visser, both studying at the University of Minnesota, each earned \$5,000 CPDF scholarships. Paige Bunn, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, received the \$500 Tonneson Scholarship. The CPDF scholarships go to students who have completed at least one semester of post-secondary education and are pursuing a degree in agriculture, with an emphasis in the dairy industry. Annually, the Tonneson scholarship goes to a student who has successfully completed at least one semester enrolled in a post-secondary college or university, pursuing a degree in agriculture with emphasis in ag communication and/or leadership. For these scholarships, preference is given to applicants in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

“This is an exciting time for the Central Plains Dairy Foundation,” stated Renee Brod, CPDF member services director. “For the first time in the foundation’s 10-year history, we awarded \$5,000 scholarships. Support for the dairy industry’s future is astonishing in the Central Plains.”

Brandel, a dairy science major, is involved in UW-Platteville’s Collegiate Farm Bureau and Pioneer Dairy Club. With a deep interest in dairy cattle reproduction and genetics, her goal is to develop and raise dairy cattle that thrive in commercial settings without compromising type. Brandel was named a National Junior Holstein Young Distinguished Junior Member and received the Wisconsin Junior Holstein Distinguished Junior Member Award. She served on the Wisconsin Junior Activities Committee and as the Lake Mills FFA vice president and sentinel, South Side Eagles 4-H Club reporter, secretary and vice president, and Jefferson County 4-H dairy youth leader.

Styer, an animal science major, grew up on his family’s 2,200-cow dairy farm and completed internships with ABS Global and an on-farm creamery. His collegiate leadership positions included Gopher Dairy Club vice president and Alpha Gamma Rho president. Styer competed in Dairy Judging and Dairy Challenge. His University of Minnesota Dairy Judging Team won the National Intercollegiate Dairy Judging Contest and he placed first individual overall. For Wisconsin FFA, Styer served as State FFA President and State Vice President. After graduation, he plans to explore a dairy genetics career, with the long-term goal of returning to his family’s farm.

Visser, who is studying agricultural and food business management, and agricultural communications and marketing, is the current Princess Kay of the Milky Way. In college, she served as the Gopher Dairy Club Website co-chair, Agricultural Business Club president and Beta of Clovia Sorority chaplain. Additionally, Visser was a member of the University of Minnesota Dairy Judging Team. As part of her higher education, she is researching

supply determinants on dairy farms and understanding Federal Milk Marketing Orders. For the Minnesota Junior Holstein Association, Visser served as treasurer. In FFA, she was as the Region V FFA Officer.

From 2023-24, Bunn served as a Nebraska State FFA Officer and facilitated leadership workshops and experiences for middle and high school FFA members, along with traveling across the state, nation and Australia. Additionally, she carried out professional level conversations with agricultural business and industry leaders. An avid equestrian, she serves on the Nebraska Pinto Association board of directors and coordinates fundraising for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Equestrian Team. Her high school class valedictorian, she held leadership roles in National Honor Society and 4-H.

The Central Plains Dairy Foundation is an independent 501(c)3 organization committed to serving the dairy industry in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. CPDF believes in investing in the people of dairy and supporting proactive programming across the region, driving innovation and progress in the dairy industry.

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