



Written Board Report

HIGHLIGHTS FROM JULY 1, 2024, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

Overview

This fiscal year begins a new evaluation plan to blend metrics with experiences from the communities served. Merging the numbers with quotes, case studies and examples aims to bring a fuller picture of programming to improve the health and well-being of children and families.

Educational Engagements

With a goal of economically engaging target audiences with dairy forward messaging, resources are shifting to digital, interactive and collaborative.

Educational Engagements



- 443,167 (24% of reach)
 - 702 business location orders year-to-date
 - Digital resources 3-year cycle 240,449
- Largest orders
 - Instate: 20,000 Madera Unified School District
 - Out of state: 3,000 resources Dairy Council of Arizona

"The resources help provide science-based information on the role of milk and dairy foods as well as the impact of dairy on our planet."
—Processor



September 30, 2024

- Aligning resources with strategies, including an intentional move toward more digital assets, will reduce costs and result in fewer annual customer orders. Using a three-year life cycle for digital resources captures first orders and assumes they are used for multiple years. In the last two fiscal years and period one of 2024–2025 there were **238,365** digital orders.



- Dairy Council of CA videos generated over **37,000** views of, which accounted for **1,200** hours of watch time, and the popular MyPlate Match Game generated **75,291** plays in the first three months of the fiscal year.
- Dairy Council of CA resources received approval from the California Health and Human Services Agency for use by Medi-Cal managed care health plans, including the new culturally relevant *Feeding Infants and Toddlers* resources. Medi-Cal has participation from over **400** hospitals and approximately **130,000** physicians, pharmacists, dentists and other health care providers in California.

Education

Training, publishing and mentoring are all ways to build trust and develop relationships with key audiences to expand the reach of dairy messaging.

Education



Attendees learned how to make butter from scratch! This activity was hands-on, interactive, and a great way to bring agricultural education to life. Perfect for students and educators alike!



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Educated Health Professionals:

- There are new partnerships this year with national dairy organizations to sponsor California health professionals to attend events, which leverages dairy-positive meetings where local experts can gain knowledge and skills to bring back to their practice. It also builds new relationship opportunities:
 - Participated and sponsored two health professionals to attend the Dairy Max *Mi Plato* symposium in San Antonio, Texas. The event focused on dairy's important



role in nourishing the first years of life while celebrating culinary heritage. The two-day event included professional development presentations on nutrition in the First 1,000 Days, The Relationship Between Dairy Foods and Health in Different Racial and Ethnic Groups, Cultural Foods, interactive tasting of Hispanic cheeses, Farming for Our Future, and a culinary experience in the Culinary Institute of America teaching kitchen.

- Presented Let's Eat Healthy: Amplifying Nutrition Through Collaboration poster and conference session titled Let's Eat Healthy: Innovative Solutions to Achieve Nutrition Security at the 2024 Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior International Conference. The session shared promising practices to promote nutrition equity by elevating the critical role of dairy in supporting nutrition security and highlighted innovative solutions presented by the Dairy Council of CA team and Let's Eat Healthy champion partner Devinder Kumar, Wonderful College Prep Academy foodservice director and co-founder of Free Meals on Wheels.

Educated School Foodservice:

- Reached **400** Elk Grove Unified School District Nutrition Services staff with a co-created training titled Celebrating Dairy's Role in School Nutrition & Wellness. It provided newly developed tools to educate on dairy's cultural inclusiveness through the newly developed Dairy Around the World activity and taste testing of two cottage cheese recipes for school nutrition.

“There was fun, learning, communication, awareness, acknowledgment of [the] whole team of food service. I think the presentation was excellent!”
—School Foodservice Attendee

Educated Classroom Teachers:

Presented on Let's Eat Healthy: Explore Dairy program and held a taste and teach activity at the annual Ag in the Classroom Conference. Participants enjoyed the activity where they learned ways to share different dairy products and voiced excitement about combining the new 4th grade Let's Eat Healthy: Explore Dairy program and Mobile Dairy Classroom to enhance student learning outcomes.

“Loved the information, access to links, and hands on demo!”
—Educator

Educated Future Professionals:

Presented to **61** dietetic students at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona and California State University, Fresno to educate them on the pathway to becoming a registered dietitian, current science for dairy nutrition and Dairy Council of CA's latest nutrition trends. Survey results showed that **100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed** on the value of



developing healthy eating patterns that include dairy, with over 90% recognizing the importance of educating others on this topic. A dietetic student shared “how helpful dairy is ... there are misconceptions about dairy intake, so it was good to hear the positives.”

