



LEGACY FOR OUR FUTURE LEADERS...

by Dianna Malcom, Mud Media

Over the next decade the Ostrom family will dedicate more than \$120,000 to World Dairy Expo's Youth Showmanship Contest to honor the late Annette Ostrom.

Annette, 49, of De Pere, Wisconsin, passed away on October 19, 2022, following a courageous battle with cancer, shortly after she completed one of her final wishes. She was determined to be ringside at WDE in 2022 to watch her son Tristen show, to see her industry friends, and to champion her family's Milk Source Genetics' show campaign.

Annette was a beloved figure at every level. There wasn't a part of the industry she didn't touch or influence in all the best ways.

The tangible legacy of this quiet overachiever is that everyone can affect change...simply by taking the first step with the right people.

Her husband, Jim Ostrom, of Milk Source Genetics, says it is time to pause and to celebrate one of Annette's enduring passions – young people.

This year's cash prizes will peak at \$3500 for the Supreme Champion Showmanship award. Jim says the decision is a deliberate nod to the significance of encouraging youth, the foundation the movement lays for life, and acknowledging Annette's commitment to both.

"The most important thing about showmanship and youth programs is that it brings our future leaders back to our industry," he says. "It might be the most important thing we do in a given year – to give young people the chance to fall in love with this industry that we all love.

"Anything we can do to build some excitement around youth and youth programs is worthy."

GIVING BACK

Outside of Milk Source Genetics juggernaut commercial operation and compelling show herd, Annette was a long-time business manager for Zoetis, and a co-founder of "Dairy Cares of Wisconsin", a non-profit organization that raised \$2.3 million within 12 years for Children's Wisconsin (formerly Children's Hospital of Wisconsin).

It included "The Dairy Cares of Wisconsin Simulation Lab", named after its benefactor. The lab uses computerized patients so the hospital can replay traumas for training purposes. In 2017, Annette and Jim were acknowledged with a "Wisconsin Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser Award" on behalf of Dairy Cares during National Philanthropy Day.

Dairy Cares of Wisconsin started with a simple garden party of 35 people who collectively had momentous aspirations to give back.

Today, that event welcomes more than 500 people to the Ostrom's family home each year.

FLAWLESS ON THE HALTER

Annette was an exceptional cowwoman in her own right. Few will forget the iconic images of her gliding out of the darkness in 2016 and into the spotlight in unison with Milk Source's five-year-old Jersey Grand Champion, Musqie latola Martha-ET. Martha would go on to win WDE Supreme Champion.

Annette's close friend and Milk Source's young stock manager Mandi Bue – a force in the ring herself – remembers Annette's connection with Martha like it was yesterday.

“I remember asking Annette if she got nervous when she was headed into the ring with a cow that carried a lot of prestige like Martha,” Mandi said. “She would smile so lovingly at Martha and say that ‘Martha led her’. They were like watching a perfectly choreographed dance, they paraded so elegantly and flawlessly together. I believe it’s because she respected and adored any and every animal, so the second she took the show halter she put that animal at ease.

“Her personality was so graceful and calm – never arrogant – and it allowed any animal to show itself because they completely trusted her.”

COWS AND PARTNERS

Annette and Mandi initiated the five-woman cattle syndicate, La Femme Fatale, which notably owned half of the 2019 Intermediate WDE Holstein Champion, Floydholm Mc Emoji-ET. That buy happened because of Annette’s faith in Mandi’s eye for a potential great one.

Mandi explained, “When I fell in love with Emoji while judging the WI Futurity, Annette was the person I called,” Mandi said. “We talked it through, and she came up with the idea that the five of us [Annette, Mandi, Keri Vosters, Sarah Wendorf, and Jen Keuning] should join together, and buy half of her. I was so worried that I was too big on her, and Annette was the one to say I needed to start believing in myself, because if I didn’t, no-one else would.

“I can remember the phone conversation perfectly and her saying, ‘Let’s do this, and we are going to do it because we love the cow, and we will be happy wherever we stand in class – because we are doing this together’. And, that’s how it happened.”

The “Femme Fatale five” got to watch Emoji’s daughter, Ms Thunderstorm Eternity-ET, win Reserve Junior Champion at WDE last year.

Mandi said young people were Annette’s calling, and she was never too busy to help a junior showman out.

“She taught them so many important life lessons that went far beyond the showring.

She was always encouraging young people regardless of their experience or their skill level, and she would make sure they had a calf to show. She would beam with pride when a junior would come back the following year and ask if they could show another calf.

“She helped to remind us that it is our responsibility to encourage the next generation, because someone took the time to help us when we were young.

“That was Annette. She was completely selfless; I don’t think it ever crossed her mind to be any other way.”

