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**GrassWorks, Inc.**

*Your grazing resource!*

### **“Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship” Seeks More Educational Farm Sites for Growing Program**

GrassWorks, Inc. is actively seeking new educational farms to host enthusiastic next-generation graziers in its Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program. The innovative program, which combines on-farm training under the guidance of an established grazer with formal instruction, was developed by GrassWorks in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and has attracted a lot of attention in recent months. “It’s exciting to see how this Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship has taken off,” says Project Director, Joseph Tomandl, III. “We now have more applicants than we have grazing farms to place them on! This is a very impressive group of candidates who would be a great asset to an existing operation while they learn.”

In addition to providing new farmers with comprehensive training, the Apprenticeship Program also emphasizes new models of investment and farm transfer for established dairy farmers. Transfer models are especially important with so many producers in the state at later stages of their careers.

However, individuals do not need to be on the verge of retirement to participate. Any grazer who wants to help shape the future of dairy by transferring his or her knowledge and who meets the criteria of five years of grazing experience can apply to become a Master Dairy Grazer. Someone who is interested but not ready to take on the full responsibility may be able to share an apprentice with a qualified neighbor. “We are striving to create a program structure that allows multiple entry points and benefits dairy farmers at all stages of their careers,” says Tomandl. The Apprenticeship program offers its Master Dairy Graziers professional development support, including financial planning through The Farm Center at Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

GrassWorks has partnered with The Farm Center as well as the Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy Farmers and Ranchers at UW-Madison to expand and strengthen the program and has received a three-year grant from USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)’s Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). On September 30<sup>th</sup> USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced program recipients, stating that \$18 million has been designated to support programs that will help transition our nation’s agriculture to the next generation of farmers. The *GrassWorks Apprenticeship Program* was among 36 projects that were awarded funding support.

To find out more about the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship and learn how you can prepare new farmers for a promising future in dairy grazing while strengthening your own operation as Master Dairy Grazer, contact Joseph Tomandl, III: 715-560-0389 or [cjtom@hughes.net](mailto:cjtom@hughes.net) . Applications for both Dairy Grazing Apprentices and Master Dairy Graziers can be found at [www.grassworks.org](http://www.grassworks.org)

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