Mentored future professionals by hosting a Public Health Informatics and Technology summer intern from University of California, Irvine, who supported a data visualization project while learning about dairy nutrition and community health. A national grant funded student time plus \$1,000 stipend for Dairy Council for mentorship.

Dairy Ag Literacy

Expanded opportunities to connect children and educators to dairy farming builds trust and value for the industry.

Dairy Agriculture Literacy

- **129** assemblies reaching **58,362** students
- Virtual Field trips: **14,588** students, including **1,911** students outside zones for in person assemblies
- **3** Ag Days reaching **950** students
- Community event engaging **450** students
- **14** exhibits with **617,124** impressions

Mobile Dairy Classroom

A program of Dairy Council of California



September 30, 2024

- Tours led by Dairy Council of CA board member Brad Scott and team of Scott Brothers Dairy Farm and Scott Brothers Creamery for over **50** team members from Centennial Farm, a Let's Eat Healthy Community Grant recipient.
- Expanded outreach to educators about the Mobile Dairy Classroom Virtual Field Trip and increased viewership by **90%** to **14,600**, compared to August through September of the 2023–2024 school year.
- Participated in Northgate Market Back-to-School events with Mobile Dairy Classroom; event coordinators gave out free backpacks full of school supplies at each event and



partnered with local agencies to provide free health screenings like children's immunizations, free haircuts and much more.

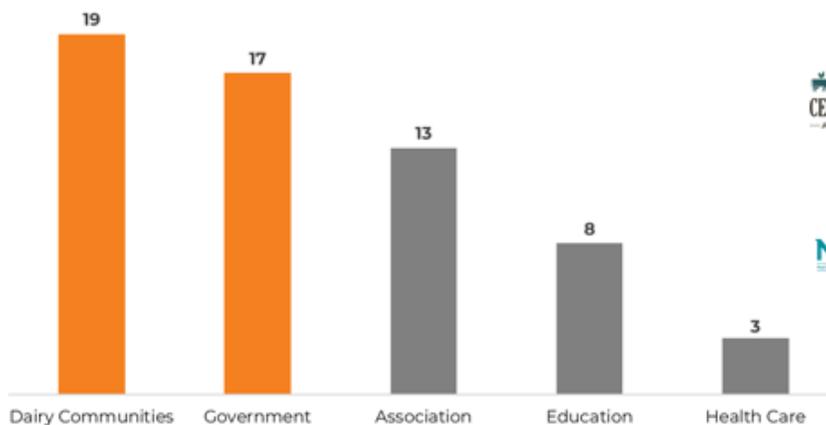
- Attended two new county fairs—Stanislaus and Santa Clara—with Mobile Dairy Classroom during the summer. This opportunity was presented to fill a void where dairy agricultural education was not represented. In addition to Dairy Ag Literacy banners being showcased, instructors attended to give a presentation, answer questions and promote educational resources to enhance dairy's presence at the fair.
- Displayed Dairy Ag Literacy banners to enhance dairy education at new locations, including Santa Clara County Fair, Sonoma County Fair, Siskiyou Golden Fair, Napa Town & Country Fair, Lake County Fair, Tulelake Butte Valley Fair and Kern County Fair, as part of new outreach and marketing efforts.

Advocacy

Informed policy and guidelines on the value of milk and dairy foods in healthy, sustainable eating patterns.

Leveraging Education and Advocacy through 60 Partnerships

Dairy communities and government organizations make up the highest number of partnerships for Dairy Council of CA.



September 30, 2024

- Submitted public comment to the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on current dairy nutrition and health insights and evidence related to three key protocols on topics, including plant-based dietary patterns for adults and young children and the implications for nutrient intake when dairy foods are replaced with non-dairy alternatives.
- Curated content and data on dairy's contribution to nutrition security efforts such as food assistance programs like school meals. Information was used as part of Dairy Cares



public comments at the CA Air Resources Board’s Environmental Justice Advisory Committee.

Developed third-party influencers to support external credibility for organizational strategic priorities. On a national webinar, Vanessa Mendez of Edison Elementary shared the partnership between her elementary school, Feeding San Diego and the Let’s Eat Healthy community grant for a milk recovery pilot project. The webinar was hosted by Alliance for a Healthier Generation and was a national event of nearly **400** attendees.

