

Texas Dairy Matters

Higher Education Supporting the Industry

Building the next generation of dairy industry leaders

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Leadership in any industry is key to that industry's success. For 10 years, I have known that I would love the opportunity to attend the Young Dairy Leaders Institute program, better known as YDLI, to learn more about what I can do to help support building future leaders.

YDLI is a program of the Holstein Foundation, designed to educate and develop future leaders for a vibrant dairy community. The Holstein Foundation website states: "The Young Dairy Leaders Institute is the premier leadership program in the dairy industry. Young adults, ages 22-45, apply for the program which consists of three phases over a one-year period. Two three-day, interactive meetings bookend tasks that participants complete in their home communities to practice what they learn."

A three-part learning experience well worth my time

This past year was my chance to attend what I believe is an amazing program (Figure 1)! "Drive to Thrive" was the theme of my class, class 12 (Figure 2)! I knew that this industry sponsored institute would lead to preparing me for growth mindset and advocacy work and the institute was worth every second and effort I put into it. Besides the amazing skills and valuable information I gained from the three-part institute, I now have lifelong friendships developed throughout the last year and am now an alumnus of YDLI.



Figure 1. Dr. Barbara Jones at the Young Dairy Leaders Institute (YDLI) program from the Holstein Foundation held at Fort Worth, Texas, February 2022.

In February 2022, I traveled to Fort Worth, where YDLI is held, and attended phase I and learned about leadership through relationships, understanding communication styles, increasing effective communication, and telling my story. Over the last year, I completed phase II on my own, in my home community, with a peer group to bounce ideas around and gain feedback. During phase II I conducted consumer interviews to gain insight into consumer’s thoughts about dairy, completed a community presentation in Granbury, where I live, about the dairy industry, took on an extra volunteer leadership role, and focused on six areas of growth. Below are the areas of growth I worked on and what I did for each area:

- Advocacy – Gave school tours to young children at the University dairy (~700 people)
- Networking – Networked through LinkedIn and built my profile and community
- Public Policy – Attended updates on the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health
- Gratitude – Worked at a food pantry in Hood County
- Collaboration – Developed new relationships with new industry partners on projects that will be released next year
- Change Management – read three new professional development books. My favorite was “Wolfpack: How to Come Together, Unleash our Power and Change the Game” By Abby Wambach



Figure 2. Young Dairy Leaders Institute Class 12 graduation cohort in Fort Worth, Texas, February 2023.

A few weeks ago, I attended phase III where we came back together in Fort Worth and learned about improving communication skills, government policy and a dairy policy update from Washington DC, learning how to manage change in an organization, managing potential employees, and how partnership is the new leadership. A few class participants also presented how they had grown during their phase II portion. During each phase we also networked with our class, the YDLI advisory committee, and the trusted leaders at Holstein Foundation.

So, now is my call to all of you reading this article. I highly encourage each and every one of you to apply for YDLI. Whether you are managing your own farm, someone else's farm, or working for allied industry, you will gain so much insight into communication and leadership in your role. If you are interested in joining YDLI, visit the YDLI website and send in your contact information. <http://www.holsteinfoundation.org/YDLI/ydli.html>

<http://texasdairymatters.org>

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