

## Class VIII Prepares for the Future of Dairy

**P**henomenal. Wonderful opportunity. Once in a lifetime opportunity. Connections. Networking. Lifelong friendships. Passion.

Descriptions like these were among the glowing reviews given by the 23 members of the eighth class of Jersey Youth Academy, held July 9 through 14, 2023 in Columbus, Ohio.

With full involvement of the Ohio-based staff of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) and National All-Jersey Inc. (NAJ), plus the presidents of both organizations and a roster of outstanding guest speakers, Jersey Youth Academy delivered a comprehensive survey of the Jersey business today, where Jerseys fit the dairy business of tomorrow, and the opportunities for participants to direct their Jersey enthusiasm and personal abilities to advance the Jersey business of the future.

The participants from 13 states included rising seniors in high school through college juniors. They were selected from a national pool of applicants based on merit, motivation and preparation for the program as reflected in experiences, accomplishments and their goal statements.

Academy's aims—to attract, educate and retain talented young people for careers in the Jersey dairy business— informed a program highlighted by a multitude of presentations, farm visits, hands-on workshops, face-to-face communication with industry experts and fellowship with peers.

Since the first Academy, in July of 2009, it has remained a Jersey boot camp with as much content relative to the program's objectives as AJCA-NAJ staff could pack into five days.

To date, 246 different individuals from 38 states have participated in the one-of-a-kind program. The relationships and work with these future leaders does not end when they leave Columbus, it continues for years to come as they join the home dairy or become a member of the dairy industry.

### The Program

The total of what they took home from the invited speakers, farm visits and AJCA-NAJ staff interaction was as broad as could be.



The 23 members of Jersey Youth Academy VIII are pictured at The Wilds, a safari park in southeast Ohio. Pictured front row, from left: Summer Hammann, Sarah Cox, Lauryn Young, Regan Johnson, Lilly Johnson, Kerigan Alexander, Sophia Bollenbacher; second row: Sara Reed, Meganne Chapman, Hope Avedisian, Emma Townsend, Jamie Gibbs, Baylee Bowen, Mykel Mull, Clancey Krahn, Regan Jackson, Mindy Anderson. Third row: Cade Claycomb, Logan Lancaster, Brae Dunham, Tyler Bohnert, Coltan Seals, and Nathan Knapp.

“This experience makes the Jersey association shine,” said Jamie Gibbs, Rollingstone, Minn. “It is a wonderful opportunity and has helped me build connections this week with other youth, peers and industry greats.”

“It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” agreed Hope Avedisian, Hilton, N.Y. “The Jersey association has worked to open opportunities to youth and introduce us to other companies and dairy youth that have been successful from every size farm.”

The variety of topics the class was exposed to was all encompassing. From learning things as common as navigating infoJersey and reading a pedigree,

to a hearing a philosophy on the use of sexed versus conventional semen, to various models of dairies in the state, each participant took home something new to utilize on their home dairies.

“There are so many things I can take home and now put to use,” said Cade Claycomb, Spickard, Mo. “Pedigrees, genetics, USJersey services, there are many things a dairy can use to be more profitable.”

“I learned much more about genomics,” agreed Sophia Bollenbacher, Argos, Ind. “It will help me to become more involved at home with matings and pedigrees for our herd.”

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Class VIII participants had the opportunity to visit with Jersey herds, industry leaders and many different types of operations in the 5 days of Jersey Youth Academy. One tour stop was Albright Jerseys LLC with the opportunity to talk genetics and management with owner and AJCA board member Joel Albright. Jeff Ziegler of Select Sires was the keynote speaker of Jersey Youth Academy and challenged the youth to always think big and accept challenges presented to them.

## Jersey Youth Academy

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### Roster of Speakers

The keynote address was presented by Jeff Ziegler, Vice President of Dairy Cattle Breeding for Select Sires. Other invited speakers included Alan Chittenden, AJCA President; John Kokoski, NAJ President; Charlie Garrison, President of the Garrison Group Washington D.C.; Paul Detweiler and Jack Hippen, STGenetics; Dr. Dwight Roseler and Allen Johnson, Purina Nutrition; Stacey Dvorak, Ag Credit; Dr. Craig Zimmerly, New Pittsburg Veterinary Clinic; David McElhaney, AllFlex; Dr. Tom Earleywine, Land O'Lakes Nutrition;

A virtual roundtable session was held with past youth winners including: Tara Bohnert, Ill., Colin Wussow, Wis., Brett Barlass, Calif.; Gracie Krahn, Ore.; Emma Vos, Wis.; Nicki Hebgen, Wis., and Wade Kessenich, Wis.

Participating as a Dean at Sunday's opening social and dinner was Dr. Katharine Knowlton, former

Jersey youth and now the head of the Dairy Science undergraduate program at Virginia Tech. Presentations were also made by every member of the AJCA-NAJ management team, Randale Lowe, Assistant to the General Manager of NAJ; and Area Representatives Danielle Brown, Scott Holcomb and Aspen Silva.

At Waterman Dairy, Ohio State University, presentations were made by farm manager John Lemmermen, herd manager, and AJCA Type Appraisers Ron Mosser, Brown and Holcomb. Dairy processing tours included Pearl Valley Cheese Inc., Fresno, where President Chuck Ellis and Sally Ellis spoke and guided a tour through the facility. At Woodruff Farms, Levi Woodruff gave a tour of their dairy, milk processing facility and farm store geared to supporting local agriculture.

Farm tours included a visit to Albright Jerseys LLC, Willard, Ohio. The students toured the dairy and saw nine robotic milkers in action. The class also had a hands-on genetic selection with herd owner Joel Albright. At Young's

Jersey Dairy, the group learned about agri-tourism and their ice cream and cheese production from Stuart Young and participated in a mock auction. After a welcome by President and CEO David Thorbahn, key staff from all departments at Select Sires Inc. presented the many career opportunities and had a parade of bulls showcasing some of the top Jersey bulls.

### Class IX Coming July 2025

Class XI of Academy will be held in July 2025. Applications will open September 1, 2024, and must be received in the AJCA office by December 1.

As always, all costs, including transportation to Columbus, were paid in full, with the Class VI experience being equivalent to a \$2,200 scholarship.

The endowment of Academy currently sits at \$544,858. Contributions can be made at any time by contacting the association office at 614/861-3636.

*Editor's note: Reports from previous classes are available at <http://bit.do/JYA>.*