Co-authored **two** publications by International Dairy Federation (IDF) and a team of international dairy nutrition experts:

1. “The Dairy Matrix: Its Importance, Definition, and Current Application in the Context of Nutrition and Health” was published in the prestigious journal *Nutrients* and reinforced the following important concepts:
 - There is a shift from focusing on single nutrients to examining how entire foods and dietary patterns affect health outcomes.
 - Foods are more than the sum of their nutrients, highlighting dairy foods’ unique structure and health effects.
 - Insights into the dairy matrix can help shape evidence-based policies that improve nutrition and health outcomes.
2. *IDF Bulletin: The State of Milk and Milk Products in School Programmes Around the World* presented survey data collected from around the world. The analysis showed that school milk is a leading contributor to nutrition across the world, reaching **210** million children across 104 countries; it also noted the importance of dairy in schools, for farmers’ livelihoods and for economic opportunities.

Convened the California Local School Wellness Policy Collaborative annual strategic planning meeting with 15 government and nonprofits agencies to set the strategic direction and priorities for 2024–2025. Celebrating **12** years of leadership, Dairy Council of CA chaired the meeting, featuring guest presentations to engage members on school wellness priorities. Post-survey feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of respondents rating the strategic thinking experience as very good or excellent. Participants shared that they “believe in the mission” and were committed to collaborating on in-person and virtual nutrition and wellness trainings this year.



Thriving Organization

Champions engage in actions to advance milk and dairy foods

Champions engage in actions to advance milk and dairy foods.

Understanding of how dairy farmers produce nutritious dairy foods (n=246)



September 30, 2024

Dairy Community Engagement Survey Results

Conducted a survey with California dairy community members to gather feedback on Dairy Council of CA's services, support and collaborative efforts; **41** respondents completed the survey. Takeaways from the survey are as followed:

- Nearly **83%** have interacted with Dairy Council of CA for five or more years.
- Over 80% reported using Dairy Council of CA resources in the past year, with dairy nutrition information (**48%**) and Elevated News (**44%**) being most popular.
- **90%** are likely to recommend Dairy Council of CA resources, materials and staff expertise to others.
- **95%** either agree or strongly agree that Dairy Council of CA “resources add value to the dairy community and fill a unique niche.”
- **97%** agreed they “learned about the functional health benefits that milk and dairy foods bring to a healthy eating pattern.”
- Responses indicated a desire for the organization to continue to share best practices, create resources, test programs and give conference presentations.



- Quotes shared by survey participants provided a lens into the value of Dairy Council of CA:
 - *“The resources help provide science-based information on the role of milk and dairy foods as well as the impact of dairy on our planet.”*
—Processor
 - *“They help educate policymakers about how important dairy is to increasing access to nutrition for young adults and how to decrease food insecurity in disadvantaged communities.”*
—Dairy Association
 - *“Really find value in the timely updates on nutrition science resources and how that policy is evolving at the federal level at USDA.”*
—Dairy Association

Communications

A more in-depth approach to communications is enlisting partners and offering expertise while reinforcing key messages.

Communications

Campaign and Key Messaging
Event Reach





- Kicked off the fiscal year with **two** campaigns. The first was the remainder of the summer meals promotion through school districts, raising awareness of how to participate in the program, which provides milk and dairy foods at each meal. The second campaign, Back-to-School, focused on breakfast and local school wellness policies to support healthy eating.
- Used content marketing emails, web page views, social media impressions from over **30** social media posts, Google ads and more for the first major campaign of the year, World School Milk Day. It included **17** local activations with school districts, including Elk Grove, Hesperia, Los Angeles and Rialto. Promotion occurred through school cafeterias, Mobile Dairy Classroom assemblies, chocolate milk at breakfast, cooking activities and other activations of the toolkit. Partners shared the day via e-newsletter highlights to educators, health providers and through various agencies reaching thousands. Following are other highlights:
 - A successful first poster contest garnered **80** submissions. The winning poster was printed and shared on social media to celebrate the day.
 - Pediatrician Kerstin Rosen created a social media video advocating for milk in school meals that was shared on social media.
 - Resources were shared through partners reaching over **3,000** health professionals and educators. Nearly **500** toolkits were downloaded.
 - CEO Amy DeLisio appeared on Studio40 Live on Fox 40 discussing World School Milk Day.
 - Presented a dairy and sustainability webinar for health professionals was dedicated to promoting health and wellness for school-age children in celebration of World School Milk Day.
- Published **five** online and print articles by CEO Amy DeLisio:
 - “Embracing Diversity to Shine a Light on Benefits of Dairy Foods” for cheesemarketnews.com
 - “Redeeming WIC Boosts Dairy Consumption” for hoards.com
 - “Celebrating World School Milk Day” for Hoards Magazine
 - “Aging Demographics Provide Opportunity for Food and Agriculture” for Agri-Pulse
 - “NorCal Dairy Tour Provides Beef/Dairy Nutrition and Sustainability Insights” for California Dairy Magazine

