



## **2017 PDPW Board Candidate Information**

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Which is the best way to reach you? **email**

### **1. Please describe your dairy business.**

Norm-E-Lane is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation dairy farm consisting of 2,400 milking cows, 2,200 youngstock and 5,200 acres of crop land. We employ 34 full time employees, encompassing all aspects of a modern dairy from raising our baby calves to planting and harvesting crops and handling all our own manure application. Our milk is sold to a local family-owned cheese plant a few miles down the road. We also operate a methane digester, allowing us to run a bio-gas engine and sell electricity to our utility.

### **2. Please tell us about your background and leadership experience in the dairy industry.**

I grew up on our family dairy farm, milking 400 cows and working the fields. I graduated from UW LaCrosse with a business degree, got married, and went back to work on the farm. We started our big expansion in 2000. Growing through that initial expansion to 1,000 cows and the subsequent growth has been a lesson of leadership in itself. Today, my father and I own and operate the business along with many strong and interested employees. Leading our farm to the next level and to the next phase has been my focus. Leadership within the industry has been fairly minimal thus far. Other than being a part of a few PDPW and DBA committees, I have not held any board positions. Not to say I haven't been involved – our farm has hosted many events, from PDPW educational services, to breakfasts, to school days on the farm, naming a few. Also, attending many annual conferences, meetings and educational events has always been a focus of myself and our employees.

### **3. What is the greatest impact that PDPW has had on you, your business and the industry?**

The greatest impact PDPW has had on me and my business has been the educational aspect. From the beginning, I have looked to PDPW as an organization dedicated to bringing farmers together to learn and to grow, not only from the content they offer but also from each other as business leaders. Many of the ideas, systems and improvements implemented on our farm have stemmed from being involved in the organization, not to mention the networks and friendships formed along the way.

As far as the industry goes, PDPW has had a similar impact. Forging ties between leaders in production, manufacturing, sales and processing has been invaluable to the state of Wisconsin and the dairy industry. At a time when there seemed to be many different groups with different agendas in our industry, PDPW became the organization that created a togetherness and a common platform that allowed farmers to be proud of where the industry was going. PDPW said, hey, we can bring the industry together, learn from each other, grow our businesses and grow ourselves as leaders along the way.

**4. PDPW is an educational organization. As a PDPW board member, how would you help PDPW grow and continue to have a greater positive impact on the industry?**

As a PDPW board member, I would aspire to bring leadership experience and new ideas to the organization. I will be devoted to continuing on the path of education while focusing on new ways to reach more people, not only within the industry, but our neighbors and consumers as well. As a parent, the next generation is extremely important to me, so focusing on them and how they will enter into and change our industry will be important.

**5. As PDPW continues to develop programs that serve Wisconsin and reach beyond to producers in other states, what do you see as the greatest need in the industry?**

I believe one of the greatest needs in our industry is to grow our communication with consumers. We need to minimize the critics and the bad information out there, while fighting hard to continue to use science and technology in order to ethically and efficiently feed the world. If we believe in and are passionate about what we do, the world needs to know about it. Our businesses cannot be compromised because we were not involved and not at the table.

I believe we need to better reach consumers directly, not only with our words and social media power, but also by our actions and business practices.

**6. In the next ten years, where do you see the greatest opportunity for the dairy business?**

I believe the greatest opportunity in the next 10 years for the dairy business will be in developing partnerships. We as dairy farmers have done a lot of work the last 10 years growing our businesses, improving efficiencies and managing risk. I believe there will be a trend in getting to the next level in growth and efficiencies, by partnering with similar businesses or like-minded people. For example, it is still quite expensive to own land, grow your own crops and manage all the manure from a dairy. Partnering with neighbors or a custom business may be a way to spread out costs and risks while getting more and better people involved. As costs do nothing but increase, the industry will have opportunities to focus on these types of ventures.

**7. What is your goal as a leader in the next ten years?**

My goal as a leader is to continue to be a better leader. I find myself about in the middle of my career, and as I look back things seem to have gone pretty fast. In my business, my leadership needs have changed rapidly as we recently went through an ownership change. I am now fully in charge of most decision-making in the business. My goal is to become the leader that makes the tough decisions and makes the right moves at the right time in order to get our farm where we want to go. This means many things, but one of the big focuses is bringing on the right people and growing them

to become leaders themselves. I have never been an extremely vocal leader, but my passion for our employees, our business and our industry is shown by what I do. I also desire to share some of my leadership within the industry. I know being a part of the PDPW board will allow me to bring my own experiences to the organization while allowing me to grow and learn from other leaders as well. The ultimate goal in my business and the way I live my life is for “leaders to lead leaders”.