THE POWER OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Mandi says outside of the ring, her lasting memories of Annette circle around the power of true friendship.

“She would remind me that as much as we love the cows, it is the genuine and sincere friendships we make along the way that withstand the test of time. Those friendships are what carry us through the tough times, and they are what make the good times sweeter.

“A memory that I always think of – which may seem insignificant to someone else, but which left a lasting impression on me – was when I had just moved to Wisconsin. I was asked to judge a futurity and I was nervous because I had never placed a class backwards before.

“I’ll never forget looking over, and sitting in the front row of the stands was Annette cheering me on and giving me that encouraging smile. I remember how unbelievably incredible it made me feel because she took time from her very busy life to be a friend, and to support me when I needed it the most.

“Annette loved the shows so much, the cows, and the people, and she was (and always will be) an enormous part of showing for me and for everyone else here at Milk Source.”

PROFESSIONAL AND TALENTED

Sara Harbaugh, a Territory Business Manager at Zoetis, says Annette was a steady constant in her life.

“She was so much more than a co-worker. She was an amazing friend,” Sara said. “Our lives overlapped through work, kids, and showing and she could always make me smile even when life was crazy.

“It seemed like she never had a bad day, and her continuous optimism through the most difficult times will always inspire me. I think of her often and try to use her example as a guide.

“The world needs more people like Annette, and this program is a perfect way to honor her.”

FOR THE KIDS

As Annette’s influence grew, she wanted to do more, give more, share more...and she surrounded herself with people who felt the same.

Jen Keuning is integral to the team which will continue the legacy of Dairy Cares Wisconsin in its 13th year this July.

“The industry has risen up every year since we started and we have surpassed our fundraising year-on-year,” Jen said.

“We had eight or 10 founding members and it’s been very satisfying to be involved, because every dollar helps kids. It’s always held the last Saturday of July, because it is prime time for the gardens, and it is a full production, which is very heavy on dairy. Every year Jim and Annette have graciously opened their home to host this event.

“This year will be hard, but also wonderful, because it’s on the cusp of the show season and there are a lot of reminders out there of Annette.”

EVERYONE STARTS SOMEWHERE

Annette’s love of the dairy industry was ignited by her parents, Gladys, and the late Hans Palm. And, when she decided she needed better heifers to be more competitive in 4-H competitions, Hans approached Sherry Siemers-Peterman, of Siemers Holsteins.

Sherry remembers that Annette was a stand-out young person, and she was happy to allow her the pick of the “better heifers at their farm.”

“Annette was quite a human,” Sherry said. “She gained a lot of confidence in herself throughout her 4-H career. Showmanship sets you up for life and it carries many lessons, including presenting your animals,

presenting yourself, and learning how to be a gracious winner...and a gracious loser. Annette was very trustworthy, earnest, and she always did her very best job.

“She could do anything she set her mind to. She really did become a great showperson, a wonderful mentor, and a wonderful mother.

“Annette’s great mentor was her father, who everyone also adored. They had a very special relationship. Annette definitely had his fast smile, and his fast little laugh.

“She never went out for the judging team, but she sure should have. She knew a cow, that’s for sure. I was so very proud to watch all she achieved and gave back.

“This commitment to young people by her family feels very right.”

AT THE HEART OF IT ALL

Behind all the obvious accolades and achievements, Annette was a woman, a daughter, a wife, a mother, a sibling, a friend, and a colleague who continues to be sorely missed every day. To preserve her memory in perpetuity within the industry is important for her family.

Jim said, “She could tell you the pedigree of a 10-year-old kid running around the show barn at a show more than she could tell you the pedigree of a famous cow. She knew their ages, what animals they showed, and where they placed.

“I might know a young kid who’s 10, but the next time I see them they are a foot-and-a-half taller and they are looking like a young adult, but Annette always instantly knew who they were...because she truly knew that person.

“That is the essence of why we are doing this. Before Annette was diagnosed, she would never have allowed me to name something after her. I did tell her I was going to, and as time wore on, she did come to accept it, because she cared so much for the young people.

“So, while we have signed up for 10 years, I do see this as a permanent thing. We wanted to make it meaningful, and we’ve deliberately put forward some sizeable prizes.

WDE 2023 SHOWMANSHIP AWARDS

Champion Junior Showmanship (cash award) – \$1500

Reserve Champion Junior Showmanship (cash award) – \$750

Champion Intermediate Showmanship (cash award) – 1500

Reserve Champion Intermediate Showmanship (cash award) – \$750

Champion Senior Showmanship (cash award) – 1500

Reserve Champion Senior Showmanship (cash award) – \$750

Supreme Champion Showmanship (cash award) – \$3500

Reserve Supreme Champion Showmanship (cash award) – \$1500