Wholesome Creations Cooking Competition

Jun 5, 2024 | News & Announcements

Downey Unified’s middle school culinary students and enthusiasts recently competed in the Wholesome Creations cooking competition, thanks to a generous donation from the Dairy Council of California’s Let’s Eat Healthy Initiative, awarded to Griffiths Middle School.

The goal of the educational cooking competition was to take a classic favorite, like mac and cheese, and have the students give it a healthy spin. This is a similar challenge to what Downey Unified’s Food Service team takes on when creating nutritional, healthy, and tasty entrees for our students. Students were advised to consider using low-fat dairy and whole wheat pasta and adding vegetables and/or protein to their creations.

Griffith’s “Thunder Chefs” were selected as the winners by an expert panel.

We are excited about opportunities such as these for our students to be empowered to explore and make healthier options in nutrition BOTH on and off campus. Special thanks to our culinary teacher, Ms. Silverman, for helping this wonderful event come to fruition.





Ditto

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HOARD'S DAIRYMAN

Redeeming WIC boosts dairy consumption

BY AMY DELIBIO, DAIRY COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA



Consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, culturally relevant, and affordable foods supports optimal health and well-being for all. Nutrition security continues to be the focus of policymakers, health advocates, and groups like Dairy Council of California, and a new study shows federal nutrition security programs can help.

The study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* examined the relationship between the redemption of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits and children's intake of select WIC foods.

Researchers analyzed the 2023 California Statewide WIC Survey, which was conducted with caregivers of WIC-participating children ages 1 to 4 years old. They concluded that a 25% higher redemption of WIC benefits led to a higher intake frequency of cereal, whole-grain bread, yogurt, and whole milk.

This is an exciting conclusion, as dairy foods offer a unique package of nutrients that work together to provide multiple health benefits for children. Nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood lays the foundation for optimal health, cognitive abilities, motor skills, and social and emotional development. In addition, consistent access to nutritious foods like milk and dairy products greatly influences brain, bone, and immune health, ensuring proper growth and development. Healthy eating can have far-reaching impacts on children's ability to succeed in school and life, as well as reduced risk of diet-related chronic diseases.

The researchers also concluded that encouraging the use of WIC benefits, coupled with nutrition education, could enhance the dietary impacts of WIC. This study highlights the need for ongoing education on the important role of dairy foods in WIC and other federal nutrition programs.

Continuing to support WIC, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and school meals, as well as nutrition education efforts, can elevate health for children and families for generations. Join the dairy community in this goal by visiting [DairyCouncilofCA.org](https://www.dairyCouncilofCA.org).



Opinion: Aging demographics provide opportunity for food and agriculture

By [Amy Delisio](#)

The trend of population aging has long been predicted but is now a reality. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the number of persons ages 65 and older will reach 80.8 million by 2040 (up from 54.1 million in 2019), and the 85 and older population is projected to more than double to 14.4 million by 2040 (up from 6.6 million in 2019).

These shifts will impact nearly every aspect of society, from jobs and health care to family support and long-term care. How the nation navigates the changes associated with an aging population will no doubt cause debate, but one part of the healthy aging equation is certain—Food is Medicine strategies can help.

At its core, Food is Medicine advocates a connection between diet and disease treatment, management, and prevention. Interventions are evolving and include everything from pilot community projects to public health programs and for-profit investments.

Aging adults have unique nutritional needs that are critical for achieving health and cognitive outcomes, and quality of life. Adopting Food is Medicine approaches can benefit the health of aging Americans while providing opportunities for farmers to supply nutritious foods.

The 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health highlighted Food is Medicine as a key strategy. Following the conference, the federal government took specific actions to tackle hunger and nutrition insecurity, including an investment of \$59.4 million into produce prescription and nutrition incentive programs and an announcement that Medicaid benefits may soon be spent on certain food programs.

The Rockefeller Foundation and the American Heart Association mobilized \$250 million to build a national initiative to increase the understanding and use of Food is Medicine programs and make them part of the health care system.

In the private sector, the Kroger Co., the largest supermarket operator by revenue in the United States, responded through a Food is Medicine platform that features telenutrition with registered dietitian nutritionists and curated healthy food boxes. In 2024, Kaiser Permanente—the nation's largest nonprofit, integrated healthcare provider—launched its Food Is Medicine Center of Excellence.

Food is Medicine interventions can support healthy aging with a variety of curated foods, including fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods that are culturally relevant, nutrient-dense, and shown to benefit older adults. With the population aging, this has never been more important. For food-insecure older adults, programs like these are critical to ensure access to various healthy foods.

Most older adults have at least one chronic health condition, and high healthcare costs and lack of access to services make it harder for them to receive adequate care. The National Cancer Institute projects that by 2040, nearly three-quarters of people living with cancer will be over age 65. In addition to chronic diseases, older adults have increased health risks related to cognition. Nutrition can play a key role in managing disease and maintaining quality of life.

Importantly for those producing and marketing food products, many older adults have purchasing power. The International Food Information Council's 2023 Food and Health Survey found that older generations are more likely to seek out products that are low in sugar and sodium to buy foods for heart health.

Older consumers should not be discounted when it comes to food trends; although they may be slower to adopt, their affinity for new trends is higher than younger generations. A growing older adult population will require companies to understand this audience more than ever.

Science reinforces that it is never too late to adopt healthy eating patterns that positively impact health. For example, milk and yogurt reduce the risk of obesity; low-fat milk and dairy foods reduce the risk of hypertension; and yogurt may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

In early 2024, the Food and Drug Administration announced the first ever qualified health claim for yogurt, "Eating yogurt regularly, at least 2 cups (3 servings) per week, may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes according to limited scientific evidence."

In addition, newly published research investigated the association between dairy intake and risk of incident dementia in older adults and found that daily yogurt consumers had a reduced risk for dementia and that yogurt intake might be inversely associated with dementia risk.

In the years and decades ahead, the United States—as well as other countries across the world—will have to navigate the challenges associated with an aging population. Food and agriculture professionals would benefit by being part of the discussion.

Leaders and marketers of food commodities and products should understand the nutrient profiles of their categories and how certain foods can benefit older adults. With this understanding comes the opportunity to educate the public and private sectors, along with consumers themselves, about strategies for eating patterns that benefit health.

At Dairy Council of California, we believe that partnerships and collaboration are the foundation of collective impact. To learn more and to partner in elevating the health of people across the lifespan, visit [DairyCouncilofCA.org](https://www.DairyCouncilofCA.org).

Amy DeLisio, MPH, RDN, serves as CEO of Dairy Council of California, a nutrition organization that works with champions to elevate the health of children and communities through lifelong healthy eating patterns.



Co-Authored by:
Linda Luna-Franks, Program Manager, Kid Healthy
Rajwinder Kaur, Community Nutrition Adviser, Dairy Council of California

In 1946, President Harry Truman signed the National School Lunch Act to help safeguard the health and well-being of our nation's children. A lot has changed since then and the program has grown significantly. The National School Lunch Program was established under the National School Lunch Act and now feeds just under 30 million students daily.



School lunch is such an important aspect of daily health for students that in 2007 the Healthy Schools Campaign, a nonprofit organization based in Chicago, founded Cooking up Change®. This program engages high school students in the conversation about school food, providing a way for students to learn about and promote healthy eating while encouraging teamwork and highlighting students' culinary talents to a wide audience. Participating students also have the opportunity to engage with health, education, policy and community leaders to impact the food served in schools. To build an understanding of the complexity of providing nutritious lunches while following government regulations, Cooking up Change teaches the rules,

limitations and processes of school foodservice and allows students the opportunity to weigh in with their thoughts on school meals.

In 2012, Kid Healthy, a nonprofit that provides hands-on wellness programs in schools throughout greater Orange County, joined forces with the Healthy Schools Campaign and Northgate Gonzalez Market to host the first California edition of the national Cooking up Change program. “Northgate Market prioritizes giving back to the community under our three pillars: faith, well-being and education. We believe in empowering youth to have access and advocate for their own health through nutrition. We have been a proud partner since the first event and have continued to support the program ever since,” said Teresa Blanco, Director of Community Engagement & Wellness for Northgate Gonzalez Market.



The local program operates within the constraints of the national guidelines established by the Healthy Schools Campaign. Student teams are challenged to create a cafeteria-ready menu that they believe students would enjoy eating. Throughout the process students develop valuable culinary arts skills, learn teamwork and are inspired to continue their education in culinary arts and nutrition sciences. Each team is matched with a local chef who mentors and inspires them at all levels of food preparation and service. Professional chefs serve as mentors and are enlisted through a network of partnerships to work hand in hand

with culinary instructors and students. Along with the instructors, the chefs assist in recipe review, help to develop the menu, provide insight into the restaurant or hospitality industry and guide the students' overall skill sets. Following a process of three recipe submissions and edits, each student team presents its creations to an esteemed panel of judges who are community leaders from Northgate Market, Dairy Council of California, Tyson Foods, Avocados from Mexico, W.K. Kellogg, Samueli Foundation, Providence Health Care, Children's Hospital of Orange County, Hormel Foods, CalOptima Health, Kellanova and Kuerig Dr Pepper.

Prior to competition, the students participate in two workshops to learn flavoring techniques and public speaking skills. Each team, made up of three to four students, creates a new lunch menu, including an entree and two side dishes comprised only of ingredients found in a typical school foodservice department. Tools must also be of common use within a school kitchen, meaning no fancy blenders, choppers or gourmet appliances allowed. Each recipe must have five steps or less and meet all elements outlined in the contest rules. The most challenging element is the cost, which must meet typical school cafeteria standards of \$3.25 per serving. Student-created meals are presented on a traditional cafeteria tray and must include a carton of milk, which is donated by Rockview Family Farms.

Healthy school meals are a part of the solution to promote children's health and are an essential element of a quality education. “Dairy Council of California is passionate about supporting students in learning about healthy, sustainable nutrition and connecting it to the cafeteria. This is why we have been a sponsor of this program since 2012 and continue to support it through our Let's Eat Healthy Initiative,” explained Dairy Council of California Officer of Partnerships and Programs Shannan Young.

“The ultimate goal of the program is for the student-created recipes to actually be served in school cafeterias across the county. This can only be accomplished through valued partnerships,” said Kim Benson, Executive Director of Kid Healthy. Students hold tasting events at various participating schools, and student recipes have been integrated into the school menu several times over the years.



The highlight of each year’s culinary competition is the school meal tasting event at Northgate Market corporate headquarters in Anaheim. The event is an opportunity to share students’ hard work and talent with the community. This year, it was a full house as guests met with the students, sampled their recipes and heard from special guest speaker Mike Hendry, Executive Vice President of Marketing & Merchandising at Northgate Market. The evening was capped with the announcement of the student champions. Each participant earned a medal, and the top teams earned cash prizes provided by Northgate Market’s Familia Gonzalez Reynoso Foundation: \$1,000 for first place, \$750 for second place and \$500 for third place. The excitement among students was overwhelming, and all guests departed with a warm feeling that they had experienced remarkable student talent at a professional level.

To learn more about Kid Healthy and Cooking up Change visit mykidhealthy.org

HOARD'S DAIRYMAN

Dairy isn't just for children

July 1 2024

By Amy DeLisio, Dairy Council of California



Healthy aging is a hot topic these days as the U.S. population is older than it has ever been. The U.S. Census Bureau reports the number of persons age 65 and older will reach 80.8 million by 2040. This growing population of aging adults will impact just about every aspect of American life — the health care environment, economy, consumer landscape, and family dynamics — and opportunities exist for dairy foods.

At the same time that Americans are growing older, there is growing support for the “food is medicine” philosophy and resulting programs, which advocate for a connection between diet and disease treatment, management, and prevention. Emerging research is also showing positive impacts of dairy foods on numerous conditions affecting older adults.

Chronic diseases: Older adults have unique nutritional needs that support optimal health and enhance quality of life for healthy aging. Research shows milk and yogurt reduce the risk of obesity and inflammation, which are connected to chronic diseases. In addition, low-fat dairy foods and milk reduce the risk of hypertension, while yogurt lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Bone and muscle: Older adults are at greater risk for health conditions related to bone and muscle mass loss, including osteoporosis and sarcopenia. One study published in *The BMJ* found that nursing home residents who increased their intake of milk, yogurt, and cheese from an average of two servings per day to three and a half servings per day demonstrated a 33% reduction in all fractures after just six months, a 46% reduction in hip fractures, and an 11% reduction in falls. Nutrient-rich dairy foods provide high-quality protein to help maintain muscle as well as bone-building nutrients important during bone remodeling that takes place post-menopause.

Cognition: Newly published research investigated the association between dairy intake and the risk of incident dementia in older adults. It found that daily yogurt consumers had a reduced risk for dementia and that yogurt intake might be inversely associated with dementia risk. Overall, evidence suggests that dietary patterns with higher variety may reduce the risk of dementia in older adults. However, more high-quality research is needed.

By working together to educate the public and private sectors — including policymakers, the health care community, and consumers — dairy advocates can help elevate the health of older adults and maintain dairy foods' position as an essential part of daily healthy eating patterns across the lifespan.

To comment, email your remarks to intel@hoards.com.

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July 1, 2024



Guest Columns

Perspective:

Dairy Nutrition

Embracing diversity to shine a light on benefits of dairy foods

Amy DeLisio

Amy DeLisio is CEO of the Dairy Council of California. She is a registered dietitian with a master's degree in public health from the University of Southern California and earned her bachelor's degree in dietetics at Youngstown State University. She contributes this column exclusively for Cheese Market News®.

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is a focus across businesses and organizations of all types, and while institutions and industries often apply a DEI focus internally, the dairy community can benefit by continuing to embrace a DEI lens when considering its consumers.

Embracing the increasing diversity of Americans, acknowledging the role of inequality in health outcomes, and appreciating the influence of ethnicity and culture in food choices can help not only elevate health, but also cultivate consumers with a lifelong appreciation for dairy foods. Cheese, specifically, has a unique opportunity to embrace diversity to its advantage.

The U.S. population is much more diverse than ever before. The 2020 Census showed people of color represented 43% of the total U.S. population. At the same time, the share of those who identified as Hispanic or Latino or as multiracial grew the most. The U.S. government recognizes the importance of this changing landscape.

For the 2025 Dietary Guidelines, USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services “sought an advisory committee that would be reflective of the full diversity within the United States, with the understanding that our backgrounds can affect our nutritional needs,” according to the USDA website. This is critically important as health disparities — including increased risk of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other chronic conditions — often affect diverse, low-income and marginalized populations that historically have difficulty accessing food, health care and technology.

Importantly, federal nutrition programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs

are critical safety nets to ensure access to a variety of foods needed for good health. Not only do these programs provide food and nutrition security to participating families, but they are also a way for the dairy community to introduce milk, yogurt and, of course, cheese varieties to diverse communities across the U.S.

Mintel, a global market and research agency, reported in 2024 that Americans Google-search the term “cheese” more than any nation — an average of 6.6 times a month per person — and that there are more than 500 cheeses that originate in the U.S., making it the leading country in that metric.

Mexican Americans enjoy cuisine that includes Queso Fresco, Cotija and Oaxaca cheese, while Italian Americans often prominently feature cheeses such as Parmesan, Mozzarella, Ricotta and Provolone, and Middle Eastern Americans embrace cheeses like Feta and Halloumi while Indian and South Asian Americans prefer Paneer. The variety of cheeses with various flavors and textures allows consumers from diverse backgrounds or who are interested in global cuisines to explore the dairy category. Studies suggest that young people, including Gen Z and millennials, are embracing diverse and global flavors. Still, for some communities, real or perceived barriers may exist around topics such as lactose intolerance.

Johns Hopkins Medicine says that lactose intolerance is most common in Asian Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans and Native Americans. And while lactose intolerance doesn’t have to mean “dairy free,” concerns over lactose intolerance suggest that culturally responsive education that appreciates the influence of ethnicity, culture, religion and education on food choices should be part of the equation, particularly as many underserved communities suffer from a lack of credible nutrition information combined with the lack of access to a variety of healthy foods in their own neighborhoods. To fill the gap in education, nutrition information needs to evolve both in and beyond the classroom to meet people where they are. This means thinking about the places where people live, learn, work, play and gather as vehicles for shaping health outcomes. These social and environmental conditions, referred to as social determinants of health, can be positively harnessed to reach diverse audiences.

In one example, Dairy Council of California received funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials to collaborate with diverse partners to create culturally responsive nutrition education resources for families that are Hispanic/Latino or of Black or Caribbean heritage. These digital resources are relevant and relatable, using traditional foods, spices and beloved meals, and are focused on babies’ first foods.

At Dairy Council of California, we believe that all people deserve access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods regardless of race, education, gender, employment, ability or community. We also believe that achieving nutrition equity is rooted in acknowledging how inequality and differences affect health outcomes and providing nutrition education that is culturally appropriate. And while elevating health is what drives us as an organization, learning to recognize inequality and embrace diversity can also lead to lifelong cheese lovers who see dairy foods as part of healthy, sustainable eating patterns.

To join us in elevating health, visit DairyCouncilofCA.org

My First 1,000 Days: A Dairy Initiative SUMMARY



Introduction and Background

My First 1,000 Days: A Dairy Initiative was a one-year pilot project launched in Gustine, Newman, Santa Nella and Crows Landing, California, by Dairy Council of California and funded by Legacy Health Endowment. This digital initiative supported the health and nutrition of families with children under 2 years of age by providing nutrient-dense and culturally familiar dairy foods for six months during the crucial first 1,000 days of life. Participants received a \$25 digital offer, similar to a coupon, which was redeemable for age-appropriate dairy products, emphasizing the importance of dairy for cognitive and physical development.

The enrollment process was streamlined and available in both English and Spanish. Additionally, the program was not income-based, allowing families with incomes up to 400% of the federal poverty level to self-identify their needs. Project partners included Raley's, Federally Qualified Health Centers and various community organizations.

Key Milestones

- Enrolled 104 families in the pilot study; an additional 53 families with children over the age of 2 received services but were not part of the study
- Distributed \$15,000 as 600 digital offers of \$25 for milk and dairy foods through Raley's Something Extra digital loyalty program
- Maintained an average 65% offer redemption rate
- Conducted over 300 customer service support calls
- Attended 52 community outreach events
- Hosted a kickoff event and a media event and established five new partnerships
- Received acceptance to present project findings at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and the World Dairy Summit

Impact

The following information is part of the baseline surveys collected from families of the pilot study.

Food Security



The project directly addressed food security, with 30% of participants reporting concerns about running out of food in the prior 30 days. The \$25 monthly digital offers ensured families had access to nutrient-dense milk and dairy foods.

Nutrient-Dense Foods



In all, 99% of participants agreed that dairy is essential for their children's health and growth, and 72% provide dairy products to their children because it is a traditional food. The most-purchased items included whole milk, cheese and yogurt, critical for early childhood development.



Participant Experience



Overall, 85% of participants expressed high satisfaction with the program, indicating its success.

Participants received regular text messages and digital \$25 dairy offers throughout the six-month intervention.

Twelve nutrition text messages educated and empowered families to adopt healthier eating patterns. Participants were also encouraged to respond to these text messages with questions, comments and photos. For more testimonials and pictures, [click here](#).

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One participant said, "So grateful for this program because it has allowed my two children to consume much more dairy foods."

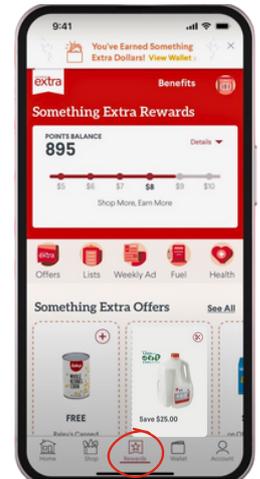
Collaboration and Partnership



Collaborations with health care centers and community organizations supported outreach, recruitment and referrals.



The partnership with Raley's enabled the seamless integration of \$25 dairy offers into participants' accounts through the Something Extra program. Families could easily access these monthly benefits through their accounts using the Raley's app or website.



Conclusion

- My First 1,000 Days: A Dairy Initiative aims to model ways to improve food security, nutritional knowledge and dietary behaviors in underserved communities. A project evaluation is underway, with endline surveys concluding in February 2025. A final report, including outcome data, is expected in Summer 2025.
- The project successfully connected families with vital nutrition resources, and participants valued a wider variety of culturally relevant dairy products, including queso fresco.
- Dairy Council of California fostered strong new partnerships within Merced and Stanislaus counties.
- The project demonstrated that food insecurity affects families with incomes above the poverty threshold to qualify for state or federal nutrition assistance programs.



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